

Connect With The Divine You

Introduction

It feels surreal to be writing this book about self-connection and also using the word “divine.” If you had told me 20 years ago that I would be writing a book with this theme, I would have laughed my ass off and said “Yeah—when Hell freezes over!”

I did everything possible to NOT connect with myself. I escaped being with myself by over-eating, drinking, taking drugs, sleeping, working and staying very “busy.”

When I turned 18, my parents stopped forcing me to go to church, which allowed me to cut off all connection to anything bigger than me. The word “divine,” and anything else that even slightly implied that God or religion was somehow involved in my world, sent me running the other way.

So how did I get to today, when I find myself authoring a book about self-connection and the divine—two “forbidden” subjects? Good question. In a nutshell, I was diagnosed with the chronic illness, Multiple Sclerosis (MS), in 2004. Before that, I had struggled with anxiety, depression, eating disorders, alcohol abuse and weight problems. The MS diagnosis was the cherry on the top of my shit sundae. It was also the answer to many of my prayers, leading me to happiness, peace, and the discovery of my purpose. My “journey of the wounded healer” had begun.

Like most people who are diagnosed with a chronic and progressive illness, I first looked to western medicine to help me manage my symptoms and, ultimately—hopefully—find a cure. At the time, my neurologist told me that I had a 30% chance of slowing down the progression of the disease if I followed western medical practices, but that there was no cure. To this day, doctors still say there is no cure. Not true in my book. ☺

Connect With The Divine You

For three years, I walked the western medicine path. I gave myself treatment shots every other day, which I dreaded. The medicine that was only 30% effective in slowing down the progression of my disease gave me flu-like symptoms for 24 hours every time I injected it, and it often kept me from getting out of bed. Year after year I would get better for a while, and then have yet another relapse, and my symptoms worsened. Multiple Sclerosis is a disease that can affect everyone differently.

At first, I had trouble speaking and finding words. Shortly after diagnosis, I lost vision in my right eye, and experienced overwhelming fatigue. I then experienced weakness and numbness on the right side of my body, similar to what happens with a stroke, and some days that affected my left side, too. On top of it all, I struggled with pain, insomnia, depression, and anxiety.

Before this, I was someone who had worked 50 hours a week, and ran daily. I even ran a marathon. Now there were days when I could barely work four hours in a day, or walk 50 feet before needing to rest. I felt hopeless and defeated. I hated my body and my life.

My Turning Point

My turning point came in September 2007, after yet another MS relapse.

As usual, I went to the emergency room and had the infusion of prednisone that had been recommended by my doctor as a means of decreasing the damage to my brain and body. Prednisone made me crazy—mentally, physically and emotionally. My nerves would be on fire for weeks after those shots. I couldn't tolerate noise and I couldn't sleep. In fact, it was impossible for anyone to be around me. I tended to isolate myself as much as possible until the effects wore off.

Commented [SC1]: You had this flagged in red but I've taken that out – was there something special about this sentence upon which you wanted to expand?

Commented [T2R1]: Nope. I just didn't know how to take out.

Connect With The Divine You

This particular time, a friend offered me the use of her cabin in northern Idaho as a “recovery hideout.” This was one of my favorite places because nature and the mountains were very soothing to me, especially when I was feeling bat-shit crazy.

One morning, I went to inject the dreaded shot of MS medicine into my stomach and something stopped me. It wasn’t the multiple scars on my body from the prior shots, or my fear of the pain the shots caused.

I actually heard a voice that said, “Stop. There is another way. Put the syringe and medicine down for good.” I never gave myself that shot of medicine, or any western medicine, for MS again.

I went home a few days later and told my husband and my doctor that I was not giving myself the shots anymore. This did not go over well, to say the least. They begged me to change my mind but I could not. It was not easy, but I knew I had to listen to that voice, whatever or whoever it was. The journey of connecting with my divine self to heal my mind, body, and spirit had begun.

I started searching and trying many, many different alternative treatments: nutrition, acupuncture, chiropractic care, bodywork, yoga, meditation, and more. I started studying mind-body healing philosophy and dug out the book, *You Can Heal Your Body* by Louise Hay that I had purchased 10 years before. I started reading it. I completely immersed myself in alternative healing and started feeling better, little by little.

Fast forward to today, almost 12 years after my initial diagnosis. I no longer experience any of the MS symptoms that I mentioned earlier. In fact, that’s been the case for more than six years. I run and hike daily. I can actually hike 10 miles in one day carrying a 30-pound

Connect With The Divine You

backpack. I run my own business, working as much as I choose. I have gotten my vibrant body and passionate life back!

I believe that the day I was diagnosed with MS was the day my prayers were answered. It has not been an easy journey. But I know it all happened for a good and necessary reason: to connect with my divine self again and to support you to do it, too. Whether you struggle with anxiety, depression, weight, or chronic illness, this book can help you... if you keep an open heart and mind. I can't promise recovery or remission. But I can promise support and a blueprint for well-being that has made a huge difference in my life and in the lives of my clients.

In these chapters, I will be sharing with you my personal experiences and providing tools to connect with the divine you. As I teach all my clients (and as I needed to learn myself), you are your own guru and you have all your own answers.

I am only here as your guide, to share with you what I have learned on my journey to healing mind, body, and spirit.

I never tell anyone to go off western medicine. I believe that some of us need both and some of us do not—we all have a different path.

I also believe that the things we need in order to heal are brought to us in divine time, when we are ready. So, if you have this book in your hands, I am guessing you are ready, and that there is something in these pages you will find necessary to your healing journey.

As you are reading this book, and applying the keys, tools and concepts I am sharing, remember to always check in with yourself and ask what is right and true for you. Take what you like and what resonates with you, then leave the rest.

Connect With The Divine You

I am truly honored and excited to be on this journey with you, and to be able to share what has supported me and hundreds of others to heal, to have a vibrant body, and to live an abundant life of freedom.

Sending you love, hope and courage to walk your healing path,

Tanya Penny ☺

Connect With The Divine You

Chapter 1: The Truth About Self-Connection

Disconnection from Self is the number one cause of illness, mind and body. — Tanya Penny

I believe that disconnection from Self is the Number One cause and driver of illness and disease, and that it's responsible for anxiety, depression, weight issues, pain and any other negative symptom or "feeling" in the body. Dis-ease with the self and spirit creates Disease mentally, physically and emotionally.

Reconnecting with, accepting, being and expressing your true Self—your desires, body, feelings, emotions and thoughts—are all essential to heal your body and feel peaceful and happy.

What Causes Dis-connection?

Through my own experience, I've determined that there are five main reasons why we become disconnected from our Self.

- 1. You were corrected, criticized or rejected.** I grew up with a very critical and perfectionistic dad. I was often corrected and/or criticized for what I did, or what I didn't do "right." I also saw him criticize my mom and others, too. He wasn't trying to be "mean." He was just following a pattern that had been set for him when he himself had been a child. When we grow up being corrected or criticized for our desires, body, thoughts, emotions, actions, etc., we begin to shut down. When we get to school, we try to fit in and be liked. Some of us are even teased for who we are. So, we slowly learn to turn off who we are and try to speak and act in ways that will

Connect With The Divine You

please others, so we won't be criticized or rejected. Not only did I get the criticism at home, but I got picked on by boys at school. Years and years later I found out it was because they liked me, but when it was happening, I thought it was because there was something wrong with me. That all results in the belief that we are not good enough or "likeable" when we are being our true self, so we stop wanting to be that person.

2. You didn't see your parent(s) connect with themselves. We often model, or do what we see, growing up. I saw both my parents do a lot of escaping from themselves—excessive TV watching plus over-drinking, eating, and *doing* (they were constantly busy). I also saw my mom doing things just to please others. Sometimes this meant that she left little time to do what she truly desired. She also stopped doing some things because she didn't want to be criticized by my dad. I saw her try to communicate her feelings, emotions and desires to my dad, only to be yelled at and criticized. Eventually, she stopped. I, of course, started to model these same behaviors in my daily life and relationships, too. As I got older, I fell into over-eating and then drinking to suppress my unexpressed emotions, and I found myself trying to please the men that I was with, even if it meant doing things I didn't want to do. I put up with a lot of unacceptable behavior and went against myself in a lot of ways. When we don't have healthy self-connection models, this is what we do.

3. You experienced abuse. When we have an experience of abuse—verbal, physical, sexual or neglect—we believe that something must be wrong with us, that we are bad, etc., and we begin to dislike and even hate ourselves. We also feel shame, and on

Connect With The Divine You

some level even blame ourselves for it happening in the first place. So, why on Earth would we want to connect with ourselves when we believe we are bad or awful? I was sexually abused by some male cousins and then, years later, at the age of 15, I was date-raped by a boy I had just started dating. I told no-one about any of these experiences until I was in my twenties because I was ashamed and scared, and I also blamed myself. I continued to date that boy and have sex with him because he threatened me. I hated myself and my body. To disconnect and suppress the way I felt, I drank too much and developed eating disorders. I also pushed myself mentally and physically in school, and then at work, both to prove that I was worthwhile and good, and to stay busy so I could ignore my negative inner voice.

- 4. You experienced one or more traumas.** Besides abuse, many of us experience one or more traumas in our life. Many of us don't even realize this because it might have been something "small" or maybe someone told you "it" was no big deal, so you brushed it off. You might have been teased or bullied in school. Perhaps, you were in an accident. Maybe you were diagnosed with a chronic illness. There is an underlying belief that bad things happen to bad people. You must have deserved it, or even caused this bad thing to happen. These traumas often affect us emotionally, mentally and physically, leaving us feeling inferior. When we feel bad or inferior, we often want to dis-connect from or get rid of these parts of ourselves.
- 5. You are too busy, and don't make enough space or down-time to connect.** Most of us learn from our culture, society, and family that staying busy, constantly doing,

Connect With The Divine You

and working hard is the way to survive, be worthwhile, and live a successful life. This starts at a very young age. Kids go to school all day, participate in an after-school activity, do homework, squeeze in a little T.V. or computer time and then finally drop into bed. We then continue this pattern into adulthood. We over-work ourselves in our job or career so we can get promoted, make more money and ensure job security. We over-do and stay constantly busy in our personal lives with chores, friends, family, etc. Many of us do things just to please others, or because we think we should or that we have to. When we don't make enough space and time in our schedule to rest, or to be or do what we like, then we slowly become more and more disconnected from who we really are. We don't even take the time to reflect on what we desire, or explore who we really are. This causes a great deal of stress that we try to escape feeling, and we stuff ourselves with food, alcohol, drugs, TV or computer use, shopping, etc.

Tips, Tools and Inspired Actions:

Remember that awareness is the key to changing anything in your life. Let go of any judgement and reflect with compassion and curiosity on the following:

1. Rate, on a scale of 1-10, how connected you feel to your Self at this moment. 0= not at all. 10= completely, deeply connected.
2. Reflect on the following questions:
 - Which of the above reasons led you to disconnect from your Self initially?

Connect With The Divine You

- Why do you think you continue to be dis-connected from your Self today?
3. Have you noticed any judgement, blame or shame come up with this reflection? If yes, know that this is normal. Take a moment and write down what the voice in your head or inner critic is saying. We will work with these judgements and beliefs as we move through the book.

Connect With The Divine You

The Truth About Self-Connection: A Client Connection

Joe's Story

Joe was having some neurological-related symptoms, and he knew I had had some success in supporting people with Multiple Sclerosis. He was experiencing vision and hearing loss, and some facial paralysis. He tended to be super-critical and was easily frustrated (with himself and others).

Why He Came to See Me

Joe and I had worked together years earlier at a rehabilitation hospital where I had been an occupational therapist. Years after our paths had taken us in different directions, I received an email from Joe asking if we could talk. He wanted to reduce his anxiety, enjoy more loving, fun and respectful relationships with others, and make more time to connect with himself daily.

Joe was aware that he had a very harsh inner critic that relentlessly beat him up for what he didn't do or do "right," especially at work. He also knew that he pushed himself too hard, and tended to take on too much. He wasn't feeling fully respected or heard in his marriage, and he felt judged. He judged his wife's actions as well, and he was often overwhelmed by his responsibility for his family, which included two young girls. Joe had previously had many close friendships, but since becoming a father and husband, he had less and less time, and he was now feeling lonely and disconnected from himself and others.

Connect With The Divine You

How We Worked Together

Joe had spent a fortune on Western medicine already, and his time and finances were limited. We decided that the best way for us to work together was to start with one private session by phone to give him insight into the root causes of the breakdown in his health and life. This would also give us an opportunity to come up with some inspired actions he could take to start healing the patterns that had led to his dis-ease. He started by listening to my “Connecting with The Divine You” (Therapeutic Meditation Process) audio lessons, and using my guided Therapeutic Meditation Practices, supplemented by a daily “reflect and write” journaling practice. We then had a follow-up phone session a month later to tweak the inspired actions and make more recommendations.

We decided that Joe would benefit from participating in my Vibrant Body & Abundant Life Journey group program to address the 10 Keys to Health. This would provide him the wisdom, support, and tools he needed to heal his relationship issues, create more work-life balance, and help him to fully accept and love himself, all of which would together contribute to healing his health symptoms.

The Issue at the Heart of the Matter

Joe agreed that perfection played a big role in most of his issues, along with his tendency to pretend to be Superman (over-doing things) and trying to please everyone else. He took on too much and pushed himself too hard at work to prove that he was “good enough.” Then, when he couldn’t keep up or do everything perfectly, he beat himself up for it. The same thing happened at home. Joe tried to be the perfect husband and father in order to please his wife and children—at the expense of his own needs and desires.

Connect With The Divine You

When he couldn't master everything all at the same time, his inner critic let him have it, again.

Trying to be a perfect "Superman" and please everyone else took a lot of time and energy, leaving very little time for Joe to connect with himself or have fun. Plus, the constant beating up on himself caused him to disconnect from himself even more. He was trapped in a vicious cycle.

Over the course of our time together, I asked Joe to carve out time to connect with himself daily through reflecting and writing five-to-ten minutes a day and using a guided therapeutic meditation practice in the morning and again at bedtime as he fell asleep. He used these tools to also accept himself, to plant the seeds for what he desired in his life, to feel and release emotions of guilt and blame, to shift the limiting beliefs that were causing him to get stuck in the patterns of pushing himself too hard, working too much, trying to please others, and looking at what, in his past, might have contributed to these beliefs/patterns.

Joe discovered many things through using the self-connection process daily. In reflecting on his past, he saw how being an only child put a lot of pressure on him to "do it all" and be perfect. Even though he knew his mother loved him very much, she tended to be needy and over-bearing, wanting a lot of his time and attention. She was also a people-pleaser, often tending to other people's needs before her own. As an adult, Joe listened to her, but didn't share much of what was going on in his own life with her. He saw how he had also picked up her people-pleasing pattern.

Joe had also felt much love and care from his father, but his dad tended to be critical and have a "right or wrong" way of seeing the world. Joe picked up this perfectionistic

Connect With The Divine You

pattern, and until we began working together, this was the way he thought he had to be to survive and thrive in the world.

Given these past experiences, Joe saw how he could easily take on the beliefs that: I (and others) have to be perfect and do it right,” “I need to please others and put their needs before my own, and “I have to do a lot to prove I am good enough.” He came to see that these beliefs, and the patterns/behaviors they generated, caused him to disconnect from himself. As Joe worked on making time to connect with himself daily, and practiced accepting himself instead of judging and blaming himself, we also focused on shifting his beliefs to “I don’t have to be perfect,” “there is no right or wrong,” and “my needs and desires are important.” We used the guided therapeutic meditation practices, daily affirmations (spoken, visual and written), and action steps Joe could take that were in alignment with these truths.

Implications and Results

After a few months of working together, Joe’s neurological symptoms began to improve. He was taking more time to connect with himself daily through the guided practices and journaling. He was pushing himself less at work and he began setting boundaries and taking on fewer projects. He noticed he was catching his negative self-talk sooner, and switching it to more accepting language.

Today, Joe feels like he has much better work-life balance and he more easily sets boundaries at work. He’s able to more confidently express his needs and desires with his wife, and share more of himself with his mom. He continues to make connecting with himself a priority, and he uses his tools to do so daily. His self-talk has improved by leaps

Connect With The Divine You

and bounds, he is much more accepting of himself and others, and he feels more peaceful. He continues to make time for activities and supportive friendships that bring him joy. His neurological symptoms continue to improve and, if they flare up, he reflects on where in his life he has fallen out of alignment again, and makes changes accordingly.

In Joe's Own Words:

Since I began working with Tanya, I feel I have grown in so many ways that I would have never considered. The thought that my illness could have stemmed from my deep commitment to self-criticism and lack of self-love, and martyring myself as a “beast of burden” had never occurred to me. The onset of symptoms around Christmas of 2015 included visual and hearing loss, capped with facial paralysis. After extensive work-ups from experts, a “professional opinion” of Multiple Sclerosis was all I had. Given there was no hard evidence pointing to this assumption, I proceeded to look elsewhere for answers. In reflection, I absolutely believe my symptoms were the product of an unattainable goal of “perfection,” extreme stress—and guilt for decisions and choices that didn’t support that goal—and the fact that regardless of whether I succeeded or failed at a physical or mental endeavor, it was never good enough. This resulted in me physically breaking myself down, both in body and spirit. I believe I achieved critical mass when I became ill with a recurring virus two months prior to the onset of my symptoms. Without a doubt I feel this perfect storm of personal behaviors, coupled with a trigger, led to my symptoms.

Connect With The Divine You

While working with Tanya over the past 10 months, my physical symptoms have continued to improve, and I feel I have made gains in all areas of my life. Not only do I feel more at peace with my current circumstances and my contributions to such circumstances, but I have become a more patient and loving father, a more cooperative husband, and a compassionate caregiver. I have also learned to give myself some slack, I expect progress and not perfection, and I love my life for what I have, and don't dwell on what I do not have. Tanya's tools, especially the therapeutic meditation practices, are effective at helping me find positive daily mindsets, and rebounding daily during stressful episodes. They also quickly guide me to restful sleep at night. I'm grateful for the guidance and tools Tanya has given me. – Joe

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Chapter 2: Self-Acceptance and Compassion

Accepting all parts of you is necessary to healing your body and mind. — Tanya Penny

Why Is Self-Acceptance Necessary for Connection?

Before we dive into the self-connection areas, I believe it is important to have a little chat about self-acceptance and compassion.

Through my own experience, and in working with hundreds of clients, I've learned that the more we accept ourselves, the more we will want to *make* time to connect, and actually look forward to and enjoy our connection time. We often think we accept ourselves, but when we are willing to be honest and look deeper, we find that we only fully accept the parts of ourselves that we believe are “good,” or even “perfect.” We may try to connect, and then make the un-perfect parts wrong or bad; we then end up feeling even worse about ourselves and then we stop trying to connect altogether. I mean, come on. Who wants to connect when you beat yourself up and just make yourself feel even worse? Yeah, that's what I thought.

The truth is that we have been conditioned by our family, culture, media and peers to pick apart, criticize and reject any part of us that isn't perfect or “acceptable” to them. Again, refer back to reason #1 in the Self-Connection Truth chapter on why we disconnect in the first place. Let me paint you a picture with some personal examples...

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- I am in third grade and being teased for wearing a bra. Yes, I hit puberty EARLY. I am also the first girl I know to get my period and I hide it from everyone but my mother for more than a year. I am ashamed and begin hating my **body** and wanting to change (disconnect from) it.
- My mother is trying to talk to my dad about how she feels and what she desires, and she is crying (again). My dad gets very angry, yells, and starts smashing shit. I learn it is not safe to express my **desires or the emotion** of sadness. It feels safer, and we feel stronger, if we “stuff it” with behavioral choices that we hope will neutralize the painful emotions. I start stuffing my sadness with food, then alcohol and drugs and the art of staying busy.
- No matter which or how many chores I do at home, or how good my grades are at school, my dad criticizes me and I begin holding the **belief** that I never do enough and I’m never good enough.
- Growing up, I see and hear from magazines and TV commercials what I need to do and be in order for my **body** to be acceptable, and attractive to others. Be thin, but not too thin. Be sexy, but not slutty. Eat, but not too much and not certain foods, ever. Be funny and smart, but not too funny or smart because it will make others feel less than or think you are too much. Pretend you like what others like and stuff what you really **desire** down into that empty hole of sadness that is inside you, so you can fit in and be liked. You get the picture.

Connect With The Divine You

- I am 15 years old and start dating an older guy. I get invited to my first drinking party. I drink to fit in, pass out, and then I am date-raped by the guy. He says that if I tell anyone or break up with him, he will deny it. He'll say I'm a slut and then no one else will want me. I believe him. I blame myself, continue to date and sleep with him for years, and only tell one friend. I hate, and despise, all of me. I gain 20 pounds and continue to drink (a lot) to stuff the **emotion** of pain I am feeling back down inside me. I don't know what else to do with it. I didn't learn healthy ways to feel and release my emotions. I just learned that negative ones are bad to have and express.

You can see from these examples why I might not accept myself—my emotions, feelings, desires, beliefs or my body—or even accept that there could be something bigger than me that “has my back.”

Having Compassion for Yourself

As we do this inner work and discover more about ourselves, it is also important to have compassion for ourselves. It may feel great to reconnect with yourself, and it may also feel hard or shitty some days. When we realize how, where or why we have disconnected from our true selves, it can cause us to feel sadness, anger, or grief. When this happens, remember to have compassion for yourself, and for what you are experiencing: all that you have experienced has brought you to this place on your healing journey. Be grateful for your courage to make the changes in your life that help you to be healthy, and happy, and have the life you desire and deserve.

Connect With The Divine You

Tips, Tools and Inspired Actions:

Remember that awareness is the key to changing anything in your life. Let go of any judgement and reflect with compassion and curiosity on the following:

1. Rate, on a scale of 1-10, how much you feel you accept all parts of you at this moment.

0= not at all. 10= completely, deeply connected.

2. Reflect and write on the following questions:

- What past experiences have contributed to your lack of self-acceptance? Make a list.
- Have you noticed any judgement, shame or other emotions come up with the previous question? If yes, know that this is normal. Take a moment and write down what the voice in your head is saying, how you feel in your body, and any emotions arising. We will work with these emotions, judgements and beliefs later in the book.

3. Practice self-compassion—Look in the mirror daily, place your hand on your heart, and tell yourself how proud you are of you, all you have gone through, and accomplished up to this point in your life. Acknowledge it hasn't always been easy, but you had the

Connect With The Divine You

courage to do it. You survived, and you are still walking the path, your unique healing path. Breathe in compassion and breathe out any shame, guilt, fear or judgement until it feels complete. Feel the compassion, gratitude and love you have for yourself. Open your eyes and go connect with, and be, your amazing self.

4. Guided Therapeutic Meditation Practice—Guided therapeutic meditation practices support you to have compassion for yourself and connect with and accept all parts of you. These practices are very nurturing and restful, and can be done in any position: lying down, seated, standing or moving. It is even okay if you fall asleep, drift in and out, and don't hear a word, as they work on both a conscious and a subconscious level. You can find a sample guided TMP practice to start using at www.tanyapenny.com/cdy.

In the next chapter, I will outline the self-connection areas that represent opportunities for healing, and provide some tools for helping you move forward. We will then dive into each area, so you can begin the process of connecting with, and accepting, all parts of you so you can cultivate health, peace and happiness.

Connect With The Divine You

Self-Connection and Your Self-Acceptance: A Client Connection

Annik's Story

Annik was referred to me by a friend who had heard me speak at an online event. She was looking for support to heal anxiety, depression, body shame, insomnia, migraines, past trauma and Multiple Sclerosis. She wanted to heal the natural way and eventually wean herself off her migraine and pain medications.

Why She Came to See Me

Annik had experienced anxiety, depression, insomnia and migraines on and off for most of her life. She had had a traumatic childhood and a history of several abusive male relationships. She used to be overweight as a child and teen, and even though she was at her ideal weight now, she continued to struggle with body dysmorphia. She was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis in 2001 and had symptoms of numbness, weakness, and fatigue that kept her from working and completing other daily personal activities.

How We Worked Together

Annik and I began working together in the Vibrant Body & Abundant Life Journey virtual group program where she began learning the Therapeutic Meditation Process and using the guided meditation practices and journaling exercises daily. After a few months we transitioned to also working together in private sessions via Skype each month.

Connect With The Divine You

The Issue at the Heart of the Matter

Over the course of our time together, I asked Annik to take time to connect with, and accept, all parts of herself daily. I encouraged her to keep up a practice of reflecting/journaling and using guided therapeutic meditation practices in the morning or at midday, and again at bedtime as she fell asleep. She used these tools to listen to her body's messages, to understand, feel and release her emotions, to feel more rested and sleep better, to discover and shift the limiting beliefs that were causing her to push herself too hard mentally and physically, and to determine what in her past might have contributed to her having these beliefs and patterns.

Annik discovered a lot by using the self-connection process and tools daily. In reflecting on her past, she saw that she hadn't been shown much love or support by her parents while she was growing up. Her mother was emotionally unavailable, cold, yelled a lot and threw things when she was angry. She often doled out "the silent treatment," and she favored Annik's sister. Her mother kicked Annik out of the house when she was 18 and pregnant, and years later she turned her back again when Annik was physically abused by her boyfriend.

Annik's father was mostly absent and always working. He was emotionally unavailable, giving her financial support, but not showing love or saying, "I love you." He also had a bad temper and he drank a lot.

Not receiving the support she needed created a lot of insecurity, anxiety and fear. It also caused Annik to take on the beliefs that she wasn't worthy or lovable, she had to do everything by herself, she couldn't trust anyone, and that no one would support her (just abuse her). It was no surprise that she attracted and stayed in relationships with men who were verbally and physically abusive, because she believed that was what she deserved.

Connect With The Divine You

How We Worked Together

Annik worked on using her Therapeutic Meditation Process tools to connect with, accept and give herself the support she hadn't received growing up. She learned to listen to her body, acknowledge, accept, and feel her emotions, build her trust in "Something Bigger," shift her limiting beliefs, and plant the seeds of truth, including: "I am lovable and worthy, I am always loved and supported, I can trust others and receive support, and I don't have to do it all alone." Annik also started taking inspired actions that were in alignment with her divine self.

Implications and Results

After several months of working together, Annik's emotional and physical symptoms began to slowly decrease. She started to sleep better, and she felt less fatigued and anxious. She was beginning to accept and love herself more. She was listening to her body and not pushing herself physically when her body said, "no."

Today, Annik manages her physical and emotional symptoms using her Therapeutic Meditation Process tools. She hasn't had any MS symptoms for more than two years and she no longer takes pain or migraine medications. Her self-acceptance and love has doubled for her body and all parts of herself. If her patterns of people-pleasing, perfection or trying to be Superwoman and do it all alone show up, she is able to catch them faster and she uses her tools to shift into a healthy place of balance again. She continues to practice setting and keeping healthy boundaries with others, and honoring her divine self. Plus, she is moving into discovering and fully living her purpose to support others to heal too.

Connect With The Divine You

In Annik's Own Words:

Working with Tanya has been incredibly life changing! I have made so much progress in the last 16 months! I honestly feel that I couldn't have done it without her support, guidance and accountability. When we started working together, I'd just had a full hip replacement surgery at the age of 39 and this caused the Multiple Sclerosis to flare up. My doctor wanted me to start taking disease-modifying drugs. I had also been taking a pain reliever and a medication for chronic migraines for 15 years. I knew I wanted to heal and not use medications any longer. With Tanya by my side, I started to delve deeper into my emotional healing and I acquired many tools to support me.

After 15 years on my healing journey, I just had my first "normal" neurological exam!!! I am off all medications with no symptoms except fatigue (when I overdo it). I am still working with Tanya to shift this "Superwoman" pattern. I am further living proof that the mind-body healing and the "natural way" not only work, but they are achievable by anyone looking to take their health into their own hands. I couldn't have done it without Tanya Penny. Thank you, Tanya, from the bottom of my heart! I will be eternally grateful to your commitment to helping people heal the natural way.

– Annik

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Chapter 3: The Self-Connection Process

Connecting with oneself can be the hardest and healthiest thing we can do in our lives.

— Tanya Penny

My Healing Journey and Creating the Process

Through my own journey of healing anxiety, depression, insomnia, eating disorders, weight, various forms of abuse and Multiple Sclerosis, I have found that there are six areas of self-connection and four main tools to support us to re-connect with ourselves. I call this combination the Therapeutic Meditation Process TM (TMP).

When you hear the word therapeutic, you may think of a person lying on a couch telling their problems to a counselor or a psychologist. Or perhaps you think about someone being taken through a bunch of physical exercises by a physical or occupational therapist, so they can heal after surgery or an accident. In either case, it requires someone else to “do” the healing “to you,” as opposed to you doing it to and for yourself. I actually was, and still am, an occupational therapist, and I’ve also been on the receiving end of many counseling sessions in my lifetime. But, in this case, I am using the word *therapeutic* to imply a self-healing process.

And then there is the word meditation. You may have an image of a person seated with crossed legs and closed eyes trying to stop their thoughts or clear their mind. Good luck. I believe the word meditation means being connected to all parts of you, including your “Something Bigger” (SB)—God, Source, Universe, or whatever you call it—all day long, in any

Connect With The Divine You

position: walking, sitting, standing, lying down, etc., and always acting from this place of connection and guidance.

Before we dive into the process, I would like to share a little about my experience and how I arrived at it.

As I mentioned in the introduction, I stopped using western medicine in 2007 and began my deeper search for what would ultimately heal me. I prayed daily for guidance and the answer I was seeking. I started using acupuncture, diet, massage, supplements, and chiropractic care. I believe they all had their place and were each a part of my healing puzzle.

In 2008, I was asked to be part of an eight-week study with Boise State University for people who had a diagnosis of multiple sclerosis, and who were willing to use a meditation practice called Integrative Restoration® (iRest). Participants were asked to attend a group class each week where we were taught the steps of the practice, and then were taken through a guided meditation practice while lying down. I left the first class knowing that this practice was profound, and an important missing piece of my puzzle.

I had suffered from anxiety since I was a young child, even though I wasn't formally diagnosed with generalized anxiety disorder until I was in my early twenties. I remember being five years old and lying on my grandmother's couch trying to take a nap. I was sobbing silently because I was so worried and afraid about my parents, who were constantly fighting. This anxiety, and a feeling of being unsafe in the world, grew as I got older, likely because I was teased at school, and criticized at home. My mom and dad separated numerous times, and I was sexually abused by several boys. As I mentioned earlier, I started self-medicating, first with food, then alcohol and drugs, sex and men, and even over-exercising. I'd do anything to keep from feeling the anxiety, fear, and self-loathing I felt inside.

Connect With The Divine You

When I walked out of the first iRest® class, I felt at peace in both body and mind for the first time in my life. I also felt connected to spirit, though I didn't know that at the time. This feeling lasted for a few hours. After class, I went to my book club and friends jokingly asked, "what did you do with Tanya?!" I went to bed feeling Zen, but still awoke the next morning with my heart racing with panic, as I did every day. I wanted the feeling of peace I had had the day before, so I decided to play the guided iRest practice CD the group organizers had given participants for the study. After 30 minutes, I was back to my peaceful Zen place again. From that point forward, I used this guided meditation practice every day, sometimes two or three times a day, depending on how I felt, physically and mentally. The peace and overall well-being I felt was something the western medication or self-medicating behaviors never gave me. Plus, I had no awful side effects to deal with!

After eight weeks of using this practice daily I not only noticed that I felt more peaceful, but there were many other positive benefits as well. I had been suffering from insomnia and nightmares since I was a child. It used to take me one-to-two hours to fall asleep, even with sleeping pills, and I would wake three-to-five times on average during the night, after which I would lie awake at least an hour. Then my alarm would go off. I began using the iRest practice at bedtime, falling asleep before the practice was through, and sleeping through the night—except for getting up once to use the bathroom...but I'd fall back to sleep almost right away.

Now let's get into the really amazing details. Due to the MS, I had lost vision in my right eye, and I had debilitating fatigue, weakness and numbness in my right arm and leg, as well as neck pain. All of these would normally lessen by several degrees on a scale of 1-10 after I underwent a guided practice. It inspired me to get trained in iRest. I knew that if this practice was key for me and my healing process, then it would be for others, too. After my training, I began a

Connect With The Divine You

program at the rehabilitation hospital and started using the guided meditation practice with my occupational therapy clients, and teaching it. I trained two other therapists to do the same.

During this time, I also started studying mind-body healing philosophy through Louise Hay's books and Hay House Radio speakers, Dr. Carolyn Myss and Dr. Mona Lisa Schulz. They expounded upon the idea that my negative or self-limiting thoughts about myself and the world, and the negative emotions that they caused (and I stuffed), were the underlying causes of all of the negative symptoms I had been experiencing.

I started journaling, using positive affirmations and other practices that supported me to connect, feel, and release daily. I also created and recorded specific guided meditation practices to feel and release my negative emotions, shift my self-limiting beliefs, and plant the seeds for what I desired in my life in terms of health, relationships, money, purpose, passions, and, most importantly, self-acceptance and love. I began listening to these meditations several times a day.

I was also guided to get trained in yoga therapy. Before I was diagnosed with MS I was doing "gym yoga" for exercise. While I was experiencing the numbness and weakness from the MS, I couldn't do the intense yoga, so I started going to a gentle yoga class. I eventually became a yoga teacher. It really helped me to create a positive connection with my body. I learned to move in a gentle way, and honor my body, rather than push it to extremes like I had done in the past.

The more I used these tools daily to connect with and accept all of me, the better I felt mentally, physically, and emotionally. By 2010, I no longer experienced the MS symptoms, and I didn't struggle with weight and body shame, or debilitating depression and anxiety. It was a miracle, and I knew I had to share it all with others. I felt I had finally found my purpose and reclaimed the health and passion for life that I had lost so many years earlier.

Connect With The Divine You

I also knew I had to leave my safe, secure western medicine hospital job and open my own practice so I could fully share all my tools, and teach mind-body healing philosophy. That is a whole other story, which I will share in my next book. 😊

Therapeutic Meditation Process™ (TMP)

The Therapeutic Meditation Process™ (TMP) includes six areas of self-connection and four main tools to support you to connect with, and accept, all of the six self-connection areas on a daily basis.

The Self-Connection Areas:

- 1. Desires.** What you focus on grows. Every day you can choose to focus on what you desire to do, have, and be, rather than on what is not working in your life. What do you desire in all seven areas of your life—self, health, love and relationships, spirituality, passions, money and material goods, and purpose? Focus on them daily with ease while believing you deserve it ALL, and in divine time you will receive it, or the “OR BETTER” version.
- 2. Breath.** Your breath is a barometer, always letting you know how you are feeling mentally and emotionally. It is also a powerful tool to relax the body and mind.
- 3. Body and Feelings.** Connecting with and accepting your body and its feelings is important, as it is also a barometer that lets you know when you are in or out of balance in your life. When the body has negative feelings or symptoms it is letting

Connect With The Divine You

you know that you are out of alignment or balance in one or more areas of your life.

Learn the basics of mind-body healing philosophy, and how to understand the messages your body is giving you, so you can heal and be healthy and happy.

4. **Emotions.** Perhaps, like most people, you have been taught to ignore or stuff your emotions. On the flip side, perhaps you get stuck in your emotions, letting them consume you and keep you from taking action. Learn to acknowledge, accept, feel, and release your emotions in healthy ways to heal and maintain your health.
5. **Thoughts and Beliefs.** What we think and believe about ourselves, our health, love, money, work, etc., creates our reality. Most of the time we are not even aware of our thoughts in these areas. Discover your self-limiting thoughts and beliefs and learn tools to accept and shift them to receive what you desire in all areas of your life.
6. **“Something Bigger” (SB).** Not being fully connected to our “Something Bigger” (Universe, God, Nature, etc.), and believing we are all alone—or are only able to receive guidance and support for some things and not *all* things—causes a lot of stress, anxiety and, eventually, illness.

I will be diving into each of these areas in more detail in the following chapters of this book. Get ready!

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The Self-Connection Tools

Here are the tools I believe you need to use in order to connect with and heal your self:

- 1. Mind-Body Healing Philosophy**—Mind-body healing philosophy looks at the underlying emotional and mental causes of physical symptoms in the body—including pain, excessive or insufficient weight, and illness.
- 2. Reflection and Journaling/Writing**— Journaling questions and writing exercises help you to build self-awareness and acceptance, understand and release negative emotions, and uncover patterns or beliefs that are holding you back from making positive life changes and healing.
- 3. Guided Meditation Practices**—Guided meditation practices include all the above areas of self-connection. These practices are very nurturing, restful, and can be done in any position: lying down, seated, standing or moving. It is even okay if you fall asleep, drift in and out, and don't hear a word, as they work on both a conscious and a subconscious level. You can find a sample guided TMP practice to start using at:
www.tanyapenny.com/cdy.

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4. Other Tools and Daily Practices—Through my own experiences and healing journey, I have created other daily practices and tips that I will be sharing with you in this book, so you can fully connect, accept, and heal.

As we move through the following chapters on all of the self-connection areas, I will be incorporating these tools for you to use so you can connect with the Divine You each and every day to cultivate more health, peace, and happiness...just like me!

Okay! Let's dive in!!!

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The Self-Connection Process: A Client Connection

Belinda's Story

Belinda had previously had a bout with thyroid cancer and she knew she needed to make some changes in her life so that she didn't get it—or any other chronic illness—again.

Why She Came to See Me

Belinda found me through a free live virtual class I was hosting. She wanted to heal her anxiety, brain fog, fatigue, and increase her self-confidence, so she could be more successful in her business. As a wife and the mother of two adult children, she knew she had a hard time setting and keeping boundaries with her family, as well as with other people in her extended family. The over-giving of her time and energy kept her from having the time to focus on her desires.

How We Worked Together

Belinda and I decided that the best way for us to work together was in private sessions on the phone, as well as in the virtual group program I was running for business owners. We met one or two times a month for 12 sessions, and she also participated in the live group classes in the business program.

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The Issue at the Heart of the Matter

Through our sessions and in using the tools of the process to reflect, Belinda began to see all the ways she had become disconnected from her true self, and how the symptoms she had were at the root of this. Belinda was the youngest child in her family and, as she had grown up, she hadn't felt like she belonged. She had stepped into the role of the fixer or mediator to get attention, love and acceptance. Now, as an adult, when people had problems, or issues arose between family members, she felt responsible for helping them to sort it all out. If she didn't, she felt guilty, and worried that they wouldn't like her. And if she tried to help them, but couldn't, she also felt like she was not good enough and that the problem was all her fault.

Belinda's parents had had a rocky marriage and she had witnessed her dad being abusive to her mother. They divorced when Belinda was seven years old. She didn't see her dad very much and, when she did, he would drink and not be emotionally present with her. This also added to her feelings of unworthiness. It wasn't surprising that she married a man who also drank, and was emotionally unavailable, and that she stuffed how she felt and what she wanted in order to please him, so she wouldn't get abused or be abandoned. At least he was physically present for her, unlike her father had been. As we continued to work together, Belinda realized how much anger had arisen as a result of her stuffing who she was and what she desired.

Belinda had a harsh inner critic who beat her up for not being good enough, and also made her feel anxious with all the pressure it was putting on her to do everything perfectly. This negative self-talk was caused by not feeling accepted, lovable or worthy growing up. This perfection part of her was also holding her back in her business. If she didn't feel good enough, or worthy, then how could she help others?

Connect With The Divine You

She realized these unhealthy patterns of perfection, doing to please others, plus trying to be Superwoman and fix other's problems needed to change so she could make time for herself, heal, and have the confidence to support others to heal too. Over the course of our time together, Belinda began taking time to connect with and accept all parts of herself daily through reflecting, journaling, and using guided therapeutic meditation practices. She also used these tools to continue to reflect on her past and how it had contributed to her current health issues.

Belinda used the process to help her to understand the messages her body was giving her, acknowledge, feel and release emotions of anxiety, insecurity, anger and grief, and shift the beliefs that were keeping her stuck in her unhealthy patterns: "I can't express what I desire, I have to do it perfectly, I'm responsible for fixing others' problems." The goal was to plant new beliefs and desires: "It's safe to speak my truth, I'm not responsible for others' problems or lives, I'm lovable and worthy no matter what I do." And, also, to connect with Something Bigger to feel safe and supported.

Belinda started expressing what she wanted and how she felt with her husband. She began setting boundaries with family members, so she had more time and energy to heal and get clear on what she desired in her life.

Implications and Results

After working together for a year, Belinda's brain fog completely dissolved. Her negative self-talk decreased, and she was feeling less anxious, more worthy and confident. Her energy returned, and her thyroid numbers were good, with no sign of cancer returning.

Connect With The Divine You

She is expressing more of who she is with everyone in her life and feels she has a healthy balance of supporting others while focusing on her desires. She doesn't get sucked up in family drama anymore and lets them all fix their own problems. She also just completed the Therapeutic Meditation Process Teacher Certification and plans to weave it into her business, so she can teach it to others.

In Belinda's Own Words:

I'm so grateful that I found Tanya and decided to invest in working with her. Learning the Therapeutic Meditation Process and coaching with Tanya has proved invaluable. I feel healthy, clear and energized. I feel I am making the changes I need to make so that cancer will not return. I am finally living my life for me and expressing who I am with confidence. I love and trust myself more than I ever could've imagined. I'm now excited to teach this life-changing process to others. Thank you, Tanya Penny! – Belinda