

Time to Reflect



A HIGH HOLIDAYS-INSPIRED WORKBOOK (FOR GROWN UPS)

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A PUBLICATION OF

CUSTOM & CRAFT

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*Sometimes the most important thing
in a whole day is the rest we take
between two deep breaths.*

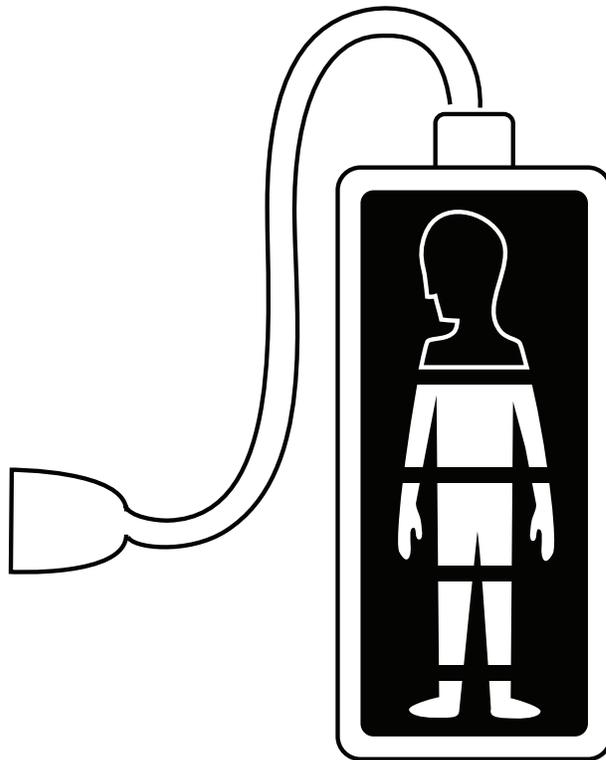
– ETTY HILLESUM

Welcome

Welcome! This is your very special, super personal, High Holiday workbook. It's filled with goodies for you to do your own reflection and intention-setting for this new year, but it's also great for bringing to the dinner table, reading aloud to your friends and frenemies, and we want you to feel very free to scribble notes and thoughts and use this to prepare and process the holidays. They're on the calendar and you might not ever take time out of your year to think about forgiveness and alignment and just how sweet honey tastes, so you might as well do the work... in this workbook.

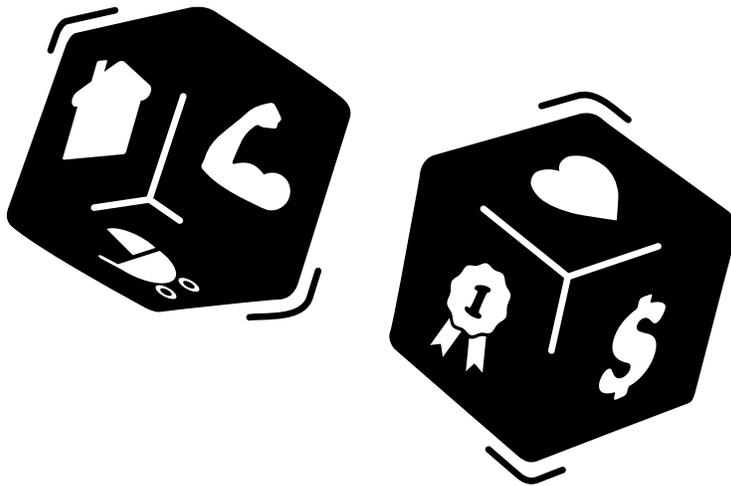
Whether you're reading it on the subway, during your lunchbreak, or you've carved out time to sit and ponder your life, past, present, and future, we are thrilled that you're on this High Holiday adventure of meaning with us.

PS - This workbook can also be a coloring book! Break out your colored pencils!



HHD QUIZ

*What should
my New Year's
resolutions be
about?*



You are seriously getting into the High Holiday frame of mind and prepping for this new year. You are reflecting and resolving and teshuva-ing (returning). It can be a little overwhelming. How do you know what to prioritize? Where should you focus? What are the next steps to creating your next best year? Take this quiz to find out!

1. It's Sunday night, you're thinking about how

- a) tomorrow is Monday, and you have to go to work. Boo!
- b) you spent the entire weekend by yourself, and are looking forward to tomorrow's human interaction
- c) your checking account is draining and you need to watch your spending starting tomorrow
- d) the weekend didn't meet your expectations and maybe next week will be better

2. If you won the lottery, you would

- a) quit your job and travel around the world
- b) finally get a gym membership, a therapist, and a professional matchmaker
- c) pay off your student loans and credit cards
- d) give to charities and invest it wisely (including some presents for yourself)

3. If you could describe how you'd like to feel this next year, it would be

- a) fulfilled and on your way to a successful career
- b) loved and in a hot and healthy relationship
- c) rich, in money
- d) inspired, engaged, happy, #blessed

4. Who would you most want to have dinner with?

- a) Lebron James
- b) Beyonce
- c) Warren Buffett
- d) Dalai Lama

5. When you close your eyes, what color do you see?

- a) white, the color of pressed shirts and printer paper
- b) red, the color of passion and love
- c) green, the color of money, obv
- d) blue, the color of summer skies

6. When you talk to your best friend (or your mom) what are you usually complaining about?

- a) your boss
- b) your lovelife
- c) your bank account
- d) your stress level

7. What are you most likely to find in your pockets?

- a) business cards
- b) napkins with phone numbers written on them
- c) loose change
- d) glitter



If you answered mostly A's...

Consciously or unconsciously, your mind is on your career. This can be awesome and lead you to flowcharting your success and getting you to where you want to be. This focus can also be consuming and prevent you from actually being in the present tense and enjoying your life in the right now. It's up to you, and now is the perfect time to set your intentions.

Spend a few moments thinking about where you want to be career-wise at this time next year. What are the steps to get there? Do you need to go back to school? Talk to your boss or mentors? Apply for new jobs or ask for a promotion? Maybe you need to explore and read and spend some time just thinking and dreaming about your next steps? In any case, calendar it! Put a few deadlines on your calendar over the next few months- and use those calendar check-ins to do just that. Check-in with yourself regularly and see where you are on your career path. No judgements, just notice and if necessary, practice teshuvah - return to your path, read - just and realign yourself with your intentions. Remember this advice by Gloria Steinem: **"Dreaming, after all, is a form of planning."** Dream big, worker bee!

If you answered mostly B's...

Love, love, love. This is your year to find, deepen, and cultivate love. That could be with your partner, with new people, and/or with yourself. Now is the time to fill yourself up to the brim with love. Good news: you have an unending supply at your fingertips. Start infusing all of your actions with love. When you write an email, read it over, then double the love, hit send. Before you communicate, choose your words carefully and ask yourself, "am I saying this with my whole heart?" What other ways can you pour love into the world? (Guarantee: it will boomerang back to you, magnified).

What's been holding you back? Fear? What can you do to be brave? Keep this as your new year mantra: **"Everything you have ever wanted is on the other side of fear"** (George Addair). Now's the time, honey. Don't hold back, be your beautiful and brilliant self, jump in to your new love life. Mwah!

If you answered mostly C's...

This probably won't surprise you, but your focus is on money. This can go in a few directions: you can feel like you're lacking, hold on tightly to what you've got, and worry about the future; you can get serious about your finances, get help from an advisor, and create a plan to your own financial sustainability; you can focus on more more more and get caught up in the hamster wheel of never having enough. There are probably other, healthier options, too, but these are the most common. Doesn't that middle one sound good? Wouldn't it be nice to not worry about money all the time? The answer is yes.

You know what's the coolest part of focusing on money? It's not really about money at all! Spending time thinking about money, setting intentions regarding money, and focusing on the numbers in your bank account are just symbols. What's really going on is that you're thinking about security, stability, and craving more. Do yourself a favor and read Lynne Twist's book, *The Soul of Money*, this year. Keep this Melody Beattie quote in mind: **"[Gratitude] turns what we have into enough, and more."** Wishing you a year of abundance!

If you answered mostly D's...

This year, your focus should be on happiness. You might be a super happy sunflower already, in which case, your job is to deepen your joy and work to bring happiness to others (which will increase your own, as a nifty side effect). If you're wanting more happiness in your life, we've got your back, too. There are a few simple, tried and true, happiness shortcuts. Go ahead: spend time outside, say thank you, meditate or at least take a few conscious breaths, spend time with people who are contagiously happy, help someone(s), smile, learn something new, and skip somewhere (seriously, it works).

The great rebbe Lucille Ball once said, **"It's a helluva start, being able to recognize what makes you happy."** And it's great advice. Let's start there, in this new year: think of all of the things that make you happy. What's already working? How do you grow from there? For example, being in nature makes you happy. Great! How can you make more time to be in nature this year? Okay, that's where you start (where you are). Now, you can also think about what would make you happy in the future? How do you fit that in? Plant the seeds of happiness in your day, life, calendar, and watch them grow. Hakuna matata!



*You are wherever
your thoughts are.*

*Make sure your
thoughts are where
you want to be.*

– Rebbe Nachman

A Writing Meditation

The tradition of examining our lives during the High Holy Days is called *Cheshbon HaNefesh* (חשבון הנפש), or “Accounting of the Soul”. Use this writing meditation worksheet to take time to be fully present, deeply reflect on this past year, and look forward to the year that’s just starting. Let’s do some accounting.

Instructions:

Take a deep breath. Close your eyes. Take a full breath. Check in with your body, and ask yourself “what does it feel like to breathe?” and return to the physicality of your breath. Become aware of how your breath comes and goes, how your lungs fill and empty, your belly rises and falls.

Use the questions to the next page to guide your own spiritual accounting practice. Take your time and give yourself the gift of writing honestly. This is your practice, your life, and your opportunity to bring your full self to this process.

When your attention inevitably wanders away from this page, on your next inhale, gently bring yourself back to this moment. Practice teshuvah and return. Return to this paper in your hands.

The Questions

- *Reflecting on this past year, what do I regret? What am I most proud of?*
- *How did I spend my resources (time, money, energy, etc) in ways that reflect my best self?*
- *In this moment, from whom must I ask forgiveness?*
- *To whom must I offer my forgiveness (regardless of outcome)?*
- *Looking forward, how can I let go of what I don’t need from this past year?*
- *What do I want to practice, seek, or commit myself to this year?*

May we all be blessed with a sweet and meaningful new year.

Write your innermost thoughts here... (This is a safe space.)

Psalm 27

In the days prior to Rosh Hashanah, throughout the Hebrew month of Elul, it is traditional for Jews to add Psalm 27 to their daily prayers. Here's a contemporary translation by Norman Fischer from his book, *Opening to You: Zen-Inspired Translations of the Psalms*

You are my light and my help
 Whom should I fear?
 You are the fortress of my life
 Whom should I dread?
 When the narrow ones gather their strength to
 devour me
 It is they who stumble and fall
 Even if a royal army were camped outside my gate
 My heart would not fear
 And when they struck with terrible weapons
 against me
 Even then I'd trust

One thing I ask for, one thing I hope--
 To live in your house
 All the days of my life
 To behold your loveliness
 Every morning in the light of your temple
 dawn

Till on a doomful day
 You secure me in your precincts
 Conceal me within the folds of your covering tent
 Place me high and safe upon a rock
 My head lifted above the engulfing waves

With the joy of my heart
 I will sacrifice
 Within that billowing shelter
 Singing and playing my abandonment to you

Hear my voice when I raise it up
 Be gracious--answer me--
 Speaking with your voice my heart sang,
 Seek my presence

I will

Do not hide your glowing face from me
 Do not reject me in anger because of my shortcomings
 You have always been for me
 Don't cast me off now, don't walk away
 My helper, my friend

My mother and father forsake me
 But you take me up
 Show me the way!
 Guide my steps on the clear path
 Against the ever-present cliffs and thickets
 Protect me from the noise of desire and hatefulness
 From false words and shouted accusations

If I did not have faith in your rightness
 That it would bloom in this living land--
 It is unthinkable

I wait only for you
 With strength and good courage--

I wait only for you



*You can only
express in words
what words are
capable of
expressing.*

– Gerhard Richter

PRACTICING FORGIVENESS

by Alison Laichter

For me, preparing for the High Holy Days, Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, usually involves a lot of time contemplating and meditating (literally) on forgiveness. It's a touchy subject, forgiveness. I think because it's scary- it can be unbearable to feel responsible for the suffering of others, and it's also frightening to allow ourselves to be vulnerable enough to open our heart and forgive someone who has hurt us. I think this is true for forgiving yourself and even God, too.

Recently, I realized that asking for forgiveness and offering forgiveness is kind of the same thing. What I mean is that acting unskillfully, hurting someone, whether directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, usually stems from a place of fear and hurt inside ourselves. In order to inhabit our full culpability and truly ask for forgiveness, we have to see our own pain and hold our own broken hearts. And this is exactly what we're doing when we forgive someone who has hurt us.

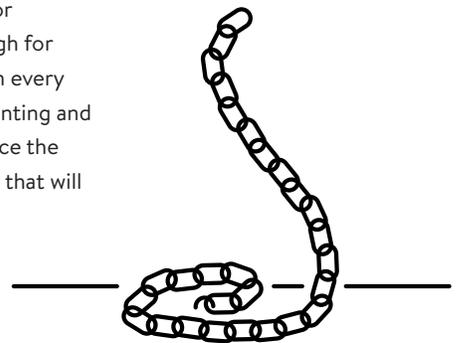
In this time leading up to the High Holidays, it's a common practice to go to our loved ones and not-so-loved ones and ask for forgiveness for any misdeeds or mistakes we might have made in the past year. It's a beautiful practice, humbling and powerful. I'd like to add on that we do the same practice with ourselves.

Here, it will only take a few seconds:

As you sit at your computer, deepen your breath. Imagine a time in the past year that you acted unskillfully. Allow yourself to feel that weight of responsibility. Think to yourself, "if I in any way was a cause of suffering, whether consciously or unconsciously, I ask for forgiveness." Now, in your mind, conjure up a time in the past year where you have felt hurt. Again, allow yourself to fully inhabit the feelings that arise. Say to yourself, "if I have been harmed, whether consciously or unconsciously, I offer my forgiveness." With your next inhale, feel or imagine receiving forgiveness. You can say to yourself, "Breathing in, I'm forgiven." On your next exhale, offer your forgiveness. "Breathing out, I forgive." Keep this going as you breath in and out, receiving and offering forgiveness, completing each cycle of breath with your own cycle of forgiveness. Offering and receiving, breathing in and breathing out.

This can be a practice for the real thing of forgiving someone or asking someone for forgiveness. Or, maybe just doing this practice in your own heart and mind is enough for now. In any case, especially now, when they say the gates to heaven are open, when every prayer and good deed counts, when we're tasked with doing serious spiritual accounting and returning to our best selves, practice forgiveness. With each breath, we can embrace the possibilities of forgiveness, returning (teshuvah), and the inevitable transformation that will happen because it just can't not.

L'shana tova, to a good year.



A VEGETARIAN TESHUVAH

by Alison Laichter

As the High Holidays approach, I've been thinking about how we're in this preparatory period, the month of Elul, leading to Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, and it's so much work! This time is all about teshuvah, which means "to return," to God, to ourselves, to each other, to the kind of life we want to live. It's intense.

Before I learned about the month of Elul and about the wind up to the High Holidays that includes time for reflection, accounting of the soul (cheshbon hanefesh), offering and asking for forgiveness, evaluating our missteps and recalibrating our aim, I was always struck by how insane it is to show up to synagogue (for many, the only time during the whole year) and try to cram all of this soul searching and prayer and thoughts about life and death into a few hours, communally. Most of us read from a book that often doesn't speak our language and doesn't feel relevant. The whole process used to feel lacking. I wanted to believe. I wanted to feel something.

And I never did.

For the past few years, I've made it my work to mine my tradition for meaning. A few years ago I read everything I could find about preparing for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, traditional and not, and the practice of kapparot kept popping up. If, like me, you have never heard of it, I'll explain: the day before Yom Kippur people used to (and apparently lots of people still do in Israel and even in certain areas of Brooklyn) take a live chicken, swing it around their head, and offer it to God in exchange for their own lives, sort of a sacrificial atonement, another kind of scapegoat. After this, the chicken is slaughtered and given to a poor family for their pre-fast Yom Kippur meal.

After reading about this, I started doing some research because I was horrified by my own visions of screeching chickens, blood and feathers. I knew this wasn't a practice I would ever do, and I veer toward metaphor when it comes to sacrifices, in general. In my search for more information, I heard a great story. I can't find a source anywhere, so I'll just write it as I remember it:

A young student also wants to learn more about kapparot. He goes to the chief rabbi and asks to watch him perform the ritual, because although he's heard of it, he's never seen it done before. "I'm so honored that you want to see me practice this mitzvah," says the rabbi, "but to tell you the truth, my practice of kapparot is not that exciting. You should really go see the innkeeper do it."

The student goes to the innkeeper's house the day before Yom Kippur and finds the innkeeper sitting in a chair in front of his fireplace. On the table in front of him are two tattered notebooks, each labeled "book of repentance." The innkeeper opens the first book. He reads it carefully out loud, and begins to weep. The book is filled with mistakes and misdeeds that

he committed in the past year. After he finishes reading from the now tear-soaked pages, he swings the book around his head and tosses it into the fire.

He takes a deep breath and picks up the second notebook. The ritual repeats, with him weeping and reading. This time, he reads an even longer list. And this time, he's reading all of the mistakes and misdeeds that God had committed in the past year. After reading this list out loud, he continues to cry, and he swings the notebook around his head and throws it into the fire.

Pretty good, minus the chickens, right? I got excited about this story, because this is personal. I love that the rabbi in the story recognized and shared with his student the power of personal prayer, individual spiritual practice and truly heartfelt work. It's a nice reminder that there's no "right" way to return, to repent, to practice.

Also, this story speaks directly to the fact that we're not alone in this hard work of returning and repenting. In a poem that I reread all the time ("Gods Change, Prayers are Here to Stay"), Yehudah Amichai writes that "even solitary prayer takes two," and it makes sense to me that personal atonement is only part of the whole of teshuvah.

Maybe returning to ourselves isn't quite complete without acknowledging our own disappointments and sadness about the world, in God, about things that were not even our responsibility. When we fully feel that broken-heartedness, let ourselves inhabit that place of disappointment and sorrow, voice it, swing it above our head, and then let it go, something opens up.

If we can recognize that all of this pain is not ours to hold alone, we figure out that we're in a partnership within ourselves, with other people, and with God. This knowing that we're working together to realign and find our place in the world alongside everyone else who's doing the same thing can be a comfort. The ritual of kapparot is bizarre and interesting, and the innkeeper's method is a sweet reminder that we can do it our own ways, too. This year, I'm going to sit quietly and reflect on the past year. I'm going to write my own lists, and maybe weep, and then I'm going to swing them above my head, and then let them go. I don't have a fireplace, so my version will probably include the recycle bin, which feels like a good teshuvah.





*We either make ourselves miserable
or we make ourselves strong.
The amount of work is the same.*

– Carlos Castaneda

Let's Confess

The traditional confessional prayer, the *Vidui*, is composed of two parts, the *Ashamnu* and the *Al Chet*, that we read aloud on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. The *Ashamnu* (translated as “we have trespassed” or “we are guilty”) is an abbreviated confession, an alphabetic acrostic, and written in first person plural. We recite this confessional in the plural to represent our shared responsibility and culpability in all of our lives and missteps. We also share this confessional as a reminder that forgiveness is also shared.

Use the modern interpretation of the *Ashamnu* below using the English alphabet and add in your missteps for each letter of the alphabet:

We have behaved **arrogantly**, _____

We have **betrayed** ourselves and our families, _____

We have acted out of **contempt**, _____

We have been **dishonest**, _____

We have **erred** out of ignorance, _____

We have **forgotten** who we are, _____

We have **gossiped**, _____

We have been **hypocritical**, _____

We have been **insensitive**, _____

We have **justified** bad decisions, _____

We have **killed** our impulse to do good, _____

We have **looked** the other way, _____

We have been **mean**, _____

We have been **neglectful**, _____

We have acted **out of fear** instead of love, _____

We have **pushed** too much, _____

We have been **quiet** when we should have spoken up, _____

We have been **rageful**, _____

We have **stolen**, _____

We have **tried to teach** when we should have tried to learn, _____

We have been **untrue**, _____

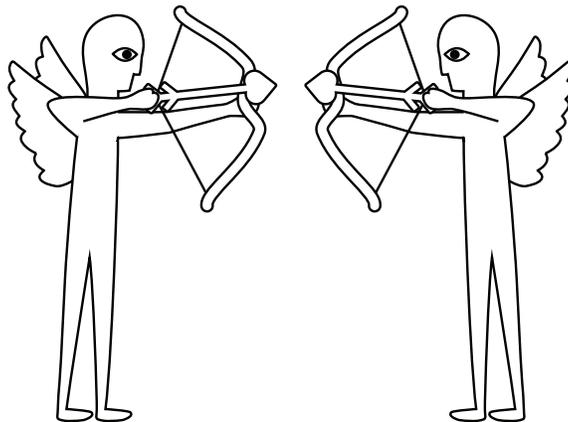
We have behaved **violently**, _____

We have **withheld** that which could have been given freely, _____

We have held others to **unrealistic expectations**, _____

We have **yielded** instead of moving forward, _____

We have **zoomed too narrowly** into challenges, _____



Forgive Yourself!

YOU DESERVE A BREAK, TOO

Sometimes the hardest person to forgive is your own self. So why not write yourself an apology?

We thought we'd give you a space to make a note to yourself asking forgiveness.

Maybe you can stop beating yourself up over whatever it is that you did this year, ok?

..... Please accept my apology



And see more apologies at:
customandcraft.org/blog/the-apologies-exchange



Watch with glittering eyes the whole world around you, because the greatest secrets are always hidden in the most unlikely places. Those who don't believe in the magic will never find it!

– Roald Dahl