

s l o w d o w n



a year of slow living with nabalo + friends



“Adopt the pace of nature. Her secret is patience.”

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

January - *Brianne Dela Cruz*

If the earth laughs in flowers, then it surely dreams in snow. On the first dark moon of the new year, that's where you'll find me - dreaming and conceiving intentions in my greenhouse for another slow and seasonal year.

New Snow Moon Themes & Energetics | January 21st, 2023

The new snow moon marks the beginning of this lunation where themes of dreaming, conception, and intuitive creativity are whispered from the landscape. The snow moon is named after the raging winter storms that often occur in this month. The energy in the winter landscape is both in the tumultuous clouds above and in the dank earth below. When creatures sleep, their bodies lay still and restful, yet life flourishes vibrantly in the ether of their dream world. Physical laws of reality are abandoned in dreamscapes, giving way to unbound creative possibility. During the snow moon cycle, the earth is in this dream phase.

As the snow moon waxes into full, the dream world fades and the energy in nature grows into an expectant phase; a period akin to a just-showing pregnancy. What was conceived during the restful and creative dreamtime is now planted as a seed and growing. While it's not obvious because winter storms abound, the first signs of spring are beginning to reveal themselves in the earliest buds forming on trees.

This moon cycle is potent with the swelling energy of the earth, which offers us the perfect opportunity to practice rituals that enhance intuition and support creative energy through lucid dreaming. This is a new moon to dream, set intentions, and put plans to paper so we can soon birth our freshly conceived ideas, projects, and goals into full form in the season ahead.

My slow and seasonal living rituals during this lunation involve crafting elixirs with the mugwort plant to induce dreaming, journaling my dreams, reading my tarot cards on the dark moon, and setting intentions based on what I conceive during my dream time. Mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*) is a plant used by herbalists for centuries as a dream inducing herb. Not only does mugwort induce lucid dreaming, but also daydreaming, creative conception, and it enhances dream recall. Mugwort is considered to be ruled by the moon, making it a potent herb to craft with and consume during the rising energy of a lunar phase rooted in themes of dreaming, conception, creativity, and intuition. In addition to these amazing effects, it's also highly nourishing to the nervous, digestive, and reproductive systems, which fascinatingly are biological systems that directly impact cognitive health.

January - Brianne Dela Cruz

Slow & Seasonal Rituals for the New Snow

Moon

I'm sharing 3 of my favorite rituals to practice on this new snow moon to slow down and synchronize with the seasonal energy of the earth.

- Make a sleep sachet of dried mugwort leaves to place under your pillow to induce dreamtime. This is a beautiful ritual if you're just beginning to craft with this plant. Mugwort is powerfully effective, and can sometimes be overwhelming for highly sensitive people. This is a ritual that can initiate lucid dreaming so the dreamer can unearth narratives present in their subconscious mind and gain a sense of creative control. I consider this ritual to be a gentle precursor to setting clear intentions for the year ahead, especially for folks who don't care to drink herbal mugwort tea. However, I myself am a Highly Sensitive Person and I love the powerful effects of mugwort this time of year, so I combine this ritual with the others.
- Keep a dream journal next to your bed and handy throughout the day. When goals, dreams, and new ideas are swirling around my head this time of year, journaling is a wonderful way to capture new ideas before planning takes place. Dream journaling is also a rewarding experience during a time when our inner landscapes are flourishing because it can help us organize our thoughts and understand our dreams. Our best ideas and intuitions come to us when we're at ease, so keeping a notebook close is a great way to capture those brilliant ideas before they slip away.
- Drink mugwort tea and journal your intentions for the year. On the new moon I love to carve out time to embrace the still quietness of nature and set intentions for the future. Drinking mugwort or dream tea, reading my tarot cards, and journaling my intentions for the year helps me get clear on my path and priorities. I ask myself probing questions and consider my greatest needs for my body and soul. With one or two intentions conceived in this ritual, I can easily develop my action plan to birth my new ideas into reality in the season ahead.

February - Elizabeth Reynolds McGuire

To be honest, I think that February is the toughest month of the year. I am certain that it has to do with the fact that it is a deeply transitional month, a portal you might say, from winter to spring. And while many people find much joy and hope and excitement in the coming spring energy, I find it hard to say goodbye to the dreamy, mystical energy of winter. I am a contemplative old soul, more suited to the dark, earthy energy of autumn and winter. I love the process of slowing down, turning inward, and coming home. And, to me, February signals the end of this inner, mystical time of the year. Instead, it invites and calls me to begin to leave winter behind and to release all of that deep, inward, resting energy. Now, it is time to open my eyes, to begin to move my stiff bones, to open my windows, to set my bare feet on the ground, to emerge from my cocoon, and to slowly rise to life again. But, I'm not ready to.

Let me be clear, though. I do actually love the light and the beauty of spring and summer. The carefree, hopeful energy inspires me. However, my soul truly thrives in the quiet, reflective, deep wisdom of the darker seasons. So, year after year, I find it hard to leave it behind.

However, years ago, I began to truly live in rhythm with nature, aligning my everyday life with the energy of the seasons and following the phases of the moon; and that means that, like it or not, the seasons change, and so must I.

Now, February's new moon is here once again, welcoming me to flow with the transitional, quickening energy that is swirling all around. And, while I accept and love the changing of the seasons, it doesn't mean that I find it easy.

The medicine of the earth.

February's new moon is also known as the worm moon because of the waking, transitioning energy in the air. Slow, quietly, silently nature is stirring. The earth is thawing, buzzing, stretching. Roots send new energy upward to plants, sap begins rising and slowly flowing, snowdrops peek out from the hard, cold ground, light returns as the days grow noticeably longer, birds begin to share their morning songs, and the worms and bugs silently wiggle and wake in the soil. The first signs of the coming spring are emerging. The new moon of February is the third and last new moon of winter. Spring is well on its way now. This is the time of the quiet dark before dawn. It's unmistakable how magical and breathtaking it is.

However, this new moon is also a clear end to the winter season. It is time for me to find closure, to release the seasons that I love the most, and to welcome in a new beginning. It is the perfect month for me to prepare for March's new moon, which ushers in the spring equinox and marks the first day of the light half of the year.

February - Elizabeth Reynolds McGuire

The medicine of the new moon.

Of course, all new moons are new beginnings. For me, each new moon is a time to mark the passage of time and the turning of the seasons. New moons occur once a month and mark the phases that the moon goes through as she orbits earth. During the new moon phase all is dark. The night sky may be full of stars, but no moon is visible. It is often seen as a magical, cosmic time representing new beginnings. A clean slate. A time to set intentions and, if you wish, to engage in some rituals.

As I follow the rhythms of nature, I take each new moon as it comes. I choose how I want to celebrate (or not) each new moon. Sometimes I meditate, sometimes simply walk or stand under the night sky, sometimes I do nothing at all, sometimes I journal, sometimes I light candles + pull cards. On a rare occasion I take a ritual shower, focusing on the cleansing and washing away of the old to welcome in the new. But, no matter how I choose to celebrate and tap into the energy of the new moon, I always take a moment to simply recognize the shifting of the phases, the turning of the earth, the orbit of the moon, and the ever-changing and evolving of the seasons.

And this February new moon invites me to recognize the uncomfortableness I feel with the changing of the seasons during this time of the year.

She is a clear sign that it is time to drop into the ever-flowing energy of the seasons, to move on, to begin to wake, and to prepare for something new.

So, I do my best to settle into the flow of February's new moon cycle. It is a messy cycle, moving back and forth between unsettling energy and invigorating energy. Shifting between cold, windy, dreary late winter days to bright, sunny, warm early spring days. The transition is tough. It is slow, random, irritating, and all over the place. But it is also a slow, organic, perfectly imperfect unfolding. The question is, am I able to really drop into the flow or will I fight it? Can I accept the messiness, stay present in the energy of each moment as it passes, and move forward?

I think that somehow the waking, rising energetic transition of February tricks me into thinking that things have to speed up and become hyper-active with the arrival of spring in March. And my quiet, contemplative soul wants to keep things slow and intentional. I want to stay grounded, rhythmic, present. But, even as I write this, I feel February's new moon whispering to me that waking and rising does not mean that I have to throw off the warm bed covers, shock my system into wide-eyed alertness, and then burst out into the new spring and summer days, rushing from one thing to the next. I am not intended to lose my grounding or presence. Nature never hurries. Nor do I ever need to.

February - Elizabeth Reynolds McGuire

Wisdom, mindfulness, and slow living.

This new moon cycle is my opportunity to learn to keep it slow - even as the energy builds. And that is where the magic is. That is what magic is. The magic of the moon cycles is the fact that life is ever changing, evolving, and transforming. The seasons continue their cycles and rhythms.

And right in the middle of it all are the moments that touch my heart and inspire my soul. The moon cycles are simply there to help me slow down, gain perspective, and remember that all of life - every single little stardust in you and in me and in everyone - is part of this divine, sacred cycle of life. Just as the moon cycles faithfully continue, so do we also cycle through life. We learn, grow, make mistakes, learn some more, surrender, die, find wisdom in the dark - and then start the process all over again.

It's how we learn. How we evolve. How we mature and transform and change and become more and more our true selves. Align. Fall out of alignment. Rebalance and realign. And do it all over again. Reaching higher and higher, and deeper and deeper with every learning cycle we experience.

This is the flow of the moon cycles. This is the flow of the seasons. This is the flow of the universe. And this is the flow of our lives.

So, as we mark February's worm moon and the shifting of the seasons, find some time, if you want, to pause. Look up. Breathe deep. Feel the energy rising. And then allow yourself to very slowly begin to wake and wiggle, like those little earthworms that begin to emerge as a signal that life cycles on.

*Let it be our deepest intention
under this new moon to
embrace the dark before
dawn. To fall into rhythm
with the moon, the sun, the
earth, the plants, and the
animals as we welcome the
new day that is slowly,
quietly dawning.*

slow down



March - Ashley York

Slowing down doesn't come easy to me. I am hardwired to always be doing. Working. Going. Seeing. Doing. Thinking. Something. Anything. Part of it this stems a lot from the airy and mercurial influence in my natal chart and another part is the societal capitalistic programming of production for commoditization. I'm an 80s/90s kid. I grew up in a technology boom. A toy boom. I came from boomers. "Get good grades, go to college, work hard, buy that big house, and have a family with a solid foundation." That program. Does it sound familiar? That was the American dream. But it also wasn't ever my reality growing up.

The reality was that my mom worked her ass off and so did my dad when he was sober enough. Don't get me wrong, my dad was my best friend. But he was an alcoholic. It sometimes make me cringe saying that in his death because I had a hard time admitting it to people while he was alive. Learning to manage the emotions of two adults and liaise between them and trying to pacify every tense situation surely lent itself to my adult programming. I see it playing out in my adult life and I've been working for a long time to peel back the layers and in a lot of ways, I'm proud of my progress. But also in a lot of ways, this programming has a way of repeating even when I thought I've learned to deal with it better. It's insidious. It doesn't go away. Our roots don't go away, but we can amend the soil and make them stronger and healthier, so to speak.

So how did I really learn to slow down and learn the importance of rest?

Well, the pandemic, for one thing. When you're holed up in your walls for over two years, you really have no choice but to do some deep introspective thinking. I didn't have a chance to constantly go, see, do, repeat. I did have the chance to re-build a garden and to really absorb the metaphor of planting seeds and composting. Plant good seeds, reap what you sow, compost the waste. Or so it goes. Eventually, I did go back to work because I found myself in my head too much and it wasn't healthy.

During that time, I also decided to really cultivate a solid yoga practice. People would ask me if I was a yogi before this. My answer was always obviously "no." because trying a bunch at home and never really finishing a flow didn't count.

I became a yogi the second my first instructor walked into class and read a passage about the student finding their way to the mat much like the adage, 'when the student is ready, the teacher appears.' I cried my way through the entire class and knew that I was exactly where I was supposed to be. I became a yogi that moment when I decided to commit to the practice and to its teachings.

March - Ashley York

Slowing down is an art. Just like yoga. It's a discipline. Just like yoga. Yoga and meditation has really taught me how to go inward and slow down. It's taught me how to find balance in the middle of chaos (though sometimes I still forget and lose my temper.) This is being human. Yoga, meditation, and reiki have taught me how to be curious about so many things, including my perception, without the negative loops. Without the narratives that play out that aren't real or the ones that disrupt my peace.

On this new moon, I would like to invite whoever finds this, to plant a seed. Plant your intention and cultivate it. I invite you to slow down and to pay attention. I invite you to watch this beautiful seed grow.

It might be 28 days from now you notice something beautiful. A month, a year, ten?

Some things take time but if we can slow down enough, we can appreciate being right here, right now. This moment is all we are guaranteed. But if you notice something beautiful to harvest a month, year, ten years from now - nice job, you're doing your work! And if you've wondered whether or not yoga is for you, I ask, why not? If you try and it's not for you, it might not be for you.

Slowing down is not just a physical process. It's also a mental or internal process. It's a surrender.

Where can you let go?

Where can you take a moment to pause?

April - Jess Buttermore

A Moon Rooted in History

Today, Thursday, April 20, 2023, marks the beginning of May's full moon lunar cycle, the Flower Moon, which reaches its peak on Friday, May 5, 2023. It was named by the Ojibwe tribes of the Great Lakes for its timing, rising when flowers are beginning to bloom and blossom across the Northern Hemisphere. The Flower Moon is considered a sign of health and rejuvenation because many medicinal herbs grow during this time too. For many of us the Flower Moon is, quite fittingly, also the time when the last frosts have passed, and we can direct sow seeds and plant out our seedlings. As a flower and herb gardener born in the month of May, this moon speaks to my heart like no other.

Though Flower Moon is the name most widely used for this second full moon of the spring season, it is called many other names as well. Native American tribes, including the Cree Nation and the Algonquins, refer to it as the Frog Moon because it symbolizes the time of year when the frogs begin singing, or the Corn Planting Moon, marking the time when corn can be planted. It is also called the Milk Moon, coinciding with the blooming of milkweed, or the Full Milk Moon, a name given in medieval Europe because it occurs near the first of May, or Beltane, when the cows are moved to their summer pastures. Yet others call it the Budding Moon, Big Leaf Moon, or Month of Flowers to celebrate the awakening of local flora.

Regardless of what you call this second moon of the spring, the theme rings clear. They represent a simpler time and a slower lifestyle more attuned to the seasons. They recognize the gentle subtleties of the spring season and seeing the goodness around us.

The Power of Flowers

“Even more important than what she gave her garden was what it gave her. In it, she found a sense of calm.”
– Kristin Hannah, *The Nightingale*

Some of my earliest memories as a little girl involved flowers. From running through a sea of dandelions at the park near my childhood home to my late grandmother walking me around her backyard, with my skinned knees and pigtailed, showing me how beautiful it was to grow things, these floral memories are some of my fondest and are a testament to the power of flowers.

The Flower Moon is a symbol of growth, renewal, and transformation, encouraging us to seek balance and harmony in our lives by surrounding ourselves with natural elements. It encourages us to slow down and appreciate the natural beauty surrounding us. During the Flower Moon, the world awakens. May we feel it, appreciate it, and grow from it.

Flowers have the power to ignite all our senses! Blooms are visually appealing, their sweet fragrances traveling through the breeze, their interesting textures between your fingers as you harvest, while pollinator buzz by and birdsong can be heard above you. A flower and herb gardener can even be caught taste testing the many edible varieties they grow to garnish their summer salads, brighten baked goods, and muddle into mixed drinks.

April - Jess Buttermore

Flowers have been proven to positively impact physical and mental health. They reduce stress and anxiety, promote relaxation, and many have medicinal properties. They are known to create a sense of tranquility and harmony. The act of giving flowers also evokes strong feelings of joy, gratitude and happiness both to the recipient as well as the gift giver. Sharing flowers from my garden, that I grew from seed, is quite possibly my favorite part of the entire flower growing experience. This year, my garden gifted me the opportunity to share its bounty over 70 times. That's 70 times someone felt loved because of flowers. What a gift it has been and continues to be.

Flowers are also an important part of our ecosystem, providing food and habitat for many insects and animals. They also play a role in pollination, which is essential for the reproduction of many plant species. I have what is commonly referred to as a pollinator garden, overflowing with an abundance of colorful and fragrant organic flowers and herbs that attract and feed pollinators such as honeybees, native bees, moths and butterflies. When I harvest, I make sure to always leave plenty of blooms to keep them busy and happy.

Yesterday, we watched countless butterflies, moths, hummingbirds, bees, robins, chickadees, and a pair of Stellar Jays visit the garden.

Our property is humming with life from dawn to dusk like never before, and I feel as though my husband and I are doing our part to support and protect pollinators and help maintain their genetic diversity within our population.

History and Floriography

Flowers are more powerful than we give them credit for. In fact, flowers and herbs alike have a rich history of power, symbolism, and strength. During the Victorian era (1837-1901), flowers were often used to convey secret messages, emotions, and sentiments between lovers, friends, and family members. Flowers were silent messengers, conveying messages they wouldn't dare be spoken aloud. They were discreetly left on doorsteps, held in portraits, and arranged on tabletops during holidays and special events for good luck. Their subtle presence can be found in famous paintings, poetry, literature, fashion, and even Shakespearian plays. Today, floriography is reemerging as gardening becomes increasingly popular and plants are being recognized for their mental and emotional impacts.

A Time to Honor Nature

The Flower Moon, in all its botanical glory, is the perfect opportunity to quiet your mind and listen to your heart. To make a conscious effort to step away from the busyness of your daily life and honor the beauty of nature and the arrival of spring. This may be different for everyone. For some, it may be taking a walk in the woods. For others, it may be spending time in their garden. Regardless of how you do it, I invite you to join me in connecting with nature in the weeks to come.

April - Jess Buttermore

Floriography of Flower Moon Flora

While not an exhaustive list, below are some common botanicals that grow during the Flower Moon, along with their botanical meanings:

Anemone – truth

Azalea – fragility, passion, temperance

Clematis – mental beauty

Delphinium – happiness, levity

Freesia – lasting friendship

Fuchsia – humble love

Gardenia – refinement

Geranium – friendship (oak leaf), preference (pink), comfort (scarlet), gracefulness, protection (white)

Heather – protection

Hollyhock – ambition

Hyacinth – constancy (blue), forgiveness (purple), beauty, unobtrusive loveliness (white)

Iris – message

Jasmine – elegance, gracefulness (yellow), amiability (white)

Lilac – first emotions of love

Lilly of the Valley – healing heartbreak, return of happiness

Magnolia – dignity

Orchid – refined beauty

Pansy – think of me

Peony – bashfulness, bravery, secrecy

Phlox – agreement, harmony, unity, partnership

Poppy – extravagance, peace

Sweet Pea – blissful pleasure, delicate pleasure

Violet – filled with love (purple), virtue (African)

Is there any better way to feel connected to the earth than to grow a flower garden? You give it time, patience, energy, and attention, and in return, it gives you buckets full of blooms and a place to turn your thoughts. With this in mind, I challenge you to plant a flower seed and grow with me. Begin by choosing a few flowers from the list above with a meaning that speaks to you and enjoy a visit to your local nursery or online seed supplier to pick up seed packets. As you sow each seed, focus on how the germination process can inspire you to reach for the light from darkness you may be experiencing. (If you need guidance on growing from seed, I invite you to visit my online journal at cedarhouseliving.com for seed starting articles.) While you nurture your tiny seedlings into robust plants, reflect on your progress and think about where you will plant your seedling out to enjoy throughout the summer.

When your flowers begin to bloom, let the energy of the Flower Moon bring forth your own creative energy, and consider how you can use the blooms you've grown in your home or for crafting purposes. Alternatively, create an arrangement with these meaningful blooms to gift to someone you care about. (If you need inspiration, my online journal has several botanical DIYs and tutorials to feed your creative soul or order *The Love Language of Flowers*.)

During the month of May, open your mind to the idea that you will grow alongside your flowers, releasing what is no longer serving you in your life and opening yourself to new possibilities and opportunities. Who knows, this may be the blossoming of a beautiful new chapter in your life. Happy growing, friends.



live in the moment

May - Holly Morgan

Heirophany and the Moon

I stepped barefoot out of the kitchen door, my feet landing softly on the wet concrete, the air smelling of Earth + rain, the perfect petrichor that only the Spring season can carry. The early days of May in the Midwest tend to feel like a baubling ball on a casino wheel, and the month's end as something best suiting Goldilocks in the infamous fable. It was one of those evenings where the sliver of a Balsamic Moon hangs in the sky as the final bits of lunar light before the moon births as new.

And as visually beautiful a phase as this is, perhaps it's the dark energy she carries during this few days' span that makes it my favorite. We are familiar with the connective powers of the New Moon and the declaration of intentions for the lunar cycle ahead, but if you aren't leaning in to the unfurling and healing ways the balsamic moon illuminates those shadow energies and the lessons they carry, you need only open your mind's eye to harness this power. A deep breath in, and a somatic exhale. Standing in the twilight, the Earth, the Moon, and me, giving ourselves wholly to one another.

What an interesting experience, being human in this world; navigating the nuance of living relationally to all beings. I feel fiercely the decay of humanity, lying like forgotten logs on the forest floor, ready to be enveloped back into the richness of Earth.

On our drive to the children's school we pass a vast prairie that rolls for miles and several weeks ago we came upon it smoldering in ash. At first we gasped, what little fallow life left was now completely gone.

Then just days later we drove by after a hearty weekend rain to discover it completely covered in vital green life, sprouting only a few inches out of the ground. What had been waiting patiently under the soil was granted its cycle of life through the transformation of death. What if we reveled in the pleasure of alchemizing this way? Taurus invites you to honor your desires and tend to that which you are cultivating under this New Moon.

My meaningful work lately has included cultivating a practice of pleasure in presence. So much of this intention is grounded in simplicity and daily ritual.

Ritual plays such a profound part in connecting me to a larger whole, a spiritual guidance that reminds me that being is an integral part of this life. It is a step back from the constant chaos of the identities we create for ourselves as humans. To be honest, I'm not sure that the word ritual carries the same potency as it's been saturated by the buzz of capitalism in the United States. But perhaps instead of discussing what rituals are it would be helpful to discuss what I have come to know they are not.

May - Holly Morgan

Katherine May wrote this so beautifully in her book *Awakening Wonder in an Anxious Age* when she said, “Ritual is different from worship: a matter of instinct rather than construction, a gesture that lets us weave significance in the moment. It is so undemanding, so simple, almost passive.” For me, ritual is woven as a thread into the rhythm of daily life; intuitive moments that nurture the living of a life less hurried. Ritual tends to my well of vitality.

Maybe you too have been longing for a connection to some greater being, an other than human life force, something outside of yourself. But there is a reason that my feet on the bare Earth, in the woods among the great grandfather Oaks, perched on the edge of a brimming garden bed, and under the light of the Moon all feel so good. These are the locality of connection between the sacred and my own divine being, already inside of me, the Moon a heirophany.

It sounds so elemental, really. But with the weight of distractions in our everyday lives, the simplicity of being, of really just sitting and feeling on a cellular level, it’s so easily lost. And while there can be great reward in having material goods as tools of practice, there is so much worth to be found in presence.

All of this to say, I’m most interested right now, in this place in the world, under these cosmic happenings, in exploring an awakening, a curiosity. Lately, the most potent moon medicine for me is that of gathering in circle under the Moon.

I’d love to say that there is a best practice for doing this, but I’m rather consistently in an unlearning process about most things I think I know about the world. What I can say is that good, in person community care grants us permission to come as we are. No curation or veils of illusion. To truly see each other for the full spectrum of ourselves, the shadow and light, joy and grief, sorrow and gratitude.

My wish is that you are able to take notice of that which plunges you deeply into the soil of being. Relish in the warmth of a strawberry warm from the plant in the soil on a June day. That the seeds you are planting with this Moon grow with patience and vigor.

June - Joey Doherty

No matter where I travel, I make a point to find the farmers market. This is where I really get to know the land. The people. The local delicacies tended by honest hands. I may not find what I'm looking for, but I sure do find what I need.

No pre-meditated internet search will tell you what the best fruit is this time of year. You'll have to consult the local taste buds. Better yet, look to the farmers, the ranchers, the flower-tenders. See whose eyes you're drawn to, whose hands you trust to fill your plate, whose heart is warm enough to raise the kind of cow you would be honored to drink milk from. The cycle of gratitude is complete when the tender and the tended know each other by name.

With a thrifted basket in hand and some cash in my breast pocket, Saturdays at the market wash the week's sorrows away, and that's no easy task. Do these farmers know they're magicians? Working not only the land but also the people. Salt of the earth. My kind of people. An honest look in their eyes will tell you, they aren't here to get rich or famous. But I bet if you asked the earth who is a star in her eyes, she would say the ranchers and the farmers who tend to her the same way she tends to all of us. With care. With the seasons. With the future generations in mind.

When there are musicians playing on the sidewalk, you might as well leave me there for the rest of the afternoon. Wherever I go, it's the artists that bring me comfort. Perhaps because they aren't trying to bring me comfort. It's not their goal to save me. They're simply doing what they do, and it's those honest endeavors that heal. Singing a ballad. Playing the banjo. Growing a deep purple carrot. Farmers are artists too. Their canvas just has worms and an unpredictable nature and may be eaten by the deer or washed clean by the storms for a fresh start. These earth-tending artists are strong people. It takes a sturdy person to gamble their livelihood with the elements. To make a deal with the seasons with only one guarantee, and that's change.

Everyone looks especially beautiful on farmers market day. The undyed cotton flower sun dresses. The dirty denim overalls. The wide-open hearts and sun-soaked skin. Come to think of it, I'm there for the people just as much as I am for the food. Maybe more. The land and oceans are abundant, but it's the people and the connections that make this human dance something special. Perhaps abundance isn't true until it is shared. Perhaps.

I don't know much for certain, but I do know that the humble farmers market will bring you back to the earth, the people, and the thing we have in common - this slow moment.



slow down

slow down
your breath
your rituals
your coffee
your kisses
slower, slower

-Iris Nabalo

July - Lisa Farmain

Summer, how I longed for you and the life that you bring, during the long, cold days of winter.

To step outside and be greeted by birdsong, to feel the warmth of the sun on my face, and smell the scent of fresh blossoms on a passing breeze. To walk through the garden where the seeds that were planted in spring, and have been lovingly tended to since, are now starting to produce the wonderful bounties of summer. To spend my time weeding, watering and caring for the plants that over the past few months, I have built a relationship with. Through them, I find a connection back to mother nature, to the earth beneath me, and to those who came before me. And, as I envelope myself in the glory of summer and enter into the new moon phase that will bring on August's Sturgeon Moon, I breathe in deeply, and I am thankful to have a place where I can slow down and live within the rhythms of nature.

Originating from Indigenous communities, the Sturgeon Moon was so named by those that relied on the rhythm of, and relationship with the sturgeon so much that they gave its name to the moon that rose when their numbers would be highest.

Of course, over time, the Sturgeon Moon has been given other names, as well - Corn Moon, Grain Moon, Ricing Moon - different names given to one moon by various original caretakers of the land, based on their place and relationships.

Yet, each name carries the same message: the time of abundance is here. And so, after days, months or even years of hard work, dedication, and nurturing, we fill our baskets as Mother Nature offers us her thanks with full gardens, hives, lakes and fields.

*We take what is needed,
thankful for the bounty as it
fills our pantries, shelves,
bodies, and spirits alike.*

But, always, we leave some behind as a parting gift to summer as she begins to ebb away. Some to be shared with those who also patiently await the gifts of summer, and still, some to fall back down to the earth, where next season they may once again take root and provide for us, so that we ourselves can continue to root ourselves in our place, and give our thanks.

August - Iris Nabalo

As the sun dips below the horizon, I'm naturally drawn to embracing the yin side of my day. Will you join me, under this blue new moon, through the dusky hours, the starlit night, the realm of dreams, and the awakening dawn? It's a journey of healing, where the beauty of the night nurtures every corner of our being.

- **Dusk:** The transformation unfolds as daylight gradually fades, painting the sky in hues that feel like magic. Dusk arrives subtly, almost like a comforting whisper. It marks a transition, a moment where the world shifts gears from the bustling pace of the day to the softer rhythm of the night. This is the slow side of the day, a time to wind down and savor the beauty that twilight brings. As the sky paints herself with amber and lavender tones, we're reminded to slow down and embrace the gradual transition into the arms of the night.
- **Night:** The darkness embraces the sky, and as the stars make their appearance, it's as if they're sharing age-old tales with anyone willing to listen. The moon, casting its gentle light, unveils beauty that often remains hidden under the stark daylight. For me, this is when I let go of the day's worries and tensions, opening up to the restorative power of the night. I explore my thoughts and emotions, delving into the corners of my heart that may stay concealed during the day.
- **Sleep:** The bridge between the waking and dreaming worlds, sleep offers a sacred haven for our bodies and souls. Surrendering to slumber allows my mind to embark on journeys that lead to creativity and self-discovery. Here, dreams become companions guiding me through the landscapes of my inner realm. It's as if the night's canvas becomes alive with stories, painted by the colors of my dreams, helping me navigate emotions and make sense of experiences.
- **Dawn:** With the first blush of dawn, the night's mysteries begin to fade, making way for the promise of a new day. Dawn is the awakening, a reminder that light always follows darkness. It's an opportunity to set intentions for the day ahead, carrying the profound insights of the night into the clarity of the morning light. As the world awakens with the soft glow of sunrise, we're reminded of the constant cycle of renewal.

Ritual: Embracing the Yin Energy

To honor the nurturing yin energy that envelops us during the night, consider practicing this simple ritual.

Materials needed:

- A candle (preferably white, silver, or deep blue)
- A journal or notebook
- A comfortable, quiet space

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TAKE A MOMENT



September - Rolf Nabalo

When the idea of slow living came to me, I thought that it wasn't fitting into my day-to-day life. With a 9-5 day job and everything that surrounds it, I often struggled to let go of the illusion that these types of practices were for me. The beauty of taking care of myself is that it can be done in moments and small actions. These moments became practices, and the small actions became rituals.

Let me share my most valuable daily slow living practice during my busy 9-5 weekdays. The practice is simple but has shown very good results.

I love early mornings, but this can easily be switched to the evening hours before bed. When the house is still resting and the world outside is dark and still, I find the energy is perfect for waking up slowly.

After I wake up, I lay in my bed for a few minutes, scanning my body; what is tight today?

Then I get out of bed and start by doing a simple 'child's pose', or just go on all fours and curl myself up in a ball. I stay there for a few seconds. From that starting position, I start making moves, letting myself be guided by where the tight spots are in my body. I stretch in whatever position my body is asking me to go.

I slowly widen the range of movement to stretches of my arms and legs and eventually get my whole body stretching itself; the more awkward the position, the better. The only thing to take into account is not pushing your body beyond its available flexibility. You can push against that available flexibility but don't go over it. Trusting that the flexibility will come where and when needed, as long as you keep moving.

What I like about this is that I am not letting myself be limited by any 'formal' poses. If I have a busy schedule and/or don't feel like it, I stop here.

But for most mornings, the next part of my morning practice is waking the body up and getting the juices flowing. I start on my back and lift my legs in the air at a 45-degree angle and let them come down just above the floor. Then I move my legs in that 45-degree angle in circles. One set is moving the legs together in circles, and the last set is moving the legs together in a circle. The amount of reps should be based on your own conditions, but it will get that core going.

September - Rolf Nabalo

Then I proceed to the only part of my routine that has some exercise gadget; sliding discs. Put the discs under your toes and go into a plank with stretched arms. I then pull my legs to my chest. I repeat this another session with being on my elbows. Then I go back into a plank with stretched arms and move my legs from the inside out to left and right. I repeat that session also on my elbows in plank.

Again, the amount of reps should be based on your own level, but it will get your core and legs warmed up.

I then continue with the most versatile but simple exercise of all; push-ups. Not easy, but it is about as simple as it can get for an exercise. When done right, it will get your shoulders, arms, and core going. You know it when you feel it.

I turn myself upside down on my arms with a little help from a wall. It helps the shoulders, arms, and core but also turns your lymphatic system upside down. If you had a stuffed nose after you woke up, this should be gone after you have done a handstand for 10+ seconds.

It really wakes the body up!

When gently landing myself on my feet again, I give myself a cooldown, and my last stretch of the practice is bringing my feet together in a half-lotus sitting position and bending my torso forward.

With the sedentary lifestyle most of us have, it will stretch the hips that can get really tight due to the high amount of sitting we do nowadays. Then I go into the full lotus pose and get my mindset right for the day.

All of this takes about 20-30 minutes.

I don't worry too much about skipping a day or doing it right; it just needs to feel good. It is a practice that fits in almost any day and starts my day right; physically and mentally.

October - Laura Mazurek

Slowness brings you closer to the present moment. Closer to truth. It allows you to really feel the edges of life instead of blindly plowing through your days mindlessly, missing all the nectar of the fruit. I know the contrast to this well.

I spent many of my days, weeks, months living deep in my masculine energy. Failing to slow down long enough to see my own blind spots. Some days I wonder how different things may be if I had been more present within certain aspects of my life.

But as I am learning to live more in the present moment, I try not to dwell on the what ifs of days gone by. Goodness do I know that sinkhole all too well, and it's one I still have to climb my way out of more often than I'd like to admit.

This season of life has been one of the most revealing and challenging passageways into my personal unfurling. At times I feel I have been forced into slowness, and her sister, surrender. Against my will, they have been lassoed around me, and held me captive.

But as I have begun to peel the layers of self back, I have realized it's only my mind that has held me captive. Slowness and surrender have actually been angels in disguise.

I have learned that going slow with things like heartache, healing and life altering decisions, you may find truths revealed along the way that you could not foresee. Sometimes the forced pauses that you think are obstacles are actually protection.

There are different kinds of slowness... There is the kind where you are mindful, observant and present with whatever task or moment you are in. For example, if you are drinking a cup of coffee or tea, you feel the warmth of the mug in your hands, you really taste it's flavor on your tongue, you smell it's aroma and soak it in. You may even experience a deep exhale in your body after you inhale it's smell. You may feel a sense of calm and warmth course through your body.

You are allowing yourself to truly take in the moment with all of your senses. You feel a connection with your action. This can be done with just about anything you are doing in the moment. Yet, so often we rush through our days feeling so disconnected from these moments that by the end of the day we question ourselves with the thought of, what did I even do today?

I have found that when I can connect with my moment at hand in this deeper way, gratitude naturally follows. I find that slowness and gratitude go hand in hand.

October - Laura Mazurek

Then there is the kind of slowness I mentioned before, with our bigger picture life events. This can be with letting go of an attachment, falling in love with your best friend, working your way through trauma, learning to see your own patterns, or learning to self regulate.

Slowness can be a beautiful thing when moving through the big stuff. It can teach you patience, compassion, forgiveness, and can be what allows you to fully feel your feelings.

It can be a doorway to loving yourself deeper than you ever have before. It can be the container for gently moving through the darkness that inevitably invites itself into your life without your permission. Slowness can be a salve to your wounds if you allow it to be.

Slowness can also be an emergence into radical joy and inner child play. Being present when you look up at the sky and take pause long enough to see shapes in the clouds morph from one thing to another. It can propel you into noticing things you might not notice without it's presence.

Like how hearts show up all around you in nature, or love notes left on trees by lovers, or the look in your child's eyes when they are lit up with the giggles.

It can be an invitation to make a different choice in that moment.

To remember the dishes can wait another 10 minutes, and so can that email.

Maybe stopping to notice the way the leaves are starting to turn crunchy and how that reminds that your favorite season is near, and it will be gone before you know it.

*So you might as well slow
down and enjoy it.*

be here now _____



November - Tess Weaver

When the lovely Iris asked me to write this article a year ago, I figured by now I'd surely be sitting in my cozy cottage, perfectly prepared with a coffee in hand to sit and write about living a slow, intentional life. Let me tell you, my life is anything but that currently. In July of 2022, my husband and I bought 38 acres of land in eastern Tennessee.

This land has been our goal for quite a while now, mostly because of the life we've craved, and already begun to live. We started shifting our life together in a different, specific direction over the last almost decade together, and all of our small choices have led us to this piece of land—this opportunity to slowly cultivate a rich day-to-day life that gives back to us as we pour ourselves into, and devote ourselves to it.

As I'm sure you're aware, what we're doing takes an immense amount of effort and planning. Turning 38 acres of completely raw, never been lived on before land into some kind of little haven for us, two dairy cows, 12 or so chickens and ducks, two dogs, and more to come. It's a huge undertaking.

It's sacrifice after sacrifice, just to start to get to where we want to be.

Some days it's total joy and excitement that motivates us. Some days pure conviction. Others, it's just the fact that we're already past the point of no return. It may sound like I'm trying to dissuade you from choosing a lifestyle similar to what we have, but that's not it at all.

I think so many of us have these beautiful aspirations toward a different lifestyle than the one we may be currently living. But what does it take to actually go after that dream? Slow living doesn't mean acreage or animals or working from home or having a garden or anything else. Slow living is intention. It's counter to our western culture, which means it will likely be somewhat abrasive to go after.

Slow living can be as simple as a simple morning rhythm, procuring some of your food from a local farm, or cooking a meal from scratch. All of which, are quite counter-cultural.

What all facets of slow living has in common though, is sacrifice. I know, cringe. We don't like that very often.

But let me tell you, a lot of the best, most rich and fulfilling things in life are on the other side of sacrifice.

November - Tess Weaver

Your sacrifice may not be living completely off-grid with no plumbing, electricity or hot running water for a year and a half (phew). But this last year and a half has reminded me that all of my smaller choices to slow down, to think, to ponder life's "mundanities", amounts to something. A thread of a new path forms as you make this shift. It may be a subtly different path, it may be in wild contrast to the current life-path you walk. But each small choice you make to live a little bit slower, a little bit more intentionally, a little bit more, if-everyone-made-the-choices-I'm-making-would-the-world-be-a-bit-better, is like plucking one of those aspirations out of the sky and making it a reality. It is cumulative.

Someday soon, I'll be sitting in my cozy cottage my husband and I built every inch of with our bare hands, and I know I'll feel the deep gratitude for the tiniest, slow moments I took over the last couple of decades that led me here, and continue to lead me. As this new moon arrives, I'm not where I thought I'd be. But I've stood under every single new moon for the last year. I've noticed them all. It's hard not to when you basically live completely outside, haha. Each one has been a reminder of the shifting of seasons, the way time passes, and the way I long for that to slow. Time doesn't slow, but I will. I will make the sacrifices to hold onto a little more time. To cup my hands and let it fill. Each moment. Each season.

Prompt:

It's unavoidable to notice that we are fast approaching the holiday season. We're really already in it.

How can you prepare you heart this November, this New Beaver Moon, for a season that seems to demand we be in a rush?

How can we choose to slow down?

Here's a couple of ideas.

- *Make a short list of a few traditions you would enjoy, and whittle it down to the ones that feel the most important*
- *A cozy morning routine goes a very long way. How will it maybe look different now that it's colder and darker out? What would your ideal-meets-realistic morning look like?*

December - Noelle Kovary

The darkest and coldest new moon of them all, the New cold moon. I am always reminded how deep I can go in life by following the rhythms of the environment around me.

Nature remembers what we humans may have forgotten: every cycle must turn to stillness, silence, the dark; Every out breath requires an in breath; every outer endeavor turns back inward to its origins, its center, and begins again; from death comes new life, and from the darkest night, the new dawn is born.

Winter is my reminder of the beautiful rich season where growth is happening, even if it's not seen but slowly experienced in nuances. Winter is the peaking point of the seasons that feels deepest and most necessary.

I personally love this time of year, I relish in the slow, cooler, darker days and use it as a time to work on things I haven't given myself time or energy for. We do a lot of crafting and baking by candlelight and fire, we enjoy the company of friends to warm our home, and we put energy into projects that will help us achieve our goals when the warmer days come. I move inward in a sense that I focus on my family, my home, and intentions for growth.

One of my favorite things to do with my kids during winter is nature activities. This gets us outside, no matter the weather, and brings us back inside with something fun to craft. We enjoy collecting fallen pine cones, placing them on twine, and covering them with nut butters and seeds. We bring them back outside to hang on the trees for winter treats for the birds on our land. We slowly walk the land observing and talking about our scenery, all that we've seen changed, what it may look like in a few months, and what we love about it now. We collect the fallen pine cones and make our way back inside for our cozy craft and a warm snack.

We are big hot cacao fans and winter is THE season for it. Not only to bring a sweet treat into our chilly days but also to nourish our bodies with necessary nutrients to keep stress low and our bodies warm throughout the season. We make a yolky hot cacao with honey vanilla marshmallows and sip them while we get to our crafts.

This is such a lovely routine for my kids and for me as a stay at home mama. We have a homestead and there's always lots to do but not everything is as fun for the kids as it is for us. So carving out specific times during the day to practice some slow paced and intentional activities, that also bring us back to nature as well as nourish our bodies, is super important.

December - Noelle Kovary

One of the main reasons we consume a yolky hot cacao and marshmallow is for the egg yolks and gelatin used to make them. Egg yolks are a powerhouse of nutrients and I whip them with sugar and use this custard as a base for so many of our daily tonics. Egg yolks are an essential source of choline. Not only does choline help in reducing chronic inflammation and levels of homocysteine in the blood, but it is also one of the highest regulators of nervous tissue in your body. Choline is an essential component of acetylcholine, one of the most important neurotransmitters in the nervous system.

Making marshmallows at home couldn't be easier, all you need is gelatin and a sweetener of choice. Gelatin is a staple in our home because it's versatile and incredibly beneficial for overall health. It's incredibly rich in glycine which is a GABA agonist. GABA is a natural antagonist to cortisol. In other words taking, glycine can increase GABA and reduce cortisol (meaning it lowers stress, which is much higher in the colder darker months).

Yolky hot cacao (2 servings)

- 2 egg yolks
- 2 tbsp organic raw cane sugar
- 3 cups raw milk
- 2 tbsp raw cacao powder
- 1/2 tsp salt
- Pinch of nutmeg

Whisk your egg yolk and sugar together until it forms a thick custard. Warm your milk and whisk in cacao powder, salt, and nutmeg. Once combined, pour your warm chocolate milk over your sugar and egg custard. Stir well and top with a marshmallow!

Honey vanilla marshmallows

- 1 cup clean water
- 4 scoops grassfed gelatin
- 1/2 tsp vanilla
- 1/3-1/2 cup raw honey
-

Bloom your gelatin in cold water. Once it's bloomed add it to a saucepan and turn your heat up to medium. Dissolve the gelatin and add vanilla. Remove the mixture from the heat and transfer to a bowl. Add the raw honey and whip it with an electric mixer or a standing mixer. This may take a few minutes. You'll know it's ready when it's whipped, thick, and fluffy. Quickly pour your fluff into a buttered glass baking dish. Pop them in the fridge for at least 4 hours or overnight. Cut them into cubes and enjoy on top of warm drinks.

Nature is where we'll find nurture. The winter season calls us to hunker down and become self sufficient. Hand make, bake, forage, and build, for the joy of life is ripe and fresh for those that see past the cold dark days. Slowing down is necessary in winter, it's almost forced upon us. Instead of fighting it, how about join it and see how nature can work with you to bring more warmth and light into your winter days.

n a b a l o . c o m



A universal pathway that can lead you to living and thriving in the lifestyle of your deepest desires.