

Identifying What You Need to Heal

Emotional healing cannot begin until you have clearly identified what you need to heal. In this first step you will start by writing down exactly what you want to heal in your drawing journal or sketch pad. This is called *setting your healing intentions*. It gives concrete form to your conscious thoughts. An intention, once set, will serve as an inner directive for your body, mind, and spirit, guiding all three elements to activate the healing process. The second exercise will help you compare what your thoughts, as evinced through the words you wrote, tell you about the pain you wish to heal, and how your soul (or heart) feels about your pain as revealed through the image in your drawing. This will enable you to spot any conflicts that might exist between what you *think* about your pain and how you *feel* about it. Since inner conflict is the main source of physical and emotional stress, it's important to at least recognize it.

As you read the directions for the exercises, you will see an occasional **TIP**. This will be a pointer to help clarify a particular aspect of the instructions or a reminder to guide you where you may have doubts about how to proceed or questions about the directions.

EXERCISE ONE

Setting Your Healing Intentions

When you are ready to begin this first exercise, place your drawing materials in front of you. Get into a comfortable position in a chair or on the floor. You may want to put on some soft music and even light a few candles or burn a little incense—whatever helps you set a contemplative mood. Then read the following directions as they guide you through this first exercise. As the exercises continue, I will abbreviate the directions.

- Close your eyes and clear your mind of all thoughts about what you think you *want* to heal, and ask yourself instead what you *need* to heal.
- When you know what that is, open your eyes and write it at the top of your drawing paper or on the drawing page of your journal or sketch pad. Leave enough room beneath it for the second exercise.

TIP *Keep in mind that you can't heal an experience, such as a divorce or an argument. You can only heal yourself and the emotions or feelings that the experience produced. So be sure that what you write reflects your need to heal some aspect of yourself and/or certain feelings and emotions.*

Expressing Your Feelings through Images

Emotional pain affects not only your physical body and the way you think, it affects your soul as well. In the first exercise, I asked you to verbally identify what you need to heal. In this next exercise, you will learn how to express your feelings through images—the inner language of your body, mind, and spirit. As a starting point for exploring the depth of your emotional pain or discomfort, I'll guide you through the process of connecting with your soul's voice—a voice that speaks through images, not words—to see how your soul feels about what needs to be healed. This drawing will become a marker or baseline of how your soul feels now as you embark on the healing process. At the end of this program, you will be instructed to do another drawing of how your soul feels, so that you can compare the difference between the two.



Figure 44: *The Tender Sunshine, the True Self*, by Jan

“I desire to be free of the angry, hopeless, helpless feelings that gnaw away at my insides. The image in the drawing is me feeling fragmented and jumbled. I labeled it The Tender Sunshine, The True Self, because deep in my heart a light glows no matter what chaos is going on around me.”

ACCESSING AN IMAGE OF AN EMOTION USING BODY-CENTERED AWARENESS AND VISUALIZATION

To do the drawing exercises in this book, you'll be using two techniques: *body-centered awareness* and *visualization*. These techniques will help you disconnect from your mind's interpretation of the pain you wish to heal and connect instead to the way your body experiences that pain.

Body-centered awareness shifts your attention away from your thoughts to your physical body. The easiest way to do that is to focus on your breathing.

Visualization means to picture or imagine what the feeling sensation caused by an emotion would look like if you were to express it as an image. I prefer to use the word *imagine*, because many people get intimidated by the term *visualize*. They are afraid they won't be able to see an image when they try to do it. Some people actually do see an image in their mind's eye when they focus on the feeling sensation produced by an emotion. Other people only sense what a feeling would look like; they don't actually see anything when they close their eyes. There are also people who get in touch with what an emotion feels like, but have no idea what it looks like until they begin to draw. There's no right or wrong way to imagine what an emotion looks like. As you start to do this process for yourself, you will discover what works best for you. Trust your instincts.