

Mirabai Starr's talks, workshops and retreats

(May be adapted to fit various venues and time frames)

A FIERCE & TENDER WISDOM: Reclaiming the Feminine Across the Spiritual Spectrum

As the fierce and tender voice of the feminine rises again, people of all genders are gifted with renewed access to the women mystics and wisdom beings across the spiritual traditions, such as Teresa of Avila, Julian of Norwich, Mary Magdalene, the Shekinah, Song of Songs, Bhakti poet Mirabai, Sufi mystic Rabia, Fatima, Tara, Quan Yin, Kali, and indigenous Mother goddesses. In this gathering we immerse ourselves in the living transmission of these beings through engaging in contemplative readings from the mystics, group reflections, evocative writing exercises, inter-spiritual chanting and silent sitting, weaving these luminous elements into a basket of awakened community. By drinking from the wellspring of women's wisdom across the spiritual landscape (with utmost respect for the cultural treasures being shared from these ancient wisdom traditions) we carry these living waters into our lives and offer them to a world thirsty for the feminine.

As traditionally male-dominated structures topple across the landscape of the human community, the feminine is rising, carrying cups of mercy and spreading flames of truth-telling. Long-buried wisdom teachings and previously ignored women mystics are revealing themselves to be urgently relevant as we pass through a global dark night of the soul and into a radically renewed humanity. With its emphasis on relationally and inclusivity, its tolerance for ambiguity and its intimacy with mystery, the feminine reclaims the body as holy ground and blesses the web of interbeing that sustains us all. The feminine speaks in poetry and song, she

worships the earth as cherished relative, she embraces ultimate reality as lover. In this talk, “mystical feminist” Mirabai Starr shares the fruits of many years of investigating, excavating and lifting up female voices in all the world’s religions.

FIERCE AND TENDER: A Woman’s Writing Experience

As the fierce and tender voice of the feminine rises again, we have access to a long-hidden wellspring of wisdom, both within ourselves and through the teachings of the women mystics and archetypal beings across the spiritual traditions. In this gathering, we read poetry of the women mystics and contemporary women poets, respond to evocative writing prompts, sit in silence, and engage in group dialog to uncover and unfetter our authentic, fearless stories.

ONE LOVE: The Interspiritual Quest

Join interspiritual author and teacher, Mirabai Starr, for an exploration of the interconnected wisdom at the heart of all religious and spiritual traditions.

In this gathering, we will follow the streams of mystical longing and social justice through readings from the ecstatic poetry of the mystics, investigating sacred texts of the world’s great religions, sitting in contemplative silence, chanting the names of God in an array of languages, and engaging in deep dialog through conversation and writing.

Discover the unifying teachings and experience the heart-opening practices that carry us beyond an intellectual understanding of humanity's many spiritual paths to the place we are transformed by the love at their common core.

THE PASSION OF THE MYSTICS: A Contemplative Journey

The mystics of all traditions claim that their love-encounter with the Holy One defies all description and yet their experience of longing and union pours out in the form of ecstatic, luminous and richly descriptive poetry and prose.

In this workshop, we read short passages from the works of the great Christian mystics, John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila, Julian of Norwich, Francis and Claire of Assisi, and Hildegard of Bingen, as well as Sufi saint, Rabia, Hindu poet, Mirabai, and others, engaging these evocative words as objects of *Lectio Divina* (sacred reading).

Then, grounding our encounter with the mystics in our own experience, we respond to writing prompts to access our unique voice and deepen our personal journey.

Inter-spiritual chanting and simple body practices support and balance our contemplative readings and writing exercises.

LUMINOUS NIGHT: A Contemplative Experience

The sixteenth century poet-mystic, St. John of the Cross, coined the term “dark night of the soul” to evoke the kind of spiritual crisis that leads us from profound unknowing to radiant transformation.

Through the dismantling that occurs in the depths of the dark night, we discover that our own ideas and agendas have no power to assuage our innate longing for the sacred, and that it is only through radical surrender that we find the sweetness of connection we have been searching for.

In this gathering, we will explore how this perennial wisdom teaching gives us the tools we need to drop our attachment to outcomes so that we may be of service in a world in crisis. By learning to listen deeply, cultivating stillness, humility and fearlessness, we harvest the vigor, humor and tenderness of heart we need to be able to offer ourselves in service of the causes and beings that most clearly move us. From this revitalized place, we can effectively engage in compassionate action.

Our time together will include contemplative readings, silent meditation, writing exercises, and group sharing.

LOSS AND LONGING: Grief as a Spiritual Path

In this gathering we will share interspiritual teachings from the mystics of various traditions that illumine the connection between loss and spiritual longing.

Many of us who have suffered profound loss experience a palpable sense of the sacred filling the atmosphere and flooding our hearts. Sometimes we are afraid to speak of this numinous gift for fear that we will seem as if we are not "sad." But our beings are vast enough to hold brokenness and exaltation in the same shattered container. When we investigate this state with curiosity and compassion, we may find that the pain of loss is intimately entwined with our deepest yearning for connection to the Divine.

The teachings of the sixteenth century Spanish saints, Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross, show us how we may approach the radical mystery that often accompanies profound loss as a spiritual opportunity rather than as a problem requiring a solution. By engaging a contemplative in favor of a cathartic approach, we cultivate an environment of emotional safety and deep peace.

Our time together will include poetry from the mystics of all traditions, deep dialog, writing exercises, interspiritual chanting and contemplative silence.

THIS BEAUTIFUL WOUND: The Mystics and Grief

The sixteenth century Spanish saint, Teresa of Avila, speaks of “the beautiful wound” of longing for God, describing this depth of suffering as a doorway to union with her Beloved. John of the Cross, Teresa’s contemporary, coined the term “dark night of the soul” and developed a teaching that shows us how to surrender to radical unknowing and allow ourselves to be stripped of all that stands between our souls and the Divine. These and other mystics see deep sorrow as a great spiritual blessing, rather than as a problem requiring a solution.

In this gathering, we will engage in contemplative reading, deep dialog, writing exercises and guided meditation to cultivate the tenderness and courage required to explore the places where our losses invite us into deeper aliveness and radiant joy.

PRAYER OF QUIET: Saint Teresa of Avila and Restless Mind

In this gathering, we will explore the details of Teresa of Avila’s seven *moradas*, the spiritual chambers of our “interior castle” and how each one represents a stage of the journey to union with the Divine.

While this is not a linear path, Teresa’s instructions for the cultivation of contemplative practice (the “prayer of quiet”) serve to help the seeker navigate the common features of the inner wilderness, leading to peace and connectedness with the Beloved.

We will weave readings from Teresa’s writings with deep dialog, writing exercises and contemplative practice, paying special attention to how the

development of a contemplative life enables us to be of service in a wounded world.

HOLY TROUBLE: Teresa of Avila as a Guide to a Radically Authentic Life

Of all the mystics of any tradition, 16th century Spanish saint, Teresa of Avila, seems to retain an especially vibrant relevance to the lives of contemporary practitioners. Teresa navigates a fluid border between sublime states of love-longing and practical grounding in no-bullshit guidance for everyday life. She invites us into the transformational fire of mystical communion and delivers back into the world with renewed energy to be of service.

In this gathering, translator and teacher Mirabai Starr will share the distilled essence of Teresa's wisdom as a vessel for navigating turbulent times with insight, grace and humor.

We will weave readings from Teresa's writings with deep dialog, writing exercises and contemplative practice, taking refuge in the wellspring of Teresa's radical and empowering transmission. This retreat is appropriate for people of any gender.

WRITING WITH THE MYSTICS: A Contemplative Retreat

In this mostly silent retreat, we combine evocative readings from the mystics of various traditions with meditation practice and writing

exercises. Simple yoga asanas and interspiritual chanting ground and balance the contemplative focus.

Using Natalie Goldberg's Rules of Writing Practice, we access our authentic voice and find the freedom to speak our deepest truths.

A weekend of deep soul renewal, this gathering connects us with our spiritual ancestors and recharges our creativity.

WRITING YOUR STORY OF LOSS & TRANSFORMATION

Have you experienced a profound loss that changed everything? Have you longed to share your story, but don't know how to begin to articulate something so holy and mysterious, so beautiful and terrible? You are not alone. Whether we experience the death of a loved one, a serious health diagnosis, the loss of a job, a community, or a way of life, radical change can shatter our foundation and open us to vast new inner landscapes. And these losses are likely be accompanied by a juicy story – one that deserves to be told.

Join us for a [weekend] of guided writing exercises, deep dialog, and meditation. Emerge with a revitalized connection to the core of your experience, and a fearless voice to tell about it.

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LAYING DOWN YOUR BURDEN: Cultivating a Feminine Sabbath Practice

“Here. Come here,” Mirabai beckons in her new book, *WILD MERCY: Living the Fierce & Tender Wisdom of the Women Mystics*. “Take a moment to set aside that list you’ve been writing in fluorescent ink. The list that converts tasks into emergencies.”

As the brokenness of the world grows more apparent, our impulse to do something to alleviate suffering grows more urgent. And so it becomes increasingly vital that we cultivate sanctuary spaces where we can take refuge, lay down our burdens and refill the cup of our souls.

The world’s wisdom traditions offer multiple contemplative methods to encourage holy rest and sacred play. In Judaism, the Sabbath carries the quintessence of the feminine. Shabbat is interpenetrated by the Shekinah, the indwelling feminine presence of the Divine. As the sun goes down on Friday and the Sabbath candles are kindled, until its sets again on Saturday, we are invited to welcome the Shekinah into our hearts where she imbues us with the spiritual resource we need to navigate the blessed landscape of Sabbath. This ancient crucible is available to everyone – people of all faiths and those who do not subscribe to any faith – to transmute our overwhelm and restore our weary souls. Our Sabbath

practice need not conform to the traditional structure. We can adapt it to fit the shape of our own lives.

The important thing is to find a way to “keep the Sabbath holy” that works for you. Where your first thought may be, “I cannot afford to observe a Sabbath,” you will come to discover that you cannot afford not to.

In this gathering, contemplative activist Mirabai Starr shares the ways in which she has come to embrace Shabbat as a beloved female relative whose love and sustenance are vital ingredients in a full and fruitful life of loving service and caring community. Weaving contemplative readings, writing prompts, chanting, silent sitting, and group dialog, we will discover how to build what Heschel called “a temple in time” and enter it.