

# *The Alchemy of Menopause*

*The Journey Of Stepping Into Our Power  
And Becoming Who We Truly Are  
A Workbook by Cathy Skipper*



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#### **A Note on the “Alchemy of Menopause” Kit of Essential Oils**

I have created a kit to accompany this workbook, which contains a selection of essential oils I have used for the exercises in the workbook. As discussed below, you can pick your own oils. The kit is optional. I made the kit because it’s really difficult to find essential oils that are full of life and spirit. Most commercially available essential oils, while often smelling ‘good’, lack this vital ‘green’ spirit. You can order your kit on our website <https://cathysattars.com/>

# *The Alchemy of Menopause*



## *BOOK I: Preparing for the Menopause Journey of Transformation and Empowerment*

## Dear Reader:

With this workbook I offer a framework for women to use during peri-menopause. The first part (Book I) is an introduction to the different parts of ourselves that will undergo the transformational journey. The second part (Book II) takes us through the journey. Most women are not even aware of the correct medical definition of menopause. Neither are they aware of the empowering inner work that this initiatory period offers. *To me this is a sign that just like with childbirth, we have once again allowed our bodies and our lives to be taken out of our own hands.*

*Menopause is an Initiation. Now is the time to take back and redefine this momentous passage in our lives!*

I strongly encourage you to find a beautiful *journal* to record your experiences as you go on this journey. In addition I recommend *art making supplies* for your favorite media, e.g. collage, drawing, pastels. Throughout the book you'll see the collages I made for the different exercises. I know from direct personal experience how powerful the exercises are. I recommend that you have your journal with you at all times, so that you are ready to journal whenever your psyche invites you.

## The Medical Definitions of Menopause and Peri-menopause

Medically, *menopause* refers to a point in time when a woman has not had a period for 12 months and there are no other physiological or psychological reasons for this.

There is no precise medical definition of *peri-menopause*. Commonly, it refers to the period before menopause when physiological changes occur. A woman's menstrual cycle may change and she may experience night sweats, hot flashes, changes in sleep patterns and other changes.

*Yet the period leading up to menopause and menopause itself are much more than this. Menopause is the doorway to our true selves.*

From puberty to menopause, women's bodies are geared towards reproduction through their hormonal cycles. Peri-menopause is the passage to women's **real maturity**. The body stops preparing for a possible pregnancy every month. Finally, a woman can give birth to her **True Self** and **step into her**

**power.** It is the conscious journey through peri-menopause to post-menopause that enables a woman to become herself—**Her All-powerful Self.**

*Peri-menopausal women are not diseased. They are going through a natural, healthy process that involves their minds, bodies and spirits.*

**Hot flashes, sweating, intense emotions, tears and other experiences are gifts from our bodies and our souls.** They enable us to transform our experiences and the experiences we carry in our blood lines. We can change our story from ‘*what happened to us*’ to ‘*something that infuses us with wisdom and a deep understanding of life*’.

*Menopause is a celebration. We must raise the status of post-menopausal women and restore their value. We must return them to to where they rightfully belong.*

Many women do not see peri-menopause as an empowering, beautiful, natural transition to the next part of their lives. This is because they are disconnected from themselves and from the secrets of the wise crone. The secrets are like a buried treasure hidden in society’s false image of the wizened, wrinkled, mean old lady. We become frightened, afraid of being rejected, of not being loved anymore, of not being seen or listened to and of not being respected. We search for surface solutions for eternal youth, not realizing that the **true beauty of a women comes from inside.** Inner beauty is eternal. It can only be obtained through cultivating the soft strength that exudes from a woman who has transformed herself. Such a woman can see through the eyes of all and has become universal and unique at the same time. **She who has become woman.**

*Woman is she who has lived through the maiden, the mother or the motherless, the wife or the divorced and the lover or the loverless. Woman encompasses them all and has stepped beyond them all into herself.*

Nothing can rush the passage of time. There are certain wisdoms only time can bring. Menopause marks a passage from apprenticeship to mastery. The crone that has embraced the passage of menopause has mastered what it is to be fully woman. Her perspective has changed from receiving life’s experiences to becoming life’s experiences. She has given birth to her own maturity and to herself, finally.

Using the alchemical stages as elucidated by **Carl G. Jung**, I have created a framework to help women transform their view of menopause and of menopausal symptoms. With this framework, women can empower themselves to embrace this initiatory passage and finally become who they really are. In the first part of this workbook, I offer a new way of looking at menopause. I also offer tools, language and concepts to prepare you for the getting the most out of this transformational process. In the second part of “**The Alchemical Journey of Menopause**” I have laid out the journey through the alchemical stages.

In this first part, I prepare you for the alchemical journey. There are exercises to do and aromas to smell. Nothing is set in stone. The exercises and aromas are just suggestions. I encourage you to use them as starting points to inspire you to develop your own ideas and find your own plant allies. My most important goal is to change our view and way of traversing this beautiful and amazing period in our lives as women.

Our bodies and ourselves are the vessel through which this transformation of consciousness will happen. **Our wombs are the crucible that contains the alchemical process.** Before menopause, our wombs may have developed a new human being, but this time, in menopause, we ourselves go through all the stages of development and become independent beings ready for our new life.

*Menopause is not something to be cured.  
It is an opportunity for enormous growth.*

*"The power to make and relate belongs to the preponderantly feminine powers of the universe." (1)*

This feminine energy is contained in both men and women. Women have a responsibility to remember, heal and activate this feminine power for themselves and to enable men to recognize it in themselves, too.

Many traditional cultures recognize that **women are ready to take their role as healers and leaders** when they reach a certain maturity. The passage to this maturity is the transformative process of perimenopause.

**We must be careful of the symbols we attach to menopause!** Menopause is a woman-centered experience and needs a woman-centered approach.

*"Medicine women among the Pomo of California cannot practice until they are sufficiently mature; when they are immature, their power is diffuse and likely to interfere with their practice until time and experience have it under control." (2)*

Recognizing that menopause is woman's age of maturity and independence relieves younger women from the pressure "to have to know" and "to be in their power" right away. They can relax into their lifelong journey of transformation, knowing that they are still apprentices to themselves before menopause.

*“Wholly unprepared, we embark upon the second half of life...we take the step into the afternoon of life...with the false assumption that our truths and ideals will serve as before. But we cannot live the afternoon of life according to the program of life’s morning—for what was great in the morning will be little at evening, and what in the morning was true will at the evening have become a lie. For a young person it is almost a sin, or at least a danger to be too preoccupied with [the] self; but for the aging person it is a duty and a necessity to devote serious attention to [the] self.” (3)*

*Are you ready to birth yourself?*

*Are you ready to become who you really are?*

*Are you ready to love yourself?*

*Are you ready to restore balance in yourself?*

*Are you ready to become powerfully woman?*

This first part will prepare you for the journey through the alchemical stages laid out in the second part that **“transforms a woman from child bearer to bearer of wisdom.”** (4a) Stepping into ourselves and our authentic power is not only a gift to ourselves but to the whole world. Older women are important **promoters of social and planetary change.**

*“Menopause initiates women into psychic maturation...if they come to understand the true purpose of the dark, they can withdraw their energies from primarily taking care of others and devote them to nurturing their own mental and creative children.” (4b)*

We do not need menopause to be described with a medical vocabulary but with our own vocabulary of transformation and empowerment. In this workbook I mention different physical processes related to peri-menopause which I do not want to label ‘symptoms.’ I have decided not to include ‘textbook’ intellectual information about hormonal changes, etc. The goal of this workbook is to learn to use a different part of ourselves to attain a different form of knowledge about this life transition.

I believe that in the passage to menopause we no longer focus on external happenings. Our perspective is turned inwards. What we once knew as truth falls away and we are forced through a birth canal once again. The passage of **birthing ourselves** can take months to years. What is certain is that an old form

and way of being ends. We have no choice but to be squeezed by the contractions of menopause towards the new form that we know nothing about yet.

I want to explore the changes of peri-menopause as messengers from our psyche. Although there is an intimate link with medically defined physical changes in the body, I will not focus on these here. There are plenty of good books already about the subject.

The goal of working through these stages is to help you accept them and work with them. You will come to see them as deep experiential learning. These are the transformative steps to becoming a wise crone. Embrace them! Don't try to resist them or deny them! Don't see them as a medical ailment or disease!

I am using the term '**wise crone**' in her original meaning. *Crone* used to mean a woman that has journeyed through peri-menopause, embodied the wisdom of the transformation to post menopause and is sharing it with the world.

I want women to use this workbook to understand and reclaim their journey to Menopause. Every woman's journey is unique and personal. I intend to provide a framework with which you can explore and discover your own uniqueness. There is no right or wrong—only each woman's individual song.

The experiential exercises of this first part will introduce you to all parts of yourself, both on an intellectual and a visceral level. We are multidimensional and multifaceted. Just like our bodies, our psyches have an anatomy with invisible yet important structures and processes. Because these parts of us reside in the Unconscious, we are usually unaware of them, yet they make us whole.

A successful passage to menopause brings us the gift of maturity. Maturity means being intimate with all parts of ourselves. In order to live through this passage in a transformational manner, we must be conscious of all of ourselves, including our unconscious. We also need to understand what this maturity or wholeness we are aiming at *is*. Without this awareness, the journey is much more difficult.

In Book II, different aspects of the menopausal experience are explored as alchemical stages. Each aspect and stage have unique qualities that we will both discuss and experience through exercises. The exercises will guide you through your own inner process, which is unique and at the same time universal.



# The Alchemy of Menopause

## Chapter 3: The Role of Aroma in the Alchemical Journey

This exploration of menopause is based on the work I do with my husband **Dr. Florian Birkmayer** which we call **AromaGnosis**. **Aroma** is the quality that makes a thing perceptible to the olfactory sense. **Gnosis** comes from the Greek work for knowledge and represents directly perceived truth, rather than intellectual knowledge. We have found that there is nothing more powerful, yet safe and easy to use, to explore our psyches than aromas, such as essential oils or hydrosols. In each exercise, I suggest essential oils that have certain qualities to enhance the communication between different parts of my psyche.

In this work, there is no single best essential oil for each exercise or stage. There's no right or wrong. It is up to you to develop your instinct to help choose the right oil for you. In each exercise, I suggest an oil that has worked for me. I want you to consider this merely as a guideline. If you feel like using a different oil for the same exercise, this is perfectly ok. At this point, I would like to honor the work of **Jutta Lenze**. She is a German naturopath working in France. I was lucky enough to attend her workshops some years ago and have used her book "Les Huiles Essentielles Feminines" as a reference and inspiration for some of the oils I have worked with in this workbook.

### The Lady

*She quietly whispers inside me, gently powerful, strong and without hesitation*

*She guides me to myself, nurturing she helps me remember I am safe*

*She is part of me and of all that is, she connects me to the whole*

*She is mother, virgin, crone and goddess, she is my womanly strength*

*I hear her and all is well, the pulsing heart of all, lives also in me*

*But when I lose her, forget my centre and rush onwards into fear, I am separated*

*Estranged from the universe, floating anchor-less, gorged with terror*

*My cells cry out to be loved, my mind reels with the dread of rejection.*

*Between fearful dreams and large, strong steps away from this trepidation, I live*

*Balancing myself like a tight rope walker without a safety net,*

*My uterus with lesions carved out by the pain of my wildness spurned by patriarchy*

*is what I am sacrificing in becoming a wise crone with a direct link to her soft purring*

*So, in being forced to accept my wombleness, this destiny of mine*

*I call upon the ally, who will fill that space so it can breathe again and smile*

*Will it be the bees, eagle, mountain lion or even the great oak*

# *The Alchemy of Menopause* Chapter 3: The Role of Aroma in the Alchemical Journey

*that take their stance deep in my newly vacated centre?*

*I hear her whispering again, a shiver of recognition as I listen to her murmur*

*'No my love, its me...the lady, I have always been here, I am your core,*

*you searched for me in every flower you touched and tree you hugged*

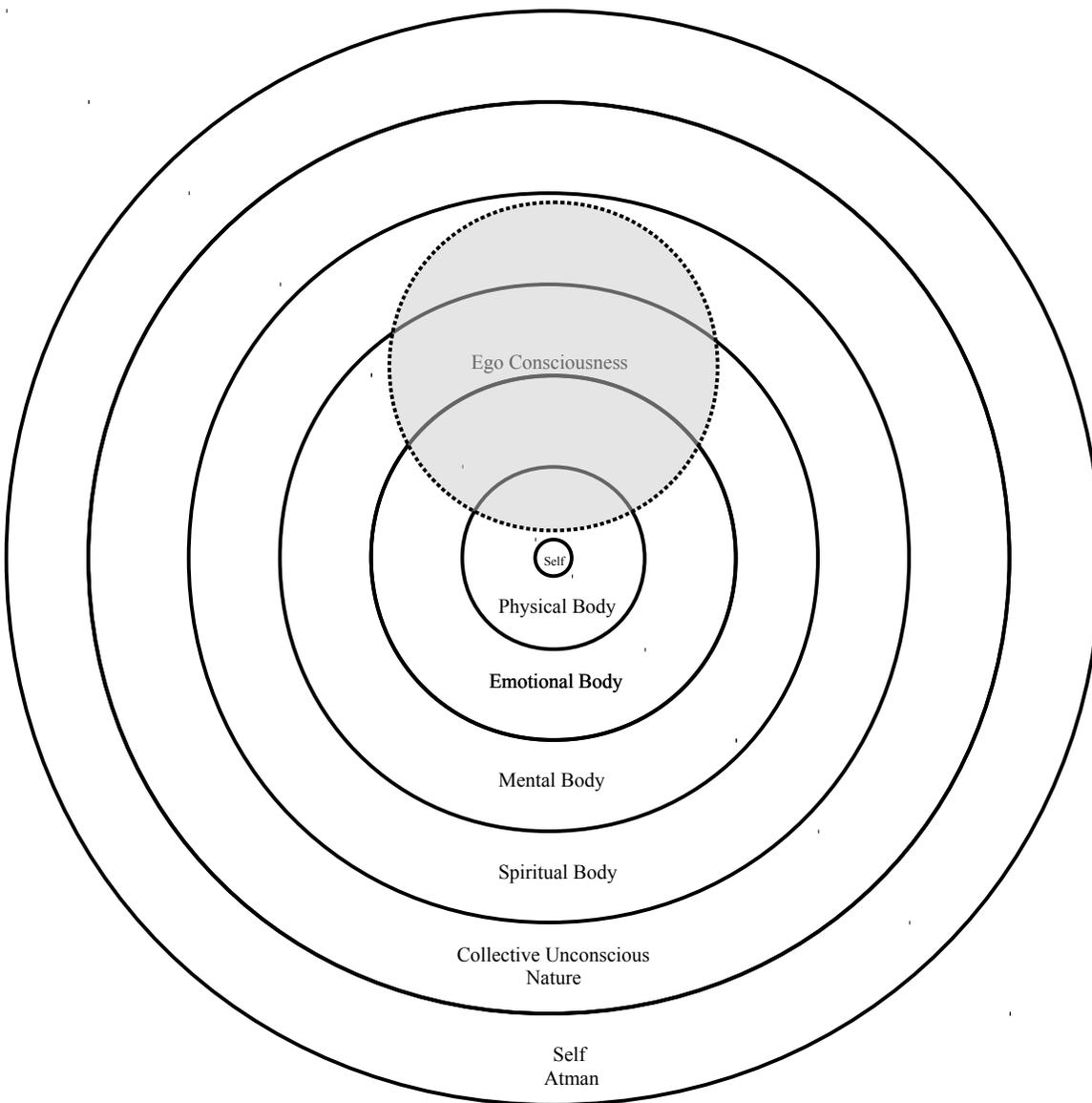
*I have been waiting lifetimes for you to listen and now my sweet, its time.*



# Chapter 4: The Anatomy of the Psyche

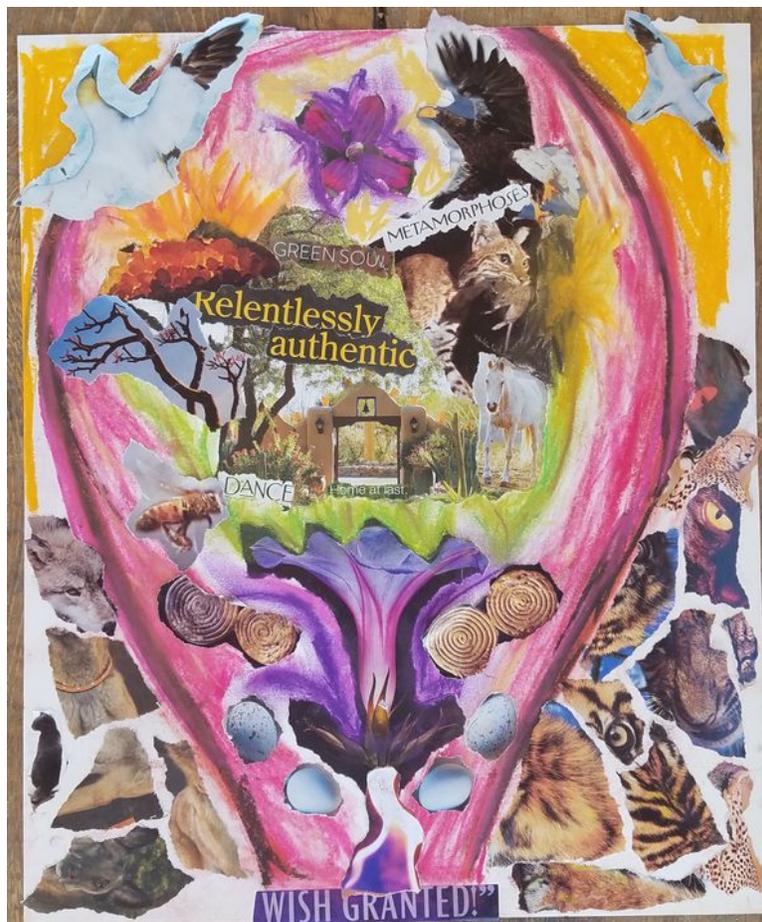
The preparation for the journey through menopause involves looking at the anatomy of the psyche. Like the physical parts of our organism, the psyche too has its own anatomy. This anatomy of the psyche has structures (archetypes) and processes (alchemical stages) which are more or less the same in all of us. We call it the **Concentric Circles**.

**Figure 1: The Concentric Circles**



## Chapter 4: The Anatomy of the Psyche

Looking at the diagram above you can see how the Self is both at the center and also the all encompassing outermost circle. The Self is like a fractal, repeating itself, like a fern, in the microcosms of ourselves and others and in the macrocosm ‘surrounding’ our ego, the self with a lower-case ‘s’. The different circles represent different aspects that we feel makes us ‘us’, such as our physical body, our emotional body, our mental body and our spiritual body. We are partially aware of those parts of ourselves and can focus our awareness, but we are largely unconscious of these parts of ourselves. For example, you don’t have to consciously remember every time you breathe, your physical body takes care of that, and many other functions, without ego awareness. The same is true for all the other bodies that make us up. With all these bodies, we interface with the Collective around us. From our unconscious we connect to the Collective Unconscious, like plants growing out of the soil. With our body we connect to Nature, which is also part of the Collective Unconscious, its physicality, just like our bodies, having arisen out of the Collective Unconscious.



**Illustration 1:** *Mixed-media Collage Representing My Intentions (Exercise 1)*

## Chapter 5: Individuation Means Becoming Fully Ourselves

Carl Jung saw that the human psyche has a natural inborn tendency to become more complete and whole. He called this natural tendency, which is the natural born right of every human being, **Individuation**.

**Individuation** means becoming *Whole* and bringing together all parts of ourselves. It means developing a deeper understanding of the intricate and ongoing relationship between the conscious and unconscious parts of ourselves. We become aware of elements of our personal unconscious and also elements of the Collective Unconscious within ourselves. Just like our digestive system continually processes the foods we eat, our psyche continually processes what is coming up from the unconscious into the conscious realm. Also like the digestive system, this process is ongoing and only ends when we die. The maturity we gain from the rite of passage of menopause is a deeper awareness of this process. The ultimate goal of **Individuation** is the alignment between the personal ego (or ‘self’) and the divine Atman or ‘Self.’ This is what the alchemists called the Sacred Marriage within ourselves, between our ego and unconscious, between self and Self. The goal is explained by Jung as: “*Identity or relation of the personal with the suprapersonal atman, or individual with universal tao. A perfect synthesis of conscious and unconscious.*” (5)

The challenge is that integrating unconscious complexes into conscious awareness is a difficult journey. It demands hard work and dedication. It challenges us to deepen our compassion for ourselves. There are many obstacles, including the ego itself. The ego wants to be in charge. The ego is attached to its own idea of how it wants to evolve, which is often focused on personal enhancement and material ‘success’, and that often stands in the way of being truly open to the journey the unconscious offers and demands of us.

*“The goal of individuation – a lifetime process of becoming a self aware person – is a compassionate relationship between the ego complex and other complexes. Said in a different way, we eventually become mindful caretakers of all our complexes, always open to thoughtful reflection on our motives and desires, no matter how alien or dark they may be.”* (6)

### Exercise 1: Defining Our Motives and Desires

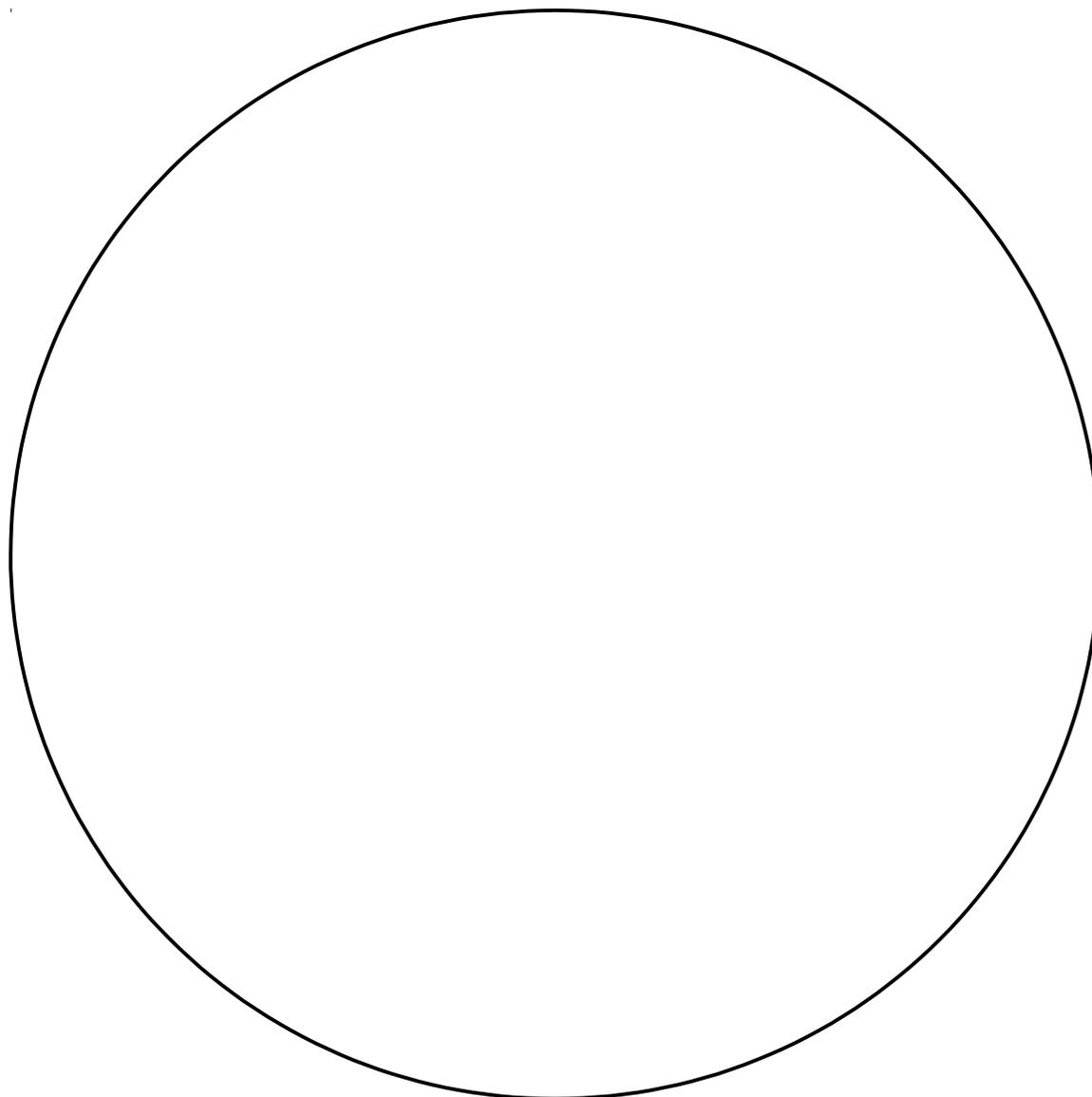
Carl Jung believed that the second part of our lives was for deeper inner work, part of which is encountering and honoring the Self. I believe the transition to menopause helps us do this.

For this exercise, use the large circle (Figure 2 below) and essential oil of Frankincense (*Boswellia carterii* or *Boswellia sacra*). [See the note on the kit at the beginning of this first part if you want to use the kit I created, which includes a small sample of my favorite Frankincense essential oil].

You can print out Figure 2 or draw a large circle on a piece of paper or in your journal.

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**Chapter 5: Individuation Means  
Becoming Fully Ourselves**

**Figure 2:** Circle for Exercise 1: Defining Our Motives and Desires



## Chapter 5: Individuation Means Becoming Fully Ourselves

Make sure that you are in a place where you can be quiet and undistracted for the duration of the exercise. Have the bottle of essential oil next to you so that you can smell it regularly throughout the exercise.

You can do this exercise by writing and drawing and if you prefer, you can do it by using collage. In that case, spend some time beforehand collecting source materials for collage images and words. I like old magazines that are full of photos, such as National Geographic and keep them in a file box. Then I can go through them when I do this or similar exercises and select images and words and then cut them out and arrange them and add writing and pastels if it feels right.

To start, put words and/or images inside the circle that describe motives and desires for the post-menopausal woman you are becoming. Take your time to really define your intentions. Where are you heading and what is important to you?

On the outside of the circle, add words and/or images that symbolize the paths you are letting go of, the things you want to let go of and also the things you were not able to pursue in this lifetime and that may have some sadness or regret about.

Take your time with this exercise. It is probably best not to do it all at once and consider it finished, but to find time regularly or when you get the urge to add to it.

Honoring the natural inclination to Individuation and cultivating a living understanding of and relationship with the Collective Unconscious, as it is represented in the esoteric traditions of many different cultures, is also what drives the New Age seekers, who explore eastern philosophy, yoga, etc., etc. in order to understand themselves better or to become more fully alive. This is why Jung is often considered the father of the New Age. He showed that this inclination is what the human soul naturally wants to do and is meant to do. He did sound a warning also, when he said '*We become enlightened, not by seeking more and more light, but by fearlessly confronting the darkness within ourselves.*' By seeking more and more light, I think he meant the New Age seekers that are always seeking bliss and are in fact running away from the darkness within themselves, where the real spiritual wisdom lies.



# Chapter 6: Transforming Experiences Into Wisdom

In this next section, we are going to become aware of the different parts that make up our psyche. We will learn to connect with them and then review their experiences in our lifetimes.

## Exercise 2: Looking At Our Experiences That Will Be Transformed Into Wisdom

Menopause is a transformational period in a woman's life. It is a liminal phase, a threshold, where she reviews her past experiences that will no longer weigh on her or rule her unconsciously, but will become her innate, personal wisdom.

This is an Exercise in four parts. Use the diagram below (Figure 3), which is called a quaternity. It is a shape that is found in most traditional cultures, including the Native American Medicine Wheel and represents wholeness. For this exercise, I have chosen to assign the physical body, the emotional body, the mental body and the spiritual body, one in each quadrant, in decreasing density starting with the physical body on the top right. You'll need two copies of the diagram for the exercise. Label the first quaternity diagram 'Experiences' and the second 'Wisdom Earned'.

### Part 1

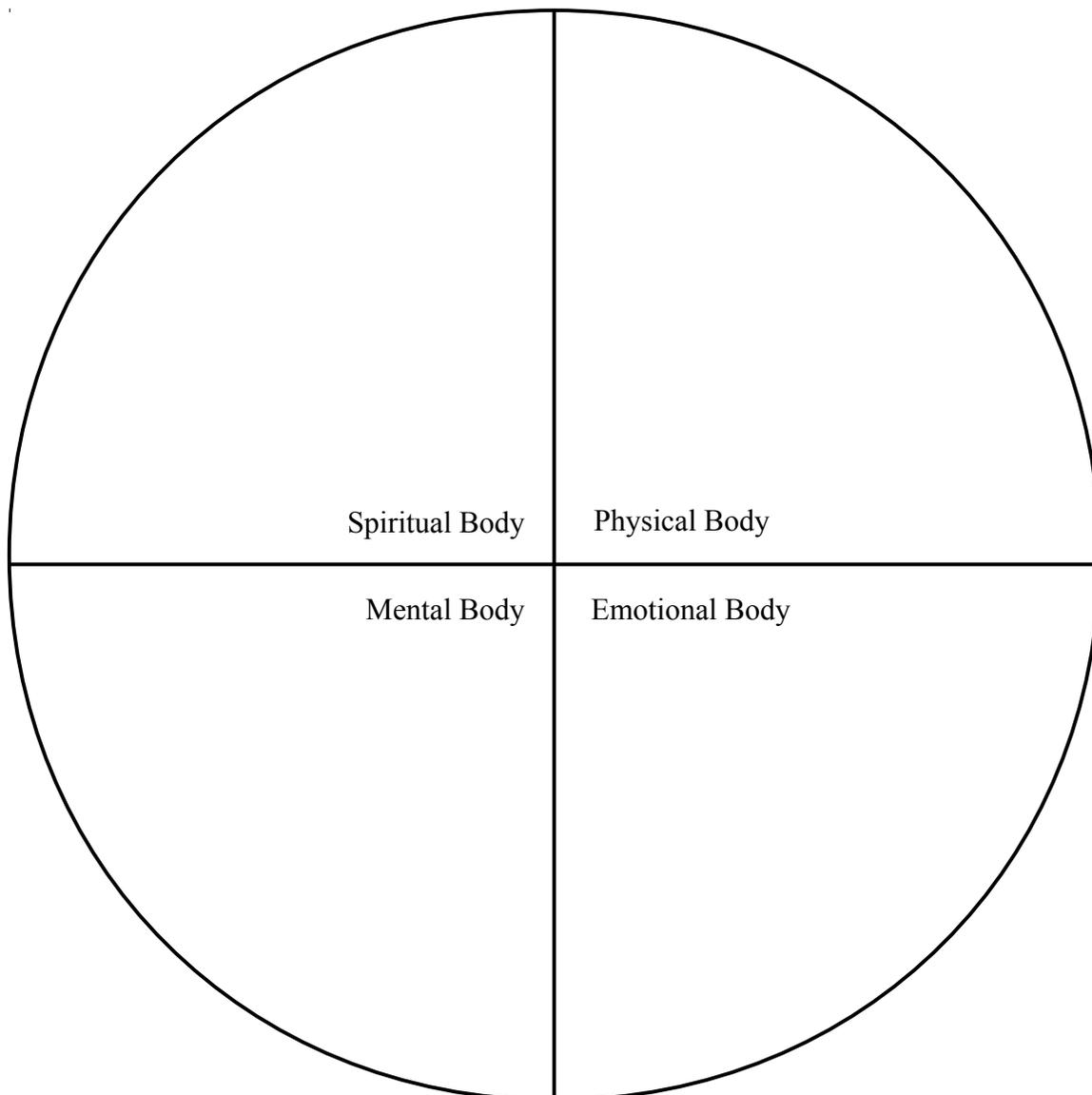
Make sure you are in a place where you can be quiet, comfortable and undisturbed for the duration of the exercise.

Get your **Angelica root** (*Angelica archangelica*) essential oil [see note on kit.] and smell it regularly throughout this exercise. I have chosen Angelica root because it is a great grounding oil. It helps us come into the physical body and be fully present on the earthly plane. Breathe deeply and regularly and exhale your tensions and inhale presence and awareness. When you feel relaxed and present, tune your awareness to your physical body. You can start with an overall view and then focus on each part, e.g. slowly scanning from your toes up to your head. Notice how your physical body feels. Are there any areas that are demanding your attention, by having tension? Tune in to where in your body you are holding tensions or blockages. As you detect any tensions or blockages, direct your breath to that area until they start to dissolve. Thank each area of your body that holds tension. Continue to tune your awareness to your physical body, as you write about the following question in the 'Physical Body' quadrant of the first circle, marked 'Experiences':

**What has my physical body experienced in this lifetime?**



**Figure 3:** Quaternity Diagram for Exercise 2





## Chapter 6: Transforming Experiences Into Wisdom

Take all the time you need to write about this. This time around doing the exercise, it could be 5 minutes. Another time it could take several days. If you need more space, you can add pages or write about what comes up in your journal.

Allow the experiences to come into your awareness through your body as you keep smelling the essential oil. Reflect on what your body has learnt from these experiences.

Begin to ask yourself, what will these experiences transform into as they become my inner wisdom? What will you be able to share with your community through this wisdom?

Write your answers in corresponding quadrant 'Physical Body' in the second circle named **"Wisdom earned."** If you run out of space you can add pages or write more in your journal.

*When I did this exercise myself, it was interesting to see the list of experiences my physical body had had during my lifetime grow so quickly. I was amazed at the wide variety and the sheer amount of different types of experience it had been through.*

*Very soon after completing the list, I sensed that my physical body was asking to be listened to in a different way. I was being invited into my own body and was finally ready to go there, to go home. I also realized that even though I was dissociated for many years of my life, peri-menopause is the time to transform this. [Dissociation is the psychological term for the experience of not being in one's body, which can range from numbness, to feeling disconnected from the body, all the way to feeling depersonalized and experiencing lost time. Dissociation is often expressed in language such as 'head in the clouds', or 'I feel like my head is a balloon on a string' or 'I can't feel my body' or 'I feel like I'm watching a movie of my life' or 'I feel I'm not real.'] Overcoming dissociation, I needed to feel my body—no matter how frightening that may seem—and authentically allow my awareness to fully enter my body. [I will not go into detail here about how I managed to do this. For now, all I can say is that it will be addressed in the couples & relationship class we are planning.] However, once I had fully come into my body, the feeling of being completely present was extremely pleasant. I realized how much it had been missing in my life and I allowed myself to begin to grieve that.*

***The wisdom I now know in my cells is: No matter how painful and frightening it may seem, it is important during the initiatory journey towards menopause to finally fully own our own bodies and fully live in them. Only then can we be harmoniously balanced in ourselves.***

### Part 2

Now use **Basil** essential oil (*Ocimum basilicum ssp. basilicum*) to open the heart chakra and help you tune your awareness to your emotional body. Some people think of this body as a little larger and less dense than our physical body. Just like your physical body has a physical heart, so the emotional body has its own heart. Our heart chakra is the doorway to the emotional body and beyond. You can imagine



## Chapter 6: Transforming Experiences Into Wisdom

it in whatever way works for you. Your emotions are not just random items in a void. The emotional body is connected and alive, even if we can't see it with our eyes.

Breathe deeply and regularly. Exhale tension and inhale awareness. When you feel relaxed and aware, tune into your emotional body. Notice how it feels. Allow yourself to become aware of any specific feelings rising up, which may be intense or confusing or be blockages. If your awareness waivers due to the intensity of these feelings, simply focus on your breathing and inhale awareness until you are fully aware and centered. Honor each feeling and allow them to transform or release. Also feelings that may be hidden may come up. Receive them with welcoming compassion into your awareness.

As you keep tuning into your emotional body and smelling basil essential oil, write about the following question in the appropriate quadrant 'Emotional Body' in the quaternity labeled 'Experiences.' If you need more space you can add pages or keep writing in your journal.

### **What has my heart felt in this lifetime?**

Again, take as much time as you need. Allow your psyche to digest and understand the wisdom that you will glean from your heart's experiences. You can write those in the quadrant 'Emotional Body' in the circle'

*Reading back through my own list that I wrote during this exercise, the first thing that I felt I was learning was that feelings are not permanent. We experience many, many feelings in our lifetimes, but they are all transitory. It is hard sometimes to remember this when we are feeling something intense or difficult. It is hard to remember, both in our suffering and our joy, that 'this too shall pass.'*

### **Part 3**

Smell **cedar** (*Cedrus atlantica*) essential oil to stimulate intellectual concentration and sharpen consciousness and become aware of your mental body. Breathe deeply and regularly, inhaling awareness and exhaling mental tensions. When you feel relaxed, tune your awareness to your mind or mental body. Some people think of it as a body that's a little larger and less dense than our emotional body. Notice how it feels. Are there any thoughts that are going around and around, mental tense spots, or patterns? Do you feel clear in your mind or is it foggy? Do you feel bright or in a funk? Does it feel comfortable to be aware of your mental body, perceiving it from your awareness?

Write about the following question in quadrant 'Mental Body' of the circle '**Experiences**':

### **What has my mind done in this lifetime?**



## Chapter 6: Transforming Experiences Into Wisdom

As before, journal about this for as long as you need.

Reflect on the wisdom these experiences will be transformed into in the ‘mental body’ quadrant of the circle of **‘Wisdom Earned.’**

*Again, whilst doing my list and journaling, I realized how many different ways I had used my mind in this lifetime. It went from worrying, to writing books, to learning a foreign language and so many other ways. I realized also how our mind is not in charge. The mind tries to convince us that it’s in charge, and sometimes it feels like it is. We have to remember that we always have a choice about how we react to things and how we use our mind.*

### Part 4

Using **cypress** essential oil (*Cupressus sempervirens*) for its ability to connect you to your spiritual body. Breathe deeply and regularly. When you feel relaxed tune your awareness to your soul or spiritual body, however you envision it. Observe how it feels. Allow yourself to explore its landscape. In the quadrant ‘Spiritual Body’ of the ‘Experiences’ circle, write about the question:

### How has my soul evolved in this lifetime?

Reflect on what the wisdom is that this soul evolution is transforming in the ‘Spiritual Body’ quadrant of the **‘Wisdom Earned’** circle.

*When I did this exercise, I realized how my soul had been pushing me to do things and make decisions about my life—decisions that were often challenging—in order to help me grow and connect more deeply to my Soul.*

Reflect on all that came up during this exercise. Look for hidden symmetries, connections, parallels, or pairs of opposites, or cycles, or evolutionary relationships between the different quadrants and circles. Look how the quadrants reflect each other and your life experiences. See the hidden patterns and feel how sacred they feel. Even if you don’t understand or comprehend, feel the awe. You are a microcosm, you contain multitudes. Look back at Figure 1, the **Concentric Circles** and explore how both your **Personal Unconscious** and **Collective Unconscious** manifest and interact within you.

We will now explore these more.

## The Personal Unconscious

The Personal Unconscious is defined by Carl Jung as follows:

*“Everything of which I know, but of which I am not at the moment thinking; everything of which I was once conscious but have now forgotten; everything perceived by my senses, but not noted by my conscious mind; everything which, involuntarily and without paying attention to it, I feel, think, remember, want, and do; all the future things which are taking shape in me and will sometime come to consciousness; all this is the content of the unconscious... Besides these we must include all more or less intentional repressions of painful thought and feelings. I call the sum of these contents the ‘personal unconscious’.”*

A very important aspect of the personal unconscious is the Shadow. You can think of it as one of the organs of our psyche so to speak, or more precisely an archetype. An archetype has both a personal aspect and a collective aspect. We need to understand our Shadow better in order to prepare for **The Alchemical Journey of Menopause** in the second part.

## The Shadow

*Facing Our Shadow* is a very important part of the work of transformation towards Individuation. Learning to allow Shadow elements of ourselves to come into the light and be recognized is a large aspect of the healing journey. The Shadow is everything about ourselves that we are not aware of, things that we have unconsciously repressed and things we’ve never been aware of. A common mistake people make when thinking about the Shadow is to think that it is made up entirely of ‘negative’ or shameful aspects of ourself that we are trying to repress. We may unconsciously repress certain parts of ourselves, in which case that is part of the Shadow. If we consciously try to repress something, it can’t be part of the Shadow, by definition. If we consciously have a very negative attitude towards ourselves and our abilities, this suggests that our innate power is hiding in the Shadow. Most people encounter the Shadow through projection. Projection is the unconscious process of projecting shadowy parts of ourselves onto other people. If we have a strong negative emotional reaction to someone, this may mean we are projecting a shadowy aspect of ourselves onto them. Now it doesn’t mean the other person is a ‘blank slate’, because of course they bring their own shadow projections to the table. Often people and even entire groups or societies have simultaneous mutual Shadow projections.

How is the Shadow formed? Our cultures, societies and upbringing play a large role in teaching a child what is acceptable behavior and what is not. We learn very young, before we are conscious, to suppress those parts of ourselves that are considered undesirable or shameful, etc. We also learn how to do this

unconsciously, automatically and continuously. The parts of ourselves that we ‘exile’ in this way, become part of our Shadow. This accumulation is the personal or ego Shadow.

Although we all have parts of ourselves that we see as negative and try to repress, we may be completely or mostly unconscious of why and how we have taken on this attitude towards ourselves. In that way, these parts we try to repress are one aspect of the Shadow, but they are not the whole picture. In fact, you could say that if you are conscious of a negative attitude you have about yourself, it is no longer in the Shadow, since you are conscious of it. Nevertheless, we all have many unconscious judgements about ourselves, that we are often completely unaware of.

As an archetype, i.e. as a part of the Collective Unconscious that manifests in us and can even possess us, the **Shadow** basically encompasses everything that we do not know about ourselves. It contains both positive and negative, including instincts, beliefs and ideas that we have kept from the light of consciousness for some reason. For example, as a child we may have unconsciously learnt that our strength was a threat to adults and other children around us. So we unconsciously learned to hide our strength in the personal Shadow. This means our ego is unconscious of our own strength and may be surprised when we express our strength. There are hidden treasures in our Shadow!

## Exercise 3: What is the Shadow of patriarchal society’s beliefs about the crone and old women?

Imagine yourself standing in the position of the observer in the middle of the circle in the diagram in Figure 4 below. Use **Helichrysum** (aka immortelle aka everlasting) (*Helichrysum italicum*) essential oil to help you connect to your personal unconscious.

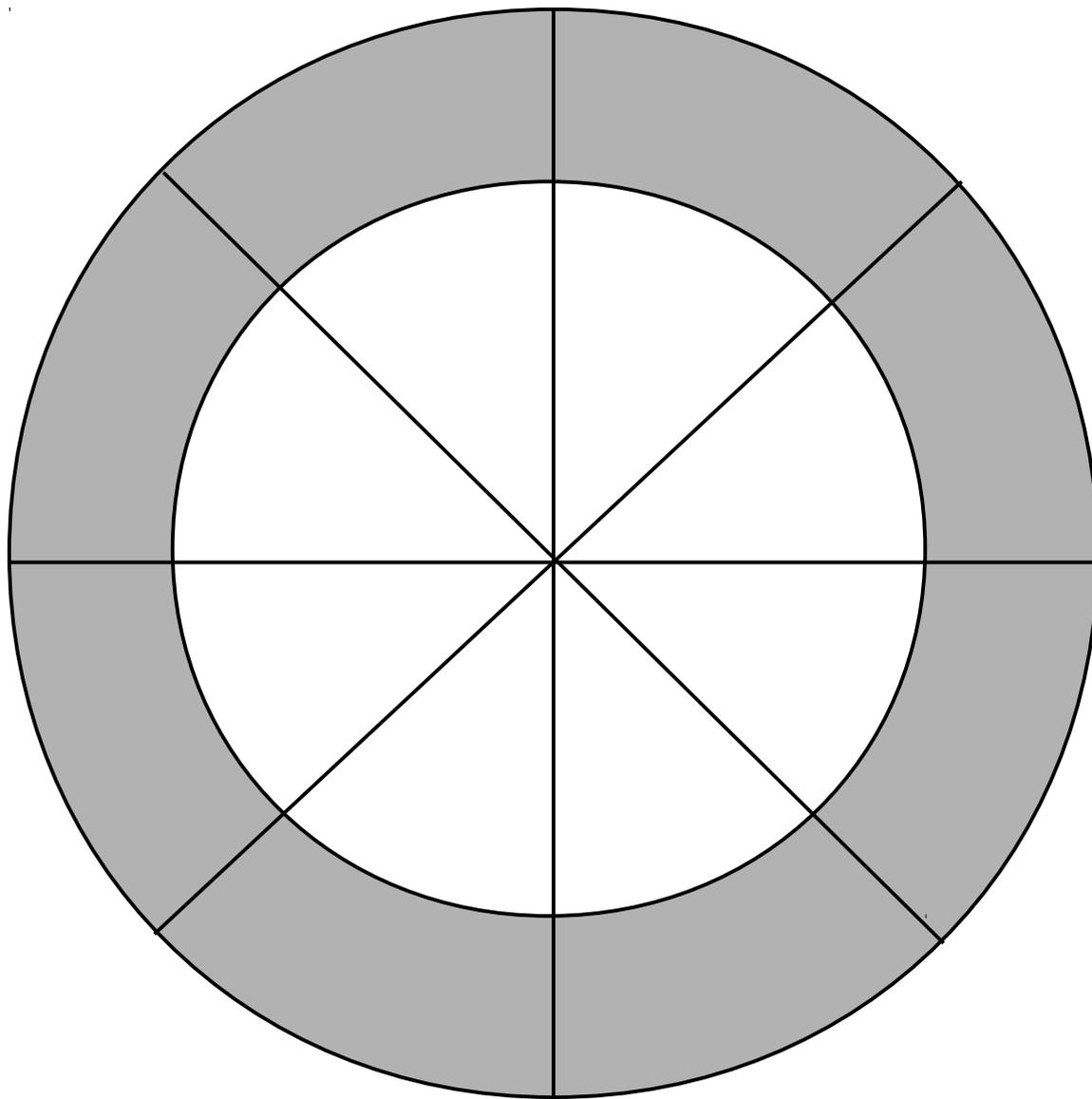
*“[Helichrysum] acts as a bridge between our conscious and unconscious parts...it constitutes the passage between a life where we ‘function’ to lead us towards an existence that we have chosen with our heart’s intelligence in terms of our true aspirations...and as we allow our light to shine more and more we unconsciously allow others the right to do the same. By liberating from our own fears, our presence automatically liberates others.*

*Helichrysum pushes us to share the treasures of our true feminine nature and light to the world...do not be frightened!” (7)*

### Step 1) Inner Circle: Society’s Beliefs About Older Women

In each section of the inner, light circle in Figure 4 below, write a belief that society has about old women, e.g. “*older women are ugly*”, “*older women are boring*”...

**Figure 4:** Diagram for Exercise 3 Shadow of the Crone



## **Step 2) Expanding Our Awareness and Discovering the Shadow**

Take each belief in each section of the inner circle and turn it into its opposite. Feel free to change the wording around a little so it sounds right. Trust your feeling to discover the right words, e.g. “*older women are beautiful inside and out*”, “*older women are deeply inspiring*”, etc. Write this opposite phrase on the shadowy section of the larger circle, just outside the related societal belief.

## **Step 3) Exploring the Shadow’s Wisdom**

Along the outside of the larger circle, outside each section, write a sentence beginning with “I” that incorporates each section’s shadowy wisdom, e.g. “*I am beautiful inside and out*” “*I am deeply inspiring,*” etc.

## **Step 4) Your New Mantra**

When you have finished, read everything you have written inside and along the outside of this circle out loud. It is very important to read this out loud, do not skip this step. Feel how powerful it feels to say it out loud. These are your new mantras, so to speak. See how it transforms you and your Shadow. You can repeat this exercise as often as you need. The Shadow will always be there, but you can radically transform your relationship to it. Your Shadow can become your best Ally.



## The Collective Unconscious

*The Collective Unconscious* is different from the Personal Unconscious. The Personal Unconscious is part of the Collective Unconscious. The Collective Unconscious is trans-personal and the Personal Unconscious arises out of it, like a plant from a seed in the ground. The Collective Unconscious is vast, connecting the whole human species and the beings and Nature around us, like the air that we all breathe. It goes beyond social and cultural boundaries, it contains everything that is common to all human beings. Just like we all have lungs and kidneys and hearts and livers, there are common forms and processes. The forms are called archetypes. What the potential held in a seed is to a plant, or the information in a strand of DNA is to a cell, so archetypes are to our psyches and reality. All human emotions, psychic processes and archetypes are held in potentiality within the Collective Unconscious. It could be described as an unconscious mind common to all of humanity, out of which we all arise. You could think of it like a gigantic invisible ecosystem which infuses all of reality. You could think of it like a vast wireless internet that connects all the seen and unseen beings and worlds. It wants to reach self-awareness, like each of us and this is why it created us. The macrocosm truly is the microcosm.

In the menopausal journey we will be working with the unconscious masculine aspect of women's psyches, which is called the **Animus**. In men, the corresponding part of their Unconscious is called the **Anima**. *One reason the Animus (and Anima) is important to explore and understand is because in each of us it is the bridge between the Personal Unconscious and the Collective Unconscious.*

## The Animus

As we have already seen in working with the Shadow, our psyches are full of opposites. We are in female bodies and commonly we consciously identify as women. This is not to imply that there is anything wrong with people who identify as transgender. For this workbook we are focusing on menopause which is a process deeply rooted in the female body. It is important to remember that when we talk about the feminine and masculine in this context we are not referring to male and female but to opposite or contrary forces that are interconnected and complement each other. Within our seemingly feminine psyche, we have an unconscious masculine aspect, which is known as the **Animus**. The ancient Chinese yin/yang symbol represents the wholeness that arises from the opposites, such as the conscious (ego) and the unconscious (Shadow), or the masculine and the feminine. In the yin/yang, within each swirl, is an eye-like circle of the opposite color, e.g. the masculine in the feminine and the feminine in the masculine. In my experience, the menopausal journey towards becoming a wise woman or crone is the time in our lives when we as women are ready to recognize and build a conscious relationship with our Animus.

Because the Animus is part of their unconscious, most women first encounter their Animus in unconscious projection onto men in their lives.

*‘To become conscious of anima and animus is the second step to the realization of the self and it is only accomplished in relation to someone of the opposite sex.’(8)*

This can be very clearly seen when someone is in the “falling in love” stage of a romantic relationship. We have all fallen madly in love with someone and then later wondered why. Especially early in a relationship, when we barely know the other person, they are a perfect ‘blank’ screen for our unconscious projections. We feel whole when we are with this person, we feel that special tingle, because we have asked them to unconsciously carry and act out this hidden part of ourselves, which seemingly completes us. We have to remember that this feeling is a clue that we are projecting our Animus. This wholeness is what we are looking for, but we must let go of the idea that another person completes us. Our journey to wholeness through the relationship with our Animus is inward and with oneself. We must get to know and recognize our own Animus as a precious part of ourselves. Eventually, an inner union will take place and then the wholeness we seek will be found within. This is the Sacred Union.

The best way to begin to get to know our own Animus is to learn to identify what we are projecting onto men in our lives, for example our partners. Another way we can encounter the Animus is in our dreams. Often male characters in dreams are aspects of this part of ourselves. There is no one ‘correct’ face of our Animus, rather each male figure we encounter it in is like a mosaic piece. Because it is a living being in the Unconscious, we can’t ever fully make it conscious. All we can aim for is to heal and evolve our relationship to this part of our psyche.

In part two of this workbook, we will do more in depth work to build relationship with this masculine aspect of ourselves as part of the alchemical journey through menopause. To prepare us for this, I have come up with some exercises that will help you identify parts of your Animus and understand more about its character traits.

When we speak about the Animus we are not only referring to particular male figures, but also to masculine-like energies, such as thinking and action in contrast to feminine-like qualities of feeling and intuiting and we all have both of these aspects to us. As we are feminine outwardly, it is the inner relationship with the Animus that enables our intuitive information to be useful, reflected upon and finally acted upon. If we do not work with our Animus, we will continually look for completion outwardly in relationships. If we are able to consciously relate to our Animus, our psyches become ‘alive’ with a continual dance between the passive and active parts of ourselves. We begin to feel whole and we no longer search for completion outside ourselves.

*“Logic and intuition become balanced. Spirit and soul are united. All of the negative self talk turns to positive encouragement. All of those intuitive impulses are acted upon with wise judgement and*

*confidence. Creative ideas now easily find shape in manifest form. The controlling woman lets the reins go and steps into a place of authentic power.” (9)*

As you do the following exercises and reflect on your Animus, bear the following question in mind:

What is the current balance between masculine and feminine energies in my life and what needs further development?

## Exercise 4: Identifying Animus traits through Myths, Stories and Movies

Think about male characters in myths or stories, books or movies, that provoke strong feelings in you. These can be both strong positive feelings such as attraction, as well as strong negative feelings. Pick one of the characters and write about your feelings about this particular male character. It doesn't matter so much if you are accurate in representing the character in the story, just explore your feelings. What is it about them that attracts you or provokes these strong feelings in you? Repeat this exercise for several different male characters. After you have done this exercise with several (at least four) male characters, look for patterns. Are there similarities in the characters? Are there seeming paradoxes within characters? Are there pairs of characters that seem like opposites?

## Exercise 5: Identifying the Animus in Your Dreams

The Animus can often appear as an important character in a woman's dreams. It may evolve and take on different forms as a woman develops through her life. The Animus can present in both positive and negative forms, and regardless of what form it takes, we need to incorporate the unconscious wisdom it offers into our conscious sense of ourselves. Early in life, the Animus may often appear as a fatherly character, e.g. protecting and guiding, but it can also be menacing and devouring. As we grow up, the Animus can become more forceful and different forms of taking action can become the dominant characteristic. As we age and our relationship to our Animus evolves, it can develop into a teacher, guide, mentor, elder, priest. It can become a figure inspiring the expression of a woman's creative self. Finally the last expression may be a spiritual guide, a magician, sage, Buddhist teacher.

If you've ever kept a dream journal, review your dreams and pay particular attention to the male characters that appear. Write a list of the character traits they have. If you do not already have a dream journal, I recommend you start writing down your dreams. After you've reviewed a number of your dreams, examine the masculine characters in your dreams and the personality traits they possess. Ask yourself the following questions:

1. Do the characters in my dreams have similar traits, if so what are they?
2. Do the characters have seemingly opposite traits and if so, what are they?
3. How do I feel about the male characters in my dreams? Do I like them or not? Do they scare me? What feelings do they trigger in me and why?
4. Are there any traits in the male dream characters that I need to integrate into my conscious self?
5. Are there traits in the male characters that I need to practice compassion towards?
6. Are there traits in the males character that I need to remember are part of myself?
7. Can I find a funny or comic side to any of the male characters that frighten me? What can I say to them to help make them less frightening to me?

Once you have begun to be a little more familiar with your Animus through the traits you have identified in the exercises above, you can meet him using a technique called, **Active Imagination**.

## Exercise 6: Meeting Your Animus

You can use **Ginger** (*Zingiber officinale*) essential oil to smell when doing this exercise, which can be helpful due to its yang energy. Ginger is “Traditionally associated with the astrological planet Mars – a symbol of force and vitality – this dynamic fiery essence activates will power, stimulates initiative, and restores determination.” (10)

Get yourself comfortable and make sure you are breathing deeply and regularly.

When you feel relaxed, close your eyes.

Imagine you are in a simple room in front of a door.

When you are ready to meet your Animus, open the door and walk through it.

Observe the landscape that you have stepped into.

Feel the air on your skin, listen to the silence all around you.

When you are ready ask your Animus to show itself.

Allow it time to appear.

When your Animus appears you will feel a change in your inner energy.

Observe your Animus.

What does he look like?

What attributes, such as body posture does he have?

When you are ready, ask him if he has anything to say to you?

Allow him time to express himself.

Ask him what you need to manifest in your life.

Ask him if he is angry about anything.

Ask him how you should use your mind.

Ask him where in your life you need to have courage.

When you feel ready, say whatever you need to say to your Animus.

Thank your Animus and allow him to leave.

Open your eyes and journal about what you and your Animus talked about.

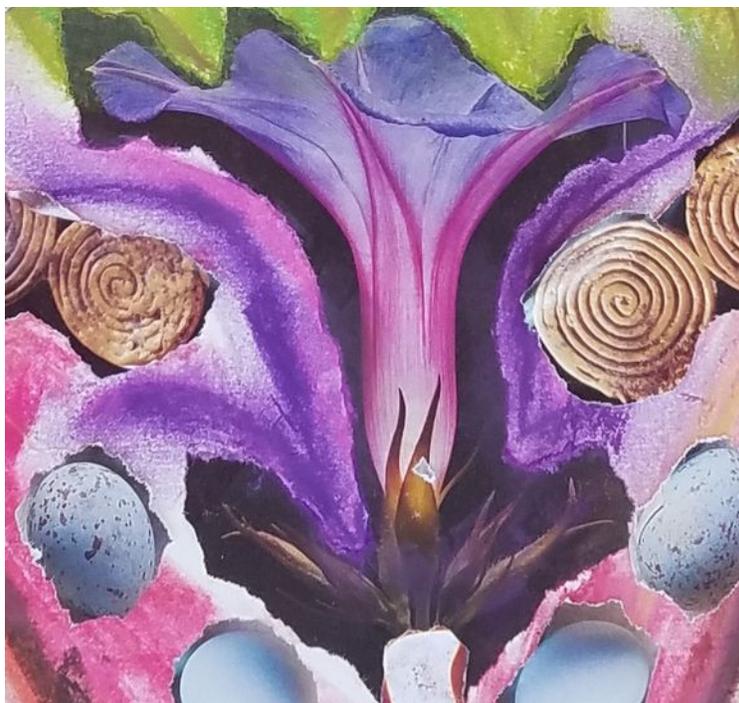
*When I did this exercise, it was very powerful. I felt like I met a very positive aspect of my Animus for the first time in my life. I also realized that I had been dominated by very negative Animus energy, that had been imposed upon me through a genealogical situation in my female lineage. On my mother's side the family were of Anglo-Indian origin, the British had been encouraged to marry Indian women during the colonization period in India. Although I knew this and felt my Indian link deeply, it was a taboo subject in my family and many of the Indian roots were denied. This left me feeling a huge conflict and split with my animus that had in part been passed down to me through this denial of the feminine roots and origins. I had many dreams whilst doing this menopause work about a frightening, aggressive, diseased masculine figure. It was great to become aware of a more positive aspect of my masculine, see the difference between the two and realize that I can build a healthy relationship to both, by collaborating with the former and showing compassion to the latter.*

*“A woman's undeveloped animus can capture her in feelings of worthlessness and despair, or tie her outer life to an authoritarian father figure or an abusive partner. The woman who is unconscious of her masculine side, but identifies with her animus, soon loses contact with her feminine nature and behaves as an inferior man. She becomes opinionated, rigid, and aggressively bitter, becoming more interested in power than in relatedness. Jung said that a woman overtaken by her animus is obstinate, lays down the law, harps on principles, is a word-monger, and is argumentative and domineering. A healthy and true relationship to the animus, on the other hand, will give her more self-confidence, and will support her creativity and intellectual efforts.” (11)*

## Chapter 9: Conclusion of Book I

The explanations and exercises laid out in Book I of the workbook have introduced us to important parts of ourselves that we need to be in conscious relationship with as we go through the alchemical journey of menopause.

The exercises are similar to rituals. Rituals evolved so the conscious can communicate with the unconscious. These exercises stimulate the psyche into processing and integrating parts of our undiscovered self and thus transform ourselves inwardly. I believe that the ideal time to do this work is during that liminal phase in a woman's life between the gradual ending of her fertility and the beginning of her wisdom years. Women's physical bodies change during this period, triggering this transformation. She is called from deep within to take time for herself, to be quiet, to reflect and carry out the inner work necessary to birth herself into her strength, wisdom and maturity. It is vital today that women embody their own metamorphosis, not just for themselves but for their communities and the world as a whole. The imbalance between the masculine and feminine in the world and within us urgently needs to be addressed. It is the wisdom of the crone that can lead women and the feminine in men towards a much needed, more harmonious relationship with our true mother, the Earth.





*BOOK II: The Alchemical Journey  
of Menopause*

The alchemical stages are seven stages identified by Carl Gustav Jung through many years of studying **ancient alchemical texts**. Jung realized that the alchemists were projecting their own unconscious inner attributes onto the materials they were trying to turn into gold and also projecting their own unconscious transformational processes when they described the alchemical stages required to turn base materials into gold. Each of these universal unconscious transformative processes are represented by a different alchemical stage. By understanding the qualities of each stage, we can recognize what stage we're in and thereby become conscious of what we're going through that we're often unconscious of. By maintaining and returning to awareness as we go through this cyclical inner journey that our psyche invites us on, we can transform challenging experiences into wisdom and progress on the journey towards **'Individuation,' of becoming the Self**. We will describe the stages and do exercises to experience them and work through them in the order that Carl Jung described them. However, they can happen in any order.

I will be guiding you through each of the alchemical stages in this workbook to help you understand and transform yourselves during the process of becoming a wise woman. Changing our attitudes and ways of traversing the journey from peri- to post-menopause is not only important for owning our own strength and maturity, but is vital for future generations. Young women need to know that this is an empowering rather than diminishing period of a woman's life. Reclaiming our strength in this way will have an impact on our culture as a whole.

*"Similar to the menstruation cycle, the voice of our souls beckons at peri-menopause, not temporarily this time, but permanently." (12)*

The physical pains of menopause are natural. Just as in childbirth, they accompany a huge **transformational experience, a birth**. This time the birth is our own.

## Awakening the Kundalini

The word kundalini means "coiled, circular, annular" and refers to a snake-like primal energy coiled at the base of the spine. Women need and use this energy in the different stages of their lives. When they are menstruating the kundalini energy that is drawn into the pelvic region in order to bring movement to the menstruating process is released with the menstruation and returns to the earth. Kundalini energy is also used during childbirth accompanying and underlying the rhythmic contractions and expulsive actions. Finally during menopause the kundalini is released from the lower pelvic regions and instead of being drawn downwards with menstrual blood or birthing, it is drawn upwards in the form of what we call "hot flashes" but which are really **waves of powerful, transforming energy** spiraling up through the chakras. It connects women to the whole through the crown chakra, whilst activating the feminine qualities of instinctive awareness and consciousness leading to a deep level of self knowledge

based on experience. The kundalini energy supports the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual changes that mean we come back as another person viewing the world in a completely different way.

Let's us now go through the Alchemical Stages.



## Hot Flashes and Calcination

The chemical definition of *calcination* is “heating to high temperatures in air or oxygen.” This alchemical term is the origin of this chemical process, but it also represents a transformative process in our body and psyche.

This first stage corresponds to the **Fire** element. Fire is the **great transformer**. The alchemists had to heat up their starting materials in the alchemical vessel in order to transform them to a workable form, to activate the hidden potential within and to burn off what is no longer needed.

Women are their own cauldron and crucible. The alchemy of menopause happens within us. This first stage takes the outer form of **hot flashes**, which we can look at as **the fire of inner transformation**. *Hot flashes* inform us that transformation is happening. **The kundalini is rising**. Hot flashes are a positive and natural life process.

*Are we ready to learn to embrace this phase and go on the journey it invites us on? Are we ready to radically transform our relationship to all aspects of ourselves?*

For the journey through peri-menopause to be transformative, we have to allow it to change us. The ego needs to be softened. It needs to become less defensive. It needs to be broken down to some degree, in order for us to become able to receive the energies and wisdom of our transformational journey.

## Exercise 7: Looking at Hot Flashes in a New Way

It's best to do this exercise while you are having a hot flash. I recommend you practice ‘beforehand’, i.e. when you're not having a hot flash, so you are familiar with the exercise and can carry it out when you are experiencing hot flashes.

Before beginning this exercise, make sure you are sufficiently grounded and that you are in a place where you will not be disturbed for the duration of the exercise.

For example, you can either lie down or sit up straight with both feet firmly anchored on the ground.

When you are settled:

Become aware of your breath.

Observe as it enters and leaves your body.

Breathe deeply, calmly and rhythmically.

Allow the breath itself to trigger the exhale.

Feel into the pause between the inhale and exhale.

Notice the slightly warm, moist sensation as your breath leaves through your nostrils.

You are now grounded, relaxed and breathing rhythmically.

Visualize a beautiful coiled serpent asleep at the bottom of your pelvic region.

Observe its colors and patterns.

Trust your kundalini to take the form that feels right for you.

This is your unique kundalini energy.

When you feel a hot flash starting, feel it rising up inside of you.

Your beautiful snake is waking up.

Follow it as the heat rises.

Feel it spiraling through the chakras, upward until it gets to the crown chakra.

Observe it rising through the crown chakra.

As it leaves the crown chakra, this coiling hot, serpentine energy connects you directly to a new expansive consciousness.

Feel each hot flash as it brings up and transforms your life experiences.

Feel it connecting your soul and your body.

Feel it grow into new wisdom and understanding.

As you do this exercise, be careful to allow the kundalini energy to lead the way.

Just observe and notice what comes up to be transformed.

When the hot flash subsides, thank it and your body for the wisdom they have shared.

Feel your body fully as you open your eyes.

Feel your feet in the ground.

Now you are ready to carry this wisdom.

Take some time to write down your observations and feelings in your journal.

## The Fiery Emotions of Calcination

In addition to the physical expression in a hot flash, the **calcination** stage can also be felt on an emotional level by surges of **anger and similar fiery emotions**. *Anger* behaves like fire. First there is a build up of friction until the flame ignites. It can appear and spread very rapidly and it can feel hard to control.

Peri-menopausal women may feel more and more *irritated* and *frustrated* with the outdated ways by which they have been living, working and relating. At some point, the anger will explode. The suppressed, held-back, frustrated feelings are revealed and liberated. There is a need for change and transformation. Many women at this stage in their lives describe intense feelings of wanting to change old patterns. They need their family members to become more independent, for example. They have an increasing desire for alone time. Anger is common. All these are natural feelings.

Repressed anger about the past often resurfaces during this period, too. This could be anger related to having witnessed or suffered trauma and abuse. It could be related to our relationship with the masculine, both in people and society around us and also within us. These emotions surface only because they are ready to be transformed. Our psyche knows we are able to transform and integrate them, so we are no longer ruled by them. They no longer control us unconsciously, because we are consciously engaging with them for transformation. **We go from being subjected to them to transforming them into the wisdom of the wise crone.**

*“We need to claim our anger. Especially during midlife, it can play an important role in improving the quality of our lives and our health. It is a powerful signal from our inner wisdom – one we should learn to listen to and act on. It often arises from: Being unable to count on promises or commitments made to us, losing power, status, or respect. Being insulted, undermined, or diminished, being threatened with physical or emotional pain...Not obtaining something we feel should legitimately be ours.” (13)*

The healthy way to deal with the anger that arises is to meet it with acceptance and understanding. We need to honor its role as a catalyst in our transformational journey.

*“Our brains actually begin to change at peri-menopause. Like the rising heat in our bodies, our brains also become fired up! Sparked by the hormonal changes that are typical during the menopausal transition, a switch goes on that signals changes in our temporal lobes, the brain region associated with enhanced intuition.” (14)*



**Illustration 2:** My Collage for Exercise 8 “From Friction to Flame”

## The Heat of Anger

As peri-menopause begins, you may start to notice an irritability that was not present before. In the early stages it is subtle, but enough to bring your attention to it. This is a natural sign that the heat is being turned up. Like two sticks being rubbed together, this friction is gradually developing into the flame that will force you to burn through and transform old ways of being that are no longer working for you.

*“The GnRH pulses associated with menopause prime the brain for new perceptions – and, subsequently, for new behavior. It is very common for women to become more irritable, even downright angry, about things that were more easily overlooked before. Long before we begin to feel hot flashes from changing hormonal levels, our brains undergo changes in the hypothalamus, the place where GnRH is produced. This same brain region is key for experiencing, and ultimately expressing, emotions such as anger.” (15)*

Remember that anger is part of the process that triggers and sets off this huge period of transformation in a woman’s life. We are now ready to feel our anger and express it in a way that is safe, coherent and meaningful. It is time to transform not only the old ways of being ourselves, but the old traumas that we have kept in our bodies’ cells. We become mature enough to transform them through feeling them. Anger is the heat that breaks open the barriers that once kept these feelings buried. The change in hormonal balance during this period also supports this maturation. It prepares us to integrate past experiences so they become our wisdom.

*Remember it is ok to feel angry!*

### Exercise 8: From Friction to Flame

Many women find it difficult to accept their own anger or even to feel it. This can lead to repressing the burning feelings and the rising heat of hot flashes. However, it’s important for women to be as conscious as possible during this period of massive physical, mental, emotional and spiritual change. You must allow the fire of transformation to burn.

This exercise is intended to help you go from irritability to actually feeling the anger. Irritability causes friction, but is not enough to transform anything. At some point, the anger needs to be expressed. I have chosen **clove essential oil** (*Eugenia caryophyllus*) for this exercise. Not only is it associated with the energy of fire and the root and sacral chakras, but it is also strongly associated with the feminine. Cloves were associated with birthing. It was one of the ‘go to’ plants for midwives.

*“...working with this essential oil is going to help us to more easily integrate our physical bodies, while at the same time breathing into it a considerable amount of vital life energy” (16)*

Due to its high phenol content, this essential oil is intricately linked, on an emotional level, to the energy of anger. This essential oil will help us to work with this energy and allows the repressed emotions to surface. It enables us to break down the walls that are prohibiting us from liberating the transformative energy needed to **birth ourselves**.

This exercise can be useful when you are stuck in the irritability stage and would like some help safely unveiling the anger that lies behind. It can also be used to make full use of hot flashes. It can also help unearth deeply hidden feelings that are ready to be transformed by the fire of kundalini.

Allowing the buried anger to break through begins the process of re-birth, clove has been used for generations to help in the birthing of babies, it is also a wonderful midwife to help us birth our own buried fire. *'The inhalation of clove greatly strengthens pelvic energy and the abdominal respiration creating a solid anchorage in the physical body'* (17).

Be in a place and set aside time where you will not be disturbed for the duration of the exercise.

Sit in a grounded, strong position.

Be clear in your intentions and that you are ready.

As you smell the clove oil that you have chosen, feel it filling up your whole:

It fills your physical, emotional, mental and spiritual bodies.

This oil is a master of heat—allow it to lead you into the fire.

Feel the fire in your root chakra.

As you feel the energy of the oil, let go and become completely open.

Ask for what needs to be released to come up.

Let any old contentions rise:

Feelings of not being respected, listened to or seen,

Past violations, Aggressions,

Whatever may be held deep down in your bellies.

Let this oil help you receive them and feel them.

This oil protects you and you feel safe,

Even if the anger that rises feels a little scary.

Allow yourself to listen to your anger.

It may feel like it may never stop.

Remember, your Psyche never gives you more than you can handle.

Feel the fire.

Feel it burning up everything that is no longer needed.

Allow yourself to feel letting go, letting the fire consume it.

At some point, everything that has come up will have been consumed by the fire.

At some point, the anger will transform.

Feel its fire fill you with its energy and power.

Be fully loving and compassionate with yourself.

You have just done some hard work on yourself.



Remember to journal about what comes up. You could also translate the feelings into a collage, drawing, painting or piece of poetry, etc.

Anger and hot flashes work on parts of our psyche to burn and transform the old. This includes experiences we have had in our life when we were powerless and other experiences we were subjected to. The heat of the power waves, which we call hot flashes is the heat that transforms these past experiences into our wisdom. This newly birthed wisdom will not only benefit ourselves but the whole community. As Christiane Northrup says, “*we are literally being re-wired*”. This is the first stage in our re-birth. We become more intuitive and powerful in a magically feminine way. Like childbirth, only we can do it. If we hand this process over to the medical industry, we hand over our intrinsic power.

*Remember to say to yourself, “I am not having a hot flash, I am transforming this energy into my authentic power!”*

The following poem acts as a link between the anger that needs to be felt in calcination and the feelings of sadness that lead us into the following stage known as **solutio**.

## To the New Moon

*Deep, deep down in my entrails,  
I am aching  
Something is squeezing, writhing, turning and crying  
out to be listened to*

*Listen I do, as I have no choice  
neglected by generations of mothers, grandmothers, great grandmothers...  
the repressed voice of woman now rebels  
from deep, deep down in my entrails...*

*I am responsible...  
For it is rising up in me, crying out to be heard  
To be felt, acknowledged and healed  
So past and present may finally find peace...deep within*

*Pregnant, this universal gash, that lies waiting to be born  
Must express at last...its rage  
Nothing can stand in its way  
Like the waves of an angry sea, it rises...*

*From deep, deep down in my entrails  
It shakes my being,  
So profoundly guarded, secret and denied  
No choice but to shine a light into the dark*

*Homeland triggers the wound  
Like a pistol to the heart,  
Running so hard for so long  
No more escaping, fleeing, hiding*

*Secrets cannot be guarded for eternity  
Today they have risen  
From deep inside my entrails  
The past is born*

*I feel its pressure  
Building up waiting to be expressed  
Released, set free  
So I too can finally be unleashed*

*The rage is the awakening  
It impulses the birth  
Of owning my own sadness  
Of broken daughters, silent mothers...*

*Sorrow weakens the wrath and  
Takes hold of my body,  
The grief of betrayal seethes  
Through my veins...*

*Facing the deep sadness  
To die a death and  
Rip away the cord that imprisons...  
reveals a treasure*

*And so I learn to feel  
to let go of the old and  
With the darkness of the moon  
I step into my future...softly!*



**During** this stage the alchemists took the ashes of that which was burnt in the first stage and continued to purify them by dissolving them in water.

The element related to this stage is **Water**. Our bodies are approximately 65% water. The same water that fills oceans or comes down to earth as rain flows also in our bloodstreams. Our cycles and internal waters are connected to the moon's phases in the same way as the moon controls the tides.

In many traditions water represents the underworld. **Nestis** is a Greek word that means water and was often used to refer to *Persephone*. In Greek mythology, Persephone embodied the fertility of the earth and was known as the queen of the underworld. She plumbed the depths and through her journey into the underworld and her return, she has become a symbol of the feminine transforming itself through going deep. While she was in the underworld, her mother Demeter, the goddess of harvest among other things, searched the earth for her desperately until she was found and during that time neglected her 'duties' and the world went into a winter. According to Greek mythology, this is the origin of winter. Persephone has to return to the underworld periodically and each time, winter comes. This is symbolic of women going into the watery unconscious regularly in order for renewal to take place.

In the **Solutio** stage, the veil that lies between the conscious and unconscious self becomes thinner. This is a normal part of the process of transformation. Our soul is deeply entwined with our physical body and now they are ready to become closer.

Feeling, acknowledging, allowing, processing and integrating buried emotions is a vital part of the journey. As the old saying goes, "**What we resist persists.**"

By allowing these hidden emotions to come to the light, we are finally able to integrate them and are therefore no longer unconsciously controlled by them. On the contrary, they help us become more knowledgeable about birth, death and re-birth on an instinctual level. **We become the wisdom.**

An important aspect in the process of becoming a crone is to make a conscious commitment to looking within. Stop thinking there is something wrong with you when you feel sad, tearful or unable to function normally, due to being overwhelmed with emotions or anxiety. Remember to **allow** what is rising from the buried depths of yourself to come up. Women are masters of the watery depths. Needing a good cry does not make us fragile. On the contrary, it is a strength to be able to allow feelings to well up and to feel them.

On a physical level, this stage can manifest with the sweating that often occurs after a hot flash or the night sweats that many women experience during the peri-menopausal period.

Think of these sweats as emotions that have been hidden deeply in the unconscious until this period in your life. They are now ready to come to the surface and be processed. You are ready to transform them into wisdom.

## Exercise 9: To Feel is to Heal

This exercise is best done when you are feeling anxious, sad or aware of challenging emotions that need to surface.

For this exercise, you could smell **Geranium essential oil** (*Pelargonium asperum*).

You can also do this exercise in a candle-lit, warm bath to which you've added geranium or rose essential oil in a dispersant (such as epsom salt or milk). You could also use hydrosol of rose or geranium, for which no dispersant is needed.

I have chosen geranium essential oil for this exercise, due to its feminine nature. It helps relax and let go and opens the heart doorway. Its energy is fluid, gentle and soft. Its movement activates the root chakra, at the base of our spine, and moves upwards through the other chakras and beyond to the world of spirit. It is this movement that helps us feel our emotions as they arise to be integrated and released. At the same time, its aroma grounds us deep in the belly, the seat of our emotions, and enables us to stay balanced during this process. Its femininity and connection with the heart reminds us to love ourselves and accept all parts of ourselves in a positive way.

This phase of emotional opening is often related to the sacral chakra. What have you been storing in your pelvic area that has been too painful to release? What has been kept hidden that is now ready to come to light?

Take a few deep breaths and center and ground yourself in your body. Keep breathing deeply and calmly throughout this exercise.

If you find your mind wandering during this exercise, simply acknowledge that it has wandered and bring your awareness back to your emotions.

Fully acknowledge that you are feeling emotional or anxious.

Allows yourself to let go of the habitual pattern of trying to make the feelings go away.

Visualize the emotions as tiny bubbles being released from a deep, dark, buried place within you.

Each tiny bubble rises slowly to the surface like bubbles rising upwards in a glass of champagne.

As each bubble of emotion rises to the surface allow yourself to feel it. Let go of any resisting.

Really go into the feeling of the emotions. What do they feel like in your body?

With your awareness, you can scan each part of your body and see how the emotions express themselves there.

Where do you feel them?

What do they feel like in your physical body?

What do they feel like in your emotional body?

What do they feel like in your mental body?

What do they feel like in your spiritual body?

What do they feel like in your connection to your environment?

Either now, or at the end of the exercise, you can record what you notice in your journal.

Allow the feelings to exist in their own right without judging them, trying to change them or even trying to understand them.

Just behold them for what they are in themselves.

Open yourself to the emotions. There should be no resistance, just a complete feeling of openness.

Step into the feelings. Really put yourself in the center of them and just notice what they feel like and what you feel like.

When you are ready, allow yourself to feel compassion for your feelings.

Remember: You are not these feelings. They are merely feelings passing through you. Just allow them to take their course.

When you are ready, allow yourself to feel compassion for yourself.

## Dreams

Dreams are another way that buried emotions, messages and archetypal content can rise from the unconscious. It's helpful to keep a notebook and pen by your bed. Try to get into the habit of writing down your dreams immediately when you wake up, even if you wake up in the middle of the night. This may be challenging. The temptation is to go back to sleep and tell yourself 'I'll definitely remember that dream', but as we all know, often we don't remember our dreams later on. You can even write just a few memorable images or words to help you remember your dream when you fully wake up. In whatever way works best for you, write down the dreams as clearly and with as many details as possible. When you are ready, you can look at the dream content and try to come up with what it may mean. There is usually not a single 'correct' or 'best' meaning. Being messages from the unconscious, dreams have multiple meanings, that can often seem contradictory. Try to come up with as many

different meanings of the original dream content as you can, especially seemingly contradictory meanings. When you have come up with as many different meanings as you can, look at them all and see if a bigger picture emerges. You will be amazed at the information dreams can bring.

In addition to *Journalling, making art, such as making a mandala, a collage or practicing automatic writing* are exciting and effective ways of working with unconscious material.

We need as many tools as possible in order to connect with the core of our soul and bring what we find up to the surface. This is a difficult task that demands time, patience and perseverance. As one layer is peeled away, more layers reveal themselves. At times, it can feel that the journey downwards and inwards is never ending. It is important to give yourself plenty of alone time to go through this process. You need time and space away from your daily chores and demands in order to do this work. Try scheduling at least an hour a day and arrange for a safe place where you will be cosy and not interrupted, so you can do this sacred work. Carry a journal with you at all times. Once this work has begun, you will find unconscious material popping up into your consciousness throughout the day and it's good to record this in your journal so you can process more later.

Although the work of delving deeply into the waters of one's inner self can be hard, it is also part of the re-birthing process. Through our tears, we discover new parts of ourselves. These parts have not felt safe enough to emerge until now. We purify and cleanse all of ourselves through this work, by transforming hidden parts into important, loved parts of the whole.

*"Water is the very lifeblood of Mother Earth. Water, and our connection to everything in the spirit world depends upon us keeping everything in balance. Every time we make our offerings and say words to the waters, it's helping to restore the balance the earth needs." (18)*



## “Our Bodies Are Our Homes”

The third stage is **Coagulatio**, which in Latin means ‘to coagulate, to solidify or to curdle.’ After having dissolved the ashes from the fire of calcinatio into liquid in solutio, alchemists would then turn the liquid into a solid, either through cooling, evaporating of the solvent or through a movement such as churning, for example.

During peri-menopause, there is what Christiane Northrup describes as “*a whole body circuitry update*” in which our brains, physical bodies and souls are all affected.

*“...body and mind or soul are the same, the same life, subject to the same laws, and what the body does is happening in the mind.”* (19)

**Coagulatio** reminds us of the importance of the physical body in this process. Physical changes are triggered by hormonal changes. The ovaries produce less progesterone and estrogen, which triggers the hypothalamus to increase levels of follicle stimulating hormone (FSH) and luetinizing hormone (LH) that are sent to the ovaries. If a woman realizes that the physical metamorphoses she experiences due to these changes in hormonal levels are natural and part of the process of the **wise crone awakening** she can welcome them as **signs of growth rather than disease**.

These physical changes signify the onset of this period of growth. They remind us of the importance of nurturing ourselves and fully being in our bodies.

Modern society has tricked many women out of their journey towards becoming their true, powerful, mature selves by falsely promoting women’s ‘power’ as being uniquely in the physical beauty of youth. Aging women spend huge amounts of money and time trying to retain their youthful bodies instead of embracing the changes and loving the wisdom and experience of their changing bodies. This does not mean women should deny their physical appearance. On the contrary, I believe this is the time where we become fully embodied and capable of mastering the energy of our soul’s full presence in the body.

*“[The soul] is of divine nature and therefore immortal; that there is a power inherent within it which builds up the body, sustains its life, heals its ills.”* (20)

During this period, we become fully embodied. As we slowly transform, living in our bodies and speaking our bodies’ truth can feel tremendously grounding. It feels safer and more authentic than the flightiness of youth. I think this feeling is the soul and body recognizing their interconnectedness and functioning from this place of togetherness. We re-learn to **re-inhabit our bodies once again**.

*“For what is the body? The body is merely the visibility of the soul, the psyche; and the soul is the psychological experience of the body. So it is really one and the same thing.”* (21)

Kristi Meisenbach Boylan sums up this feeling of coming home to the self in soul and body beautifully in her book “The Seven Sacred Rites of Menopause”:

*“She finds this new land steady and solid beneath her feet, and the air fresh and liberating. She is completely absorbed with her newfound inner wisdom. Her spirit soars as she revels in the new sights and feelings that pulse through her heart and mind, for at last she has made it to the core of her soul to refresh and replenish all that the outer world has taken away. She is now free to dance among her people, to speak her own tongue, to be soft and tender and strong.”*

This newfound feeling comes from the energy of our body. It is symbolized by our menstrual blood which in menopause is no longer being lost every month, but is now being retained, held within, accumulating its power in the body. We are coming back to who we were before puberty, whole once more, but with the added experience of everything we lived through during the menstruating years.

The wise crone has learnt the secrets of birth, death and re-birth. The ancient wise woman accompanied younger women during childbirth and those at the end of life. She had gained a natural knowledge of these bodily passages into and out of physical reality. By denigrating the wise crone and making her into an old hag, by making women obsessed with their youthful beauty, our society has deprived women of this natural wisdom so innately connected with humanness and embodiment.

## Coming Into the Body

The body is the way we experience life, not just through our actions but our perceptions, memories, thoughts, sensations. The body stores them all and this is called cellular memory by some. Life’s challenges may have taught us that it is not safe to feel. We may have learnt to tense up and block off areas of the body so as not to feel the difficult sensations that arise there. We may have become really good at dissociating, disconnecting our awareness from our body, intermittently or continuously. This alchemical stage teaches us that we must fully live in our bodies and not just in our heads. We have the opportunity to becoming whole and fully present in our body, rather than remaining fragmented and disconnected from our body.

## Exercise 10: Coming Home to Our Bodies

For this exercise, I have chosen a very sacred **wild vetiver essential oil** (*Vetiveria zizanoides*), also known known as **ruh khus**. [see kit] If you can’t find wild vetiver essential oil, you could also use cultivated vetiver. They are both similar, except the wild is usually of a superior quality and vitality. There are many grounding oils that I could have chosen, but vetiver has such a safe and earthy quality that it is ideal. Gabriel Mojay in his book ‘Aromatherapy for Healing the Spirit’ describes it as being ‘imbued with the calm, reassuring strength of mother earth’ and this really sums it up. It helps us to be grounded and connected to the earth, which is really important for being wholly embodied in a softly

powerful way. Vetiver ‘centers and reconnects us.’ Gabriel goes on to say, ‘it is suited to the type of individual who constantly strives for perfection but who, in the process of pursuing their ideal, loses touch with the ability to absorb and replenish, and are never still enough to let perfection be. The uplift that vetiver brings them is one that, paradoxically, comes of traveling **down** – down to that experience where we instinctively rejoice in feeling essentially real.’

Vetiver encourages us let go of using the intellect as our armor or castle and to really feel at home in our bodies and discover what it feels like to fully live and be present in our physical bodies. By building a solid, loving relationship with our physical bodies, we begin to feel more confident and centered. Our feelings, thoughts, emotions and interactions are anchored in our flesh and bones.

Here is a simple form of this exercise: Every morning massage one drop of vetiver neat on the bottom of each foot. Then put a drop in your hands, rub them together and spread the aroma around your aura by laying your hands over every part of your body. This daily ritual will really help the energy to be directed down towards the earth, grounding you both to the earth and into your body.

In addition, you can also do a more elaborate version of this exercise, by first making a massage oil and getting into the habit of a mindful self-massage.

## Massage Oil

Prepare 1oz of your favorite carrier oil, such as jojoba, macadamia, sesame, avocado, sweet almond, apricot kernel, grape-seed oil, etc. Add 30 drops of wild or cultivated vetiver essential oil and mix together with intention.

Use this oil to massage your body after you have had a shower or a bath. Whilst you are oiling yourself, become aware of how you feel physically. Feel your body and scan for any tensions you may be holding, if you notice any, breathe into them deeply as you massage the oil on that area. See if you can help these areas relax. Often, just noticing and breathing into the areas where tension is being held is enough to liberate them. Really contemplate and be aware of your hand caressing your skin and loving the body that has been loyal to you for all these years. Love its curves, the texture, the wrinkles, the wisdom it holds. Be mindful of breathing deeply into the body. Remember that you live in this body.

## Exercise 11: Doing a Body Scan

Start with bringing your attention to the head. Focus on your eyes, forehead, cheeks, chin, jaws and inside the mouth. Notice any tension in the head and forehead, which can indicate over-thinking, too much analyzing or putting too much emphasis on the mental body. If our jaws feel clenched it may be

because we hold anger there or we have a blockage there because we are holding back something we need to say. Breathe deeply into the places where you feel the tension and invite them to relax.

Next focus on your chest. Our chest is the place that we often feel sadness, emotional pain and above all anxiety. Once again, notice the tensions and blockages and release them with your breath.

Next focus on your diaphragm and stomach area. Tensions here are often related to undigested emotions, feelings of guilt or burdens we are carrying.

Next focus on your lower belly. In this region we often carry fear and apprehension. Notice and release.

Next focus on your pelvic region. Do you notice any tension or tightness? This is where we hold our creativity, where we feel shame or hold onto certain forms of trauma, especially sexual trauma. Breathe into any tensions and release.

## Exercise 12: Reconnecting our Bodies to the Earth

Take time every day to walk outside barefoot. Feel the cold grass underfoot. Be aware of the earth's energy rising up through your feet and connecting you with its vibrations. Remember to breathe and walk slowly and consciously.

Have days when you do not put on any artificial cosmetics or other products that are aimed at concealing your body's natural beauty. Walk around at home naked after oiling your body and enjoy it. Send it love. See how beautiful it is. Feel the experiences and wisdom that it carries. Be grateful for your body. Thank it.

## Exercise 13: Giving a Voice to my Body

When you are journaling, remember to listen and pay attention to your body and write down what it tells you. Intuitive knowledge comes through our bodies. Our wisdom is held in our bodies, so we have to learn to listen to them. Allow your attention to notice and linger on anything that comes up from your physical body. It may be a purely physical feeling, but it could also be a word, thought or memory. If you perceive it as a word, thought or memory, focus your attention on the physical sensations that underlie the memory or thought. Your body will tell you if you need to rest, or if you need to spend some time alone, or dance or walk or run or swim. It may need to cry, shout, laugh. It may need to express something to someone. Listen to what nutrients your body needs. Does it need more greens, proteins, fiber, fruit? The body knows, trust its signals.

*“If we now recall to what a degree the soul has humanized and realized itself, we can judge how very much it today expresses the body also, with which it is coexistent.” (22)*



**Illustration 3:** My collage for Coagulation Exercise 13 “Giving a Voice to my body”.

## Our Sexuality in Menopause

There is a common myth that women lose interest in sex during menopause, which is yet another reason why we may dread the arrival of this period in our lives. However, this is not true at all. I personally believe that it is another myth to make us afraid to age. This embodiment stage is about coming home to our bodies, finally loving them and fully owning and living our sexuality.

Many women express a renewed sexual liberation after menopause, since they no longer have to worry about the possibility of getting pregnant. Also their children are older and need less attention, and women may find they have more time for themselves and for sex. Women have more experience with age and are often less inhibited about fulfilling their sexual needs, as they become more aligned with themselves. They also can become more skillful in their relationship and ability to communicate. Post-menopause can be a time to enjoy our experience and experiment more. We may be able to let go of being preoccupied with orgasm, our own or our partners, as the goal of sex. We can discover a whole new world of being intimate, sharing pleasurable experiences, enjoying our bodies and embodying our sexuality in unique and authentic ways that suit us.

On a physical level, sexual activity is health enhancing. It increases blood flow to the vagina, exercises the muscles of the vaginal walls and the pelvic floor. Strengthening the pelvic floor muscles helps prevent stress incontinence. Experiencing arousal and orgasm also helps to preserve the vagina's elasticity and lubrication.

Lubrication is an important aspect of sexual activity post-menopause. Due to hormonal changes, many women find that their vaginas make less lubricating fluids and this can make sexual intercourse painful and un-arousing. Making your own lubricant with beautiful essential oils that heighten arousal is a great way of honoring ourselves and our bodies and giving importance to our sacred sexual activities.

## Personal Lubricant

The two main ingredients I recommend for gentle, effective personal lubricants are aloe vera gel and coconut oil, which can be used alone or together. Aloe vera is cooling, emollient and moisturizing. Coconut oil is very lubricating and long-lasting and also anti-fungal, antibacterial, antimicrobial and smells good. Experiment with the ratio of the two to find the optimum for you. You can also try other carrier oils.

### Aloe vera gel and coconut oil lubricant recipe

¼ cup coconut oil & ¼ cup aloe vera gel

15 drops total of one or more essential oil of your choice or from the list below:

**Cardamom** (*Elettaria cardamomum*): I love this warming and slightly stimulating oil with its aphrodisiac qualities. One of my personal favorites is a blend of cardamom and ylang-ylang.

**Jasmine absolute** (*Jasminum officinalis var. grandiflorum*): This aroma oozes sexuality and sensuality. It lifts the mood and helps build confidence and is a powerful aphrodisiac.

**Neroli** (*Citrus aurantium* flowers): This beautiful smelling oil calms and relaxes, stimulates the libido and increases sexual pleasure, and helps make us feel more open and playful.

**Rose** (*Rosa sp.*): A great oil that works on multiple levels of our being, including physical, emotional, mental and spiritual bodies. It is well known for opening the heart doorway and breaking down the barriers that separate us.

**Ylang-Ylang** (*Cananga odorata*): One of my favorite essentials for intimacy. It is uplifting and relaxing bringing a feeling of happiness and joy. Great for stimulating the libido. It increases the blood flow to our genitalia for enhanced pleasure and sensation.

Other oils that may go well in personal lubricants include **Lavender** (*Lavandula angustifolia*), **Clary-sage** (*Salvia sclarea*), **Black Pepper** (*Piper nigrum*), **Sandalwood** (*Santalum album*) and others.

Now is the time in a woman's life to totally own her body, listen to it, fully live in it and be able to speak, move and react on its behalf. Ask your body what she needs. Enjoy letting your body lead the way, dance her very own dance, sing her unique song and share herself with the world.

## Loving aliveness

*I peel back yet another layer  
Of understanding the pain  
That sends me staggering forward  
Into the mouth of fire  
Un-lodging the fear monster  
That has been settled  
For lifetimes  
In the caverns of my belly  
Awakening with a primal roar  
Do I run or face it?  
Writhing and thrashing  
Filling my inner space  
With its death-like stench*

*Tyrannizing the instant,  
which lost in its jaws  
is sacrificed as sustenance  
To an insatiable force  
that engulfs my soul  
and forces me into  
its interminable darkness  
the turning point, pivotal  
emerges from a desire to live  
in the light of the instant  
and feel the warmth imbue me  
to fight would be to feed  
the greedy demon  
face on I feel his force  
and call upon my allies  
to infuse me with their light  
their love and impulse for life  
Its trunk alone, hard and determined  
A pillar of strength  
Anchors me solidly between sky and earth  
Like a father teaching a toddler to walk  
Supporting, the new growth  
with its mighty structure  
and then I call on the angel of angels  
the light bringer, she infuses me  
recognizing the ancestral fear  
whilst caressing my depths, rhythmically  
Brushing the fear from my ovaries  
She gets to work on my belly  
Her radiance brings movement that  
Scrapes away the sticky, oozing blackness  
It hurts, my kidneys tighten and I vomit  
Generations of terror that has no place  
In a temple of light, where the angels  
Abide.  
She passes the torch to Palo-Santo*

*A master of love  
From the deep humus of the forest floor  
Decomposing matter into light  
My body melts into being here  
As I accept the earth as my home  
Its massiveness fills every cell  
I am worthy of my place and I am safe  
Tear drops, cleansing and watering  
This new life, pledging its loyalty  
To loving aliveness, where fearful death  
Has no place except as a distant memory  
That was composted, decomposed  
Cleansed, transformed by the living soil  
Of my belly, so that the forest of dreams  
Can flourish and love through me.*



**Sublimation** is the chemical process in which a solid dissolves into a gas, like snow evaporating instead of melting. This stage is sometimes called distillatio, which give us a clue about how it works. The alchemists would boil the material in solution to further purify it through distillation. **Sublimis** in Latin means to ‘*elevate over a threshold*’ (23) and this stage gives us the opportunity to rise above it all and see everything from a bird’s eye perspective.

*‘If you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change.’* (24)

This stage teaches us about the importance of being able to rise above and see things from a wider perspective, especially during periods of major growth and evolution in our lives. To take full responsibility for our lives and to continue to change and evolve we sometimes need to be able to see how everything fits together, take a new view and rise above the narrow ways of our habitual perception.

We are going to be calling on the wisdom of eagle to work on this stage. **Eagle medicine** helps us see things from an aerial perspective. Eagle sees the whole picture from above.

The element for this stage is **Air**. Eagle is at home and free high up in the sky. As eagle soars high its wisdom expands far beyond the ego perspective touching a sense of spirit and expansiveness. Eagle has amazing eyesight. As he soars above the world, he scans the terrain below, teaching us how to lift ourselves above the constraints of life and see the bigger picture for what it is. This way we can identify beliefs and outdated ways of being that are stopping us from being who we really are. This **higher perspective**, that eagle masters so well, invites us to really see our lives more objectively. It allows us to see patterns in our past, present and possible futures that we might not see when we are ‘at ground level’ in the midst of our lives. By looking at things with new eyes, we rise above problems and blockages in our lives. We are more able to see the big picture and hidden paths that may lead to solutions.

*“The reality is that, by its very nature, existence cannot have any boundary, because what will be beyond the boundary? – Again another sky... Skies upon skies are available for your flight.”* (25)

## Exercise 14: Soaring with Eagle to Gain New Perspectives

For this exercise we are going to use **Sage (*Salvia officinalis*) essential oil** and you will also need your journal. Ketones have “an anti-matter energy [and] reduce physicality” (26). This is one of the reasons that this ketone-rich oil is ideal for this exercise. Sage also has a strong connection with the feminine.

Please be very careful with this ketone-rich oil. It is safe to smell, but should be treated with the highest respect and NEVER taken orally.

Smell the oil for brief periods. If it gets too strong, you can put the lid back on the bottle. Be careful. This is a very strong oil and less is more. You can set a timer for 10 minutes to limit the amount of time that Sage essential oil takes you on this journey.

Enter a meditative state and invite eagle to take you and soar above your life, seeing it as a whole. Use the following phrase as a starting point and let yourself write automatically:

***“As I soar above my life, I see that...”***

Just let your pen write. Let it flow. Don't worry about correct spelling or grammar. Don't stop or re-read or filter anything that comes through your pen. Just write.

When you have finished writing, read what you have written out loud to yourself.

Getting a glimpse at the larger patterns and layout of our life can help us see what is no longer needed, what no longer serves us and this leads us onto the next stage.



In this stage, the alchemists broke down their material into a decayed mass through fermenting it or letting it putrefy. The old needs to decay and die in order for something new to emerge.

Psychologically, this stage feels like the breaking down of all that is solid in our lives, like death.

The female body is intricately linked with the **cycles of birth, death and re-birth**. As a woman prepares for menopause there is a death of parts of herself. There is a letting go of the reproductive period and all that it represented in a woman's life. In order for the new to take place, the old must die away. This is a completely natural phenomenon. Nature continuously needs old things to die and decompose for new life to be born. This can be seen in the decaying plant and animal matter that accumulate on the ground of a forest and turn into humus which feeds the plants growing in the forest. Without the decay, there would be no humus for the new shoots and young trees and plants to grow in.

What is no longer needed on your journey?

What will become your humus so new parts of you can grow in this journey to becoming a wise woman?

Menopause is a **rite of passage**, a transition from one state into another. The British anthropologist Victor T. Turner defined three stages involved in any *rite of passage*:

- 1) Separation from the former stable state.
- 2) The liminal phase, where one is no longer in the old state but has not reached the new state yet either. It is a place he describes as '*between and betwixt*,' where a person becomes invisible and has to go underground in order to prepare for the passage into the final stage.
- 3) The final stage when one arrives at the new place on the other side of the passage.

The peri-menopausal period is very much a **liminal phase**. As in all rites of passage, a symbolic death and resurrection are central to the experience. It is in the liminal phase that we are faced with **symbolic or ego death**. The death we experience on one level is letting go of our ability to reproduce. We are no longer about to give of ourselves to be able to birth another human being. In this liminal phase, the re-birth we are awaiting is that of ourself.

*'Undoing, dissolution, decomposition are accompanied by processes of growth, transformation and the reformulation of old elements in new patterns.'* (27)

What parts of your life are dying in order for the new to be reborn?

What aspects of your life are no longer in resonance with who you are becoming?

Like the snake shedding its old skin, what do you need to shed and surrender?

What has become too heavy a burden to carry?

What is getting in the way of the new life you are heading towards?

What aspects of your life need to be cleaned up, finished and relinquished?

Are there any relationships in your life that are no longer healthy and fitting?

Can you identify any parts of your life that are stopping you from being real and alive?

What needs to be stripped away?

This is important work. It is the time in your life where you have no choice but to become authentically you.

## Exercise 15: Releasing the Old with the Full Moon

The full moon is an excellent time to act, to release and let go of what you no longer need in your life, in order to create space for the new to enter. The full moon's light helps illuminate those places in ourselves, where we are holding on to outdated emotions and ways of being. The energy of the full moon heightens active power. It helps us cleanse and release. It is an ideal time for purging and unburdening ourselves.

I recommend letting **Spikenard** (*Nardostachys jatamansi*) essential oil accompany you during this ritual as it connects the crown and root chakras. *“Under the sign of Scorpio, spikenard is the symbol of death and transformation. It is the oil of rites of passage par excellence that expresses the cycle of eternal beginnings, a principle inherent to life, while at the same time integrating death.”* (28)

Smell it from the bottle or put a drop on your third eye and under the nostrils while preparing for and during the ritual.

Take time before the full moon to think about the questions laid out above.

There are several ways you can approach this exercise, using painting, drawing, collage, photos or a blend of them all. I love collage for this. Just let go and allow yourself to be guided to words and images from magazines that speak to you as you keep your question in mind.

Create a piece of art that represents what you need to let go of.

Or you can use a slightly different approach and gather objects, souvenirs, photos, even words written on pieces of paper, etc. that represent what you need to or want to leave behind.

If you have chosen to do a piece of art or collage, chose a place in Nature or in your garden and on the full moon put your artwork on a tree.

If you have chosen to gather the objects and words, dig a hole somewhere in Nature or in your garden or backyard where you can bury them.

In either case, as you give the objects up to Nature, give thanks to the places, things, people, ways of being that were part of your life up to this liminal phase and let them go.

The things in the hole will slowly decompose over time and the art work will become a piece of living art that gradually decomposes and goes back to nature, too.

*“In this transformative process, nothing new can be reborn until something old first dies. Thus whenever we cling to a person, place, thing, or situation that has outlived its purpose, we only prevent ourselves from experiencing the abundance of renewal. In the modern world the initiation rite that prepares us for our ultimate death is the path of willingly embracing change and psychological transformation. Over the course of our life it means experiencing many ‘little deaths’ through the process of letting go. While letting go and change may seem frightening at first, it is the necessary part of the cycle that allows for renewal.” (29)*

There is a pause in the darkness of not knowing, after we have left behind the familiar ways and completed the cycle we are transitioning out of. The old form goes back into the earth and decomposes. The teachings and wisdom that have been learnt grow in that earth, like a baby in the womb or the seed in the soil. This stage can feel frightening—the not knowing, the darkness and the grief. Remember to have faith that you will eventually get to the other side and that you will transform. This is a part of the process that cannot be avoided or ignored.

The death of our old identity is necessary in order to continue evolving and growing. It leads us into the next stage of the alchemical journey through menopause, which involves seeing the totality of ourselves clearly. By letting go of all that has become unnecessary, we simplify our lives and are more able to find or create the quiet space inside and outside of ourselves, which we need to be able to go within and integrate the transformational journey we are undergoing.

The natural changes we are going through are responsible for pushing underlying, buried emotions and tensions to the surface so they can be healed and transformed. Cellular memories are released in order to be finally integrated. We may be able to let go of the chronic pain often associated with traumatic cellular memories. These raw, powerful, intense and deeply rooted parts of ourselves will become the humus from which our wisdom will grow. They are the fertile ground of woman’s growing understanding of the world. The integration moves us towards self-acceptance, joy, clarity, soft power and an ability finally to **dance our dance**.

In the laboratory, alchemists separated out the different parts of the matter they were working with in this stage by filtering, cutting, settling, agitating, distilling, etc. They then were able to decide what they wanted and what was unworthy matter and could be discarded.

In this stage, we at last really see all aspects of ourselves, including those parts that have up until now been hidden. We see the parts we feel are worthy of maintaining and developing and those parts that we have unconsciously carried and that are no longer needed.

There are also parts of being a woman that need to be hidden until the time is right. This liminal stage between the maiden and the wise crone is the right time for these inner secrets to be revealed to us.

Identifying unconscious parts of ourselves can only happen when at last we are no longer ruled by these parts. Instead, we have cultivated our awareness, also called the Observer or the Witness. *“It is not that your history is rewritten, but rather that the self experiencing that history is transformed.”* (30)

The peri-menopausal journey is the time for women to feel and experience the darkest aspects of themselves and their experience. The black goddess **Kali** is the embodiment of time, *“associated with sexuality and violence [...] she is also a strong mother figure and symbolic of motherly love.”* (31)

At the right time, she leads us into the entrails of our unconscious. We all have been there many times before, but unaided, immature, not yet ready, and we may well have been overpowered by the Unconscious repeatedly. This time, something is different. Time and experience are on our side. The Dark Goddess is ready to be unveiled. She pushes us to face our own demons and our deepest, darkest secrets. Because she is now at our side, instead of being taken over by the horrors within, we are able to look them in the eye, own them and finally love them. This part of the journey is about owning the dark goddess within. She is our mother during this stage and governs the three aspects of life—birth, death and re-birth. With her help, our knowledge becomes our wisdom. She is our midwife on this journey of birthing ourselves. She is Hecate, who in the myth of Persephone and Demeter is a key figure in re-uniting mother and daughter, because she can travel between the realms. Demeter represents the green plants’ growth above ground and Hecate the underground roots from which the plants grow. In other words Hecate helps the feminine re-unite with her creativity. *“The shadows hold the secret to our own rising rebirth, the secret of the wisdom of ourselves. The ultimate mystery is that of knowing oneself. This is the lesson the Dark Goddess teaches.”* (32)

This stage represents a higher form of **self awareness**. We become aware of the different parts of our psyche and through first-hand experience begin to understand the forces emanating from them. This myth, which also occurs in similar forms in many other traditional cultures, reminded the ancient Greeks of the importance of honoring all aspects of the psyche through personifying these parts as gods and goddesses, which demanded rituals and worship. They understood that if you ignored one of these gods and goddesses they would turn against you and destroy you.

**Separatio** is the stage in which peri-menopausal women need to make time for and honor the different parts of the psyche that are calling her.

Shadow work is a responsibility to ourselves and to the feminine in our culture. There is currently a resurgence of the feminine that has been repressed for too long by society. This stage can help us really see all parts of the feminine principle, especially those aspects that have been hidden and stifled by a patriarchal society. By owning the dark parts of ourselves and honoring the dark goddess, we gain a certain freedom, we are no longer owned by anyone but ourselves.

*“Live your own life and not the one projected on you.”*

We need to go through this stage in order to reach maturity. Once again it is during peri-menopause that we are given the chance in the form of a calling from the psyche to do this work. An important thing to remember about the work of this stage is that we are often frightened of discovering the unknown parts of ourselves. Often we will do anything not to go there. However, bringing to light and reintegrating these parts frees up a lot of blocked energy that can be extremely strengthening and liberating once it's released.

In this stage, the **mother archetype needs to be excavated** with piercing honesty. Marion Woodman describes the crone as being born from the ‘*conscious mother and conscious virgin*’. In order to make this transition, we must first become a conscious mother, regardless of whether we are an actual mother to a child. We need to bring the unconscious mother into the light. The shadow needs to be integrated. Confronting the mother complex, which is the unique expression of the mother archetype in our life, is like opening a can of worms. We may have gathered some glimpses and basic understanding of our mother complexes as we have gone through life, but for most of us Kali's gift of deeper understanding comes only with the cycle of time. Now is the time.

Our true mother in this journey of re-birth is the Dark Goddess. **The conscious virgin** is the innocent, authentic part of us, that is both giving birth and being birthed and ‘*restoring the unity of body and soul*’. (33) She is symbolized by the young maiden entering womanhood.

*“The woman who is virgin, one in herself, does what she does – not because of any desire to please, not to be liked, or to be approved, even by herself; not because of any desire to gain power over another...but because what she does is true.”* (34)

Every archetype, including the mother archetype, has positive and negative aspects. It can be the nurturing life giver as well as the negative mother that judges, nags, destroys and devours. We must fully recognize and accept all parts of the mother archetype and all facets of our own mother complexes in order to become the conscious mother who can work with the dark goddess and enable the creative virgin to emerge healthily.

When doing these exercises, be sure you have time and a sacred space where you can be undisturbed. Trust yourself and enjoy creative expression. You are not limited to the exercises I have suggested. They are just a jumping off point. Feel free to let them lead you onwards and develop your own variations.

In this work, it is important to accept and embrace all aspects of ourselves and these archetypes, both the Light and the Shadow. If we repress the Shadow, feel guilty or bad for not being perfect mothers, the Shadow will find a way to express itself through unconscious means, meaning it will unconsciously control us.



## Exercise 16: Exploring the Mother Archetype

This exercise needs to be approached like a research project. Think about the mother archetype in mythology, in society, even in animals. Research as much information as you can about this archetype before arranging it in the circles as described below. You need to print out two copies of the circle below (Figure 5) or you can draw two circles.

The mandala can be constructed in whatever way you prefer, e.g. with painting or drawing or with a collage of images, words, phrases or a combination of all of these.

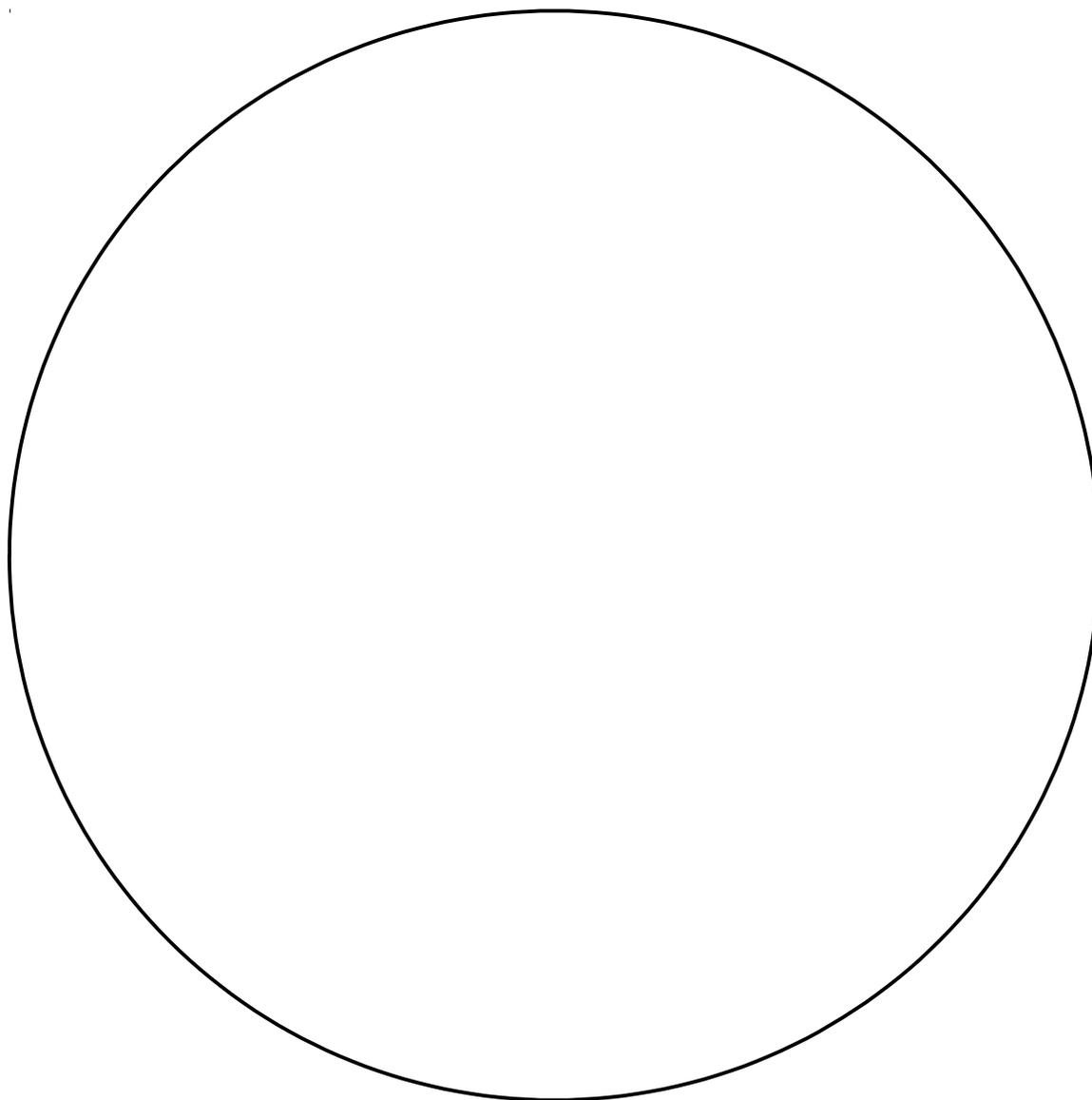
Using what you have thought about and researched, freely fill in two circles.

In **Circle 1** arrange the **Attributes of the Positive Mother Archetype**.

In **Circle 2** arrange the **Attributes of the Negative Mother Archetype**.



*Figure 5: Diagram for Exercise 16*



For each the next four exercises (Exercises 17-20) you will need two copies of the diagram in Figure 6.

Use **lavender essential oil** (*Lavandula angustifolia*) for these exercises. Lavender is associated with the mother energy, she is deep and light at the same time, she brings the best out of other oils in blends and helps oils work together. Lavender is reassuring, safe and familiar helping us to align with ourselves and stay centered. She has a calming ability while at the same time maintaining a certain mental lucidity and clarity. As in her physical actions she acts in a huge variety of situations, she is also able to help the soul navigate many different experiences. Her softness is supported by a maturity and depth that helps us love and accept ourselves. She keeps everything balanced and harmonious.

“Lavender has a moderating temperament that aims at getting along with everyone. Avoiding disputes, lavender re-establishes balance through reconciliation.” (27b)

## Exercise 17: Myself as Daughter

Using two quaternities (Figure 6), think about and feel into *your own experience as a daughter*. This doesn't mean only your biological mother, but any person in your life that has mothered you. Write in each quaternity about how you were mothered. In **Circle 1**, which represents the light, write about **the positive mothering** you received. In **Circle 2**, which represents the Shadow, write about **the negative mothering** you received. The quaternity has quadrants labeled Nurturing, Empowering, Protecting and Initiating. In each quadrant write about these important functions of mothering, using Circle 1 for the positive experiences you had of these functions and Circle two for the negative experiences of these functions.

**Circle 1 – How was I mothered positively?**

**Circle 2 – How was I mothered negatively?**

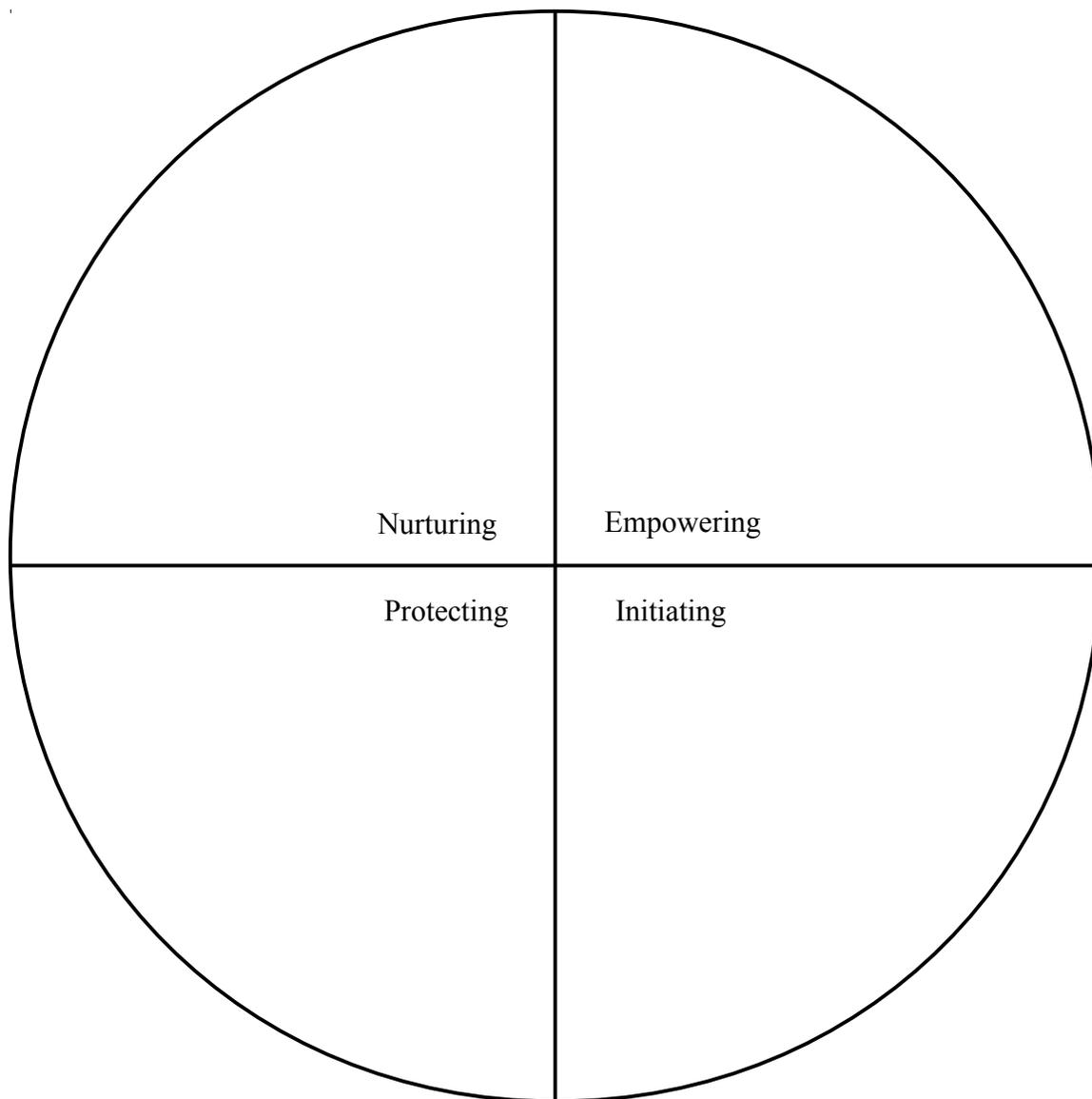
## Exercise 18: Mother to Myself

Using another two copies of Figure 6, the Quaternity of Mothering Functions, just like in the previous exercise, explore how you mother yourself positively and how you mother yourself negatively or unconsciously.

**Circle 1 – How do I mother myself? (Light)**

**Circle 2 – How do I mother myself (Shadow)**

**Figure 6: Quaternity of Mothering Functions**



## Exercise 19: Mother to Others

Using another two copies of Figure 6, the Quaternity of Mothering, just like in the previous two exercises, explore how *you mother others* positively and how *you mother others* negatively or unconsciously. This does not have to be your children (and you don't even have to have children) but any person in your life that you have mothered, consciously or unconsciously.

**Circle 1 – How do I mother others (Light)**

**Circle 2 – How do I mother others? (Shadow)**

## Exercise 20: Female Lineage

As women we carry within us the unhealed wounds of past generations—the unfinished business, the secrets that were never told. We can be carrying, consciously and unconsciously, both an archetypal inheritance, i.e. from our community, society and/or ecosystem and our own personal inheritance, i.e. events or traumas inherited from our family and lineage, such as historical trauma. Using the quaternity in Figure 7 explore and write about issues, emotions and patterns that you can see being repeated in your life, which you may be carrying from your mother, grandmothers and great grandmothers. The quaternity is divided into *emotional burdens, unfulfilled dreams, unfinished business, wounds*.

## Exercise 21: Who is the woman I am being called to be?

We need a new blueprint of what is woman in today's world. While doing this exercise, remember the quote from above; *“The woman who is virgin, one in herself, does what she does – not because of any desire to please, not to be liked, or to be approved, even by herself; not because of any desire to gain power over another...but because what she does is true.”* Using two copies of the quaternity in Figure 8 below, with quadrants labeled *Relationships, Work, Caring for others* and *Wildness*, explore the themes below.

**In Circle 1: Who is the woman my mother and the society I grew up in bought me up to be?**

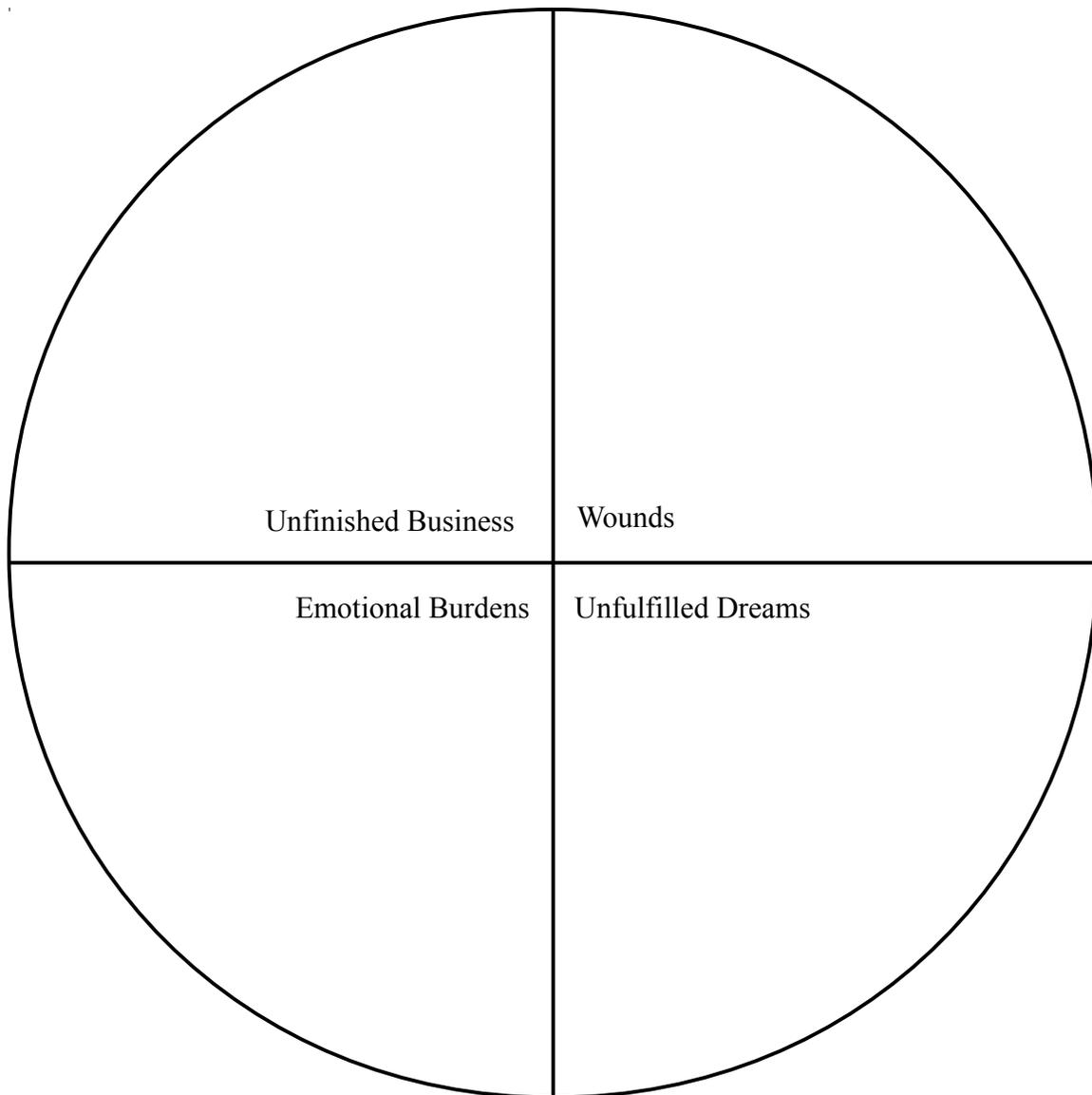
**In Circle 2: Who is the woman I am called to be?**

Again, I invite you to honor the woman you are being called to be in her entirety, her light and dark, her hardness and gentleness, her strength and fragility. We must honor and embrace all of her.

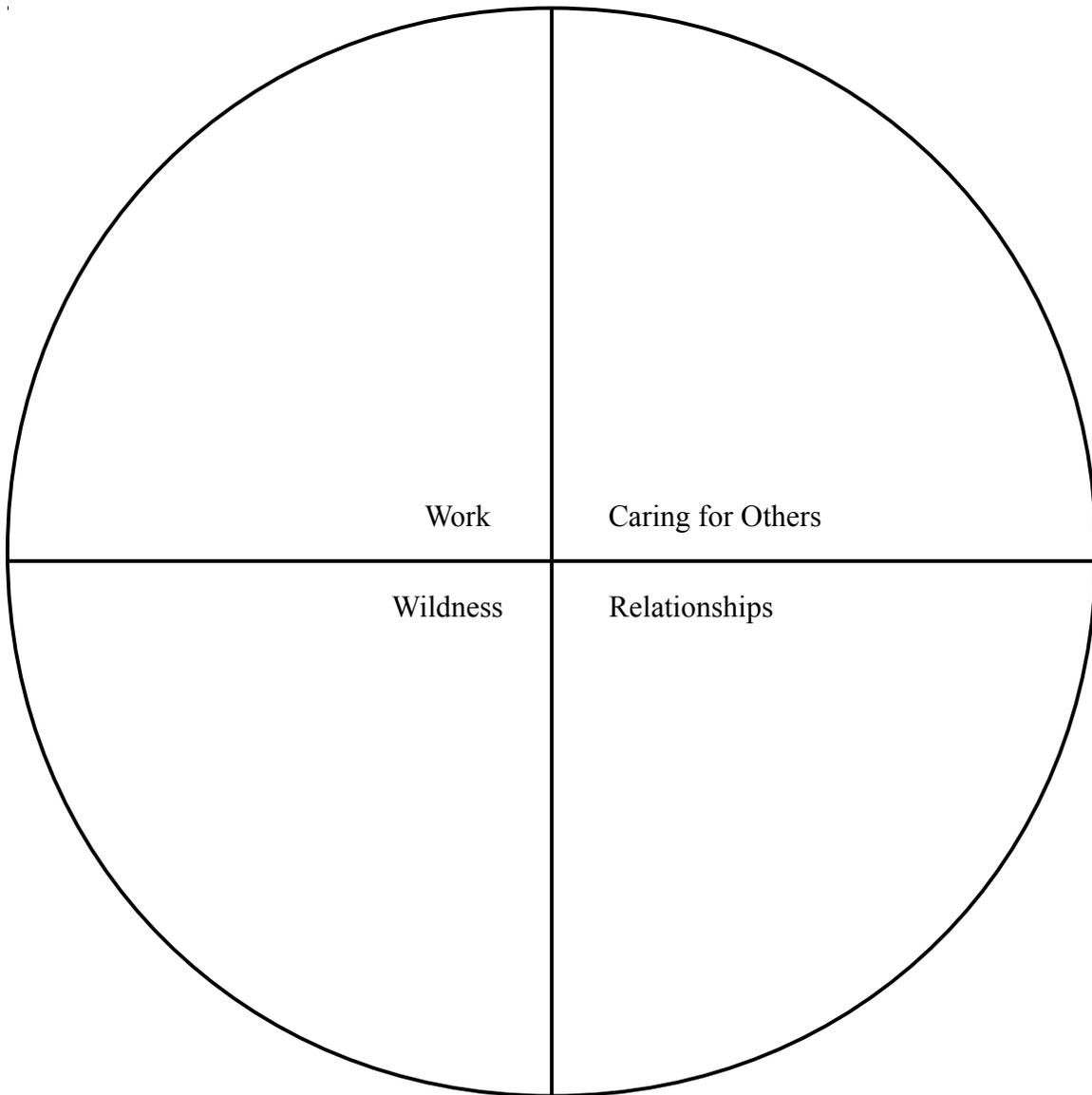
Reflect on the different exercises and what came up for you and continue the themes in your journal. The mother archetype and its complexes have a profound impact on each of us. The exercises presented here are just one way in to gain more awareness, understanding and self-compassion. The most important thing to remember is:

*“Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate.”* (35)

**Figure 7: What am I carrying from my mother, grandmothers great-grandmothers?**



**Figure 8: Quaternity of Being Called**



“**Spiritual** birth, like biological birth, requires a union of opposites from which the sacred child is born.” (36)

In this stage the alchemists in the laboratory would try and find a way of recombining the elements they had separated out in the last stage in order to form a new substance. In order to do this they may have to force things a little by “*fusing or amalgamating metals or by mixing saved components in a new chemical reaction by the addition of a temporary mediator such as an acid or a catalyst.*” (37)

On the journey towards menopause, in this final stage **a sacred marriage occurs between the Inner Masculine and Inner Feminine**, the most human and relateable opposites within the psyche. Carl Jung described this union as *giving birth to the Self* or *becoming whole*. This sacred marriage is a living symbol of how precious it is to be able to fully Individuate.

The path is arduous and demands many cycles. It is the gift that keeps on giving. At the end of each cycle we get a taste of more wholeness, a larger sense of being connected to something larger than us. This tonality or feeling is what we take with us as we begin the cycles again. The ‘becoming crone’ must honor and embody with her feminine the divine masculine and not look to her partner or patriarchal views in order to become whole. This marriage can also be seen as a symbol of the union of the spirit and the soul within the body. We achieve a feeling that all the parts of ourselves are working together, cooperating. We come home ourselves in, as Jung said, “*a combination of conscious and unconscious processes*” (38)

Without this union, the Consciousness that we have been working with in the stages of this workbook cannot realize itself in the world as an independent being.

## The Heart Center

**The heart center plays an important role in this inner marriage.** The energy rising up from the lower denser, earthier chakras meets the energy descending from the airier, lighter, higher chakras in the heart chakra. The Black Goddess, who we met in Separatio, has shown us that *the way we transform is through feeling*. Our masculine aspect must witness this and then act through love. This is a new, evolved relationship between inner masculine and feminine. It is the marriage of spirit and soul, embodied in the flesh. We are ready for our bodies to become the chalice or holy grail and to realize that it is within us that all wounds can be healed.

I believe that through the transformative journey towards menopause, older women are being asked to step into their power. To transform from having no place in patriarchal society to leading from the inside towards a new way of being in the world. The work we do to transfuse our energy into wisdom at this stage of our lives has huge implications not just for us as individuals but for society, humanity

and Nature. **The Goddess is rising** and she needs to be made conscious through her marriage with the Divine Masculine.

This raises the important and inevitable question: What is the archetype of the Divine Masculine? In this period of evolution and transmutation, we realize that the masculine qualities of thought, conceptualization, power and manifestation have become inappropriately dominant. **The sacred masculine has been forgotten and replaced with a caricature of masculinity.** We see these caricatures of masculinity in contemporary societies' blind worship of athletes, pop stars, politicians and business men. These caricatures are now crumbling like false idols, as the sacred masculine is called upon by the divine feminine. This follows the archetypal process of things turning into their opposites, which Jung called enantiodromia. Also archetypally, it has to follow the re-awakening of the sacred feminine and cannot precede it.

For women during the peri-menopausal journey, it is the divine masculine within, or what Carl Jung described as the **Animus**, that will lead the Divine Feminine—the Goddess—to the other side. The son, according to Marion Woodman, is now appearing more and more in women's dreams. [The son has been a regular theme in my dreams as I write this material.] It is the energy held in the archetype of the son that is going to synthesize a new balance in the inner journey. This is new territory. Marion Woodman in her book, "**Dancing in the Flames**" describes this as a new paradigm. She looks at the past as we have cycled through matriarchal and patriarchal systems, 'from instinctual self to ego self, from power from nature to power against nature, from power as gift to power as strength from dependance to independence'. The aim now is to move to the inner marriage, '**power with nature, power as love and interdependence**'. (39)

It is important to understand that the masculine needs the feminine and vice versa. The masculine or spirit needs to be embodied. Thinking and conceptualizing are not enough. Wisdom is the marriage of thought embodied in experience. They work together not against each other.

*"..they are partners in the dance of life – partners, that is, in the ongoing interplay between observer and observed. We all have an important contribution to make in bringing the feminine to consciousness. And with that consciousness will come a totally new understanding of the Masculine."* (40)

The feminine principle needs the masculine, or the spirit, for it to be brought into consciousness. The masculine principle, or spirit, needs to be embodied, which is the feminine principle.

During her journey through the maiden and mother archetypes, a woman projects aspects of her own masculine or animus onto men in her life, such as her father, teachers, lovers, partners. The work during peri-menopause demands a woman to finally identify these projections as aspects of herself and reel

them in. In this way she becomes autonomous, she does not surrender her power to the outer masculine, the patriarchy.

*“The true feminine is the receptacle of love. The true masculine is the spirit that goes into the eternal unknown in search of meaning....Without the true masculine spirit and the true feminine love within, no inner life exists. If we try to make perfection outside, try to concretize our unconscious inner ideal, we kill our imagination. We are left holding life in our rigid molds. To be free is to break the stone images and allow life and love to flow.”* (41)

In this section I have chosen to use **Kunzea** (*Kunzea ambigua*) and **Fragonia** (*Agonis fragrans*) essential oils, due to the French aromatherapist Dr. Penoel’s work with these oils that I encountered in France. I hesitated about this decision. On the one hand I admire Dr. Penoel as an outstanding aromatherapist. On the other hand, I feel he has gone a little too far in appropriating certain reflections and approaches by trademarking phrases and names of oils for example. Nevertheless, his suggestion of working with *Fragonia* and *Kunzea* as yin and yang principles to harmonize and balance the inner feminine and masculine spoke to me some years ago. At the time, I found the oils very helpful for this. Now I have chosen to work with them again for the *Conjunctio* stage of the alchemical journey of menopause.

Penoel speaks about them in the following way:

*“They both constitute the founding couple of quantic aromatherapy. *Fragonia* symbolizes the feminine principle in that it is more fundamentally yin. Meanwhile *Kunzea* amplifies the masculine principle. When you look at and compare *Fragonia*’s flowers with those of *Kunzea*, you are struck by the contrast. In *Fragonia*, the stamens are subdued and very organized. In contrast, the stamens of *Kunzea* are abundant and passionate. The stamens of a flower carrying the pollen and are equivalent to the masculine sexual organs in the animal world”.*

We also notice a feminine gracefulness and masculine power in each plants reaction when we bend their branches.

*“..in the case of *Fragonia* the branch straightens back up with grace and softness, *Kunzea*’s branch, bent and released, comes back to its original form and position with vigor. *Fragonia* exudes its perfume more easily than *Kunzea* does. Just like a feminine perfume, its sexual olfactory connotations are much more easily perceived when one is in the presence of the flower in comparison to the essential oil”.* (42)

As I mentioned at the beginning and throughout this workbook, you can use the oils I have suggested or you can pick those that work for you yourself. The guiding principle for the work during this stage is to work with a very masculine and very feminine oil.

## Exercise 22: Researching the Masculine Archetypes

I have chosen *Kunzea* essential oil for this exercise due to its affinity with the masculine principle. It expresses masculine traits such as vitality, physical energy, mental strength and courage.

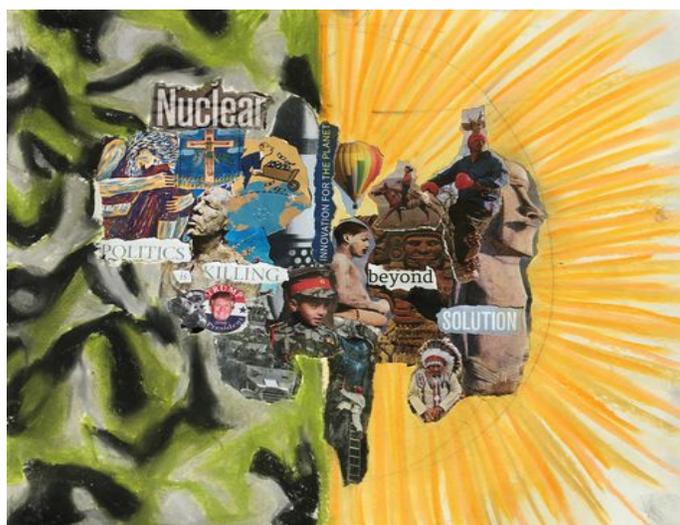
Carry *Kunzea* essential oil with you and sniff it regularly throughout the day for the duration of this exercise. You can also leave the bottle open at your bedside while you sleep.

In the first part of this exercise, you need to do research on the Masculine Archetypes. Read myths, fairy tales, stories. Watch movies. Look for characters in these stories that represent the principal masculine archetypes: the Hero, the King, the Warrior, the Wise Man or Sage, the Magician, the Priest, God, etc.

Journal. Reflect. Write. Make collages. Take photos. Make music that conjures up these energies. You may want to touch on all of them or concentrate in more detail on one or two of them.

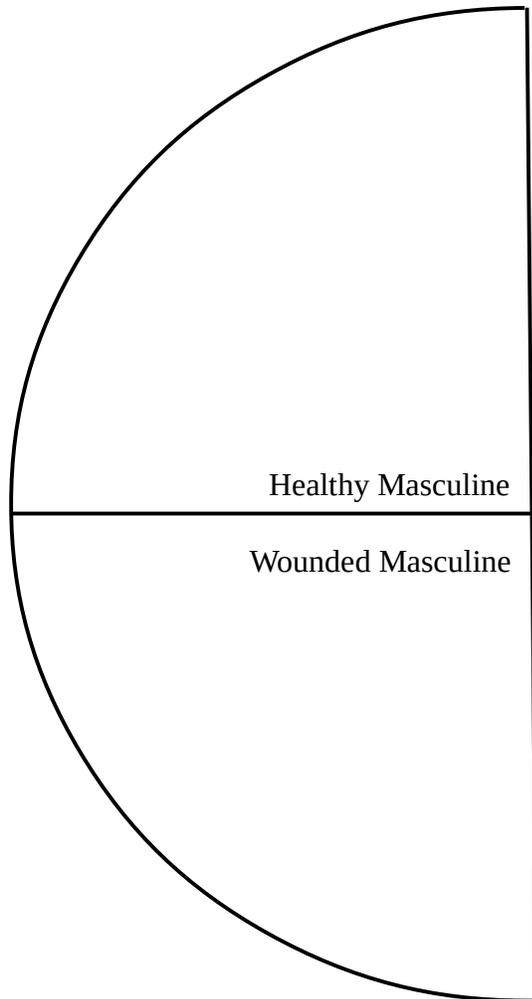
## Exercise 23: Healthy and Wounded Masculine Traits

Take as much time as you need for this exercise, it may take days or weeks. Continue to work with *Kunzea*. Reflect, meditate, observe and research what the masculine principle means to you and how you observe it in life. Using the diagram in Figure 9, record your insights. When you notice a very defined trait that you feel represents the masculine in some way, place it in the quadrant that you feel it should be in, either *Healthy Masculine* or *Wounded Masculine*. Keep doing this until the two quadrants are full and you feel that you have a really strong idea of the masculine principles.



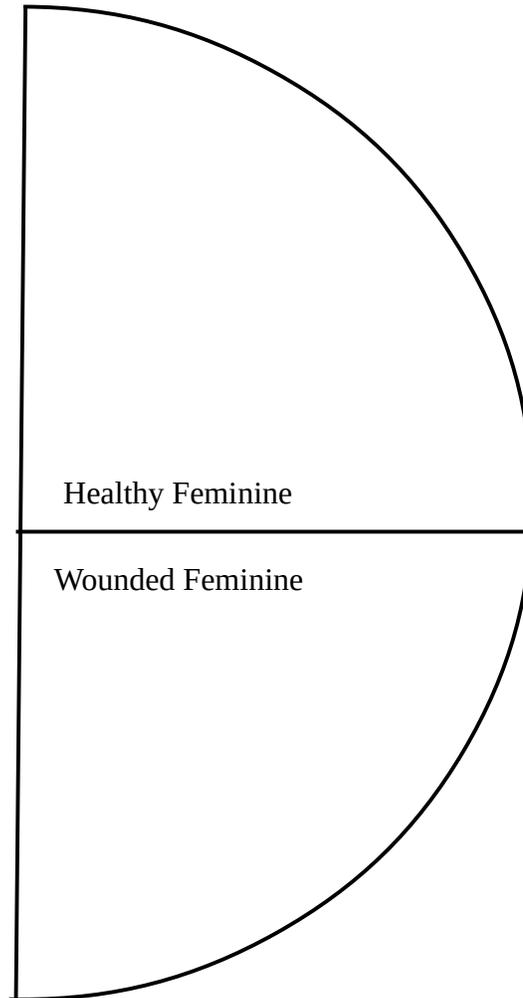
**Illustration 4:** My collage for exercise 23

**Figure 9: Half-Quaternity of Masculine Traits**





**Figure 10: Half-Quaternity of Feminine Traits**





**Illustration 6:** My collage for Exercise 26

## Exercise 26: Reflecting on My Inner Masculine and Feminine

Review the two half-quaternities from Exercises 23 and 25, which are Figures 9 and 10. Align them side by side so they form a full quaternity. Think about yourself and which side you have more natural affinity with. Which side do you tend to operate from or do you recognize both sides in different parts of yourself? What about the aspects that come from the wounded aspects of each? Which of the two oils did you prefer?

You can develop and express your thoughts through journaling, poetry, collage, painting, music, photography, dance, etc.

## Exercise 27: Tuning into your Feminine

Using *Fragonia* essential oil, sit quietly and start to tune in to your inner feminine. What does she feel like? What does she like wearing? What are her likes and dislikes? What are her beliefs?

Describe her in detail as if you were writing about a main character in a book or play or someone you have met. You can also draw or paint or collage her.

## Exercise 28: Tuning in to your Masculine

Using *Kunzea* essential oil sit quietly and start to tune in to your masculine. What does he feel like? What does he like wearing? What are his likes and dislikes? What are his beliefs?

Describe him in detail as if you were writing about a main character in a book or play or someone you have met. You can draw him if you like to.

## Exercise 29: Expressing Our Needs

When you feel you have really grasped these characteristics within you, ask your Inner Feminine to write a letter to your Inner Masculine telling him what she needs from him. How does she need him to support her?

What does she need him to do?

How does she need him to behave in their relationship?  
What language does she need him to use with her?  
In what ways does she want them to work together?  
What role does she want him to take in their relationship?

Do the same thing with your Inner Masculine. Ask him to write a letter to your inner feminine telling her what he needs from him.

How does he need her to support him?  
What does he need her to do?  
How does he need her to behave?  
What language does he need her to use with him?  
In what ways does he want them to work together?  
What role does he want her to take?

When you have finished these letters, the next stage is to write a **marriage contract** between you inner masculine and inner feminine. Remember that the aim of this marriage is that the sacred union will give birth to the new consciousness in the form of authentic feminine power. Use **garden marjoram** (*Origanum marjorana*) essential oil for this exercise, as you write your marriage contract. This essential oil is very harmonious. It brings emotional fluidity and ease and helps balance the masculine and feminine principles so they can work together. To make this easier, go through the letters you have written between your inner feminine and masculine. Using the issues raised in these letters, write a contract starting with:

**“I promise to...”**

For example an inner masculine may say to the inner feminine:

*“I promise to help us think about our options in a well-defined and ordered way.*

*I promise to help us take time to tune into our feelings before we react to something.*

*I promise to make sure we have enough alone time in order to re-charge our batteries*

*I promise to listen to our feelings before making any quick decision*

*I promise to protect and guide us through life safely and with strength when necessary*

*I promise to act from a place of unconditional love and acceptance*

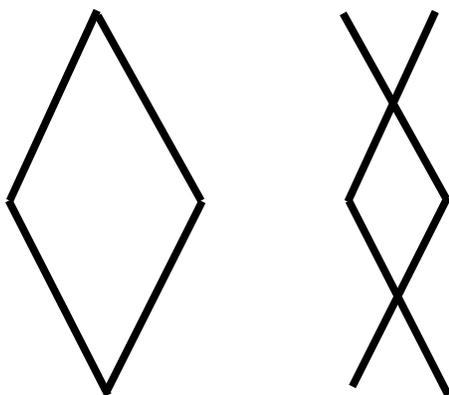
*I promise not to dominate and to be open to all possibilities*

*I support my inner feminine in expressing her sexuality and sensuality in complete confidence and inner security”*

When you have completed your contract, you could do a little ceremony with yourself and read the contract out loud. You could even buy yourself a beautiful ring that speaks to you about this inner marriage and offer it to yourself.

I want to close this stage with some reflections triggered by the rune **ING** which can be symbolized in either of the ways shown in Figure 11.

**Figure 11: The Ing Rune**



The psyche, I believe takes advantage of the situation when we are working with elements that concern it. With any work I do related to inner alchemy—be it writing, live teaching, etc. I find I am taken by my unconscious into living in some way the stages and concepts I am presenting. This workbook is no exception. We could say it is *‘the gift that keeps on giving.’*

Doing the work on the sacred inner union, I was triggered by an exterior situation that revealed a challenging imbalance between my inner masculine and feminine. In the mugginess of the feelings that arose, I turned to the runes for some insight. *Ing* rune helped me to understand this element of **coniunctio** on a personal as well as collective level.

Ing can be seen as the **inner hearth**. It is the vessel, the cauldron and the womb. It is the fire within the hearth. The hearth is the center of the home, where the alchemical process is cooked. It is a triad, in that it is made up of three parts—the masculine, the feminine and the divine child or creative life. This rune has been likened to the energy of the **coiled fiery snake of kundalini**. It is with this symbolism and energy I want to end my discussion of this stage. In the first stage of *Calcinatio*, we looked at the rising kundalini energy that women can feel when they have a hot flash. The home and embodiment of this energy is kept in the cauldron of the womb, the uterus. When we are menstruating this energy is released from the body and given back to the earth. Or this energy is transformed into the energy of new life in the form of a baby. With menopause, the kundalini energy is no longer released downwards. In the menopausal journey, the birth is of the self and the couple is within. The union is between inner feminine and masculine, the Sky and the Earth, the Spirit and the Soul. This rune Ing also looks like a double helix of DNA. It is interesting to think that the DNA is symbolized here not through the sharing of DNA when the egg and sperm meet through intercourse, but by the feminine aspect receiving and embodying the vibrant masculine energy in the pure expression of our individual DNA. Like the ouroboros, the serpent that bites its own tail, the cycle is complete, our inner masculine inseminates us and we are born.

And so I welcome you, Wise One! You have earned yourself. You are needed as guide and sage in your family, community and the global community. The individual journeys each of us takes during this passage of empowerment in a woman's life, is the same journey the Earth is taking so that spirit can inseminate her and her creativity can be expressed.

### *The long journey home*

*So there was the constant running,*

*Years of it*

*Frightened...but not sure of what*

*Angry...but not sure with whom*

*I dwelled in the space*

*Where eternity lies*

*With the stars and dreamy nothingness*

*Of the other side*

*The here and now*

*Routine and cycles*

*Of life on earth  
Terrified me... to the point of  
Dragging my two young children  
Across the globe  
Just to be sure  
That we could always hide  
Or move on....from  
That which reminded me I was alive  
In a physical body  
With an earthly life to lead  
A life that had lost its sense  
Somewhere along the way  
Couldn't find the place  
Or the forgotten meaning  
Searching I did  
Whilst running wildly  
Hunting for safety, love and a home  
But a home can't be found  
Home is where the heart is  
But as the heart was in shreds  
The homeland was unrecognizable  
From the start...  
But run and search I did, in all the wrong places  
In the drugs that made me feel  
So connected...to the disconnected world of lost souls  
In relationships that intensified the feelings of loneliness.  
To India, where the reflection of self in the eyes of all,  
Spun me around and shoved me back into the arms of what was not yet finished*

*To my horse and cart and the seeking of sense  
in the windy lanes that the gypsies had trod.  
Until with age and the turning of Saturn  
I made the first tentative steps to stop running  
And face the job of building  
Something more stable  
That had structure and form  
That I could say was mine  
And that maybe I would even belong  
But life cannot be forced to  
Supply stability  
At the wave of a hand, the making of a decision  
And so from running to illusion...I built sandcastles in the sand  
I created a persona  
That had many friends and an exciting life...in foreign lands  
And the frightened me who ran away  
Looking for a home, buried herself deeper within  
Given up fleeing  
Hiding now in the theatre piece of a life  
that was animated and dynamic but  
resting on a bedrock of dust and emptiness  
Until the day I signed on the dotted line  
I boarded the train  
That would take me on the journey  
Inwards...towards a reanimation of the lost soul  
It was to be the most intense adventure of all my travels  
Layer by layer, like an onion skin  
I peeled slowly away, each hurt, illusion,*

*And out-dated survival technique  
And slowly I could feel the breath coming back  
To my aura, to my being, to my heart  
Hesitatingly I looked in the mirror  
And told myself I loved me!  
Slowly I made sense of the past  
And even the generations past  
I performed symbolic acts  
To heal the unconscious mind  
I learnt to dance my dance  
Sing my song and feel  
Feelings were the key...  
I stopped running from and faced them  
What we resist persists  
I let go, stopped barricading  
And my body processed intelligently  
Much more so than the mind (that likes to think it's intelligent)  
And gently as I learnt to believe in myself...and love myself  
the outer illusions started to flake away  
And deep in my innermost  
A subtle process of going home began... yet unbeknown to me  
And the universe helped the subconscious  
As together they created situations that nudged me nearer  
To the place where I had come from  
To the place where I had fled from  
Inner and outer intertwined  
I was getting nearer to them both  
Closer to home, back to the hearth*

*Feminine, masculine, the union of both  
In my inward and outward lives  
Harmoniously, magically, beautifully reflecting each other  
I had stopped running and begun caring  
For myself, for other, for the whole  
And in an instant, twenty five years later  
The two ends joined  
I had arrived at the same place  
But recognized it for the first time  
I am going home!*

I want to end this journey with **Myrrh** essential oil (*Commiphora myrrha*) for its ability to bring the spirit into the physical and bring all aspects of life together—heaven and earth, light and shadow, birth and death, joy and suffering.

*“It strengthens the link between our crown and base chakras – the psychic centers at the base of the spine and top of the head. By so doing, the dreams and visions of the soul can find a channel for earthly expression and tap the force they need for their ‘magical’ realization.” (43)*

Physically *Myrrh*'s powerful energy can be felt throughout the body. It pushes through physical and psychic blockages liberating and unifying. Take the time to feel its presence and you will notice that it helps us to stand within ourselves at the point where spirit, heart and body meet. It helps us to understand the suffering we have been through. It lets us see the wisdom of this suffering in the lucidity of our spirit. Its warmth penetrates our souls and bodies, caressing us and nurturing us on our earthly journeys. It has been used since ancient times to help women during the contractions of childbirth. In the same way it supports us as we birth ourselves.

Welcome Home

If you would like to order the “Alchemy of Menopause” kit, which contains the 17 essential oils that are used in some of the exercises and a goddess effigy, please visit <https://cathysattars.com> or email us at [info@aromagnosis.com](mailto:info@aromagnosis.com)

If you would like to keep in touch and learn more about our work sign up for the Aromagnosis email newsletter at <https://aromagnosis.com/>. There is also a separate newsletter for <https://cathysattars.com/>.

You can also follow @The\_Alchemy\_of\_Menopause on Instagram.

There is also a facebook group “The Alchemy of Menopause” that you can join.

If you want to explore this approach in more depth, I encourage you to sign up for my online class with Florian Birkmayer MD “Aromatherapy and Medicine of the Soul”, which is offered by us at <https://aromagnosis.com/> along with several other enlightening classes.

I also teach classes in person, including “The Alchemy of Menopause”, “Aromatherapy and Medicine of the Soul” and others. To find out the current schedule of live classes, visit our website at: <https://aromagnosis.com/>

If you are interested in hosting me to teach “The Alchemy of Menopause” live, please contact me at [info@aromagnosis.com](mailto:info@aromagnosis.com).

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Edition for participants of online “Aromatherapy & Medicine of the Soul” class.



### About Cathy Skipper

Cathy Skipper trained as a herbalist and aromatherapist in France, where she worked for many years practicing and teaching. She now lives in the United States and is co-founder of Aromagnosis with her husband Dr. Florian Birkmayer. Her work stems from a synthesis between aromatherapy and alchemy, which in CG Jung's view is a model of personal evolution and soul growth. She is passionate about empowering people to find and live their personal myth.