



Make Yourself Safe

In any form of recovery, PTSD, addiction, grief, and many other forms of staying the course with yourself as a necessity to survival, there are three keys, the first being – MAKE YOURSELF SAFE!

The Self-Inquiry Series, with,

Ana Maria Santuario

Workshop 002 of the series, Self-Inquiry for the Modern Age.

<https://anamaria.org/self-inquiry-for-the-modern-age/> ©Ana Maria Santuario 2023.



What is safety?

Safety is a relative term, one without a definable definition. For me, safety is a sense of feeling, a state of being able to thrive and enjoy life. For each of us safety is a learned concept. If you had an unsafe childhood, chances are your radar for what it actually means may be off slightly. If you have experienced trauma, the concept of what it means to feel safe changes dramatically, as so too, will you. It is a difficult notion, but one we will endeavour to conceptualise.

There is no saying what safety will come to look like for you, all we can do is come to terms with reality as it is and work from there. There is no overnight solution, but there are practical tools to explore and experience. As well as there being a systematic societal approach to change, which will vary dependant on where you live on this earth. Sadly, this kind of help may require community support if societal infrastructures do not offer things such as a women's refuge or care home.

Staying safe is the foremost important feature of any recovery plan and this may need to become a flexible thing. Perhaps you cannot yet leave your husband, or the wife you disdain is mentally unwell, and your children are left at risk if you leave her. Perhaps your elderly parent is losing their mind and you cannot afford a care home. Whatever the situation there is a solution – it's called *loving yourself first*.



Place Yourself at Your Centre

What on earth does this mean? Read on to find out!



What on earth is my center?



You are the centre of this life that you are living, but some of us will get swept up into issues not belonging to us. Bring your energy back to yourself and those in your immediate environment. Dropping social media is a great start – how much time and energy do you waste? Does it ever make you feel so much better about yourself? Are you SAFE with that mirror and what it tells you about yourself?



Your centre is where you live – what's going on there? Are there feelings of upset, sadness, or cries for help inside of your soul? Are you happy each day or mad at yourself and those around you?



To place yourself at your centre means to *stop distracting yourself* and come home to where you live; your body and mind need you to come home if you are to restore a sense of safety for yourself and infuse it into this life to come.



Play Detective...

- Your centre speaks all of the time, the only question is, *do you listen?* Or are you even capable of listening?
- Being emotionally numb is a common trait these days, or perhaps hyper-sensitivity sends your system into overdrive and you can no longer use this intelligent system-of-self to explore what is good and bad for you, just as you did as a child.
- We intuitively know what is right and wrong, we have an inner compass called a conscience. Some of this will be learned, of course, taught morals and principles, but I have never hurt a person intentionally, mostly because even when I hurt somebody accidentally, I FEEL EVERYTHING ten times over. I carry sadness in my body and mind, and a lot of it, I have never not felt sad about things happening around me. I still cry for another person's pain, and so I had to learn to stay safe in my own way, since crying about everything never did anything but mean I became stuck in the mud of my own grieving nature.



What is your nature?

Look inwards now...

Do you hate your life or are you freely accepting of it?

Do you hate others and feel angry sometimes > Or even rage and contempt?

Do you feel so sorry for everyone and always try to help?

Are you a compassionate person left holding the light for others who live in their own perpetual darkness?

Who are you really? Are those you live with understanding of you? Do they even know the real you? Do you?



Staying Safe means knowing some things about who and what you are...

If you rage on impulse, figure out who and what triggers you and learn to navigate life without having to do this to yourself. You are allowed to be angry, but I'm guessing you don't love this aspect of yourself. Perhaps protecting yourself means making some changes?

If you cry when you watch a sad film and feel rubbish for a few days – stop watching the darn films! Stop feeding the sadness, let yourself feel nicer things, safer things. If you have a sadness yearning to escape, find a healthier way – see a therapist perhaps, or engage in online communities, find what ails you and release it somehow.

If you feel contempt that seeps into conversation regularly from the news or other loaded debates, stop partaking in said debates and leave yourself time to feel at peace with your world. The world has a bad habit of pretending it's doing something, when all it really is, is stuck! Free yourself and the world will free itself in time.

If you hate the way you feel each day, play detective and find your triggers – do you hate your life, your job, your family? Do you hate your friends, find yourself complaining all of the time? These are tells, listen to what your life is saying... it's the key to your own freedom and will inform any positive steps you may choose to take in your own time.



Staying safe in a zoo without boundaries...

The world is a zoo with a whole bunch of mad and enlivened wild animals, many of whom will tell you they know something that you need to hear.

Many people think themselves living a life worthy of sharing these days – just look at social media. It's a frenzy, a strange thing I no longer want around me.

People tick boxes online – a home, a car, a fancy new ring on their engagement finger, a weight loss journey – a fake life of illusionary happiness.

All this does is reinforce what you think you need and should desire to make your life look as theirs seems to look. Happiness is not something to chase, it's something to become.

Without things that matter around you, will you matter? Without happiness on the inside, will the external ever satisfy a deep longing for something on the inside... *safety and love?*



To allow this world to tell you how to live is never a safe thing to be doing!

- I am telling you all this to make you think! Is the person who has lost 10lbs sharing it because they are content? Or are they so needy for congratulatory well wishes that they need the ego boost, since the loss of the weight didn't change a thing about how they truly feel about themselves? Are the engaged couple even happy or doing this because time is running out and both are too scared of being alone? Are the parents who sing praises of their child in photo montages even aware their tiny human's tantrums will evolve into a deep seated hate of themselves, and perhaps of those who raised them?
- Are humans ever content? Are we ever really appreciating life and all it has to offer? Do you make food and smell every ingredient, getting to know what life smells like? Are you enjoying the making of said food and deciding that this will become your body since it tastes so good, just as you will to anyone who nibbles at your energy. Are you content in eating well or feeling deprived of something 'more'?
- You are what you absorb, this includes food, obviously, but are you a pleasure to engage with for others? Or do you incessantly complain about the work you do, or how tired mothering is making you, or how your wife is constantly blaming you for her own misery? Are you joyful since you inhale joy in each moment or are you bored, conceited and annoyed by those who are happy?
- Energy meets energy alike, and chances are you're a bit like those around you... who are they? They may become your greatest tool of reflection. Even when you think there is something off about your world, you tend to sit and do nothing about it because figuring out what it is, is the deciding feature of finding the solution...
- Here we are all about solutions, so let's crack on...



What are you absorbing? Are you safe?

So, let's look at what a safe world may be for you all:

- Are you watching violence on a daily basis? If so, it reflects something inside you that likes the adrenaline rush and the deep confirmation of rage. I have felt rage too, murderous thoughts are alright, so long as you don't act on them – they come from pain, a very deep, visceral pain. Don't judge it, know it's there and figure out why.
- Are you steadily eating your sorrows and numbing any sense of aliveness? In this case, life became scary at some point in time and your weight and shape protects you somehow. Let it... don't judge, become friends with information, stop reading weight loss blogs and instead turn to compassion for yourself. Forgiving yourself comes first, accepting yourself, second, changing yourself follows on from here. Take your time, use the tools provided in [The Self-Help Library](#).
- Are you ingesting / inhaling / snorting or injecting drugs? These will change you, please see the [references and reading](#) page @ anamaria.org for sources of support. There is also a mini-series; *The Science of Addiction*, coming soon to our website. This is a path hard to escape, there are often real reasons we end up here, please forgive yourself and know you're deserving of different. With love, I bless your heart and soul for its sorrows and how misunderstood your life path is... we seek to alter people's perceptions of your journey, but you can help by realising the realities and communicating your needs to others, there are people out there who can help.



Are you safe? Continued...

- How do those around you speak to you? With kindness, compassionate love and cherished words? Do they scream, shout and abuse your sense of worth and value? Do you even know what love seems like other than on television? (not real love, FYI, a terrible reference for something so visceral and powerfully shifting and transformative).
- Are your words coming from your own mouth safe? How do you see yourself and present yourself to this world? Are you betraying yourself by lying externally to stay safe internally? In other words, do you make your world smaller to fit into the safety those around you permitted your existence to squeeze into? Are you safely tucked away in a box or a cage? Or are you soaring with your own song flowing freely from this heart of yours?
- Who are you? There seems to be no real answer to this question, so I prefer to ask, *WHAT ARE YOU?* Are you a body, are you a mind, are you energy waking up to itself? Are you life happening within and around you? Are we single entities or connected to one and all? Can you even survive without your connection to this world – the earth, the air, the trees and animals all support this life that you live? Are you supporting them back with graceful receipt by way of gratitude?



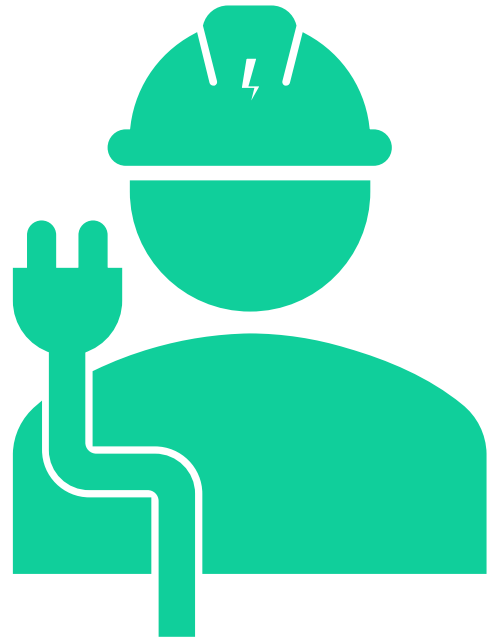
Does connection equal safety?

- Time was we lived in herds, of a sort, communities grown together in harmonic stories of love and powerful connection to oneness and self. All had roles to play, all accepted said roles, since survival depended on it.
- Now we live solitary existences in comparison. We live alone in houses with many rooms, instead of together in one big shared space. We sleep alone with a pillow, instead of together for body warmth and snugness found in safety of togetherness. Even babies sleep alone fairly often these days... were you safe as an infant or left to wail and cry yourself to sleep? If so, this information matters, it shaped you, made you feel safer alone than with others, it was forced upon you.
- Are you healthy with the sense of connection found in touch and physical sharing, or are you wham, bam, thank you sir / mam? Are you safe enough to explore intimacy? Without intimacy have you ever been safe?
- These are all questions to point you towards your core wounds, and it's important to understand that once you are grown, anything new, different or strange, may very well arouse unsafe sensations in both body and mind, which can be sad if the new thing you're trying to access is love. It's why so many of us live on cyclic repeat, since we come to stay where it is 'safe', but really, safe can frequently point to familiar, not necessarily what is really and truly safe.



Is safe even really safe?

- There is a world I came to know – that of safety in body and mind. It meant change was enabled for me. I learned to sing, to dance, to play music once more. Adolescence was the last time that this happened.
- Safety means a chance to become who you really are, not stay as the world made you. This may mean picking and pressing flowers; or going to the local market and buying fresh food; it means making new experiences occur as a result of feeling safe enough to try them out.
- Safety is found in the familiar, but familiar doesn't really mean safe... and should you deny your own right to live life well, all it goes to show you is what your children will become, should you have any, and theirs after them. You are the experiences you absorb... as too will they be.
- What do you absorb daily? Is it always the same? Do you learn anything new? Are you able to adapt your thinking or are you so very stuck?
- Anything you learn is only helpful if you allow yourself to use and apply it to this life that you live. No good learning what healthy recipes are without delving into the actuality of cooking them for yourself and those around you.



So how do I make myself safe?

There lies the question, yet we must find the answer for ourselves.



What actually is safety?

This is an illusion of a concept. When you really delve into things you will find there is no cementable answer. How can something fluid become concrete in a manner of words and concepts? It cannot.

Safety evolves alongside your needs and growth throughout life. It will never be only one thing, it will present as exactly what you need at any given time, which makes it hard to define.

A sufferer of PTSD will define safety in their own way, in a way that manages and meets their needs at that moment in time. Zoom ahead, ten years later and their life may look very different, and their recovery made way for a beautiful life to blossom and bloom around them, as well as within.

Without acknowledging your needs you will remain where you are. To see what you need and to reach out for it is braver than you may seem to realise. To speak your voice in reference to knowing exactly what you need is courage in action, as well as mighty empowering!

Never fear what you need, it may be hard to grab a hold of initially, but like we always seem to preach to our young – *practice makes perfect!*



Then what are we talking about?

There is a reason you are here thinking with me this day. There is a reason we are thinking instead of answering... because this thinking and provoking of concept development will be how you find what safety looks like for you. It will also evoke (potentially) a self compassionate stance which remembers the journey ahead will be as complex as you are, but that each step eventually leads to some place new; no matter how far away it may feel, wherever you dream to be, one day at a time is all that is ever possible. Or every moment at a time, if you really want to micro manage your world as it really exists – in the here and now of it all.

“The journey is what leads to a new destination, avoid the journey, never reach where you want to be. It’s quite simple, right?”

- Ana Maria, 2021



Tools and Time

- Every phase of development as a human takes learning and applying as a necessity. Without learning there can be no evolution of yourself, without applying what you learn, there can be no evolution of yourself; both are required!
- So, where to start? With the learning of what is 'true' (Nothing is ever true by the way, only believed to be until otherwise disproven), good and hopeful? Or with the learning of what it is about you that requires your attention?
- BOTH are required! Both are symbiotic processes, without learning the new how can you direct your attention to what you need to shift and change. Without something to replace it with what's the point in knowing it's there?
- Would it not be better to learn what you need and then proceed to work towards it by learning what needs to be done to evolve, shift or change. This is a positive way of looking at your own evolution, and one that will empower you, not leave you lost and hopeless without a way to turn towards successful outcomes.



So what outcomes do we mean?

- Fame, glory, possessions, a life of luxury? Are these what you seek? Wealth, successful careers, cars and boats? What is it that you want?
- Many teachers and gurus will speak of manifesting, of playing at pretending you are God and able to create things out of thin air just by believing you can. Nonsense is what I say to this. You may well be energetically aligned with things turning up for you, but only because your energy allows for it to be so. If you are perpetually unlucky in love, just dreaming about the perfect stranger turning up in your world would leave you stuck and wishing for nothing but a fairy tale... it creates and sustains a painful experience of longing, wishing and hoping for life to change without you ever trying much to change it. To Manifest one must be clear and aligned, which is no overnight feat.
- Self inquiry leads to a new place, but one you cannot know or design for yourself. It is a process of dissection and subtraction, not accumulation. This entire process I practice relies on surrender and revolves around a person placing their faith in the unknown of the journey of their own evolution. Successful outcomes can mean the destruction of your world as you know it, which is not something everyone will embrace. For others, a successful outcome may be sticking to a health plan and taking one leap towards enjoying life now that they are able to run and play with their kids after losing 100bs of weight.
- Self-inquiry outcomes are personal, they are outcomes that cannot be planned for, or deemed as the only solution to your happiness and contentment. All discontentedness sits within, any lingering longing for love exists in your own heart space, any fear of loss and love comes from not feeling safe enough to expose yourself or to experience the fear evoked by these experiences.



Outcomes... continued...

- As a general rule, if you want to learn about yourself, if you want to grow and commit to real effective change – then figure out what you want, and when it scares the hell out of you, DO IT ANYWAY! Do it fully, do it fearlessly as you enter the fear of it all, and know that the fear is there to force you to stop. Don't stop! Always keep going! This is how you change yourself and your world, with a dedication to yourself above all else. Feeling fear and walking along with it takes courage, remember that when you need to.
- This does **not** mean becoming selfishly minded, this means living in your centre, that's all there is to change. Find your centre and stay there. Watch the world float by and watch yourself react to it, never once letting your reactions dictate your next choice in life.
- I cannot provide you with answers, only the questions that may help you find them for yourself.
- I will offer you with the best advice I have ever received from another human being, in terms of a commitment towards a life of enjoyment and fulfilment...



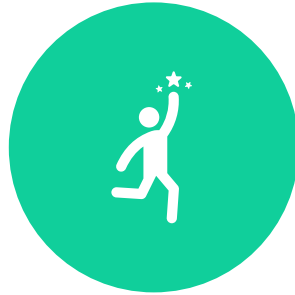
I asked him...
“What is your key to
living a life of joy?”

“It’s simple really...
find out what you
like and do it more
often.”



This journey of change need not be brutally dull or take the fun out of living... When I say do the things you're afraid of and keep going, I don't mean bungy jumping when it's not really your thing... I mean returning to those things you loved as a youngster, a love of nature, of drawing and painting, of singing, playing football or hockey. A world of *life being lived* as the ultimate experience... this is all I advocate! Work takes up so very much of our time, too much really, so making joyful experiences a priority can be harder for some than others, which needs to be a thought allowed by some of you. Not reaching back into painting could be a result of required financial restraint, not of your commitment to yourself. Try saving up, then buy when the time is right. It's also okay to be you, in all your finery and glory. We all serve the whole somehow..

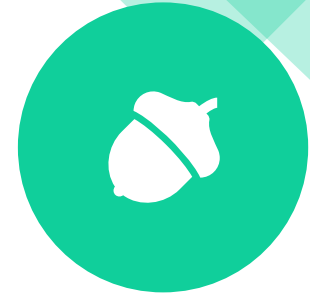
What
about my
immediate
sense of
safety, right
now?



TO KNOW WHETHER YOU'RE SAFE OR NOT MEANS YOU MUST HAVE ALREADY EXPERIENCED THE FEELING, THERE MUST BE A REFERENCE FROM WHICH TO WORK FROM. IF YOU HAVE NEVER FELT SAFE AND THIS IS YOUR NORMAL, HOW WILL YOU EVER KNOW? THERE ARE SAFE SPACES, SUCH AS THERAPY AND COUNSELLING... REACH OUT IF YOU NEED TO.



A GOOD EXERCISE IS TO GO INTO NATURE AND SURROUND YOURSELF WITH BIRDSONG, LIGHT AND A GENTLE BREEZE... EVEN THE RAIN WILL DO. NATURE NEVER FAILS YOU; IT WILL REVEAL WHAT SAFETY FEELS LIKE... LOVE, PEACE, BEAUTY, AND LIKING THE WORLD THAT SURROUNDS YOU. ANYTHING THAT CAUSES YOUR EMOTIONS TO SPIKE UNHELPFULLY IS NOT SAFE.



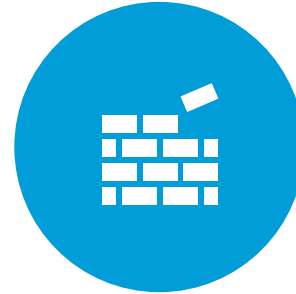
I AM HERE TO PLANT SEEDS, BUT IT IS UP TO YOU TO NOURISH THEIR GROWTH. PLEASE ACT WHEN YOU CAN, AND STAY HOPEFUL WHEN YOU CANNOT TAKE ACTION TOWARDS THE CHANGES YOU SEEK. THERE IS ALWAYS A WAY FORWARD, BUT IT MAY NOT BE A QUICK FIX SITUATION AND PATIENCE MAY BE REQUIRED. I AM HOPEFUL YOU CAN GET THERE... IN TIME.



Immediate actions to take.



IF YOU ARE IN IMMEDIATE PHYSICAL DANGER, CALL THE EMERGENCY SERVICES, DO NOT FEEL ASHAMED, KNOW YOU ARE SAFE TO REACH FOR THIS KIND OF AID, AND KNOW THAT YOU DESERVE TO BE PHYSICALLY SAFE – ALWAYS. ALWAYS. ALWAYS. IF IT HAPPENS AGAIN OR YOU ARE THREATENED AS A RESULT, CALL THE POLICE AGAIN. ALWAYS PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR CHILDREN.



IF YOU ARE EXPERIENCING EMOTIONAL ABUSE, THERE ARE MEASURES TO PUT INTO PLACE RIGHT NOW. MAKE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR YOURSELF BY CLAIMING A ROOM IN YOUR HOUSE AS YOUR OWN. MAKE A BEDROOM WHERE THE LIVING ROOM OUGHT TO BE. CLAIM YOUR RIGHT TO AN IMMEDIATE SAFE SPACE TO RE-EVALUATE THE REST OF YOUR WORLD, GIVE YOURSELF TIME.



SAY NO, STOP HELPING OTHER PEOPLE WHEN YOU REALLY NEED TO LEARN TO HELP YOURSELF. STOP USING YOUR ENERGY IN SUPPORT OF OTHERS AND SAVE IT IN TIME TO REINVENT YOUR WORLD. YOU DESERVE TO BE HAPPY, CONTENT AND MOST OF ALL, SAFE. ENJOYING LIFE IS A PRIVILEGE MOST OF US CAN AFFORD, BUT WE NEED TO CLAIM THIS RIGHT FOR OURSELVES.



More ideas
to help you
seek the
safety you
deserve!



STAY INDOORS. SOMETIMES WE THINK ISOLATING ALWAYS A BAD THING, BUT IT CAN SUPPORT THE REGULATION OF YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM AND HELP YOU BALANCE YOUR MIND ONCE MORE, SO THAT YOU MIGHT THINK CLEARLY AND STOP REACTING TO LIFE IN CIRCLES OF REPETITION. CONSCIOUS THOUGH MAY HAVE SPACE TO SHOW UP AND SUPPORT YOUR PROCESS OF MOVING FORWARD.



REIGN IT IN! FILL YOUR WORLD UP WITH DOABLE TASKS; WASHING UP, BRUSHING YOUR TEETH, SHOWERING DAILY; FEEDING YOUR BODY AND MIND WITH NOURISHING SOURCES OF ENERGY. BACK TO BASICS IS ALWAYS A GOOD PLACE TO BEGIN ANY RECOVERY OR RESET JOURNEY. PLACE YOUR HEALTH AT THE FOREFRONT AND PRACTICE WELLBEING AS A LIFESTYLE CHOICE, NOT A FAD.



THERE IS A WAY THIS GOES... MAKE YOURSELF SAFE PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY BEFORE CHANGE IS EVEN A POSSIBILITY, OTHERWISE YOU WILL FLY AROUND IN PERPETUAL CYCLES OF SUFFERING WITHOUT YOUR SAFETY BECOMING YOUR CORE VALUE IN LIFE. YOU MAY THRIVE, BUT TO WHAT EXTENT? PREFERABLY WHOLLY, COMPLETELY, WITH A FULL AND HAPPY LIFE? OR IN ONE DIRECTION BECAUSE IT'S EASIER?





There is more to come on
'Make Safe Practices', subscribe to
Anamaria.org to keep up to date. And
just keep going at your own pace, we
promise you're heading somewhere new,
but to get there, you must keep stepping
in time with yourself and nobody else.

Safer Shores of Me, is a collection of poetry and prose
written by me in a time of great suffering, when
safety was only accessible in my imagination.
Perhaps it can help some of you find your own
inwards safety, which only ever grows into external
fruits as an extension of that energetic setting. There
are also three ways to write to me, explore your
options here.