



# HEALING JOURNEY PROGRAM

## LEVEL 5: READING GUIDE

*Eckhart Tolle's A New Earth*

Created by:  
Alastair J. Cunningham, OC, PhD, PhD, CPsych

Developed for Wellspring by:  
Claire Edmonds, Ph.D. R.P.  
and Judy Gould, Ph.D. R.P. 2016

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## THE HEALING JOURNEY PROGRAM: LEVEL FIVE READING GUIDE

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## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Level Five of the Healing Journey Program. You have now worked your way through Levels One, Two, Three, and some of you will have also completed Level Four<sup>1</sup>—a total of 20 to 28 weeks of sessions. Congratulations!

Let's take a look at some of the skills you have been introduced to:

- Progressive relaxation
- Allostatic load
- Healthy thought management
- Imagery for healing
- Meditation
- Journaling
- Setting goals and priorities
- Letting go of resentments
- Exploring spirituality in the context of cancer
- Understanding emotional triggers
- Reacting versus responding
- Understanding icebergs and what lies beneath the surface of our behaviours
- Conditional versus unconditional love

It's a wonderful, long list of skills you have acquired. We have moved fairly quickly through the content, and it will take time for these skills to become a part of your day-to-day life. Some strategies will have come more easily to you than others and perhaps you have found it challenging to apply them in the moment during difficult situations. Level Five, which is based on Eckhart Tolle's *A New Earth*, gives us an opportunity to learn more about how these skills can be implemented in real life. Within a warm supportive group context, you are free to explore how these psycho-spiritual strategies work in the stress of life and cancer.

*A New Earth* can be a challenging book, and in the group sessions we often joke that while Tolle's book may be on the New York Times Best Sellers list, it must be languishing on many people's bookshelves! However, reading *A New Earth* in a group setting, with like-minded people who share the same context of cancer makes the material far more accessible.

Since the development of Healing Journey Level Five, many more helpful and enlightening spiritual books have been published. If you have found any books to be particularly helpful in your healing, we hope that you will share the titles with your group.

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<sup>1</sup> participants do not have to have taken Level Four to participate in Level Five and are free to join Level Four after they complete Level Five.

A New Earth was chosen specifically because the concepts that we learn in the Healing Journey Program align with the content of Tolle's book. While he may use slightly different language, you will come to recognize our previous work on identifying triggers, managing reactions, and moving toward responses. He will use terms like "the pain body" that you will have already worked through in our model of the emotional iceberg.

Our goal in Level Five is to continue to make the work "real" in your lives, so that you are actively working on using these concepts in life's daily challenges, frustrations, and anxieties. Your group is a safe and strictly confidential place to share your experiences and strategies. You will all learn from each other while we work our way to living a more peaceful, connected, and healed life.

Sometimes Tolle can express ideas in a slightly surprising or provocative manner. If you feel uncertain of what Tolle means or you have an emotional reaction to what he writes, bring it up in group discussion—you may not be the only person who feels this way. We can learn much from each other as we work through the chapters together.

On a practical note, it is important for you to read the chapter for each week prior to the session and to consider and journal about the questions in this reading guide. This will ensure you are well prepared to delve into the material with the other group members.

I also encourage you to have your own copy of the book to highlight and make notes in. Inexpensive copies are often available second hand or on the internet. My own book has been read so often and has so many notes in the margins that I fear it is beginning to fall apart! While I could use a new copy, I value the accumulated insights that I gain each time I read it. Because while the material stays the same, I change through time and I meet the concepts differently because I am in a different place in my life. I have never failed to come away from a session of Level Five without a new or deepened understanding of spirituality in the context of my life and my own cancer journey.

This is not a book that can be fully digested and absorbed in a single reading. This is especially true if you are on chemo or active therapy. Know that you can return to the program and take it again even if you have taken it before. We learn in spirals, encountering the same ideas but in different circumstances, and these concepts take time to become integrated into our lives.

I hope you find Level Five as helpful and inspiring as I have. Over the past 10 years hundreds of participants have found the work helpful, worthwhile, and healing.

Namaste.

Claire Edmonds 2023

## WEEK ONE

### CHAPTER 1: THE FLOWERING OF HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS

Author, Eckhart Tolle says that it is essential to experience the truth or felt experience of spirituality rather than to try to understand it intellectually. Presence cannot be understood conceptually but must be felt. Below are a series of questions or actions for you to do prior to starting this course. They are focused on your experiences rather than concepts.

1. Tolle states that this book will bring about a state of consciousness. What expectations do you have for this course?
2. Page 13 reads, *“You do not become good by trying to be good, but by finding the goodness that is already within you, allowing that goodness to emerge. But it can only emerge if something fundamental changes in your state of consciousness.”*

Recalling the work you completed in Healing Journey Level Three, please answer the following questions:

- a. What are your thoughts in response to these statements?
  - b. What does it mean for you to be good versus finding goodness?
  - c. What sort of fundamental change do you believe is part of this process?
  - d. How might these changes be encouraged?
3. What role does stillness play in this process? Are you ready to be still? What will this require you to do? What will be the challenges?
  4. On page 9, Tolle describes sin as *“missing the mark”* and to *“live unskillfully, blindly and thus to suffer and cause suffering”*.
    - a. What is your response to these ideas? Are there facets of your life in which you are missing the mark or live unskillfully?
    - b. Have you had moments of being “awake” or “hitting the mark”? Describe the experience and what preceded the experience. Has this experience altered your understanding of who you are in a spiritual sense? Have you already had moments of glimpsing the truth within yourself? (Page 16)
  5. Thought watching is fostering the sense of internal observer and stillness, the sense that you are more than your thoughts—it is a fundamental practice. Practice “being the awareness” behind the thoughts.
    - a. How can you build this into your daily experience?
    - b. Notice how the mind continually labels experience (this, that, good, bad etc.). Write about your experience.

6. Take a walk in nature. Spend time with something that you find beautiful—such as observing a flower. Let yourself experience this aspect of nature without labelling it. Let yourself be present with nature rather than be trapped in thoughts. Write about your experiences.

## WEEK TWO

### CHAPTER 2: EGO: THE CURRENT STATE OF HUMANITY

1. As you read the chapters of this book, create a table. In the first column, list the characteristics of the ego, and in the second column, list the characteristics of awareness or Presence. Then, in a third column, for purposes of reflection, note any surprises/reactions/new learning/helpful or descriptors that are meaningful to you.
2. Tolle writes about the “need to disentangle your sense of I...from all the things it has become mixed up with,” such as possessions and roles. He writes that, “ego-identification with things creates attachment to things, obsession with things...where the only measure of progress is always more” (page 37).
  - a. Have you seen in yourself the compulsion to possess something only to feel dissatisfied soon after?
  - b. Are you able to identify the ego in this experience? Reflect and write about it.
3. In the story about the lost ring, Tolle asks the woman if she is really diminished by its loss. He asks, “*Has who you are become diminished?*” (page 40). She responds by connecting with her “I am-ness” and sensing a deep peace and aliveness that has not been diminished.
  - a. Do you feel, or have you ever felt diminished by having cancer?
4. Read page 37 beginning with, “*But we cannot really honor things if we use them.*”
  - a. Are there moments when you feel either inferior or superior to others who have an attachment to possessions?
  - b. Are there moments where you feel the strong need to be right and the other person wrong? Can you feel the ego at work? Write about some examples.
5. On page 53, Tolle writes, “*Body awareness not only anchors you in the present moment, it is a doorway out of the prison that is the ego. It also strengthens the immune system and the body’s ability to heal itself.*”
  - a. What does this passage mean to you?
6. On page 56, Tolle writes about, “*The peace that passes all understanding.*” This is a theme that will be returned to throughout the book.
  - a. What are your thoughts as you read this section?
  - b. Does this seem possible to you?
7. Practice smiling inwardly when you notice the ego at work. The awareness of the ego is the process through which the ego is diminished. Write about your experiences.



8. Continue to foster thought watching and Presence with nature—not attaching words or labels to what you see.

## WEEK THREE

### CHAPTER 3: THE CORE OF THE EGO

1. On pages 60 and 61, Tolle writes about complaints and resentments, *“Every complaint is a little story that the mind makes up and you believe it.”*  
Notice through thought watching:
  - complaints and resentments that you carry with you or that are repetitive
  - situations when you feel the need to be right and the other person to be wrong
  - situations when you feel the need to be superior
    - a. How do these feelings and reactions strengthen your ego? Reflect and write about these experiences.
2. In Level Three of the Healing Journey, and again on pages 62 and 74 of *A New Earth*, the topics of forgiveness and projection are brought up—it bears further exploration.
  - a. List what you find most upsetting about this person; what they do and what they “are” that distresses you.
3. In page 74, Tolle explains that anything you resent and strongly react to in another person is also inside you. He also discusses forgiveness on pages 63 and 66.
  - a. Explore what your resentments teach you about yourself.
  - b. In what situations do you typically react?
  - c. What are some typical triggers for you?
4. On pages 62 and 63, Tolle writes about non-reaction saying it is essentially forgiveness. Practice non-reaction in a situation that usually creates reaction within you.
  - a. How does it feel?
  - b. How does it alter the situation?
  - c. How can you help yourself maintain a sense of non-reaction in the future?
  - d. What are your thoughts on non-reaction being forgiveness?
5. Tolle asks the pivotal question, *“Do you want peace or drama?”*
  - a. Are there examples in your own life in which you are drawn to drama?
  - b. What pulls you in?
  - c. How might you help yourself maintain peace?
6. On page 75, Tolle states, *“whatever you fight, you strengthen and what you resist, persists.”*
  - a. What are your thoughts on this statement?
  - b. Are there concrete examples in your own life where you have observed this?
  - c. Are there examples from your own experience of this while coping with cancer?

## WEEK FOUR

### CHAPTER 4: ROLE PLAYING: THE MANY FACES OF THE EGO

1. On page 124, Tolle writes about how the ego identifies strongly with many different roles—illness and distress included (see also discussion of suffering on page 102). The role of patient often evokes other roles such as cancer victim, cancer hero, fighter, martyr etc. Think about the role that cancer plays in your life and how the ego has tried to identify with it, including the various aspects of your cancer experience and the labels that have been applied to your experience—by others and by yourself.
  - a. Is it possible to see how the ego attaches to these labels and how this limits your experience of yourself?
  - b. Try meditating to feel the aliveness and the awareness that lies behind this aspect of your experience.
  - c. Experiment with bringing this awareness or “observer self” you’re your everyday life, allowing cancer to be only one aspect of your experience.
2. Think of some of the roles that you and your family members have played in your family of origin; for example, the good child/bad child, the peace maker, the clown, or the fixer. From page 87, notice how the ego attaches to a role and then makes it part of “*me and my story*.” See page 90 for a discussion of how playing a role can render one ‘unconscious’; how we confuse who we are with the roles that we play.
  - a. Are aspects of these roles played out in your adult life?
  - b. Have the roles altered over time?
  - c. What might it feel like to be freed from these roles?
3. On page 110, Tolle writes how the ego cannot distinguish between a situation and how it interprets the situation. The ego’s negative reaction (anger, resentment, unhappiness etc.) gives it pleasure and/or is a way for the ego to get what it wants. Tolle says awareness is the key to diminishing the ego.
  - a. Can you see examples in your own life where unhappiness gives pleasure to the ego?
  - b. Can you find examples based on a belief that unhappiness is in service of getting what the ego wants?
4. On page 95, Tolle offers the strategy of separating yourself from feelings and reactions. For example, rather than saying, “*I am unhappy*,” instead say “*There is unhappiness in me*”.
  - a. Experiment with ways to create distance between your ego reaction to situations and your True Self.

5. For many of us, parenthood is one of the most central roles our lives. Tolle discusses parenthood and how it is possible to see it as a function rather than a role.
  - a. What are your thoughts about this?
  - b. How might “*conscious parenting*” play out in day-to-day life? Think of concrete examples in your own life.
  - c. How might children benefit from conscious parenting?
  
6. Another theme that will be revisited many times in the book is that “*my life*” is a delusion—a mental image of myself. On pages 127 and 128, Tolle tells us that we do not have a life, but that we are life—Being. We cannot be separate from Being, that this separateness inferred by “*my life*” is a delusion of the ego. He tells us that we might be able to lose something that we own but that we can never lose something that we are.
  - a. What are your thoughts about this? If it is confusing at this point, that’s okay as we will return to this again further along.

## WEEK FIVE

### CHAPTER 5: THE PAIN-BODY

1. On page 133, Tolle tells us that the voice inside the head tells a story that the body believes and then reacts to. He says that emotions are the *“body’s response to a thought,”* that they feed energy back to the thoughts which perpetuates the cycle.
  - a. Can you identify examples of this cycle in your own life?
  - b. Can you identify any thought-emotion cycles related to your experiences of coping with cancer?
  
2. The pain-body or old emotional pain contains any negative emotions that are experienced but not fully faced. These old emotions reside in everyone as an energy form. This is the same pain that we discussed on Level Three that is a deep part of the *“iceberg”*. Some sources of the pain are our childhood, our gender, even our national inheritance.
  - a. Write about the sources of your own pain-body.
  - b. Think about how your pain-body manifests itself. Some examples would be conflict and drama with others (family and intimate relationships) or addictive behaviours (food, work, etc.)
  - c. Identify patterns in your life that are caused by the pain-body that seeks conflict and energy to perpetuate itself.
  - d. What situations trigger your pain-body?

## WEEK SIX

### CHAPTER 6: BREAKING FREE

1. Conscious awareness breaks your identification with the pain-body so that it can no longer control your thoughts or behaviour—knowing that you have a pain-body but also knowing that the pain-body is not who you are. Awareness is key; it is the practice of Presence and being in the moment. With awareness, the energy of the pain-body can be transmuted into fuel for consciousness.
  - a. What are your thoughts about this?
  - b. The next time you feel your pain-body being triggered, stay in the moment, anchored by the breath and the body. Notice what happens. How does it feel?
  
2. Tolle tells us that we can diminish the pain-body by not fighting it. He asks us to be aware of the pain and sense the emotion rather than intellectualizing it or labelling it. He says to experience the “I” *directly*, rather than your story about the pain. On Page 172 Tolle talks about the “inner yes,” allowing space around the unhappiness which comes from accepting the moment (see also his discussion of Satori on page 177).
  - a. Experiment with this process. Start with small things such as being stuck in traffic.
  - b. What happens to unhappiness when we do not mind being unhappy? Practice making an “inner yes” to the moment.
  
3. The thinking part of us doesn’t understand Presence so it misinterprets it as uncaring, distant, or a lacking compassion. Tolle says that when we are present, we are relating to others at a level deeper than words or form—that the formless essence of yourself connects with the formless essence of the other. This kind of active listening has been described as a spiritual practice.
  - a. Spend time listening to another person with no agenda and no judgement—just letting them express themselves while you stay in the moment with Presence. Write about your experience.

## WEEK SEVEN

### CHAPTER 7: FINDING OUT WHO YOU TRULY ARE

1. On page 188, Tolle maps out the consequences of responding to a situation from your place of spirit rather than your “*small me*”. You accept the situation and become one with it. Out of alertness comes a response. This response would be powerful and effective and would make no person or situation the enemy.
  - a. Imagine a situation that usually triggers your pain-body and see yourself responding from a place of spirit. What would it be like? What might happen?
  - b. Alternatively, try out this exercise when the situation arises.
2. On page 189, Tolle writes about projection, “*When you realize that what you react to in others is also in you (and sometimes only in you), you become aware of your own ego*”.
  - a. Check in with yourself—how are you becoming more aware of this aspect of the ego?
3. On pages 190 to 191, Tolle states, “*Outflow determines inflow*”. That is, whatever you think the world is withholding from you, you are withholding from the world. You withhold it because you think you are small and having nothing to give—such as praise, appreciation, assistance, and loving care etc.
  - a. What are your thoughts about this?
  - b. Try the exercise of giving to others what you feel you need; ask yourself how you can be of service to others and write about your experiences.
  - c. Keep an ongoing list of what is abundant in your life and what you feel grateful for.
4. On page 194, Tolle writes about Chaos and Higher Order, “*Behind the random events lies concealed the unfolding of a higher order and purpose that cannot be understood through thought but we can glimpse it and align ourselves with it and become conscious participants*”.
  - a. Does this make sense to you?
  - b. Have you had glimpses of this higher order?
  - c. What role does accepting the Now/ Presence have? Write about these moments.
5. On page 207, Tolle writes about time, “*The elimination of time from your consciousness is the elimination of the ego. It is the only true spiritual practice.... Whenever a habitual ‘no’ to life turns into a ‘yes’, whenever you allow the moment to be as it is you dissolve time as well as the ego*”.
  - a. What does this mean to you?
  - b. Have there been “habitual no’s” in your life?
  - c. Through your healing journey have you noticed any shifts towards an “uncompromising inner yes” (page 172)? If so, provide examples.
  - d. What helps you say “yes” when in the past you have said the “habitual no”?

## WEEK EIGHT

### CHAPTER 8: THE DISCOVERY OF INNER SPACE

1. On page 226, Tolle writes, “This too will pass. Suddenly there is space around the event. There is also space around the emotional highs and lows, even around the pain. And above all there is space between your thoughts. And from this space there emanates a peace that is not ‘of this world’, because this world is form, and the peace is space. This is the peace of God”.
  - a. In terms of your cancer experience, how does this passage strike you?
  - b. Have there been moments of peace, even amid the challenges?
  - c. Is the phrase “this too will pass” (the notion that everything is impermanent) helpful to you? Experiment using this phrase and explore its effects. Write about your experience.
  
2. On pages 235 and 236, Tolle offers some suggestions about seeking inner space. Tolle tells us that when we try to seek this inner space, we will not find it because it becomes an object desired by the ego.
  - a. Does this make sense to you? Keep experimenting with it.
  - b. Is there anything that helps you settle into this space of awareness?
  - c. Can you feel your own inner Presence; the alert stillness in the background while things happen in the foreground?
  
3. On page 238, Tolle writes, “*Right action emerges out of alert stillness itself. It is not the ego’s quest to fulfill its own needs. Rather right action flows through you.*”
  - a. Have you experienced moments of right action?
  
4. On page 244, Tolle writes, “*Be aware of your breathing as often as you are able, whenever you remember. Do that for one year and it will be transformative.*”
  - a. Are you able to practice this daily?
  - b. How might you build it into your daily life?
  - c. Do you experience the sense of “rising above thinking” when you practice aware breathing?
  - d. Another exercise on page 249 uses the breath to connect with the inner sense of aliveness that we all have. Experiment with this and write about it.
  
5. We all have addictions or compulsions, from the very destructive to the more mundane, such as eating sweets or watching television mindlessly. On page 247, Tolle offers an awareness exercise to experiment with.
  - a. Try this exercise and write about your experiences.



6. On pages 254 and 256, Tolle writes about experiments to notice behaviours that enhance the ego. Now that we are more familiar of the role of the ego and how it perpetuates itself, and we are cultivating daily awareness, Tolle suggests that we identify unconscious ego-patterns in action (ego-enhancing thoughts and behaviours). He asks us to let the pattern go, just drop it and see what happens!
  - a. Have a go at experimenting with this exercise and write about your experience.

## WEEK NINE

### CHAPTER 9: YOUR INNER PURPOSE

1. On page 269, Tolle talks again about listening as a spiritual practice.
  - a. Just as we did in week five, try to bring a conscious awareness of others when you interact with them.
  - b. Being fully aware and completely present, listen to them in the “field of awareness that arises between you” which “becomes the primary purpose for the interaction”. Write about your experiences.
  
2. Think about any questions that you would like to ask Tolle if you had the chance. Think about aligning one’s inner purpose and outer purpose.
  - a. Does it sound possible to you?
  - b. What challenges might arise?
  
3. Think about moments in which you been engrossed in the moment and felt things flow or they moved very smoothly.
  - a. Have you had moments when your inner and outer purposes have aligned?
  - b. What were these moments like for you?
  - c. How might you encourage more of these experiences.

## SESSION TEN

### CHAPTER 10: A NEW EARTH

1. As a member of the Healing Journey Program and having experienced at least four levels (for a total of at least 28 weeks of classes!) you might find the description on page 287 interesting; *“that what is lost on the level of form is gained on the level of essence”*. Tolle goes on to suggest that people who have experienced trauma, illness, or serious disruption to life can experience spiritual awakening.
  - a. What role has your cancer experience played in your spiritual journey so far?
2. At the beginning of page 295, Tolle talks about the “three modalities of awakened doing”. The next few questions focus on these – Acceptance, Enjoyment, and Enthusiasm.  
*Acceptance* on the surface looks like a passive state but is creative and active.
  - a. Have your ideas about acceptance changed through the process of working through this book?
  - b. Think about moments of acceptance you have had. What aspect of the experience is creative and active for you?
3. On page 297 and 298, Tolle talks about *enjoyment*. He writes, *“When the creative power of the universe becomes conscious of itself it manifests as joy... Joy does not come from what you do, it flows into what you do and thus into this world from deep within you.”*
  - a. Does this make sense to you?
  - b. Have you had moments of feeling the flow of joy?
  - c. What role does Presence play in this process?
  - d. As suggested on page 299, make a list of daily activities, and let them become a vehicle for alertness. Be absolutely present in what you do and sense the alive stillness that is the background of the activity.
  - e. Write about your experiences.
4. On page 301, Tolle talks about *Enthusiasm*. It means that there is a deep enjoyment in what you do with the added element of a goal or vision that you are working toward. On page 303, Tolle goes on to contrast activity that is ego driven because it wants something out of the activity and is often fuelled by competition and manipulation.
  - a. Looking back over your own life, think about contrast activities that were suffused with enthusiasm versus activities fuelled by ego.
  - b. At the bottom of page 303, Tolle says that enthusiasm and ego cannot co-exist. Does this make sense to you? How do you understand it?
5. On page 304, Tolle writes that at the centre of enjoyment and enthusiasm there is a quiet centre, *“a still but intensely alive space at the centre of a wheel, a core of peace in the midst of activity that is both the source of all and untouched by it all”*.

- a. Are you able to imagine that this is possible?
  - b. What experiences inform your understanding of this image?
  
6. Congratulations, you have made it to the end of *A New Earth*!
  - a. Looking back over the course, what changes in yourself have you noticed?
  - b. What are your plans to help support these changes?

## CONCLUSION

Congratulations—you have now completed Level Five! I hope it has helped deepen your spiritual interests and given you real, practical strategies for managing the complexities of life. I hope you have developed ways to find peace in your life and had many glimpses of spiritual opening. It is a dense book, and I do not think it is possible to glean all the value that it has to offer in one single reading.

I hope this is a book that you return to many times. You may even sign up for Level Five again if you would like to work on it further. Alternatively, you can take Level Four which will help reinforce the skills that you have learned.

Eckhart Tolle offers online programs and you can watch some of his lectures on YouTube. You may also be inspired to seek other authors who are spiritually alive and relevant to your healing.

Wellspring offers many programs that can deepen your interests and I suggest that you keep on top of the new offerings, as well as the foundational programs that are so helpful such as yoga, relaxation and guided imagery, and art therapy.

I trust that the Healing Journey Program has been a source of comfort for you, and a resource for skills in your cancer experience—as a patient or a caregiver. I wish you continued growth and many moments of peace as you continue your own Healing Journey.

Namaste.

Claire Edmonds 2023