

Turning Toward Next With Grace and Grit

Wisdom Council Reflection Questions for the Year End — A Two-Part Practice

Hello,

The year is turning again now. Here is an updated version of annual reflection practice. This practice offers a way to fully embrace all that this darkening-before-the-light time of year has to offer. To engage this practice, carve out a protected chunk of time to be still and listen to the voice in you that arises when you put pen to the page. Be willing to peer into the uncertainty of these times as they are playing out in your life. I trust that this practice will illuminate or clarify what is next for you and give you purchase on your path to fulfillment. Please feel free to share it!

The idea here is to take some time to close up the year and begin to turn towards next year. Give yourself about 30 (+) minutes for each part of this practice. Part One & Two can be spaced about a week apart, or just take a walk in between. Remind yourself that your responses are for your eyes only, unless you want to share with a trusted friend, companion, or spouse.

Part One, the practice of closing up — your day, week, month, year — gives rise to good beginnings. The practice of turning towards what is next (Part Two) by listening for your emerging future, gives a very different flavor to our usual New Year's Resolutions.

As my wing women have described, this practice is both gentle and powerful — there is both grace and grit here.

May you grow still enough to hear the small noises earth makes in preparing for the long sleep of winter, so that you yourself may grow calm and grounded deep within.

May you grow still enough to hear the trickling of water seeping into the ground, so that your soul may be softened and healed, and guided in its flow.

May you grow still enough to hear the splintering of starlight in the winter sky and the roar at earth's fiery core.

May you grow still enough to hear the stir of a single snowflake in the air, so that your inner silence may turn into hushed expectation.

— Brother David Steindl-Rast

Wisdom Council Reflection Questions — Part One — Reflecting back with grace and grit . . .

1. Magician: Take a few moments to scan back over the year. Depending on how your mind works, you can do this by reviewing month-by-month or season-by-season, or just gently expanding your attention so that you get an overall sense of the whole year: What 3-5 words come to you to describe this year? (Trust whatever words bubble up and write them down.)

2. Lover: Placing your hands over your heart, invite yourself to drop in to your inner world for a few moments: Are there any emotions or body sensations that are emerging as you reflect back over the year? These could be positive or negative. Just write them down and describe them so as to give them some latitude to be experienced.

3. Warrior: Now sit more firmly in your seat. Tune in to the connection points of your buttocks, the back of your legs, your feet . . . Sense into your connection to the ground and the ever-present tug of gravity that holds you onto this earth. Then draw your attention up your spine and feel the available strength that your back and shoulders afford you: What hard truth(s) arose in your life?

4. Magician: From where you sit now looking back over the year:
What action or inaction was this hard truth(s) calling for you to take?
How resourcefully were you able to meet the challenge / opportunity in this hard truth(s)?
(Note: This last question might naturally stimulate some intentions or wishes for next year. If so, please make note of them and park them for now. Then go on to the next question. Thx!)

5. Sovereign: Now relax your brow and soften the part of your mind that wants to figure everything out – which was likely to have been activated by those last two questions. Invite yourself to hold the whole-of-the-year in the regions of your heart as you respond to the next three questions:
What blessings and support did you receive this year?
In what ways did you offer support to others?
In what ways were you, yourself, a blessing?

Please give yourself as much as a week or as little as an hour before moving on to Part Two. Let these questions and your responses to them reverberate. As Rilke wrote so eloquently in his *Letters to a Young Poet*, “try to love the questions themselves as if they

were locked rooms or books written in a very foreign language”.

Wisdom Council Reflection Questions — Part Two – Turning towards what is next . . .

After completing Part One give yourself some time to hold whatever stirred in you. (This could be as long as a week, or you could just take a walk or a bath before beginning Part Two.)

1. Magician: Take a few moments to scan back over your reflections from Part One. Be sure to return to question #4 where you may have parked a few naturally arising wishes or intentions. Then gently hurl your attention forward to this time next year for a few minutes. Using your imagination and intellect, sense into your highest emerging future — the future that will need some of your grace and grit to be brought into being. Get a “take” on how your life might be at this time next year. (Where are you? What does it feel like? What are you doing? Who are you with? This “take” could be subtle or startlingly clear and specific, just trust whatever comes to you . . .)

What do you imagine for yourself at this time next year? Describe this glimpse using just a few single words, or phrases.

2. Lover: Placing your hands over your heart, inviting yourself to drop in to your inner world for a few moments:

Are there any longings that are stirring in you as you turn your attention towards the coming year?

Call in your curiosity and explore it with as much appreciation as you can muster. (If you have more than one longing, take them one at a time, or just choose one.)

3. Warrior: Now sit more firmly in your seat. Tune in to the connection points of your buttocks, the back of your legs, your feet . . . Sense into your connection to the ground and the ever-present tug of gravity that holds you onto this earth. Then draw your attention up your spine and feel the available strength that your back and shoulders afford you. From this seat of truth and action you intrinsically know that longings have a way of changing things up a bit, even subverting the dominant paradigm, so here is Warrior’s line of inquiry:

Are there any agreements (promises you have made to yourself or others) that your longing disturbs or challenges?

What is the risk of breaking or re-negotiating those agreements?

What is at risk if you do not re-visit those agreements somehow?

4. Magician: Imagine that you are up on a balcony of sorts, looking back over the year and turning your attention into the future:

Are there any habits or routines that your longing is asking you to change up? If so, please describe.

When you consider shifting your longing into the realm of intention, what structures in your life, begin to shake up, if any?

In what ways can you respond to the requests that your longings are making? Specifically, what habits or structures could you consider changing up on behalf of your longing?

5. Sovereign: Now relax your brow and soften the part of your mind that wants to figure everything out. Invite yourself to hold the whole-of-the-year in the regions of your heart as you respond to the next 4 questions:

What is ending as this year comes to a close?

What is opening up?

What help or affirmation do you need?

Who can you reach out to for that help and affirmation?

To complete this process:

Name just a few actionable steps that you can take to set your trajectory for the coming year: (Small steps are good . . .)

Directions you would like to take - describe

People you would like to reach out to

New habits, rituals or structures you would like to put in place

Note: Wisdom Council inquiries are powerful stuff. Please let these questions, and your responses to them, reverberate and begin to do their work as the year turns. A little wisdom from Reba McEntire seems in order . . . :)

To thrive in life you need three bones.

A wishbone.

A backbone.

And a funny bone.

May the year ahead astonish us all with its beauty, truth and goodness.

Blessings,

Lyedie Geer
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