



# UU Writers

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## The Gift of Interdependence



Participant Packet

April 2024

## Personal Warm Up Prompts

Ease your way into this month's theme with one or more of these prompts. Use them as a free association exercise. Don't try to create a full or finished piece of writing. Simply take around 5 minutes to jot down bullet point thoughts, a short intuitive response, idea fragments or maybe even sketch some images. Have fun getting your creative juices going!

**Option A:** Do you think age impacts the way we *connect with* the interdependent web?

**Option B:** When was the last time you became thoroughly absorbed in the curiosity of understanding [another creature's life](#)?

**Option C:** Has a tree ever *spoken* to you? How about [a river](#)? Or the ocean? Or the moon? What about [a weed](#)?

**Option D:** How interdependent are you with the place you live? How has it shaped the way you understand and approach life? And yourself?

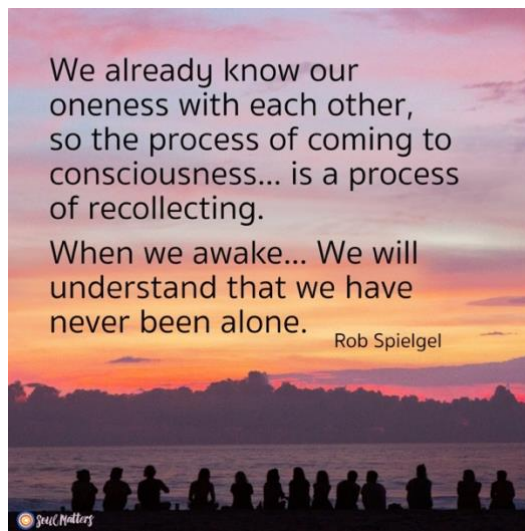
**Option E:** Has a beloved [young person](#) ever altered the way you think about your relationship with nature or the planet?

**Option F:** Listen to and reflect on one of these songs on *The Gift of Interdependence*:

- **Alone - Ryan Harris**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=55RgEoVv4wc&list=PLvXOKgOQVYP7dVbuAlecwM9vg6n9uxWCa&index=3>
- **Fall Down as the Rain - Joe Crookston**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mw-D5qjxxSQ&list=PLvXOKgOQVYP7dVbuAlecwM9vg6n9uxWCa&index=8>
- **We Tried - Louise Harris**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o2XV20G85Tg&list=PLvXOKgOQVYP7dVbuAlecwM9vg6n9uxWCa&index=10>
- **They Are You - Robby Hecht**  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r\\_hDtDlnSHc&list=PLvXOKgOQVYP7dVbuAlecwM9vg6n9uxWCa&index=12](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r_hDtDlnSHc&list=PLvXOKgOQVYP7dVbuAlecwM9vg6n9uxWCa&index=12)

*p.s. If music is your writing muse, you might want to check out our entire **Soul Matters music playlist** on *The Gift of Interdependence*:*

- Click [here](#) for the **Spotify playlist** on Interdependence.
- Click [here](#) for the **YouTube playlist** on Interdependence.



# Writing Project Exercises

## Suggested Steps:

### Step 1: Which project exercise/prompt is yours and why?

Spend some time reflecting on the options below. Treat it as a spiritual discernment exercise, in which you try to discern which option seems to be emotionally pulling you towards it. For those who are comfortable, you might think of it as asking, “Which exercise is my inner voice inviting me to explore?” Or to put it another way, the goal is to figure out which exercise is “yours” and why that is so.

### Step 2: First thoughts

Write whatever comes to mind in response to the exercise you selected. Free associate using words, sentence fragments, images.

### Step 3: Write your piece

Write your reflection, poem, story, song, or story inspired by your writing.

Take your time. For some, their piece will spill out whole cloth in a matter of moments. For others of us, it will be a journey of twists and turns, with us writing and rewriting as first drafts open us to new insights, inspiring second drafts, and even thirds.

## Option A: Build a Relationship with the Natural World

*May we love the earth not as an object—beautiful nature to pass through—but as a complex, miraculous subject that we build a relationship with.*

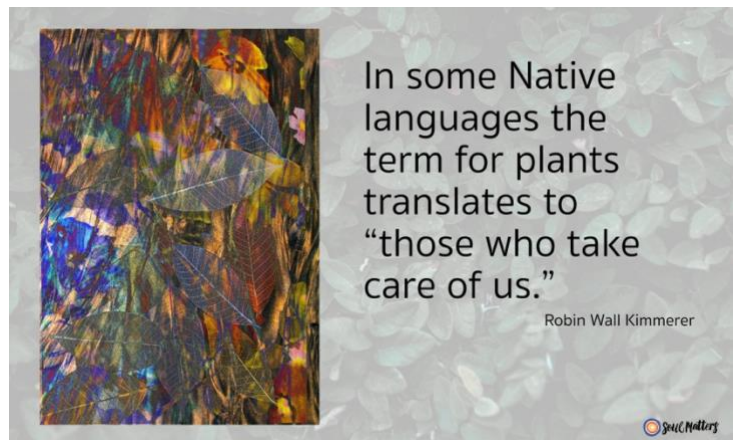
[Courtney Martin](#)

This exercise is all about leaning into Courtney Martin’s wish for us. We know how to appreciate nature. And, unfortunately, we are very skilled at how to *use* it. But we are less practiced at building a relationship with it. So, this month, let’s think about and celebrate the two-way, instead of one-way, relationships we have with the natural world. The goal here is to honor the reciprocal relationships we have with nature, even the friendships we have with it.

So, pick an animal, flower, plant, wooded trail, or body of water that you have an affinity for or existing relationship. If none come to mind, think of one you want to deepen your relationship with.

Then spend time with it at least three times in the period of a week.

Afterward, write about what arises from that engagement or about how that aspect of the natural world has spoken to, comforted, healed, companioned or shared wisdom with you in the past. If you are looking for some inspiration, you can find it [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).



## Option B: Write a Letter to the Future

Parent-activist [Jill Kubit](#) and the behavioral scientist Trisha Shrum, [created a project](#) called [DearTomorrow](#) which challenges people to [write a letter](#) to a child who is important to them, for those [children to receive in 2050](#). The instructions are to express your hopes and fears about the climate crisis in your letter, describing the world you want for them, in 27 years' time. You are also asked to write about what you think especially needs to change and what you will do to help make that happen.

So, use your writing this month to take on [DearTomorrow's challenge](#) of writing this letter to an important child in your life.

## Option C: Reconnect with the Place You Already Are

*Belong to your place by your own knowledge  
of what it is that no other place is, and by  
your caring for it as you care for no other place...*

*Belong to your place by knowledge of the others who are  
your neighbors in it: the old man, sick and poor,  
who comes like a heron to fish in the creek,  
and the fish in the creek, and the heron who manlike  
fishes for the fish in the creek, and the birds who sing...*

*Speak to your fellow humans as your place  
has taught you to speak, as it has spoken to you.*

[Wendell Berry](#)

Who we are is deeply intertwined with where we live. But as Wendell Berry's words suggest, we need a little instruction and urging to lean in fully to that relationship with *our* place. Too often, our connection to our nearby world is frayed.

So, use your writing this month to reflect on your relationship to the small world surrounding you. What role does a sense of place play in your life? Do you, as Berry puts it, "care for it as you care for no other place"? Do you belong to it "by the knowledge of the others who are your neighbors: the old, the sick, the poor, the fish in the creek"? "Do you "speak as your place has taught you to speak, and as it has spoken to you"?

p.s. For inspiration, we encourage you to read Berry's full poem at <https://www.dailygood.org/story/2832/this-place-that-you-belong-to-wendell-berry/>.

For even more inspiration, check out:

- Billy Collins' [A Sense of Place](#)
- Ross Gay's [To the Fig Tree on 9th and Christian](#)
- Sarah Kay's [A Love Letter to New York](#)
- Leah Juliett's [The View Between Villages](#)
- Clementine von Radics' [My Hometown](#)
- Clint Smith's [Place Matters](#)

## Option D: Our Preference for One-Way Vulnerability

*Frequently in my practice, patients tell me that they often cry in private. I ask them whether they ever allow their grief to be witnessed and shared with others. There is usually a quick retort of “No, I couldn’t do that. I don’t want to be a burden to anyone else. . . We need to recover our right to ask for help in grief, otherwise it will continue to recycle perpetually. Grief has never been private; it has always been communal. Subconsciously, we are awaiting the presence of others, before we can feel safe enough to drop to our knees on the holy ground of sorrow.*

[Francis Weller](#)

Francis Weller is right. Many – if not most – of us are glad to support and bear the burdens of others, but we wouldn’t dare “burden” those same people with *our* troubles. Or to put it another way, when it comes to vulnerability, we are more comfortable with it flowing one-way. So, if this is true for you, use your writing this month to reflect on your relationship with asking for support.

Some questions to think about: What or who has tricked you into thinking that your grief, worry or struggle is unwanted by or too heavy for others? Who or what taught you that the weight of your worries must be carried by yourself alone? What might be the unacknowledged benefit of having others rely on you without you relying on them? What is the cost?

## Option E: Remembering Our Shared Humanity

*And if it’s true we are alone,  
we are alone together,  
the way blades of grass  
are alone, but exist as a field.  
Sometimes I feel it,  
the green fuse that ignites us,  
the wild thrum that unites us,  
an inner hum that reminds us  
of our shared humanity...*

[Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer](#)

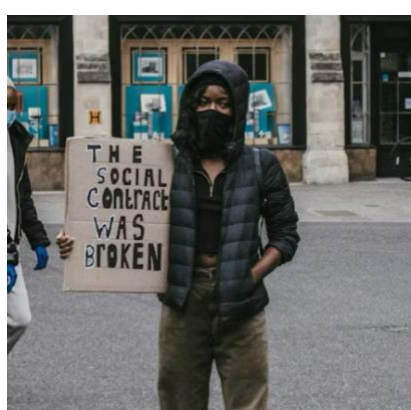
It can happen in so many ways: In the middle of a choir anthem when all of our voices blend into one. On a damp early morning walk when the sun doesn’t just rise but pulls us into itself. When we help someone in pain, or someone made unhoused and their tear feels like our own. When our newborn child, still connected to us with a cord, is placed on our chest. In these moments, we are reminded, like [Rosemerry Trommer](#), of our shared humanity, of our underlying unity that never dissolves even when we can’t feel it.

So how about you? When have you been reminded? What moment will you always hold dear because it put you in touch with a connection to all? When did the walls come down and you suddenly knew that who you are does not end at the barrier of your skin? Use your writing this month to honor that moment.

## Option F: Visual Prompts

This prompt is all about letting an image spark your writing. Below are a handful of pictures related to our theme of *the gift of interdependence*. Look them over until one reaches out and asks you to write about it!

For some of us, the image that stands out will take us back in time to a memory we want to write about. For others, our chosen image might inspire us to write a fictional short story based on it. For still others, a picture will evoke a new perspective about the theme that we will then tease out in our writing. *(Or maybe these pictures remind you of a favorite picture you took recently or have treasured for a while. If so, great! Write about those picture s instead.*



## Option G: On the Interdependent Entanglement We Call Friendship

*Each friend represents a world in us, a world possibly not born until they arrive, and it is only by this meeting that a new world is born. -Anais Nin*

Have you ever had a friend that “birthed a new world in you”? Our families and life partners ground us and keep us safe; our friends are portholes into the possible and yet unknown parts of ourselves. Use your writing this month to honor such a friendship that gave you access to a brand new world.

## Option H: Make Your Own Way

Our prompts are here to support you. So, if none of the above prompts speak to you this month, feel free to find inspiration on the theme from wherever it comes.

Whatever it is, let the gravitational pull of memory, reflection and the pulse of your personal imagination be your guide. Let love take you where it will.

## Closing & Companions Words

*Read this quote after completing your writing projects as a way of celebrating your writing journey this month. Or read it regularly while working on your project prompt to keep you grounded and inspired. It sometimes helps to write out the words and tape them above your desk or on your bathroom mirror, living with them during the month.*

Your great mistake is to act the drama  
as if you were alone... To feel abandoned is to deny  
the intimacy of your surroundings. Surely,  
even you, at times, have felt the grand array;  
the swelling presence, and the chorus, crowding  
out your solo voice... Put down the weight of your aloneness and ease into the  
conversation. The kettle is singing even as it pours you a drink...  
Everything is waiting for you.

[David Whyte](#)



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