

## The Gift of Interdependence

*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](#)

Talk of interdependence immediately calls up the work of *saving* the planet, rightly so. But what if the first step toward saving the planet is learning to *speak* to it? And hear it? Could our collective failure to confront the climate crisis be rooted in our lost ability to listen? What if the quickly-going-extinct creatures don't want our sympathy, but our ear? What if the fraying of the web isn't just about us failing to act, but also us having forgotten who we are. And what if nature itself is the only one who can help us remember?

This month our Soul Matters resources offer us an exercise. 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 work on a two-way, instead of one-way, relationship with the natural world. The key here is reciprocity, even friendship. Pick an animal, flower, plant or body of water that you have an affinity for or want to deepen your relationship with. Then spend a week (or the entire month) and engage that "natural sibling" in some or all of these ways:

- [Introduce yourself](#) and get to [know it](#).
- Take care of it somehow; Support its thriving.
- Visit it regularly, like you would a close friend.
- Capture its beauty by [photographing](#), painting or [drawing](#) it at different times of day and in [different weather](#)
- Learn about how it came to live in the place it does. Is it natural to your landscape or not?
- Learn its [scientific name](#).
- Learn [its role](#) in [its ecosystem](#).
- Learn how [Native Americans relate](#) to it.
- Spend an entire [day around it](#).
- [Sleep](#) near it.
- Practice the spiritual discipline of [listening to it](#) or even [talking to it](#). Want some guidance about listening to the natural world? Try [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)
- Bring questions to it. [Ask it for advice](#).

Enjoy these inspirations for your month exploring our interdependence with each other and with the great web of life.

### **Wise Words**

A human being is a part of the whole called by us 'the universe'... [But we] experience ourselves, our thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of our consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.

*Albert Einstein*

Each experience of love nudges us toward the Story of Interbeing, because it only fits into that story and defies the logic of Separation.

[Charles Eisenstein](#)

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.

When members of the Native American Blackfoot tribe meet each other, they don't ask "How are you?" Instead, they ask "How are the connections?"

[Jeremy Lent](#)

If you want to go fast, go alone.  
If you want to go far, go together.

*African Proverb*

We never know how our small activities will affect others through the invisible fabric of our connectedness. In this exquisitely connected world, it's never a question of 'critical mass.' It's always about critical connections.

*Grace Lee Boggs*

There is nobody in this country who got rich on their own. Nobody. You built a factory out there--good for you. But I want to be clear. You moved your goods to market on roads the rest of us paid for. You hired workers the rest of us paid to educate. You were safe in your factory because of police forces and fire forces that the rest of us paid for... Now look. You built a factory and it turned into something terrific or a great idea--God bless! Keep a hunk of it. But part of the underlying social contract is you take a hunk of that and pay forward for the next kid who comes along.

*Senator Elizabeth Warren*

I wish the knowledge were easier to come by, that individualism is just a scam, that you are always the butterfly wings. You are always a flap of the storm...

You must not believe the lying lie that you do not matter, that whatever change you can organize is so insufficient as to not be worth your time...

[Rev. Julián Jamaica Soto](#)

Here is the question we must at last confront: Is land merely a source of belongings, or is it the source of our most profound sense of belonging? We can choose... You, right now, can choose to set aside the mindset of the colonizer and become native to place, you can choose to belong.

[Robin Wall Kimmerer](#)

Whether we and our politicians know it or not, Nature is party to all our deals and decisions, and she has more votes, a longer memory, and a sterner sense of justice than we do.

[Wendell Berry](#)

You carry Mother Earth within you. She is not outside of you. Mother Earth is not just your environment. In that insight of inter-being, it is possible to have real communication with the Earth, which is the highest form of prayer.

[Thich Nhat Hanh](#)

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](#)

In some Native languages the term for plants translates to "those who take care of us."

[Robin Wall Kimmerer](#)

I've come to believe... we already know our oneness with each other, so the process of coming to consciousness... is a process of recollecting. When we awake... We will understand that we have never been alone.

[Rob Spiegel](#)

### **Music**

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

[here](#) for the **YouTube** playlist on Interdependence

### **Articles**

**Greed Does Not Have to Define Our Relationship to Land, Robin Wall Kimmerer**

<https://lithub.com/robin-wall-kimmerer-greed-does-not-have-to-define-our-relationship-to-land/>

**Living in the Shelter of Each Other**

<https://kathrynwonders.wordpress.com/2015/05/03/the-shelter-of-each-other/>

**Smoking gun proof': fossil fuel industry knew of climate danger as early as 1954**

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2024/jan/30/fossil-fuel-industry-air-pollution-fund-research-caltech-climate-change-denial>

### **Videos & Podcasts**

**Understanding Interconnectedness**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kmvwG-tD918>

Gotta love [this kid's way](#) of getting close to nature!

**Between the Earth and the Sky: The interconnective art of Wangechi Mutu**

<https://vimeo.com/575476465>