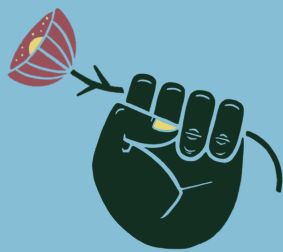


SOCIAL JUSTICE
GROUNDING PRACTICES
FOR THE
SENSITIVE SOUL



EXERCISES TO HELP SENSITIVE
ACTIVISTS FIND THEIR WAY

DORCAS CHENG-TOZUN

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

Like most highly sensitive people, I love learning. I could spend months on end reading books and articles and listening to lectures.

But for any of us to truly internalize learning, we need to apply it. We need to practice it. This guidebook is a way to practically apply the ideas of my book *Social Justice for the Sensitive Soul: How to Change the World in Quiet Ways*.

This guide is divided into two sections. The first section, Wayfaring, provides exercises to help you think through where you might best fit in the world of social justice. The second section, Anchoring, has practices that are meant to help you build resilience and avoid burnout as you engage with the challenging issues around you.

As you can see, this is relatively short. It is by no means comprehensive. I hope you will also make use of other helpful exercises that you access online, in books, or from experts. You may even come up with your own exercises that give you helpful insight and grounding.

I'd love to hear from you as you figure out your place among the community of sensitive activists, and I look forward to being in the fight alongside you.



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Social Justice for the Sensitive Soul

WAYFARING OI

JUSTICE ISSUE BRAINSTORM

PURPOSE

Explore which social justice causes might best fit you in terms of interest and personality.

INSTRUCTIONS

In the space below, take 5 minutes to list every social justice issue you can think of. Be as specific as you can. Don't edit yourself (e.g., don't worry if something is considered a justice issue or if an issue overlaps with another). Just write down everything that comes to mind.

Then:

1. Cross out every issue you are not interested in, or that would be too emotionally challenging for you to engage in, or that is otherwise not a good fit. No judgement—this is just for you.
2. Circle every issue that you think you are interested in or you would be excited to engage in.
3. Of the remaining issues that haven't been crossed out or circled, are there any that you are curious about? Underline those.

WAYFARING OI CONT.

JUSTICE ISSUE BRAINSTORM

REFLECTION

Considering all of the social justice issues you circled (the issues you are interested in), spend time reflecting on the questions below. Jot your answers in the space provided.

1. Why am I interested in these issues? Try to think of something beyond wanting to help or make a difference.
2. Why are these particular issues important to me?
3. Is there any connection or similarity between the issues I'm interested in?
4. What groups, organizations, or movements are addressing these issues? Can I spend some time researching their work to learn more?

Considering all of the social justice issues you underlined (the issues you are curious about), spend time reflecting on the questions below. Jot your answers in the space provided.

1. What about these issues piques my curiosity? What questions do I have?
2. What next step can I take to learn more? Is there a book I can read? Someone I can talk to?

WAYFARING 02

PAST EXPERIENCE REFLECTION

PURPOSE

Reflect upon social justice roles (e.g., jobs, volunteer roles, long-term or one-time gigs) you have done in the past to better understand what you enjoy and what is challenging for you.

PREVIOUS SOCIAL JUSTICE ROLE #1

My role:

The group/organization/cause:

What I enjoyed most	What I found most challenging

WAYFARING 02 CONT.

PAST EXPERIENCE REFLECTION

PREVIOUS SOCIAL JUSTICE ROLE #2

My role:

The group/organization/cause:

What I enjoyed most	What I found most challenging

PREVIOUS SOCIAL JUSTICE ROLE #3

My role:

The group/organization/cause:

What I enjoyed most	What I found most challenging

WAYFARING 03

MIND MAP OF LOVES

PURPOSE

Explore what you love and what makes you come alive.

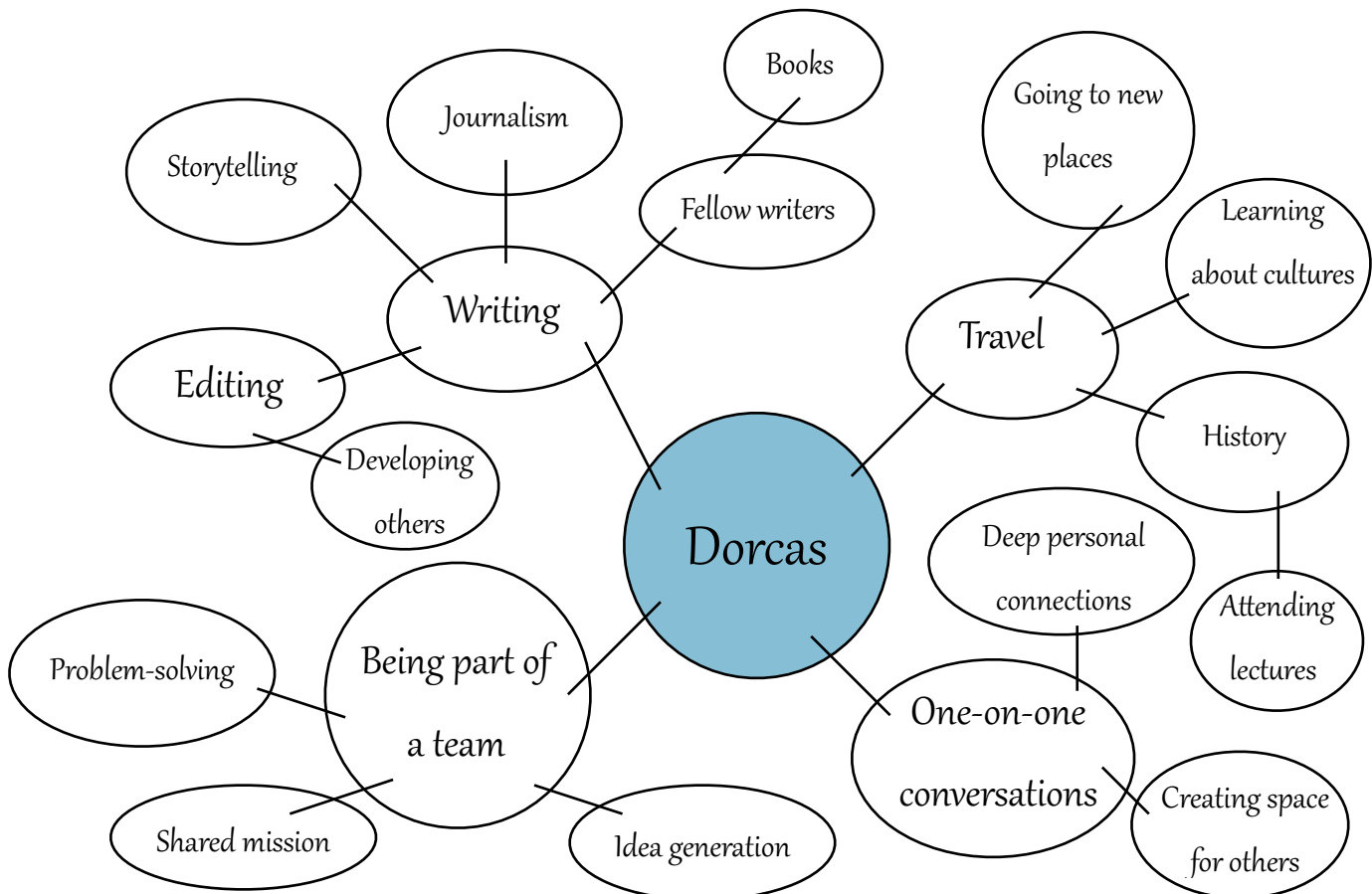
INSTRUCTIONS

Use the space on the next page to make a mind map of things that fill you with joy and make you feel alive. This can include people, places, environments, activities, and more. Be as specific and detailed as you can. Don't edit yourself. Write down everything that comes to mind, and use what you've already written as a springboard for other ideas.

Give yourself at least 15 minutes to complete this exercise. Feel free to add to it later as more ideas come to you.

EXAMPLE

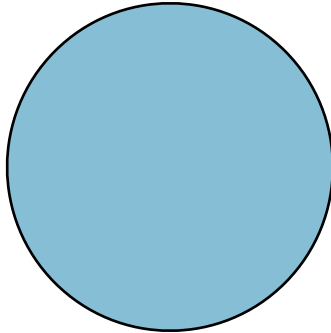
This is what the beginnings of my own mind map would look like.



This exercise was inspired by *Designing Your Life: Build the Perfect Career, Step by Step* by Bill Burnett and Dave Evans.

WAYFARING 03 CONT.

MIND MAP OF LOVES



WAYFARING 04

IDEA GENERATOR

PURPOSE

Connect what you love with the issues you care most about to explore possible opportunities.

INSTRUCTIONS

You know those name generators where you put together two completely unrelated words or phrases to come up with a funny name for yourself, like a pirate name or a Harry Potter name? This exercise may feel similar, but rather than being funny, it's meant to incite your imagination.

In the first column, list out the social justice issues you care most about or are more interested in (use Wayfaring 01 if that helps). In the second column, list out things that you love and enjoy. (You can refer back to Wayfaring 02 and 03.) Then, start connecting things in column one with things in column two to try to create social justice roles and opportunities that could be a great fit for you. For example, I might connect having one-on-one conversations with people about racial justice, or writing about education access for children.

Social justice issues	Things I love

WAYFARING 04 CONT.

IDEA GENERATOR

Keep dreaming and coming up with ideas, possibilities, and things to try and explore on this page.

ANCHORING 01

LOVINGKINDNESS MEDITATION

PURPOSE

Build your resilience by remembering your identity and your purpose through lovingkindness meditations.

INSTRUCTIONS

Set aside at least 5 minutes for this exercise. Begin by selecting 3 to 5 statements of affirmation and encouragement for yourself. Feel free to use the suggested statements below or come up with your own.

Get in a comfortable position. Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths to center yourself. You may want to place your hands over your heart or have them open, palms up, in front of you. Then say the statements you selected, either silently to yourself or out loud. Repeat the sequence of statements at least three times as you continue to breathe. Do this practice as often as you like.

Lovingkindness meditations can also be directed toward other people by replacing the “I” below with “you,” their name, or their pronoun. You can meditate on your loved ones, colleagues, neighbors, community members, or even those who you’re in conflict with. In this way, we can grow our compassion for others as well as ourselves.

AFFIRMATION STATEMENTS

I am loving and lovable.

I am uniquely wonderful.

My sensitivities are beautiful qualities.

I am enough, just as I am.

I am living with purpose.

I am doing enough.

I am making a difference.

ANCHORING 02

REVIEW OF A TYPICAL DAY

PURPOSE

Review a recent day you experienced to assess what is giving you joy and what is draining you.

INSTRUCTIONS

Using your digital calendar or planner to help you, pick a relatively typical day from the past two weeks. Fill out the schedule below in as much detail as you can, and then respond to the reflection questions on the next page. Feel free to revisit this and do this exercise as often as you would like.

Date:

Time	Activities
6am - 7am	
7am - 8am	
8am - 9am	
9am - 10am	
10am - 11am	
11am - 12 noon	
12 noon - 1pm	
1pm - 2pm	
2pm - 3pm	
3pm - 4pm	
4pm - 5pm	
5pm - 6pm	
6pm - 7pm	
7pm - 8pm	
8pm - 9pm	
9pm - 10pm	

ANCHORING 02 CONT.

REVIEW OF A TYPICAL DAY

Describe this day in 3 to 5 words.

- *
- *
- *
- *
- *

What drained me?

What gave me joy?

What would I have done differently?

ANCHORING 03

SOURCES OF HOPE

PURPOSE

List out the things in life that give you hope, and create a plan for regularly connecting with these things.

INSTRUCTIONS

Spend at least 10 minutes brainstorming anything that gives you hope. These could be big things or small things. They could be other people, activities, particular environments, spiritual practices, art, or more. For example, I find hope in time spent with encouraging friends, learning about high-impact organizations, listening to music, being at the ocean, prayer, and reading true stories of acts of courage and kindness. (You may want to refer to Wayfaring 03 for some ideas.)

Then see if there are ways to incorporate these hopeful things into your weekly, monthly, and quarterly rhythms so you can remain connected to meaningful sources of hope.

What gives me hope?

ANCHORING 03 CONT.

SOURCES OF HOPE

Which sources of hope would I like to connect with regularly?

In the calendar below, write down the sources of hope you want to connect with weekly.

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Morning							
Afternoon							
Evening							

Write down the sources of hope you want to connect with monthly. If you are able to, write in specific weeks or dates.

Write down the sources of hope you want to connect with quarterly. If you are able to, write in specific months or weeks.

ANCHORING 04

PROCESSING HARDSHIP

PURPOSE

Process a difficult experience in order to heal, learn, and grow in resilience.

INSTRUCTIONS

If you have experienced something difficult (e.g., a conflict, a high-stress situation, a disappointment), you are more likely to recover from it if you spend time working through it rather than ignoring it or moving on from it too quickly.

Think of a recent situation that led to negative emotions for you: anger, sadness, grief, disappointment, embarrassment, etc. Reflect on each of the questions below. Consider talking further with a friend, colleague, or mentor about the experience and how you are recovering.

An important note: If you experienced something that felt traumatic to you, please consider seeking professional help from a counselor or other mental health professional.

REFLECTION

1. What did you experience that was hard?

2. What were the emotions that you felt? What did you think about yourself because of this experience?

3. Was there anything you could have done differently? What was outside of your control?

ANCHORING 04 CONT.

PROCESSING HARDSHIP

REFLECTION CONT.

4. If this had happened to a good friend of yours, what words of comfort, affirmation, or encouragement would you offer? Direct these words toward yourself. How would you counter the false narratives you may be telling yourself?
5. What helpful lessons did you gain from this experience? These could be learnings about yourself, other people, particular situations or contexts, etc.
6. Is there anything you can proactively do to prevent the situation from happening again, or to prepare yourself in case it happens again?
7. What else do you need to recover and heal from this experience? For example, you could take a day off, or you could schedule time to talk with a friend or mentor.