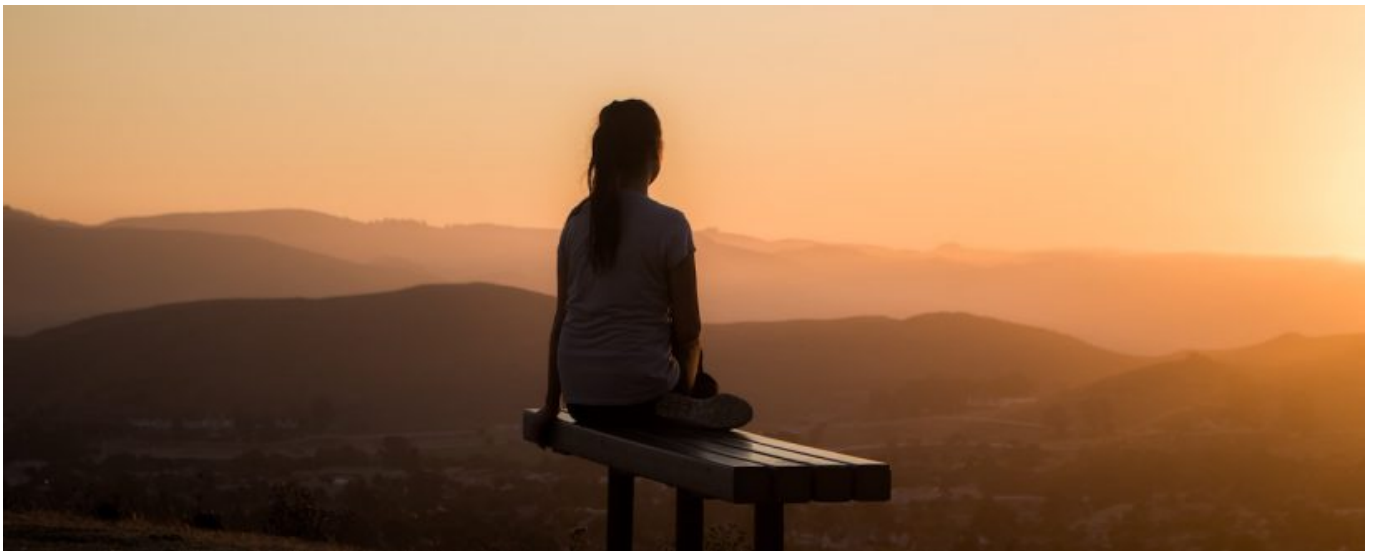




KARYN SHANKS MD
Heart, Hope, Healing

Slow Healing Power Tools

BY KARYN SHANKS MD | JANUARY 25, 2019



Remember my mantra?

Show up.

Go slow.

Pay attention.

Going slow leads to Presence.

And Presence is the absolute, non-negotiable key to claiming a healing life.

Sounds easy, doesn't it?

Not for me!

But I've got power tools to help me.

Journal writing. Yes, I've been keeping some kind of diary my entire life. But as a young 'un

in my early thirties I started serious journaling. Julia Cameron taught me about “morning pages.” Three pages written long hand every morning no matter what. The only requirements are to show up every day and “vomit” it all up (my adage, not Julia’s)—thoughts, feelings, worries, to-do lists, brilliant ideas—onto the pages.

It works! Sometimes I don’t even know how I *feel* until I start writing. When I first started with the five or ten minutes I could “steal” in the early mornings while my little boys were still asleep, it was the only time I spent completely focused on myself. It became the time when I’d pinch myself and confirm that *I* actually existed at all!

Today, with children all grown up, I have the luxury to spend more time with my writing. It helps me reckon with my baggage, morph it into insight, and create space for moments of clarity and genius. (Yes, we all have it! It shows up when we create space for it.)

Meditation. Uh huh. Seated, eyes closed, slow-deep breathing, prayerful, mantra-chanting meditation. I started when my boys were little, again “stealing” just five to ten minutes first thing in the morning before they were awake. I was oh so tired. And oh so needed it!

I stuck with it and it has been one of the single most important practices to help me connect deeply with my innermost strength and presence. It reminds me—and fills me—with the Divine loving energy that is all around us. It grounds me to the goodness of the world, which would be a struggle to see otherwise.

Meditation helps me go slow... but *expand* time.

Dump and dive. What I call my early morning writing and meditation time.

First I set my timer for one hour. Then I write in my journal, dumping the thoughts, feelings, and ideas that are swirling all around inside me. I give them a place to live, to be seen and reckoned with.

Once I’ve cleared the deck, I sink into meditation. This dive into my self, the earth, and the unseen energies all around me brings me home to my most essential me.

Walking in Nature. Nature glistens and shimmers and vibrates with energy and beauty. She smacks me out of my busy head and grounds me in her gorgeousness. I try not to miss a day. But when I do, even a glimpse of her—in the birds and squirrels out my window—pulls me right back into slow, into spacious, into present time.

Deep Breaths. A single deep conscious breath calls me to the present moment instantly. They slow me down and tether me to real time no matter what chaos is going on all around (or inside!) me.

It’s easy to stay unconscious about breath, programmed to go on automatically all the time. But by tuning in, we can use the sensation of breath to anchor us to present time, and harness the power of it to go slow and shift into calm.

Softening. I learned this tool from my yoga teacher, Betsy (Hi Angel friend!). I hear her voice, “Soften your skin. Soften your face. Soften your stories. Soften your expectations.”

I use my mantra, “soft,” to help me with those tenacious stories—worries, worst-case scenarios, impossible predicaments, feelings of unworthiness. You know what I mean—all those drivers of going fast so we don’t have to feel. I may not be able to see their resolution, but I can stay with them, and release their sharp, painful edges and intensity by simply saying, “soft.”

So, my friends, our power tools for a slow, healing life come in all shapes, sizes, and flavors. These are mine. What are yours?

My husband mows the lawn and cooks—concocting like he’s in a trance. (Better not interrupt him!) Yours may just blow us all away. We need to hear them! Send them along and I’ll add them to our list in a future email.

Have a Beautiful day!

Karyn

p.s. From my Archives:

[**Learning to Practice “Slow.”**](#) 2017.

[**Five Things I Must Do to Start My Day \(Hint: Yep, Think Slow\).**](#) 2018.

p.p.s. My e-books to help you jumpstart your healing life:

[**Let Go—The Nine Domains of Healing: Step One.**](#) 2018.

[**Big Energy: How We Bravely Reclaim Our Health, Our Potential, Our Lives—It’s All In Our Stories.**](#) 2018.

p.p.p.s My online healing community, [**Grit and Grace**](#), where we support one another in the hard work—and grace—of self-care.

KARYN SHANKS MD

Karyn Shanks, MD, is a physician who lives and practices in Iowa City. Her work is inspired by the science of Functional Medicine, body-mind principles, and wisdom gleaned from the transformational journeys of thousands of clients over her twenty-five-year career. Her work honors each individual and the power of their stories, their inner wisdom, and innate healing potential. She believes that the bones of healing are in what we do for ourselves. She is the author of *Liftoff*, a manual of energy recovery and healing through essential self-care practices.

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