

Growing a Global Radical Aliveness Movement

(In Vancouver ... and beyond)

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(as part fulfillment of her 4th year graduation project for the RA/CE Institute)

If not here, where? If not now, when?



Dedication:

This project is dedicated first and foremost to my beautiful, wise beyond her years, and huge-hearted daughter, Rio Holmes, who originally encouraged me to join a Radical Aliveness workshop on Cortes Island “because it will help you be nicer, mom”. She has generously allowed me to leave her repeatedly and at considerable cost and anxiety to herself so that I could pursue my passion to lead group process and become a better mother.

This project is also dedicated to the 18 deeply feeling, powerful women who embarked with me on the pilot Women’s Process Group and taught me what it is to facilitate fiercely, to stay awake and to be on my growing edge while repeatedly moving me to tears.

Finally, this project is dedicated to all the student practitioners of RA/CE who come after me. For you I’ve taken the time to go through the messy process of developing my first workshop offering in potentially alarming detail. This is my attempt to normalize the non-linear nature of the beast, the incredible resistance you may feel, how all of your distortions will get activated in the most therapeutic possible way and most importantly, to give you hope that even if you are in the throes of these feelings, you will get out the other side. I also want to encourage you to believe in yourselves no matter how scary it may seem to start. You are the instrument, the offering and the gift.

Acknowledgement/Gratitude:

I owe a debt of gratitude to my mother, Julie Holmes, who taught me what it is to love fiercely and to stand up for what is right. Through her I come from a lineage of powerful women who were courageous adventurers and creators. I also want to acknowledge how profoundly impacted I have been by Ann Bradney, a surprisingly slight red headed pixie, master teacher, and exceptional human, who facilitates the most awe-inspiring, radically alive process that I have yet experienced. I am deeply appreciative of Niki Angel, my project mentor, who gave me wise and compelling advice that still rings in my ears and makes me excited to explore the next complexity frontier. I also want to acknowledge my compatriots in the Vancouver RA/CE peer process group (Ellen Henderson, Lorrie Lech, Terry Martyniuk, and Sherry Sakamoto), a group deeply committed to creating community and furthering our process work in between school modules. Having this space to experiment and make mistakes and test the bounds of friendship has changed my life immeasurably. Finally, my project would not be complete without my lion hearted friend, roomie and fellow student, Josée Martel. Her fearless, creative and adventurous spirit inspired me to grow exponentially in this project and to reach for what I really wanted, even when I was quaking in my boots.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of my project was to support the creation of a global Radical Aliveness movement. This purpose unfolded in three “takes” - it certainly didn’t arrive fully formed in one clear certainty. In its final form, my project has 3 parts:

- 1) building the supportive network, infrastructure and skill base for a Radical Aliveness Vancouver community hub which is connected to a global Radical Aliveness movement;
- 2) delivering Radical Aliveness offerings in Vancouver including a Community Evening Introduction to Radical Aliveness (co-facilitated), a Women’s process group (solo facilitated), and individual process sessions.
- 3) systematizing my learnings and creating a Resource Binder as a “low threshold for entry” to support Radical Aliveness Institute students and new Radical Aliveness practitioners to create more Radical Aliveness communities around the world (available upon request).

Take 1 - Radically Alive Cancer Recovery - The Seed Crystal

As a cancer survivor myself, I initially intended to do a group process for cancer survivors. In fact I developed a proposal, a workshop agenda and a couple of great flyers to do exactly that. However, the further I went down this road, the more I found myself questioning this decision and each foray that I made into building connections in the cancer community and expanding a network of potential participants dead-ended despite initial excitement on my part. While I had a lot of expertise to offer, I began to realize that after a long teaching from my cancer, it no longer defines who I am and I didn’t feel comfortable staying rooted and defined in this context. In that moment, despite my strong desire to inspire hope within the cancer community, the truth was that I wanted to reach towards something pleasurable and creative without the heaviness that I associated with most people who are journeying in the morphogenic field of cancer. So, for the time being I have put this project on the back burner - I know that I will return to it when the moment is right.

Go Big or Go Home - the Light Goes On

While I was still debating what to do instead, I attended a RA/CE Visioning workshop at the Relational Centre in LA in August of 2015 and my world lit up in a new way. When the discussion shifted from how we could support a Radical Aliveness school to talk of creating a global Radical Aliveness movement I was immeasurably excited. In particular, I realized that I know a thing or two about movement building from the 20 years I have spent in the social change movement and most importantly, I had that clear simple feeling of “rightness” that I associate with the few great things I have been associated with in my life.

What I love about RA/CE is how it provides a way for me to integrate my activism, my parenting, my personal growth and my healing work in the world into one coherent experiential transmission. No longer do I see my activism and my healing work as separate from each other. I believe that many of our looming problems today (environmental destruction, climate change, wars, systematized inequity and oppression, rising divorce rates, disaffected youth etc) arise at their center from the ways that we as human beings separate ourselves from our humanity i.e. our ability to feel and receive each other, the world around us and our own innate goodness and divinity. I am passionate about creating positive

planetary scale change that arises from healing the places where we separate from each other and our environment. I am utterly convinced that the way to do this is to create a vibrant movement that has its own momentum and doesn't require a very few of us to burn out trying to effect change. Regaining our wholeness requires all of us working together across traditional separating lines of nationality, colour, race, creed, politics, economic fault lines, gender, sexual orientation etc.

As a single parent, I am relatively uninterested in taking on any more big things by myself these days. What I love is to be connected and to feel like I am part of a passionate team who is working together to create something bigger than any of us individually. At the visioning workshop I began conspiring with a group of people who were committed to creating Radical Aliveness communities where they lived as a way to start building a global Radical Aliveness movement. I loved the idea of doing this in parallel with others, of having friends who I could call for support as well as give support as I began the work of building a Radical Aliveness community in Vancouver where there was a complete dearth of somatic therapy or Core Energetics practitioners. And so, without quite realizing it, my project was born:

Growing a Radical Aliveness Movement (in Vancouver and Beyond)

It became clear that whatever I did, I wanted to be able to reach a large number of people and through them to more people. As a child of WASP parents who was brought up with the image that life is hard, I've always been excited by small and efficient actions that can be leveraged to create much larger change. It also became clear that I needed to root myself more deeply within Radical Aliveness and to coherently begin embodying the principles both in my facilitation but also everyday life outside of process groups.

There are as many "theories of change" for movement building as there are activist movements and academics to study them. We need look no further than Bernie's run for the 2016 Democratic nomination to see some of the most inspired and emotionally sophisticated movement building to come out in years. Rather than get too academic, however, I want to share a simple theory of change for movement building that has defined much of my working life - the metaphor of butterfly soup.

Butterfly Soup Metaphor: When a caterpillar transforms into a butterfly, it doesn't just sprout wings in the chrysalis. Instead, the caterpillar breaks down completely into a liquid soup that no longer resembles a caterpillar. And in this soup, small individual cells called imaginal cells which hold the dream of the butterfly begin gathering throughout the soup to begin the process of coaxing the soup into a butterfly. However, the soup is initially resistant to the dream of the butterfly and other cells attack the imaginal cells and try to break them down to stop this process. (Sound familiar? Resisted your higher self lately anyone?) It isn't until individual imaginal cells can gather with other imaginal cells into small clusters throughout the soupy matrix that the dream of the butterfly gets strong enough for the soup to align with it and the process of creating wings and proboscis and antennae begins.

My project as Metaphor: From a Radical Aliveness Movement Building perspective, I imagine the work I initiated in this project to have engaged at three levels of this metaphor. First, through my peer process group, the Radical Aliveness Community nights and the women's process group I subsequently convened, I have begun coalescing one of these RA/CE imaginal cell clusters in Vancouver. I also began developing materials and connections to support a

broadening of these initial forays into the social change activist, the cancer recovery, transgender, First Nations youth and Actor as Artist communities. Second, while doing this, several friends were engaged in a similar endeavor to the east of the continent and to the south of me in Columbia and by continuing to stay in contact and support each other, we are already strengthening the dream of the RACE movement and showing that it is possible. Finally, by engaging in this project both as a participant facilitator and as a keen observer and scientist interested in the process, I used the experience as a grand experiment to test hypotheses about what worked to begin systematizing and streamlining the process of building an initial cell cluster. The result is a “how to” manual of sorts to gift back to nascent Radical Aliveness movement community nodes that will continue to “turn on” in other cities as students begin to bring this work back to their home communities. The goal of this phase was to create a “low threshold for entry” for new practitioners who to reduce the need to keep reinventing the wheel and to simplify the process of creating a workshop container so that practitioners could focus the majority of their attention as the facilitator on allowing Radically Alive process to unfold as freely as possible.

STAGE 1 - PREPARATION FOR BUILDING A RADICAL ALIVENESS COMMUNITY - building a supportive network, infrastructure and skill base

Building My Capacity To Facilitate RA/CE Process

Practice, Practice, Practice: Because I come from the Brennan Integration Work tradition, I spent extra time getting to know how Radical Aliveness process work is different. I watched Ann facilitate Radical Aliveness evenings in class and two summer workshops, and I dissected every episode of the “Group Docuseries”. Everything I saw excited me. Inspired by Ann’s incredibly natural, compassionate and endlessly wise and curious way of facilitation, I resolved to get as many hours of facilitation practice under my belt as I possibly could.

Vancouver Peer Process Group

The most important component of my facilitation skills development happened through my Vancouver Radical Aliveness Peer process group. This was a group of between 5 and 8 people who met regularly - initially monthly and then in the fall of 2015, shifted into meeting 3X/ month. Having the space to practice facilitation with participants who were completely willing to go deep and be collaborative leaders in this process (there were 5 RACE students in the group) played a huge role in developing my confidence in my ability to facilitate a group. It also helped me to understand what my gifts were and how Brennan Integration Work is both different from and very complementary to Radical Aliveness process. In my peer process group, I found that my edge was to find ways to bring in all of the participants throughout rather than doing a linear process with an audience and I experimented with this repeatedly to find ways that allowed me to bridge with participants, allow for creativity and chaos while still slowing the process down enough to create meaning and self-empowerment for the participants. I was so excited by what I was learning that I didn’t want to share the facilitation role with my co-participants - I discovered something new about Radical Aliveness each time and I was hungry for more. Looking back now, I can’t emphasize enough the importance of getting all those hours of practice. Over the last couple of years, I have

facilitated/co-facilitated 100+ hours of process work in our peer process group. While I still get nervous facilitating a group, I have developed a much greater trust in the integrity of the field of Radical Aliveness process work. I have developed a greater facility to stay with whatever comes, no matter how big the energy and to say yes and lean into conflict. I have discovered that I can be endlessly creative when following impulses in the group and I have been able to see first-hand where my tendencies to try and control or provoke do not serve the larger group growth and expansion. Initially, I was very nervous to claim the role of group facilitator because I felt exposed and alone and overly responsible. As I relaxed into the Radical Aliveness field, it became much easier to trust in everyone's leadership and to know that I could ask for and expect support from the group whenever it was needed. There was also the space to make mistakes, to back up and to try things again and to really experiment in a very safe and forgiving laboratory. When a process was left unresolved, it also felt good to know that as a group we were committed to staying and find a solution, even if it felt uncomfortable in the moment.

Accumulating Gear

In addition to developing my RACE facilitation skills, I also found myself stumped on several other fronts which took me some time to resolve and provided endless excuses for not getting my own process group started. For some reason, getting a cube was an extended event which took 3 months (ordered and shipped from LA). Similarly, accumulating all the gear for a group was a prolonged event which I did over a 6 month period - I reduced the costs by shopping second hand from Craig's List and stalking towels and bandanas from dollar stores. Accumulating gear was symbolically important and allowed me to take myself more seriously as a RACE facilitator. When my two (!) cubes finally arrived I suddenly felt the gravity of my commitment.

Location, Location, Location

Finding a location to hold group process in Vancouver where space and privacy is at a premium was also challenging. After weeks of searching, I was totally excited to serendipitously find a space that was 2 blocks from my house in a private dance studio. We christened the new space with my Vancouver peer process groups well before I did anything for my own process group.

Music

Finally, and this was my biggest stumbling block, was the fact that I knew next to nothing about relevant modern music (having been brought up on a steady diet of classical from childhood) and I felt like I needed to literally learn a whole new language. I collected suggestions from other facilitators and friends (Terry Martyniuk and Josée Martell chief amongst them) and then spent countless hours searching through Spotify to find music that I liked and that spoke to me personally. Add to that the additional countless hours trying to get a bead on how specific music could be used and getting familiar with particular pieces of music and you have a sense of how illiterate I was to begin with.

All told, this process took me a full 13 months and paralleled my growing commitment to RACE and becoming a RACE practitioner as part of a larger RACE movement. Given that I had a more than full time job working on the Great Bear Rainforest agreements at the same time, my experience was that I needed to do small amounts often and consistently while holding my clear intention to keep pushing my edges a bit at a time. Despite my impatience to get "my

project” happening, I am quite convinced that my slower approach was an exceptionally healthy and sustainable choice for me in retrospect. In fact, it was part of my larger commitment to having fun with this project, having space to really enjoy and engage the process without trying to bite it all off at once. While it was hard to watch my peers holding their groups and doing their project work while I continued to keep my primary commitment to finishing up my work in the Great Bear Rainforest, I learned a lot from those who went before me about the care and preparation that I wanted to take for my project and I was unwilling to sell myself or my participants short just to “get it done”.

RACE Vancouver Community Evening

My next step in the skill building department was to make a small step outside the safety of the peer process container and experiment with facilitating this work in a community that was not familiar with RACE. Again, having the Vancouver peer group made this process much less scary and overwhelming than it might otherwise have been. Each of us took responsibility for pulling off specific aspects of the evening, and mine was to develop the agenda and co-facilitate with Terry. I quickly realized that I didn’t want to have to figure this out from scratch, particularly since I’d never actually attended a RACE community evening and had no idea what one looked like. Thus began my foray into making connections with other practitioners and asking their advice and learning from those who had already gone through this process. I interviewed Ann and asked her questions about how she structures and puts together a community evening which helped me to understand the “why” of the process much more explicitly. When I had it all written down, I realized that it reduced my anxiety about not knowing what I was doing considerably and gave me a template to build around that was comforting in its simplicity and helped me to focus on providing participants with an experience, rather than worrying about what I didn’t know how to do. That experience convinced me that sharing what I had learned could really help others, who like me, just needed a bit of help to get over the threshold and started facilitating groups in their own communities.

As the Community Evening approached, I became aware that while I was willing to take the risk to co-facilitate with a peer, what I was becoming increasingly anxious about was whether anyone would actually show up. And, while I could imagine doing a number of things to increase the likelihood of this, I was increasingly terrified to put any of them into action because they meant exposing me in my community as something other than the kick ass environmental negotiator I’d been known as for 20 years. I worried that people wouldn’t take me as seriously, I worried that people would judge me, I worried that nobody would come ... and this last one was a HUGE issue that became the defining edge of my entire project.

MY EDGE: If I put myself out there, if I take a risk and I am big and I have needs (i.e. participants), then nobody will come. Boom! I was a year old standing in my crib screaming for my mother again.

A week before the Community Evening, I printed flyers. I hastily pulled together an email list. But then the demands of my day job intervened and somehow it was 2 days before the Community evening before I actually sent the email invitation and walked around my neighbourhood putting up posters. It felt like a double bind: *If I don’t make too much effort then I won’t have to be disappointed by the fact that nobody comes. But I really want people to come.* By the time the evening arrived, I had worked myself up to a fever pitch of

anxiety about the fact that I had left it too late to ask people to come because I didn't want to deal with their rejection, but had created the perfect conditions for exactly that. Luckily, unencumbered by this particular distortion, one of our peer group participants had managed to rustle up some friends to bring with her and in the end, we had 5 new participants and our 5 core RACE peer practitioners. Terry dealt with music because my confidence in my music skills was not up to the task. I talked about RACE and why I was passionate about it ... and suddenly, I got excited. I thought: Hey, even though these people are new to this work, when you give them the principles and a good exercise, at least some of them are able to really drop into the process and get something. I'm not crazy. There really is something to this Radical Aliveness work.

The Community Evening was another turning point of sorts for me. I left the evening absolutely exhausted by all the worry and self-recrimination about not having set myself fully up for success. I was incredibly grateful that I hadn't had to carry the whole thing myself and that others had taken up slack in bringing friends and family to the event and helping with logistics and participatory leadership. I learned a LOT. I discovered that I could talk about RACE coherently and with passion, something that I had been worried about on the strength of my previous attempts to describe it to other friends. I also learned that it is really important to give people plenty of advance warning about a new event so that they can schedule it in their calendar. Hardly rocket science but with my particular distortion, this was revolutionary information.

Landing my target audience

Location ... check. Gear for large group process (i.e. 2 cubes, 2 sets of boxing gloves, 1 blocker, 2 rollers, 20 bandanas, 10 towels, 3 sheets, pillows, blankets, mattress), check. Many practice sessions of RACE facilitation under my belt ... check. One Community Evening with new people to work the kinks out of the system ... check. My edge and primary distortion - fear that nobody will come when I "call" an event - well and truly excavated ... check.

Now, I could jump in and tell you all about the group that I eventually DID run. However, that would leave you thinking that the process was linear and simple which doesn't do justice to the messy and poetic way it really unfolded for me. Creating the final product was a process of slowly excavating my resistance by trying more than one thing, having to accept my limitations as far as time and availability and then surrendering to what came to me with grace when it did happen.

Take 2 - Radical Aliveness for the Trans Community

In late October of 4th year, I decided that since my big fear about starting my own process group was that nobody would come for me and/or that I didn't know anyone who might come for me, I would circumvent this problem completely by hitching my star to someone who could draw a crowd and was well connected to an active network already. It also met a secondary goal which was that I wanted to use my workshop in service to a good activist cause. Enter my transgender activist neighbor and friend, Morgane who was the chair of the Trans Alliance Society. Feeling quite pleased with myself about the ability to feed two birds with one seed, I proposed that we try a collaboration with me doing a one day workshop for activists in the trans community which has been historically underprivileged and disenfranchised and wants to claim more a more powerful voice. Morgane was initially

lukewarm to the idea and asked a lot of hard questions (like, will my trans friends actually be able to afford you if they open up in a workshop and then need additional process work afterwards?). She also wanted to know how a bunch of catharsis was actually going to be helpful, especially since she'd had a brief experience of an open evening with Ann B at Hollyhock and it seemed like pretty scary work to her. I wrestled with how to describe the work to someone new to the work who was afraid and resistant without needing to convince her. I wrestled with the sense that I was in over my head and might just be biting off more than I could chew. I felt I could see how clearly this work had supported my own activism and strengthened my clarity and confidence and empowered my ability to create change ... but then I became unsure - perhaps I might be imposing my particular dominant culture perspective on her. Was this work actually universally helpful? Or was it only for the brave few who were willing to risk excruciating fear and/or whose need was so strong that they were willing to jump over barbed wire for the gold? At this point, we'd had one module on complexity and while I got it intellectually, I was still a little hazy on the details. I had a nagging feeling that I was missing something. I was also triggered because Morgane was mentally sparring with me and I didn't want to have to fight for or justify the work, I wanted it to speak for itself. I suggested that Morgane consider having a free session to see if it was for her before she made up her mind. She countered by suggesting that I put together a flyer and that we book it for the day after Trans Day of Remembrance on November 21st so that it could also give the community a space to process the emotions brought up for them the previous day. I procrastinated for a week before doing the flyer because I felt vulnerable bringing something that I was so passionate about forward where it wasn't necessarily going to be positively received. When I sent it to Morgane for review, there was a 3 day silence. Uh OH. She came over on the 4th day to talk about it and I got the first of several lessons about my cultural bias and assumptions. I had made a poster that visually screamed "rich, West-side" when most of the transgender community lives "poor, East-side". I had also made the cardinal sin of using Christian terminology - "transformation angel"- for a group who has been somewhat universally reviled by religion. Combine that with Morgane's sense that the poster was too focused on what was "wrong" with them and not what was right with them and it was clear that I was back to the drawing board. She also challenged me about how anyone was going to be able to trust me since I wasn't transgender. We agreed that we might be able to get past this particular issue if we co-convened the group and she created some trust by association for me as a starting place. However, I also started getting a little more realistic about how much more work I might need as a facilitator to take this on. It took me another week to make a revision to the poster - this time it was full of words and explanation so nobody could be in any doubt about what was being offered and it was superimposed on top of a more neutrally appropriate transgender symbol. I sent it off to Morgane feeling relieved that I'd been able to learn from the experience and not get totally shut down by the criticism. I was also congratulating myself that I'd been able to keep leaning in and not give up when the going got rough. We still had 3 weeks until the event - not perfect, but just enough time to give people the opportunity to clear their calendars. However, Morgane insisted on sending the flyer to 8 other friends she knew to see if it would pass muster. That process took another week and then I was dependent on her to put the flyer out on her private network and I had no control over how it was introduced and/or described. A week before the event, I had not had any responses. I realized that I had made mistakenly assumed that Morgane would enthusiastically market the group when in fact she was clearly ambivalent and, I'd made myself completely dependent on Morgane rather than having my

own self agency. I had lost control of the process. In the end, there were only two queries and neither person was able to attend on the date we'd suggested. Morgane and I agreed that the first round had been a bust and agreed to retool and consider a date well into the future so that we could increase the likelihood of success the second time round. I checked in with my mentor, Niki Angel, and she asked me more hard questions. Did I know what my goal was for working with this community? Did I understand what my ground was and where I was going to get triggered? Had I read and understood the history of the trans community, did I understand how they would see me? She also emphasized that their respect would have to be earned by me and that I needed to create a soft place for the participants to land that allowed them to feel their heart, to feel their pain without having to defend it and to really feel heard. She also quickly found places where I subconsciously held judgment that showed up in my language and encouraged me to get really clear about anywhere that I was holding discomfort and disgust in my own system since this was held strongly within the transgender field. She emphasized the importance of being able to take participants fully to their goodness, the place before they had been pathologized in any way. Subsequent to this meeting I began deep process work to find the places where I felt shaky and uncomfortable - e.g. what was subconsciously brought up in me when what I was presented with ("I'm a woman") was inconsistent with what was felt with my inner terrain ("you sound like a man") and how this triggered childhood fears of not being able to read a situation because the visual and verbal clues did not match with reality. I also got clear about how much I wanted to be of service, but only if it was wanted. I did not want to impose Radical Aliveness on the transgender community as yet another expression of dominant culture.

There were some important learnings for me here. First, that to sail in and easily impose my version of RACE on another community without taking significant time to understand the complexity and history of that community, and with my agenda and need paramount was naïve and pre-doomed for failure. What I needed to do was do my own work first to find where I was subconsciously wired to recreate earlier wounding for Morgane and her community. And, it didn't feel like it was a safe place to "experiment" with techniques for either of us. I didn't want to give up on the workshop, but I also realized that I didn't want to set myself up for failure on my first run out because I was taking the long view and that I needed more experience under my belt before I really had something to offer. Another lesson was that in order to collaborate with someone to bring this work to a new community, it would be helpful to have a champion who has had a positive experience of Radical Aliveness and can cross translate about its benefits. Finally, I had let my fear that nobody would come derail me again and I had given over my power to someone else as way to not have to take responsibility for feeling the discomfort that came with directly calling my participants in. My distortion was more conscious, but it was still wiggly in my field.

STAGE 2: TAKING THE TRAINING WHEELS OFF (Running My Own Process Group)

Take 3 - The Radically Alive Women's Process Group - Preparation

Building my own network:

In mid-November, with the clarity that the transgender community workshop was not going to happen immediately, I began focusing on building my own network of potential participants. I combed through my emails and built a couple of small annotated email databases that included friends, acquaintances, old clients and other practitioners. Then, for a lark, I pulled together a Meetup Page for Radical Aliveness Core Energetics Vancouver. Not quite understanding how Meetup worked or the fact that once I had the account the listing was live and would be advertised throughout the network, I inputted a flyer for a Women's Workshop (something I had already developed as a fun side project with some dates suitably far into the future that it didn't feel real) and then promptly forgot about it. I also connected it to an email address that I rarely, if ever checked to complete the trifecta.

Accidentally on Purpose

By the time I arrived at the 2nd module, I was starting to feel anxious about whether there was going to be time to get my workshop completed before the 4th module given what I now knew about the need to pre-advertise for a significant period of time. So, when a classmate mentioned that it was great that I had 10 women signed up for my women's workshop, I was more than a little shocked. At first I didn't even know what he was talking about, or how he could possibly know about it since I was convinced that I hadn't actually posted anything live. Then the irony of the situation hit me. Here I was so scared that people wouldn't come that I hadn't even been in receiving mode as they *had been coming*. I tuned into the Meetup group that afternoon and picked up the 40 odd emails that were waiting for me feeling simultaneously like an idiot, ecstatically happy that people had responded and anxious that because I hadn't responded to any of them that they might have already lost interest. I also got clear that even though I hadn't been planning on doing a Women's workshop in actuality, it was about to happen regardless because I couldn't retract the offer. In retrospect, with a couple of subsequent process group launches under my belt which required significantly more work, the ease with which this group came together still amazes me. It was like an encouraging gift from the universe to signal that I was heading in the right direction.

The Perfect Storm - what was also happening at the same time

As the project director for the Rainforest Solutions Project, a coalition of environmentalists who were negotiating precedent setting agreements with the forest industry and First Nations, in January 2016, I was in the middle of the final month to conclude the Great Bear Rainforest agreements (an unusually hectic, time sensitive and pressure valve situation). I had planned to have the timing of my process group to coincide with a more relaxed period after these agreements had been finalized (which should have been November of 2015), but unexpected political developments including the Paris attacks had led to an unanticipated delay in agreement finalization. The result was a perfect storm of the most work intensive period of my life coinciding with the start of my process group.

Risking calling out again and being on my edge

With 2 weeks left before the workshop was due to start, I swung into high gear. I got very aligned about letting the perfection and ease of this experience have its way with me and I committed to having as much fun as I could have. And I got clear that I wanted a LOT of women to come. My advertisement had said we were looking for between 8 and 20 women - something that I hadn't actually thought would be possible in reality for a first workshop. Now that I had ten without any effort, I wanted to see if it was possible to manifest more. I also took others' advice about Meetup to heart -- "you'll only get 50% of the people who actually sign up to come so overbook your workshop". This is where it became apparent to me that all the preparatory work that I had been doing was paying off. I wasn't worried about facilitating the women's group so much as I was concerned about challenging my limiting fear that nobody would come if I "called out." Despite my misgivings about being visible in my activist community, I sent my flyer out to my 150+ activist list serve, asking men to recommend the process group to beloved women in their lives and encouraging women to come and enliven their activism. I sent it out to practitioners that I knew with a personal note which told them how much this work had meant to me and asked them to recommend any clients who they had that they thought might benefit from the experience.

Learning to discern when enough is enough

With less than a week left, the number of participants swelled from the original 10 women to 18 women and several more were asking to join the group. Now I actually had to be conscious about how big a group I wanted to facilitate for my first foray into facilitating people who hadn't done this work before. It was a CHOICE! In the end, I interviewed and made commitments to 18 women and I turned away another 4 women who wanted to join. Turning women away was something I had never imagined that I might have to do, and it as a great learning experience to be able to hold my strong intention for the group that had already formed to be complete. I felt very protective of these women and I wanted them to have a potent experience where I could bring the best of myself. I also got clear that I didn't need to overdo it. Eighteen women were enough.

Setting the welcome table

As I interviewed each woman I used the experience to learn how to best conduct an interview both to elicit important information about what each one was working on in her life, but also to make a personal connection that was welcoming and relational (for the specific script/ questions that I used in the interview process, see the Group Process "How To" Binder). I had to be conscious of the places where I wanted to hide or be shy and remember back to the first time I had taken a risk and tried something outside of my comfort zone. I shared how the work had impacted me personally, I reflected back their courage to try this out and I impressed upon them the importance of being committed for the full 6 weeks of the process group i.e. this was not a sampler menu that they could come to some but not all of, and it was also not an appetizer that they could try and then refuse the main meal

Being a facilitator is very different from being a participant

In the safety of the ½ hour interview process, women confided their fears about being in a group, about being with women and about the traumas and life issues that they were coming with. As I met each of them by phone for the first time, I was tremendously moved. These were women who were on their own mythic journeys, consciously reaching for support and

community, willing to be vulnerable and trust me with their story. I felt the part of me that wished that I was a participant joining them (many of them would have made great friends) and also how different the facilitator role was going to be. I needed to be able to hold the boundary as their facilitator and be willing to allow their transference with me to be of service. Already it felt different. I felt my desire for a more connected and intimate community of my own and also my joy at being able to share this work and being of service to other women the way strong women in my life had been of service to me. Or ... at least, that was part of my experience.

To pursue or not to pursue - working my abandonment edge

The other part of my experience was wrestling with how much I wanted to hold some of the women accountable vs. creating an unconditionally accepting experience. A number of women were late for their information interviews or actually stood me up at the times that we set up for their interviews. In several cases, I needed to call 3 or 4 times to finally connect with them. Following up after the first time ran counter to all my professional training (if they want to come, they should reach for the experience, you shouldn't have to chase them) ... but despite my discomfort, I continued to follow-up with them to find out what it was that they had originally reached for. I had to work on my edge (concern that I would be abandoned by my group members) and soothe myself there so that I was not acting from a sense of scarcity. As I surrendered into being curious and learning this terrain, I also felt how each of these women was a mirror for the reluctant, poorly attached part of myself who procrastinates and sets up circumstances that create anxiety so that I can connect with another in some way that has energy and intensity. Instead of punishing that part of these women, I consciously experimented with giving these women what I was giving myself - a welcoming and non-shaming heart connection that met them exactly where they were at and stayed with them if they were afraid, wanted to run or were resistant. This isn't a choice that I would replicate with an ongoing group. In fact, one of my learnings was that it is important to set the expectations clearly so there is no confusion. However, I am incredibly grateful that I made the choice to stay more open in this case because of the specific lessons I learned from each and every one of the reluctant women who joined us for the 6 week pilot.

Using my body as the instrument - aka your group will evoke all your family of origin issues and is a therapeutic instrument and teacher for you too!

As I began feeling into the women who were coming to the group, I also began to feel a wild intensity of fear, abandonment, performance anxiety and a desire to shut the whole thing down. My resistance was legendary and I found all the places where I was not being clean and intentional with committing to the group. I had a process session with Piper which was very helpful where I felt myself afraid and separate from the whole group and then allowed myself to join hands with them and allow our fear to be a portal for connecting the whole group. Subsequent supervision sessions also revealed something apparently very common - that facilitating a group will evoke many of your family of origin issues, particularly with your mother. Realizing that my fear was diagnostic of what was happening in the larger group, and that my vulnerability would actually help to cohere the group was a helpful reminder that I wasn't here to perform so much as to find out how I was human. In reaching my hands out for the group, I also discovered how fiercely protective I felt of their experience in the group, my desire for them to find and express their uniquely feminine strength, leadership power; to feel how much I loved them for taking a chance on me, for taking a chance on themselves.

What I also became aware of in my cells was an ancient, sacred calling from this group and the field of the many women who have gathered in circles over time - it had the slow throbbing heartbeat of wise women and healers gathering to build their power and be of service. My spirit leapt in recognition, though I had not been in a women's circle for a very long time.

RADICALLY ALIVE WOMEN'S PROCESS GROUP - What happened in detail

Target Audience:

The "Radically Alive Women's Process Group" was for women (both cis and trans) of all ages, races and economic circumstances who wanted to claim more ownership of their feminine voices, wisdom, goodness and power and were interested in having more vitality and passion in the process. 18 women began the process group with me ranging in age from 26 to 61. The women in the group had American, Canadian, Russian, German, Chinese and East Indian origins. While there were no trans women in the group, one of the women in the group was in relationship with a trans woman. The group had an almost equal number of straight and gay participants. There were 2 medical doctors (a surgeon and an addictions specialist) as well as 4 counselors and therapists along with a green building specialist, an artist, a jewelry designer and a communications specialist. All of the women were new to Radical Aliveness Core Energetics although one participant had done some core energetics 20 years earlier. We had an equal balance of introverts and extroverts and an equal number of coupled and single women. There were 3 mothers in the group while the remaining women were childless. Although I didn't know this when we began the group, almost half of the group were also sexual abuse survivors.

Why Women?

In a 2009 Peace Summit in Vancouver, the Dalai Lama was quoted as saying that the world will be saved by western women. Notwithstanding the very real critique that this tends to empower a preponderance of wealthy white women to the status of saviors, I passionately believe in the underlying sentiment about all women's capacity to create change and I am excited by the responsibility that comes with this capacity. Women are biologically inclined to feel deeply and are particularly attuned to the pain of separation inherent in wars, poverty and environmental destruction. Their capacity to act on these feelings all over the world, however, is often muted by systemic disempowerment, trauma and violence. My desire was to empower women to support each other to find their voices, leadership and embodied wisdom in service of planetary scale healing.

Description of the Women's Process Group:

This project was a 6 session weekly process group, each session being 3 hours in duration. The group began in January of 2016 and completed at the end of February. The group was held from 7 to 10 PM on Tuesday evenings for a total of 18 hours of group process facilitation. I did not have an assistant for this group. In addition, I did 15 hours of individual process sessions with women from my process group to support them throughout the 6 weeks.

Workshop Goals:

My intention for this group was to offer a space where the women could

- Grow a community (sisterhood) of radically alive women who support and empower each other's authentic and embodied unfolding (to stand together rather than against each other)
- Feel both the joy and the pain of being in relationship and to learn to tolerate both
- Bring awareness and compassion to their dark and stuck places
- Accept and value their bodies, being and wisdom
- Reclaim their sexuality and pleasure
- Increase confidence in their voices and their opinions
- Be seen and see themselves as mythic beings who are courageous
- Engage each other from a place of personal leadership and risk taking.
- Reclaim and reconnect with the embodied feminine goddess within
- Be with each other with non-shaming hearts, a willingness to say yes to everything and a willingness to be changed by each other.
- Discover the freedom in not knowing it all and be with the mystery of what arises in the group body as we explore the unknown together.
- Celebrate their complexity and claim their unique gifts as women from all cultures, sexual orientation, faiths, and traditions.
- Have FUN!! Experience pleasure together.

My personal goals were to build a base group of women who could continue to meet together as an ongoing Radical Aliveness group, to create more visibility for myself as a Radical Aliveness practitioner in Vancouver, to contribute to growing the Radical Aliveness community in Vancouver and to grow my personal capacity to authentically embodying my own empowered feminine wildness, pleasure and expression with other women. I particularly wanted to test the limits of how big a group I was capable of facilitating.

Learning Outcomes:

The specific learning outcomes I wanted to support were for the participants to:

- Work with a variety of physical techniques to unwind, unblock and shift energy and strengthen their physical, energetic, emotional and spiritual container to hold more personal vitality and radical aliveness.
- Understand the basic theory underpinning core energetics and radical aliveness (mask, lower self, wound, higher self)
- Learn how to support process work for other group members that allowed them to have their power
- Discover where they may block their full gifts in relationship with other women (highlight caretaking, enabling and colluding as ways we distort our relationships and

disempower each other) - to be able to stand in their full magnificence and strength, power with other women

- To have an experience of their core that draws them to commit deeply to their growth and impact in the world
- Apply what they learned in each process group in their everyday lives and make mistakes/learn
- Consciously create healthy endings - to be present while saying goodbye and be in relationship during the ending of the group

Key Themes:

When I began thinking about the series of 6 process groups, I imagined that I might need to develop a very specific set of themed evenings so that the women would have something to work with (I laugh hysterically now at my naiveté - one of the things that I learned was that I could probably do a whole day workshop on each of these themes and that less is definitely more when it comes to having material pre-prepared). For what it is worth, here is the list of themes that I thought that I should probably have exercises and agendas ready for:

- Security, Finances, Abundance, Belonging (First chakra)
 - Being with Need and disappointment
- Sexuality (2nd chakra)
 - Shame, Physical and Sexual Abuse, Trauma
 - Pleasure, healthy sexuality and attraction
- Relationships with Men and Women (4th chakra)
 - Women - mothers, sisters, friends lovers (now and with your family of origin)
 - Competition, aggression, sneak attacks - Women as our own worst enemies
 - trust & betrayal
- Expressing ourselves - Claiming our voices (5th chakra)
- Intuition, Creativity (3rd and 6th chakra)
- Spirituality, Relationship with the Sacred, One, Goddess, All (7th chakra)
 - Pleasure, Joy
 - Higher Self/Core Expression
- What are the gifts that you are bringing to the world at this time?
- What do you dream of - if there were no limits Manifestation/Creativity What do I want to create with my life

- Healing - working with subtle techniques
- Dealing with Anger, Conflict
- Need
- Boundaries

Planning - The Process Group Six Session Overview

I began by framing out a relatively simple overview for the six sessions which looked like this:

Session 1

- To introduce Radical Aliveness concepts and ways of working in the group.
- To get our bodies moving
- To build a connected safe container within the group capable of deepening and holding larger process
- To seed process opportunities within the group

Session 2

- To create a feedback loop and allow the group to deepen with each other by allowing more of our stories to emerge
- To deal with members joining and leaving the group
- To begin to process in earnest

Session 3

- Introduce theory of Radical Aliveness Core Energetics
- to explore the various forms of our Feminine mask and the ways that this developed when we were children
- To work with lower self behind the mask

Session 4

- to gently work with body trauma using TRE
- to provide an opportunity to express and reclaim trauma consciously
- to work with shame and giving this back to where it belongs

Session 5

- To explore our relationship with sexuality and pleasure
- To explore our relationship with the Sacred, divine feminine
- to explore our relationship with our bodies - the source of all our wisdom
- Tantric breathing
- What I really want is exercise

Session 6

- To process any “unheard” or “silent” voices
- To integrate the gifts of the last 6 weeks

- Work on trust and surrender (blindfold exercise with each other - one is guided in a dance by the other)
- Name the higher-self gifts of each of the women that we have been with over the last 6 weeks
- Meditation re: Longing and intention that they have after completing this group - with a hara alignment

In addition, each week I developed a detailed agenda which included songs, exercises, readings and closings.

SESSION 1 - Group Forming and Norming

The objective of this session was to allow the group to form, for people to get to know each other, to start creating connections and bridges between people, to establish a safe container and to introduce them to the basic principles of Radical Aliveness.

My agenda plan for the first night can be found in Appendix 1.

What actually happened

(Note: all names have been changed to keep the participants identity confidential.) I was totally excited and incredibly nervous for several days before the workshop started. Was I going to be able to do this for 18 women?? Had I bitten off more than I could chew? I also realized that I was feeling a little overwhelmed, tired and victimized/resentful of all that I needed to do to get the group up and running. In my pre-session supervision we identified that with the perfect storm of work and process group, I had reached my capacity threshold and was in a familiar defensive pattern of over-giving and striving for impossible perfection. My supervisor's suggestion was that I experiment with thinking about group as a dinner party where as the hostess, my job was to tantalize them with appetizers but leave them hungry for more instead of trying to cater to their every possible desire immediately. Provocatively, he suggested that I should aim to feel dis-satisfied, like I hadn't mothered and fed them enough. He also suggested that I connect to the consciousness of the large trees who had protected and supported me during my cancer diagnosis and reminded myself that I was not alone and they had my back.

I vibrated for most of the day of the workshop and felt REALLY stressed. Because of the aforementioned perfect storm of work and process group I was on non-stop work conference calls until 5PM. I was still printing out my agenda and feeding my daughter dinner ½ an hour before the workshop started. I arrived and set up with 5 minutes to spare and took a huge breath of relief. I didn't exactly "OWN" the room, but I had miraculously arrived and set up before anyone else arrived despite it all and we were about to start!!!

I was concerned because 2 women had cancelled at the last minute - one of them had been hit by a truck on her way to the session and had to go to hospital! I was also amazed because as women entered the room I was able to recognize their voices and call them by name which made them feel even more welcome and seen. The women were nervous and as they walked around the room, and I was surprised to see how much information I could get just by watching their bodies move in the space and with each other. One woman stood by herself and waited for everyone to come to her and then monopolized them until they broke away. Other women couldn't make eye contact. Some laughed nervously whenever they met

someone. Several women were unable to stop talking about the picture frames which weren't hung straight on the walls and one of them kept moving things around and tidying up after me. There was a lot of mask.

Having 16 women was an amazing feeling. It felt like the right number of people in my room and I was excited. Having them share in the group circle took a very long time, and even when I kept encouraging them to stick to a time limit so that they left room for the rest, each person kept taking even longer than the person before them. Their sharing had a lot of references to feeling stuck in their lives, having fallen by the wayside and lost something, being in transition, trying to "find their authentic self" again. In the end, it felt like their sharing was a really important part of allowing each woman to be heard, claim her space and build trust in the room.

After working with golf balls on their feet, Anna made a special point to come up to me and ask if I had something else she could do because she couldn't tolerate the pain of the golf balls - she resisted my suggestion of putting less pressure on the ball and just working with what she could tolerate so I promised her I would bring tennis balls for her so she could work lying down on her back the next time. I noticed that I felt slightly irritated and like I was being set up - that it wasn't possible to get it right for her. [I didn't yet know that this was a pattern for Anna - to resist what was asked of her and then to ask for special attention to test whether I would break her heart as her parents had.]

Then we did the icebreaker exercises and the group got very animated. There was a lot of laughter, great connections were made and the women started making physical and eye contact with each other quite quickly. They liked the spectrums so much that they wanted to do more than I had already thought of so we improvised more on the spot. As we did the spectrum about how many children they had, several women asked questions - "live children or dead children?", "conceived or brought to full term", "want or have"? It happened amidst the rest of the excitement and I wasn't fully attuned to the consternation that it was causing in the group.

At the break, Jane came up to me and said that she was having strong feelings, that she wanted to leave and that she was feeling mad at me about having done the children spectrum when I knew from her intake form that she was having a hard time conceiving children. I remember feeling simultaneously scared and excited and thinking "here we go!" I asked her if she was willing to take a risk and process this with the group, and then asked the group if they were willing to depart from the agenda and dive into process. It was a pivotal moment. By taking the risk, we took the group to a deeper level right away. This was also the beginning of Jane's (and the group) testing whether I could be trustworthy and neutral as the facilitator even if she challenged me. Jane began hitting the cube. She shouted that she didn't trust me or the group and she was mad at me because I had exposed her as someone who didn't have children but wanted them. I encouraged her to let us know what she was feeling and to not hold back. I encouraged people who felt similarly to join Jane as she expressed herself or to notice if they wanted to move away. Jane alternated between yelling about how stupid it was to hit the cube and being mad at me for making her hit the cube. After asking her "who's voice is that" she had an aha and realized that she was talking to her mother and I used this as a moment to teach about the importance of staying curious, using the group as an experimental laboratory that could help us see things we are blind to, not

taking things personally and the honour of being someone's transference object. I encouraged her to yell "I won't do this for you" which brought up a lot of tears and her resistance to saying this out loud. She claimed that she was angry, ashamed, judging herself, shutting down, not wanting to connect with the group, wanting to leave, sure that the group was judging her as a barren woman or stupid because she didn't get busy having a child when she really wanted to have one and finally, how she had betrayed herself and didn't listen to her own body's wisdom about having a child. The whole room changed and got more coherent as she claimed this. One of the other women, also a doctor was moved to tears and amplified the issue of self-betrayal by talking about how she was afraid of the same thing because her body has been telling her to have children for the last year and she hasn't been listening either because of the demands of being a doctor. We also presented the additional complexity that came with the East Indian cultural expectation that children would be doctors and lawyers, regardless of what children wanted. Several other women were clearly affected and I asked Esther how she related to what Jane was saying. She was shy, but as she started talking about her own struggle having children and her frustration in feeling like the choice to have children had been taken away from her, Jane got very excited and encouraged her to get up and hit the cube with her. The two of them ended up hitting on two cubes side by side and shouting about how much they hated other women (the women with children arrayed in front of them) who could have children and didn't even realize how lucky they are and are wasteful enough to hate their own children. They were both braver as they did this and reported that there was pleasure because they were no longer alone in the struggle. I suggested that they claim "I want to have a child" - and then what they would do with a toddler, a teenager, their dreams of having a child. They finished by claiming to the group "I have a lot of love to give!" The room erupted into cheering. Both women's faces were totally flushed, they had removed layers of clothing and they looked completely different by the end. Jane commented that she didn't know what was happening with hitting the cube but she LOVED it, even if it was stupid, and she encouraged everyone to try it.

When we checked in with the rest of the group, it turned out that Rhea had just taken a Plan B pill a couple of weeks earlier and she was feeling the complexity of feeling her grief with two women who would do almost anything to have a child. I noticed that Simone was sitting off to the side of the room and isolated and I asked her if she had any reflection on what she had just witnessed. This released her to talk about her own intense feelings about having just learned that she couldn't have children either - the choice had been taken away from her, regardless of whether she wants to have children or not. Other women had experienced miscarriages.

I was unable to get my music working for this evening - one of the things that I had been most nervous about. Instead of hiding, I was very transparent about the fact that if I had been all together I would have been able to play them a beautiful song to end the session. In what felt like perfection, Ashlen asked if she could sing us a song instead and proceeded to sing "How could anyone ever tell you, you were anything less than beautiful?"

Our closing was short and took us slightly over time - I felt like I was herding cats and was still getting a handle on how to plan realistically for how long things take in the larger group. Jane finished up the evening by commenting that she was really happy at the quality of the group, and she was especially happy that there weren't any "crazies" in the group like she

had feared. I worried that I might have needed to give them a bit more time to close down the group at the end given that they weren't used to running this much intensity in their systems.

Without much effort, by choosing to follow what came up in the group, we wove together an experience of wholeness around our feminine capacity to create life and what this evokes in us when we are unable to, choose not to or do so with ambivalence. It was a powerful evening and I went home exhausted and excited. I was amazed at how "radically alive" the women were already and how much trust and connection had already been built in the room with the icebreaker exercises and then my willingness to let Jane challenge me and Jane's willingness to go for it and take the risk. My fear that there wouldn't be anything to process about had already disappeared and a new one had replaced it. Would I be able to handle the intensity that this group might bring to me?

Questions for supervision:

- 1) How soon do we shift from lower self to higher self-expression in a group? Over the course of 6 sessions or iteratively within each process and session?
- 2) In Jane's case, she was really abusive to herself and had a harder time expressing her feelings outwards. Was I circumventing Jane's process by trying to get her to shift to H.S. too soon because I wasn't able to tolerate my anxiety and desire to "fix" it?
- 3) More process, less exercises from now on? How important is it to keep to my agenda/objectives vs. let these women have their heads and bring the issues that they've got (so that they have the best chance to really get process time in if they want it).

Learnings from session 1

- 4) Can increase the 50% success rate with Meetup by also requiring that they fill out the intake forms and having a personal interview.
- 5) Say yes to the will of the group if a process has arisen (asked permission to do this with the rest of the group) unless it doesn't serve the needs of the larger group as a whole - Some questions to consider are: has the group effectively bonded yet? Is there some trust in the group and a sufficient container to hold this process? Is it possible to use this as a gateway to a larger group process? Are you serving the larger group
- 6) Say yes to group/individual challenge of your leadership choices - I'm sorry you felt that way. Are you willing to try something different? Are you willing to risk something?
- 7) OMG, 3 hours is almost nothing and 6 weeks is crazy short - we aren't going to really be able to get fully into it for all these women in 6 weeks.
- 8) I love working with 2 cubes and having people processing together - it really amplifies group process work.
- 9) Find ways to keep asking what is happening in the group and to get the group to move (ask them to feel into what may be keeping them stuck in their chairs)

- 10) Good to proactively educate them about things like difference between violence and responsibly doing our own work so that we don't have to make other people feel our pain for us
- 11) Sometimes you need to let people just behave from mask (like the opening circle) because it helps them to get present and feel safe enough to open up.
- 12) The spectrums were an awesome tool to both help people get to know each other, make connections and feel into the group as a whole. It also provided an unexpected avenue to process.

Thoughts for next sessions

- 13) Let them know that I'm giving reduced rates for sessions if they want any in between group sessions to help them make their way through.
- 14) Make sure to check in midweek and see how they are doing - also do a check-in at beginning of the session next week.
- 15) Make sure that we deal with confidentiality at the beginning of the next session.
- 16) Plan agenda accordingly to deal with the fact that everything takes longer than you think with 16 women if you try and let everyone do everything.

SESSION #2 - Belonging and the Group Body

Between the first and second session, several women wrote emails to me talking about what had been evoked for them in the first group. I found myself spending quite a bit of time writing back to explain some basic concepts and then encouraging them to bring the material back to the group. I felt torn between trying to meet their needs and keeping everything in the group container which might not actually be able to meet all their needs.

Counter-transference and resisting the pleasure of the group:

Great Bear Rainforest work had ramped up another notch and my sense of overwhelm, stress, resistance to the group and resentment at all the extra work it entailed was at an all-time high for this session. I kept feeling scared - that I didn't know what I was doing, that I could never be Ann B in the room, that I would get lost if the process really took a deep dive and that what we had done so far was just touching the surface of "real process" and that I'm would not be able to hold it together if the "real shit hits the fan". I felt clumsy, like my instincts were all wrong and that I knew NOTHING, that I had no skills. Not having pulled **everything** together left me feeling very vulnerable ... that I hadn't done enough in the way of readings and that I didn't have anything to give. I had a really distorted sense of my expertise and what I have to give (a lot of tightness around 4B, jaw, in eyes and at the back of my neck)

Despite my earlier supervision session, I was also fully in the throes of martyring myself to the group. In particular, I was really resisting creating an agenda for the group and instead of trusting the wisdom in that, I was beating myself up about setting myself up to "fail". It felt like all my images that life was hard and my need to be perfect had come barreling into my

group experience with a vengeance. I didn't trust myself and I felt a lot of negative pleasure in not creating the agenda, getting stressed and the idea of not performing for them. I was bummed that I wasn't feeling excited or any pleasure at the thought of doing another process group. My brain knew better (prepare ahead, give myself time on the day, set a positive intention, access my higher self) - but the sense that I was caught in headlights with this distorted dynamic was pervasive. I was having a difficult time accessing my positive intentionality with so many balls in the air. In the absence of supervision, what I knew was that my counter-transference with the group as my demanding mother was very strong. I also knew enough to trust that my resistance had purpose and wisdom. I had a niggling sense that trying to stick to the agenda wasn't going to allow me to flow as easily with process in the group.

I wasn't getting enough sleep so I did a salt float in the morning of the second process group. I slept in the pod and dreamed about the group that evening - it felt better and more spacious and I calmed down enough to finish my agenda (see Appendix 1). I recycled much my first agenda and simplified. I also realized that I needed to parse the 3 hours up into working chunks that left enough space for process and for the group to ramp up and integrate what happened afterwards.

Changing things up - comings and goings

Kila joined us for this session - she hadn't showed up for the previous session because she had fallen asleep after doing the information interview with me and had slept through the session. This was the only time that we saw her as she emailed just before the next session saying that her mother had fallen and broken her leg and she was needed for 24 hour care. Sita, who had been hit by a truck coming to the first group also emailed to say that she thought that she wouldn't be able to join us for the group after all because she was in too much physical pain from the accident. Less than an hour before the session, our youngest participant Emmy emailed me to say that she had decided that she wasn't going to come back. I felt my anger that she hadn't taken her commitment or the group seriously and she had taken a spot that someone else could have claimed. Ashlen talked in this group about how she was angry and disturbed by the fact that Emmy had spoken disrespectfully of the group - that she "didn't get it". I took the time to email Emmy and invited her to call and discuss her decision and what might have been brought up by the first group but didn't hear anything further from her.

What actually happened was

I got my music working with the speakers! I even managed to get several songs playing one after another for the dancing and exercises. I danced with abandon to shake off all my angst getting there, and after a bit of hesitation, many of them started to dance with me. For the first time I realized that as the facilitator my dancing in the group helped to activate permission to dance and I really got into my pleasure in my body dancing.

Then we worked with the taboo statements ("No!", "Get off my back", "shit on you" etc.) The group got into it and there was a lot of giggling, and increased energy. The room got really noisy.

The group check-in took almost 45 min and women shared much more deeply - it took twice as long as I had planned in a worst case scenario and I felt torn between letting them all speak and my desire to get them processing, not talking. Liza's sharing stood out because

she said that she had been to a Non Violent Communication workshop the previous weekend and she needed to be able to hold back with us because she didn't want to get screwed up between the modalities. I gently probed whether she could use some support but this activated further resistance in the moment. My internal response was - "pick me, pick us, if you are going to be here, be with us!" I regret that I didn't pick up on this more in the moment. *[In my exit interview with her, she confessed that she had been deeply disturbed by the NVC work and she had reacted by closing down. What she had really needed was for someone to keep reaching in for her, rather than falling for her familiar dismissive pattern. This taught me about how I get afraid of conflict when a woman speaks emphatically and instinctively try and take the easy way out and not make waves which doesn't serve to deepen the group or act as a healing response for the individual.]* I let them know about the changing women in the group and invited the group to feel if they had any reaction to the gain and losses of participants. I remembered to talk about confidentiality and we discussed what the women needed to feel safe in the group. This flip chart went up for every subsequent group as a reminder. We also went over the RA principles again - a lot of women were taking photos and copying them down in notes this time ... I encouraged them to explore the idea of a "principled approach" to process that doesn't have to look any specific way.

Then I pulled the cubes out into the middle of the room and suggested that people just try them out and claim something. It was immediately clear where the blockages and resistance were in the group. Some women got up and really went for it: wanting a divorce from their husbands, having been sexually abused, having been abused by previous therapists and/or wanting more space to be. A number of women refused to try hitting and/or immediately stood back if it looked like someone else was going to make a move to reach for the rackets. I noticed that Alice was particularly in a love mask and was always being "compassionate" and "standing up tall" when she talked about herself or other participants. I didn't try to push her out of it, I just let her hit and feel that in her system. Anna got up and hit tentatively about how she didn't like the "first past the post" voting system. I invited Anna to explore if she had any emotional material she wanted to claim and she expressed concern about making sure that everyone got equal time and that if she took time she needed to be sure she wasn't taking time away from someone else. She talked about having been kicked out of her family of origin when she was 15 and not having a sense of belonging. I invited her to take a risk and compete for time and fight to take it away from someone else and claim her space, her need and her right to belong. She resisted this suggestion and continued to subtly demand that I give her a fair amount of time without having to ask for it. *[This was part of an ongoing pattern that played itself out over the next couple of sessions.]* I also used the large group cube claiming exercise as a teaching opportunity about why hitting the cube works to charges up energy and increase access to subconscious material and to teach them how to mirror effectively and respect each other's capacity and ability to process without caretaking.

In this session, I was still struggling a bit to bring in the more silent voices and to keep track of everyone - it is easy for them to hide in the group and I found it harder to engage them all with the time that I have available. I kept offering opportunities where I noticed that the room was fairly "still" and I asked other participants what they thought might be happening in the quieter sections of the room if the quieter participants didn't have anything to say.

For the last part of the process, I made space for Simone who had emailed a lot of information about what had been triggered for her in the first group. I chose to let her express herself with very little intervention from me and this was a very quiet and subtle process. She was still speaking largely from her mask but gradually she became more vulnerable as she described the issues she was having with her hoarding father, the brother she was trying to protect and her own issues with conceiving a child. The group was very drawn to her as she spoke and when she burst into tears about how she felt that she didn't belong in the group, the whole group came to sit near her and assure her that she deserved to be here and belonged as much as anyone else. I commented that Radical Aliveness process didn't need to look any specific way, and that it could be much more subtle like this process had been. We explored how staying on your edge, and staying with your own vulnerability helped to serve the group because it created connection and gave permission for other people in the group to feel these same feelings of not belonging. Sitting near Simone, and watching as the group moved to connect with her, I really felt the difference between being a facilitator and a participant. I was seen as different in the group and I began to claim that role fully for myself.

This session felt like it was primarily geared towards getting to know the group as a whole better. I surrendered the idea that I was going to get them to actively choose a series of themes as a group to work with and I re-oriented myself towards getting a sense of the dynamics, the personalities, similarities, differences and the inherent themes of their group body. I was constantly being challenged to hold my awareness of the group while working with individuals - strong individuals, in particular, drew my attention away from the group as a whole.

At the end of the group I got some very positive feedback from Jane about my facilitation which felt good to have as a reality check - I was seen as powerful, articulate, brilliant, and much of the reason that the group was going so deep so quickly was because I created a kind of permission and transmission just by in who I was in the group, and how I bridged and connected the women.

What I loved about my facilitation this session:

- 1) I have an ability to be fluid and follow the process
- 2) I had a general idea of what I wanted to do and followed it.
- 3) I was able to connect with several of the more quiet participants and gave great feedback at the end
- 4) I used many of the process opportunities as teaching opportunities
- 5) My interventions were light and generally really helpful - I helped to name things, coalesce group themes and had some inspired feedback to a number of women about their edges - "what would I do if I wasn't being a nice appropriate British woman?" "what am I not wanting to feel here?"
- 6) This session keeps challenging the idea that process won't be as deep or active in a group that doesn't have any Radical Aliveness training - it is a lot deeper than I expected and really quickly

Questions for supervision:

- 1) Exploring how my idealized facilitator image (i.e. Ann B) is getting in my way
- 2) How does Ann make it feel like 3 hours is so long and spacious at school when I find it difficult to fit everything in?
- 3) Pros and cons of structured vs. fluid facilitation - is one more appropriate for different stages and types of process groups?
- 4) How do I better keep the group feeling as a whole, including the quieter voices, rather than getting distracted by high energy individuals? E.g. Becky - had an anxiety attack before coming to the group tonight (but I don't know what about) and then appears to be incredibly calm and very into being available for Lorraine to beat on her ... what is going on with her? And is it my job to try and "break-through" and "reach in" to find out what is going on for her? How do I help to create an experience where each member of the group is able to get fed and gets what they came for? [*I think that the success forms will be really important for this*]
- 5) Is there some way that I am avoiding a deeper process with these women by trying to interact with many of them? Am I letting it just stay on the surface?
 - a. Being with my anxiety about needing to "fix" or solve the group's problem. Can I let them figure it out for themselves?
 - b. Am I also respecting my own limits for what I can effectively facilitate right now and controlling the group to where I can safely hold it?
 - c. Or is it appropriate that they aren't all diving so deep to begin with? --- feels like this is more about me and less about the group which actually seems to be going for it ... or at least some elements of the group are going for it --- who am I missing, how can I encourage the quieter members to participate?

What I was challenged by:

- 1) I want and need more space to connect with myself and the room ahead of time - Tuesday is a particularly bad day for process group for me because of my work schedule.
- 2) Carrying gear back and forth to the studio is a lot of work - having an assistant would really be supportive. I want an assistant - someone to talk with about these things after the fact AND, I really love being able to hold the group by myself and be more fluid - and it is ALL for me.
- 3) My space is less than ideal - landlord is older and OCD - leaves a lot of disapproving notes with detailed requests - I feel like I'm a bit on eggshells trying to make sure that I don't screw up or get it wrong --- not a fully supportive space.
- 4) Trying to deal with multiple needs and NOT nearly enough time ... I just keep thinking that what I really want to do next is a weekend (or a whole day) workshop so that there is a bit more time for everyone and a chance to relax into it a bit more

Learnings from session 2

- 1) Less is more --- we could have spent more time talking about how the 5 physical exercises made people feel afterwards and checking back in
- 2) Agenda structuring: Want to more effectively alternate between small groups and large group work - to engage some of the quieter women, we need deeper small group exercise where the women can work with each other and I can just come around and help as/if necessary
- 3) Getting clear how useful this experience is as an opportunity to work out all the kinks for running a process group - to incentivize me to really pull together everything that I've learned from Ann in a more systematic way, to pull together my materials and to learn how to do everything relative group process

SESSION #3 - STORMING - Group Crisis and being the Rock of Gibraltar

Now I started developing agendas which were more fluid and had a series of choices of exercises and starting warm-ups so that I had something to fall back on if there wasn't something percolating in the group but I was also prepared if we needed to do something more structured. The agenda for session 3 can be found in Appendix 1.

What happened was:

In her intake interview, Jane revealed that she had multiple chemical sensitivities and I had asked the group to ensure that they are not wearing perfume to support Jane's ability to be with us. In this session, Sita, the woman who had been hit by a truck had joined the group for the first time. I was unaware of when it happened, but as Jane entered the room a strong scent was obvious and she went into fight or flight, her throat started closing down, she had to use an inhaler and she ran outside to hyperventilate. I went out to assess her for any life threatening issues instead of being in with the group. I felt caught in a massive energetic double bind and I was not sure what the right choice was. I asked her to assess what was best for her. I offered her the option of rejoining us with the windows open and processing the intense emotions that are happening for her in the moment or to leave the session and rejoin us next time when the room could be guaranteed scent free. My sense was that if she left, she would not rejoin us for the process group again. After some deliberation, she chose (instead of her usual pattern of fleeing) to stay with us ... the wildest ride of all the sessions ensued.

I rejoined the group with Jane and told them what had happened and requested that we jump in and process what had arisen for Jane in the moment. Despite my intention to create space for the quieter members by starting with small group exercises, I chose again to follow the big energy that was presenting because it was "life threatening" and trumped the needs of others. I honestly didn't know how to handle the situation which felt a bit like a runaway train. *[In supervision much later I realize that I had let the agenda be hijacked because of my fear of having to say no to Jane's participation and I had not kept the needs of the group as my prime directive. I also had been attracted to Jane's big energy at the expense of the quieter energy in the group.]* Jane started hitting and attacking two women (Sita and Lianne) who are "so stupid" and have worn perfume "cause they can't get their shit together".

Participants gathered around each of the “victims” to support them and I kept encouraging the group to keep feeling what was happening in their own fields and observing what they see happening in the room so that we could help Jane to be able to see how her energetic construct functions and affects herself and the group. Lianne was very affected by the attack which reminded her of her abusive father and I encouraged her to collapse and curl up and follow her body’s impulse to make sounds while she was supported by a group of women. Sita, who hadn’t even had an adequate introduction to the group as a new member, was under attack as the one who has sprayed the scent. She amazed me by taking a stand for herself and telling Jane how sorry she was while explaining that she was feeling very vulnerable in the new group and worried that she had BO so she’d unconsciously put on some scent to cover up her anxiety. *[In her feedback after the group she revealed that she had not been conscious of it at the time but that she was also trying to manipulate Jane by making her feel guilty for making her feel bad.]* She was powerfully emotional, embodied her distress and stayed in relationship with Jane while Jane kept hitting the cube and yelling about how stupid everyone was. Ashlen was very affected by how Jane kept herself protected and others at a distance and repeatedly tried to make contact with her. Jane rebuffed all attempts and I asked Ashlen to just feel her helplessness without needing to keep acting on it. Sylvia expressed her despair that being in a group never feels safe because there is too much emotional violence flying around and we asked her and Jane if this felt familiar in each of their own childhoods. We talk about how despair is part of the group field and belongs here, it doesn’t have to be hidden or shamed.

Jane alternated between beating herself up as the drama queen and beating everyone else up. *[It is so much easier to see these patterns after the fact with good supervision than it was in the moment when everything felt very chaotic and exceptionally stressful]* She continues to threaten to leave and her state of anxiety is contagious in the room. I could feel myself alternatively freezing, being extremely anxious about needing to “fix” the situation and feeling personally responsible for not having reminded the participants about the need to be scent free. In each moment, I was afraid that I didn’t know what the “right” thing to do was, and my only option was to know that I didn’t know and surrender to the process. I just kept feeling into the moment and following where my attention was drawn. I claimed my responsibility as the facilitator for not keeping the space scent free and apologized to Jane. The process became a combination of me tracking Jane and telling her that I was not going to abandon her here, no matter what she came up with while at the same time, bridging to individuals who were being attacked by her and to other allies and compassionate voices in the room to keep grounding and embodying the situation. While I stayed near Jane, I talked to the group about the importance of using this opportunity to track the group field and notice what was happening in each person’s body, that no voice or experience was unimportant and that by accessing the whole group organism we could give Jane an opportunity to better understand the traumatic shock wave that she had very little volitional control over. It felt really important for me to be as neutral as possible and to keep shifting the whole group away from judgment to curiosity and invitation. The group reflected how strongly charged and polarized the field felt, how stuck and intense the energy was and how there was no way to make connection with Jane who just kept pushing people away. We worked with not drawing away from Jane’s rage, allowing everyone to see it as energy moving but not getting caught in it, being able to stay present and stay with Jane. *[In retrospect,*

the group field was very “speedy” and would have benefitted from additional “time out” moments to stop and feel itself.]

The amount of mirroring in the room was incredible - Jane felt hated, not wanted or chosen by her father (he gave up custody of her so that he wouldn't have to pay child support) - she can't ever get it right and she is stupid because she isn't able to. --- Lianne (who crouched down to show how it feels in her body when Jane accused her of having purposefully worn perfume) - was reminded of her dad who used to beat them for misdemeanors that she and her younger brother hadn't understood. When Lianne was crouching down, this activated Rhea who started screaming “Get up, get up! Why don't you stand up?” because this reminded her of her mother being beaten by her father. Rhea then took a risk and told Jane that she was being a drama queen and taking up all the space. This led to Rhea claiming her own space and yelling “It's about me” repeatedly. Jane discovers that it was very difficult for her to consciously choose to do the same i.e. to say that she was worth it and she deserved the space. We noticed that while Jane is always giving 150%, she never feels satisfied and is always yearning to be met with intensity. Lily, the other doctor noticed how exhausting this dynamic felt in her own body and reflected this back to Jane. Lily joined Jane and I suggested that they try something less black and white (totally good or totally bad) so they both hit the cube and claimed what felt more true for them, that they are both great and not great all at the same time. Something settled in the group field as they accepted the messiness of life and the paradox of being great and not great at the same time. I asked how this might be different from the energetic field of medicine they work in and suggested it might require a really conscious choice to hold both truths. Punam brought in the additional complexity that there often isn't any choice about whether you are going to become a doctor in an Indian family.

In another part of the room, Alice began to process her anger about growing up in Russia with a communist father and her terror of expressing her frustration because her Dad had had a heart attack when she talked back to him. This process felt very big but she couldn't keep her eyes open while processing and because of the time we had available, I chose to not have her deepen in this session [*This issue came back in several later sessions and was able to sequence to resolution*].

I stood by Sita and asked her how it felt to have had a baptism by fire in the group. She appeared to be doing amazingly well but she said that she still felt that Sylvia was judging her. I asked if she'd like to do a reality check and she asked Sylvia if she was indeed judging her. We explore a little further and she discovered that Sylvia reminded her of a case worker she had had as a child and I then used this opportunity to teach them about reality checking and reminded them to stay curious because other's reactions are rarely personal. I also observed that we could alternate between wise adult self and child consciousness and lower self to better understand our whole experience - noting that the younger consciousness has a different logic which we're not trying to argue with from an adult perspective, it just needs to be expressed and received.

During the break, Anna approached me privately again to request that everyone got equal time and noted that she was starting to get upset [*In the moment, I felt anxious about not being able to “fix” the issue of multiple competing needs. In retrospect, she was an important voice to teach me about holding the needs of the group sacrosanct over those of*

the individuals]. While normally I would have asked her to work this with the group, because we had limited time and I was concerned that we hadn't done any small group work at this point, I chose to let this go.

Instead, I chose to give the group a chance to integrate after their time in the involuntary trauma field. We did a short "need/want" exercise where the women sat in pairs and asked what the other wanted to receive and then listened to their own wise guidance and intuition and offered healing energy wherever they were drawn to touch. I was surprised that Ella, one of the women who had had almost no emotional affect in anything so far suddenly burst into tears during this exercise and was completely overcome by the intimacy of the exercise. Her partner was Anna who found this incredibly disturbing because she didn't understand and couldn't do anything about what was happening. We circled up for a final check in after the exercise and I felt my anxiety about the fact that so much had happened and was not fully resolved. I suggested that everyone go gently in the next few days and allow this work to have its way with them and to bring what happened back to the group for the next session. Jane reported having had a very healing experience with Simone that was helping her to integrate all of what had happened that evening.

This was a huge learning session for me. I learned how important it is to be able to stay solid like the Rock of Gibraltar when really strong energy moves through a group so that they can trust you and go even deeper. I learned that as a group facilitator it is sometimes very important to stay with your agenda for the wellbeing of the group and that the boundaries that you create with the agenda can create greater safety for the group and the capacity for it to deepen. For a participant with multiple chemical sensitivities, it is also really important that they be doing process work separate from the group so that the group does not become the focus of all their distorted needs. They need a separate container to be taught about their own responsibilities to the group as a whole as well to themselves. I also learned a lot about the energetic field of trauma and projective identification and how it can affect a group as a whole. I stayed, even though I was scared, and the group experienced some big shifts in the process. I was also imperfect and not able to hold the group as a whole the entire time.

What I liked about the session

- 1) I didn't give up on Jane, I demonstrated to the group how to stay even when the going gets really rough. - I had courage, patience and creativity and was able to bridge what was happening to Jane with the group field and keep many participants aware and interacting.
- 2) A LOT happened - and it felt radically alive with many women all interacting, bridging and feeling things deeply.

Questions for Supervision

- 1) Bringing someone new into the group in the third session? Do it again? - Sita is really powerful and so willing to risk and to show up - amazing as a first timer in the group, she has added a lot to the group. While it is difficult to keep having people added to the mix, my choice in this case was dictated by the fact that she had signed up for the group and really wanted to come and had been detained because of an accident rather than not showing up

- 2) How do I help the group deepen even more - as a group vs. going deep in an individual process? Right now, everybody gets a little bit, but nobody gets the full meal deal and gets to run everything through to the end. People are getting activated, people are speaking up (although I had a difficult time tracking what was happening in the more silent parts of the room because Jane was keeping me on my toes)
- 3) Did I make the right choice to connect with Jane and let her process come to the fore? -- my concern was balancing the medical threat with the fact that if she left the group (which is her pattern) she might not come back and would avoid feeling. Did I give the group the message that only big drama gets my attention? What about me? I felt like I didn't stay neutral the whole time - am I colluding and making Jane special?
- 4) How much did I leave on the table? - in other words, did I miss something important with Jane - I tried a bunch of things --- impossible to get it right with Jane (in my own countertransference with this)
- 5) I am triggered by Anna's not so subtle demand and threat strategy - always coming in sideways with her comments, not willing to really bring herself, not fully committing with either the group or the forms --- how am I not working better with her? [I've suggested to her that she might want to experiment with taking more space in the group, in taking more than her fair share - she is not being genuine when she says everyone needs to have space
- 6) Came into the evening feeling like I don't know anything, like I don't have anything to give these women - what is this about?

Learnings from session 3

- 1) Role of private sessions - really helpful to support work in a group, particularly when women are not getting their full needs met in the group and lots of material is getting stirred up to work with. Particularly important for someone who has high chemical sensitivity and orality to have support outside the group so that they don't hijack the group with their needs.
- 2) LESS IS MORE

Thoughts for next session

- 7) Too much story telling - keep them in movement more (did I cut them off quickly enough. Is there a way to do this kindly)
- 8) Can I slow down even more? Am I moving way too fast?

Between session 3 and session 4 - Anna's departure

In between session 3 and session 4 - Anna emailed me to say that she was not willing to come back to the group unless I immediately started doing more small group exercises and giving everyone equal time. In fact, she said she would not come back until I had proven that I could do this in the next session and that this had been confirmed by the other participants. I acknowledged that it had been my intention to do this in the previous session and that I was very committed to doing it in the next session. I also acknowledged that this was a learning experience for me as a facilitator and that I wondered how it was for her that I was human

and could make mistakes. I invited her to bring her feelings to the next group and we would make space for her to work with it there rather than doing it by email but she was adamant. She then wrote publically on the Meetup group saying that she was not willing to come back to the group unless I changed the format to small group work and that this was confirmed by the other group members. I was triggered by this because she stopped communicating with me and went through the group. With more bandwidth I might have been able to use this as a more therapeutic experience, but as it was, I judged her demand as unreasonable and irresponsible. I held my boundary more strongly here and just reiterated with her that we should continue the conversation in the group rather than continuing by email. The group members responded by encouraging her to join us anyway and not leave the group, but despite the fact that many of them wrote again to confirm that there had been a lot of small group work in session 4, she refused to rejoin us and stopped communicating. I really learned that radical aliveness group process is not right for everyone (a somewhat robust ego is required to be able to tolerate the tension of needing to compete for space in a larger group) and while I really appreciated that Anna had highlighted the importance of keeping the needs of the group foremost, I had to be willing to let her go and accept that I was not a perfect facilitator.

SESSION 4 - CORE Model of the Personality and Small Group Work with Mask

Because we didn't end up using the agenda that I had planned for in week 3, I reused the week 3's agenda for week 4 with a few minor tweaks. In particular, after my experience with Anna, I created space for a teaching about the role of a group and expectations of group members as well as exploring Anna's departure and what effect this was having on the group.

Holding Healthy Boundaries with the group

As the women arrived it was now easy to see that several women had a pattern of being late and I had to decide whether I was going to modify the agenda to accommodate late participants or not. I built 15 - 20 minutes of dancing and physical exercises into the beginning of each group as a way to create a buffer for starting as a large group until everyone had joined us and because it felt like an important way to ground and connect the group to each other and their bodies. Generally, the women who were late were signaling something to us with their lateness (resistance to feeling, insecurity about their role in the group, split intentionality about their commitment to the group) but I chose not to make this a focus of our in group process experience. Because I had been receiving feedback from a number of women about wanting to end exactly on time because they had partners waiting to pick us up, I chose to deal with this in an email about group boundaries. I said that I had heard from a number of them about how important it was to honour start and end times and that I wanted to do my part to support this and requested their help to join us on time so that we didn't run late. I also requested that they remember to provide their \$10 donation to help cover the costs of the space. I found myself needing to really be conscious as I wrote the email so that I didn't either try to guilt them into being on time or leave it unclear that a boundary was being requested - this brought up my image that boundaries curtail relationship and connectedness. Several women didn't join us that evening and I wondered if I had managed to strike the right note after all. Sylvia interpreted what I had said to mean that she wasn't welcome except if she came on time and with money which she had already talked

to me about forgoing because she had very limited means. Notwithstanding her rather weak ego container, the experience really taught me a lot about checking all my energetic as well as unconscious motivations behind communicating and reminded me that emails needed to be exceptionally simple and clear to avoid misinterpretation. I apologized and engaged in a repair conversation with her after the fact which helped me to get clearer about the boundary I was holding. In the end, I realized that my boundary around timing was not completely hard, but that I required everyone to take individual responsibility for their effect on the group and clearly communicate any requests to depart from a newly established group norm around timing if they wanted to come to the group late and were limited by other circumstances. And, while I was quite good at holding boundaries during process and being directive where necessary, I realized that in this case, I was nervous about holding a boundary with the group where they might not like it and there could be conflict - my image was that if I didn't please them and allow them to do what they wanted, they might not like me or come back.

Perhaps not surprisingly, around this time, the issue of my own lateness to several of my Vancouver Peer Process groups was also getting attention and helped me to keep clarifying my boundary from the other side of the experience. I realized that I really didn't like a hard, inflexible boundary that didn't accept that each of us was dealing with unique circumstances, nor did I like the feeling that I was wrong or bad and unwelcome if I was unable to join the group exactly at start time, and that there was no willingness to acknowledge the somewhat unique circumstance of the perfect storm conditions I was in. And, I also wanted to take responsibility for my own patterns which tried to cram just a little bit more into each moment prior to group and invariably made me late. I became very clear that I didn't want to make a habit of being late unconsciously, that setting the group container was important to me as part of the process and I began to really consciously choose my priorities to enable the likelihood of making it to my peer process group on time. This was one of my edges with both groups which I got to play with repeatedly. And, while I imagine that the easiest way to deal with group norms and lateness is to deal with it by discussing group norms with the group before it becomes an issue, I have yet to experiment with dealing with lateness directly with group participants.

What actually happened was:

After we danced energetically for 15 minutes, and did a quick group check in (now done by putting one word that described the essence of what they were aware of for themselves in that moment), I did a quick teaching about the purpose of group process and clarified that group was not intended to meet all the participants needs all the time, that everything that we were dealing with in our everyday lives would show up in the group to be worked with in real time, and that if we used it as a living laboratory and got curious, it would give us the opportunity to experiment with new behaviours in response to familiar family of origin stressors of competition and conflict. I also emphasized that "getting caught" in our old patterns first was an important experience so that we could allow the beauty of the larger group organism to really express itself and help us to become aware of our patterns from a lot of different vantage points. I also emphasized the importance of using individual sessions as a way to support the work that each of them was doing in the group (I offered them a 40% discount for up to 4 of my individual sessions while also offering to give them referrals to other 4th year students with even more reasonable session rates). [A number of the

participants had a single session and Jane came for 4 additional sessions which were incredibly helpful to strengthen her container and capacity to participate in the group.] I let the group know that I had been in conversation with Anna about bringing her feelings to the group, that she had chosen not to join us for this group and I asked if anyone had any questions and/or feelings about Anna's absence. Several people were concerned about Anna but the general consensus was that they wanted her in the group to engage her concern and were frustrated by a sense of helplessness to do anything about it. I encouraged people to connect with their sense of helplessness and use it as a portal to whatever the evening had to offer us as a group. In particular, I encouraged them to keep lightly holding the question "what am I not willing to feel here?" as they went through the exercise.

I then did a teaching about the Core Energetics model of the personality to set up for the Mask exercise we were going to do in small groups. I spoke about how much I loved the spiritual optimism inherent in RA/CE and my own experience of finding goodness as my foundation over and over again when I worked in groups. Participants were really fascinated with the idea of arriving at our goodness being the goal of our work and many of them immediately got the felt sense of our mask having very little energy. After demonstrating the exercise with one of the participants, the groups were off.

It was fun to watch the women supporting each other and the intensity of the processes that were evoked. Several groups struggled and were very rigidly intellectual about the exercise and I moved amongst them making suggestions and asking the workers to show us more of how they felt in their bodies when they experienced their childhood voices from their helpers. The energy level in the room was high and many women had a deep process in the 15 minutes that they were each given to work individually.

I noticed I felt both relief and disappointment about this. For the first time, I felt relief from the tension that I hadn't quite known that I had been feeling about not being able to get depth with a number of the quieter individuals and the fact that the group's attention had been taken over twice by Jane's process. I also felt the relief of not being the center of attention, not receiving all of the group's transference and not needing to "perform" and work so hard to give them an experience. It took the absence of the sensation for me to become aware that it had been operative in the first place. I felt disappointment because I didn't feel myself as much a part of the larger group whole and, I suspect, because I didn't feel as integral to and central to its experience. This really helped me to focus on what my role as the facilitator was in each session. My unconscious tendency is to want to be the center of [my mother's] attention and to be special and clearly useful to the group so that they don't abandon me. Watching the women buzz with activity and connection without my direct interaction was a profound teaching about how to hold the larger group - a reminder of their capacity, skill, wisdom and wholeness. I remembered something my supervisor had said about remembering to think of the group as people who were coming to serve me and process me because I am such a difficult case and need a lot of remedial teaching. And that my job is to learn to just facilitate and not to "do for them" but to enable them to do for themselves. The group members are responsible for what they get out of the group, not me. Provocative Proposition: my job is only to create a performance space for healing - to let go the floodgates.

There wasn't enough time to do more than the small group process in this session. I made the choice to let the small group exercise go longer because the women were clearly enjoying themselves and very animated. It seems obvious in retrospect, but in this session given the larger size of our group, I was well and truly convinced about the absolute necessity of using small group exercises as a way to allow more members to process and to build the container of the group as a whole to hold larger process. The quieter participants each had their opportunity to shine and to be clear supporters to the workers in their group. It was clear from the animated written feedback from this session that everyone built their confidence to go deeper in the smaller containers and most of the women reported that they were aware of new edges from tracking their body awareness and moving. They were also excited by the question "what am I not willing to feel" and this became something they returned to by themselves in the later sessions.

The women really engaged their family of origin relationships, and spoke in the debrief afterwards of becoming aware often for the first time of how much anger and/or fear that they held from their childhoods, but also an increased awareness of this dynamic being part of a lineage that hadn't started with their parents. This seemed to really help people to hold the intensity of their feelings as sacred and to see their work that evening as supporting something much larger than themselves as individuals. I noticed that sexual and physical abuse issues were a strong theme in the group which in large part informed my choice of agenda topic for the next session. For the next session, my desire was also to find a way to have time for both the small group and larger group process.

SESSION 5 - Trauma Release, Sexuality, Being in a larger field/Letting the World in

In this session, my agenda was the simplest that I had made to date (see Appendix 1). It was hurriedly dashed out by in less than 10 minutes on the day of the session and came almost fully formed and effortlessly. Because many of the women had reported out about sexual abuse in the previous session, I wanted to teach them TRE and give them a tool that they could use at home to gently work with the physical trauma of which many of them still showed evidence.

What happened was:

After high energy dancing, we did a need exercise. The women were partnered and told to say "I need" to each other repeatedly for 15 minutes straight. They had access to towels and I encouraged them to play with their tones of voice, facial expressions and allow themselves both to impact and be impacted by their partners. The sound level in our little studio was powerful with 16 women yelling "I need" at the top of their lungs. Having so many women doing it was incredibly enlivening and it was truly spectacular to see all the different ways of masking, denying, resisting, over expressing and finally coming to a healthy mutual relationships with need. *[This is an exercise that I have used a number of times now with groups and I REALLY love for how much it experientially teaches people about their embodied relationship with need.]*

After the need exercise, I taught the group how to do TRE. We had very little unimpeded wall space so women were wedged up behind ballet bars on the wall letting their thighs vibrate. I encouraged them to let their voices out and also to ask for help if they needed it. While not everyone had large vibration happening, everyone noticed micro-vibrations that began amplifying under certain conditions. While each woman was very interiorly focused in this exercise, I could feel how the coherence of energy in the group was being amplified.

During the group check-in, Lianne, a self-confessed “rigid Brit”, talked about how the experience of vibrating in the butterfly position had vividly recalled memories of her 6 year old sexual abuse and her discomfort with how vibration, pain and pleasure were linked together for her. She spoke about how she felt ashamed and guilty because she had felt pleasure and that her six year old self had decided that this made her a “bad” person. This was a pivotal moment for the group where powerful archetypal energy joined us. As she spoke in a relatively calm disembodied voice, Punam and several other normally reserved women began to moan in distress while others moved to their aid. Sita got particularly activated and began to resonate with her experience of having been raised by a schizophrenic mother and being abused by her many partners. As she began to describe this experience, Rhea jumped in and said she was triggered by how Sita was manipulating us and that Sita reminded her of some friends in her life who over dramatized and didn’t take responsibility for how their energy affected others. Jacky and others moved to support Sita who got defensive and asked if Rhea could see who she really was, rather than judging her as white trash like everyone else had. I asked Rhea what she might not be willing to feel. Things started moving very quickly in the group at this point and without asking if they were OK with it, I dropped this process before it fully resolved itself (*more on that later*). Meanwhile, Lianne had stood up and taken the racket and asked Punam to join her. She began expressing her anger at what had happened to her but reported feeling some dissociation. Punam took over with the racket and began raging “Children are not for sex and it is not our shame but theirs!” Afterwards Lianne talked about how important this moment for her, to have a protective ally in Punam who was willing to be an advocate for her to say the words that Lianne wasn’t able to in that moment and in a way that her mother wasn’t her advocate at the time. I kept asking the group to notice how they were affected and to let their bodies move to where they were called to be. I named that the field of sexual abuse was in the room and that each of us was likely to be feeling its impact in our systems. Jane was holding the cube and encouraging Lianne to hit and, when she noticed that Rhea and Esther were sitting off to the side apart from the group talking she forcefully asked them if they could respect Lianne’s process by not distracting her. I reminded the group about getting curious and feeling into the larger field of the group. I asked them what they noticed. And I asked Rhea and Esther what they were aware of and what they might be holding for the group field. Both of them said that they didn’t have any experience with sexual abuse, that they felt helpless, that they couldn’t feel anything and that they didn’t want to touch the intensity because they were afraid that the feeling would overwhelm them. I asked if this was familiar to any of the women who had experienced sexual abuse and they talked about their experience that they were told to shut up and not talk about it, or that their parents didn’t believe them or wouldn’t hear them if they tried to talk about it. About how silenced and numb they had had to become to cope with the experience because there wasn’t a safe space to feel what had happened. This was my first really powerful experience of how focusing on the group field as a whole I (and the group) were able to link seemingly disparate experiences

and experience them as meaningfully connected. This freed Lianne up to yell at them “Why won’t you see me?” and to feel how their apparent disregard echoed her mother’s lack of concern and engagement with her. It happened very quickly.

In the middle of this moment, there was a loud banging on the inner studio door which gave me a fright because I thought that we had a locked outer door. When I went to the door, an irate male neighbor loudly demanded that we stop all the banging and screaming which “had been driving him nuts for weeks”. I quickly moved him out to the outer door, said that I heard his concerns but that I couldn’t guarantee that we could do anything about it in the moment and that I would check in with him after the process group was over. As I came back into the room I was in shock. My feeling was that our room had been violated and that I had failed to keep the container safe for the participants at a very vulnerable point in their process. I also felt a surge of anger and sense of betrayal by my landlord who clearly had not relayed to the neighbor what was happening despite her assurances to the contrary. And ... despite all this, I was also able to stay conscious about the group field that we were currently in. I pointed out to the group that I imagined that this kind of behavior (“be quiet, be a good girl, stop bothering me”) sounded suspiciously like something that might happen in the field of sexual abuse in real life and I encouraged the women to have their feelings about the interruption. The room erupted in a frenzy of pounding on the cube and yelling “fuck you!”

Lianne noticed that she was triggered by Ella, another woman with very little emotional affect (who reminded her of her mother). Ella began to cry and ask why no one could see her emotions. I encouraged the group to really let themselves “see” Lianne and Ella and to give each a reality check about what they saw. Group members were in tears telling Lianne how inspired they were by how brave and honest she was being and how this was giving permission to everyone to feel more deeply. Initially Lianne didn’t want to take this in so we worked with her resistance and then she went to every woman in the room and claimed her bravery and honesty.

While this was happening, I noticed that Alice (a woman who had stopped herself from hitting the cube to let someone else who wanted it more in the 2nd session) was clearly in distress so I asked her if she wanted to claim something with the group. She began to talk about how having grown up under Russian communism and with a violent father had left her gun shy and afraid to be around loud sounds. She wasn’t sure that there was any sexual abuse but she started to hit and yelled “Don’t touch me!” repeatedly. As I watched her I realized that she was shaking like a leaf and I encouraged other women to support her while I knelt down to put my hands on her feet and ground her so that she could really claim her voice and her boundary. She claimed the shame that she felt and we ended with each woman claiming the shame that they each felt in some way around their body, a shame that was not theirs but represented someone else’s voice. Everyone was given a towel to symbolize their shame and they first clutched the towels tight to them and felt what that was like and then one by one, each woman named her shame and gave it back to where it belonged. As each woman spoke and then threw her towel onto the growing discard pile, the power in the room was palpable. We looked around at each other and I was enormously moved by the courage and power of the women in the group, the power of the group body itself and a little in awe about the process that had just unfolded. We finished with the song “Brave” and I suggested that the women be

very gentle with themselves for the next few days and understand that they had been in a very altered state.

As Lily wrote in her feedback: “Everything in the field is necessary even indifference and judgment and interruption. It all solidified the theme of power and understanding the world in this way creates a harmonious and connection based paradigm ... the expression of “don’t touch me!” was so haunting and simple it left me with a very strong feeling which is partially one of deep grief at how much pain there is in the world, and simultaneously that feeling of strength and power and resistance to that pain, in essence - DO NOT TOUCH ME”

I went home and sat in my bed trembling like a leaf and cried for hours after the session. It had evoked my own resonance with the field of sexual abuse - even though I have not experienced myself in this lifetime it runs rampant through my mother’s lineage. I also felt how afraid I was that I would lose the space just before my last group session, I felt my discomfort with not being welcome in the space, wondered frantically what I might have done differently to avoid the situation and felt terribly alone in my responsibility for the wellbeing of the group and my fear that I would not be able to protect them adequately. The experience collided with an old image for me - that when things get really amazing, the rug always gets pulled. The 24 hour period after this process group was dark and epic for me.

In a series of emails, my landlord first threatened to end the arrangement immediately and then agreed that I could do one last session in the space as long as it wasn’t “too loud”. In the course of talking with her other neighbours she also discovered that someone else had been on the verge of calling the police. Apparently, our evening experience could have been a lot worse.

I reached out for support from Josée who was empathetic and reassuring which helped me to recover some equanimity. I had group supervision with Ann B and I screamed my heart out at the group “Where were you? I got scared!!!” I comforted myself with the thought that we must have been doing something right because these women were not holding their feelings back, even after the interruption.

Between Group 5 and 6

Sita wrote me an email saying she was really angry about how things had been left between her and Rhea and said that she was having a hard time and feeling very judgmental. I confirmed that what had happened had not been resolved, apologized about having dropped them midstream and asked her if she would be willing to bring her discomfort back to the group to process for the last session. I also suggested that she might like to do a reality check with someone else in the group about what had happened so that she didn’t get stuck in her negative narrative. I rode my anxiety for several days that I had done something wrong and tolerated the fact that the process had not been perfect.

SESSION 6 - Completion, INTEGRATION AND CONSCIOUS ENDINGS

The goal of this session was for the participants to complete any hanging issues from previous sessions, to have an opportunity to take in and integrate their experience, to be in their

higher selves and to have a conscious ending with each other. My planned agenda for the session can be found in Appendix 1.

Resistance and Conscious Endings

Within 3 hours of the session, I received texts from 3 women saying that they weren't going to be able to attend. I replied to each of them and observed that endings were often difficult for participants, and wondered whether they might be feeling resistance to saying goodbye to the group and letting it really mean something to them. I encouraged them to reconsider their decisions and bring their resistance and discomfort to the group. I also pointed out that the purpose of the final session was to grow our abilities individually and as a group to say goodbye consciously. Two of the three women reconsidered and joined us.

What happened was

After an initial "trust" exercise where the lead women danced with partners who were blind folded (which the women who were a little shy about dancing particularly loved), I asked the group if there were any hanging issues to be claimed and processed with the support of the group. In the end we had 6 women who had issues with something/someone from a previous session. I felt a momentary panic that we were not going to be able to resolve everything and complete our primary goal of saying goodbye well. I connected to my hara and set my intention that we could do this effortlessly. 5 of the women had issues with each other and Simone, the sixth, was having aftershocks about her unexplored sexual abuse after the previous group. To meet our timing needs and ensure that everyone was able to have their process, I chose to split the group at this point and asked who was willing to join a group with Simone to support her. Almost all the women who had experienced sexual abuse joined this group and they worked without facilitation. When they debriefed they said that this was one of the most meaningful experiences of the 6 weeks where everything had gotten connected for them.

Meanwhile, I worked with Sita and Rhea to slow their process down (which was very speedy and reactive) so that we could feel what was happening. Rhea wanted to continue to box Sita's behavior and judge it and Sita was quickly triggered. I called a number of time outs and asked each of them feel what was happening and to give other group members an opportunity to feel what was happening in their own systems. As we worked with Rhea I noticed how afraid I felt in my own body and I asked her what she might not be willing to feel with Sita and the other people who she perceived were trying to overwhelm her with emotion. She started to cry and said how afraid she was. Sita's entire system relaxed as she felt the truth of this and we worked with how Sita might be trying to scare others so that she didn't have to feel her own fear of rejection. Rhea was also then able to claim how envious she was of Sita's ability to access her emotional intensity and breadth and how articulate she was.

Several women had issues with how much space Jane had taken up in the group and processed this with her. It was remarkable testimony to how much Jane's container had grown that she could take this in without defending against it - a number of women remarked on this in the feedback session afterwards. Sylvia was particularly angry about how much space Jane had taken from the group but she was nervous about saying it. I suggested that she consider claiming and taking up space regardless of what Jane was doing and see how that felt. With two cubes, she and Jane hit vigorously while both claimed that they would take up space,

that it was “my space”. Jane actually loved this and it was a healing experience for her to be met by another woman with strong energy. Sylvia looked completely different afterwards and she literally stood tall and proud and energetically inhabited her space instead of sitting hunched at the edge of the group.

I held the time boundary very firmly for the last part of the agenda and asked both groups to finish processing even though it was clear that they could have continued processing for the whole session. The last hour of the group we did a feedback exercise that involved each woman sitting on the cube while the rest of the group gave her feedback. I demonstrated for them how to give great feedback and encouraged them to really breathe and take the feedback in. This was an absolutely beautiful experience and a number of women gave very poetic and moving feedback. It was difficult to keep them all to the time limit that we had but I held a strong boundary because I wanted each woman to have her allotted time. I also recorded the feedback for each of them so that they could listen to it later. The women were lit up like suns by the time we finished this exercise.

We finished with a small ceremony where I gave them each a beach collected translucent, pearly moon snail operculum (the hard shell attached to the foot of a moon snail that it uses to close itself into the shell and protected tight against invaders). This was a symbolic reminder to them that they each had the muscles now and they had a conscious choice about whether to pull the operculum close or let their vulnerable selves be more exposed and available. We took photos of the whole group to finish and then there were a lot of hugs and euphoric congratulations to all of us as a group that we had completed a really big 6 weeks together.

POST GROUP REFLECTION

Using your group as a living laboratory - Creating a feedback rich experience

As a scientist, I am endlessly curious and experimental. I recommend that you adopt a learning approach to your first group(s) - use your project as a laboratory for the group and to experiment to find your personal facilitation style. In each session, I made hypotheses, tested ideas and experimented. I gathered field information. I gave myself permission to take myself seriously as a practitioner. For those of you reading this, I highly recommend getting excited about the possibilities and trying out a bunch of different strategies. And build feedback loops into the process.

After each process group, I requested that the participants each fill out a short “Feedback and Progress” form (templates for these can be found in the “Group Process Logistics Binder”) Because the group was very large and not every participant was doing other therapy and/or process work in addition to their group participation, these forms were intended to give them another avenue to build their understanding and to kindle their reflective capacity, to allow them to make sense of the experience that they were having, to point out where they had issues and also to become aware of the mental states that underlay their experiences. Overall, the feedback forms were also a helpful adjunct to upgrade the group as a whole to higher levels of awareness and complexity.

These were enormously helpful to me as the facilitator to gain extra insight and understanding into what was happening for specific individuals in the group, to provide extra support to gauge what issues might be useful to focus on for the next session, to find out what I was doing that worked well for the group and to identify issues with my facilitation that the participants might not feel brave enough to raise with me in person. I also found that the group as a whole deepened very quickly and began consciously using the tools and principles that I was teaching them which, in part, seemed due to the reflective writing work that they did in between sessions.

A few other observations about the utility of this feedback process in the group:

- 1) participants made a commitment in their intake forms to filling out these forms within 24 hours of each session
- 2) it was important for me to hold this lightly and continue to respect the difference in learning styles, cognition and resistance levels of the participants.
 - a. not everyone appreciated written forms as a way to communicate (often those who would have most benefitted from making their experiences conscious were the most resistant)
- 3) These were most useful when done within 48 hours of the group process because individuals were most in contact with themselves and what had happened and they understood that the writing was FOR them. Subsequent to 48 hours, what appeared to happen for a number of individuals was that the form became an onerous “to do” for someone else (me) which they resisted as a matter of principle.
- 4) About half the participants regularly provided the forms, many provided them intermittently and several individuals didn’t provide a single form. I checked in with each of these individuals about what might be a more effective way for them to allow their voice and opinions to be engaged. This included doing ½ hour phone debriefs with several individuals who preferred to speak about their experiences and found writing onerous.

My Biggest Fears

- No one would come
- Being visible - people will judge me from other worlds that I operate in and see this as flaky or too alternative and out there.
- This work isn’t actually that useful to anyone and my attraction to it is a reflection of how weird I am, not how good the work is.
- I am not good at this. Why would anyone want to come work with me. I don’t have anything to offer. I don’t know how to facilitate Radical Aliveness process - I will get all linear rather than allowing the group to engage collectively
- I will try to over control the process and not trust and make space for each woman’s brilliance.

- I won't have fun and enjoy this - this will wreck RACE for me because it will become work

What worked?

- Having an agenda and then being willing to be fluid depending on the process that developed.
- Taking the work seriously and getting a lot of supervision and support
- Having a lot of practice first allowed me to risk holding a much bigger group
- Being curious and following my “yes, tell me more” instincts
- Using key moments to teach the group and deepen their capacity to hold intensity.
- Holding the field of the group and encouraging the group to track this and what was happening in their bodies.
- Letting the participants have many leadership opportunities

What didn't work

- Not having enough sleep
- Not taking enough “time outs” to slow the process down
- Trying to be the special, smart, centre of attention.
- Allowing several individuals who did not have strong enough ego containers to hold the work join the group (needed a better filter for interviewing them)
- Talking too much
- Not being clear about boundaries

My “Mistakes” (There are no mistakes, only a failure to notice/learn)

- The spectrum about children (made up on the spot) which unintentionally activated a lot of process around fertility for a number of women in the room
- Spending a lot of time creating multiple flyers rather than committing to one thing and just going for it (allowed myself to procrastinate, try and get everything perfect and not deal with my big fear which was to put it out into the world)
- Allowing fear of visibility in my community to drive me - not getting flyers out soon enough, being afraid to own this new terrain within my known community; trying to break into an unknown community with an ambivalent ally; setting my sights too high to begin.
- Not proactively talking to the neighbours at my first location (being in denial about the amount of sound)
- Letting one participant hijack the agenda several times (leading to resentment on the part of other participants) ... my tendency is to create conditions where participants

need to activate their reaching for what they want, they can't just passively wait for things to be handed to them ... but this is a place where you can miss people, especially if they have never learned how to reach (has to also be a teaching about how to reach and expectation setting about what a group is about)

- Not checking in by phone with specific participants in between sessions despite the fact that I suspected that they were struggling (because I didn't have time, energy, was struggling with how much "extra" to put into the group vs. holding them responsible for being able ... I also didn't want to end up enabling a lot of dependent behavior or creating a norm and expectations for a high touch environment that would exhaust me.
- Trying to cram too much into a short period of time. Had to learn that the first day's agenda was actually something that could be unpacked over the whole 6 weeks.
- Did I apologize too much ... or not enough?? (yes only in Canada 😊). Modeling learning without absolving others of responsibility.

Anything you would do differently?

- Relax and enjoy it more while it was happening
- Get weekly supervision while I was doing the group (more support)
- Have an assistant the next time? (although I loved the freedom of doing this solo) - I chose not to so that I could learn everything. Created a lot of logistical pressure (I had to learn to let the participants take responsibility for some of this) but I know all the details inside and out now and I could use an assistant much more effectively as a result.
- Start running my own process group earlier - just do it!
- Single Large or Many Small? I'd like to try a 2 day workshop. It seems like a more efficient way of dealing with finances, gear and amount of logistics and organization. However, doing process groups weekly was VERY useful as well - allows you to learn and change and modify and evolve as you get new information; requires a lot more preparatory work and a rigorous attention to detail; requires more sustained interaction with your participants; is an opportunity to get extensive feedback, information and sustained learning opportunities. However, a longer workshop allows you to work certain components all the way through over the course of 2 days, to go deeper with the group because it doesn't re-harden between sessions.

What was tough

- Holding the field of the group while paying attention to individuals and getting distracted by high intensity events
- Not having the support of an assistant.
- Juggling all the logistics, email between groups, texts before groups while being in a perfect storm with work.

- Knowing when to let go vs. chase after participants that left the group
- Not being able to protect my group's space from outside interference

What was easy

- Shifting into the facilitator role and taking myself seriously
- Being creative and following my impulses while process was happening
- Being able to roll with the punches and be fluid rather than controlling
- Staying grounded and centered even when I got really scared. My ability to come back to myself relatively quickly when I got triggered.
- embracing the group as my teacher
- noticing connections and themes developing
- dancing

What surprised you

- How much intensity this group brought almost immediately (and how I didn't have a good sense of what was a reasonable amount of intensity in a new group)
- How challenged I was by the facilitation even though this was something that I felt relatively prepared to do.
- How many of my personal edges were activated for me by the group and how strongly they were activated.
- How much work it was to get a group up and running and then maintaining it.
- I love working with music and when done well, this is a huge amplifier in the group. I'm getting good at doing this (went from being terrified about not knowing anything about music to having my own playlists)
- I love to dance. Really going for it and doing that had an affect in the group that went beyond words and created a different kind of permission to move and be in our pleasure.
- I often left a group feeling like I KNEW NOTHING about group process and how to facilitate radical aliveness - this group stretched me enormously

Overarching Learning - What you learned (about RA, about the project process, about your life and/or clients etc.)

- Growing a community takes time.
- It can take 3 - 6 months to actually prepare for the workshop itself - give participants at least 4 - 6 weeks lead time to develop buzz and allow the transmission to land (this is something to be very aware of if you have any fear about being visible and/or people not coming to your workshop).

- The BIGGEST risk that you can take, is to put the workshop offering out there ... take this seriously, prepare the ground well and consider how you will increase the likelihood of the people who you would like to come to your workshops saying yes.
- **Knowing that I don't know:** Doing this group taught me more about Radical Aliveness and myself than all the lectures and personal experience as a participant and there is no way that I could do it without all of that first. At the end of 6 weeks, I really know that I don't know AND that I have great supports and wisdom to draw on that make it safe to not know in a more sustained way.
- Don't be afraid to shine and really put yourself out there. Own your gifts and share them. Importance of bringing my whole self into the group. My background as an activist was important. My leadership in the Great Bear Rainforest agreements was inspirational to many of the group members; it also attracted women who cared deeply about the planet and the natural world. Don't be afraid to bring parts of yourself that may not seem like they are relevant to the work at hand.
- **Surrender** - sometimes the universe has other plans for you - I thought I was doing cancer recovery or the transgender community. 12 women needed to sign up to convince me that I was actually facilitating a women's group.
- Pay attention to all those thoughts and fears that you have at the beginning, before you actually run the group --- these are diagnostic of the field of the group that you are calling to you. Use that material to understand your people, build exercises that can help to open them up to these feelings, use them as themes and through-lines for your group. Allow yourself to connect to your group through these portals.
- This is a work of very great love and it calls for great love from each of us. The more you can ground in your own goodness, the more you will be able to recognize and call forth the goodness of others.
- Take this work seriously - Preparation, preparation, preparation
- Trust in the integrity of this work. A field is created when you signal your intention to hold "radical aliveness" process. There are things that you can do to structure, contain and amplify the work, but in the end, there is also just what happens in the field itself which you don't have to "DO" anything for.
- Have fun - it doesn't always have to be serious and sad and cathartic - this work can look so different depending on both you as the facilitator and the people in your group.
- Don't be afraid to be silly or to make mistakes. Some of my very best sessions of facilitation have been when I was willing to let the group go where they needed to go, I listened to what was wanting (I don't want to be so serious here) and then asking "if that is what you want, what's holding you back?"
- Ask provocative questions. Make provocative propositions. Don't be afraid to challenge the status quo.

- Get lots of support for yourself while facilitating. I had hara healings before each group process session; I used these to feel into my counter-transference with the group and to diagnose the dynamics of the group and the larger field; ask what is here
- The importance of the 5 principles and using these as a way to inform how you design and hold the group as well as information to impart for the group when thinking about how to do this work. -- I love how simple the RA principles are - and these keep deepening and deepening and deepening as I facilitate. Thinking in terms of group qualities is also helpful: generative, vital, finding its voice, connected, whole, truthful, learning, grounded
- Your job is to track the “arc” of the group experience - like flying, it is very helpful to know how to take off and land the group but otherwise, you want to let them do a lot of the steering. You have to really trust in the wisdom of the group and its individuals and not care take, over give and exhaust yourself. them. “give them only small portions, have them leave hungry for more”
 - Your job is to create a performance space for healing - to let go the floodgates. The participants are responsible for whatever they get out of the group, this is based on what they bring to the group and the risks that they are willing to make
 - Am I here to serve the group? Or, are they here to serve me and process me because I am such a slow learner? So that I can learn to just facilitate them and not to “do it for them” but to enable them to do it for themselves.
- Use the group members to feel and express what is happening in the group - remember to have them do the work, rather than you doing the work.
- **Group Size matters** - I wanted to experience what it was like to facilitate a large group by myself. I wasn't willing to settle for 3 - 5 people. However, 15 is a lot of women to facilitate early in your facilitation career. It requires a much stronger emphasis on the group and less emphasis on the individual's process. It is difficult but not impossible for everyone to get their deep dive in 6 weeks. Need to keep giving the process back to the group rather than trying to “take them somewhere” or “fixing uncomfortable circumstances”
- **Resistance is fertile** - both my own and others. I really learned that my resistance has great wisdom on occasion and that its biggest message was to slow down and really take things in before I rushed into action. Sometimes you have to work up to it. Don't do the hardest thing first - eat, chew, digest, pooh and then eat again.
- **Stages of a group:** Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing
- **Boundaries** for the group container. Need to be aware of whether this is informed by scarcity, a need to control, a desire to protect the safety and integrity of the group experience, judgment or intuition? (Start times. Payments. Agendas. Contracts.)

- Creative tension between structure and being with what is. Create on ramps to process don't be afraid to allow "optimal frustration" to build in the group as material for processing. The more you use your agenda to control the group, the more you will prevent it from deepening. The more you use your agenda as a structure to free your fluidity, the more your group can deepen.
- **Less is More** - it is amazing how little you can do in 3 hours with a 15 person group. (or perhaps because of who I am, I had unrealistic expectations of how much you should be able to do with a group and how much I wanted to do with them) It is better to do less and dive deep, rather than try to do too much and only skim the surface - assume no more than the following basics:
 - Movement
 - Opening intention setting/circle
 - Small group exercise
 - Large group process
 - closing
- Exercises are just a portal to process --- don't get caught up in the form, see the function.
- **Edges** - make friends with them, this is where we learn the most for ourselves, and for our group participants.
- The importance of "name, claim and negotiate" to create coherence in the group body
- Encourage feedback early and often - don't assume that you are going to "know" or be able to "intuit" everything about the group, or that there will be time for things to be fully exposed in the group
- **Rock of Gibraltar moment** - a group may test you to see if you are steady enough to trust for them to dive deeper. You need to be the Rock of Gibraltar so that your group can deepen.
- **Container Breach** - don't want this to happen ... but if it does happen, integrate this into the session itself and allow any feelings about it to come out as part of the process.
- Importance of letting any expression (in my case, the tears) to fully unload themselves and unwind, to let the body fully have its grief without holding back and trying to be competent and capable (and how much letting down this created in my system)
- Importance of having your story received and reflected back to you initially - mirroring for narcissistic wounding.
- TRE --- can quickly activate a lot of sexual abuse trauma in women; good to be prepared for that if you are planning on using this technique

- The importance of regular follow-up between groups for newbies and using email as a way to check in while always bringing personal process back to the group.
- Need to build a strong support system for yourself after big group process work --- big energy comes in through you and you are responsible for holding a strong and safe container for the group. Important to have a place where you can be vulnerable, have your own feelings and be supported and effectively mirrored after big experience or it can get VERY DARK and turn back inwards. Your goodness needs to be well supported here; it needs to have somewhere to go and be channeled so that it can expand and have relational impact. Post Process Group - use a process pillow to have all your feelings after a group.
- **Create a welcome table** - one that doesn't shame people for being late, which makes space and welcomes people who are all meeting their own edges in their own timing [and how this has been a big part of cutting myself some space around my own lateness when I've been juggling so much ... creating an attitude of welcome, rather than shaming (from something I read from Patti Hammond which she'd pulled out of something about community building)]
- Everyone comes to your group for a reason ... even if it is not immediately obvious, or if they are resisting you mightily or you find yourself immensely frustrated with them. Remember to see their yearning and their beautiful need, even if they can't see it themselves.
- Discern who needs to be "chased after" - sometimes, people really need to have a "hello in there" in order to be able to come out [this is a double edged sword, can make a lot of extra work - however, if you don't do this with a few people, you may miss out on some real gifts in your group, people who just never got "reached for" and need that in order to come out of hiding]
- Be willing to let certain people go ... you will need to discern when they are not ready for this work, or this work is not the right modality for them. You don't need to "save" everyone. There is some point at which you do need to a) trust in their knowing for themselves vs. encouraging them to not hold back at an edge which will not serve them. It is also important to take a stand for the greatness (rather than the limitations) of your group participants - to not collude with them when they try to hide, or resist you or make it difficult.
- When working with complexity, it is really important to know your ground, your launching space and be aware that you must ask more questions because you can't possibly know what is going on for other participants.
- A group is not there to do everything for everyone. It is a tool best used in conjunction with individual therapy - the combination of the two of these amplifies both experiences and allows group participants to ground their work both individually and within a group field. Some group members will need more individual work than others ... particularly those who either dominate or don't take enough space in the group.

- While we don't want to get stuck in the "story", allowing group members the opportunity to tell and be received in the larger arc of their life story is both tremendously healing and can also create a state of connectivity and trust in the beginning of the group and allows for much deeper processing subsequently.
- **Expectation setting** - how to set expectations clearly but in a way that doesn't judge, diminish, separate or exclude anyone; use as guidelines rather than rules, encourage people to understand why they are being given and encourage communication about them.

Final Outcomes

- 75 people signed up on Radical Aliveness Meetup group in less than 3 months
- 100+ person email list
- 15 participants completed 6 week women's process group (18 hours)
- 10+ hours of individual one on one process work with women from the group
- 1 community evening (2.5 hours)
- 18 hours per month peer group process (150+ hours of facilitation and process work)
- Subsequently started two paid process groups - a Women's Group & a Mixed Gender Group (18 additional hours of group process work so far)

Benefits Received

Benefits I received: The visioning/story telling workshop completely turned my world upside down and simplified how I think about creating change in the world and how to have large scale impact. The convergence of the completion of 20 years of my work in the Great Bear Rainforest with this project was a transformational crucible of sorts. In both cases, I had to surrender to let myself be visible, claim my gifts and limitations, tell my story, be vulnerable, make mistakes, take myself seriously and claim my ability to have impact. I claimed my values, my principles and my history; and in making space for myself to "have" this experience fully, I was able to make space for and be much more generous about appreciating others. In particular, the process has opened me to so much more love and appreciation for my parents and siblings.

I have become much more aware of how much I want my life to be of service, to inspire others, to create change by example - I want to be humble and accessible and human, to live the message that this is possible for everyone; to embrace the mythic quality of this gift of a human life that we are all given. To live my life as if it is sacred and VERY human all at the same time.

I also gained the confidence to run large group process which I am now continuing to do subsequent to my project. I define myself as a Radical Aliveness process facilitator and I see myself as part of a larger movement dedicated to helping people feel and remember their integral connection to this beautiful blue planet and the denizens who call it home.

Benefits the participants received: The participants reported dramatic shifts in how they were claiming their voices and willing to challenge the status quo at work, in their personal relationships and when they witnessed wrongs being perpetrated. They also felt more embodied, aware of when they contracted out of pleasure and able to consciously choose to relax into pleasure - one participant coined the term “feeling RAW!” (radically alive woman) to describe this. Most importantly, the participants felt a deep sense of belonging in the group, were willing to take big risks and were committed to supporting each other’s growth. For a detailed summary of the benefits the participants received in their own words, see *Appendix 3*.

STAGE 3 - SYSTEMATIZING MY EXPERIENCE - CREATING A WORKSHOP/ PROCESS GROUP “HOW TO” BINDER

After undertaking this project, I systematized my learnings and collected all the information I had gathered about the process and associated techniques and skills. This was synthesized into a separate document entitled “*The Workshop How To Binder*” which is available upon request (*see separate attachment*). It is intended to simplify the process of creating a workshop and to free more of the facilitator’s energy to learn the seriously fun work of facilitation. It is also provided as a way to create a “low threshold for entry” to support Radical Aliveness Institute students and new Radical Aliveness practitioners to create more Radical Aliveness communities around the world.

APPENDIX 1: Sample Agendas for Women's Process Groups

Session 1 - Agenda

7PM Welcome participants (as they enter, encourage to put their belongings to the side and

then to start moving around the room)

- a. In silence, notice what they are aware of as they interact with the space and other women in the space
- b. Stop in front of someone and introduce yourself like you are at cocktail party, then move onto the next person and so on.
- c. "something you don't know about me is"
- d. "what I hold back is my ..."

7:20PM Large group sharing

7:30PM Icebreakers/Openings

(Objective: bridging and making connections in the group body; establishing safety)

- a. I once ... (say something unusual that you have done - "dated a vegetarian", "bungie jumped" "lived in the Antarctica" and then anyone else who has had this experience comes and physically stands beside you
- b. **Spectrums** - age (oldest vs. youngest), where you were born from east to west using London England as ground zero, number of countries you have lived in, number of languages that you speak, how many children you have, intellectual vs creative, introvert vs. extrovert,

7: 45PM Large group circle (Setting the Tone)

- a. **Logistics** - bathroom, lights etc. - anyone who hasn't handed in their Intake form, please bring it to me before end of workshop.
- b. **Sharing around the group** - Name, what my gift is, what I am willing to risk is
- c. **Goals/My intention for this group** (and for the way I will facilitate it - encourage shared leadership; empower the group body to allow larger energy to run through us; kindness and to keep our goodness first and foremost; to encourage us all to take risks; to enable your leadership as a group, to enable our greatness and to invite in the sacred feminine to have her way with us here. Dedicate this work to my daughter who is 10.
- d. **Ground Rules** - confidentiality, respecting differences in opinion

8:00PM A short primer on Radical Aliveness

- a. principles of Radical Aliveness

- b. how to engage
- c. 3 rules

- d. Short snack/bio break

8:10PM Break

8:15PM Potential Exercises

- a. Physical movement to break down taboos - exercises
- b. Story-telling and Resonance - in groups of 3, have the women tell their stories to each other and then reflect back what was resonant.
- c. What makes me feel safe? (do in 3 or 4s) - take 2 minutes each, collect and we'll report back to the group
- d. What messages did I receive as a woman (write up on big sheets)
- e. Diads - "what I long for in my life is" (partners, debrief in small group, debrief in big group)
- f. "I need" - partners pulling the towel with each other ... or just saying the words at the same time and seeing what comes up

9:45PM Closing

- a. Share one thing that you learned or are taking away
- b. What you loved/what you would change
- c. Something you are committed to risking doing for the next session

10:00PM End

Session #2 - Agenda

7 - 7:30PM - Dance and Movement - (20 - 30 minutes)

Alors on Danse - Stromae (crazy percussion beat) 6:31

Straight to Memphis - Club des Belugas - blues beat, great dance music 3:49

Limbo (Spanglish version) - Daddy Yankee 3:45

"Stress" exercises - Use golf balls and work on grounding a bit more (or roll on roller or, roll on tennis balls along your back on the floor)

Large Group - Physical Exercises -- Stand in a circle and (5 minutes)

- a. stamp your feet and say "No!"
- b. move your pelvis around and say "Fuck you!"
- c. push your shoulders and elbow back and say "get off my back!"

- d. turn your butt towards others and wiggle it and say “shit on you!”
- e. imagine something precious in the centre of the room, reach towards it and say “its mine!”

7:30 - 8PM Large Circle up (put altar in the centre of the room)

Logistics etc.

- My goals and intentions for the group
- Introduction of 2 new people
- doing feedback and success forms after sessions
- quick reminders:
 - Ground Rules - confidentiality, respecting differences in opinion, 3 rules
 - Basic principles of Radical Aliveness, how to engage

Large group check in - anything percolating?

8:10 PM Candles and Set Intention for the session

8:15 PM Exercises

- 1) What makes me feel safe? (20 min)
 - a. groups of 3 or 4 - take 2 minutes each, collect (10 min)
 - b. large group report back (10 minutes)

8:30PM - BREAK (check if anyone needs bathroom and short food break)

- 1) **Poll for relevance** of stuff we want to work with - What kind of things are you really interested in exploring? - what kind of issues are up for you in your lives right now
 - a. Choose top 3 most excited by (happy faces)
 - b. Choose two that you are actively not excited by (may even dread them) crosses

8:45PM: Either use one of these Exercises or large group Process

- 2) **Longing Exercise:**
Choose a partner - stand together and say “what I long for in my life is ...” (each share for 5 minutes) = 10 minutes; debrief in the smaller group - another 5 min; debrief in larger group 10 minutes (25 min)
- 3) “I need” (pulling with the towel with each other or ... just saying the words at the same time and noticing what comes up) - really get into it, allow yourself to feel your need, use your whole body, your expressions
- 4) What messages did I receive as a woman (write up on big sheets)
 - a. The “ideal woman” image

5) Triads - RA/CE Mask - Idealized Feminine & the mask we have put on to project this

OR,

Large Group Process

9:45 Closing

- 1) reminder about filling out the forms - simple version about what worked for them and what they are looking to risk in the next session
- 2) Is there any voice that wasn't heard? Anything that wasn't already said?
- 3) What were you surprised by? What did you learn? Where might you like to risk more the next session?

Sessions 3 & 4 - Agenda(s)

[Note: this agenda did not end up getting used in Session 3 and so only slightly revised (see anything in square brackets) for Session 4]

7 PM Movement and grounding (15 minutes)

Dark Moon, High Tide
Straight to Memphis Radio Edit
Limbo - Spanglish version

Grounding with golf balls and/or lying down using tennis balls.

7:15PM or less Logistics & Brief Checkin - stand in a circle holding hands - 30 seconds

- Bathroom
- Taking photos?
- Circulate email list?
- Individual Process Session options
- Confidentiality reminder
- Comings and goings (Kila, Sita, [Anna]) acknowledge people may have feelings about this, bring this into process with you.
- Sita intro
- Reflection on process so far and last week's process in particular.
- Purpose of group process and expectations of "equal play" time.
- Reminder about individual process sessions available between sessions

7:25PM Intention setting - light candles

7:30PM Feminine Mask Exercise

- a. Theory - Core Energetics model [need to have drawn on a flip chart] (5 minutes)
- b. Feminine Mask Exercise [have instructions up on flip chart, have written exercise instructions] - see if you can specifically focus on messages that you

were given about the fact that you were a girl (good girl, mumma's little helper, daddy's princess etc.)

- i. Demonstrate with someone first (10 minutes)
- ii. Get them to go away and do it together in groups of 3 (45 minutes) - if necessary, get the gear and let the person start processing their feelings
- iii. Large group feedback and questions (10 Minutes)

8:35PM **Break**

8:45PM **Large Group Process:**

What is in the room? Does anyone have something specific that they would like to work with?

What do you need to do here? What are you holding back? What do you need to move to release it?

- What kind of messages have you received as a woman, because you were a woman?
- How might I go deeper here? How might I take a risk? What would I like to say yes to here?
- What are we avoiding here?
- What are we resisting here?
- Don't stop yourself from feeling, but breathe and see what is going in with me first.

9:45PM **Final Circle**

Song: Brave or **Beneath your Beautiful**

"What I feel in my heart is ..."

Session 5 - Agenda

6:55 **Music**

7:00PM "I need" exercise with towels

7:10PM Large group circle - 2 words (what bringing, what want to receive)

7:20PM Light candles, set intentions

7:30 PM **TRE**

1) Background theory

2) Demo and have them do it (40 minutes)

8:15 PM break

8:20PM How was that for you?

8:40PM What is in the room?
Open to large group or several smaller group processes

- Bring you leadership
- Make mistakes
- Get messy
- Take risks

9:40PM Large Group - debrief

- Intentions for the next week
- What do you want to risk for the final session

9:55PM Group Photo

10:11PM End

Session 6 - Agenda

Objectives:

- [To process any “unheard” or “silent” voices] - not likely to have time to do this, may need to speak to this at the very beginning; **how deal with Rhea/Sita; Sylvia/Jane issue up front?**
- Work on trust and surrender
- To know our goodness, our pleasure, to be accurately mirrored
- To integrate the gifts of the last 6 weeks
- Name the higher self gifts of each of the women that we have been with over the last 6 weeks (sit on the cube while others name our gifts - or be in the centre of the circle dancing/standing)

6:55 - Music: Burning Up

7:00PM - Trust/Movement Exercises

[Choose music]; energetic: Habibi Ya Ini **3:55**; Calcutta Kiss **3:10**; Sing **2:57**;

Slower, softer: Aloha Ke Akua **5:57**; Shine **3:33**; Who I am **4:38**; Kothbiro **5:35**

Partner A - lead; Partner B - blindfolded. choose a partner, put a blindfold on them, you are going to dance them to the music. Partner A - Start slow, build trust, goal is to be able to dance freely through the room and keep your partner safe while having connection, communication, pleasure. Partner B - what will it take for you to surrender and loosen your body and allow Partner A to move you freely through the room.

7:10PM - switch

OR ... do a dance with our eyes closed, exquisitely attuned to our bodies, slowed down, noticing when we touch another, allowing ourselves to melt into other bodies, to feel the pleasure of touch without our eyes open

7:20PM Large Circle up and set intentions

speak to the importance of endings and being willing to stay in relationship where we are uncomfortable and don't want to feel the unfeeling feelings. Commend courage of the group who is here to be able to do that

Not coming: Liza, Punam (will be late); Ashlen

If I didn't hold back my goodness I would ...

What I don't allow others to see in me is. Where I am holding back. What I intend to risk changing tonight is

7:30 PM Reflection of our Goodness/Wanting

- 1) Inner Goodness exercise; or
- 2) 'the Jason Schulman exercise; or
- 3) "What I really want is" (to say to a partner in response to repeated questioning, standing or lying down); or
- 4) What I really love about myself is ... (or a 3rd person story about yourself - introduce yourself and what is great about you)
- 5) If there is someone who you feel incomplete with or still feel triggered by, you may want to go and stand with them.

8:15 PM water, food, large group check in about how that was for you

8:35PM

- 1) **What my gifts are** - do in dyads and then have the other partner introduce you to the group and tell you about what is amazing about them; OR
- 2) **Whole group reflection on a cube** - Each individual stands up in front of the group and gets reflection for 5 minutes per person (1 hr and 20 minutes);OR
- 3) **Feedback lines** -number of people minus 1 = number of combinations - stand in front of the other person and do a feedback line (14* 4 minutes = 1 hour plus changeover time)

9:35PM Closing Circle

what I have learned is, what I am taking away is; my biggest aha is; what I am excited about it; what I am committed to changing is (not about can I do enough, where can I do more?)

- Importance of goodbyes done consciously
- \$\$ reminder
- My reflection on what accomplished over 6 weeks - only scratching the surface; how much changes for people who really go for it; what this work can accomplish ongoing over time
- operculum gift
- paid group starting up ongoing
- Private sessions are available ongoing
- Ann B doing a session at Essalin and at HH this summer.

Ending Song: Brave, Home, One Voice, Love you More

APPENDIX 2: My Reflections for Year 3 students about your RACE project

Stage 1: Commitment - Starting out on your project journey

- 1) **Your body is an instrument to diagnose what is happening in the group field** - The minute you commit to doing your project, you will connect and enter the field of your project. Make no mistake, you may feel like you got hit by a truck and some BIG stuff may want to come through you as you start feeling your participants, the work that wants to be done by and through them and the edges that you will be called to work on. See if you can open to this experience (“yes! tell me more”), rather than contract against it. Try not to personalize it too much. Use yourself and what you are experiencing as the instrument to diagnose the group field, what the workshop is calling for and your own growth edges.
- 2) **Feed your deepest desire for your project and learn to tolerate the discomfort you feel there** Don’t be afraid to ask for what you want. How many people do you want to have in your workshop? Where do you want to do your workshop? What are your goals for yourself and your workshop participants? Commit wholeheartedly to your dream. Ask for it. Work the space in you that doesn’t believe that you will get what you want. Keep returning to your deepest desire for yourself and your expression in the world and feed it, stoke the flames and tolerate the discomfort you feel there.

Stage 2: Diving In and facilitating RACE process

- 3) **Your agenda is a runway to freedom - you just need to know how to take off and land your group** - Go in prepared, but don’t feel the need to stick rigidly to your agenda. An agenda is only a guide and a structure to help you out before the energy starts to flow. And ... it is good to have a basic idea about how you are going to take off and land your group 😊 .
- 4) **Less is more - just tolerate your fears of “not enoughness” on that edge**
- 5) **Slow down** - When you get scared don’t be afraid to slow things down a little. In fact, even if you aren’t scared, don’t be afraid to slow things down a little. Less is often more, especially if you are willing to tolerate your fears of “not enoughness” on that edge.
- 6) **Hara is your friend** - You can never go wrong with this: The Hara, the hara, the hara ... baby. Find your ground. Breathe.
- 7) **Embodiment prime directive** - The more you can feel your body the more information about the group field you will have access to and be curious about. If you find yourself in your head, ask yourself (and the room) what you aren’t willing to feel in that moment.
- 8) **Know that you don’t know.** Wonder aloud what other people are aware of and feeling.

- 9) **Paradox: It's not about you. And ... it's all about you.** - Your group will look to you, transfer and project onto you and take their lead from what you do more than from what you say. The more fun you are willing to have, the more permission you give to your group to have fun and pleasure. Dance like there is no tomorrow - it gives people permission to experience what it is to dance like there is no tomorrow.
- 10) **There are no mistakes, only a failure to observe and learn** - Commit to publicly making mistakes as a group leader. Let yourself off the hook. You don't need to get it perfect, you just need to be good enough to get people started and the field of Radical Aliveness will take care of the rest. When you make mistakes and can model a willingness to acknowledge them with a non-shaming heart, you set a template for the group that creates a kind of safety and acceptance that is often enough by itself to get things started.
- 11) **Treat your project like learning a new language.** Commit to practicing new techniques until they get familiar. Here are a few great "Annisms" to have in your back pocket until you get really fluent and able to go with the flow in every moment:
- If those tears could speak, what would they say?
 - If you weren't feeling confused, what would you be feeling?
 - Would you be willing to take a risk here? (often said while standing next to a participant, holding their hand and smiling encouragingly)
 - Welcome your judgment and your shame ... that's how we know we are close! The gold is right underneath it.
 - "Tell me more!"
- 12) **Welcome your group as your teacher, get really curious about what today's lesson is.** - Your group is here to teach you. Honour and respect them as your teacher. Stay humble and let yourself receive all the lessons that they are here to teach. For each session, get really curious about what they are here to teach you this time.

Stage 3: The Aftermath - when your group/project is finished

- 13) **The after-effects of facilitating an amazing process can be surprisingly dark** - When you bring big energy through in a group, know that unless you have a way to connect that and ground it and be in relationship with other practitioners who get what you've just done, it can come back inside and implode and things can get really DARK. After each session and after your project ends, make sure you get lots of support, connect with your fellow classmates and tell your story so that you can keep all that higher-self energy moving forwards into even larger expression in the world.

APPENDIX 3: A Summary of Key Participant Feedback

Below is a sampling of participant feedback taken from participant's written "Feedback and Progress" forms and individual phone "exit interviews":

"There is so much power in our bodies that we don't even know about. There is so much to release in our bodies that we aren't even aware of. There is so much our bodies can remind us of."

"I was wary of committing to Radical Aliveness at first, but I'm so grateful that I was a part of Jody's group. It's a powerful experience that got me thinking about who I am today and how that has been shaped by what I experienced in the past. I was encouraged to take risks, to dig deep and find my compassion, to get to know my own strength and power, and to see each person and moment as a teacher. I felt loved and deeply touched at times during the process, and was honoured to hold space for others as they worked through deep dark demons to get to that place of self-knowledge. Jody is a passionate and gifted facilitator, and brings such authenticity and openness that I couldn't help but surrender into the space she creates. I encourage you to consider Radical Aliveness and explore it if it's calling you -- I'm so lucky that I did."

"It's really intense and an exhilarating experience to release all these emotions in safe, guided way."

"So far I feel more clear and light, like I took a giant energetic poop :) also more engaged with my healing process, feel more excited and energized by it than daunted and afraid. It's no longer Pandora's Box; it's more like a revolving door."

"Jody, I like the way you listen and talk. I wish to learn more from you as you display a lot of wisdom during the sessions. Please keep up the work you are doing."

"Definitely yes, I would like to continue doing this process work, and I would pay for this service as well. What I appreciated most was the ability/expertise of the facilitator to create such a safe container in so short a time. Why: Learn to share and own your story. And in the process support others to own their own stories. I was surprised whose sharing healed me. That is when I realized I was subtly and unconsciously judging what and who could heal me. I am still processing the after effects of the group therapy. I am having dreams of my past experiences. I am becoming aware of some deep seated issues and learning to hold them and love myself for the journey taken so far."

"I have looked on with awe and admiration at your ability to stay with the storms as they raged, of being creative and steadfast, yet gentle and playful. You have been so responsive and attuned reminding me of a murmuring of starlings who in an instant change direction in response to the group signal in a dazzling communication of flow and grace. It was wonderful to watch you dance with joy, encouraging the group to learn how to find their way to dance for themselves - to take risks and to push ourselves just a little more than was comfortable - to find our edges."

What have you noticed in your life this week?: “Definitely taking risks in speaking up when I might have backed down if things got difficult. However, I felt I alienated myself on one occasion. But, then received positive feedback on another occasion for making a discussion lively! In fact, I feel I am getting fed up of people not saying what they really feel. I’m noticing and becoming impatient with imbalances in power, especially from men towards women. I feel fed up of playing games and want to challenge the hidden agenda that says, “Let’s all agree that these things are not really taking place, keep the status quo in place and play nicely.” I want it to be real and honest”

“Loved how raw and intense it got, with the hitting and emotions. An excellent experimental and safe place to try new things.”

“I am not sure I had any expectations to start with other than to explore what this was about. and most certainly it was more than I could have imagined and expanded both my ideas of what this kind of work might encompass as well as open the doors for a new perspective on group and perspective itself. The work is remarkable, likely a lot in part due to the facilitator :) and remarkable in participants too.”

“I was curious on how the process worked and was slightly skeptical. The 6 week process group more than met my expectations. I was surprised at the ease with which everyone opened up and was ready to let go and share their deep vulnerabilities with the group. I was left feeling humbled and grateful.”

“Thank you so much Jody for your care and attention. This was very eye-opening to me, to see and experience such a physical manifestation of emotional release. Beautiful job. I’m very grateful for you and this experience.”

“I appreciated the fluidity of the evenings and letting them be organic. I appreciated the creation of a safe space for women to dive deep into their personal process. I didn’t have any expectations about the process and it knocked my socks off”

“Thank you for holding us and reminding us of our strength. I am very proud of myself that I did this and feel like finishing it deserves a giant gold star, I’ll settle for this feeling though ;) it’s like I’ve got a gold star in my heart”

“On one occasion, when I went to the cube, and as I was expressing some angry thoughts and feelings, my body was completely vibrating, heart racing, feeling completely ungrounded, like when I was a child, and you came over and asked if you could put your hands on my feet. First, it was surprising and powerful to experience how quickly that grounded my whole being, and second, on so many levels, what it meant for finally, someone to see the ungrounded, vibrating little girl, someone to see her, see what she might need, and to be there with her. And how memorable having a sensory experience, like your hands on my feet, helping me ground, is. It was just very different, and it felt like my little girl finally got some of the help she never had, and that something about the sensory part, made it very real and easy to feel and recall over time.”

“Noticing - and this is so exciting for me! - that instead of loud voices, intense movements and hitting, being associated with angry men, and everything I want to avoid, those things are now beautifully associated with strong women, courageous women, strong voices, voices/energy that want to be borne into this world. My body mostly no longer responds with fear at intensity, yelling or anger. - I'm so, so grateful.”

“I wanted to feel some movement in my process, or insight. Also, to feel part of the group. That happened, seemingly all in the last session (although I guess the previous sessions set the stage for it). It was interesting to see how different my experience of myself and the group was when I let myself say what I wanted, allowed myself to be seen in that way. And also interesting to see I didn't need as much as I'd imagined. It was a profound experience of it being okay to let others see what I experience as my hate and selfishness, without being judged. What came out of that was a sense that there's a lot more to me than I think. As a result of being seen and accepted, my sense of self became solid and real, growing out of that sense of relationship.”

“I keep reminding myself to come to the table with a non-shaming or blaming heart - we carry too much as it is.”

“Watching projections happening for people, and then seeing the awareness surfacing around them, and then drawing those people back to the core issues of what's going on for them in those moments/reactions is such a cool process - it's really brought me to start linking things back when something comes up for me in my interactions with others.”

“I think you're pretty awesome - thanks for bringing your authentic, perfectly imperfect self to the group!”

“You are holding a remarkable space with an extraordinary process. Thank you!”

“Amazing experience. Beautiful facilitation. I am grateful to have had this opportunity with you. I only wish we have a couple more sessions or direction on how to work with the new space created in our bodies and lives.”

“This is a not-to-be-missed opportunity to work with a truly inspired and perceptive facilitator. Jody does her magic and doesn't pull any punches! Be prepared to change in ways you didn't think possible - and didn't know you needed to. Meet yourself and others at The Edge!”