BREATH AWAKENS · A FREE SELF-GUIDED WORKSHOP

Eight Talks, One Breath

A self-paced workshop for finding your why, landing the work, and thriving in it

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Eight of the finest short talks ever given, walked through one at a time, breathed rather than merely watched, and turned into real practice you build with your own hands. It is made for the young person starting out, for anyone whose work is being reshaped by AI, and for everyone looking for their why and for the proven human skills that land the interview, win the job, and let you thrive once you are in it. It is free, it is yours, and it is the open-door companion to Finding Your Empty Center and the course From Thought to Form, distilled from thirty years in the working world.

Keith Shirley · Breath Awakens · breathawakens.com

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

What This Is, and Who It Is For

This is a free workshop, and it asks nothing of you but honesty, a little time, and the willingness to actually do the exercises rather than only read them. There is no cost and nothing to buy. If the course From Thought to Form is out of reach right now, this is the open door beside it.

It is built for three people especially, and you may be all three at once. The young person at the start, with more capacity than resume. The worker whose field is being reshaped by artificial intelligence, who needs to find where the durable, human work still lives. And anyone trying to find their why and to build the proven skills that get them the interview, land the job, and let them thrive in it. Everything here is drawn from two sources: eight remarkable talks, and thirty years of one working life, on both sides of the interview table.

UNDERSTANDING IS NOT ENOUGH, SO WE BUILD

It is easy to watch a great talk, feel inspired, and change nothing. This workshop is designed to prevent that. Every session ends in a real exercise you actually do, in the real world, and each exercise builds on the one before it, so that by the end you are not holding eight ideas, you are holding one built toolkit: a growth log, a spoken why, a map of your circles, your interview questions, a live listening skill, a sustainable search rhythm, a settling ritual, and a negotiation you can run. Understanding is the seed. The practice is the plant.

HELD WITH BOTH HANDS

This workshop tells the truth about its own material. Some of these talks rest on solid, repeated science; some contain a famous claim that later research questioned. Where that is so, it is said plainly, because a skill you can actually trust is worth more than a story that only inspires. The durable, useful heart of each talk is always named clearly. Take that, and hold the rest lightly.

THE BREATH CYCLE

One Full Breath, Passed Four Times

Every session opens and closes with the same simple breath, because a settled body learns and builds what a racing one cannot. You need nothing but a quiet minute:

THE GROUNDING BREATH · FOUR BY FOUR

Breathe in through the nose for a count of four. Hold, gently, for four. Release through the mouth for four. Rest, empty, for four. That is one round. Do four rounds, about a minute, to arrive before

> *a session and before you build, and one round to close. Before anything that matters, an application, an interview, a hard conversation, do the same. It is called the anchor because it holds you still enough to be yourself.*

And the whole workshop is shaped like that one breath, passed four times. Its four movements are the four phases of a single breath, and you will move through the entire cycle four times as you climb the eight sessions:

- **The Inhale.** Find Your Why (Dweck, Sinek). You draw the work in. Belief, and the reason underneath.
- **The Hold.** Know Your Ground (Dunbar, Waldinger). You hold steady, and see what actually carries a life: real relationships.
- **The Exhale.** Serve and Persevere (Sirolli, Duckworth). You turn outward, listen, and keep showing up.
- **The Rest.** Land and Thrive (Cuddy, Voss). You rest into presence, and claim your worth, then begin again.

And then one breath more, the ninth, the turn outward: you give what you have built back to someone who needs a hand up. That exhale completes the cycle, and it is where the deepest learning of all is waiting.

Breathe the four by four to begin each session. Breathe the four movements to climb the whole workshop. Same shape, one small, one large. That is the one practice underneath everything here.

THE SPINE

The Eight Talks, at a Glance

Here is the whole spine, with a live link to each talk. Six are on TED.com and two are TEDx talks. Watch each one as you reach its session.

1. **Carol Dweck,** *The Power of Believing That You Can Improve* watch
2. **Simon Sinek,** *How Great Leaders Inspire Action (Start With Why)* watch
3. **Robin Dunbar,** *Can the Internet Buy You More Friends? (TEDxObserver)* watch
4. **Robert Waldinger,** *What Makes a Good Life?* watch
5. **Ernesto Sirolli,** *Want to Help Someone? Shut Up and Listen!* watch
6. **Angela Lee Duckworth,** *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance* watch
7. **Amy Cuddy,** *Your Body Language May Shape Who You Are* watch
8. **Chris Voss,** *Never Split the Difference (TEDxUniversityofNevada)* watch

And the ninth breath, the turn outward, three voices on giving, held as a breath and not an edict:

Elizabeth Dunn, *Helping Others Makes Us Happier, But It Matters How* watch

Adam Grant, *Are You a Giver or a Taker?* watch

Matthieu Ricard, *How to Let Altruism Be Your Guide* watch

MOVEMENT ONE · THE INHALE · FIND YOUR WHY

Session 1 · Carol Dweck

The Power of Believing That You Can Improve

Watch: Carol Dweck, The Power of Believing That You Can Improve (TED, about 10 minutes)

https://www.ted.com/talks/carol_dweck_the_power_of_believing_that_you_can_improve

Breathe. Four rounds of the Grounding Breath. Then watch the talk once, without taking notes. Just listen.

The walk-through

Dweck begins with a single word. A high school in Chicago, instead of failing students who had not yet passed a course, gave them the grade Not Yet. Sit with how different that is from a failing mark. Not Yet says you are on a learning curve, moving forward, not standing at a dead end. A failing grade says you are nothing, right now, and perhaps forever. One word turns a closed door into a hallway.

From there she draws the central distinction of her life's work: two mindsets. The fixed mindset believes your ability is a fixed amount you were handed at birth, so every hard problem is a threat, a test of whether you are smart enough. The growth mindset believes ability grows with effort, good strategy, and help, so a hard problem is not a threat but the very thing that grows you. She shows children meeting a puzzle too hard for them: some feel crushed, and some light up and say they love a challenge. Same puzzle, opposite response, because of what they believe about themselves.

Then she goes to the brain. When students who hold a growth mindset make a mistake, their brains light up: they engage the error, process it, correct it. Fixed-mindset brains go quiet at the error and turn away. Her practical lesson: praise the process, the effort and strategy and persistence, not the innate talent, and teach the word yet, and achievement rises, most of all for the children who had been counted out.

A NOTE, HELD WITH BOTH HANDS

Dweck's growth mindset is one of the most influential ideas in modern psychology, and also one that later researchers have debated: some large studies find the effect on achievement real but modest, and it works best as a genuine stance, not a slogan taped to a wall. Take the durable heart of it, that treating ability as improvable helps you engage effort and persist, and do not oversell it to yourself as magic. The word yet is a real tool, not a spell.

What it really does

It replaces a verdict with a process. The whole talk is one move, repeated: it takes the sentence I cannot do this and adds a single word, I cannot do this yet, and in doing so it turns a wall into a road. It is the ground every other talk here stands on, because none of the rest matters if you secretly believe you cannot grow.

From thirty years, for your work

Every real job I ever grew into, I was unqualified for on the first morning, and so was almost everyone I watched rise. The ones who thrived treated every gap in their skills as a not yet rather than a no. Hear this plainly about the age you are entering: when AI reshapes your field, your safety is not the skill you have today, which may not last. It is your proven capacity to keep learning. That is the one asset no machine and no downturn can take.

Practice: build it in the real world

You are going to start the one thing this whole workshop rests on: a Growth Log, and your first not-yet skill. This log is where every later exercise will live.

Breathe. Four rounds of the Grounding Breath first. Then build, do not just read.

1. Open a note on your phone or a fresh page and title it My Growth Log. Write today's date at the top.
2. Write three things you have told yourself you cannot do for work. Rewrite each one with the word yet added at the end.
3. Pick one small, real skill that matters to the work you want (a tool, a piece of software, a certificate, a habit). Name it in the log.
4. Do twenty minutes of that skill this week, badly, and write one line in the log about what you did. That line is the first brick.

Carry it forward. *You now have a Growth Log. Every exercise from here forward gets written in it. This is the spine of your toolkit.*

Reflect

Where in your working life are you treating a not yet as a no?

Name one skill you could begin, badly, this week, if being bad at it were allowed.

What would change in how you act if you fully believed your ability could grow?

One small action, today. *Do your first twenty minutes of the new skill today, and log it. Being bad at it is the start of being good at it.*

Breathe. One round of the Grounding Breath to close. Let what you built settle before you move on.

MOVEMENT ONE · THE INHALE · FIND YOUR WHY

Session 2 · Simon Sinek

How Great Leaders Inspire Action (Start With Why)

Watch: Simon Sinek, How Great Leaders Inspire Action (TEDxPugetSound, 18 minutes)

https://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action

Breathe. Four rounds of the Grounding Breath. Watch the whole talk. Notice when it stops being about business and starts being about you.

The walk-through

Sinek draws a simple picture he calls the golden circle: three rings, why in the center, then how, then what. Most people and companies communicate from the outside in: they tell you what they do, and how, and rarely why. The rare few who inspire do the reverse. They start from the center, from why, from what they believe, and let the how and the what follow. His single sentence, the one the whole talk turns on: people don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it.

He proves it with stories. Apple does not lead with we make good computers; it leads with a belief, that the status quo should be challenged, so people buy anything from them. The Wright brothers beat better funded, better connected rivals to flight because they were driven by a cause, not a payday. And Martin Luther King moved a nation with a speech called I Have a Dream, not I Have a Plan; a quarter of a million people came, uninvited, because they believed what he believed.

Underneath, he reaches for the brain: the newest part handles language and analysis, the what; the older, inner part handles feeling, trust, and decision, and it has no words. That, he says, is why a why you cannot quite put into words can still move people, and why a list of features leaves them cold.

A NOTE, HELD WITH BOTH HANDS

The insight, lead with why, is sound and endlessly useful. The neat brain story, the golden circle mapped onto brain regions, is a loose metaphor rather than rigorous neuroscience, so hold that part lightly. You do not need the biology for the practice to work: leading with why simply lands, and you can test it yourself.

What it really does

It moves you from listing your credentials to transmitting your conviction. Everyone in the interview can recite what they have done; almost no one says why they care. This is the bridge from the resume to the reason, and the reason is what a person remembers. It is the same question the Invitation asked: your why is not a job title, it is the thing underneath it.

From thirty years, for your work

In thirty years I sat on the hiring side of the table more times than I can count. I forgot most of what candidates listed. I never forgot the ones who could tell me why they cared, because a why is felt, not parsed, and it is rare enough to shine. The same is true of customers and teammates. Learn to say your why first, and you are already ahead of nearly everyone else in the room.

Practice: build it in the real world

You will build the single most useful sentence in your whole search, and a short spoken introduction that leads with it. This goes at the top of your Growth Log and into every message you send.

Breathe. Four rounds of the Grounding Breath first. Then build, do not just read.

1. In your Growth Log, finish this sentence honestly: I do this work because I believe …
2. Write a thirty-second spoken introduction that goes in golden-circle order: your why first, then how you work, then what you do.
3. Say it out loud five times. Record yourself once on your phone and listen back. Fix the one word that feels false.
4. Paste the final why sentence at the very top of your Growth Log, where you will see it every time.

Carry it forward. *Your toolkit now holds a written Why sentence and a spoken intro. Use them to open every application, message, and interview from here on.*

Reflect

Underneath the paycheck, why are you drawn to the work you want?

What did you care about, and do freely, before anyone ever paid you for it?

If you opened your next interview by saying your why in one sentence, what would it be?

One small action, today. *Say your thirty-second why introduction out loud to one real person today, and watch their face.*

Breathe. One round of the Grounding Breath to close. Let what you built settle before you move on.

MOVEMENT TWO · THE HOLD · KNOW YOUR GROUND

Session 3 · Robin Dunbar

Can the Internet Buy You More Friends?

Watch: Robin Dunbar, Can the Internet Buy You More Friends? (TEDxObserver)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=07IpED729k8

Breathe. Four rounds of the Grounding Breath. As you watch, think of your own circles, not in theory, but the actual names.

The walk-through

Dunbar is the scientist behind a famous figure: about 150, the rough number of stable, meaningful relationships a human can hold at once. He found it by a striking route: across primates, the size of the social group a species manages tracks the size of its neocortex, the thinking brain. Run the human brain through that and you land near 150, and the number keeps reappearing: in hunter-gatherer clans, old village sizes, effective army units, and the length of people's holiday-card lists.

But the deeper insight is the structure inside the number. Your relationships are nested circles, not a flat crowd. An innermost few, around five, are your closest support, the people you would call in a crisis. Around fifteen are a close sympathy group, around fifty are good friends, and out near a hundred and fifty are the people genuinely meaningful to you. Each inner circle costs more time and contact to hold than the one outside it.

And here is his answer to the title. The internet is wonderful at one thing: it slows the natural decay of a friendship across distance. What it cannot do is manufacture the inner circles, which are built by real presence, by time and shared laughter and meals. A thousand online followers do not add one person to your inner five.

A NOTE, HELD WITH BOTH HANDS

The exact figure 150 is an average with a real range, roughly 100 to 250, and scholars still debate how hard a limit it is. Hold the precise number lightly. What is robust and useful is the shape: connection is layered, the inner layers are small and precious, and real relationship is built by real contact, not accumulation.

What it really does

It right-sizes your sense of what a network is. In a world that says collect thousands of contacts, Dunbar tells you the truth: you need to tend the few dozen who actually know you. That is a relief,

and a map, because your next job almost certainly lives inside those circles, not out in the anonymous crowd.

From thirty years, for your work

In three decades, nearly every good opportunity I received came through a person, not a posting. A warm word from someone who knew my work opened doors a perfect application never could. So tend your circle before you need it. Reconnect with the people who wish you well. Give, do not only ask, and when you look for work you will be reaching into a warm network instead of shouting into a cold void.

Practice: build it in the real world

You will draw your actual circles and put two of them back in motion this week. This becomes the Circle page of your toolkit.

Breathe. Four rounds of the Grounding Breath first. Then build, do not just read.

1. In your Growth Log, start a page titled My Circles. Draw three rings and write real names: your inner five, your fifteen, your fifty, as many as come.
2. Mark with a star everyone who has seen your work or could speak to it.
3. Choose two people to reach out to this week with genuine, no-ask contact. Use your why sentence to tell them, simply, what you are up to.
4. Send both messages, and note the date beside each name.

Carry it forward. *Your toolkit now holds a living map of your circles and two live conversations. Keep adding names as you meet them.*

Reflect

Who are the five or so people who truly know your work and wish you well?

Who have you lost touch with that you could warmly reconnect with this week, with no agenda?

What could you give to your circle, an introduction, a thank-you, a hand, rather than only ask of it?

One small action, today. *Send one of the two no-ask messages today. Just genuine contact. That is how a network stays alive.*

Breathe. One round of the Grounding Breath to close. Let what you built settle before you move on.

Session 4 · Robert Waldinger

What Makes a Good Life? Lessons from the Longest Study on Happiness

Watch: Robert Waldinger, What Makes a Good Life? (TEDxBeaconStreet, about 13 minutes)

https://www.ted.com/talks/robert_waldinger_what_makes_a_good_life_lessons_from_the_longest_study_on_happiness

Breathe. Four rounds of the Grounding Breath. Let this one be less about strategy and more about what you want your life to feel like.

The walk-through

Waldinger directs a study almost unique in science: the Harvard Study of Adult Development, which has followed the same group of people for more than seventy-five years, since 1938, tracking their work, homes, health, and hearts, and now their children too. Very few studies last long enough to watch a whole life; this one did, for hundreds of them.

He names the modern belief up front: most young people say the good life is built of money, fame, and relentless achievement. Then he tells you what three quarters of a century of data actually found, and it is not that. The clearest single lesson from all those lives: good relationships keep us happier and healthier. Full stop.

He gives it three edges. Social connection is good for us, and loneliness is toxic. It is the quality of your close relationships that matters, not the count; living in conflict is corrosive, and warm relationships protect you. And good relationships protect not only the body but the brain. The strongest predictor of who was thriving at eighty was not their cholesterol at fifty. It was how satisfied they were in their relationships.

What it really does

It reorders your priorities before you choose your next room. In a workshop about landing a job, this is the necessary counterweight: the point of the work is a good life, and a good life is made mostly of people. So it changes what you are shopping for. You are not only choosing a salary; you are choosing a set of human relationships you will stand inside forty hours a week.

From thirty years, for your work

I watched capable people take the bigger title into a colder room and slowly shrink, and others take a little less to work beside people they trusted and quietly flourish. When you interview, you are interviewing them too. A job that pays more but isolates you can cost far more than it pays. Choose your rooms, over a career, by their people, and you will be happier and, the data says, healthier for it.

Practice: build it in the real world

You will turn this into a screen you can actually use in interviews: questions that reveal what the people and the culture are really like.

Breathe. Four rounds of the Grounding Breath first. Then build, do not just read.

1. In your Growth Log, list the three relationship qualities you most need at work to do your best (for example: trust, learning, kindness, autonomy).
2. Turn each into a real question that asks for a story, such as: Can you tell me about a time the team handled a mistake?
3. Draft five questions to ask an employer about the people, the manager, and the culture, and keep them in the log.
4. Choose the three you will actually ask in your next interview.

Carry it forward. *Your toolkit now holds interview questions that screen for a good room, not just a good title. You are choosing people, not only pay.*

Reflect

When has work felt genuinely good, and how much of that was the people?

What do you need from the people around you in order to do your best work?

What three questions could reveal what the humans and the culture are truly like?

One small action, today. *Say your three culture questions out loud today, so they are ready in your mouth when the interview comes.*

Breathe. One round of the Grounding Breath to close. Let what you built settle before you move on.

MOVEMENT THREE · THE EXHALE · SERVE AND PERSEVERE

Session 5 · Ernesto Sirolli

Want to Help Someone? Shut Up and Listen!

Watch: Ernesto Sirolli, Want to Help Someone? Shut Up and Listen! (TEDxEQChCh, 16 minutes)

https://www.ted.com/talks/ernesto_sirolli_want_to_help_someone_shut_up_and_listen

Breathe. Four rounds of the Grounding Breath. Watch for the moment the whole room laughs, and notice the hard truth inside the laugh.

The walk-through

Sirolli opens with a story from his first aid work, in Zambia in the 1970s. Well-meaning Italians arrived to teach local people to grow food in a gorgeous, fertile valley by a river. The tomatoes and zucchini grew enormous, and the visitors marveled that the locals had never farmed such rich land. Then, one night, two hundred hippos came up from the river and ate everything. That, the locals said, is why we have no agriculture here. The visitors had never once asked.

From that humbling lesson he built a method he calls enterprise facilitation, and its rules are almost the opposite of a helper's instinct. Never initiate. Never try to motivate anybody. Never arrive with your plan. Instead, respond only to the passion and initiative of the person in front of you. Become a servant of their dream rather than the author of your own. Help only those who ask, and then help them get what they need to do the thing they already care about.

The whole talk is a sustained argument for one unglamorous act: listening. Not waiting to talk. Listening so completely that you serve what the other person actually wants, not what you assumed they should want.

What it really does

It teaches the most human, and least automatable, skill there is: serving what a person genuinely needs, which you can only know by listening. In an age when machines generate answers instantly, the rare and valuable human move is the opposite one, the patient question, the real attention. That is the heart of every helping, selling, caring, teaching, and leading role that will still belong to people.

From thirty years, for your work

The finest salespeople and leaders I ever knew talked the least. They asked, then went quiet, and listened until they understood what the other person truly wanted, and only then spoke. In an interview this is a secret weapon: listening well is far more persuasive than talking well, because it is

so rare. And once you have the job, listening is how you become the person a team cannot do without.

Practice: build it in the real world

You will practice deep listening live, and use it to open a real door: a short informational conversation with someone in a field you want.

Breathe. Four rounds of the Grounding Breath first. Then build, do not just read.

1. For the next three conversations you have, ask one more question before you give your own answer. Afterward, write in your log one thing you learned that you would have missed.
2. Choose one person in a field you want to enter, from your Circles page or one step beyond it.
3. Ask them for a fifteen-minute conversation with one honest purpose: to listen and learn about their path. Make no ask for a job.
4. In that talk, ask, then be quiet. Afterward, write down three things you heard.

Carry it forward. *Your toolkit now holds a live listening skill and, likely, one new relationship. Listening is your quietest and strongest advantage.*

Reflect

When did someone truly listen to you, and what did it do to you?

Where in your life do you talk when you could listen?

How could deep listening become your specific edge in the work you want?

One small action, today. *In your very next conversation, ask one more question before you answer. Practice being the one who listens longest.*

Breathe. One round of the Grounding Breath to close. Let what you built settle before you move on.

MOVEMENT THREE · THE EXHALE · SERVE AND PERSEVERE

Session 6 · Angela Lee Duckworth

Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance

Watch: Angela Lee Duckworth, Grit (TED Talks Education, about 6 minutes)

https://www.ted.com/talks/angela_lee_duckworth_grit_the_power_of_passion_and_perseverance

Breathe. Four rounds of the Grounding Breath. This one is short. Watch it twice.

The walk-through

Duckworth left a high-flying consulting job to teach seventh-grade math, and there noticed something that sent her back to graduate school: her best students were not always her highest in IQ. Something other than raw talent was doing the deciding, and she set out to find it.

So she studied success in the hardest places she could find: which West Point cadets survive the brutal first summer, which children advance in the National Spelling Bee, which rookie teachers in tough schools stay and succeed, which salespeople keep going. Across every one, a single trait predicted success better than talent or IQ, and she named it grit: passion and perseverance for very long-term goals. Grit, she says, is living life like a marathon, not a sprint.

Then she does the honest thing that makes the talk trustworthy: she admits science does not yet know how to build grit reliably, and the best idea she has found is Dweck's growth mindset, believing failure is not permanent, because that belief is what lets a person keep going after a setback. The talk quietly hands you back to Session One.

A NOTE, HELD WITH BOTH HANDS

Grit struck a chord and also drew real criticism: some studies find its power to predict success more modest than its fame suggests, and closely overlapping with the older trait of conscientiousness. Do not take grit as a magic key, and be wary of anyone who uses it to blame people for hardship. The defensible core remains: sustained effort toward something you care about matters enormously, and showing up again after a setback is a skill you can practice.

What it really does

It names the quiet engine that carries you through the unglamorous middle of any search, the long stretch where nothing seems to be happening. Grit is not drama. It is the humble act of showing up again, especially on the days it would be easier not to.

From thirty years, for your work

Thirty years taught me that steady persistence beats brilliance on most ordinary days. A job search is a marathon of small silences, and it is easy to read each silence as a verdict on your worth. It is not. It is just the middle of the marathon. The person who sends the tenth message after nine went unanswered is very often the one who gets the tenth reply. Keep a rhythm, and let the rhythm, not your mood, carry you.

Practice: build it in the real world

You will build the engine of your whole search: a weekly rhythm you can actually keep, and a way to turn every rejection into data instead of a wound.

Breathe. Four rounds of the Grounding Breath first. Then build, do not just read.

1. In your log, set a weekly rhythm you can keep even on a bad week: for example, five applications and two reach-outs. Choose a number that is real.
2. Put it on a calendar as a repeating weekly block. Protect it.
3. Start a Not Yet tally: every silence or no gets one mark and one line, what I learned, or the next move. It is data, not a verdict.
4. At the end of each week, glance at the tally, adjust one thing, and keep going.

Carry it forward. *Your toolkit now holds a sustainable search engine that runs on rhythm and turns rejection into learning. This is what carries you.*

Reflect

Where have you already shown real grit that you give yourself no credit for?

What is the unexciting middle you are standing in right now?

What is the single next small act of showing up, regardless of how you feel?

One small action, today. *Do this week's rhythm number today, even if it is only one application. Rhythm beats mood.*

Breathe. One round of the Grounding Breath to close. Let what you built settle before you move on.

MOVEMENT FOUR · THE REST · LAND AND THRIVE

Session 7 · Amy Cuddy

Your Body Language May Shape Who You Are

Watch: Amy Cuddy, Your Body Language May Shape Who You Are (TEDGlobal, 21 minutes)

https://www.ted.com/talks/amy_cuddy_your_body_language_may_shape_who_you_are

Breathe. Four rounds of the Grounding Breath, and as you breathe, notice how you are sitting. Then sit up and open your chest.

The walk-through

Cuddy starts with something we all know: body language shapes how others judge us, in a courtroom, an interview, a first meeting. Then she asks the braver question. Our bodies change other people's minds about us, but could our bodies change our own minds about ourselves?

Her proposal became famous: the power pose. Stand or sit for two minutes in an expansive, open posture, chest wide, taking up space, the way confident people naturally stand. In her original research she reported this changed people's body chemistry and behavior and made them feel more powerful. Woven through it is her own tender story of feeling like a fraud after a traumatic brain injury, and the advice that saved her: not fake it till you make it, but fake it till you become it.

Her single practical gift is small and usable: before a high-stakes moment, find two private minutes, in a hallway or a stairwell, and stand tall and open, and let your body tell your mind that you are ready.

A NOTE, HELD WITH BOTH HANDS, AND IT MATTERS

This is the talk where honesty matters most. Cuddy's dramatic claims, that two minutes of posing measurably change your hormones and risk-taking, largely failed to replicate in later studies, and even one of her original co-authors publicly doubted them. So do not believe the hormone story. What has held up better is gentler and still useful: adopting an open, expansive posture can genuinely make people feel more powerful and present in the moment. Take that, and treat the rest as an inspiring story, not a proven mechanism.

What it really does

It gives you a body-first way to arrive as yourself before the moment that matters. Stripped of the contested science, the durable truth is one you can feel: you walk into an interview from your body first, and a settled, open body lets your real competence show, while a collapsed one hides it. This is where the Grounding Breath and the open posture meet.

From thirty years, for your work

I sat on both sides of the interview table for decades, and I can tell you plainly: the people who landed the role were almost never the flashiest. They were the ones who seemed settled, present, and comfortably themselves. Nerves are normal; the trick is not to erase them but to arrive in your body anyway. Before you walk in, take two quiet minutes. Stand tall. Breathe the four by four. You are not manufacturing confidence. You are clearing space for the real you to be seen.

Practice: build it in the real world

You will design your own pre-interview ritual and then rehearse the interview itself out loud, so that on the day it is not the first time.

Breathe. Four rounds of the Grounding Breath first. Then build, do not just read.

1. In your log, write your two-minute pre-interview ritual: a private spot, stand tall and open, four rounds of the Grounding Breath, then say your why sentence once.
2. Write out the five questions most likely to come up in interviews for the work you want.
3. Do a real rehearsal: have a friend ask you those five, or record yourself answering each aloud. Speak, do not just think.
4. Watch or replay one answer, notice your body and your pace, and redo that one answer more settled and slower.

Carry it forward. *Your toolkit now holds a body-ready ritual and a rehearsed voice. You have practiced landing before the day arrives.*

Reflect

How does your body actually feel in the minutes before something that matters?

What genuinely helps you feel settled, open, and present?

What small ritual could you do, on your own, in the two minutes before your next interview?

One small action, today. *Run your two-minute ritual once today, for real, before any ordinary task, so your body already knows it.*

Breathe. One round of the Grounding Breath to close. Let what you built settle before you move on.

MOVEMENT FOUR · THE REST · LAND AND THRIVE

Session 8 · Chris Voss

Never Split the Difference

Watch: Chris Voss, Never Split the Difference (TEDxUniversityofNevada)

https://www.ted.com/talks/chris_voss_never_split_the_difference

Breathe. Four rounds of the Grounding Breath. This is the last session. Breathe as if you have already landed the work, and are learning to hold your worth.

The walk-through

Voss spent twenty-four years in the FBI and retired as its lead international kidnapping negotiator, a job where splitting the difference is not an option and a life hangs on the conversation. What he learned there, he argues, is exactly what you need in an ordinary salary talk or a hard conversation with a boss, and it is almost the opposite of what most people think negotiation is.

The heart of it he calls tactical empathy: not being nice, and not caving, but understanding and then naming out loud the other person's perspective and feelings, so completely that they feel understood. He offers concrete, learnable tools. Mirroring: repeat the last few words the other person said, and they keep talking and reveal more. Labeling: name the emotion you sense, it seems like you are worried about the budget, and the naming defuses it. Calibrated questions that begin with how or what, such as how am I supposed to do that, which hand the problem gently back. And the gold he prizes above yes: getting the other person to say that's right, the moment they feel truly understood.

His title is his thesis. Never split the difference, because meeting in the middle out of fear usually gives both sides a worse outcome than patient understanding would have found. The counterintuitive core: the person who listens hardest, and makes the other feel most understood, is the one who guides the conversation.

What it really does

It turns the hardest conversations, above all the one about your salary, from a contest into an act of understanding. Most people never negotiate an offer at all, out of fear or gratitude, and quietly leave real money and respect on the table for years. This talk shows you that negotiation is not aggression; it is empathy with a spine, and anyone can learn it.

From thirty years, for your work

Over thirty years I negotiated a great many deals, and the best outcomes never came from out-arguing the other side. They came from understanding what the other side actually needed, and

solving for that. So hear this plainly, especially if you are young or have been treated as though you should be grateful for any offer: when the offer comes, you are allowed to negotiate it. Do it with warmth and calibrated questions, not demands. Ask, in genuine curiosity, is there any flexibility on the number, and then be quiet and let them think. Empathy, not force, is how you claim your worth without burning the bridge you just built.

Practice: build it in the real world

You will write and rehearse a real negotiation you can run the day an offer arrives, so the moment does not catch you unprepared.

Breathe. Four rounds of the Grounding Breath first. Then build, do not just read.

1. In your log, write your calibrated question, such as: Is there any flexibility on the number? Then write one label you might use, such as: It sounds like the budget is tight this quarter.
2. Decide two numbers privately: your target, and your walk-away floor. Write them down.
3. Role-play the offer call with a friend, or out loud alone. Ask your question, then practice the hardest part: going quiet and letting them answer.
4. Save the script in your toolkit under When The Offer Comes.

Carry it forward. *Your toolkit is now complete: a growth log, a why, a circle map, culture questions, a listening skill, a search rhythm, an interview ritual, and a negotiation. You built it yourself.*

Reflect

Where do you avoid asking for what you are worth, and what fear is under that?

In a salary conversation, what might the other side genuinely need or worry about?

What would it look like to negotiate from empathy and curiosity rather than fear?

One small action, today. *Say your calibrated question out loud five times today until it feels natural in your mouth.*

Breathe. One round of the Grounding Breath to close. Let what you built settle before you move on.

THE NINTH BREATH · THE TURN OUTWARD

Session 9 · The Give-Away

Three voices on giving, held as a breath, not an edict

The eight sessions built you: your why, your circle, your skills, your rhythm, your presence, your worth. This ninth breath turns all of it outward, and it is not an afterthought tacked on the end. It is the place the whole breath was climbing toward, the exhale that completes the cycle. The Invitation called it the give-away. Here it becomes real.

This session has three voices instead of one, and they are offered exactly that way, as a breath and not an edict. No one is telling you how to give, or that you must. These are three people who spent their lives studying it, each saying, here is what I found, take what is true for you. Watch whichever calls you, or all three, and let them breathe.

Watch: One, Elizabeth Dunn, Helping Others Makes Us Happier, But It Matters How We Do It (TED, about 15 min)

https://www.ted.com/talks/elizabeth_dunn_helping_others_makes_us_happier_but_it_matters_how_we_do_it

Watch: Two, Adam Grant, Are You a Giver or a Taker? (TED, about 13 min)

https://www.ted.com/talks/adam_grant_are_you_a_giver_or_a_taker

Watch: Three, Matthieu Ricard, How to Let Altruism Be Your Guide (TED, about 16 min)

https://www.ted.com/talks/matthieu_ricard_how_to_let_altruism_be_your_guide

Breathe. Four rounds of the Grounding Breath. This is the breath you give away. Watch what calls you, and let it land where it lands.

First voice · Elizabeth Dunn: the how of giving

Dunn is a social psychologist who studies a simple, surprising question: does giving actually make us happier? Her research, run across many countries, rich and poor alike, found that yes, spending our money and our time on other people tends to lift our wellbeing more than spending it on ourselves. But then she found the catch that makes this talk matter: giving does not always make us happier. It depends entirely on how we do it.

What turns a good deed into real joy is never the size of the gift. Three things decide it. Connection: the lift comes when you can actually relate to the people you are helping, see them, know them, rather than giving into a void. Impact: it comes when you can see the difference your help made, a concrete good and not an abstraction. And choice: it comes when the giving is freely chosen, not squeezed out of you by guilt or duty. When help is anonymous, disconnected, or forced, the joy

quietly drains out of it. Which is exactly why volunteering, done in the right setting, teaches you almost everything: it is a relationship, built over time, in which you both give and receive.

DUNN, HELD WITH BOTH HANDS

This is some of the more solid ground in the whole workshop. Dunn's core findings, that helping others genuinely lifts our wellbeing, and that connection, visible impact, and free choice are what make it do so, have held up well across cultures, though the size of the effect varies from person to person. Take it plainly: helping, done in a connected and chosen way, is real medicine for the helper too.

Second voice · Adam Grant: giving in the world of work

Grant, an organizational psychologist, studies what happens to givers in real workplaces, and his finding is bracing. In any organization there are three kinds of people: takers, who try to get more than they give; matchers, who keep careful score and trade favor for favor, which is most of us; and givers, the rare ones who help with no strings attached. When he measured performance, givers sat at both the very bottom and the very top of every chart. The worst performers were often givers, the ones who gave so much, so indiscriminately, that they burned out or were used. But the best performers were givers too, sitting at the very top of the whole company.

The difference between the burned-out giver and the thriving one is not how much they gave, but how. Grant's word for the healthy kind is otherish: generous and ambitious at once, giving freely while guarding their own time and floor, asking for help as readily as offering it, and aiming their giving at the small acts that cost little and mean much, what he calls five-minute favors, an introduction, a piece of advice, a good word. A workplace full of otherish givers, he shows, quietly outperforms one built on takers keeping score.

GRANT, HELD WITH BOTH HANDS

The giver, taker, matcher picture is a useful map, not a law of nature, and like all such maps it simplifies real people, who are all three at different moments. The durable and important part, and the reason it belongs here, is the caveat: giving without boundaries harms the giver. Generosity is a strength only when it is sustainable. Give freely, and guard your own floor. That is the both-hands stance this whole workshop keeps.

Third voice · Matthieu Ricard: altruism as a compass

Ricard came to giving by the longest road: trained as a scientist, he left the laboratory to become a Buddhist monk in the Himalayas, and has spent decades studying and practicing compassion. His

talk makes a quiet, radical case: that altruism, simply the wish that others be happy, is not soft-headed idealism but the most practical compass a human being can steer by. Most of our hardest choices force a conflict between the short term and the long term, or between our own good and everyone else's. Altruism, held as the guiding value, is the one lens that reconciles them, because a genuine concern for others naturally takes in the future and the whole.

And he offers the most hopeful finding of the three: compassion can be trained. It is not a fixed trait you either have or lack; like any capacity, it grows with practice, and the brain changes as it does. This is where his science meets the oldest teaching of the contemplative traditions, and the whole Codex: the turn outward is not only something you do, it is something that slowly remakes you, loosening the grip of self-importance and opening the heart. Giving is not only good for the world. It is how a person becomes larger.

RICARD, HELD WITH BOTH HANDS

The nickname the happiest man in the world came from one laboratory's brain scans during meditation, and it is a headline, not a scientific title, so hold it lightly. The trainability of compassion has real and growing support in neuroscience. The deeper claims are offered as contemplative wisdom, a vision to feel and test in your own life, not a proof. Held that way, they are a gift.

What it really does

It turns the entire workshop outward, and in doing so it completes you. Everything in the eight sessions was built for your sake. This ninth breath hands what you built to someone who needs a hand up, and the science in all three voices is the quiet proof that this is not a sacrifice of your wellbeing but a deepening of it. You give, and you receive, in the same motion. Both hands, held out.

A word from a working life

In the middle of a hard season, a personal crisis of why, and why now, a wise person once taught me something I have never let go of. Volunteering, done in the right spirit and the right setting, can teach you everything, and it releases self-importance. When I stopped circling the question of what my life was for and simply showed up to serve people who needed a hand up, the question grew quiet, and something grounded and humbling and deeply joyful took its place. Almost everyone has needed a hand up, more than once. That is the whole of it: not charity handed down, but a hand held out, on the level, one human being to another.

Practice: build it, and treat it like a job search

Here is what turns a nice idea into a practice: look for where you will serve almost the way you looked for work in the eight sessions. The value is not in a single good day. It is in the commitment, and in the relationships that only commitment builds, whether it is a hunger walk once a year that you truly train for, or a meal served to the same people every week.

Breathe. Four rounds of the Grounding Breath first. Then build, do not just read.

1. Start from your why. Look back at Sessions Two and Three: who do you most want to help? Let the cause come from your center, not from obligation.
2. Choose commitment over the one-off. Pick something you can return to, weekly or monthly, however small. Recurring beats occasional, because relationships need repetition.
3. Apply like it matters. Find one or two local organizations, reach out the way you would to an employer, and show up reliably. Every skill in your toolkit works here: your listening, your rhythm, your presence.
4. Return, and learn the names. Come back. Learn who you serve, and who you serve beside. The relationships are not a side effect of the volunteering. They are the volunteering.

HELD WITH BOTH HANDS, AND NO PRESSURE

If you are carrying a full-time job and young children and truly have no room right now, this is not one more guilt to add to your load. Honor your season; your hands are already full of service, and that counts. But if you are young, or in the middle of your career, and you have simply never begun, or thought about it once and never acted, let this ask you gently: why not? Start with a single hour. There is more waiting there to be learned, and quietly healed, than almost anywhere else you could stand.

AND IF YOU TRULY CANNOT, THE ONE-MINUTE PRACTICE

Some seasons leave no room even for an hour, and that is real. There is still a way to hold both hands out, and it takes only a minute or two: acts of kindness, done for their own sake. A genuine thank-you by name. Letting the other car merge. A real compliment, said and meant. A short message to someone you sense is struggling. Patience with a stranger having a hard day. You are not trying to save anyone or fix anything, and that is exactly the point. It is kindness for the sake of kindness, nothing owed and nothing expected back.

KINDNESS AS A WAY OF LIFE, NOT JUST RANDOM

Here is the turn that changes everything: begin with random acts, but let the aim be kindness as a way of life. Random kindness is a spark; a way of life is a standing fire. It is a posture you carry

into every room, toward the barista, the stranger, the difficult colleague, the person who cannot do anything for you, not as occasional gestures you remember to perform, but as simply how you move through the world. Done once, kindness is a nicety. Sustained until it becomes who you are, it quietly opens the heart and the mind, and it embodies the whole turn outward in miniature. The smallest breath of the give-away, always within reach, is simply to be kind, and to keep being kind, on purpose, for good.

Reflect

Who do you most want to help, and what would you want to be different for them because you existed?

What cause or place has been quietly calling you that you have not yet answered?

What recurring commitment, however small, could you actually keep?

One small action, this week. *Find one local organization aligned with your why, and send one message offering your time. Then show up, and come back.*

Breathe. One round of the Grounding Breath. Feel the exhale leave you and go out into the world. That is the breath returning, and the cycle, complete.

THE FULL-CYCLE PASS

Four Breaths, One Toolkit

You have climbed all eight sessions, and if you did the exercises, you are not holding eight ideas, you are holding one built toolkit, made with your own hands. Before you carry it into the world, do the practice that seals it: one full pass through the four breaths, one for each movement, naming aloud what you built. This is not a metaphor. It is a minute of real breathing that turns eight sessions into one steady whole.

THE FOUR-BREATH INTEGRATION · DO THIS NOW

Sit with your Growth Log open. Then breathe one slow, full round of the Grounding Breath for each movement, four rounds in all, and on each one, say the line aloud. Breath one, the Inhale: I know my why. Breath two, the Hold: I know my circle and my ground. Breath three, the Exhale: I can listen, and I can persevere. Breath four, the Rest: I can arrive present, and I can hold my worth. Rest in the silence after the fourth breath. That silence is you, ready.

Do that four-breath pass again whenever the search wears you down, or on the morning of an interview, or the day an offer comes. It gathers the whole workshop back into one breath, and hands you back to yourself, steady.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Your Rhythm: Daily, Weekly, Monthly

A toolkit only works if you use it on a schedule. Here is a simple accountability rhythm to keep you moving when motivation comes and goes, as it will. You do not need to do all of it. You need to keep the rhythm you can actually keep, because a small pace held for months beats a heroic week followed by silence. One more thing, drawn straight from Dunbar: ask one person from your inner circle to be your accountability partner, someone you simply send your weekly numbers to. Being witnessed, kindly, is half of finishing.

Cadence	What you do	Time
Daily	Grounding breath and read your why. One brick of work. One line in your Growth Log. One listening rep.	10 to 20 min
Weekly	Hit your rhythm number. Two no-ask reconnections. Review your Not Yet tally and adjust one thing. One four-breath integration. Send your numbers to your partner.	1 to 2 hrs
Monthly	Update your circle map. Sharpen your why. Review your Growth Log for real skill gains. Run one mock interview. Celebrate one win. Recalibrate your rhythm and name next month's focus.	about 1 hr

Daily, the small keep-going

- **Arrive.** Breathe four rounds of the Grounding Breath and read your why sentence. Two minutes that set the day.
- **Build.** Do one brick: twenty minutes on your not-yet skill, or one application, or one reach-out. One is enough on a hard day.
- **Log.** Write one line in your Growth Log: what you did, or what you learned, or what stung and what it taught.
- **Listen.** In one conversation, ask one more question before you answer. Keep the listening muscle warm.
- **Kindness.** One small kindness, for its own sake, with no agenda. A minute of it, sustained, opens the heart while the search does its slow work.

Weekly, the engine

- **Apply.** Hit the rhythm number you set in Session Six, even in a quiet week. Rhythm, not mood.
- **Connect.** Send two genuine, no-ask messages to people on your circle map. Give before you need.
- **Review.** Look at your Not Yet tally. What did the week teach? Change one small thing for next week.
- **Seal.** Do the Four-Breath Integration once, and send your week's numbers to your accountability partner.

Monthly, the honest look

- **Refresh.** Update your circle map with anyone new. Re-read your why and sharpen it if it has grown.
- **Measure.** Read back through your Growth Log. Name, with evidence, one skill that is measurably better than a month ago.
- **Rehearse.** Run one full mock interview with your two-minute ritual, so the real one is never the first one.
- **Renew.** Celebrate one real win, however small, then recalibrate your weekly number and name next month's single focus.

Your weekly tracker

Copy these five lines into your Growth Log at the start of each week, and fill them in. Five minutes of honesty that keep the whole thing alive.

This week's why (read it daily):

Rhythm number, done: applications _____ reach-outs _____

Two reconnections I made:

One thing I learned, from a yes, a no, or a silence:

The one thing I will adjust next week:

THE WHOLE ARC

Why These Eight, and Why Now

Look back and you will see it was never really eight separate talks. It was one arc, breathed in four movements. You found your why, with Dweck's belief that you can grow and Sinek's call to lead from the reason underneath. You knew your ground, with Dunbar's map of the circles that carry a career and Waldinger's seventy-five years of proof that relationships are the thing. You learned to serve and persevere, with Sirolli's shut up and listen and Duckworth's steady grit. And you learned to land and thrive, with Cuddy's settled, present body and Voss's empathy that claims its worth without a fight.

There is a reason these eight belong together in an age of artificial intelligence. Notice what every one is about: belief, purpose, relationship, listening, perseverance, presence, and empathy. Not one is a technical skill a machine can absorb. These are the durable human capacities, the ones that grow more valuable, not less, as the automatable work is automated away. The person who can find their why, tend real relationships, listen deeply, persist, arrive present, and negotiate with empathy will be needed in every economy that has people in it. That is not a comfort. It is a strategy.

THE ONE-LINE MAP, FOR WHEN YOU FORGET

Find your why (Dweck, Sinek). Know your ground (Dunbar, Waldinger). Serve and persevere (Sirolli, Duckworth). Land and thrive (Cuddy, Voss). Then turn outward and give (Dunn). Breathe between each. The talks are the spine; the breath is what holds you upright while you climb it; the toolkit is what you carry down the other side, and the giving is how you hand it on.

A CLOSING WORD

Now Go and Begin

You did not need to buy anything to do this work, and you do not need permission to begin the next part. You have your why, a truer sense of the circles around you, the durable skills that land and hold a job, a built toolkit, and a breath to steady you at every threshold. That is a real foundation, and most people never build it.

When you are ready to turn all of this toward something of your own, a business, an offering, a livelihood built from your center, the course From Thought to Form is the next door, and Finding Your Empty Center is the quiet room before it. But you do not need either to start today. You need only the next small action you named, and the willingness to be a beginner. Take the step. Keep the breath. Begin again tomorrow.

And know this, whoever you are, wherever you are starting from. The economy will keep changing, and the machines will keep learning, and none of it can touch what you have gathered here, because what you have gathered is not a skill that expires. It is a way of being a person: awake to your why, rooted in your people, able to listen, to persist, to arrive, to ask for your worth, and to give. That person has been needed in every age there has ever been, and will be needed in every age still to come. You are not behind. You are not too late. You are not too little. You are a human being with a breath, a why, and two hands held out, and that has always, always been enough to begin.

◇

Find your why. Know your ground. Serve and persevere. Land and thrive. Then turn outward and give it away. And breathe, always, between the breaths.