

UNPOSTED

FRIENDING MYSELF IN HAWAII



DR. JOANNA CORNELL

Unposted

Friending Myself in Hawaii

by Joanna Cornell, PhD

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Volcanic Landing Pad

Dear Friends,

I welcome you into the time during the 2018 Kīlauea eruption on the Big Island of Hawaii. My boyfriend and I were initially feeling fairly safe with a lava river flowing about a mile away and the sky glowing orange at night. Daily life became focused on primal pulses of a volcano birthing new earth. Even earthquakes felt cozy, like being rocked by the 'āina, land, herself. For me, it registered as a relief that clearly—humans were no longer in charge.

Then one morning, the wind direction changed, increasing airborne sulfur dioxide. We could smell it—like burnt matches—then it began climbing down our throats, leaving behind an itch. Although sense of safety is a relative concept, we honored our lungs and evacuated.

After various adventures on the mainland, as it's called here, we have returned and landed into a jungle habitat that is a short walk to a steaming volcanic landing pad. It's now spring 2019 and we are living in the neighborhood closest to the huge, infamous fissure eight, by USGS naming standards, or Ahu'ailā'au' as this vent is later renamed. Along a rift line, the earth opened. Dramatic as that sounds, the lava from this spot covered a third of the neighborhood and changed the region's geography.

We've been here for weeks and haven't met any neighbors, except the guy who came out with a baseball bat. Thankfully, he seemed reassured by my friendly greeting and headed back up his driveway without a reply. This area got pretty rough while we were off-island, and people are still on guard. Our warmest welcome, thus far, has come from a wild jungle chicken who left us an egg on the porch, in a box. We ate it, the egg not the chicken.

Who has welcomed us back are ample crowds of mosquitoes in the overgrown areas on the land as well as bird gangs aplenty. Thankfully, the mosquitoes continue to leave my skin alone. Such a relief. They fly around me, for sure, yet they don't even buzz my ears. Like many neighborly relationships, with enough sound distance, it's easier to tolerate each other.

The mosquitoes target their favorite people—like boyfriend. They adore him. Then again, he notices each one and locks onto it. Tracking like a skilled and savage hunter, he zaps it with an electric racket. His message is more action-direct: you buzz, I zap. My energetic approach and his action approach are working for us.

I'm not sure that it's my smell. I practice a grounding technique that my jungle cat buddy once taught. I had wanted to let an upset bee know that I'm part of the local field and not a threat. (More on that soon!) My theory is that it's either working on mosquitoes or else my body sends out other signals.

In this life, I'm not locked into one culture or place as I've long ago left the country of my birth. Thus, I sense inner guidance to temporarily land in specific locations. The calling to return here felt so strong that perhaps the invisible energetics of this island are mysteriously soothing the buzzers. Lots is in play—beyond my understanding. What I do know is that in this phase of my life: the Big Island is where I'm to be.

Fire Ants Aplenty

Hey Friends,

Any of you regularly co-habitate with ants? In different ecosystems, I have recurring experiences with various types of ants. My theory is that they're one of my spirit animals and therefore keep showing up. I assumed this was normal and that most homes had ants until I mentioned it to people. None of them live with ants.

This time, it's getting extreme. They're now fire ants. Whatever message I'm to receive needs to get through to me—soon.

Has your skin gotten their injection? If not, then it's a bit like a bee sting. No, more like a wasp as these guys can sting many times. Yet, it's also curiously amplifying in its sensations from a delicate “oh, I can do this” to “nooooo, not again” to use your imagination here.

Perhaps you've celebrated your own endurance when you'd bite into a hot chili pepper and think “oh, it's not spicy” and then the spice kicks in, amps up then kicks from some other angle. Your mouth is officially on fire. Then ablaze. Yea, they're kinda like that except on the skin.

Unlike the bees and wasps of the air waves, these fire

ants are practically invisible as they're the size of a pencil tip while also abundant: as in, hundreds are crawling across the floor over there. One of their many talents is finding a way into clothing. Yea, their qualities as housemates rank pretty low and they don't show up to house meetings.

My internal mystery school here continues with fire ants aplenty. The first mystical homework is to communicate with them. Thus far, my message that I'm not food is not getting through. They continue to consider me bite material, especially in sensitive spots, which currently cover most of my body. Wow, for tiny creatures, they sure have superpowers.

I mentioned a jungle cat teaching me how to communicate with an agitated bee. That was at our last home on the Big Island, before the eruption, which included goats—thus many baby goats—and plenty of airbnb guests and couchsurfers. There, my animal whisperer parts got a workout through animal dramas. As a gift, after consistent attention from me, the house cat finally accepted me as a buddy. I called her Meow-Meow, although she has a different real name.

On that particular afternoon, we were exploring together under a grove of papayas when a large, aggressive bee came flying directly at me, pausing in the air, evaluating my presence. Although, plenty of insects buzz around the jungle, when one notices you, I mean *really* notices you, it's different.

In people terms, it's the difference of walking past

strangers on a crowded city sidewalk versus when that intense guy across the room is looking at you and only you. You're sure of it. Yea, it can be like that with an insect too.

"What do I do?" I tele-whisper to Meow-Meow.

"Put your hands on the earth," I hear back immediately. I reach down onto the wet soil and press until a piece of lava rock pushes back.

"Drop your energy down, not out. You're shooting energy directly back. That shows you're on alert too. Pretend you're chill. You're with me. They don't do eye contact—they do energy," comes in through this inner hearing gift that is open for me.

I do it, pressing my palms more firmly down. As my energy drops into the earth, I sense myself as a part of this eco-system, another dweller on the land. I communicate this via my body to the alert insect. It flies in a bit closer to evaluate, then abruptly changes direction and leaves.

The cat stretches casually, seeming like a regular cat. No more words come into my awareness. Sometimes I wonder, did that really happen? Or do I make this stuff up? Regardless, the inner tele-whispers deepen my relating with what's wild or non-human. Plus if I'm making it up with my vivid imagination, then, it's insightful and more entertaining than a movie. People make those all up too.

Now, at this house with these fire ants, although I'm grateful to the local herbalist for a cream that calms the

skin fire, I still have aspirations of contact and successful negotiations that my skin is off limits. Perhaps they might consider my proposal that they move their successful empire—elsewhere.

I'll let you know how it goes. I'm accepting red welts and dots as decorations on my body. Perhaps there's medicine in it. I have a strange confidence, though, that I'll figure out some way to get through to the fire ants.

Another Way

Dear Friends,

I write posts for my Facebook account. Then, I don't share them. Strange choice. Yet, I lost my drive to self-promote. Thus, I continue disappearing off people's radars. I'm trusting that pulling away now isn't a descent into exile. Yet, my body seems determined in her guidance these days. Plus, the whispers deliver a consistent message: *what you're seeking awaits within.*

My regular writing to an audience continues as it's been my practice since I was a kiddo, inspired by the relief that Emily of the New Moon got from sharing her heart through letters. Words still flow from somewhere inside me and dance their way across the keyboard until I'm satisfied with what might be a lovely post. Each time, as I pour my time into word choice, crafting and rearranging, it seems like *this one* will make it to the eyes of others.

Why does it seem like I can't connect with a larger group in this phase of my life? Might this collection of words be my breakthrough into a reality where I share of my life and reflections with ease?

Alas, once again, my guidance sends hot explosions inside my bones with the message: *private collection, for*

now. I remain in a retreat from open sharing. These days, my inner compass points away from a screen-based life and towards my off-screen living. As my personal underworld opens its gates for me, my choice is clear.

Red Lion Pump

Hey Friends,

Do you know anything about water pumps? Or water filtration for rain catchment? Our water pump broke so there's no water in the house until we figure it out. This house is on rain catchment as the neighborhood doesn't get city water. Each house collects rain off the roof and stores it in a large metal tank to then pump it into the house. Yea, seems more connecting to the natural world—as long as the pump works.

Boyfriend and I are learning quickly about jungle house repairs such as what water pump to buy. The one here rusted out due to a localized acid rain from the volcanic fumes. Not sure if I'll ever again get to claim this problem. It's a unique moment in time for sure: post-eruption life anew.

Studying a topic in school is not the same as living the topic. Take for example: acid rain. I've read many studies and reports, yet here, we are in its after-effects. The volcanic fumes plus rain created an acid rain, and lots of stuff requires replacement.

For example, the water heater stopped working. When we pulled out the metal heater coil, it turned to dust. Yes,

metal literally crumbled to dust. Now that's a demo that one of my teachers could have brought into class.

Plus the house doesn't yet have a stove: we're camp stoving it. This life-stuff sure takes up lots of time even when it feels a bit like we've run away from the bigger global issues by landing into the jungle.

Recently, I appreciated David Whyte's naming of this conversational frontier: "how to feel grief and heart-break on a planetary level" and also have your own joyful, glorious, inspiring life.

For me, that tenderly names what before felt unnamable.

Note from the future: Our Red Lion pump video went mini-viral. No kidding. Boyfriend recorded a short video about its installation process that he uploaded onto YouTube for future reference. Thus far, that video has 49K views. Perhaps future creative shares ought to be accompanied by a real-life solution tip. Practical plus creative? Is that a way to reach a larger audience?

It's Me Not You

Hey Friends,

Vulnerable share. I have a secret that I'm ready to stop hiding. I have a private motivation for vanishing. After reenacting patterns that weren't getting me closer to integration, I realized that my childhood programming was winding me into odd dramas with people.

As I rode into my forties, I realized that I'd be reliving the same patterns for the rest of my life with different people on various locales. Or I'll find the courage to put enough attention on myself to understand, unpack, crack and tend these recurring choices and thought loops.

"Looping again," is a reassuring text I'd get from a friend to remind me that it's not only me replaying patterns. After all, it takes many of us participating in these dramatic patterns.

Finally, instead of seeking understanding and insight from friends, I'm practicing new skill sets *with dedicated repetition*. Yoga isn't done once, we practice. Same goes with other life skills, which are learnable even if initially I didn't even know what I didn't know.

The most delicate work is offering tenderness, for the first time really, to my parts stuck reenacting those patterns. They thought it was their only way to survive. Once it was. Now I have more options as I've learned new practices to turn towards myself with care.

The choices I've been making are not the only ones I'm capable of making. To live up to my own potential though, I need to figure out how to calm down the upset parts within and make space to spend time with wiser parts.

I think of myself as an inner classroom. Remember from our school days: if there's a bully in a class or a kid having an asthma attack then those kids garner the attention. The quiet, insightful kid sitting two seats back doesn't stand out enough to make it into the scene. I usually was that quieter kid in classes and now it's time for me to pay attention to myself.

Jumping Together

Hey Jumpers,

Wish to jump with me? It's a fantastic way to get the heart rate up and land into the body (in case you're the type who enjoys flying out). Jumping is one of my favorite physical practices. I learned it with jump rope, yet now practice with an imaginary jump rope. Not surprisingly, I'm better with the imaginary one. Choose which type of rope is aligned for you. I go for imaginary rope, as I prefer to focus on my heart rate than perfecting rope moves. You might wish to do both. I prefer to jump low and fast as it's gentler on my knees. This is how I was originally taught.

Participate with however many jumps. Perhaps start with your edge, which might be a hundred or several hundred or less or more. It's your body. You know. Play as you wish. You can increase slowly or over time. Or not. No one needs to know your edge. This is for you, your practice, your body and not a competition.

One jump a day might offer wonders. It's simply a daily way to pause whatever else is happening and jump to move energy within. If emotions are energy in motion, then when they get stuck or stagnant in my body, jumping jiggles them back into flow.

Liminal Time Friendships

Hey Friends,

Making new human friends around here isn't going so well for me. I'm getting along fabulously with the animals, plants and rocks. Plus, with myself as that's a new friendship I'm experiencing. Yet the concept that it's healthier to socialize with many people instead of few still pokes me from within.

Thus, one afternoon, boyfriend and I went to our first community picnic at the pavilion; a potluck with burgers and hot dogs off the grill. The weather was lovely. Much older than us people crowded two tables, chatting away in a friendly manner.

With plenty of tables sitting open, we choose the unknown. Surprisingly, two Mormon missionaries joined us. Young dudes. They began their introduction with smiles then quickly gave each other some internal "let's move on" signal. One of them mumbled an excuse about seeing someone he knew and then both got up and headed over to a crowded, white-haired table.

There's a way that people who seek religious community find one another. For me, I left religion as soon as I could and found my way into a spirituality

focused on relating with wildness, nature, ecosystems, creatures, old rocks, little meandering streams. When I was younger, I might have said I'm into ecology or environmental science yet I'm more of an animist these days, communicating at an inner level with what might otherwise be invisible or overlooked. Yet, I'm not sure how to openly speak of it. The response I get from more traditional people is that they're quickly uncomfortable around me. Thus, I'm not surprised that the Mormons moved on.

My belly resonances when I hear someone speak who is rooted in their place, reconnected with earth below, aligned between their beliefs and actions. Here, surrounded by these American retirees, I only sense our common not-from-hereness. I wonder how it would feel to sit surrounded by healthy, vibrant elders who share my ancestral roots. Yea, my fantasy for sure.

Looking around, with a sense of not-belonging, I accept it with more ease: I wouldn't belong among American retirees. I'm not retired. I simply haven't found my place in the world for the next phase of life. I'm in that liminal time of the Quickening, as the Red School calls it, or more commonly known as perimenopause. As my body bleeds in erratic patterns, with weeks stretching into months, I'm aware that my last phase of life is complete and the next phase of social and professional interactions remains a mystery.

Right now, I'm in an inner phase and that totally works for me. As it's work for me. Literally. Meaningful personal

projects are a theme of this time in a woman's life. Thus, I'm on track.

Currently, I'm not at a job in academia or government or some think tank. I'm not starting up an inspiring program, environmental foundation or conscious business. Sometimes I feel shame about that yet then my body reminds me that inner and creative projects are work too. Plus, I get mysteriously ill immediately if I take on any project that isn't fully aligned and then have to spend days, weeks or even months regaining my health again. My body is in charge these days.

I am inner focused on a level that is subtle. Even if I can't yet articulate it into words, it contributes to my ability to navigate collective issues like our restlessness, our lack of deep care for this planet we inhabit, and our quick regressions into survival consciousness.

Returning home without having made any new potential friends, I sit down at my writing table on the screened in porch. With light rain falling in the jungle outside, a distant rooster announces himself, again, while two zebra doves call back and forth. Even with their wilder name, they sound like doves anywhere else who here wear a jungle feather outfit.

My sense of friendship with myself sits down at the table. I gaze out at the green bananas dangling off their stalk and the nearby little avocados that resemble edible ornaments. Wild-grown food is such a gift. Most of the plants and trees are new to me, therefore learning is ahead.

It's a gentle-drops moment with enough light that leaves sparkle. From this spot, rainbows don't appear as the jungle covers up the open sky. On such rainy-sunny moments, they do pop up in our backyard sky, near the big mango tree.

With rainbows and mangos, it's easier to have few human friends on my calendar.

Space Needs

Hey Gardening Friends,

Recently when I pulled up my first radish, I realized the rest of the batch was planted too close. Even with enough sunlight, rain and soil—it wasn't optimal.

The plants needed to be dug out and replanted so that their roots could spread out and grow into healthy radishes. Not little squeezed-by-circumstances radishes. Their thriving green tops were not indicative of their cramped conditions below.

Plants pulled out of the earth freak out. Their leaves flop over even after they've been reinserted into a cozy spot. It takes time for each radish to realize: *oh, I'm okay. I can grow here too.*

The dramatic leaf flop initiates the plant's process of slowly rising up again. These days, I'm more aware how many of us—human and other-than-human—are in this process of figuring out how to navigate with more dignity, care and presence. What happened in the past does affect us, even if we attempt to ignore our innards.

Our jackfruit tree drops its bumpy, yellow fruit early. They rot on the ground. We've trimmed it back and fed it

horse poop, and although the fruits are bigger than before, they still fall off when fist-sized instead of growing into their watermelon-sized goodness. Although healthy in appearance, the jackfruit tree isn't getting its needs met. Or perhaps it's finding its balance after the recent changes: new people living in the house (we're its new neighbors), the recent earthquakes and nearby lava flow, the dog who lived here isn't around anymore. Perhaps those changes affect the jackfruit's ability to make fruit. Who knows.

Fruit trees, radishes and humans have needs, in addition to the basics. In moments when there's major change, we might have our personal flop overs and freak-outs. It's really hard when within feels unsettled. Like we've been uprooted out of what we know.

I've certainly felt like a transplanted radish many times in my life, and each time, although I eventually learned ways to adapt to new external circumstances, the in-between phases were often rough and unpredictable. Sometimes I felt like the jackfruit tree: although everything looked fine on the outside, some inner need was still unmet.

Disorientation is hard to navigate. During transitions or when out of context, it's not just my head adjusting to a new phase of life. My body also moves through the transition. These days, we help each other out, more.

I finally committed to a daily yoga practice after more than two decades of intermittent dabbling. What a relief to turn inwards, where regardless of how unrooted my

head-consciousness is at this moment, my body-consciousness is home on this planet of ours.

In finding my way back onto the woven pink mat, I feel less disoriented. The earth beneath welcomes my awareness back into my body. I place my palms on my root, my mūlādhāra, and imagine my energy reaching down into the earth here, through the thin soil to hardened lava below, passing the air spaces of lava tubes below that and down, down, down. For at least moments, I'm feeling held by the planet that I call home.

Aliens Need Home Too

Hey Friends,

Do you feel alien where you currently live? Does your body yearn for a place where your bones and blood speak the same non-verbal language as rocks, rivers and land beneath?

A volcanic island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean is far from my ancestral lands. That's true for most of the walking, flying or crawling inhabitants here who are alien, like me. What I mean by alien is that most of us are non-native: our ancestors came from some other land.

For a variety of reasons, we left behind a system or someone/thing or by choice decided to step into new possibilities. Few people leave their own culture and wilds, where their bones belong, if life is working for them there. As far as the wildlife, they're translocated by humans. Those of us living here are adapting out of necessity or pleasure. For me, it's a mix.

Born in Warsaw, I lived with the conceptual knowing that my family is Polish. I left before the age of four, but I maintained a cultural imprint, which confused me, as if I was missing something that I couldn't name.

Curiosity increased for me after our family's DNA analysis revealed that our ancestors mostly lived across regions of Poland, Ukraine and Russia. My body tingled in response to seeing those areas on a map, like they remembered the terrain.

I appreciate Daniel Foor's guidance with Ancestral Medicine, especially his reminder to focus on finding your "well ancestors" and not only remain hijacked by the hungry ghosts or the recent pain reenacted by the last few generations. Who were my ancestors earlier? Before that time period? What were they like when they weren't fleeing their homeland for various reasons or surviving a war? How many lived in stable, fertile, abundant times with healthy family dynamics?

These days, globally, only a tiny percentage of humans and other creatures live on their ancestral lands or experience external stability. The people living on mine are currently at war again.

The external wars there will continue until enough of us resolve our internal wars. For that, it doesn't matter what location we call our address, as our inner wars follow us even to the most beautiful of places.

We can't ever fully run away from the unprocessed past. I'm evidence of that. Thankfully, abundant practices and modalities come into my life that teach how to face my inner wars to bring peace, at least within myself. That's where it begins for each one of us.

My Snuggle Bear

Hey Friends,

Do you still cuddle with a stuffie when your inner world is rumbly?

I have a soft, brown-eyed, black snuggle bear that has arms and legs long enough to wrap around me. When I'm unsure where to turn while having complex sensations or feelings inside, my bear instantly down-regulates my system. Like a cup of hot chocolate with fatty coconut milk, my bear's softness melts my tension away.

It wasn't like that with my childhood bear. First of all, amazingly, it turns out that my boyfriend had the same hard teddy bear. It had a consistency of a punching bag, and little boyfriend used to practice kicks and judo throws on it. Our theory is that wood chips stuffed it. I loved mine as much as a uncomfortable rock—with short, stumpy arms—can be loved.

Toys train future adults for that culture, sending a range of messages into the unconscious. It makes cultural sense that a standard issue Soviet bear given to kids in the Communist days would be teaching kids to be tough, hard workers and not cling to softness.

Yet kids and adults need to feel safe, soothed, tended. For adults, this is especially true if we didn't get enough of those experiences as a kid. How much of adult acting out and aggression could be reduced globally if more adults felt seen, soothed and safe?

(Thanks to Dancing Eagle—known professionally as Dr. Dan Siegel—for the s's and being a wonderful guide on my reparenting experience.)

Wolves and Baba Yaga

Hey Friends,

Any of you with Eastern European roots curious about Baba Yaga and what's up that small, rocky path that goes up into the mountain mists? Past the lilies of the valley and piles of bison poop?

Deeper, older, wilder ancestral traditions reach out and whisper to me. Ancient rural magic traditions lure me. Does the wolf howl to you? Do wild boars snort as you lay down to sleep? Does a distant rooster wake you each morning?

Would you be willing to share your discoveries about earlier practices and rituals—before Catholicism and Slavic deities? What songs stir tears with a remembering of when you were rooted?

My Babcia, grandmother, kept silent about her past except for this one story:

As evening darkens quickly, two horses pull a large sleigh with several teachers on board. They ride through open snowy fields on a packed down trail as new snowflakes drift. Nearby, the surrounding old forest keeps guard. It's wartime and the front is approaching, with gunshot sounds

resonating off trees more regularly. Tonight, wolves howl from the forest, coming closer and closer. Calmly, young Babcia pulls out long braids of straw made for such occasions. She throws several of them out the back of the sleigh, then ties them to their anchor. Using precious flickering matches, she lights each one on fire.

In silence, they continue on home: on a sleigh pulled by horses with straw braids dragging behind on the cold snow—burning.

Some of my roots are out in the Carpathian Mountains and flowing through rivers like the Visła. They reach into forests, valleys, hills and lake regions. My grandmother and her mother and hers and that branch of the family lived at the base of the Carpathian Mountains in a region near Romania that was then Poland, now Ukraine and before Russia. Peace wasn't known there.

Ninety percent of my genetics is from Eastern Europe. Sometimes, my body yearns for that energetic ecosystem—not the people or cultures—yet the natural systems themselves. When I hiked trails in the northern end of those mountains, ahhhh, my body knew the land and the land recognized me back. When I stood at the mouth of caves, I recognized their breath and they mine.

Yet it's a complex longing. Anytime I reconnect there energetically—through my awareness, a dream, music or people—then my body responds with mysterious pains and fragmentation. I have to micro-dose these interactions.

Perhaps the trauma of that land attempts to transmit into my body? I sense my allies protecting me. I don't wish to numb-up or armor-up my body nor to change its shape into a tank or beetle (a common shape of older women in that region). Yet after some interactions, I spend days to months integrating. I could cut away for health reasons yet I do return and reconnect, when I am healthy enough. This ancestral lineage work is an aspect of my work in this life. Perhaps by simply naming it, I'm practicing "name it to tame it" as Dan Siegel teaches. Not only people hold trauma. Land does too. We can change our address yet that's not a solution.

Since I do not roam those areas in person (for many reasons these days), I'm continuing my relating at a distance. My interest is not in the male history of the wars and pain there, nor in the marriage traditions or love-sickness of the people, or cultural patterning and games. Although the castles, churches and art held my attention in the past—it's not there that I'm looking.

I'm slowly collecting into my awareness the mythopoetic bits and pieces that resonate an instrument within my bones. I place my attention on the hidden mysterious layers that live in the land, rock formations, caves, waters, plants, trees. Stories of birds intrigue me. There are trails accessed by the whisperers, healers, mystics, and through the healing traditions of those areas, especially the earliest period of Dreamtime practices. I hear dragons walking the land. They feel like my protectors as I bravely face my ancestral past with care.

Thriving Inner Family

Hey Friends,

Who lives inside you these days?

Within myself I've reconnected with parts of myself who are kids, teens, twenty-somethings, thirty-somethings, forty-somethings and other fragments. Although I didn't reproduce and make a little human, I can still care for inner humans within my own consciousness. There's plenty of me on this planet!

This is such a huge discovery for me. During intense emotional moments, I'd hear myself saying words that later I'd wonder: who was speaking through my mouth? It turns out that was a part of me.

Until recently, those younger parts of me had been hijacking my body and playing out complex dramas in an attempt to get attention.

What a fantastic gift Richard Schwartz has given the world (through Inner Family Systems AKA IFS) to have a process, technique, skills and support to befriend our inner family, unburden each one and integrate our whole system.

When I set off on my trauma research binge (which

was fully immersive and all-consuming as I dedicated myself to figuring out what might be contributing to the bumps in my life), I read the classics. One of them is *The Body Keeps the Score* which lays out many modalities for healing. IFS was one of these, and I set off on the trailhead into myself.

Years now into this process, I am enthralled by the depths of self-knowing that open through a simply, repeating process that allow me to be with these younger parts of myself with kindness, presence and curiosity.

A younger part of me wishes to brag and tell you about what I've done. An older teaching part of me wishes to teach you about IFS, define the terms properly and lay out an overview. My facilitator part wishes to offer you a framework that you could then follow to maximize your inner time's investment. My firefighting part wishes to distract me because don't I need a snack?

Mastery begins with practice. It's already a big step for me to have awareness of these parts becoming active with their different ways of expressing. Then, instead of allowing one of them to grab the wheel of my life, we notice the hijack. Then together, I make a conscious choice from this current, wiser awareness as to where we head together next. It's not a me versus them, it's a we. Or using Dan Siegel's term in another way: it's a m-we. For sure, this takes practice. It felt normal to have parts jump in to grab the wheel and many even offered relief, yet I'm practicing a more conscious approach these days.

A insight from this batch of inner work revealed an incorrect assumption I made when I was younger. When I arrived in America, I learned that unless I was an actress, I had to be one person. Multiple personalities was seen as a mental disorder and portrayed as such in films and books. Yet what about those of us navigating different cultures, countries, or social rules? Even within the American culture, there are countless subcultures with their own social expectations. None of us are the same person everywhere we go.

This modality gave me the final self-acceptance piece that I had needed. I don't have multiple personalities and I do have many parts who adapted to various cultures, subcultures and landscapes. Human resilience is incredible.

Mostly, my parts wish to wave to your parts and say: let's chat more. I've got lots to say, as this has been revolutionary in my integration work. Plus, I get to cut pictures out of children's books, play with legos and color while calling it healing. Yes.

The part of me who calls herself Care Bear wishes to say: "We get along MUCH better these days and don't hijack Jungle Joanna's now-life as often."

As this work evolves over the years, our inner family is morphing from resilient survival experts into a thriving, intelligent, wise, playful, silly, expressive collective of beings. Each session together drains out old victim consciousness, replacing it with kind presence. This is the modality I had been seeking as a way to crack into myself.

Most importantly, we're learning to co-habitate together instead of battling one another for attention to get our needs met. It's new for us to think of ourselves as an us: as a system of parts with an inner ecology, yet it totally makes far more sense for the experience we've had as a collective since infancy. It certainly didn't seem like there was one me.

Fat Coco

Hey Friends,

Listening to my body's guidance, I take a slow and deep breath. Again, allowing a longer exhale than inhale. Bird sounds get louder. A gecko runs by. My toes wiggle, then stretch.

Right now, from outside, the sweet scent of flowering ginger rides the air waves over a deeper note of rotting fruit and vegetable remains that we dumped into our rotating composter. By tomorrow, only the ginger notes will linger in the air as our healthy compost crew take out the smell in under twenty hours.

When I'm here, it's easier for me to notice smell. Most of the time, my nose is turned off. Do you have awareness of when you re-arrive back into your own body fully? Does your nose turn on and off? I'm not sure where I otherwise go. I'm far more aware of my surroundings when I return home to my body. Even stinky smells are a treat.

I'd like to introduce you to my dear friend named Fat Coco. He, yes, he's a male, which I'm not sure how I know yet that's how he feels to me.

During an online writing workshop, the facilitator

suggested we look around to see if we might have a friend nearby that we had not noticed. It was then that I saw Fat Coco for the first time.

He stood there, where he has been since we moved in, yet somehow now stepped out of being a practically invisible palm tree in the background into being a presence, a being, a new friend. There's a particular way that some people spark bright as they morph from un-met to friend immediately. You know how that feels. We simply know. That's how it was for Fat Coco and I.

Yes, I'm spending time with a coconut palm and I'm proud to openly admit it. Friends have privately shared with me about their relationships with trees yet I haven't seen many open declarations.

Not only am I a tree hugger, I'm a tree friender—which includes chats and communication as yes, I really do hear them. Being clairaudient means I hear internally. I'm still figuring out how to tune in and practicing in holding my boundaries with beings whom I'd rather not interact with internally. Internal interactions have much in common with external interactions: not everyone makes for wise conversation. It's important to know how to walk away from a person and also how to close out an internal interaction. Thankfully, I have other friends who are also exploring their intuitive gifts and it's much easier when I can openly share.

I asked Fat Coco if he had a message for you and here's what came through: "Look around, a tree friend is

probably nearby who is waiting to be seen, greeted and invited into your life. We're everywhere. We are not just standing there. We're in constant motion with much happening on, around and within us. If you don't know how to begin relating with your tree, whisper a greeting. Then listen and observe. We're friendly."

That's perhaps why I haven't been interacting on Facebook. I've been busy with beings who don't have an account.

U-turning

Hi Friends,

I don't come from a "me first" background. I was well-trained that others come first, except when on a crashing airplane and those yellow face masks drop then the rule is to put on your own mask before assisting someone else.

Many of my parts once believed that survival while living in a woman's body requires me to serve, soothe or support others. Ha! (Said wiser parts). Many parts believed that other's needs, dreams and aspirations come first. Some even believed that by ignoring myself, I'll have a higher chance of survival. Yea, we've had to hold plenty of inner-gatherings about these topics. As unexamined, those ideas can easily form into roles.

During these chaotic times, I wish to return to the gift of exploring "me first" as a way of checking in with myself when my mind races or body gets tense or activated. Instead of focusing externally, as my old habit, to analyze or change or understand a problem or issue, instead I commit to increase my self-awareness and presence before charging out into the world or tapping words for countless eyeballs attached to bodies.

The u-turn is a method of turning my attention: onto me. It sounds a bit confusing yet it's the phrase that Tara Brach teaches and I haven't come up with my own. The concept behind it is that instead of locking myself into fixing, changing or helping the other person, I can u-turn onto myself. If there's an optimal window of time in a woman's life for this radical act it's during the Quickening.

I often ask within: what do I need in this moment? As if, OMG, as if, my needs also matter.

When I u-turn onto myself, calm my nervous system, acknowledge that I'm here and worthy of attention then this magical gateway opens: my survival brain relaxes and a whole new reality opens. Here people are calmer and capable of such complex actions like singing, laughing and even not rushing.

Mold Party at Our House

Dear Hawaiian Mold,

For the few colonies that didn't get the memo: the party is rocking at our house and cottage.

This year's mold festival is big and growing. If you're not here and are looking for some screen to grow on or perhaps a pillow to infiltrate then I suspect that little bits of mold-free or lightly moldy areas still await your presence.

Now, this invite comes with a warning.

Come knowing that your whole crew will be going out together ... into the light. The party isn't forever.

No final warning besides this one. If you wish to evacuate any of your friends then you're welcome to show up on a rescue mission instead.

Yes, we have a UV lamp and know how to use it.

Dear friends, no not the mold, actual people like you who can read. If you have mold in your house once the rains come (or anytime) then this little UV light is the best friend you haven't yet met. I've lived in various moist

(some people hate that word yet I like it) and extremely moist (the moist-haters cringe on) climates.

I had not then known of the UV lamp. Wow. Yea, seriously. It works. Much better than those loud-zapping mosquito lights of the 80s. Remember those? Yea, this is silent and stinky then ahhhhh, no mold.

Not sure of the environmental consequences of using this type of UV lamp as it produces ozone. It's also harmful to lungs so the spaces need time to air out. Perhaps someday I'll cringe that I used one here yet for now, wow, what a relief to breathe with more ease.

Nightly Bamboo Party

Hey Friends,

As I find the strength to pull away from the cacophony of human life, I discover a deepening of my connection with the non-human inhabitants. It's a delight listening to other beings communicating. Perhaps they may teach us?

The birds around me play out unusual patterns that I had not noticed in any other ecosystem. Then again, I didn't pay much attention to birds when I was busy with people.

On some days, more than fifty birds (yes, I've counted) of common waxbills, saffron finches and house sparrows land in the grass, pecking and hopping around. The waxbills wear a red mask while the yellow saffron finches have a splash of green on them with some orange on the head that boyfriend's eyes see with more ease. The browns and grays of sparrows easily blends with the grass. I observe silently.

Then, sometimes when a naughty young part jumps in to play then we squeal and watch birds flutter up in a flurry of wings as they fly up into the trees. Soon enough, they return to hopping around in the grass. I admit that it's a childish game we're playing. Yet oddly, after each round of

it, that younger part of me feels my care and lack of judgement and she settles. The naughty was her way of getting attention and these days, she's finding healthier pathways to be seen.

Sometimes, it's not just me, as another bird or a mongoose or a distant dog makes the sound, and the birds startle and team-flutter upwards. I keep looking for the flock leader as somehow agreement happens instantly about which sound gets classified as worthy of team-flutter and when they determine that it's safe enough to return. I wasn't kidding that bird gangs exist as they instant-communicate in ways that show they're tuned in together somehow, as if on an attuned field.

I assumed them to be free-style players who lack a leader yet organization, harmony and inter-species interactions happen around me. The only somewhat aggressive behavior I've seen is in courting and feeding dramas. There's a common mating dance of the doves here that begins with bowing and vocalizations then ends up with aggressive wing flutters. Plus, this one time, I witnessed a native Hawaiian hawk ('io) eat a nest of baby warbling white-eye (mejiro) birds which was a dramatic theater that played out. (If you wish to read about it then I did write a long reflection on that, and it's available upon-request for those who feel called to hear about that moment in time.)

Since I'm new to bird watching, I'm now understanding one reason why so many adults spend their time with the colorful, playful, social creatures. It soothes

the nervous system generously. When I find myself surrounded by birds in such numbers then I'm certainly grateful that they're not dinosaur-sized or aggressive demons.

One alien, super invasive creature has my attention often. The common mynas are new to me. These large, orange-legged walkers gather on the grass in the later afternoon to catch up on the latest happenings in our neighborhood, loudly stating their opinions about the families of wild pigs and mongooses.

Boyfriend and I watched a few nature films about the mynas. Their ancestral land is in India. The Indian naturalistic, beaming with pride about his country's birds, described their superb ability to survive and thrive in new conditions.

These mynas click, clatter and walk around each other like humans strolling a river-side boardwalk. As evening approaches, hundreds gather in the tall bamboo grove next to where we live. They cluck and chatter with the sound rising into a bird cacophony—loud enough that I can't schedule a phone chat during their party. Then, several times each evening, they become silent in an instant moment. Silence hangs with minutes passing, then one begins their lament and their party continues.

I wonder how this is possible as with a human orchestra—a conductor silences the music. With a crowd of humans, could we fall silent without any guidance in the same moment? How do mynas decide?

My rare amusement is that once they fall asleep, my inner naughty youngster part pops in—making a startling sound. Sometimes our bamboo sleepers wake and discuss their safety. Yet usually, they sleep on in silence. They've gotten used to us.

What oh what do they chat about with each other? Although my gift allows me to inner communicate with one, they haven't yet revealed their secrets. What's their inner life like? Their dreams? Do they find the perfect nest stick that keeps dropping away into nothingness? They certainly are observing me as I observe them. Who am I to them?

Adding human ambiance to our evening soundscape is an unmet, distant neighbor with a vocal expression practice. Around sunset for usually an hour, he screams his pain out into the jungle. This happens monthly lately. The first time was incredibly unsettling as loud human screaming does not soothe the nervous system like bird chatter does. Yet, with regularity and predictability, even his sounds fit into the evening routines here. There is a cadence to it that reassures us that he's not dangerous.

Once evening turns dark then the loud drone of coqui frogs begin their set. They often out sing even the insects. It's a nightly nature party. I used to get caught in a trance where humans had my full attention, and the louder humans tended to win out. These days, I pull back into my own, bird-filled reality.

Future Fruit Grandma

Greetings,

I won't be a grandmother as I haven't reproduced. Instead, I'm enjoying parenting many seedlings who will eventually grow into trees producing fruits or nuts. Perhaps I can consider myself a mother of fruit trees and a grandmother of fruits? A fruity nut-ma?

Plant us is what seeds used to whisper to me when I didn't have land I was tending. I'd throw them into wild areas whenever I could, as that's better than the trash bin (they are alive). Yet, I was pretty sure few would grow into trees. These, under our care, have a much better chance.

A seed is gently placed by me into soil in a container, then watered, tended and given enough light until the seedling rises up. Saplings in containers stay alive and even flower and produce a fruit or two. Yet it's only when their roots can stretch into the actual earth, sensing a tension holding them and feeling that connection that they expand in space, growing rapidly and producing hundreds of flowers. Only some turn into fruit. I had no idea how few flowers turn into fruit.

Watching their journey brings me joys in a way that I imagine burping babies does to those who celebrate babies.

I prefer to watch a green clementine grow and eventually turn orange.

Thus, for a phase of life, I've become a fruit and nut tree grower. We live on a couple of acres, and there were four types of fruit (rambutan, pomelo, clementine, mango) and two types of nut trees (malabar chestnuts and coconuts) when we arrived. Dozens more are in the earth as young seedlings, including cacao, sour sop, peanut butter fruit and rollinias. Once they're established, we'll have more than fifteen different fruit and nut trees growing here.

An anticipated delight is envisioning the day when we pluck the first orange-yellow cacao pod off the plant, crack it open, ferment the seeds within for a week and then bake them into cacao nibs. Homegrown. I know. Wow. For now, the plants slowly grow.

Last weekend, boyfriend and I harvested coffee cherries and made our first jungle-grown cup of coffee. Although neither of us drinks coffee, it was surprisingly delicious, due to our homemade fatty coconut milk. One of my favorite recurring home-tasks is blending coconut pieces with hot water and then squeezing the mixture through nut bags to release a milk. The sensation of warmth flowing between my fingers into a Mason jar reassures me that future deliciousness awaits.

Filling glass jars with our locally grown delights calms my nervous system, as I navigate these inner-fire days of mine.

Around me, I'm surrounded by new friends. Fire ants walk in a straight line along the edge of the wall while two little day gold dust geckos chase after a flying meal. The rooster crows as light glimmers off the fronds of Fat Coco. For now, this is my life.

Scrolling Less

Hey Friends!

Are your eyes holding up well with scrolling these days? Pleasurable connection with friends online requires ample amounts of scrolling and clicking.

My eyes don't wish to scroll. They throw temper tantrums after too much screen time by hurting afterwards, sometimes even with a gritty sensation. Ouchie. If I ignore them, then my vision starts blurring. They've replayed this enough times that I have to take their requests seriously. However much parts of me wish to be online and interact virtually, my body offers clear inner guidance that there's some other way for me to care for friends while also caring for my own body. This means that staying in touch these days has some additional challenges for me.

I've explored other formats including exchanging old-school-type letters electronically, one-on-one and group Zoom calls and random phone calls. Imagine that radical action in this modern world: your phone rings and it's me saying "hi" and then we chat. Figuring out distance relating is clearly a work-in-progress. None of these ideas seem like a solution for a larger group, as those attempts require much time and attention.

Might this be a new way?

If you've gotten to here then you've experienced my quirky life updates that I've put together into this little book. Perhaps, someday, you also send me yours? We both get a book out of the deal. I can pop your ebook onto my Kindle and then read it without scrolling, with greater care for my eyes.

What was a gestating idea has come into being. What if what otherwise would be, or even are, Facebook posts or short messages can also become a collection of posts that live in a shareable book? Then those with more sensitive eyes can read on a Kindle? Perhaps we even weave posts from several lives into one book? Our lives certainly make for unique reading material that's far more alive than most books out there. I'd certainly read more of my friends' posts if it didn't hurt my eyes. I enjoy staying in touch and might there be some new ways that we co-create?

This is my first such book.

Now and Future

Dear Readers,

It's now autumn 2023 and I'm sharing this manuscript with my Facebook community. Thanks for taking the time to hang out together.

My intention in writing *Unposted* was to (1) break through my inner wall that prevented me from open sharing and (2) bring some words out of the Quickening phase—as many friends are entering these inner energy flows.

This little book is also my creative way of staying in touch with old friends and perhaps making some new ones. As we mature, it's complex figuring out how to keep or begin meaningful friendships. Perhaps we write little books to each other?

My vision is to get *Unposted* self-published in 2023. I've shared it with several small circles of friends and am considering putting it out via Amazon. Yet perhaps this will also remain as a writing project for friends. I'm still feeling into this.

After discovering that my ANS (autonomic nervous system) appreciates stabilizing, regulating and calming

actions and reading material, it's been a journey to find books that fit me. From what I've found thus far, few books entertain, soothe, calm and inspire. What I yearned for is to curl up with a book that feels like feels like spending time with a healthy friend.

Perhaps *Unposted* can be such a friend.

If my writing moves you and you wish to offer edits or feedback or cheers before/if I put this out in the world then I would greatly enjoy hearing from you.

Much love and tender care,

Joanna

P.S. The fire ant empire did move elsewhere. Yup. The short story is that they became less and less interested in me. Sometimes months would pass without a red welt. Then their numbers began to decrease until one day: they were gone.

Gratitudes

In the writing of this little book:

Gratitude shimmers flow and spark through my body for the Big Island calling me here to show me—experience me—into a deeper awareness of animate contact with non-human beings. With my childhood history of Polish-Nigerian Catholicism (against which I fought hard), I also had early animist experiences through the Yoruba and Igbo traditions in Nigeria—that laid a foundational awareness that a spiritual life can happen outside of church and within the body.

It took some large inner leaps to step into an animist perspective after my training as an Environmental Scientist. I had to cross many inner thresholds. Yet once the earth and allies began their communications with me—speaking with my heart—I couldn't turn away.

Yea, when the earth speaks with my heart then there's nothing else like that level of connection. I still have work to do about my belonging among other people and I've found my belonging with earth beings—and humans belong in this group. My communication can be with a rock or the wind, bubbling lava or a cat. The resonance plays my bones into harmony, coherence, integration.

The perspectives offered by Josh Schrei of The Emerald podcast support my deepening of animate explorations. Hearing that: “real’ assumes a divide between natural and super-natural that doesn’t exist in trance possession traditions,” reassures me. For sure, my definitions and experiences of “real” have shifted through experience. When I expand my boundaries on what I consider is real, then, I can listen with my heart in addition to my ears. For those who smile at a tech reference—that’s like upgrading your headphones.

Earlier in my life, I had a profound shift when I went off the pill and my menstrual cycle synched back up again with the full moon. I could feel the difference profoundly, moving me then into tears of relief. Here, I experienced my moon blood now also synching with the lava flow beneath: twice I began to bleed as lava erupted. That difference in my body offered another layer of reconnection to a primal force. I strongly believe that human bodies are made of earth—and therefore require connection with the wild, primal forces of this planet to remain coherent.

I’m grateful to my boyfriend Andrey for walking along with me on this path. Being with a perimenopausal woman who communicates with earth beings is certainly a unique experience. He’s been exquisite in his care, kindness and technical support. As wow—there many technical skills to learn in getting words from my fingers out to your eyes right now. Witnessing his easeful flow with technology has opened me to a whole new relationship with it. Tech responds differently to him than

to me when I'm emotionally flustered. Do the computers have an innate intelligence that responds to our inner world? I'm not referring to AI either. If I live in a reality where I believe that the moon isn't a life-less rock then what or who else might be capable of interacting with me? I deeply appreciate being with a partner who allows me to explore these questions. Plus he's amazing at learning complex systems, solving any tech issues and even installing our Red Lion water pump.

I'm also grateful for the opportunity to live on this land which is the future retirement home of Andrey's family. Navigating extended family dynamics brings many gifts and additional skill sets. I wish them all the best when they land here and we move on to our next life phase.

Plus I couldn't have gotten through these emotional waves without my weekly exchange sessions with my dear friend (and therapist) Val. It's reassuring having a therapist who also hears within. So grateful. And cheers to the circle of friends who hung in there with me as I went so deeply in, in, in—into my Underworld, Inner Worlds and the animate planet.

Although Fat Coco is a fantastic friend and continues growing me coconuts, I'm slowly growing new friendships with people. I'm curious about distant friends returning into my life and new friends arriving.

I close by expressing gratitude and wonder to this animate planet earth which has gifted me my boney, watery, fleshy human body to dwell in for the years that

I'm here as a human. The sun, moon, stars, winds, rains, rocks, waters, ocean and many creatures of this planet are my friends, allies and companions each step of the way. I honor my inner guidance from Source and the many guides, goddesses, allies and wisdom keepers who spend time with me in meditations and dreams. Thank you for reminding me that I'm more than my ancestral or human pain—I'm also life in human-body form with a big smile and curious eyes.