

## Beyond Mindfulness: Revisioning Mindfulness and Spirituality in the World of the Imagination

Dina Glouberman Ph.D.

Dorothea sent me this story of a life-changing imagery experience she had in an ImageWork group I offered more than 25 years ago. ImageWork is the interactive imagery approach I have developed over the past 45 years to help clients understand themselves and guide their lives. Dorothea wrote this:

This image dates from my very early days of ImageWork over 25 years ago, but it remains as clear as if it were yesterday. My issue was what appeared to be a hopeless longing to be able to take early retirement and paint, but in the mean time being financially constrained by the need to earn my living as a full-time head of department in a boarding school.

In my image I was on a long ladder propped up against the wall of my school, which was, as in real life, a magnificent gothic-style Edwardian mansion with rolling grounds, deep in the countryside. The ladder was not nearly long enough to reach the top, and the wall seemed to loom above me almost infinitely; but I absolutely knew that I must get it to the point where I could see over the building. The only way to do this was to allow the wind to let the ladder flex out from the wall with every passing breath of breeze, and thereby encourage it to expand in some way. It was very scary, but I had the firm conviction that this could work.

Indeed, eventually it did, and the ladder had grown sufficiently for me to see over the top. What I saw was a beautiful formal rose garden. At first this seemed the ideal goal for me, but then beyond that I became aware of a wider landscape of hills and valleys, with a path threading its way through the hills and out of sight over the horizon. Following the path, I found myself in a whole new world.

What I read from this was that I must seize every possible opportunity, regardless of whether it seemed practical, and that somehow by doing this I would find a way to make my dream come true. Moreover, this would lead me in a direction in which I would not only paint the kind of things I spent much of my time on then, such as flowers, gardens etc., but in due course also wider landscapes and beyond, over the horizon, I would find subjects and ways of working that I could not yet envisage.

And that is what happened. Even the landscape that I conjured up proved to be very similar to where we now live.

I pursued ImageWork right through to the post-practitioner stage, and got my husband John sufficiently on board to agree to my ‘crazy’ scheme to use a small legacy to enable us to take early retirement and move down to Dorset to run a Bed & Breakfast.

I did move on from painting gardens to the wider landscape, and then to far more abstract art, and to this day I continue to evolve and experiment, and to sell sufficiently well to be self-financing without needing to be a slave to what other people want me to produce. And most important of all, it has benefited my husband John as much as myself, and enormously deepened our relationship.

As I read Dorothea’s vivid account of her image from so long ago, I felt as if I was there with her. Dorothea’s image represented her attempt to look forward to the future, and indeed it did set a remarkable template for her life, one that she risked a great deal to follow. Yet during the imaging experience, as Dorothea climbed her ladder, felt the danger, and dared to do something so unconventional that it seemed as if

it couldn't possibly work, she was living completely in that world and in that moment.

While we are imaging, even when we are having an image of the past, the future, or a spiritual dimension, we are always living in the present moment.

This present-moment awareness is what mindfulness and the world of the imagination have in common. As Thích Nhất Hạnh (1992, 1999), Vietnamese Zen master and mindfulness pioneer, used to say: *Present Moment, Wonderful Moment*.

### **ImageWork and Mindfulness**

The practice of mindfulness has entered into the Zeitgeist as a non-medical and evidence-based way of bringing oneself to peace and harmony, to help heal a variety of emotional problems, to improve focus and concentration, reduce rumination, increase insight, build equanimity, and generally improve health and well-being. It is essentially a translation of the age-old practice of meditation to Western life, and it can only be applauded.

Mindfulness is normally considered the awareness of, and focus upon, without judgement, the moment-to-moment reality of your breath, your body, your feelings, your thoughts, your surroundings, the food you eat, the dishes you wash, the floor you are sweeping, or whatever activities you are engaged in. When the mind wanders and you become aware of your thinking, you simply notice this non-judgementally and return to the present-moment focus.

Mindfulness has already made a wonderful contribution to our lives, but I believe that it is time to go beyond the traditional view of what constitutes mindfulness and to expand it to new contexts, in particular the dimensions of imagination and of spirit. I have come to understand through my work with imagery that present-moment awareness need not, and indeed should not, be confined to what is going on in and around us in our immediate physical

situation. When we are fully engaged in the world of the imagination, or in a spiritual dimension, it requires the same present-moment attention as mindfulness, except that the present moment is not in this physical reality, but in an alternative reality of the imagination, one that psychodrama pioneer Jacob Moreno called 'surplus reality' (Moreno et al., 2014).

I will be exploring here the fascinating and complex relationship between mindfulness, spirituality and the world of the imagination, with a particular focus on the imagination, which is my field of specialisation. Mindfulness and the world of the imagination share the focus on the present moment, and some of the techniques I use to keep people focused in the present moment of the imagination can be viewed as aids to traditional mindfulness.

On the other hand, imagery is different from mindfulness in that it can also serve as a meaningful and powerful metaphor for life, as it was for Dorothea. This combination of mindfulness and meaningfulness that we find in imagery can be transformative, and can even help dissolve some of the difficulties people have in staying mindful.

Working with the imagination in a present-moment way can also offer a pathway to a spiritual perspective without ever using the word 'spiritual', or indeed any spiritual concepts. This can be life changing for people who do not want to follow a spiritual belief system. For example, the image of light can be seen as just an image, to be explored mindfully as a direct and present-moment experience. Yet ultimately it can open up a world that goes beyond everyday reality, and that may well be a spiritual dimension. This is an approach I use a great deal in ImageWork.

Finally, I will offer a lovely ImageWork exercise that you can try out yourself, which brings together imagery and mindfulness, and helps to let go of the 'stories' you tell yourself, and sink into the present moment.

## Committing to the World of the Imagination

Briefly, ImageWork is the ground-breaking imagery process I have developed that harnesses the imagination to guide our lives and create positive life choices and profound life changes. It enables us to access the images or models that are implicitly guiding us that we may not be aware of, and that may well not be serving us. Once they become conscious, we can allow and encourage them to transform so that they reflect a more balanced, creative and healthy truth. Because imagery has so many functions, I have created a series of imagery structures which can represent the healing imagination, the creative imagination, and the transcendent imagination (Glouberman, 2002, 2013, 2014, 2018, 2022 [forthcoming]).

Anyone who has ever participated in an ImageWork group will remember the moment that they, or another group member, emerged from an imagery experience like the one Dorothea describes, and looked around the group with an expression of surprise, as if amazed to find the group members still there. The imaginer has been immersed and fully present in the world of the imagination, and it takes a moment or two to come back to the world of everyday reality.

During the experience, if a noise startled you, or your thoughts took over, you might momentarily be distracted, and direct your attention away from your image world, just as you would in the middle of a traditional mindfulness practice. But then you could immediately bring your attention back to your images, just as you might bring your attention back to your breathing if you were doing a breathing meditation. The image world is still there, still real, and can be taken up where you left off.

Thích Nhất Hạnh considered that when you practise mindfulness in community, this generates a collective energy that brings healing and transformation. Group meditation flourishes everywhere for this reason. And just as being

mindful in community strengthens the power of the experience, so the practice of ImageWork in a group where this reality is shared makes it immeasurably stronger and more transformative.

I have wondered why it is so widely accepted that mindfulness should be limited to awareness of present-day reality, to the neglect of the world of the imagination. Perhaps one of the reasons is that the way we use our imagination in our everyday life is very mental and uncreative. We worry, we plan, we regret, we rehearse, we predict. Essentially, we sit in the present, thinking about, and reacting in habitual ways to our pictures of, the past or the future. This is a kind of imagery which I call the ‘Everyday Imagination’. The Everyday Imagination represents our habitual and often unconscious pictures of self and world, and it is mostly influenced by the past, the family, the culture, the status quo. It enables us to stay stuck in our old stories.

By contrast, when we are engaging consciously and creatively with the image world, we don’t think ‘about’ or get a picture of the past or future. We may take a space-and-time ship into a dimension in which past, present and future are one, and then on to the future, and experience all of it as absolutely present. Or we may go back into the past and relive it as if it were happening now. Dorothea was in an alternative reality that was related to her future but was lived in the present moment.

I call this the ‘Transformational Imagination’ because through it, we tap into our intuitive wisdom and have the possibility of new understandings and transformations. This is the level of the imagination that great scientists, artists, mathematicians, writers, poets and psychotherapists call upon to make the creative leaps that characterise great theory and practice. And it is this imagination that is always experienced in the present moment.

## Staying Present

In imagery experiences, as in mindfulness experiences, we may not always be able to retain our present-moment focus. Learning to do so is a practice that everyone has to go through to become able to stay committed to the world of the imagination and the world of the here-and-now. Let me give an example of how this works in the world of the imagination.

I was working with a new client, Beth, who wasn't used to ImageWork, and I wanted her to have a conversation with her inner child. I said: 'There's a little girl sitting with you with your name, the little girl you once were. How old is she?' She said, without looking, 'She's always 8'.

Not looking, and then saying what she always is, is of course a sure sign that this is simply a thought based on past experience, and not a fresh new image created and experienced in the present moment. 'No, look at her', I said. 'She may not be 8. How old is she?' Beth now said, 'Oh, yes, she's six'.

'And what is she wearing? And what is the look on her face and the feeling in her body?' As Beth sought to answer this, she was really able to focus on the little girl and see what was going on, rather than what she *thought* was going on based on past imagery experiences.

Where possible, I invite the imaginer to switch places and physically step into the body of the image being, in this case the child, and 'breathe into being' the child. Once they have switched roles, it also helps to ask questions like: 'What are you feeling physically? Mentally? Emotionally? Spiritually?' 'How does the child look to you?' 'How do you feel in her presence?' 'Did you hear what she said and what she asked or demanded?' 'Can you now respond?' This gets the Imaginer to tune into themselves in their new role, and more fully engage in order to answer the questions.

When the Imaginer returns to their original place, I repeat some of the same instructions.

'Breathe into being Self. Did you hear what the child said to you and what the child asked or demanded of you? Can you now respond?' I always say, 'Did you hear what they said?' because, amazingly, whatever one has said and done in another role can only be absorbed fully when returning to being Self. It doesn't necessarily happen automatically. Indeed, people sometimes have no idea what they said in the other role. In this case, I wouldn't remind them, but get them to go back to the other place and see if they can remember. Consciousness has many rooms, and they don't always communicate with each other.

Aside from switching seats, the more the Imaginer can express what they are doing physically, the better. For example, if I am doing a future visioning and the imaginers are turning the dial on the space-and-time ship, I ask them to do it physically, with their hand. To check out that people really are in the experience, I might say, 'When you can feel the plush seat, raise your hand/tell me. When you see the screen, let me know.' You are essentially asking, 'Are you really fully present in the body and mind of someone or something else? If not, let me help you get there' (see Glouberman, 2022, forthcoming)

The equivalent question in traditional mindfulness might be: 'Are you really present in your body and in your environment? If not, let me help you get there.'

## Why an Imaginer May Not Be Able to Be Mindfully Committed to the Image World

My client Janet described very clearly to me a memory of being neglected by her mother and abused by her father, and told me that at that time she had told a friendly adult that there was something very wrong in the family. Yet the memory of the actual abuse was so painful that she didn't want to believe it, and kept saying she couldn't really remember and wasn't sure it ever happened.

As I did with Beth, I asked her to look and see who was the child who was sitting with her. It was six year-old Janet, looking very sad. I invited the adult Janet to talk to the six year-old and tell the child that she was adult Janet from the future, and she was here to help little Janet, and wanted to hear all about what had happened to her. This is a rather standard beginning to a conversation with the inner child.

Janet did this happily, but when I asked her to switch roles and become the child, she couldn't stay in the role of the child for more than a moment at a time. I asked the child what it was that she felt was wrong in her family, and the child would say, 'I hate being left alone'; and then a moment later, she'd be referring to this in the past tense – 'Yes, my parents would leave me for hours on my own' – words which could only have come from the adult.

I tried for a while to help her to stay focused on being the child in the present moment, but it became clear that she was not really ready to go back there, and as soon as she felt the pain, she would jump out of the child consciousness into adult thinking. We agreed that we would take our time with this process, and wait until she was ready. This is a good example of a time that the imaginer cannot stay fully present, because playing that role of child too fully brings the trauma too close. This may also be the reason why someone finds it difficult to be mindful of their body and of the world around them.

But even when there is good reason for the imaginer to slip out of role, or to stop being mindful, it is not for ever, and also, there are ways to make it easier by shifting the focus or keeping things as safe as possible. This is important both in mindfulness and in ImageWork.

A suppressed trauma is not the only reason why present-moment awareness is difficult. It is quite common for the imaginer to keep slipping out of the present moment into rational thoughts. Reasons why the imaginer might want to remain in their rational self include:

- fearing a loss of control
- avoiding possible pain
- making sure to have the outcome they want
- being in the habit of living in their rational mind
- being in the grips of a powerful story about themselves

These may also block a person from being mindful in their present-day physical reality. When I participated in retreats in Plum Village, Thích Nhất Hạnh's monastery, I found that he would introduce his own kind of imagery work, including for example conversations with our inner child, or with our parents when they were children, into his meditations. He saw that working with the imagination to resolve problems and clear blocks can help make it more possible to become fully present in the world of physical reality.

It is also the case that practising staying present and calm in the world of the imagination can enhance the ability to stay present in everyday life. For example, I do an exercise which I call 'Stepping off Cliffs' in which I ask people to imagine a cliff which represents something in their lives, and then ask them to step off. Because of the power of the imagination, this can be incredibly frightening, as it would be in real life, and I often take people's hands and accompany them to the edge in order to help them do it.

What happens when people step off their imagined cliff? Surprisingly, they are always safe: they invariably fall safely, or float, or get wings and fly, or see a bridge rising to meet them, or some other wonderful thing happens to keep them safe and happy. Or anyway, this has always happened every time I do this exercise, and I have done it many times indeed. It also turns out that I am not alone in this experience. Indeed, there is a quotation widely attributed to Richard Bach that describes this experience exactly:

When you have come to the edge of all the light you have

And step into the darkness of the unknown  
Believe that one of the two will happen to you  
Either you'll find something solid to stand on  
Or you'll be taught how to fly!

When I first saw this quotation, I thought it had been written by someone who had been to my group! It is fascinating to observe these common patterns that emerge when you work with imaging that can teach us about everyday life.

This exercise can be practised again and again as a kind of mindfulness practice. I originally created it to keep myself calm when walking alongside cliffs in real life, which it has. But it has also enabled many people to calmly face challenges that previously raised all their fears, and to stay present and courageous.

## **The Meaningful Imagination**

Long-time ImageWork student Eleanor told me of a touching image from her first experience of ImageWork that changed her view of herself, and which she still cherished 20 years after she first had the image.

My image of myself was of a threadbare teddy bear. It was one of my children's stuffed toys. It was worn to a thread from rubbing it at night, and the stuffing had fallen out. But then I realised: that was because it had been so loved. And that was so revealing.

I was threadbare. I was weary. But I hadn't understood that I was also loved. And that gave me huge comfort. That image has walked with me all this time.

As we have seen, being mindful of your breathing and being mindful of your experience in the world of the imagination require the same kind of focus. However, there is an important difference between them. When we focus on our breathing, we are simply putting our attention to something physically real, whereas when we are doing ImageWork, the images we focus on mindfully are generally also a meaningful reflection or metaphor for ourselves and our lives. This is why Eleanor's image meant so

much to her that it 'walked with her' for 20 years.

Dorothea, whose story of climbing the ladder was so vivid, concluded from her image that she needed to 'seize every possible opportunity, regardless of whether it seemed practical', and that this would lead her both to realise her dreams, and to find subjects for her paintings that she could not yet envisage. And indeed, 'That is what happened'. The reflections of what I would call her 'soul's whisperings' were so clear to her from the imagery experience that they not only sketched out a course of action, but predicted what she would find in the future.

Although the image that emerges is very personal to the imaginer, it can also have a more universal meaning, easily understood by other people besides the imaginer. Dorothea's interpretation of her image went beyond what most listeners or guides could have understood, but the meaning of Eleanor's teddy-bear image is so accessible that I have been able to use this image as an inspirational metaphor for other clients.

That said, it is possible to go into the world of the imagination for other purposes. If you go to a peaceful and safe haven in your imagination to relax and be nourished, the experience is not being used as a metaphor but as an opportunity to let go of everyday realities, to refresh and to heal. This is very like traditional mindfulness, though it takes place in the world of the imagination rather than the everyday physical world. But most ImageWork exercises are intended to go further, and to reflect, illuminate and transform our lives.

## **Spirituality and the World of the Imagination**

One of the wonderful things about the combination of mindfulness and meaningfulness in the world of the imagination is the pathway it opens to spiritual experiences without ever having to label them as 'spiritual'. I have always been wary of assuming that any belief system is shared by my clients and colleagues, and I like

to work with images that can evoke a spiritual perspective but which can be simply considered images to commit to in the world of the imagination.

The use of light is a good example of this freedom of choice about what you believe. Is imagining and working with light another way of saying that we are doing spiritual work? Light can certainly be experienced as spiritual. We commonly talk of the light of the soul, and wisdom beings tend to be pictured as emanating light. But light can also be presented as an image to explore and experience, as you would explore any other image. This gives the imaginer the freedom to take it in any way they feel comfortable.

Because of the importance of giving imaginers the freedom of their beliefs, the language I use as a guide is very important. For example: 'I'd like you to imagine there is a big light behind you larger than life itself. Let's call it the soul.' This makes clear that it isn't necessarily the soul if you don't believe in the soul. Or 'I'd like you to imagine that there is a wise being opposite you. It can be your long deceased grandmother, a spiritual being, or a teacher you respected. Who is it?' I *don't* say: 'Behind you is the light of the soul.' Or 'There is a wise being sitting opposite you.' I use words like 'I'd like you to imagine...', to make clear that this is *your* imagination, and you can imagine whatever feels right to you. Once we say that something or someone spiritual is there, we are assuming that the person believes that this is possible or likely. They may, or they may not.

If I am working individually, it is easy to check, and to use the language my client is happy with. In a group, I normally ask first how many people hold some meaning for the word 'soul'. In the groups that I run, most people do. I ask people to give some idea what they mean by that word. I also ask people who don't hold a meaning for the word 'soul' whether they have a word for something that goes beyond their everyday reality, and what it is. Then I tend to alternate my language, and occasionally use the words they have given me.

Some of the exercises I use originate from a spiritual perspective. For example, 'Walking the Golden Path between the Opposites', the ImageWork exercise I give below originates as a spiritual image of 'the middle way'. But I tend to present it as an opportunity for the imaginer to explore two extreme positions, and then to find a new position by doing a walking meditation down the middle, imagining it is a golden path. For some people this becomes a spiritual experience. For others, it is simply a way to reach balance, present-moment focus and peace.

It is certainly true, however, that imagining light has an enormous power to align us with our deeper self, and to offer us protection, healing and wisdom. Sending people light can often be felt as healing by the person to whom it has been sent. Using the image of stepping back into the light, or expanding the light field around us, tends to have an immediate calming and balancing effect, particularly when we feel agitated or confused. Indeed, although there are a variety of ways of working with light without presupposing a belief system, I have found that when people who have no spiritual beliefs work with light as an image, often something shifts in their understanding, to the extent that they sometimes have something akin to an enlightenment experience.

One group member and client, Tracy, worked in one of my ImageWork groups with an exercise I call 'Mind, Heart and Soul'. She was someone who didn't know she had a heart and soul, and would never have come to a group that was labelled 'spiritual'. As always, I suggested that she use the image of a light behind her to represent the soul, and she didn't have to believe in it. But as a result of her experiences, in which she learned to imagine, focus upon and listen deeply to what her mind, heart and soul were saying, she described this:

My mind was scary and wanted to block my heart. It was very angry. 'You don't exist', it told the heart. Every time I had a desire to do something, the mind told me something else, and I did what my mind said. I got to see that

my heart had a huge capacity for joy, but I wouldn't let it out. And the light of the soul was pure behind me. That's the first time I felt this huge energy of the soul coming.

Then when we were in the circle, my body began shuddering, and when you asked me to look around the room, all I could see were people's souls – their pure unconditional souls. The colours were more vivid, and I saw auras and energy. That euphoric state lasted about four days when I was at one with the world. I could no longer deny that there is something more than my physical body.

I wanted to be dead at 40 because life was too hard. Now I was in bliss. After four or five days I was out of that euphoric state, but that was a beginning of a whole massive shift. Suddenly I have a soul, a heart, a different perspective on life. I realised I did die a symbolic death, that the old me died and a new me was born. I didn't know who I was now, and I had time to explore.

Eventually this exploration led her on a journey from being a burnt-out high-flying lawyer to becoming a social entrepreneur working with indigenous communities.

## **Walking the Golden Path between the Opposites**

One of the loveliest ways I know of bringing to life the power of mindfulness in the world of the imagination is the exercise I call 'Walking the Golden Path between the Opposites'. I invite the imaginer to see two mountains with a golden path down the middle. The two mountains represent two opposite attitudes the person has, which could be: I am helpless vs I'm omnipotent, or my partner can do no wrong vs partner can do no right, or poor me vs I am a gift to the world. The imaginer walks around each of the mountains and talks to themselves as they would if they were in the grips of one of these attitudes.

Then I teach the imaginer how to do a walking meditation down the middle, taking one step with each breath and saying in a rhythm with the steps: 'One breath, One step', or 'Present

Moment, Wonderful Moment'. Thus they are literally walking mindfully, but in the world of the imagination, imagining that they are walking on a golden path.

We often think that our inner critic is harmful, but being super positive is good. People sometimes talk of the 'good mountain' and the 'bad mountain'. In fact, the two mountains are really two stories about ourselves or about someone or something else, and whether positive or negative, they are still stories, and stop us from being fully present in the here and now. As we mindfully walk the golden path, there is no story, only commitment to the present moment.

This is an exercise that can quickly bring you out of some pretty bad places of self-attack or attacking someone or something else, and enable you to find a centred and mindful way to be. It is one of those I use freely not only in the consulting room or group, but also with friends and colleagues who are open to trying out my exercises.

My friend Cathy was visiting me, and as we sat in my sitting room, she began to complain non-stop about her husband and to ask for my advice. I was tempted to start making suggestions, and then I stopped myself. Instead, I asked if she was willing to try this exercise. She was.

I talked to her about the two mountains and the golden path. As she walked the mountain on the left, she kept talking about how her husband was driving her crazy, and how desperate she was to escape. As she walked the other, she talked of how much she loved him and how kind he was.

But when she walked the golden path, there wasn't even a mention of her husband. It was all about picturing the things she enjoyed by herself or with her friends, like having a prosecco by herself in the light of the setting sun, or going for a long swim or for a sail with friends. She imagined and savoured each picture, and felt an enormous sense of gratitude.



She realised that every time she got into how awful her husband was, there was an equal and opposite story to consider about how much she loved him. But beyond that, she had a whole life she was grateful for that had nothing to do with him. Her relationship with him now took its rightful place as a background sense of partnership that was sometimes happy and sometimes unhappy, but which could always be kept in perspective.

She promised herself to practise walking the golden path every day to keep returning to this sense of peace, contentment and gratitude.

## Finally

I invite the reader to try out the same exercise that Cathy did, and to see how the world of the imagination can open up new opportunities for mindfulness. To this end, I've given the script for this exercise here. I hope you find it an illuminating experience.

1. **Relaxation:** Use any you know. Here is a super brief one: Let your eyes close. Breathe three times slowly, breathing in through the nose, and out through the mouth as if blowing out a row of candles. Say to yourself: (Pause) Relax. (Pause) Deeply Relax. (Pause) Completely Relax. (Pause) Now surrender.
2. **Think of two opposite states of mind:** Think of two opposite states of mind or attitudes or ways of talking to yourself that you veer between, either about yourself, for example 'poor me' vs 'I'm invincible', or about someone else, e.g. 'My brother really loves me' vs 'My brother is so awful to me'.
3. **Imagine two mountains and a golden path down the middle:** Imagine that you can see two mountains, each of them representing one of your opposites, and between them is a golden path. See or sense where they are in the room. Name the mountains, or if you haven't figured out what your opposites are, ask each mountain what it is, and see what comes up.
4. **Walk around the first mountain talking to yourself:** Go to one of the mountains, and walk around it in circles, or go in circles up the

mountain – whichever feels more comfortable. Talk to yourself aloud, and just say all the things you think or tell yourself when you are in that frame of mind. Feel free to exaggerate, and make it bigger than life, so you really get the picture.

5. **Walk around the second mountain, talking to yourself:** Now go to the other mountain, and do the same. Notice what comes up on this mountain. It should be more or less the opposite of what you were saying around the first mountain,
  6. **Walking meditation on the golden path:** Now take the path in the middle, which is a golden path. Walk very slowly on this path between the mountains, aware that you are on a golden path, and do a walking meditation, taking one step, one breath. Breathe out with your first step, and breathe in with your second step, and so on. If you wish, say this mantra of Vietnamese Buddhist teacher Thích Nhất Hạnh: *Present Moment* (first step) *Wonderful Moment* (2<sup>nd</sup> step) *Present Moment* (3<sup>rd</sup> step) *Wonderful Moment* (4<sup>th</sup> step), and keep on with this. Do this for a while until the practice feels stable.
  7. **Self-Talk on the Golden Path:** Let yourself become aware of what it is like to be on this path and how the world looks; and when you are stably present, start to talk to yourself on this path. Notice how this self-talk is different from the self-talk on the two mountains.
- [Please note: If you find you are telling a story about yourself – i.e. describing yourself or your life, even if it sounds like a better and more balanced story than the mountains – then go back to the walking meditation, until you are really in the present moment. What you are saying to yourself should not be a story, but a present-moment expression of what is happening, or needs to happen, right now.]
8. **Count up:** I'm slowly going to count up from one to five, and when I say 'five', I will open my eyes, feeling relaxed and alert, bringing the peace and wisdom back with me.
    - a One, two... – coming up to the surface, eyelids becoming lighter;
    - b three... – alert but still relaxed;
    - c four, five... – eyes open.
    - d I stamp my feet. I come back to this room.

- 9. Reflect, share and look towards the future:** What has this meant, and how can you make use of your experience to stay more centred in future? How would your life be different if you were walking the golden path? Share with someone, and make notes or do drawings.
- 10. Homework:** Commit yourself to walking the golden path once a day for the next week or fortnight. What changes in you or your attitudes, as you do it regularly?

## References

- Glouberman, D. (2002). *The Joy of Burnout: How the End of the World Can Be a New Beginning*. London: Skyros Books.
- Glouberman, D. (2013). *Life Choices, Life Changes: Develop Your Personal Vision with Imagework*. London: Skyros Books.
- Glouberman, D. (2014). *You Are What You Imagine: 3 Steps to a New Beginning Using Imagework*. London: Skyros Books.
- Glouberman, D. (2018). *Into the Woods and Out Again: A Memoir of Love, Madness and Transformation*. London: Aeon Books.

Glouberman, D. (forthcoming, 2022). *The ImageWork Handbook: How to Work with Transformational Imagery in Psychotherapy, Counselling, Coaching, and the Helping Professions*. Wyastone Leys, Monmouth: PCCS Books.

Hanh, T.N. (1992). *Peace Is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life*. New York: Bantam Books.

Hanh, T.N. (1999). *The Miracle of Mindfulness: An Introduction to the Practice of Meditation* (trans. M. Ho). Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press.

Moreno, Z., Blomkvist, L.D. & Rützel, T. (2014). *Psychodrama, Surplus Reality and the Art of Healing*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

## About the contributor



**Dina Glouberman, Ph.D.**, is a psychotherapist, writer, international trainer, and world expert in imagery-based therapies. She is Co-founder/Director since 1979 of Skyros Holistic Holidays, which has pioneered community-oriented holistic health holidays worldwide. More

recently, she has founded and directs the Aurora Centre in Southern Italy, to train therapists, counsellors and consultants in her approach. Dina is a course leader on the Faculty of the MA (Clinical) in Psychotherapy, the Tivoli Institute in Dublin, and a member of the Board of Directors of the Association for Humanistic Psychology (Britain). DrGlouberman is the author of the classic and widely translated books *Life Choices, Life Changes; The Joy of Burnout; You Are What You Imagine; and Into the Woods and Out Again*. Her forthcoming book is *The ImageWork Handbook* – the definitive ImageWork training manual for practitioners, which will include the theory and practice of working with the imagination, and scripts for all the main Imagework exercises.