

Inviting Your Full Self to the High Holy Days - 2011/5772

a jmc holiday worksheet by alison baichter and benjamin ross



The *Yamim Noraim* (Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur) are here. We're tasked with reflecting on our lives and practicing *teshuvah* (returning). Through *teshuvah* we examine our actions over the past year, seek forgiveness from ourselves, others, and the Divine and dedicate ourselves to do better next year.

These sacred days provide an opportunity to ask ourselves the hardest questions and explore all the nooks and crannies of our thoughts, words, and actions over the past year. What's beautiful about this process is we're given the awesome opportunity to meet ourselves exactly where we are and practice being accountable. *Teshuvah* is about living a reflective life and taking responsibility for how we treat ourselves and interact with our family, friends, loved ones, colleagues, and even strangers.

Practice Instructions:

Let's invite our full selves to this practice. Sitting right here and now in the present, look back over your past year's journey while visioning out the potential in the year to come. Before working with the three simple steps below close your eyes for a moment and take a few deep breaths.

Bring your awareness to your present moment, check in with your breath, your body. Feel the seat beneath you. Return to your breath. Notice how you fill with breath and then how this same breath is released back to the world. As thoughts arise, notice if and where they reside in your body. Notice where you feel tension in your body, and observe your reactions and responses.

Use the questions below to guide your *teshuvah* practice. Spend time with each question and invite yourself to write the most honest answers. This is your practice, your life, and your opportunity to bring your entire self to the process. Whenever your mind inevitably wanders or your focus wavers (which it definitely will), bring yourself back to this work, this paper in your hands. See the divinity in the task at hand, your role in creating the life you want to live and the capacity that you hold at every moment, with every breath, to practice *teshuvah*: to return, to steady yourself, to forgive, to move forward.

Now, turn over this sheet to write your responses:

<p>1. Reflect</p> <p>Over the past year, did I fully live my values? Did I treat other people how I would want to be treated? What do I most regret? What am I most proud of?</p>	<p>2. Seek forgiveness</p> <p>From whom must I ask forgiveness? To whom must I offer my forgiveness (regardless of outcome)?</p>	<p>3. Letting go & moving forward</p> <p>How can I release myself from any residue of the past year? What do I want to practice, seek, or re-commit myself to this year?</p>
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After completing this writing exercise, feel free to revisit your responses daily, weekly, monthly or whenever you remember to re-ground yourself – align yourself with your core values and deepen your spiritual practice.

לשנה טובה *Blessings for a sweet and meaningful new year*

