

excerpt from Chapter 14 of

*The Woman's Belly Book:  
Finding Your True Source of More Energy, Confidence, and Pleasure*

### Restoring Your World

What difference will deepening your awareness into and energizing your body's center make in your life? What difference will having more vitality, pleasure, confidence, compassion, creativity, intuition, and sense of purpose make in the everyday details of your life?

More vitality means your life force is flowing more fully and freely — the definition of health and healing. With more vitality, you're more receptive to and savvy about sensual and sexual pleasure. You're all the more equipped to share such pleasures in intimate relationships with others.

Nourished by vitality and pleasure, you have the confidence to be with family, friends, and co-workers in relationships of mutual respect. Your heart full to overflowing, you can be patient, generous, and compassionate with them while still attending to your own well-being.

Confidence and compassion enable you to speak up and out, to express what you know to be true. Expressing your originality, you also draw on your intuition, coming up with creative ways to solve problems and introduce innovations at home, at work, and in your community.

The exercises had a surprising effect in my life. I found myself feeling more empowered and more "myself." I began to confidently pursue things that had previously caused me great anxiety. Opportunities began to arise and gave me the chance to review what I really wanted. I found that I needed to realign my intention.

Without the sense of empowerment I received from the exercises, I would still be stuck, depressed, and lacking focus. Now I am focused, clear about my intention, confident, and taking action steps to achieve my dreams.

— Anna

Vitality, pleasure, confidence, compassion, creativity, intuition, and sense of purpose — all are qualities and capacities that support you in clarifying your heart's desire and actually living in alignment with your soul's purpose. When you're living in such alignment, you're not just following your bliss — you're living your bliss.

Bliss. That's the bonus of living a gutsy life. That's the bonus for honoring your belly and energizing the soul power concentrated in your body's center.

Taking charge of your pro-creative power, coming home to yourself, puts you at the center of your world. And rather than being self-absorbed, you're self-fulfilled. The experience of self-fulfillment allows you to sense your kinship with creation.

As I opened my eyes after the Alignment exercise, I found myself looking out through the picture window and saw the fir tree out there. My fingers were the tree's fingers. The tree's light green needles at the tips of its branches were like fingers, like my fingers.

— Elaine

Your sense of kinship with creation affirms your intimate connection with the web of life. You know, in your gut, that what happens to another creature is also happening to you. It's not just that redwood tree that's being logged for decks on second homes; it's not just that river that's being trashed by a factory's waste stream; it's not just that sky that's being clouded by weather-modifying chemicals. It's your tree, your river, your sky. Their fate is not separate from yours. A question then arises: What's your responsibility for protecting them?

Honoring and activating your *hara* power doesn't necessarily mean you'll be walking the picket lines, carrying placards, or camping outside the president's door. If that's your choice, firing up your *hara* power will certainly help give you the guts to do so. But it's not required.

Simply by being who you are — setting the example of a self-validating woman living in alignment with her soul purpose — you're being the change this world needs if we humans are to survive.

## In Gaia's Lap

What are the dimensions of the ecological crisis occurring across this planet? Scientists predict that we'll make the planet uninhabitable in the foreseeable future. According to Deep Ecology activist John Seed, the rate of environmental destruction is so rapid that unless we spark "an unprecedented revolution in consciousness," no action that we take now can save us. "Nothing but a miracle would be of any use," he declares.<sup>1</sup>

I believe that women — you, me, all of us — can be that miracle. What do you imagine would happen if women acknowledged the pro-creative power we carry within our body's center? We would know indisputably, in our guts, that our bodies are the earth's body. What degrades the earth — the goddess Gaia, as the Greeks named her — damages us. What nourishes the earth nurtures us.

When we love our bellies, we open to a tender, intimate connection with the planet. As we allow ourselves to breathe deeply, we notice the quality of the air. As we allow ourselves to eat in peace, we notice the quality of food and we care about the soil in which it grows. As we feel our kinship with the trees, we notice the fate of the forests.

We have been sitting in Gaia's lap for a long time. Now it's time for us to hold her in ours.

## Alternatives to Obsession

As we obsess about our body weight and shape, American women bankroll the cosmetic-surgery and weight-loss industries with more than \$40 billion each year. What else could we do with our \$40 billion?

What do you imagine would happen if instead of trying to banish our bellies, we directed our life force and our money to healing the distress within our communities, our nations, the

world? What would happen if instead of trying to shrink our stomachs, we used the resources we already have to ensure humankind's survival? What do you imagine would happen if women took charge of our pro-creative power and claimed it as our own? We would discover that we already possess the courage, confidence, passion, compassion, creativity, and insight that we need in order to act on behalf of the Earth and all her creatures.

For nearly two years, my grandmother had been coming to me in my meditations. I knew she was bringing a gift for me, but for eighteen months I wouldn't even look at what she was holding. When I was willing to look at it, I saw that she was holding a gold ball of energy. After another few months, I took the ball from her and I brought it into my belly.

After that, everything fell into place. A community development foundation asked me to be its director. I accepted the job once the board agreed to my plan for genuine grassroots empowerment.

— Linda

For millennia, women have expressed our pro-creative power by bearing and raising healthy children. Our pro-creative power has always worked through us to ensure the survival of our lineage, our family, our tribe. The birth-giving capacity of our bellies has ensured the survival, and evolution, of the human species.

In these times, our tribe is all of life. Our home encompasses all of Earth. Today, women have the opportunity — perhaps the calling — to apply our pro-creative power to preserving life on this planet.

In class tonight, as we were doing the moves, I received a picture of how the energy was moving. It was like a stone dropping into a pond, producing oval ripples that radiated outward. With each breath, this energy increased, big waves of belly energy rippling throughout the room, passing on out of the building, on out through the whole city.

Later, when we were doing the workout again, there was a point when we were all in sync, and all fully concentrating within. Here again, we were building up this pond effect. Each breath, each gesture, each woman was producing bigger and bigger ripples. Who knows? Maybe our belly energy rippled all the way east to the Atlantic, north to Canada, south to Florida, and west to the Pacific!

— Tricia

Imagine: We cultivate and direct our pro-creative power to generate peace, justice, and ecological sustainability within every realm of human endeavor. Imagine: We bring our pro-creative power to bear as we establish new ways to feed, shelter, educate, employ, entertain, inspire, and govern ourselves. We organize new ways to promote our health, resolve our conflicts, serve each other, protect each other, and preserve the life of the natural world.

Where do we start? We start with ourselves. We value and validate ourselves. We celebrate our body's center as the chalice of our sacred wisdom and spiritual power.

### Our Future, Our Choice

Contemporary Western culture shames women's bellies, and it's a clever tactic. Shame makes a woman's belly an uncomfortable place to be.

To avoid feeling such discomfort, we're tempted to lose touch with the pro-creative power our bellies shelter, withdrawing our awareness and abandoning our body's center. If we do so, what's the result? Conveniently for the culture, we barely notice that our soul power is leaking away. Then we wonder why we feel so empty inside, gutted, harboring a hole that nothing can fill and a hunger that nothing can satisfy.

Many women, myself included, have tried to flatten our bellies and hide them from sight. We hope that by removing the target we'll avoid the shame and the abuse. We try to comply with the culture's conventions. Like hostages becoming loyal to our captors, we cooperate with our own oppression.

But when we make our bellies rigid, we cut ourselves off from our core energy, our pro-creative power. We make our body's center the focus of our self-contempt. We unconsciously work the culture's violence upon ourselves.

The culture entices us to become agents for our own disempowerment. It urges us to

enforce its restrictions on ourselves and each other — with diet pills and weight-loss plans, cosmetic surgery, stick-figured dress-up dolls, and instant-slimming undergarments.

The culture constantly bombards us with directives to belittle our bellies. But the good news is this:

We do not have to torture ourselves any longer.

We don't have to make the culture's cruelty our own. We don't have to enforce its oppression upon ourselves, our friends, our daughters, our sisters.

We can choose to cherish our body's center, our center of being. We can ungirdle our bellies and let ourselves breathe and feel. We can take charge and express the creative power that we already carry within us.

As we enliven our bellies, we can consider ourselves to be cultural pioneers. In every moment that we honor our bellies, we are revaluing and reconsecrating our womanhood. We are transforming our culture. We are creating a new world.

This is my prayer: May we know ourselves to be sacred beings.

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