

Chapter 11

Meaning in everyday life

Living fully in the moment

It's like that door you find one day, way at the back of your closet. And you go into the closet and turn the knob and open it. And inside there it is: the immense Caribbean. And you can't believe it. You've lived here for so long, and you never knew that all this was right here the whole time.

Laurie Anderson

On the way to the play we stopped to look at the stars. And as usual, I felt in awe. And then I felt even deeper in awe at this capacity we have to be in awe about something. ... I decided I would set time aside each day to do awe-robics.

Jane Wagner

I see skies of blue
Clouds of white—
Bright blessed days
Dark, sacred nights—
And I think to myself ...
What a wonderful world!

"What a Wonderful World," sung by Louis Armstrong

Meaning shines through

When I revisited my native Australia a few years ago; some friends took me to a nature preserve near Adelaide. It boasted a variety of the best-known local fauna, including an emu. An emu, a large flightless bird roughly the size of an ostrich, padded around the enclosure. It seemed to give me permission to approach, so I got really close. It was about my height, so before long we were eyeball to eyeball. I found myself peering into the emu's eye—it seemed like it was three inches across, and of wild aspect. That bird seemed to be looking straight through me. I realized I was in awe so thick I'd have to dust it away afterwards. This emu seemed to be saying, "I know you through and through, old fellah." I had to break off the contact. It was eerie.

Afterwards, I realized that life is full of these kinds of encounters, where a simple event starts brimming over with awe. Such events seem to occur more and more in the midst of our ordinary lives: at home, on the job, in our communities, and around the world. In these moments we sometimes encounter more than we are ready for—events that shake our world with experiences of fascination and dread. How we respond to these experiences greatly affects our self-story.

In this chapter we will reflect upon everyday experiences of transparency. We will talk about the states of being that accompany these awe experiences. We will use poetry, music, song and metaphor to allow stories to emerge that make these events "our friends" and part of our inner wisdom.

Imagine sitting with a loved one, watching a beautiful sunset and listening to the waves softly lap on the shore. The sun, a huge red ball, sinks gently to the horizon and is gone. Imagine watching a mourning dove sit on her nest day after day, until two little heads appear. Imagine looking at a painting or a piece of art that takes us to somewhere deep inside, or being with a friend as she gives birth to a child. Imagine another moment. A few misspoken words of gossip passed on, or a secret revealed—words that can never be retracted, that hurt, offend and dismay another person. Both the pleasurable and the painful experiences can make permanent imprints on our consciousness. They might remain with us, becoming points of reference for the rest of our lives.

These are all everyday events, but they are significant and need our attention. How do we know they are important? They evoke deep feelings, ranging from ecstasy to dread. They might bring tears to our eyes, or stillness. When such events happen, it is time to pause and feel that moment, without judgment.

Perhaps a fresh air walk through a forest or by the ocean gives us the kind of pause we need. Quiet meditation or an intense hockey game might allow us to see through

a situation. A conversation with a friend might suddenly open up a new perspective. Journaling using the exercise at the end of chapter 2 or the four-level reflection process of the last chapter might be fruitful in seeing through a significant moment to its meaning. Sleeping with the expectation that all will be revealed can clarify an experience if we pause in our waking moments to note what we have discovered. The brain has many capacities, some of which work best when we are most relaxed.

Sometimes ordinary language just doesn't get at the wonder or dread we are experiencing. We need the language of the heart in the form of songs, poems, images, stories, symbols, paintings, rituals or ceremonies to speak to our momentous event. Perhaps we pick up a paint brush and begin to put colour and form upon a sketchpad, write a poem or do something as simple as light a candle. We dance to our favourite music. It is as though our whole being has to be involved if we are going to be able to create a meaningful story about this experience.

Recently, a sailing school of 48 teenage students, 8 teachers and 8 crew members found themselves shipwrecked in the Atlantic Ocean, some 500 kilometres off the Brazilian coast. Of these, 42 were Canadian high school and university students, and others came from the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Mexico, Europe and the West Indies. After their rescue two days later, a weary teacher named Ruth McArthur reported:

Students, teachers and crew helped pull each other into the life rafts. The students worked together to make sure everyone was safe and sound. Cold and shivering, they kept their spirits up by singing as they bailed water from life rafts constantly for the 42 hours they spent adrift in the south Atlantic ...

How different this ending could have been if fear had overwhelmed them. Singing as a community played a role in helping them to take in the dread they all felt, so that panic was not allowed to rule.

It would be interesting to follow up with some of these teenaged shipwreck survivors, to discover the stories they have now created about that event. Perhaps they made new songs, poems or paintings. One would hope that all of them experience themselves stronger because of their shared experience.

Finding profound meaning everywhere

When I hear the word *transparent*, I think of the windows in my condo that let me look out on a park and receive light from the sun. My space changes dramatically

when the curtains are closed. Transparency in our lives happens when we open the curtains and see right through an everyday experience to the insight or universal truth that lies behind it. Transparency points to allowing the light to shine through, or being able to see through the surface to the depth below.

Transparency resembles holding a match under a piece of paper. First there is heat; then the paper turns brown till the flame pops through. A hole appears, and we see through the paper to what lies beyond. Sometimes we can feel a hole forming before we can see it.

The death of a loved one is an objective event. But transparency about the experience might happen a week or even two years later. That event might shake us up, or even tear the bottom out of our very being. Encountering a dead bird on the beach can evoke dread and fascination with our own death, and with the awareness that everyone dies.

Celebrating someone's birthday reminds us that their life and our lives, too, are unique and unrepeatable gifts, and that there's a mystery to being in the world at all.

In recent times we have discovered, or re-remembered, what seems like an extraordinary secret: the deeps of life are not only found on a mountain in the Himalayas, or in some kind of mystical practice, or in a place of worship. Today people are finding profound meaning within the ordinary aspects of their lives. Life turns transparent in the kitchen, on the street corner, or in a community meeting.

On the Discovery Channel on television, I watch a kayaker weave his way down a mountain stream, around rocks, down foaming rapids, into whirlpools and even waterfalls, until he reaches calm water. Suddenly I see right through his adventures on that river, to my own experience of my journey through life. I see how I navigated some passages well. In others I tipped over or rammed into the rocks. Life is indeed a great adventure, filled with awesome challenges—an adventure not just for me, but all of us together, facing a universal experience that everyone encounters. I am grateful that life is this way. Suddenly, the programme catches my attention again. I was merely distracted by a little trip into a transparent dimension of life. I realize that life is full of these strange moments when the awe breaks through, and life becomes like a clear pond. For a moment I see through to the very essence of life.

We don't have to belong to a particular religion to have the capacity for transparent experiences. Television celebrity Roseanne Barr, who starred in *Roseanne* through most of the 1990s, and in 1999 had her own talk show, is probably the least pious person I've encountered. Yet, as she recalled her life in *My Life as a Woman*, she gave this statement:

That's my mood tonight, when everything means something, everything is connected to everything else and nothing exists apart, even me. Every green thing is breathing. You can hear this hum—like when you're at the ocean almost—just a hum, everywhere. Maybe the sprinklers are on—the grass and stuff is getting watered and you can almost hear the drops of water sliding over the grass. On nights like this while sitting all cosy on the floor and my legs cropped Buddhist fashion, drinking champagne out of these real pretty crystal goblets, I go, God, what an incredible life I've had and how lucky I am.

Roseanne speaks here about an experience of profound meaning within the ordinary. Once a person starts feeling for this depth, it is possible to find it everywhere.

One day I was walking, along with thousands of other people, through the popular Eaton Centre mall in downtown Toronto. I was in particularly bad form. I'd had a really hard week and felt sorry for myself. Supposedly, I was looking to buy an umbrella, but I was really trying to leave the week behind. Near the end of the concourse I sat down on a low bench. I could hear water behind me, but I was immersed in thought. Suddenly, someone beside me turned and said, "It's beautiful, isn't it?" I turned to look at the speaker, and said, "I beg your pardon?" "The fountain," he replied. I turned around to look at the fountain. Water was spurting towards the ceiling under pressure from hundreds of spouts and falling with a crash. It was indeed beautiful. I stood up to loosen the crick developing in my neck. After a time looking at the water, I got the strangest feeling that the fountain was inside me: I could feel new life coursing up my body. I said to the man, "Yes, it is indeed, beautiful." And then I was driven to say, "And thank you." I walked away, astonished at the power of that simple incident to breathe new life into me, and at the strangeness of life that allows the most unlikely person to say the right thing to us at the right time. I found that I had just taken a little journey to the centre of awareness.

A question arises: How do I know an authentic experience of transparency when I see it? One test is the presence of awe in the event.

The sensation of awe

Awe is experienced as something external, like something that pours in and fills up our interior space. Awe is a sign of the presence of mystery in our midst. It is the forerunner and accompaniment of experiences of transparency, and it has many faces. As Rudolf Otto points out in *The Idea of the Holy*, awe is always a blend of dread and fascination at the same time. It is a stirring of something uncanny, marvellous or

majestic. The experience can cause us to shudder—a sign that something mysterious is looming before us. Or, awe might feel like a Fourth of July fireworks display inside. It has an energy that is compelling and alive.

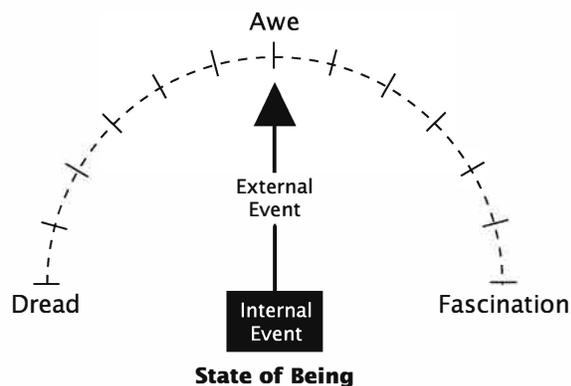
Awe defines humanness. It is as objective as bananas. When a group of people encounters awe, it is palpable, sometimes even frightening. Time seems to stand still. Your pulse beats faster or slower. When a person experiences awe, it can be heavy with dread or light with fascination. It might come with a tingle, or an odour like roses or sulphur. It comes in many varieties, accompanied by a wide range of emotions—all the way from radical insecurity to ecstasy.

Humanity also experiences moments of collective awe: the wonder of the first airplane flights, of the sinking of the *Titanic*, or the horror of the Hiroshima bomb. The whole world knew a moment of awe at seeing the first pictures of the earth floating in space. More recently we have known the wonder of the Internet's connectivity, the terrible angst of the 9/11 attacks, and worldwide delight as 33 Chilean miners emerged from being trapped underground for 69 days. These events and many more are dripping with awe—some full of dread, others replete with fascination.

The awe that appears in events of transparency is not just some kind of personal or even psychological experience. It is a profoundly human experience that, when acknowledged, enriches our lives and fills them with meaning. Descriptions of transparency come in the language of poetry. When the awe of transparent events impacts us, there is an accompanying state of being. And states of being are often expressed best through poetry, song and metaphor.

States of being

So, what is a *state of being*? Joseph Mathews spoke of it as an inner event that combines a “big feel” (a prominent feeling, mood or attitude), a “big think” (an overarching



or encompassing thought), and a “big resolve” (a new response to life)—all entwined in one state of being.

When my wife Jeanette and I had been married a few months, she began to gently raise the possibility of leaving Australia, and taking an overseas assignment to another ICA location. I had never been out of Australia. The very idea of leaving it seemed utterly alien and fearful to me. One day, when we were lying on Maroubra Beach in Sydney after a surf, she broached the matter again in more direct terms. Her words had a real wallop, like a George Foreman punch to the solar plexus. I remember that I began to shiver (and not because of the dip I had taken). I turned away from her and pretended I hadn't heard her question. Actually, I was in a blue funk, terrified of what lay beyond Australia. Like Columbus's crew setting sail for the New World, I thought that once I left the shore, I would drop into a terrible abyss. That was the big feel. As we went home I continued to brood on the incident with dread. It was as if my wife, so gentle and unassuming, had turned into a blowtorch for me. My big think was: the Mystery had lit a fire under my backside, and I wasn't prepared for that—not while soaking up the sun on Maroubra Beach. The resolve was something like this: Stanfield, maybe you'd better start thinking about what it would take to dive off the high board into that abyss.

Let's explore some ways that we can work with states of being and images to reflect on our own experiences of dread and fascination.

Poetry

Poetry enables us to experience what the poet experienced when meaning bled through his or her everyday life and illuminated the essence of life itself. In feeling the poet's experience, we have an opportunity to see such depth in our own experience.

Gerard Manley Hopkins provides a sharply focused example of awe expressed through poetry. One of his poems begins with an autumn scene, in which a grove of trees is losing its leaves. The onlooker, Margaret, expresses her sorrow over the fact. The poet asks her:

Margaret, are you grieving
Over goldengrove unleaving?
Leaves, like the things of man, you
With your fresh thoughts care for, can you?
Ah! as the heart grows older
It will come to such sights colder
By & by, nor spare a sigh
Though worlds of wanwood leafmeal lie;

And yet you will weep & know why.
Now no matter, child, the name:
Sorrow's springs are the same.
Nor mouth had, no nor mind, expressed
What heart heard of, ghost guessed:
It is the blight man was born for
It is Margaret you mourn for.

The poet comments that, as she grows older, Margaret will experience sights much sadder than that. Then he pushes through the event to the universal sorrow, at the death that we are all destined for. In looking at the dead leaves falling off the trees in Goldengrove, Margaret is really mourning her own death.

Anyone who experiences weariness in their work will resonate with the poem "Tired and lonely" by former UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld, from his book *Markings*. After sharing the heartache of his situation he declares:

It is now,
Now, that you must not give in....

The poet talks about climbing a mountain. We find ourselves asking, What mountain am I climbing? What makes me want to give in?

Then he reflects on whether to weep or complain. He ends the poem with a resolve:

The way chose you—
And you must be thankful.

What is "the way" that has chosen me? How can I decide to be thankful when I am bone-weary?

We could also ask questions like these to deepen our reflection:

1. What state of being is the poet experiencing?
2. What probably happened to the poet the day before? (We might think, "Well, maybe he was at the United Nations Security Council, pleading with them to intervene in the Congo struggle, and he met with stony faces." If we don't know much of the poet's background, we could just as easily create an answer from our own lives.)
3. What was the poet's "aha" the next morning? What did he realize?

As we read the poet thoughtfully, we find our own life experience being interpreted for us with a new slant.

Songs

Songs can play the same role as poetry. We can reflect on the meaning that shines through great popular songs, even the first verse of a simple old song like “Nevertheless” by Bert Kalmar:

Maybe I’m right and maybe I’m wrong,
But nevertheless I’m in love with you.

The key to reflecting on old classic love songs like this is setting them next to our own life situation. Maybe the “you” really is a lover. Or maybe it’s a project I have taken on, or the class of children I teach, or a sculpture I’m working on. The song’s poetry can illuminate our situation. Or perhaps it is our situation that illuminates the song’s words. Whichever way it happens, it helps the process to ask questions like the following:

1. What words or phrases became transparent for you?
2. What experiences from your past did you see when you looked through?
3. Where does this song speak to a situation in your own life at present?
4. What profound insight did the writer have when writing the song?

Many of the classic songs of Gershwin, Rogers and Hammerstein, and Cole Porter are amenable to this kind of reflection: “Night and Day,” “Some Enchanted Evening,” “I Could Have Danced All Night,” “Smoke Gets in Your Eyes,” “I’ll Be Seeing You,” and many others have this capacity for transparency.

Perhaps you are thinking, “Well, that’s all right to talk about the golden oldies, but what about rock and roll or contemporary music? Does it have this capacity for meaning?” Clearly it does: all great songs do. Maya Angelou’s lyrics of “Still I Rise,” as sung by Los Angeles singer Ben Harper, raise powerful questions for anyone open to the message. After Maya shares many ways she rose above oppression, she ends with these lines:

You may kill me with your hatefulness
But still, like air, I’ll rise. ...
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.

The question in any song is, does it speak to my situation? Can I find an example of the writer’s experience in my own life?

On Friday mornings, on Tempo CBC Radio 2 there is a segment called “Music that Rocked Your World,” when listeners share their musical moments. It is amazing what an impact a single piece of music heard at a particular time can do to one’s life. What piece of music has done that for you?

Metaphor

In Exercise 4, we will explore a model of the Other World in the Midst of This World. It is like a map of states of being that you can use to draw out your own metaphors that help you see through your life experiences to transparency. You may find this a helpful reflective tool to use over time. As John Epps puts it,

An interior map such as the Other World charts can tell us where we are and whether or not we are lost. It gives us some guidelines for staying on track, even if the track is rough going. Most helpfully, it establishes for us that, even when we’re in unfamiliar territory and wondering about the place, people have been here before and have found this experience good.

This chapter encourages us to consciously engage in creating meaning for ourselves and with others in the midst of everyday events. It asks us to be present to moments of awe in our lives, to expect and explore those moments and to mark them in some way with poetry, story and music. If we do, our lives will be filled with texture and rich beyond measure. The exercises at the end of the chapter will give us ways to process awe in the minutiae of life, and to allow our reflections to become part of our inner wisdom.

Leadership challenges

Why is it important that we process awe in our daily events?

This is a book about leadership, and leaders are stretched in all kinds of ways. We experience many things, including disappointment, rage, exultation, abandonment, betrayal, victory, extraordinary comradeship and deep solitude. At times we encounter feelings we cannot explain. We might find ourselves assuming that some experiences are good and others bad. But actually, each of these experiences is potentially a window to the deeps of life, an encounter with transparency. These experiences can be strange wake-up calls, but only if we avoid trying to either run away from them or pass value judgments on them. Without gaining insight into what is happening, leaders may become stubborn martyrs, pushing forward without regard to outer or inner feedback. Without sensitivity to the inner spirit, big and small projects can curl up and die.

It is tempting to assume that real life ought to be different from the way we find it. At the launch of a project, we often feel great momentum, high vision and boundless energy. Then, as the project runs into difficulties, leaders are tested. We may find ourselves subject to accusations by others, or we might even accuse ourselves. As leaders we need the capacity to see through what is happening to the project, ourselves and others. We need to find ways to accept our situation and move on. Change is then possible.

 **Exercise 1** *Processing recent moments of dread and fascination*

1. What recent events have had an impact on you?
2. For one of these events, what was the “feel” of it?
3. At that moment where were you on the awe scale (page 234)? Were you more on the dread side or the fascination side?
4. What insight do you have about this moment in your life?
5. What song or poem speaks to this moment? If you wish, write your own verse or title for this moment.

 **Exercise 3** *Encountering mystery*

Context: Sometimes awe-filling absurdity peeks through the facades of business as usual. You feel an emptiness in the awareness that all your hopes and your efforts will someday come to nought. This is not a mistake. This is an insight into the mystery of life itself.

Example: After years of diligent work, a man was finally promoted to a top management position, the pinnacle of a successful career. Moving his personal belongings into the executive suite, he noticed workmen just completing the renovation. Then he saw that his name plate, newly affixed to the door, was in a sliding holder. It occurred to him that he was only a transient occupant of the position. This awareness rocked him. He's never again had the same relationship to his work.

Take a moment and note your own reflections regarding this state of being. What event or encounter with another person has occasioned in you a similar state of being?

1. When have you encountered the fleeting nature of work, whether a role or a task or a project? What images or poetry describe this state?

2. What was the feeling?

3. What insights have stayed with you?

Exercise 4 *Exploring the other world in the midst of this world*

This model came out of real experience. In the 1970s, ICA was asked to facilitate human development in a number of communities across the world. For the most part, the culture and living conditions of these places would be vastly different to anything the staff members had experienced before. Dread and fascination were rampant as families prepared for two- to three-year assignments. There was a need to create models of care for one another during these experiences. One such model emerged out of a research project on states of being and the use of metaphor to help people reflect on their experiences.

Metaphors for states of being

The research staff attempted to distinguish and describe the full range of different states of being one could experience. They came up with 64 states of being, arranged in a series of charts called “The Other World in the Midst of This World.” See pages 250-257. These charts use metaphors to describe when transparency happens in the midst of ordinary life. For example, suddenly, in a conversation with colleagues, their words seem to drip with awe. We realize we have just taken a quick trip to the “other world.” We pick up a newspaper and read of another car bomb in another far away township. We see the photo of the dead and wounded, and life reaches out to grab us again.

The Other World charts were assembled to create a kind of map of transparent experiences and give us a way to talk about them. Many times, we experience things in our lives that we don’t have a “handle” or “handhold” for. These charts help us to name those experiences instead of passing them off with a shrug. The poetry and metaphors used in the charts give us language to use with our own poetry about our experience. We can use these charts in a journal exercise where we combine the images and language of the charts with specific life experiences to produce our own poetic reflections.

The four Other World charts are each organized into *treks*. Each chart groups together some related states of being.

Some states of being have more to do with the mystery in the midst of life: with confronting the infinite. They are experiences of wonder and humility related to being impacted, enveloped, recreated and seduced by the mystery of life. Some have referred to the set of these experiences as the *land of mystery*. The state of being from exercise 3 is from the first trek in this chart. We read that “Nothing makes sense, and neither does everything else!”

Some states of being are more related to the experience of constructing the self— inventing one's freedom of awareness, of inventiveness, of decision and obligation. They are related to the capacity of the self to transcend itself. These states are like being on a *river of consciousness*.

Other states of being involve overwhelming care or responsibility in relating to the world—states of care as appreciation, compassion, responsibility and motivation. These are the states of being experienced by the social pioneer, the community development worker, the doctor working at the medical edge trying to find a cure for AIDS, or the retired person teaching a child to read. We find them in our expenditure on behalf of others, the experience of care as a mountain, luring us irresistibly beyond ourselves. These states are on the *mountain of care*.

Finally, some states of being are associated with difficulties, suffering and even death—certitude, problemlessness, contentment and everlastingness. We find them when we feel confident in the midst of ambiguity, peace in the midst of stress, fulfillment in the midst of fragmentation, the eternal in the midst of finitude. These are the boundless states of being of the *sea of tranquility*.

How we might use the charts

The Other World charts push the edge of our intuition. They are meant as seeds for your thinking, not to limit it or tell you how you should be feeling.

The following examples of working with the charts involve four steps:

1. Pay attention to what experiences stir your feelings.
2. Stop and note what is happening—all the details.
3. Reflect on your feelings, and create a metaphor that names your experience.
4. Go to the charts and find poetry that speaks to that metaphor.

Using the charts and exploring transparency begins with a concrete experience. Something grabs your awareness and pulls at your being, asking you to pay attention. You stop and note what happened. What was going on? How did it make you feel? At this point, stay focused on your body and feelings. Don't start interpreting and intellectualizing what happened. Trust your body, and remember what happened in all its detail.

One woman wrote about a one-day vacation she took:

Yes today I am sitting beside the fire in my fluffy dressing gown, listening to all the music I love, with all the family away at work and school. It is

quiet in my rural setting. The smell of my fresh baked cookies permeates the house. I cuddle with my book and enjoy the opportunity to read for pleasure. A pause—a significant pause in my hectic life. This is life. This is tranquility—a moment away from all my care and obligations. It is like standing still in the warm rain. I feel alive in a new way.

One of the keys to using the chart is the next step—naming your own metaphor for the experience. It might take one metaphor or several to help articulate what this event is like for you. The woman in the fluffy gown chose “standing still in the warm rain” as her metaphor. You’ll notice in her description and in the metaphor that there is no fear—only fascination with how caring this moment is. Finding a metaphor for it allows you to own your experience.

Now take your metaphor and look at the charts. Start reading down the three columns on the right (“a sense of ...,” “like being ...,” and “it’s like ...”). The poetry in these columns talks about the “Big Feel”, or the predominant feeling in the event. Find the poetry that fits your metaphor. It might use similar words, or say something quite different, yet you might think, “Yes, that is my experience.” Then look across the rest of the poetry for that trek, reading from left to right or right to left, considering the column titles and the poetry of that trek.

In the fluffy dressing gown story, the woman chose state of being 59. The prominent mood, feeling or attitude in her event was one of:

being electrifyingly alive, or glowing after a mountain trek. There is a sense of fitful dancing. As I think about the event, it is one of being struck by bliss. This day is a moment of rapture and blissful seizure. If you asked me, I would say my cup runs over. And I acknowledge to myself that I am effulgence. The universal experience is one of a strange gladness.

As you read across, ask yourself if this poetry opens up the transparency of your event, so that you see more in the event than you saw before. If the poetry doesn’t reveal more depths in the event, explore the columns at the right again and find another row of poetic images. It doesn’t take long to find the right one. The point is that each state of being you explore quickly like this, whether it fits or not, gives you a different understanding of your event.

You will note that the categories across the top of the page are trying to open up the relationship we take to events that fit each state of being. They add more poetry to the experience. But you are not limited to these words; you can find your own. By trying to answer the questions of each category while also finding your own poetry, you are

opening up to the transparency and your sense of awe. You are caring for your spirit. Suddenly you fall down a rabbit hole or walk through the veil, and a new world opens up. Wonder is in the air; the everyday event you explore cares for you, and gives you jewels to share with others.

A second example concerns a man's strong reaction to a bad haircut. In reflecting on this event, he wrote in his journal:

It is the day before my mother's funeral. My brother says both of us need to get a haircut before tomorrow and so we go to the local barber. The barber, as he finishes, admits he was not paying enough attention and cut off more than he should have. A look in his handheld mirror shows that my spotty hair loss (*alopecia*) is baldly on display for all to see. I am more than angry. I feel humiliated—embarrassed—exposed. There is a fear of what others might say—of being seen in a different way. It felt like I was naked in a public place. Nothing that anyone said lessened the anger and the rollercoaster of emotions. Family at home gasped and a few laughed. I raced from the house and walked for an hour and then sat in a pub to explore what had happened to me.

You can see in his writing that he is in dread and fear over his situation. There is no fascination at this point. And in looking over the Other World charts, this man chose state of being 2 on pages 250,251. The prominent mood, feeling or attitude in this event is one of

being critically disoriented or riding a tilt-a-whirl carnival ride of emotions. There is a sense of benign madness about it all. As I think about the event, I am struck by the irrationality of life (why would this happen now?) and the absurd existence I have. If you asked me, I would say to you, life is an eternal riddle (how did I get into this situation?). And I acknowledge to myself that I am beyond reason and nothing makes sense. The universal experience is that all of life is absurd.

The diagram on the next page is intended to help us dialogue with the two previous examples of awe and connect them to each of the columns of the Other World Charts. This diagram is working from right to left on the Other World Charts. The column called "discerning question" can help us in the reflective process evoked by the Other World Charts. The questions might be helpful as you work with your own personal example.

Pulling the examples through the Other World chart columns	Discerning question	Example 1 <i>Fluffy dressing gown</i>	Example 2 <i>Bad haircut</i>
<p>The “big feel”—The prominent feeling <i>The next three rows are different ways of describing the predominant mood, feeling or attitude you experience in the midst of the event.</i></p>			
<p>Analogy <i>It's like</i></p>	<p>What might be a similar experience?</p>	<p><i>It's like</i> glowing after a mountain trek.</p>	<p><i>It's like</i> riding a tilt-a-whirl or rollercoaster.</p>
<p>Affective <i>A sense of</i></p>	<p>What is the mood, feeling, attitude related to this experience ... <i>I feel a sense of...</i></p>	<p><i>Affectively, I feel a sense</i> of fitful dancing.</p>	<p><i>Affectively, I feel a sense</i> of benign madness.</p>
<p><i>Like being</i></p>	<p>What is a metaphor to describe the experience you have had. This experience is like being...</p>	<p><i>It's like being</i> electrifyingly alive</p>	<p><i>It's like being</i> critically disoriented.</p>
<p>The “big think”—the overarching or encompassing thought <i>The next two rows are different ways of describing the dominant theme in this event.</i></p>			
<p>Reflective <i>Subject</i></p>	<p><i>If you generalize, this is a story about...</i></p>	<p><i>This is a story about</i> a moment of rapture</p>	<p><i>This is a story about</i> the irrationality of life (why would this happen now)</p>
<p><i>Concept</i></p>	<p><i>The underlying concept is about...</i></p>	<p><i>This is really about</i> being seized by bliss.</p>	<p>What an absurd existence I have.</p>
<p>The “big resolve”—Your declaration <i>The next three rows are different ways of describing your declaration about the event.</i></p>			
<p>Subjective declaration</p>	<p>What is your own internal gut-level declaration about this experience?</p>	<p><i>Subjectively I declare,</i> I am struck by bliss.</p>	<p><i>Subjectively I declare,</i> nothing makes sense.</p>
<p>Titles <i>You and me</i></p>	<p>What would you declare to someone else?</p>	<p><i>Between you and me,</i> my cup runneth over</p>	<p><i>Between you and me,</i> it is an eternal riddle (how did I get into this situation)</p>
<p><i>Myself and I</i></p>	<p>In the depths of your own being what are you saying to yourself about this experience? <i>Between myself and I, I am...</i></p>	<p><i>Between myself and I,</i> I am effulgence.</p>	<p><i>Between myself and I,</i> I am beyond reason.</p>
<p>A moment of clarity—The universal experience that is embedded in this event</p>			
<p>Objective pronouncement</p>	<p>What is the insight that is embedded in this event?</p>	<p><i>Objectively</i> It is a strange gladness.</p>	<p><i>Objectively</i> All is absurd.</p>

 **Exercise 5** *Mapping your experience with metaphors from the Other World charts*

1. Remember an event that has had an impact on you. It can be a big impact or small impact.
2. Describe that event—what happened?
3. What did it feel like? What was the dread, fascination or awe in that event?
4. Create a metaphor that describes your experience of the event— it was like ...
5. Go to the three right columns on the Other World charts and find the appropriate metaphors. Alternatively, write your own metaphors by answering the questions in the worksheet on the next page.

Pulling your experiences through the Other World chart, from right to left	Discerning question	Personal experience	Personal experience
The “big feel”—The prominent feeling <i>The next three rows are different ways of describing the predominant mood, feeling or attitude you experience in the midst of the event.</i>			
Analogy <i>It's like</i>	What might be a similar experience?	<i>It's like</i>	<i>It's like</i>
Affective <i>A sense of</i>	What is the mood, feeling, attitude related to this experience ... I feel a sense of...	<i>Affectively, I feel a sense of</i>	<i>Affectively, I feel a sense of</i>
<i>Like being</i>	What is a metaphor to describe the experience you have had. <i>This experience is like being...</i>	<i>It's like being</i>	<i>It's like being</i>
The “big think”—The overarching or encompassing thought <i>The next two rows are different ways of describing the dominant theme in this event.</i>			
Reflective <i>Subject</i>	<i>If you generalize, this is a story about...</i>	<i>This is a story about</i>	<i>This is a story about</i>
<i>Concept</i>	<i>The underlying concept is about...</i>	<i>This is really about</i>	<i>This is really about</i>
The “big resolve”—Your declaration <i>The next three rows are different ways of describing your declaration about the event.</i>			
Subjective declaration	What is your own internal gut-level declaration about this experience?	<i>Subjectively I declare,</i>	<i>Subjectively I declare,</i>
Titles <i>You and me</i>	What would you declare to someone else?	<i>Between you and me,</i>	<i>Between you and me,</i>
<i>Myself and I</i>	In the depths of your own being what are you saying to yourself about this experience? <i>Between myself and I, I am...</i>	<i>Between myself and I,</i>	<i>Between myself and I,</i>
A moment of clarity—The universal experience that is embedded in this event			
Objective pronouncement	What is the insight that is embedded in this event?	<i>Objectively</i>	<i>Objectively</i>

The Other World

Area A ■ The Land of Mystery *humility infinity wonder*

	Moment of Clarity		The Big Resolve		
	Objective pronouncement	Titles <i>you and me</i>	<i>myself and I</i>	Subjective declaration	
Trek I The awful encounter Impacted by mystery <i>the last up-againstness</i>	1	death awaits everyone	the time of my death	I am a condemned person	it just cannot be that way
	2	all is absurd	the eternal riddle	I am beyond reason	nothing makes sense
	3	finally no-thing	the last of the secrets	I am without ground	no place to stand
	4	and it's all a cloud of awe	lost in quicksand	I am in wonder	and everything is swirling
Trek II The inescapable power Enveloped by mystery <i>there is no escape</i>	5	always in the midst	a foot in two worlds	I am both-and	it's all around me everywhere
	6	every moment	creeping with meaning	I am surrounded	no place to go
	7	no escape	the invisible force	I am caught in the middle	no way to win
	8	and everything's out in the open	the cosmic eye	I am stripped naked	and I'm absolutely vulnerable
Trek III The transformed state Recreated by mystery <i>all things are new</i>	9	a strange power is burning	the giant stirs	I am really alive	everything is simply exploding
	10	everything is different	a stranger in paradise	I am transplanted	nothing is the same
	11	I am something else	my recent metamorphosis	I am not what I was	including me
	12	and life is endless celebration	everybody's banquet	I am perpetually new	and I'm having the time of my life
Trek IV The infinite passion Seduced by mystery <i>the adoration of being</i>	13	it's absolutely incredible	the spoof of life	I am unsettled	I can't believe it's true
	14	forever unknowable	the masked mystery	I am excluded	it's all beyond me
	15	eternally remote	the lonely one	I am abandoned	nothing seems secure
	16	and love has won the day	the perfect love	I am enraptured	and I'm just about to surrender

The Big Think		The Big Feel		
Reflective <i>subject</i>	<i>concept</i>	Affective <i>a sense of</i>	<i>like being</i>	Analogy <i>it's like</i>
1 the creatureliness of humans	radical contingency	terrifying numbness	mortally stunned	hearing the worms cough
2 the irrationality of life	absurd existence	benign madness	critically disorientated	riding a tilt-a-whirl
3 the absoluteness of nothing	ultimate reality	intense shock	irrevocably outcast	wandering in a thick fog
4 the objectivity of awe	primordial wonder	total paralysis	helplessly suspended	hanging over molten lead
5 the meaning of the eternal moment	embodied living	double identity	fatally split	experiencing bi-location
6 the significance of omnipresence	ubiquitous otherness	constant pursuit	under surveillance	having nowhere else to run
7 the relevance of omnipotence	final limits	chronic weakness	perpetually conquered	racing in a field of tar
8 the import of omniscience	total exposure	deep guilt	permanently embarrassed	standing nude in Times Square
9 the unleashed vitality	vibrant powers	eerie strength	intensely enlivened	opening the floodgates
10 the transposed perspective	transformed existence	joyful anxiety	radically relocated	waking up on another planet
11 the actuality of possibility	second birth	trustful expectation	unconditionally recast	recovering from amnesia
12 the reality of change	dynamic selfhood	forever surprised	ceaselessly evolving	watching a pinwheel explode
13 the eternal defection	essential dubiety	irrational self-doubt	shatteringly ridiculed	feeling you've really been had
14 the revelation of enigma	cryptic disclosure	secret resentment	totally injured	being finally excommunicated
15 the unclosable gap	inspirational presence	insatiable yearning	chronically homesick	knowing you'll never go home
16 the honor of the mystery	singular adoration	burning desire	hopelessly enamored	being reluctantly love-sick

The Other World

Area B ■ The River of Consciousness *freedom self awareness*

	Moment of Clarity		The Big Resolve	
	Objective pronouncement	Titles <i>you and me</i>	<i>myself and I</i>	Subjective declaration
Trek V The authentic relation Freedom of awareness <i>I am my consciousness</i>	17 finally all is consciousness	me and my shadow	I am my awareness	I'm at the center
	18 transparently grounded	the last mystery	I am groundless	standing on nothing
	19 creating myself	the invented human	I am forming myself	building myself
	20 and there's a hole at the center	the unfinished symphony	I am never finished	and with no hope of any completion
Trek VI The creative existence Freedom of inventiveness <i>I am my originality</i>	21 a child of the fates	wheel of fortune	I am my temporality	this is the way I showed up
	22 yet no one to blame	without defense	I am my circumstance	there's no excuse
	23 we design our world	you've made your bed	I am my universe	I'm the architect
	24 and become the sign of life	the son of Adam	I am my species	and come do as I do
Trek VII The moral ground Freedom of decision <i>I am my conscience</i>	25 beyond good and evil	crossing the river	I am my stance	I determine good and evil
	26 we decide it all	all is permitted	I am my conscience	keep my own conscience
	27 wholly accepted	the beloved of being	I am well pleasing	am simply a delight
	28 and with a charge to keep	the way has chosen you	I am commissioned	and I'm here on business
Trek VIII The final accountability Freedom of obligation <i>I am my answerability</i>	29 at last my native vale	long journey home	I am not a stranger	this world is not my home
	30 this world is not my home	the fallen angels	I am single-minded	all is relative
	31 the yoke is easy	the untouchable	I am unburdened	I just don't care
	32 and the mystery has its moment	the day the world ended	I am ordered answerable	and there's the ultimate court

The Big Think		The Big Feel			
Reflective <i>subject</i>	<i>concept</i>	Affective <i>a sense of</i>	<i>like being</i>	Analogy <i>it's like</i>	
17	the consciousness of consciousness	ultimate awareness	frozen lucidity	incessantly shocked	being hit by lightning
18	the relation to no-thing	eternal connection	incredible precariousness	irredeemably empty	standing on a mile of air
19	the being that creates itself	self transcendence	horrifying boundlessness	ceaselessly bewildered	meeting yourself coming back
20	the becoming within being	perpetual becoming	everlasting emptiness	unquenchably thirsting	discovering you can't stop the leak
21	the facticity of life	universal fate	unbelievable aloneness	suddenly adrift	being the stakes in a dice game
22	the given is my responsibility	relational situation	exclusive wakefulness	absolutely vulnerable	having no one to tell your troubles to
23	the world we create	contextual world-view	dreadful suffocation	unbearably entrusted	being asked to lift ten tons
24	the measure of a human	archetypal humanness	reckless impertinence	terrifyingly nonchalant	being elected the world's president
25	the ground of ethics	beyond morality	sudden reeling	scandalously intrigued	having broken thru a police barricade
26	the basis of judgement	intentional conscience	exquisite ambiguity	ludicrously unconstrained	being lost in a wilderness
27	the approval of being	cosmic sanctions	indefinable significance	exceptionally precious	finding your glass marble is a diamond
28	the one essential task	primal vocation	absurd election	destinally designated	being a Martian undercover agent
29	at one with the eternal	original integrity	inexplicable rootedness	securely anchored	feeling you've been here before
30	practical commitment	worldly detachment	painful relief	surprisedly victorious	losing all your friends at once
31	the relativity of covenants	passionate disinterest	anxious deliverance	fearfully courageous	feeling your kite string break
32	the final judgement	destinal accountability	unconditioned submission	devastatingly obliged	having accelerator stick at 90 mph

The Other World

Area C ■ The Mountain of Care *service world agape*

	Moment of Clarity		The Big Resolve	
	Objective pronouncement	Titles <i>you and me</i>	<i>myself and I</i>	Subjective declaration
Trek IX The original gratitude	33 a person just shows up	the human adventure	I am living a journey	I am given the chance to do a life
Love is appreciation	34 on this planet	no universe next door	I am given a situation	in the only world there is
<i>I'm in love with life</i>	35 with a lot of others	the family of being	I am one with totality	along with every creature
	36 and everything is unexplainable	busting out all over	I am honoring the deeps	and each is a presence
Trek X The universal concern	37 one day you just care	my brother's keeper	I am concerned	I now belong to all creation
Love is compassion	38 for the whole world	never look back	I am totally engaged	to serve it
<i>binding wounds of time</i>	39 with all your heart	teardrops on the window	I am on the altar	with all my heart
	40 and then you get caught in doom	a far, far better thing	I am expendable	and to the cost of my life
Trek XI The singular mission	41 responsibility for all that is	I've got it all in my hands	I am the guardian	the world has become my ward
Love is responsibility for	42 what's no longer	in the beginning	I am savior of the past	plus all that's gone before
<i>everything is my brother</i>	43 what's not yet	tomorrow is forever	I am the future	plus all that's to come
	44 and there's no one to show the way	mister universe	I am history	and there isn't any pattern
Trek XII The transparent power	45 suddenly you see through all	the other wise one	I am clairvoyant	everything is suddenly clear
Love is motivity	46 develop a strange power	the pillar of iron	I am the rock	here I stand
<i>the strength of ten</i>	47 speak with authority	the healer	I am charismatic	people are listening
	48 and begin to move mountains	the impossible deed	I am a miracle worker	and look at all that's happening

The Big Think			The Big Feel		
Reflective <i>subject</i>	<i>concept</i>	Affective <i>a sense of</i>	<i>like being</i>	Analogy <i>it's like</i>	
33 the incredibility of occurrence	individual fatefulness	breathless amazement	uniquely preferred	winning the super Nobel Prize	
34 the arbitrariness of our universe	ultimate destiny	hidden rancor	eternally imprisoned	feeling a gun at your head	
35 the oneness of all creation	temporal solidarity	unbounded rapport	awefully yoked	having a rock for an uncle	
36 the mystery within each thing	sacramental universe	wondrous harmony	wholly engulfed	being perpetually astonished	
37 the ground of human concern	primal sympathy	unabashed caring	freely bound	mistaking yourself for another	
38 the explosion of fellow feeling	universal compassion	wide horizons	relentlessly driven	migrating to the moon	
39 the consuming mission	sacrificial passion	continual sadness	emotionally drained	taking a one way trip	
40 the identification with doom	reconciled existence	inevitable expenditure	poured out	swinging off the high dive	
41 the care for the world	global guardianship	deep paralysis	forever encumbered	taking charge of history	
42 the appropriation of the past	ancestral obligation	irrational inertia	burdened down	existing before dawn	
43 the task of creation	futuric responsibility	heavy weakness	over rated	being ahead of all time	
44 the burden of election	invented history	hilarious absurdity	devastatingly ridiculed	having the only set of keys	
45 the gift of depth perception	diaphanous intuition	intellectual aching	beyond yourself	looking through a stone wall	
46 the gift of depth motivity	interior discipline	incurable loneliness	eternally primed	imitating the Rock of Gibraltar	
47 the gift of depth communication	impactful profundity	cautious confidence	unequaled adequacy	being forever on-stage	
48 the gift of depth accomplishment	definitive effectivity	aweful danger	deadly accurate	commanding mountains to move	

The Other World

Area D ■ The Sea of Tranquillity *fulfilment death happiness*

	Moment of Clarity		The Big Resolve	
	Objective pronouncement	Titles <i>you and me</i>	<i>myself and I</i>	Subjective declaration
Trek XIII The radical illumination	49 there's suddenly light both ways	the last dawn	I am in the light	I think I found Hesperides
Certitude at the center	50 you know everything	the fountainhead	I am learnedness	all is clear
<i>light shines in shadows</i>	51 meaning is everywhere	the awful truth	I am the word bearer	all is significant
	52 and you've become an avatar	one from depth	I am the way	and I'm the very keystone
Trek XIV The unknowable peace	53 there is a strange victory	cynicism revisited	I am hoping against hope	I am now beyond expectation
Problemlessness at the center	54 no worldly cares	gone is the couch	I am de-burdened	burdens down
<i>security dwells in trials</i>	55 no earthly foes	in search of enemies	I am enemy-less	nothing to hate
	56 and only integrity everyday	the great combatant	I am my own war	and it's just evil and I
Trek XV The unspeakable joy	57 there is a different elan	the virgin spring	I am vibrant	I'm simply all a-tingle
Contentment at the center	58 showers of blessing	let the sunshine in	I am gratitude	everything's a gift
<i>rapture walks with woe</i>	59 a strange gladness	my cup runneth over	I am effulgence	struck dumb by bliss
	60 and everything's worthwhile	happy death	I am my happiness	and what a time to die
Trek XVI The endless life	61 for those who dare to die	the living dead	I am expired	I'm really very dead
Everlastingness at the center	62 there is another life	walking through walls	I am alive again	yet revitalized
<i>death where is thy sting</i>	63 with those who passed	listen to the dead	I am community	with the internal mentors
	64 and eternity is everywhere	grave, where is thy victory	I am more than conqueror	and on the way to forever

The Big Think			The Big Feel		
Reflective <i>subject</i>	<i>concept</i>	Affective <i>a sense of</i>	<i>like being</i>	Analogy <i>it's like</i>	
49 the all-embracing gestalt	seminal illumination	irrational convergence	unreservedly liberated	looking directly into the sun	
50 the wisdom from nowhere	inclusive comprehension	shocking cognizance	absurdly assured	knowing the mind of God	
51 the universal secret	contentless word	image explosion	sacredly empowered	discovering the mother lode	
52 the embodied truth	personal realization	intriguing terror	preposterously nominated	being the last soul on a flying 747	
53 the hope of no hope	creative futility	interior silence	perpetually released	running an endless marathon	
54 the absence of cares	problemless living	detached trust	alertly relaxed	resting easy on a bed of nails	
55 the freedom from hatred	transcended hostility	patient regard	cleanly restored	emerging from a stuffy sewer	
56 the only human struggle	exclusive contradiction	sweet struggle	endlessly embattled	narrowing the war to one front	
57 the animation of the deeps	vital spirits	throbbing exhilaration	tautly coiled	taking a cold shower	
58 the acknowledgment of goods	spontaneous gratitude	teeming life	unavoidably plunged	receiving a bundle of gifts	
59 the moments of rapture	blissful seizure	fitful dancing	electrifyingly alive	glowing after a mountain trek	
60 the meaning of bliss	final blessedness	enraptured stillness	harmoniously surrounded	playing in a great symphony	
61 the dying to self	living death	physical detachment	gloriously condemned	waking up totally dead	
62 the life of the dead one	transformed existence	objective power	irresistibly impelled	waltzing on the water	
63 the fellowship of internal mentors	everlasting community	supporting fraternity	agelessly wise	marching with all of history	
64 the life beyond the grave	contingent eternity	existing forever	eternally present	reversing the time machine	