

How to Hold Space for Transformation

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Hi beautiful,

*Can you remember a time when you felt held?
When you felt safe to share what was in you - uncensored.
When you felt received. Completely..*

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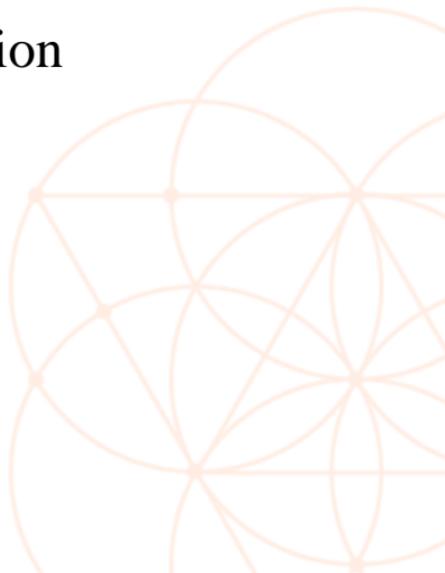
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**This eBook is for you,
if you want to deepen
your ability to help others**



Part 1

Introduction



Hi beautiful,

Can you remember a time when you felt held?

When you felt safe to share what was in you –
uncensored.

When you felt received. Completely.

No judgments made. No need to be anything but you,
right there & then.

No fixing.

No hurry.

No hiding what was uncomfortable.

But also: your joy, your happiness, your learning not
overtaken by someone else's experience.

And do you remember what happened, when you were
feeling held in this way?

We find release.
Release of pent-up emotions.
They were allowed to flow through us.

And when life energy, Shakti, flows through us, our
natural flow is restored.

Healing happens. Energy and Shakti intelligence become
available. We find more spaciousness in ourselves.
And new feelings, thoughts and insights can arise.
Transformation can emerge.

Some say Yin is the greatest healing power that exists.
As a yin healer, I am biased 😊

But this is what we do, when we hold space for someone.
Sounds easy, right?

But we are so prone to wanting to fix. To solve, to reframe, to take pain away, to build on the other's story, to know what needs to happen, to decide what is best, to intuitively know what is going on, to share in the pain, to self-identify with the situation, to bond over heartfelt stuff, to relate to the other based on the stuff that they are going through in that moment.

It's what we were taught to do.

But we also have this ability to hold space. Which leads to release, healing and learning – from within. It leads to magical transformations. ***If we can let it happen.***

With our understanding deepened and our skills practiced, we bring potency to that space, and transformations happen more easily.

You might be surprised at how easily.

In this ebook, we explore how to hold space.
And not just any space, but a space where soul based
transformation can happen.

I am sharing my best tools & practices with you. Gathered
in a life-time of holding space. As a friend, a corporate
consultant, facilitator & trainer, a partner, a mom, healer,
priestess, entrepreneur and a soul-based coach.

You can read about me at the end of this ebook.

Holding space is my super power. And there is nothing I
want to do more than to share what I have gathered so
we can grow together.

What I offer comes from a deep inner knowing, and years of practice, ongoing practice. This is one of the core skills of the priestess and healer.

Maybe you think: that's not me. Keep reading anyway. You don't need to call yourself anything or become anything to use and deepen these skills that are innately yours.

And maybe you think: this is my super power too - I know about holding space. Then I am honoured you are reading this ebook, and I love to hear what it stirs up in you.

**May this book help you find your personal edge,
where the known becomes the not-yet-known,
the seen becomes the to-be-seen
and the field is fertile and moist.**

“To hold presence for another is a great gift to offer and a skill worth practicing. We are so used to thinking about life as a problem to be solved that when we hear of another’s suffering, we are not fully present and instead become preoccupied with figuring out how to respond. We think we have to say the right thing, fix her or find a solution for her.

Great healing happens when we can simply share our hurt and sadness, our anger and doubts, and be received in presence—whether by another or by ourselves. Even a tree, rock or river can hold presence for you. Presence creates spaciousness around the contractions of life. Presence is an intelligence that creates enough room for life to move and evolve, uninterrupted.”

~ Chameli Ardagh

What is holding space?

When we hold space, we create a container with strong boundaries in time & space, that is designated for something specific to happen. It can be meditation, self-reflection, dance, but in our case: personal or group transformation.

We can decide in advance that's what we do, when we book in a coaching or healing session. And sometimes we decide in the moment, in a conversation, to hold space for the other(s).

We can do this literally: set time (20 min) & space (this room) aside for this purpose. Or we do this metaphorically, in our soul-body-mind.

By setting the boundaries, setting the intention, however subconsciously, we start doing it, we start holding space. And the better trained our muscles are for holding space, the more we will guard it and chase away any intruders, physical, psychological or otherwise. Everything we do is in service of the other person's process of healing and growth.

And the more deliberate we do this, the more energy we can hold.

What we say to the other on a soul, mind, emotional and physical level is:

This space is for you now. Completely.
I am here to receive you.

And the magic can start to happen.

Reflection:

- ✍ Where and when do you hold space for others?
- ✍ When you bring more awareness to this, what happens?
What happens in you, what happens to what you do or don't do, and what happens for the other?
- ✍ What is your intention when you are holding space?
How are you aware of your intention? How does it serve you?

Essence of holding space

When we create that container in time & space, it's like drawing a circle around the two of you, and saying: everything that does not serve you, will not be allowed in. I will guard that. I stand at the edge. (And I will make this decision to the best of my ability of what I believe serves you.)

It is also saying: the floor is yours. Sure, I have my experience, my wisdom, my expertise, my personal stories, but right now, they are not what matters. I am not what matters. You are what matters. Your experience. You get centre stage.

Our intention is to be there, and support the other and their capacity to (self-)heal and learn.

The healing power of holding space - The Power of yin

Our world is used to Yang, we tend to think the only way forward is to 'do'. To take control. To manage. To make happen. Yang is a powerful force. But as we know from the symbol, Yin is equally powerful. And greatly undervalued and underused in our culture.

Yin is receiving. Yin is the feminine, the sensual. Yin is chaos. Yin is emotion. Yin is rest. Yin is the dark (~ where all life is conceived). Yin is quietness. Yin is slowing down.

The power of Yin is closely related to the Sacred Feminine. It teaches us to slow down from our frantic doing and thinking, to sink into our body and be present with what arises.

The Buddhists say that the root cause of all suffering is separation. It is thinking that we are not part of the whole. Or that part of our experience is not right: our pain is not right, it should not be here because it is uncomfortable. When we separate a part of our experience like that, we separate a part of our life force, our Shakti. We fight it and fixate it into a mental construct – the story we tell ourselves about the cause of the pain, and whether it is justified, and how much we are disserving or not. As long as we hold onto this, it will keep us very busy. And not very happy.

When we learn to include all of our experience, by expressing the emotions and letting go of the stories we hold with them, the Shakti can start to flow again.

And when Shakti flows, its energy flow is restored, bringing rejuvenation, insight, joy and learning.

This is nature's way of learning for us.

This is our divine nature being perfectly equipped to guide us through the stuff that we encounter. It is the way our soul/body/mind arrange magic and transformation.

If we let them.

We often get in the way. Because **our mind thinks** it can outsmart this natural way of learning and growing. And because we **have not learned** how to follow this process, or even to trust this process, when we were kids.

But we are **making our way back**. We are discovering the innate beauty way of healing and growing that we all have the capability for.

And when we hold space for an other, this is what we allow.

We allow the other to access the super powers that they were born with. We amplify it with our presence.

And there is no greater power than our natural healing power. Every time we use it, we become stronger and more resilient (which does not mean pain feels less painful by the way. It means we can let it flow more easily and learn its lessons).

We evolve so we can live more and more of the super powers that we were born with. Transformation emerges from us. With ease.

What does holding space ask us to do?

Here are six guiding principles.

1. We let go of outcome

The only way we can truly give the other the floor, is by letting go of outcome. Not be attached to what will come out of this meeting, this situation. Not be attached to what the other will choose to do in the situation they are in.

Of course we care, and we don't want to see them hurt.

But as soon as we are invested in what should be the outcome, we lose our ability to stay neutral, to keep the floor free of our stuff.

This will interfere with their process. And their Shakti, their life energy, will not be able to flow freely. It takes away a part of the power that they have. Which we want to unleash for them to find their magic.

It's the paradox of keeping safe and letting go.

*"I want to know
If you can sit with pain
Mine or your own
Without
Moving to hide it
Or fade it
Or fix it"*

*~ Oriah Mountain Dreamer ~
from: The invitation*

2. We let go of judgment

This is an easy sentence to write down. But we are meaning-making machines, and we instantly have our opinions and judgments about any situation. Even if we don't think so, we do.

Voicing judgment is a sure way to stop the flow of Shakti. It will invite self-criticism and self-consciousness for the other, or make this is 'true/not true' game with you. Even feeling judgement is something that will be picked up by most.

It takes ongoing practice to notice our judgments while we hold space, to honour them, and to let them go. We may think we know, but actually, we can't know. And even if we did, our knowing does not serve them.

3. We open our heart and connect

When we hold space, we want to be there for the other to support them. So we open our heart and feel them, as a complete human being. Not broken, but a beautiful and amazing miracle. As each of us is.

A beautiful way to connect is by saying a 'Namaste' within ourselves. 'The divine in me bows for the divine in you.' It reminds us that even if there is shit going on, and the other feels lost, or their life is a mess, there is still that part of them that links them into their wholeness. - And you don't need to save them.

Connecting heart - to - heart is an amazing gift to give someone. And we can just choose to do this. Even if it's not someone we love or feel close to.

4. We stay present

There are books full of wisdom on staying present. In mindfulness and meditation, we learn more and more about what this is and what it takes.

For us, it means to stay with what happens. To keep your attention on what is happening right here, right now. To stay in connection with the other at all times. And to feel what happens in you.

What we don't do is disappear into our thoughts and stories about what the other is saying or what is happening. When we are in thoughts, we are no longer present in our bodies. We are no longer present in our hearts.

And what we don't do is voice what happens in us spontaneously. We might not voice it at all. – but we need to acknowledge to ourselves what we feel in order to stay present.

If we do decide to give voice to what is being triggered in us (our fear, our anger, our joy, our questions), we chose our moment wisely, we offer our experience as exactly that - an offering. And then we retreat from the floor. We give them back the space so Shakti can flow freely while they incorporate this information – or not.

Practice to stay present is essential, as this is not a skill taught in our schools (- ahh, how wonderful would that be..). We are likely to check out and occupy our mind, or we are likely to join them on the floor and stop the magic from happening.

5. We have deep trust

When we hold space, we operate in deep trust.

Trust in the divine nature of the other

Trust in life

Trust that our emotions are always pointing the way

Trust that expressing our emotions (without getting lost in the stories we make around them), is exactly what they are intended for

Trust that our Shakti, our life energy is made of and part of a vast intelligence, much bigger than anything our ego-minds could hold

Trust that everybody is capable of –is made for - this transformation into expressing more of their divine nature

Trust in the others resilience and power, even in dark times

Of course we will offer a safety net when it is necessary.

But most of the time, when we hold space, it is enough.

And we give them time to process, to express, to find their way. We do not jump the gun in any way. As a rule of thumb: bite your tongue just a little longer. Especially when they are still processing.

You might find that exploring your urge to intervene, to save them, to step onto the floor, holds valuable information for you.

The Guest House ~ Rumi

This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
As an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still treat each guest honourably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing,
and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.

6. We step in where we feel it's not serving them

When we hold space and offer the other the floor, we are not just letting them jump into the deep end of the pool by themselves. Our being there, open to receive it all, is a very powerful gift. This gift is what carries the healing power of the space.

It is what supports their being to enter that world of healing and magic. Of transformation.

But sometimes people get stuck. (Or we lack time to stay present throughout their journey – be honest about your motives!)

And then it can be helpful to intervene and help them get back on track. Help their soul/body/mind to keep expressing rather than investigating. To stay present. To

focus their attention from what they don't want to what they would like.

A lot of the tools I teach other coaches and healers are tools that can be used here. You can find some of them in part two of this ebook.

And at this point, it is so valuable to explore when you feel it's time to intervene.

Is it when you start feeling scared it won't work out?
(- but we are not attached to outcome, remember?)

Is it when you start to feel impatient?
(We might be taking away very important lessons on using time & energy by stepping in, and there is no way for us to know what the 'best' way to reach transformation is for their soul/body/mind.)

Is it when you just 'know' the answer?

(This might be you getting in the way of a deeper self-carried transformation.)

Is it when you get irritated?

(Could this potentially be a mirror for yourself, triggering your 'stuff'?)

Is it when you can't relate?

(You don't have to understand what is happening for the other, the magic will work anyway.)

Is it when you get angry because they don't respect their boundaries in the situation they are sharing about?

(See the lesson for yourself, hold on to your insight and check later on if it's still not being done.)

What is it for you ?

Receiving versus Fixing

When the other has a problem, or is in emotional discomfort, it can be so tempting to try and 'fix' it for them. But you can't. And you most likely shouldn't. It is their stuff and theirs to fix.

The reason to fix it for them, is when they are incapable of learning how to fix it themselves. As you might do with a young child who can't tie their shoelaces yet. Or with somebody who is having a heart attack who needs CPR.

From the perspective of holding space, there is no other reason. You receiving them, fully, completely receiving them, is the way you amplify their natural abilities to learn and grow.

Reflection:

- ✎ Do you really believe she is capable of transforming the situation she or he is in?
- ✎ Do you really believe she is capable of transforming the situation she or he is in - even if she is not?
- ✎ What do you feel responsible for when you hold space?
- ✎ How is your sense of 'a job well done' or 'being a good coach' dependent on how quickly their problem is fixed?
- ✎ When do you consider yourself doing well at holding space? At coaching or healing, or helping?

These reflection questions are not trick questions, I promise. I still revisit them regularly. Asking the questions means you are willing to learn.



Part 2

Skills & Tools



Skills & tools for holding space

These skills and tools might seem very obvious, but they all come with a twist. Or rather: an invitation to dive deeper and support the other's process more in line with their natural abilities.

1. Listen

Yes, of course we all know how to listen well. Though actually... When you come and do one of my courses, you might be surprised how much you can deepen your listening. One practical tip is to repeat the literal words the other speaks, and not paraphrase their experience. This builds very strong rapport with the other, keeps the floor free of your (unintended) stuff, and helps their magic to build. And it requires you to listen really really well. Do give it a try.

2. Silence

Another obvious skill is to welcome silence. If you don't feel compelled to fill silences, the other will keep processing, and will keep being responsible for their process. Stay curious what might happen next for them.

Allowing the natural flow of Shakti to reclaim energy is a process with ups and downs, with times of silence and times of emotions being expressed, with times of knowing and times of not knowing. Silence is often in between those different times. New insights are born in the silence. If we feel uncomfortable and cover up the silence, we stop the magic.

3. Stay present

We talked about this before. But how do you do this? Keep your heart connected. Notice what goes on inside you – in your body. Feel your feelings. Notice your thoughts. But don't go into them. So keep going back to the moment. What is there for you – what do you feel arising inside yourself as you listen and watch? A beautiful way of doing this comes from Yin Healing. You notice what you feel, or that you have thoughts, and you give it one word which you express inside of yourself, while offering that to the space you are holding. It keeps you present and it adds a layer of healing power to the space you are holding. Another tip is to have soft eye contact. Not constantly, but when you look at the other, keep it soft, so you don't draw their attention into their relationship with you in that moment, but their attention can stay with themselves.

4. Acknowledge what they are expressing

When they express what is going on for them, acknowledge it. It is an active form of receiving them. The best way to acknowledge them is to repeat back to them their literal words, same order and a similar (but slightly toned down) intonation. You are not mimicking, but you are letting them know that you have heard them, and that what they say is valid and worth being listened to.

And they can stay in their process. When you add other words, or interpretations or labels for what they experience, you add stuff on the floor, that they then have to do something with. Keeping the floor clean means that their exploration, and the flow of Shakti can continue unhindered.

5. Ask questions

But check your intention. Is it to move them away from this uncomfortable point? Proceed with caution. Also be aware that many many questions that are used in coaching are either leading or putting some of your stuff on the floor. Here is a selection of questions that is incredibly valuable for guiding people into transformation – while keeping the Shakti flow and the natural ability to heal and learn completely intact. They are called Clean Language questions, and were devised by David Grove. They are at the core of my soul based coaching program. For every [..] you insert (a) word(s) that the other has used.

- 🌸 And what kind of [..] is that [..]?
- 🌸 And is there anything else about [..]?
- 🌸 And where is [..]?

- ❁ And is there a relationship between [..] and [..]?
- ❁ And that is [..] like what?
- ❁ And what would you like to have happen?
- ❁ And what happens just before [..]?
- ❁ And what happens next?
- ❁ And where could [..] come from?

Using these questions often take some getting used to, but they are unparalleled in guiding transformation.

6. Learn to hold space for yourself

We can only hold space for others, if we have learned how to do this for ourselves. The more regularly we pay attention to our own Shakti flow, without needing to fix it or change it, the easier we can hold space for others.

To practice, set a timer (holding the time for you), and be in a space where you feel safe and are not disturbed. And then you start to notice what is going on in you. A feeling, a sensation, a thought. And you allow it to be. When you notice a thought, name it as a thought (out loud or on the inside), and direct your attention back to what you are experiencing. Don't go into your mental story of a feeling.

If you like, you can go outside and ask a tree to hold space for you. Sometimes it helps to have another physical entity present. And it is a beautiful experience in and of itself. You can do the same Yin Healing exercise we did earlier: name the feeling, sensation or thought, and offer it to the space between you.



7. Help them stay out of drama

We are well trained to engage in drama. To act the victim, to be the persecutor, to be the rescuer. Some say by the age of 7, we have our scripts ready, and when someone starts doing one of these roles, other effortlessly take up a fitting counter role. When we are in these roles, we are no longer effective. A very quick run through of what to do:

Watch yourself

When you do one of these while you are holding space – even internally, get back into your regular self. Ask yourself: “What would I like to have happen?” or “Did she ask to be rescued?” or “What is going on for her?”.

If you see the other going into victim mode

Ask them: “And what would you like to have happen?” As often as needed. Staying in drama will not get the Shakti flow going.

When they stay in persecutor mode,

Ask them: “And how do you know?” or “And What would you like to have happen when that is the case?”.

If they continue to linger in rescuer mode

Ask them: “And were you asked to help? And when that is the case, what would you like to have happen?”

8. Distinguish your stuff from their stuff

When we are witness to somebody else expressing their stuff, it is easy to be drawn in. Especially if we have experiences that are similar in some way. You don't help the other by going to your experiences when you are holding space. When you feel triggered, acknowledge it and let it go. Know that even when there is a similar experience, their experience is always also different. And again, we want to keep the floor clean, so that all they have to deal with is their stuff. That is what their soul/body/mind can transform like no other. There is a time and a place for sharing stories. We can learn from each other. Take heart. But not when we are holding space.

9. Inner stuff

Can you receive the other fully – the beauty & the ugly – and feel comfortable?

Sometimes our fear comes up

‘Can I hold this? Is this not too big? Will she be able to come out of it?’. That fear can point to something real that you need to guard. If it is too big and she might need (other) professional help, share that thought with her as a suggestion. Tell her what you are comfortable with doing. And often, when she can hold it, so can you. If she is allowed to express it all, and you can be by her side, it can release.

Sometimes our ego steps in

‘I know what she should do, let’s just do this exercise.’ –
Can you push your own boundary and see how you can
allow her system to work it out?

Sometimes it’s our impatience

‘Enough already! And what would you like to have
happen?’ – A confrontation is not a bad thing if they get
stuck in the same circle for a while. If it is only this
question, chances are you will help them get back into
their process. But try not to do anything else.

10. Stay on the edges

When we hold space, our place is on the edges of the floor. Not on it, and definitely not centre stage. If you feel there is incredible value in adding one of your nuggets of wisdom, check yourself for your motives. And if you do, leave the floor as soon as possible, so the flow can continue. (It will be hindered to begin with. And some gold is worth it.)



11. Notice how words get in the way (yours and theirs)

Holding space for transformation is not holding space for words. Words are useful because they can convey meaning and they can help express stuff and energy that were stuck. But it's never about the words.

We are so used to rationalising and wanting to intellectually understand things, that we focus on them.

Let go of the words (except for the part where we use them to acknowledge or deepen their experience). Let go of needing to understand what they mean. Let go of the need for rational answers and a nice and tidy intellectual solution. Let Shakti intelligence do the work and be amazed at it's solutions.

12. Prepare yourself

Set your intention, choose a time and place that work for you. Turn off your phone, manage any other physical distractions. Check if you have taken good care of yourself: are you in a position where you can give the other the floor? A good healer makes sure her cup is full before she starts pouring. And know your personal edge. This allows you to deepen your skills every time you hold space.

Reflection

- ✎ What skills can you deepen?
- ✎ What triggered you the most while reading? How could it be a mirror? What could it tell you?

But won't this .. ?

- ❁ Perpetuate their problem / issue / victim state? - It's when we break up the Shakti flow, and hang on to our pent-up energy, that we perpetuate problems. If we allow energy, thought and emotion to flow, we follow the natural flow of transformation. A victim state can do with a helping hand as described earlier. That will not solve itself easily.
- ❁ Deny my expertise? - You can express your expertise outside of this container, as well as use it to focus your attention and guide their transformation in a way that is in line with their natural Shakti flow.
- ❁ Make my expertise superfluous? - Never. All you are and all you bring is part of the space you can hold and the energy that you can allow to build up.

- ☸ Take way too much time? - It is actually a lot quicker than most other ways of working. Because they don't get stuck in half-solutions, or solutions from another soul/body/mind that not quite fit them. But we need the courage to go and find out as space holders.
- ☸ Make it impersonal? - When you hold space you are not on the floor. You are at the edges. Your personality is not needed to make deep connection. Being truly present is one of the most personal things you can do for somebody. It is very rare to receive somebody's undivided attention. It is just a different way of connecting than we are used to.

What is your personal edge?

- ✎ What is one thing that you can do to create an even stronger container?

- ✎ What will you see or hear when you are doing that?

- ✎ What will you see or hear when you are not doing that?

Why does all this matter so much?

When you hold space for others more often,
more people will feel the power that resides in them
more people will learn to trust ~ life ~
more people will start to know
about the transformation that they are capable of
more people will start believing that they can
that they should
follow their inner wisdom
more people start seeing they carry the seeds for
transformation for our world within them

This is how you start to invoke their Magic

I am so happy you have taken the time to read this. If you have got this far, it will have given you value. And I live to serve stronger healers, better coaches. And more people living the Life They Came Here for. That is how we will change our world.

Now please come and share your biggest take-away with us in [our Soul-based Coaching Community on Facebook'](#)

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Annemiek van Helsdingen

Founder of Soul Based Coaching

I am Annemiek. I teach coaches & healers to invoke their client's magic so their clients transform with ease.

I help you Live the Life you Came Here for.

Now is the time ♡

What I offer comes from 45+ years of being me.

15 years of facilitating change in organisations.

13 years of entrepreneurship.

15 years of coaching.

10+ years of teaching coaches & healers.

7 years of being a mum.

Countless years of being a friend and life partner.

20+ years of offering myself as a trained healer.
Years of training.

But mostly, it comes from life times of practising
- and counting :)

I'm devoted to the beauty in our humanity and the power
we have to create a better world.

A lover of strawberries. And apple pie. My daughter. My
amazing husband. And much more.

Read more about my journey
On [Academyforsoulbasedcoaching.com](https://www.academyforsoulbasedcoaching.com)