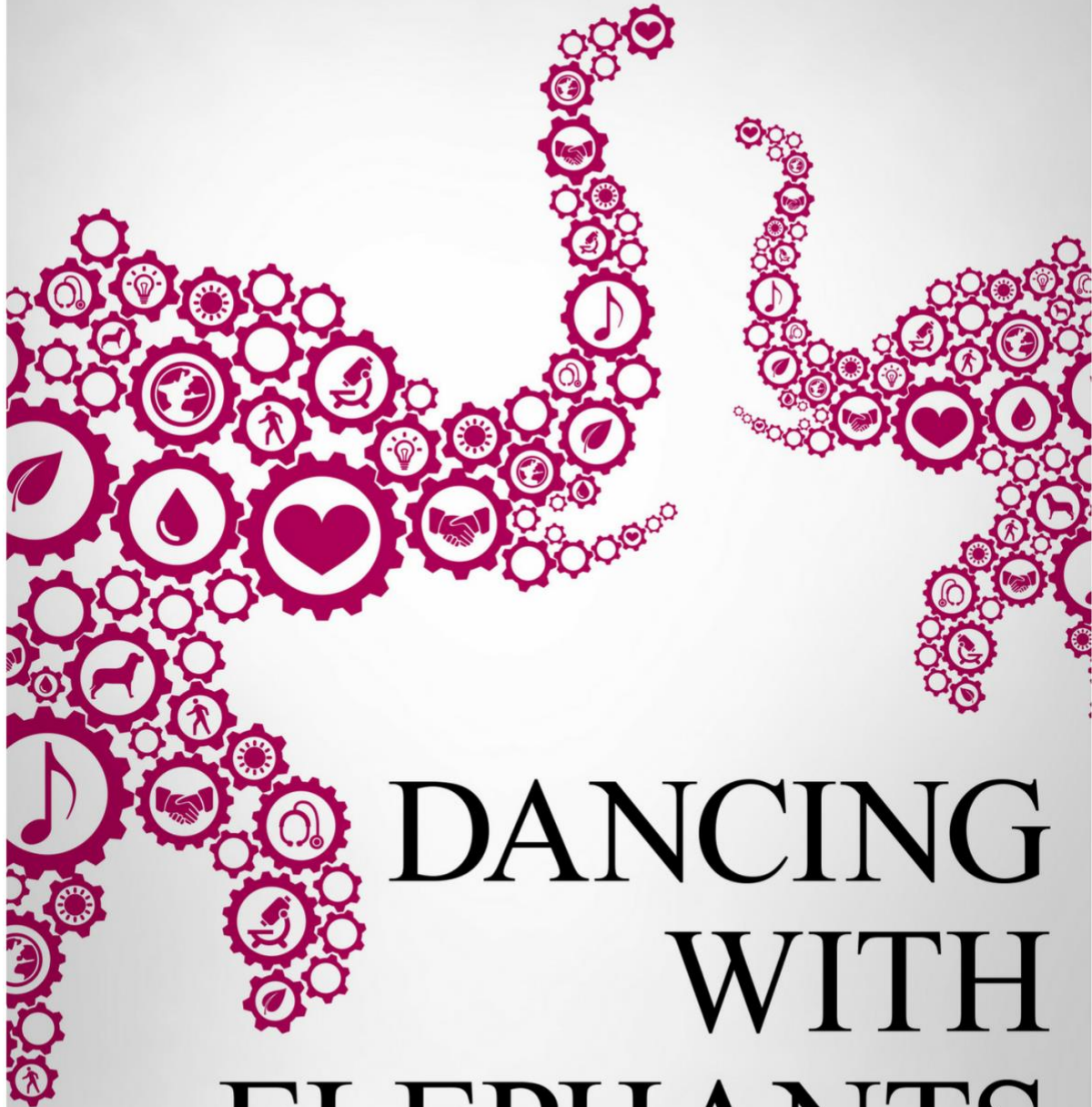


**30-Day Journal**



# DANCING WITH ELEPHANTS

Mindfulness Training For Those Living  
With Dementia, Chronic Illness or  
an Aging Brain

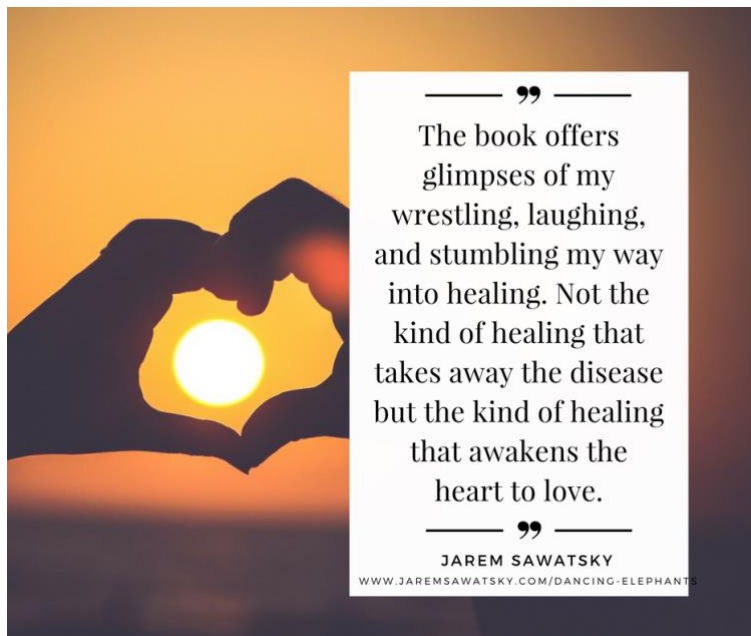
**JAREM SAWATSKY**

# Dancing with Elephants Journal

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## Day 1 – Facing Elephants

Read Chapter 1 – Facing Elephants in *Dancing with Elephants*.



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What are your elephants? What do you fear? Who gave you these elephants? How can you learn to love and dance with your elephants?

# Dancing with Elephants Journal

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## Day 2 – Embracing the Hard Things

Read Chapter 2 – Embracing the Hard Things in *Dancing with Elephants*.



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The art of dancing with elephants is not the elimination of suffering. We don't kill the elephant. We learn to dance with it. All living beings suffer. To revere life, we cannot remain in denial but must understand that suffering and death are inevitable. What are your views about the existence of suffering? Are those views helping or harming your attempts to walk in a healing way?

# Dancing with Elephants Journal

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## Day 3 – Replacing Fear with Love

Read Chapter 3 – Replacing Fear with Love in *Dancing with Elephants*.



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Try using Corpse Prayer – change the words if you want, because it is not about the words, it is about letting go of fear. What practices have been helpful for you in the past in overcoming fear? What new practices do you want to try now and in the future?

# Dancing with Elephants Journal

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## Day 4 – Letting Go

Read Chapter 4 – Letting Go in Dancing with Elephants.



Write your own poem about letting go. Share it and discuss it with others. Letting go is part of the path to true happiness. What do you need to let go of so that you can live in true happiness?

# Dancing with Elephants Journal

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## Day 5 – Celebrating Everything

Read Chapter 5 – Celebrating Everything in *Dancing with Elephants*.



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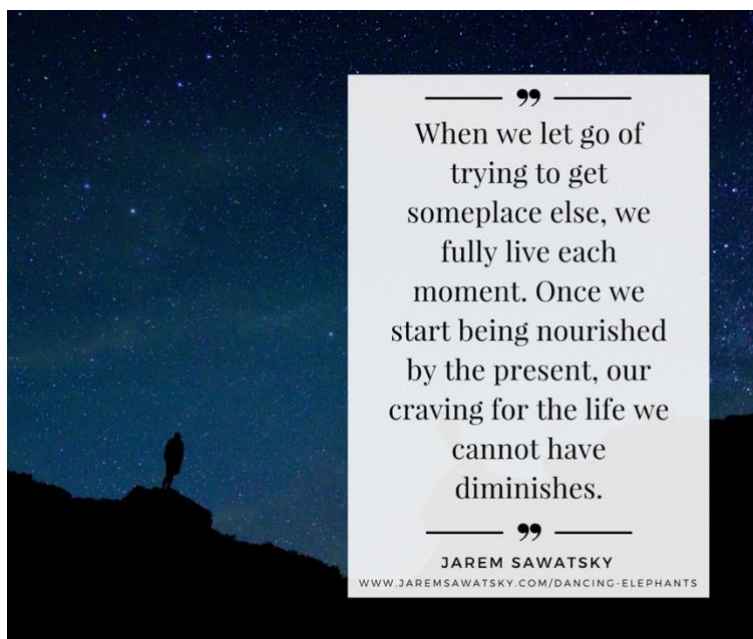
What can you celebrate today? How can you make celebration a part of who you are? What do you like about life? How can you celebrate that? Who can you celebrate with?

# Dancing with Elephants Journal

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## Day 6 – Living the Life You’ve Got with Jon Kabat-Zinn

Read Chapter 6 – Living the Life You’ve Got with Jon Kabat-Zinn in *Dancing with Elephants*.



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There is a freedom and a dare to live when you learn that “there is more right with you than wrong with you, no matter what’s wrong with you.” All of us, including me, are living someone else’s dream life. However, most of us don’t live as if we are living the dream. How can you enjoy living the life you’ve got? How do you let go of the toxic hope of living someone else’s life?

# Dancing with Elephants Journal

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## Day 7 – Living Beauty Awake

Read Chapter 7 – Living Beauty Awake in *Dancing with Elephants*.



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This chapter explores 4 ways of living beauty awake. Which of these four ways is the most natural for you? How can you live out the most natural ways more often? Which of these four ways is the most difficult for you? What would it look like for you to practice this difficult way in your life this week?

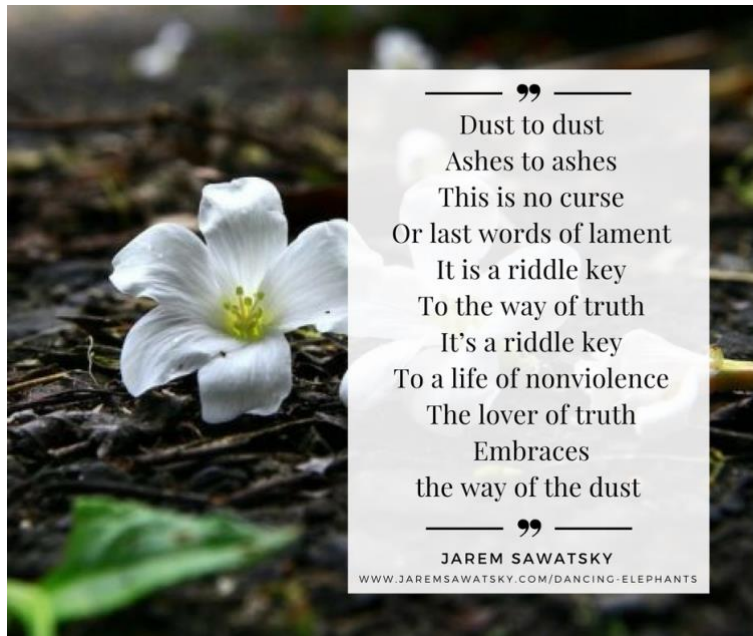


# Dancing with Elephants Journal

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## Day 8 – Embracing Dustness

Read Chapter 8 – Embracing Dustness in *Dancing with Elephants*.



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What do you think of Gandhi's statement that "the seeker after truth should be humbler than dust." What advantages do you see in embracing dustness? How might embracing dustness be lived out in your relationships and identity?

# Dancing with Elephants Journal

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## Day 9 – Walking the Urban Pilgrimage

Read Chapter 9 – Walking the Urban Pilgrimage in *Dancing with Elephants*.



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Find some practice of walking meditation. It will probably look very different from mine. What matters is not how it looks, but rather the spirit you bring to it and your openness to learning to see anew. What is a practice of urban pilgrimage that could work for you? As you walk, how does your perspective change by traveling at the speed of love?

# Dancing with Elephants Journal

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## Day 10 – Loving a Puppy

Read Chapter 10 – Loving a Puppy in *Dancing with Elephants*.



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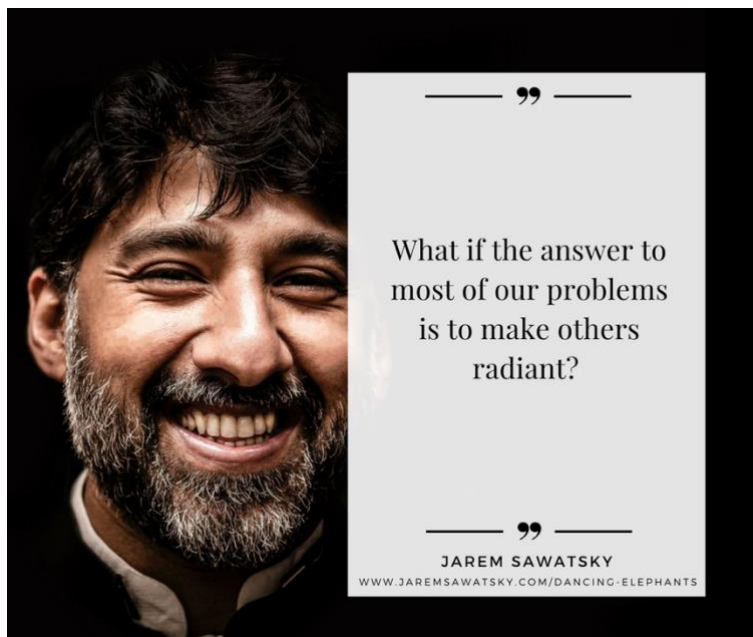
In this chapter I make the claim: “having a dog—even a poorly trained puppy—is minute to minute mindfulness training in happiness.” What in your life gives this kind of minute to minute mindfulness training in happiness? It might not be a pet. Who sees you with the eyes of love? Can you make it a daily practice to look at someone with the eyes of love?

# Dancing with Elephants Journal

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## Day 11 – Diving into an Ocean of Gratitude with Patch Adams

Read Chapter 11 – Diving into an Ocean of Gratitude with Patch Adams in Dancing with Elephants.



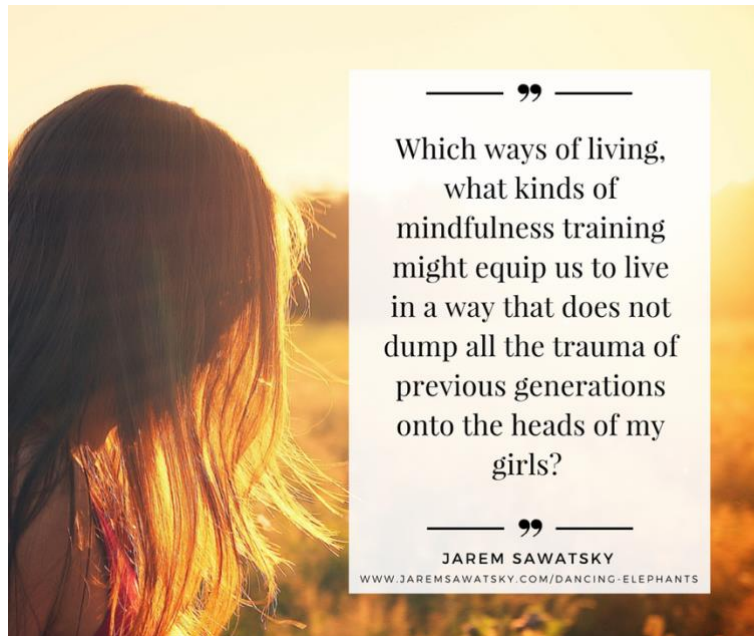
This chapter dares each one of us to keep living, to be thrilled, grateful, wonder-filled and curious about life. What thrills you? What makes you wonder-filled? How do you arrange your life in such a way that you can touch those things daily?

# Dancing with Elephants Journal

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## Day 12 – Responding to a Disease with a Circle

Read Chapter 12 – Responding to a Disease with a Circle in *Dancing with Elephants*.



Are you tapping into enough care resources from you community? Could some kind of circle of care help you and those close to you to live well? What kind of circle of care might be helpful and healing for you? What steps do you need to take to put that plan into action?

# Dancing with Elephants Journal

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## Day 13 – Dying and Mourning with Love

Read Chapter 13 – Dying and Mourning with Love in *Dancing with Elephants*.



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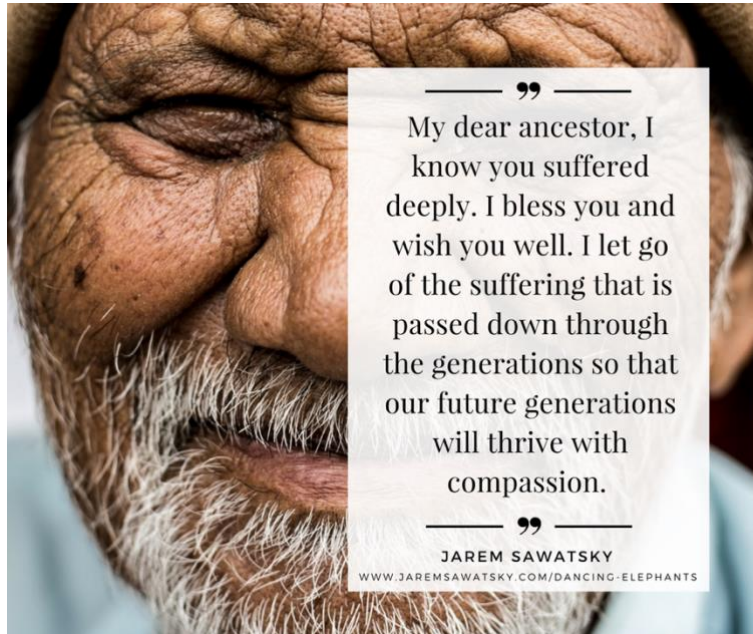
Elephant dancers can use the dying of loved ones as mindfulness training on how to live and die well. Perhaps by learning to unlock the keys to dying, we will create the space to keep learning to love. Who are some of your loved ones who have died recently? Journal about what you want to learn from them about living well, dying well and loving well.

# Dancing with Elephants Journal

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## Day 14 – Loving Our Ancestors

Read Chapter 14 – Loving Our Ancestors in *Dancing with Elephants*.



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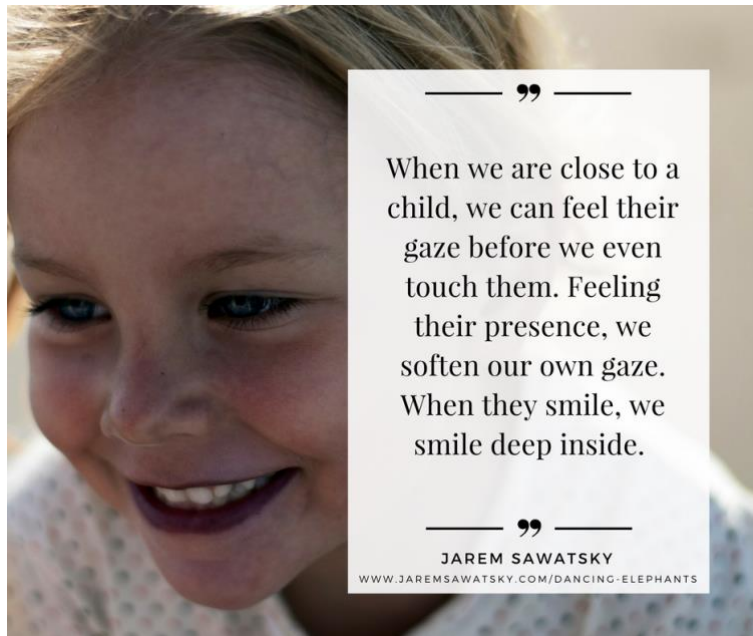
What kind of traumas did your ancestors experience? In what ways did they pass on trauma to you? What questions about traumas would you like to ask you ancestors? Go for a walk and ask those questions. Listen. Say some version of the prayer above. What else can you do to stop passing on the trauma of past generations to the future generations.

# Dancing with Elephants Journal

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## Day 15 – Playing with Children

Read Chapter 15 – Playing with Children in Dancing with *Elephants*.



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How can you draw on the energy and power of the younger generations? Which young people inspire and embolden you to live better? Can you tell them? Can you build more of that into your life?



# Dancing with Elephants Journal

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## Day 16 – Being Disarmed by Joy with Lucy Kalanithi

Read Chapter 16 – Being Disarmed by Joy with Lucy Kalanithi in *Dancing with Elephants*.



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Paul Kalanithi speaks about a “sated joy, a joy unknown to me in all my prior years, a joy that does not hunger for more and more, but rests, satisfied.” How can you tap into this deep joy that rests satisfied? What would it take for you to become a joyful person? How might your joy affect those around you?

# Dancing with Elephants Journal

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## Day 17 – Refusing to Battle My Disease

Read Chapter 17 – Refusing to Battle My Disease in *Dancing with Elephants*.



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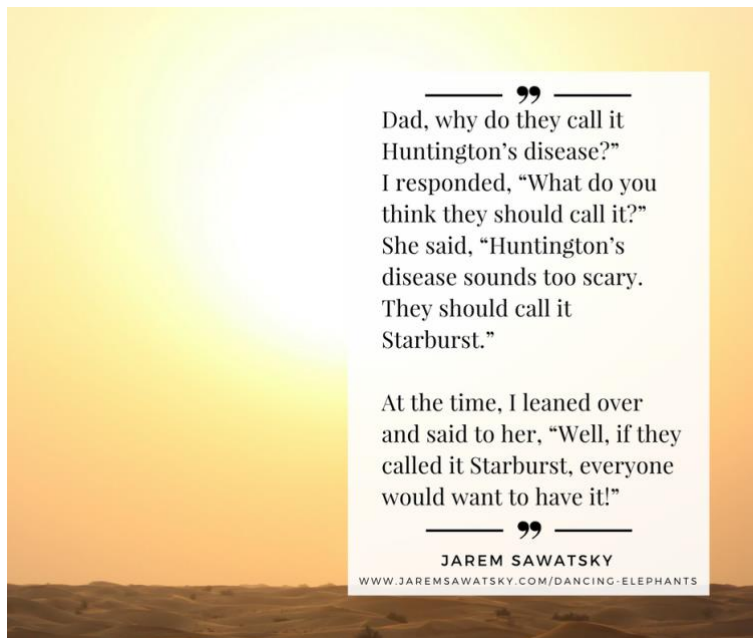
Those learning to dance with elephants need practice in deep listening. Not all the voices around us orient us to live in a reconciling and healing way. Sometimes even the voices of friends and health professionals unintentionally prod us down a path that cannot lead to health. Who are the people around who orient you to live in a reconciling and healing way? Where are the voices that orient you in a different way? Which voices do you want to listen to?

# Dancing with Elephants Journal

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## Day 18 – Naming Your Own Way

Read Chapter 18 – Naming Your Own Way in *Dancing with Elephants*.



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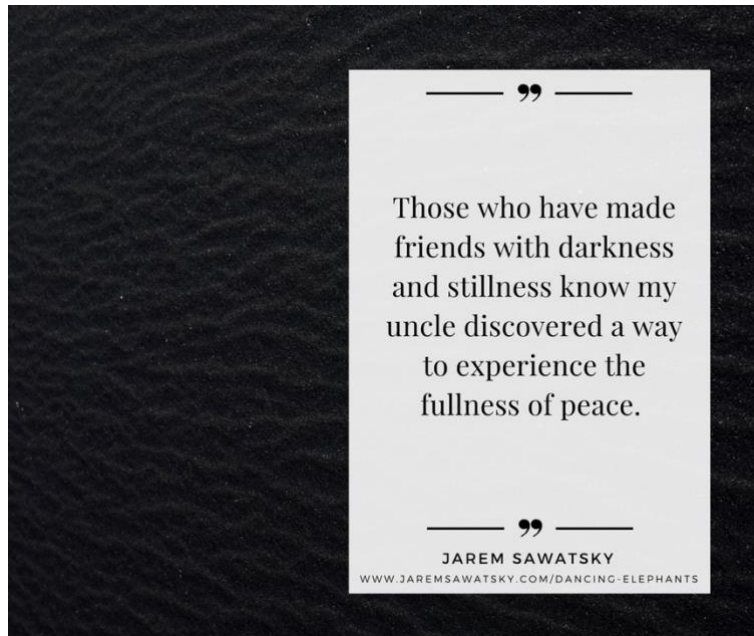
Naming, done well, is an overlooked and underused mindfulness training for elephant dancers. It is a form of loving speech that arises from deep listening. How do you name that healing path you are trying to walk? How do you name your new friends that others name as disease or problem? What are you learning about your true names?

# Dancing with Elephants Journal

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## Day 19 – Making Friends with Darkness

Read Chapter 19 – Making Friends with Darkness in *Dancing with Elephants*.



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Practice enjoying sitting in darkness for 30 minutes. Afterward, journal about what you learned about making friends with the darkness?

# Dancing with Elephants Journal

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## Day 20 – Remembering Forgetting Is OK

Read Chapter 20 – Remembering Forgetting Is OK in Dancing with *Elephants*.



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What do you notice yourself doing that really frustrates you? It might be forgetting but it could be something else. Write some caring words you can speak to yourself the next time you do it. The world does not need more frustration, anger or shame. On the other hand, if you can unleash more care or loving into the world, we would all benefit.

# Dancing with Elephants Journal

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## Day 21 – Breathing Anger

Read Chapter 21 – Breathing Anger in *Dancing with Elephants*.



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What practices help you to care deeply for your anger? Do you need practices? Which caring for anger practices will you try using. Journal your plan. After acting on the plan, return and journal again about what you have learned.

# Dancing with Elephants Journal

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## Day 22 – Practicing Awe During Winter’s Creep with John Paul Lederach

Read Chapter 22 – Practicing Awe During Winter’s Creep with John Paul Lederach in *Dancing with Elephants*.



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List 5 everyday activities that you could enjoy doing and that would give you your daily dose of vitamin awe. For the next 30 days live with more awe in your life. Ask your friends or family if they can tell the difference.

# Dancing with Elephants Journal

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## Day 23 – Embracing Weakness

Read Chapter 23 – Embracing Weakness in *Dancing with Elephants*.



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What do you perceive to be your biggest weaknesses? Take one of them and make a plan to work through the four-step process outlined in this chapter.



# Dancing with Elephants Journal

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## Day 24 – Falling Mindfully

Read Chapter 24 – Falling Mindfully in *Dancing with Elephants*.



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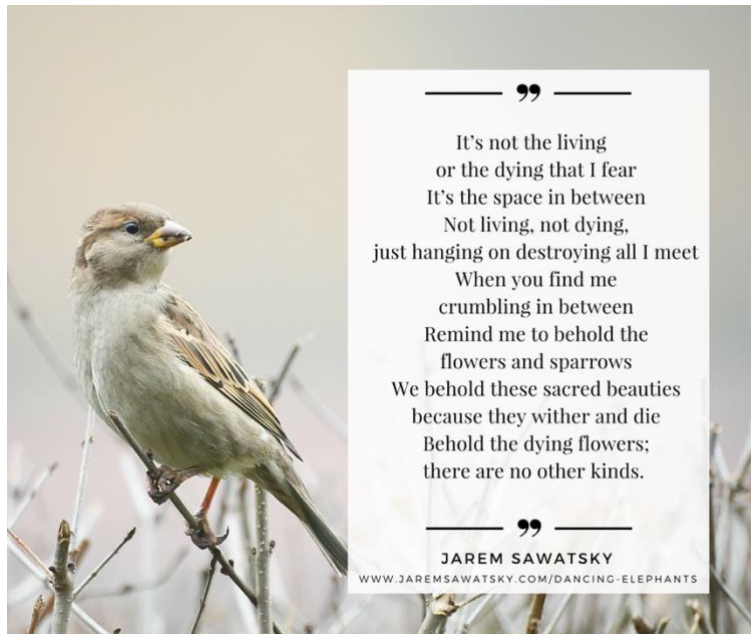
This chapter focus on falling, which for me is one of the more annoying symptoms of my disease. Elephant dancers need to recognize this pattern – what are the things in your everyday living which are zapping you of life? And then how do you use those very things as a mindfulness training to dare you will live more fully? Use this pattern to create your individualized mindfulness training programs.

# Dancing with Elephants Journal

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## Day 25 – Valuing Your Life

Read Chapter 25 – Valuing Your Life in *Dancing with Elephants*.



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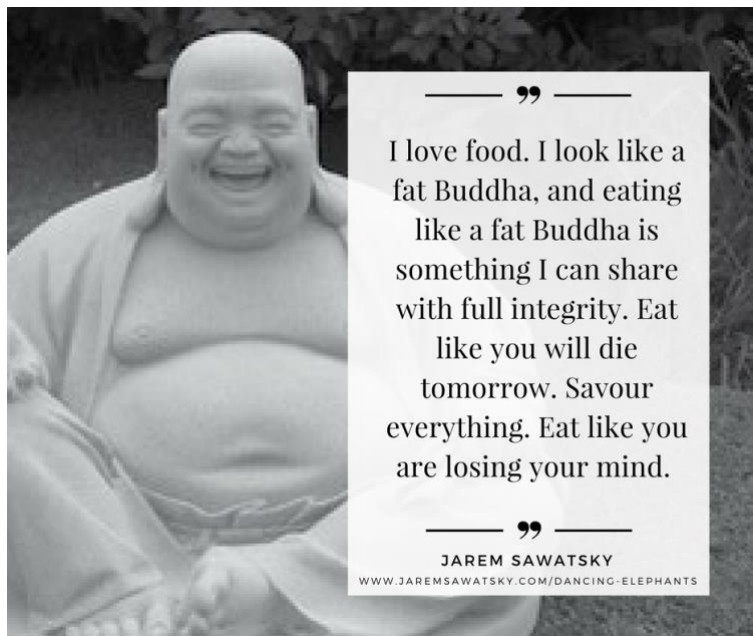
Re-read the poem *On This Sacred Earth*. Part of what the poem is about is learning to live and love fully in the present moment. Which parts resonate with you? Which do not? Journal about how you can remind yourself to live fully in the present moment.

# Dancing with Elephants Journal

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## Day 26 – Eating Like a Buddha

Read Chapter 26 – Eating Like a Buddha in *Dancing with Elephants*.



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What are your best insights on how to eat in such a way that leads to healing and nourishment? What do you need to do to avoid consuming that which is toxic? This is the basis of mindful consumption. How can you make mindful consumption an important part of your healing journey?

# Dancing with Elephants Journal

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## Day 27 – Developing a Family Health Plan

Read Chapter 27 – Developing a Family Health Plan in *Dancing with Elephants*.



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Do you want to want to enjoy your life? Do you also want the people around you to enjoy life? What are the major issues in your life that you need to address so that you can focus on enjoying life? Would creating a family health plan work? What would work?

# Dancing with Elephants Journal

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## Day 28 – Mandela Gardening

Read Chapter 28 Mandela Gardening in *Dancing with Elephants*.



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You need to find your own Mandela garden. Review the defining characteristics of a Mandela garden. What could be a Mandela garden for you? How would you need to structure your day so that daily you create space for Mandela gardening?

# Dancing with Elephants Journal

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## Day 29 – Practicing Self-Compassion with Toni Bernhard

Read Chapter 29 – Remembering Forgetting Is OK in Dancing with *Elephants*.



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Toni Bernhard claims for most people, developing habits of self-compassion is a very difficult task. Write about what self-compassionate words you can say to yourself during those times you are most likely to treat yourself in way that you would not treat others.

# Dancing with Elephants Journal

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## Day 30 – Last Words

Read Chapter 30 – Last Words in *Dancing with Elephants*.



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I found great nourishment from reflecting that in the end it all comes down to love. While my mind and my body will crumble, I can still love. Reflect on what it means for you that love is the beginning and the end. I find this freeing. I hope you do too. What next steps do you need to take in learning the art of dancing with elephants?