
Session Two

Listening Below the Surface

Part One — Going to the Root

In Session One, you arrived. You noticed that something had been waiting for you — some part of yourself that had gone quiet or underground. You set an intention, grounded yourself in Nature, and began to listen.

Session Two asks you to go a little deeper. Not to push or force — but to listen. The roots of a tree do not reach toward light. They reach for water, nourishment, for what they need. This session is about learning to do the same: to sense what has been calling to you beneath the surface of your daily life, and to begin to trust that signal.

Connecting to Nature

This practice begins every session in Root and Return. It is the first step toward the root — the moment of turning toward the outer world before turning inward.

Go outside if you are able — even a doorstep, a parking lot with a strip of grass, a fire escape. If you cannot go out, open a window, sit near a plant, or find a nature sound or image that feels alive to you. Nature does not require a forest. It requires only your attention.

This time, instead of observing with your eyes first, listen. Before you look, be still for two to three minutes and simply hear what is present. Wind. Traffic. Birdsong. Rain. Silence. Your own breath. The world does not stop making sound just because we stop paying attention.

What did you hear? List as many sounds as you can, from the loudest to the most subtle.

Was there a sound you had to listen carefully to find? What did it take to hear it?

Is there anything in your inner life right now that is making a quiet sound — something you must get still to hear? What might it be trying to tell you?

Creative Practice — The Root Map

Session Two's creative modality is visual mapping — a way to externalize the inner landscape so you can see what you already know.

You will need a blank page — the one provided below, or your own paper. You will also need something to write or draw with. If you have colored pencils, markers, or anything with color, use them. Color is a language the inner life understands well.

Creating Your Root Map

Draw a simple tree in the center of the space below — it does not need to be beautiful. A circle for a canopy, a line for a trunk, and some roots reaching down is enough. Or use any shape that feels like a tree to you.

Then, working outward from your tree:

- In the roots — write or draw the things that have sustained you throughout your life. Relationships, places, practices, beliefs, memories, or values that have held you even when everything else shifted.
- In the trunk — write one word that describes the core of who you are when you are most yourself.
- In the branches and canopy — write or draw what you are reaching toward. What you hope for. What is beginning to grow, or what you want to grow.
- Around the outside of the tree — write any words, images, or fragments that came up during last week's question: When do I feel most like my authentic self?



[Your Root Map drawing space]

Reflecting on Your Root Map

What surprised you about what ended up in your roots? Was there something you did not expect to find there?

Is there anything missing from your roots that you wish were there — something that once sustained you but no longer does?

What are you reaching toward in the branches? Does that reaching feel hopeful, frightening, or both?

Journaling — What Has Been Waiting

Freewrite if you are able. Let the pen move before the inner critic catches up. You are not writing for an audience — you are writing to find out what you already know.

Somewhere beneath the day-to-day noise of your life, something has been waiting for your attention. It might be a feeling, a longing, a question, a part of yourself you have been setting aside. What is it?

You don't have to name it precisely. Write around it if it doesn't have clear words yet. Sometimes we can only approach the thing sideways at first.

When did you last feel like you were truly listening to yourself — really attending to your own inner voice? What were the conditions that made that possible?

What would it mean to trust that “still, small voice” within more in your daily life? What would you have to be willing to hear?

A question to carry with you this week:

“What am I nourishing in myself right now — and what am I leaving thirsty?”

You don’t need to answer this now — just carry it with you. Let it work on you quietly and then come back and write about it before Session Three.

A Reflection to Carry

Trees in a healthy forest are not isolated. Their root systems communicate — passing nutrients, water, even warning signals through a network of mycelium and shared soil. A tree under stress will receive resources from its neighbors. A tree with abundance will give.

You are not meant to do this alone and notice that you are not as alone as the noise in your head may have convinced you.

The roots know this. We are only just remembering.

Optional — If You Are Using This Journal With a Group

Please remember: Trust is built through small acts of courage over time. You are not required to share anything that does not feel ready. But the group grows stronger when each person offers something real.

In your next group meeting, you are invited to share:

- One sound you noticed during the nature practice, and what it stirred in you
- Something from your Root Map — one thing from the roots, or one thing reaching toward the branches
- Your response, if you are willing, to the carry question from Session One: When do I feel most like my authentic self?

When we share our inner maps with one another, we often discover that what felt private and strange is, in fact, deeply human. Your roots may resemble someone else's. Your reaching may name something others have not yet found words for. That recognition — the sense of being seen in our real experience — is one of the most restorative things a group can offer (N. Rogers, 2026, p. 41).

Session Two References

- Kaplan, R., & Kaplan, S. (1989). *The experience of nature: A psychological perspective*. Cambridge University Press.
- Rogers, N. (2026). *The creative connection for groups: Person-centered expressive arts for healing and social change*. University Professors Press.
- Simard, S. (2021). *Finding the mother tree: Discovering the wisdom of the forest*. Alfred A. Knopf.
- van der Kolk, B. A. (2014). *The body keeps the score: Brain, mind, body in the healing of trauma*. Penguin Books.

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