

Awaken To Meaning (ATM):Session Aftercare

For Participants

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Introduction

One of the key intentions of this platform is to bridge the Theory and Practice gap, and in that it means engaging in practice which sometimes leads us to novel experiences. The impact of these experiences can range anywhere from “meh” to “I now know there is/isn’t a God” and this impact is going to vary, sometimes wildly, within the various participant groups.

The fact is, as much as we’re the same, we’re also very different. We come into these practices with different histories and different capacities. These (and other) differences contribute to the different impact and outcomes from our participation.

As such, if you are currently under the care of a mental health professional (e.g., psychologist, counselor, therapist, etc.), please be sure to speak to them about the practices you’re looking to start integrating into your life. They are most likely the ones who are in the best position to help assess and process your experiences with.

If you notice during (or after) your participation you’re experiencing some psycho-emotional distress, we have some suggestions you can work with in the moment and a recommendation that if the impact persists, to seek the guidance of a professional. Please see the “Resources” page on the ATM website for some recommendations.

If you are someone who is frequently overworked, ill, heavily medicated or already know you’re prone to trigger or dissociative episodes, we strongly recommend you work with one of those professionals on those symptoms before taking on some of the practices offered on the platform. Our interest on Awaken to Meaning is for people to move in the direction of being more wise, and if our participation in these workshops or practices is unearthing the same unresolved experiences on a repeating basis, we are probably not taking good care of ourselves and thus are moving away from wisdom and wellbeing.

And it’s not uncommon to attend a session, especially if it’s new-to-you, and to experience some fatigue. Novelty is very neurologically / metabolically expensive. It’s also not uncommon to experience some discomfort (this is different than pain) as we lean into the edge of our capacities, in that sweet-spot that exists just outside the edge of our comfort zone. This is the place where our framing of ourselves, others, and the world can be broken and reshaped. That

place where we come out of the session and the world occurs to us just a little bit differently than when we came in.

Whatever our individual histories and capacities, ideally, just as one might in Yoga, we want to stretch the muscles and/or joints, not tear them.

Questions or Feedback

You can always share feedback about sessions at <https://forms.gle/7C9RvTKaVMeQofzD9>. Many facilitators are also very open to questions and feedback and you can often find their contact info in the event listing under “Organizer(s)”. If for whatever reason your attempts to ask questions or for feedback go unanswered, please do reach out to us at info@awakentomeaning.com so that we’re aware.

Communitas

One of the great accelerators for integration and processing of experiences in sessions is through dialogue with people who share the same context (understanding, frameworks, experiences, grammar, etc.) with you. Awaken to Meaning already provides some of this commonality implicitly through many people’s attraction to the platform coming through their exposure to the work of John Vervaeke and/or the Respond Network. We deepen this through our live practice, workshops, and course experiences on the platform. However, not all, perhaps only a few, offer opportunities for open dialogue. As a result, we also offer “Community Sessions” that provide a light structure for us to drop into a more casual and organic space for engaging in dialogue together from time to time.

That said, nothing can beat the benefits of engaging in this platform and the practices offered on it than doing so with people you are the closest to. Just be sure they have their own wants to participate with you.

The Vulnerability Hangover

Vulnerability is an essential component to deepening connection and intimacy with one’s self, others, and the world. As John might say, the covenant of mutual disclosure affords us the experience of reciprocal opening. In other words, my leading with courage in sharing something vulnerable, edgy, or difficult will often inspire a similar response and together we will ‘open’ to one another and the world.

However, if you participate in drop-in practice events involving dialogue long enough, then you’ll inevitably have the experience of a ‘vulnerability hangover’. That is that moment 5 seconds or a day after you shared something with someone else that you start to wish you hadn’t and then the rumination begins.

If you're concerned about the other party(ies)—this is easier in the moment/session than afterwards—it is wise to check in with them on the impact.

"I've lived through some terrible things in my life, some of which actually happened." - Mark Twain

The good news is that the vulnerability hangover is just information that your quest for authenticity or connection might have had you lean past a Yoga-metaphorical stretch and into a tear. So, as you would with any tear, try to be kind and gentle with it. Know that you're not the only one who's done this, and this is quite often part of the process of knowing where your own boundaries are, which is certainly helpful for moving in the direction of becoming more wise.

Other Psycho-Emotional Distress

If you are in the grip of some psycho-emotional distress, give yourself compassionate presence and space. Become aware of whatever is happening for you that is painful or difficult, and relate to it with an attitude of acceptance and welcoming—the way you would relate to a small child that came to you with that feeling.

Some practices to help in case you feel overwhelmed

- **Shaking** - put on some music and shake your whole body for five to ten minutes. Make any sounds that feel like an expression of how you feel right now.
- **Friends** - ask a friend who is currently calm to hold you, and tune into their body state. If that doesn't feel available, ask them to sit with you and sigh (out loud) until you are calm.
- **Breathing** - breathe long and slow exhales from the bottom of your belly. Let the inhale occur naturally. Keep breathing like this for five to ten minutes.
- **Walking and sensing** - get up and walk around slowly, if possible outdoors, and consciously note whatever is salient in your environment (colors, shapes, objects, sounds, smells, breathing, bodily sensations), until you feel more grounded in the simplicity of being a moving body that is simply perceiving.

If you find yourself having a trauma reaction, especially after the session, please notify us and the workshop facilitator right away at info@awakentomeaning.com and be sure to reach out for professional help (therapist, counselor, psychologist). You can find some such resources on our "Resources" page.

Some experiences that would qualify as a possible 'trauma reaction' might be:

- Strong reaction you don't understand
- Flashback to an event you weren't previously conscious of

- Shaking
- Prolonged crying
- Strong dissociation (aka 'spacing out')
- A familiar/recurring pattern of feelings or stuckness that does not shift in quality when attention is brought to it (sometimes referred to as a 'core wound')

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