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AKASHIC
RECORDS
INTENSIVE
AGREEMENTS

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**Go Deep.
Live Personal
Truth.
Awaken Becoming.**

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CHERYL
MARLENE

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WELCOME!

I'm so glad you're here. The *Akashic Records Intensive* is not just a set of classes — it's a living witness community where your journey unfolds in your own way and time.

Membership is simple: a monthly contribution on a sliding scale, with scholarships available if needed. There's no fixed end date, no tests to pass, no certification to chase. You choose how long you stay, and you walk at the pace that feels true for you.

All that's required is your presence — openness, curiosity, and a willingness to explore — along with a stable internet connection and a way to join us on Zoom.

As a member, you'll receive access to all Intensive courses, two private sessions with me to support your beginning, and the ongoing companionship of an international community committed to presence, discovery, and shared becoming.

This is a space of support and soul-aligned wisdom. If you're ready to step in, you can begin with the application below.

In Joy,
Cheryl

[APPLY TO THE AKASHIC RECORDS INTENSIVE →](#)

THE AKASHIC RECORDS INTENSIVE: MORE THAN A COURSE

Akashic Records Intensive:

A sacred witness community for deep spiritual study, clarity, integrity, and transformative exploration within the Akashic Records and ancient wisdom—go deep, live personal truth, awaken becoming.

The Akashic Records Intensive is not a typical class or training. The Intensive is an immersion into the sacred practice of opening the Akashic Records for yourself and eventually for others and for non-human energy flows.

This is a journey of discovery, personal truth, and integration — one that requires not only your personal commitment but also your willingness to learn within a shared community.

While the Intensive offers live workshops and classes with Cheryl plus lessons, techniques, and practices, it is not simply a course of study. It is a collaborative learning environment — a *witness community* — where each participant learns through presence, trust, and the courage to show up as they are. You will not only gain knowledge; you will practice living from your personal power while supporting and being supported by others doing the same.

Joining the Intensive is more like entering a sacred circle than enrolling in a class. What makes this possible are the agreements we hold together. These agreements protect connection with the Akashic Records, honor each participant's truth, and sustain the shared vision of inquiry of the group so that every person can do their deepest work.

By saying yes to the Intensive, you are saying yes to:

- Showing up in integrity for yourself and others.
- Holding the community as a sacred space for mutual learning.
- Engaging the Akashic Records with reverence and responsibility.

This is why participation in the Intensive is not casual. To join is to step into both a personal practice and a collaborative covenant — one that honors your personal truth while safeguarding the shared environment that allows everyone to thrive.

FOUNDATION OF A WITNESS COMMUNITY

To step into a Witness Community is to step into a different way of being with yourself and with others. Most communities rely on hierarchy — someone knows, someone doesn't; some are better, others are not.

In contrast, a Witness Community is not about performance, answers, or authority-over. A Witness Community is about presence — and about the courage to listen with your whole being, to honor the truth of another as you honor your own, and to trust that personal transformation unfolds in its own rhythm.

Witnessing is not passive. Witnessing is not withdrawal or indifference.

Witnessing is active presence without control — a way of learning and becoming together that honors diversity, nurtures trust, and resists the impulse to fix or dominate. In this community, you are asked to bring yourself fully, to hold others respectfully, and to let go of the demand for certainty.

A Witness Community is not built on answers, but on inquiry. Not on hierarchy, but on resonance. Not on fixing, but on honoring what is unfolding. This foundation shapes both the agreements you enter and the values you live when you join.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO WITNESS?

To witness is to be fully present with yourself or another without needing to change, correct, solve, or improve what is unfolding for either person.

As a Witness, you are actively present, observing, and listening, without control or opinion, for both yourself and for others.

Witnessing is an act of listening with your whole being — body, mind, heart, and soul — while allowing space for truth to arise on its own terms and in its own rhythm.

Witnessing is neither passive nor avoidance.

Witnessing is active presence without control.

To witness someone means:

- You listen without trying to shape, interpret, or explain their experience.
- You reflect without inserting your own agenda
- You trust that what they're discovering is worthy — even if it's unfinished, uncertain, uncomfortable, or makes no sense to you.

To witness yourself means:

- You show up honestly, without performance.
- You allow your own truth to emerge in the moment.
- You resist the urge to immediately explain, justify, or package what's raw, uncertain, or unexpected.

WHAT IS A WITNESS COMMUNITY?

In a Witness Community, each participant joins the community to learn in *common unity* as a witness for self and other.

A Witness Community is a *collaborative learning environment* where no one is above, beneath, or outside another.

Through a *shared vision of inquiry*, we hold space for learning to happen within each and between each — in the shared breath, the open pause, and the honest reflection.

There are no experts, no spectators, and no right answers to compete over.

Rather the community motion is a walk-pause-walk rhythm with presence, inquiry, witnessing, integration, and becoming as focus, experience, and path. To walk is to experience life as it is in the moment. To pause is to allow What Is in the moment without judgment, explanation or immediate resolution.

The right or perfect answer is set aside in favor of learning peace with the unknown, the uncertain, and the unexpected. This allows personal deepening within the pause and breath within the walk without needing to solve, fix, or explain.

Authority is not denied. Instead, authority is transformed from external dominance to acknowledgement of the Power Within of each community member. Thus each person is their own authority of their personal truth.

Personal truth lives in connection with community agreements. The agreements are the terms of participation within the Witness Community. The agreements form the context of the relationship of the individual with the group and within the group. The agreements protect the community so everyone can do their deepest work without harm.

Each participant is the authority of their own truth. Within a shared witness community, personal truth lives alongside the truths of others and within the structure holding the work.

Without a hierarchy, witness community thrives with the concept of leadership as stewardship. In this perspective, the leader does not have authority over. Instead the leader has both charge and responsibility for tending to the energetic coherence of the community and developing the content of community inquiry.

LEADERSHIP AS STEWARDSHIP

In a Witness Community, leadership is not about hierarchy or control. It is about stewardship — tending to the integrity, honoring the agreements, and guiding the community with presence and care. A steward leads by witnessing, not by dominating, holding the center so that each member may bring forward their truth. To do this, the leader:

- Honors, respects, and witnesses the community
- Leads within the dynamics of Power With and Power Within
- Tenders the energetic coherence of the community
- Holds the center of the community's sacred space.
- Guides without controlling
- Honors all voices
- Holds boundaries and agreements for both the community and the individual
- Brings topics for learning, discovery, and release
- Establishes and maintains shared values

- Acknowledges when there is resistance or denial by either the group or a participant
- Cultivates comfort with uncertainty, the unknown, and the unexpected.
- Maintains confidentiality of the community and the individual

Within the Akashic Records Intensive, Cheryl Marlene is the community leader. As described, Cheryl serves as steward of the Intensive — managing both content and process, honoring boundaries, and guiding without control. Members agree to allow personal redirection from Cheryl when needed to preserve the integrity of the Intensive.

STEPPING INTO WITNESS COMMUNITY

When you choose to join a Witness Community, you enter into shared agreements that honor both your truth and the truths of others. These commitments are not restrictions, but protections — creating the conditions where deep work can unfold with safety, reverence, and respect. They are how you declare readiness to learn, to witness, and to grow together in trust. Community agreements include:

- Be present and engaged from center
- Listen with whole being
- Speak from personal experience
- Ask questions to open space and possibility
- Allow uncertainty and discomfort without rushing to resolution
- Trust the rhythm of personal truth, even when unfamiliar
- Hold shared stories with care, reverence, and confidentiality
- Take responsibility for personal energy, presence, and participation
- Resist the urge to fix, advise, or rescue others
- Stay connected at the edge, where transformation stirs and the unknown beckons
- Acknowledge others grow at their own pace, without comparison or impatience
- Remain open to change through resonance with the unexpected

WHY THIS MATTERS

Most learning communities are built on hierarchy. Someone knows, someone doesn't. There's a right answer, there's a wrong answer.

Additionally, hierarchy breeds a disempowered sense of responsibility and the idea that one joins a community to elevate by always producing the right answer. This supports the outdated habit that telling others when they are wrong and offering to fix them is appropriate community behavior.

In a witness community, everyone is whole, worthy, and complete. No fixing needed. No reparation of brokenness. No need to offer solutions to others.

To join a witness community, hierarchy is unlearned. Within the boundaries of the witness, the understanding is responsibility is for self. And that no one — including self — needs fixing.

As witness, this means don't offer advice, opinion, or judgment. Don't offer help. Don't presume to know better about someone than they know themselves.

You wait to be asked and respond to direct questions. Pay attention to your own process and your own questions. In group, you reflect what you are experiencing in real time.

When the going gets tough, ask for input, for assistance, for clarity. And then process for self — maybe out loud to the group, maybe within self-awareness.

Ultimately, witnessing is how truth finds room to breathe. This is how you learn to trust your own voice and your own inner awareness of personal truth. And it is how we honor the voices of everyone.

By claiming this perspective of community, the direction of the witness allows the community to form as a consciously-held, multidimensional, supportive collaboration with experience and learning at the threshold of the unknown.

WITNESS COMMUNITY CORE VALUES

At the heart of a Witness Community are the values that guide how you show up, how you relate to others, and how you deepen into truth. These are not rules for compliance, but invitations into a way of being that honors presence, trust, and transformation. They are the ground from which the community draws strength and the rhythm that makes growth possible.

1. The Power of Presence

Come as you are, engaged from within, present to yourself and to others. Presence is truth. Presence is you saying you are ready to go deep, explore truth, and step into your becoming.

2. Witnessing and Listening

Witness without judgment. Listen with your whole being — body, heart, mind, and soul. A witness honors another's truth without needing to guide, correct, or rescue, allowing what is expressed to be fully seen, felt, and heard.

3. Power With and Power Within

Honor the authority of truth as it arises within all. True leadership emerges as coherence and stewardship, never control. Strength comes when each person stands in their own knowing and insight is shared in mutual respect.

4. Diversity of Truth

Recognize there is no single right answer. Each truth adds depth, and strength comes from the interplay of many perspectives. Together, the tapestry of understanding becomes richer than any solitary thread.

5. Compassion and Non-Judgment

Remember that everyone is in process. Choose compassion, especially when others act from fear. Release judgment in favor of curiosity, flexibility, and generosity.

6. Inquiry Over Persuasion

Ask questions that open to possibility rather than persuade or debate. Treat inquiry as an act of reverence — an invitation into deeper truth, a way of exploring rather than correcting.

7. Trust in Timing

Trust the rhythm and timing of insight and integration. Growth comes not from pressure but from reflection, resonance, and readiness.

8. Welcome Silence, Discomfort, and Resistance

Silence, pause, and discomfort are part of the process. Resistance is not failure but a doorway — a threshold to deeper awareness, shift, and becoming.

9. Hold Stories with Reverence

Receive the stories of others with care, confidentiality, and reverence. Each story is a gift — not authority, not comparison — but truth offered into the circle of becoming.

10. Share Responsibility for Coherence

A Witness Community is a living cauldron tended by all. While leadership stewards the energy, every member shares responsibility for maintaining presence, integrity and inquiry.

11. Integration Requires Rhythm

Learning is not just ingesting content or completing assignment. Learning is integration which fuels becoming. Growth unfolds in rhythm — walk and pause, expression and reflection. Honor the rhythm that lets becoming settle into lived experience.

12. Safety in Presence

Safety is not comfort at all costs, but the ground that makes vulnerability and risk possible. Presence holds the sacred space where you may bring forward the edge of who you are.

13. Responsibility for Self

Attend to your own energy and presence. Stay connected at the edge where transformation stirs. Use what arises within you as an invitation to your own becoming, without projecting unresolved work onto others or feeling the push to fix another.

14. Accept Guidance and Agreements

Accept redirection when needed to maintain coherence. Honor the commitments that make this community possible — including your agreements with the Akashic Records, with Cheryl, and with yourself. Communicate directly with Cheryl when challenge or resistance arises, so that truth may meet truth.

WITNESS COMMUNITY RESOURCES:

Alongside these values are resources — writings and reflections that open new doorways of understanding. They offer you deeper language for what it means to witness, to live truth in community, and to resist the pull of hierarchy and control. Both the values and the resources exist to support you in walking the path of becoming within a Witness Community.

These articles are included in the Appendix of this document or on my website:

Personal Truth is not Universal Permission

The Architecture of Sacred Trust

Personal Power: the Heartbeat of Witnessing

The Art of Being Seen and Seeing Others

When Presence Becomes the Practice

Holding Space Without Losing Yourself

FINAL WORDS

To join a Witness Community is to commit to more than learning a skill or gaining knowledge. It is to enter a living exchange where truth is honored, difference is welcomed, and presence is the ground of transformation. It is to stand at the threshold of the unknown and discover that you do not need to fix, prove, or perform — you need only to be present, to listen, to witness.

This way of community is rare in a world that prizes answers and hierarchy. Yet it is here, in the rhythm of walk and pause, in the practice of Power With and Power Within, that new possibilities emerge. Here you learn to trust your voice, to honor the truths of others, and to live inside the sacred balance of freedom and responsibility.

A Witness Community is not a container you enter; it is a shared act of becoming. By claiming your place within it, you join in creating a space where transformation is possible — not through control, but through presence, resonance, and reverence.

AKASHIC RECORDS INTENSIVE

AGREEMENTS

When you join the Akashic Records Intensive, you step into a sacred learning community guided by the principles of presence, trust, and truth. These Agreements protect the integrity of the work, the Akashic Records, and each member. They are made in mutuality: the commitments I make as leader and steward, and the commitments you make as a member.

AGREEMENTS CHERYL MAKES

Before agreeing to join the Akashic Records Intensive, I want you to know about the Agreements I make to you as a member and to the community:

1. Hold Sacred Space

Tend to the integrity, presence, and depth of the Intensive as a witness community. Lead within Power-With and Power-Within, never through hierarchy or control.

2. Teach with Integrity

Offer the Akashic Records wisdom, process, and practices with clarity, authenticity, and respect for their sacredness and power. Provide step-by-step learning that supports all members in building trust with self and with the Akashic Records.

3. Protect Confidentiality

Safeguard what is shared in class, practice, or private communication. Respect your privacy and hold all student information with care and in confidence.

4. Maintain Boundaries

Keep the Intensive focused on its purpose. Protect students from solicitation, judgment, or misuse of community space and time. Redirect behavior that undermines the integrity of the group. Make the decisions required when Agreements are broken.

5. Guide with Care

Provide honest reflection, compassionate redirection, and encouragement when resistance, fear, or challenge arises. Witness member process without judgment and with respect for personal truth.

6. Model Responsibility

Live the same principles I ask of you: presence, inquiry, non-judgment, and reverence. Acknowledge my own edges and be transparent when correction or clarity is needed.

7. Honor the Akashic Records

Teach, guide, and protect the sacred work of the Akashic Records. Ensure all classes, workshops, and practices remain aligned with the Agreements we all make with the Akashic Records.

8. Support Your Becoming

Offer resources, guidance, and presence to help you deepen trust in yourself, live your truth, and step into your becoming with confidence and reverence.

MEMBER AGREEMENTS

When you join the Akashic Records Intensive, you commit to:

1. Honor the Core Principles

Engage in the Intensive through the Witness Community Core Values of presence, witnessing, Power-With and Power-Within, compassion, inquiry, trust in timing, and responsibility for self.

2. Keep Your Akashic Records Agreements

Maintain the Agreements of *Open Your Akashic Records* and *Open the Akashic Records for Other* as shared by Cheryl and through your Intensive study. Open only your Akashic Records until you learn to open the Akashic Records of Other. Then, until your Clarity Protocol is complete, open for Other only within Intensive classes, workshops, or practices, or as directed by Cheryl. In all Intensive events use only the process and techniques taught within the Intensive.

3. Be Fully Present

Arrive on time to all Intensive events, remain present for the full session, and treat each gathering as sacred space. Keep your camera on and avoid multitasking. Engage as a witness — not as a spectator.

4. Respect Confidentiality and Privacy

Hold all shared stories with care and reverence. Do not disclose what belongs to another. Do not request personal contact details from other Intensive members. If you share your contact details do not be insulted if no contact is made — not every member is in a position to respond.

5. Maintain Boundaries

Treat practice and community space with professional respect. Do not use it to seek friends, free readings, clients, or to evaluate others' abilities. Do not bring in or offer other modalities or techniques.

6. Take Responsibility for Self

Attend to your own energy and presence. Use discomfort, resistance, or challenge as an invitation to your own becoming. Communicate with Cheryl when challenges arise either with self or with another. Seek to take care of the consequences of broken agreements.

7. Support Community Integrity

Honor the rhythm of walk and pause. Share responsibility for the community's well-being. Accept redirection when needed, especially to uphold agreements and values.

8. **Respect Sacred Works**

All teachings, blessings, and writings shared in the Intensive are sacred works, entrusted to you for learning only and are used only within the context provided. They may not be altered, adapted, or reused in any form without written permission from Cheryl. To do so is both a violation of copyright and of sacred trust.

TRUTH, BOUNDARIES, AND SACRED RESPECT

Personal truth is honored here as a vital expression of who you are. Yet personal truth does not equal universal permission. To remain in the Intensive is to live your truth within the agreements you have freely chosen. If your truth leads you beyond these boundaries, you are free to live it — outside the community. Remaining inside while breaking agreements imposes Power-Over, which is not permitted here.

There are five primary reasons someone may leave the Intensive:

1. **Learning is Complete** – You have received what you came for and feel ready to step forward into your own path.
2. **Persistent Doubt** – Doubt cannot be overcome and prevents you from trusting yourself, the Records, or the community.
3. **Truth No Longer in Alignment** – Your personal truth moves in a direction no longer aligned with the Intensive Agreements.
4. **Resistance to Inner Shift** – When resistance becomes a refusal to grow and is expressed as blame, especially toward the leader or community.
5. **Severe Breach of Agreements** – A break so significant that parting is required, which may include violations of confidentiality, disrespect for others, misuse of teachings, or non-payment.

Most importantly, leaving the Intensive, for any reason, is not failure. Usually it is alignment — an honoring of truth, whether within or beyond the community. Your time here remains a sacred part of your becoming.

When it is time for you to part and follow a different path, simply let Cheryl know so that she can acknowledge your time in the community and complete your Intensive membership.

CONSEQUENCES

By joining the Akashic Records Intensive, you freely enter into these Agreements. Breaches that undermine the community — including non-payment, violation of confidentiality, misuse of teachings, or resistance expressed as blame — have consequences. When a breach occurs, consequences may include redirection, private conversation, or removal from the Intensive without refund, at Cheryl's sole discretion.

AGREEMENTS: OPEN YOUR AKASHIC RECORDS

To open your Akashic Records, you are asked to make agreements with the Akashic Records and with me which guide how and when you open the Akashic Records. These agreements support your process of opening and the use of the blessing you will learn in the first part of the Intensive.

Before committing to the Intensive I want you to know about these Agreements and raise with me anything that might not be something you can agree to. When you join the Intensive, I will discuss these with you further and show you how they are woven into your experience with opening your Akashic Records.

1. I am Beginner's Mind.

1. I begin each opening of the Akashic Records being as clear and open as I can.
2. I move inward to answer The Call, letting go of ego.
3. I am in training for twelve months from this day, _____ (enter date).
4. I will begin each time like the first time.
5. I will not memorize the Blessing. I will say the blessing out loud.

2. I am here, now in the Present Moment.

1. I gather my energy and awareness into this Present Moment.
2. I let go of my expectations, presumptions and judgments.
3. I let go of blame and fear.
4. I let go of my stories that no longer serve me.
5. If drugs, alcohol, or other stimulants are a problem for me, I will not consume those 12 hours prior to opening my Akashic Records.

3. I set my Intention without external influence.

1. I identify what I want to ask the Akashic Records.
2. I focus my entire self on receiving everything that is for me, in this moment, from the Akashic Records.
3. I listen with my heart.
4. I open the Akashic Records for myself only. I will not open the Akashic Records for another person or entity.

4. I maintain Integrity with myself and others.

1. I agree to always be honest and seek balance and understanding within the Akashic Records.
2. I acknowledge Cheryl Marlene as my Akashic Records Teacher and will turn to her as needed for assistance and knowing.
3. I keep the process of opening the Akashic Records to myself and will honor others as they find their own path in the Akashic Records.
4. I will not teach another person how to open the Akashic Records.

5. I am Sacred Space.

1. My clear intention and integrity form the foundation for my connection with the Akashic Records. I yield control and step into faith with trust.
2. I will not change my blessing or process for opening the Akashic Records nor use another method of accessing the Akashic Records during my twelve-month training period.
3. I will open the Akashic Records only when I need them and only in a space of safety and full concentration.

AGREEMENTS: OPEN THE AKASHIC RECORDS FOR OTHER

Just as with opening your Akashic Records, there are agreements to make with the Akashic Records and with me, as your teacher, to open the Akashic Records for Other at the deepest and broadest levels possible.

I acknowledge that within the scope of the Akashic Records that Other includes any and all flows of energy which are not mine. Each and every time I open the Akashic Records for Other, I declare my intention to always do so as a Witness of the divine flow. May the flow be through me as a spark of recognition of All That Is, expanding the Knowing for all whom I witness. May I move within the support of Beginner's Mind, Present Moment, Intention, Integrity, and Sacred Space.

I. Let me be a Witness of the Divine Flow.

1. I will open the Akashic Records for Other only when asked specifically to do so by Other. I will never offer.
2. I will request the Other's full legal name and birthday, using this information to guide my reading for Other in the Akashic Records. In the absence of a full legal name, I will consult with my Akashic Records as to how to proceed.
3. Only Other's intention and questions will guide the Readings I provide; never my own opinion, judgment, expectation, or question.
4. Let me be as the ocean in flow with All That Is, allowing the highest expression to emerge and be transmitted to Other, whatever this may be.

II. Let me be a Speaker of Truth as an echo of the divine flow.

1. I will not memorize the blessing.
2. I will never reveal the content of an Akashic Record Reading for Other unless I receive permission from Other. I will guarantee 100% confidentiality and will not reveal the content to a third party unless required to do so by law or within the teacher-student context.
3. I will withhold nothing of the flow, except in issues of death or abuse.
4. I will flow within all senses and find ways to convey all feelings, thoughts, words, pictures, and experiences that I receive on behalf of Other.
5. I will use expressions of love, compassion, and consideration in my work with the Akashic Records and throughout all aspects of my life.

III. Let me be a Holder of Sacred Space for Other, creating room for the presence of the One and the Many.

1. I will only open the Akashic Records for individuals 18 years old or older.
2. During an Akashic Record Reading for Other, I will be present and in good health, and will not consume alcohol, drugs, or other disrupting substances within twelve (12) hours before a Reading.
3. I agree to a twelve-month training period from this day and will not change the opening process or blessing during this period.
4. Before conducting Akashic Record Readings for other people, I will clearly state my intention to be an Akashic Record Reader by following the *Clarity Protocol*.
5. I will not teach another until I have at least twelve months of experience opening the Akashic Records for Other.
6. An Akashic Record Reading lasts at least one hour, unless permission is granted from the Akashic Records for shorter periods.

In the sacred trust granted to me by the Masters, Teachers and Loved Ones of the Akashic Records, I agree to continue to keep the Agreements I made to open the Akashic Records for myself and I now freely make these agreements to open the Akashic Records for Other.

GUIDING YOUR JOURNEY TO SOUL- ALIGNED WISDOM

[APPLY TO THE AKASHIC RECORDS INTENSIVE →](#)

The Akashic Records Intensive Membership is offered on a sliding scale of \$50–300 per month, with a suggested membership of \$125. If this is beyond your budget, you may request a scholarship directly in the application.

Membership is month-to-month with no fixed end. You may join for as long as you feel called, and leave with 30 days' notice. There are no tests, no performance standards, and no certification chase — just a yes to yourself and the path ahead.

To begin, you need only:

- To be at least 18 years old
- Openness, curiosity, and a willingness to explore
- A stable internet connection, Zoom access, and a webcam to be fully present

As a member, you receive:

- Live access to all Akashic Records Intensive classes (introductory and advanced)
- Two private sessions with Cheryl to anchor your beginning and support your transition into advanced study
- Ongoing participation in an international, collaborative witness community
- Immediate access to four foundational courses: *Open for You*, *Personal Healing*, *Soul Energy Dynamics*, and *Open for Other*
- Audio recordings of all classes for continued connection
- Student newsletters, free 15-minute check-ins, and the option to add Student Mentorship at student rates

This is a living membership — a space of support and soul discovery. You walk at your own pace. You stay for as long as the journey calls.

READY TO BEGIN?

[APPLY TO THE AKASHIC RECORDS INTENSIVE →](#)

APPENDIX

To dive deeper into the concept of witness community and what it means to be a witness, I have written the following articles which I include in full for your consideration and reflection. The links take you to my website where each article is also available.

Personal Truth is not Universal Permission

The Architecture of Sacred Trust

Personal Power: the Heartbeat of Witnessing

The Art of Being Seen and Seeing Others

When Presence Becomes the Practice

Holding Space Without Losing Yourself

PERSONAL TRUTH IS NOT UNIVERSAL PERMISSION

The Collision Point

We live in a time when *living your truth* is celebrated as a marker of integrity and self-awareness. A worthy aspiration — and yet, in many places, this effort has been misunderstood. Increasingly, personal truth is used as a justification to override agreements, disregard boundaries, or act without regard for the impact on others.

Personal truth is sacred. And it is **not** a universal permission slip.

What Personal Truth Really Means

Your personal truth emerges within the alignment between your inner knowing, your lived experience, and your values. Truth is how you understand yourself and the world in this moment. Your truth is precious and uniquely yours.

Further, truth is not static. Truth evolves as you grow, as new experiences and deeper understandings emerge. And because it is *personal*, truth exists within all aspects of your life. However this does not make personal truth a blanket justification to ignore the commitments, ethics, or agreements that govern shared spaces you choose to participate in.

The Boundaries of Communities

When you step into a community, you are entering into relationship. You are establishing and acknowledging connection. These relationships are held together by shared agreements, mutual respect, and ethical commitments.

These shared agreements form the boundaries of the community. Boundaries are not simply lines of limitation — they are the shape of mutual responsibility among those present. They define how engagement takes place, what is protected, and how trust is sustained so the deep personal work can occur. Without agreements, boundaries become vague, and the stability of the community erodes.

Especially in spiritual communities, these boundaries are not arbitrary rules. They are part of the sacred structure that protects the spiritual work itself. Agreements and boundaries ensure that everyone who enters can engage with trust, safety, and the freedom to go deep without fear of misuse or disrespect.

Where the Collision Happens

The trouble comes when personal truth is used to bypass the shared commitments of the community.

For example:

- *It's my truth to pick which agreements I keep.*
Agreements in a community are not a menu of optional choices — they are the shared foundation which make community learning possible. Selectively keeping only the agreements that suit undermines the integrity of the whole and shifts the burden of holding the community's structure onto others, especially on to the community leader.
- *It's my truth to adapt this sacred material into my own creative work.*
Sacred material in a community is shared within a specific context and under mutual agreements. Adaption without consent attempts to remove the material from the legal and spiritual protection inherent within community structures and agreements. The attempt is to try to turn a shared trust into a private claim.
- *It's my truth to speak critically about another because I'm just being honest.*
In a witness community, your role is not to fix, correct, or offer unsolicited suggestions about another member's path. Even when framed as honesty, speaking critically about someone shifts the focus away from witnessing and into judgment or intervention. The commitment here is to witness each person's truth without inserting your own evaluation.
- *It's my truth to remain unseen during gatherings.*
In a witness community, visibility is part of reciprocal presence. Choosing to remain unseen often isn't about privacy but about splitting attention — doing something else while in class. This disengages from the shared moment and erodes the mutual presence that allows witnessing to be authentic and whole.

In each case, personal truth is invoked as a shield against accountability within the agreements of the community. This is Power-Over — placing one's own will above the mutual agreements that make the community possible.

The harm is real: trust erodes, personal effort is distorted, and community relationships can fracture.

Why Personal Truth Gets Misused as Permission

Beyond bypassing accountability, personal truth is often misused to ignore agreements for several reasons. One is the belief personal truth carries a kind of moral or spiritual exemption — “If it's my truth, it must be right for me, therefore it can't be wrong.” This bypasses the reality

that what feels right for one person isn't necessarily true for another. This limited view can cause harm in relationship.

Another trouble is the elevation of authenticity above all else. Here, *being authentic* is treated as the highest value, automatically outweighing collective agreements. The assumption is that personal alignment matters more than the shared commitments that make the community safe and personal work deep. Interestingly this is a form of hierarchy which attributes worth by elevating a particular standard above any other.

There is also a common misunderstanding of freedom. Freedom is often seen as the absence of limits, rather than the choice to act with integrity within limitation. In this view, agreements are mistaken for constraints instead of being recognized as a valid structure of depth and trust.

Some simply resist anything that feels like external authority. In this mindset, any request or requirement feels like "someone telling me what to do." This confuses *mutually chosen agreements* with imposed control, overlooking the fact that joining the community is itself a voluntary choice.

Finally, there is the comfort of self-referential logic: "If it feels right to me, then it is right" becomes the only measure. This closes off awareness of other perspectives and of the relational impact of one's actions. In each case, personal truth is no longer a guide for integrity but a shield against mutual responsibility.

Honoring Truth Without Breaking Trust

Honoring personal truth does not require breaking agreements. It does, however, require discernment. Discernment is the ability to perceive clearly and judge wisely between different courses of action, especially when both feel personally valid. It is the inner skill of asking: *Does this choice serve only me, or does it also honor the commitments I have made to others?* In the context of community, discernment is what allows a person to hold personal truth alongside the relational responsibilities that sustain the shared work.

If personal truth calls someone toward an action that is outside the community's agreements, the ethical choice is simple: that truth can still be lived — but it belongs outside the community.

Remaining within the community while breaking the agreements is not a neutral act. Remaining can impose one person's will on the entire group without the consent of other community members. This is control. The benefits of belonging are exploited solely to personal benefit while discarding the mutual responsibilities that belonging requires. In practice, this shifts the balance of power, forcing others to adapt to a choice they did not agree to, and undermines the integrity of the commitments that make the community possible.

Freedom and Responsibility as Partners

True freedom is not the absence of boundaries. It is not the right to act without regard for the impact on others. True freedom emerges through integrity — the choice to act in alignment both with personal truth and with community agreements. In this sense, integrity is the bridge between what feels right internally and what has been agreed to collectively.

Responsibility is the partner of freedom. Responsibility means honoring the agreements that create the conditions for the work to thrive. Responsibility recognizes that belonging comes with mutual obligations, not just benefits. When personal truth no longer aligns with those agreements, responsibility calls for stepping away rather than attempting to reshape the community to fit an individual preference.

When freedom and responsibility are held together, expression becomes deeper, more authentic, and more trustworthy. Freedom without responsibility becomes self-indulgence; responsibility without freedom becomes compliance. Together, they allow truth to be expressed in a way that strengthens the community rather than eroding it. This balance makes it possible for each person to live fully in alignment while also sustaining the integrity of the shared work.

A Call to Maturity

Living personal truth is not diminished by honoring commitments. Personal truth is deepened with clarity about inner boundaries and commitments with others. Maturity is measured not only by the fierceness with which truth is held, but by the skill with which it is held in relationship with others.

In a healthy community, personal truth and collective agreements are not competing forces — they are partners in sustaining trust, depth, and safety. When either is neglected, the foundation of the community is challenged and the shared work suffers. When both are honored, the work thrives and everyone benefits.

The choice is not between self-expression and community integrity. The real choice is whether truth will be lived in a way that strengthens or weakens the bonds that make the work possible. The mark of maturity is the ability to live one's truth without diminishing the truths, rights, or agreements of others.

Your truth is yours. The community belongs to all who enter. Both are sacred — and in a witness community, both are honored together, or not at all.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF SACRED TRUST

Trust as Structure, Not Just Feeling

In ordinary conversation, trust is often spoken of as a feeling — a sense of safety, confidence, or mutual respect. However, in the work of a witness community, trust is not just a feeling that might arise. Trust is a structure intentionally created and maintained.

Sacred trust is not built on sentiment alone. Within a witness community, trust rests on clear agreements, healthy boundaries, and shared accountability. Without this structure, even the most heartfelt intentions can be misdirected or be misaligned under the weight of misunderstanding or disrespect.

The Building Blocks

Sacred trust in a witness community is not an accident of goodwill — trust is the quiet weaving of intention, choice, and shared presence. At its heart are three currents shaping how the community engages with one another, how the community holds space, and how depth is entered. These currents are the building blocks: agreements to steady the ground, boundaries to invite emergence, and accountability to sustain integrity in motion.

Clear Agreements

Every relationship in a witness community begins with agreements: how the members will engage as a group, what is expected, and what is not acceptable. These agreements are not constraints to be chafed against — they are the framework that allows deep, vulnerable work to happen in an environment of trust.

Boundaries as Emergence

Boundaries are not walls; they are sacred energetic waves moving through the shared experience of the community. They carry the rhythm that holds community relationships clear and steady, so depth can rise naturally into the space between each member. Within these living waves, each person's truth can unfold and be witnessed without intrusion, distortion, or misuse.

Mutual Accountability

In a witness community, accountability is a shared commitment to remain in integrity with oneself and with the whole. Sacred trust is upheld when each person takes responsibility for their actions and stays open to asking for, and receiving, assistance when needed. This is not about policing or correcting one another, but about standing together in the awareness that the integrity of each person nourishes the integrity of all.

Together, these building blocks create a living architecture — one that moves with the tides of challenge and change, and opens space for the unexpected beauty of emergence.

How Sacred Trust is Maintained

Sacred trust does not spring into being and remain whole on its own. Like any living structure, trust needs tending — steady hands, attentive hearts, and a willingness to meet what is present. The building blocks form the foundation, and the ongoing presence of each member keeps trust alive.

Consistency

Sacred trust grows when members show up in alignment with community agreements, even when doing so is inconvenient or uncomfortable. Consistency affirms that words are more than aspiration — they are practice, shaping how members engage with one another in both ease and challenge.

Transparency

Boundaries as emergence require honesty about where each person stands. Naming when something has shifted, or when the flow between members feels disrupted, clears the waters so depth can move freely. Transparency is not the airing of every thought, but the intentional offering of what will keep trust clear and relationships steady.

Soothing the Current

In a witness community, the leader carries the responsibility for keeping the current clear and steady by restoring alignment and maintaining the integrity of the community. Members are never required to name concerns publicly; instead, they are encouraged to bring them privately, knowing they will be heard with care and confidentiality. This includes moments when agreements feel overlooked, boundaries waver, or resistance rises. In the hands of the leader, remedy is not a public spectacle, but a quiet, steady act that restores flow and reaffirms the safety of the whole.

Sacred trust is maintained not by perfection, but by presence — the willingness to keep showing up, keep listening, and keep clearing the way for depth to move between members. In this tending, the community becomes more than the sum of its parts: a living witness, steady enough to hold truth and open enough to let truth bring change.

The Cost of Neglect

When the architecture of sacred trust — agreements, boundaries, and accountability — is left untended, the changes are often subtle at first. A voice held back. A quiet stepping away. Over time, neglect gathers its own momentum.

Safety weakens, and members no longer bring their full selves. Depth gives way to guardedness, as the space once open begins to contract. Power-over dynamics slip in through the smallest gaps, as actions drift away from the agreements that once shaped the whole.

Left unaddressed, the community loses the capacity to hold the depth it was created for. What began as a living, breathing witness becomes a hollow form, unable to sustain the truth it once welcomed. Tending sacred trust is not an afterthought — it is the lifeblood of the witness community, and without it, the work cannot endure.

Sacred Trust as Foundation

The architecture of sacred trust is not about control — it is about liberation. Clear agreements create steady ground. Boundaries, honored as sacred energetic waves, shape a space where truth can rise without interference. Mutual accountability keeps integrity alive in motion. When these elements are in place, members can release the tension of self-protection and rest into the work, with confidence that the community will hold steady at the edges.

A witness community that tends this trust structure with intention gains an enduring capacity to go deeper, to meet challenge without collapse, and to welcome transformation without fear. Here, depth is not forced — it is invited. Without this architecture of trust, a group may still gather, but the witnessing will be partial, unable to sustain the kind of presence that transforms. Sacred trust is the ground and the shelter, the current and the vessel — the foundation from which the work not only begins, but truly lives. When trust is built as structure, trust can hold what feeling alone cannot — the full weight and wonder of the work.

PERSONAL POWER: THE HEARTBEAT OF WITNESSING

The Power Question

Every person in a witness community arrives with power — the inner capacity to choose, to act, and to speak truth. Power is never absent; it is always present in one form or another. The question is how it will be held and expressed.

At its most authentic, power begins as *Power-Within* — the personal alignment and authority that allows you to stay present, speak truth, and remain in integrity. Power-Within is the foundation of personal power: courage, steadiness, and visibility in your truth.

When Power-Within is expressed outwardly, it becomes *Power-With* — the shared dynamic of a community where voices are honored equally, presence is sustained, and every participant's truth strengthens the whole.

Power-Within and Power-With are inseparable: one cannot thrive without the other. Without Power-Within, Power-With weakens. Without Power-With, Power-Within diminishes. Together, they are the heartbeat of authentic witnessing.

What Personal Power Looks Like in Witnessing

Personal power is not abstract. It is the lived practice of staying connected to yourself while opening to others.

- **Integrity in Presence** – Showing up fully, not half-heartedly, and honoring your commitments to yourself and the community.
- **Courage to Speak** – Claiming your truth, even when vulnerable or uncertain, without collapsing into silence or imposing it on others.
- **Respect for Self and Others** – Holding your own voice with dignity while recognizing the equal worth of others' voices.

When participants embody these qualities, Power-Within flows outward as Power-With. The personal stance of each member creates the conditions for the collective to thrive.

What Power-With Looks Like

Power-With is not abstract theory — it is lived in the everyday patterns of how a community relates to itself. With Power-With present, it becomes visible in the way voices are honored, responsibilities are shared, and dialogue replaces domination. These qualities create the foundation where witnessing can truly thrive.

Mutual Empowerment

Power-With is not about diminishing anyone's authority or voice. Instead, Power-With ensures that each person's expression strengthens the whole, and that no one has to reduce themselves for the community to thrive.

Shared Responsibility

In Power-With, each member carries part of the responsibility for the health of the community — engaging fully, respecting boundaries, and upholding agreements without waiting for someone else to enforce them.

Collaboration Over Control

Ideas, concerns, and truths are brought forward in ways that invite dialogue, not domination. The aim is not to “win,” but to strengthen understanding and connection.

When these qualities take root, Power-With becomes more than principle — it becomes the lived culture of the community. Mutual empowerment, shared responsibility, and collaboration ensure that each person's presence strengthens the whole. In this way, the heartbeat of Power-With moves from intention into action, sustaining the coherence that makes authentic witnessing within the group possible.

How Power-Over Disrupts Witnessing

Yet, just as Power-With can sustain and deepen connection, its opposite quickly unravels it. When Power-With is absent, the balance of mutuality gives way to Power-Over — a dynamic that replaces respect with control, and collaboration with extraction. Where Power-With builds trust, Power-Over erodes it.

Power-Over is the opposite of Power-With. It places one person's comfort, preference, or control above the shared agreements and purpose of the community. Sometimes it is blatant; other times it is subtle:

- Taking from the community without giving back.
- Withholding presence, visibility, or engagement while expecting the benefits of the space.
- Reframing actions that diminish trust as harmless or justified because they “come from the heart.”

Power-Over undermines integrity by shifting the center of gravity away from mutual respect toward dominance. It erodes connection by creating caution, guardedness, and distance among members — conditions where authentic witnessing cannot survive.

Practicing Power-With in Witnessing

Neither Power-Within nor Power-With is sustained by belief alone. They are strengthened by practice — the everyday gestures of how participants show up, speak, and engage. These practices are simple in form, yet profound in impact, shaping the difference between a space that merely gathers and one that truly witnesses.

Three ways this practice comes alive are:

Speak From Self – Share truth without imposing it as the truth for others.

Hold Space, Don't Take Space – Be present and engaged without dominating the interaction.

Respect the Mutual Field – Recognize that each action — and each absence — shapes the experience for everyone else.

Together, these practices become a rhythm — a way of returning, again and again, to the shared heartbeat of personal power. They ask for presence, not perfection; attention, not performance. By engaging inner power in witnessing, the community renews its commitment to dignity, mutuality, and truth, allowing depth to not only be possible but to endure. Through them, Power-Within becomes Power-With — the pulse that sustains both personal clarity and collective coherence.

Personal Power as the Heartbeat of Witnessing

Personal power is more than inner strength. Personal power is the lifeblood of authentic witness. Without it, the group may still meet, speak, and share, but it will not truly witness.

With personal power, each person's Power-Within flows outward as Power-With, creating the shared trust and dignity that allow depth to flourish.

Choosing personal power is choosing to remain whole in the presence of others. This is the decision to stand in Power-Within and, through that stance, to create Power-With. This choice safeguards the integrity of the community and makes authentic witnessing possible.

Personal power is the heartbeat of witnessing — the pulse that carries both individual truth and collective connection into a shared field where authentic presence can thrive.

THE ART OF BEING SEEN AND SEEING OTHERS

Two Directions of Witnessing

Witnessing is never a one-way act. Witnessing is the living exchange between being seen and seeing others. Both require courage. Both demand skill. And both are essential to the health of a witness community.

Witnessing is more than noticing. Witnessing is the sacred act of affirming another's presence while also allowing your own to be affirmed. In this way, witnessing becomes both relationship and practice — the thread that weaves coherence into the community.

In today's world, it is easy to slide toward imbalance. Some disappear into invisibility, present in body but withholding their truth. Others lean toward performance, eager to be seen but reluctant to truly see. Both distort the current of witnessing and weaken the ground of belonging.

To restore balance, witnessing must move in two directions: the practice of being seen, and the practice of seeing others. Only when both are present does the community hold its full strength.

Let's begin with the first doorway into witnessing: the practice of allowing yourself to be seen.

The Practice of Being Seen

Being seen is more than showing up physically. It is the willingness to let yourself be recognized as you are in that moment — not curated, not armored, not hidden behind excuses.

- **Visibility:** In a physical or online space, this means choosing to be present, attentive, and available to connection.
- **Vulnerability:** It means sharing truth without knowing how it will be received, trusting that the community's agreements will hold you.
- **Authenticity:** Letting go of the need to appear a certain way and instead showing up as your whole self.

Being seen is a gift you give to the community, because it invites others to trust that they, too, can show up as they are.

Showing Up as a Witness in Being Seen

- For self: Resist the urge to hide behind silence or perfection. Let yourself be visible even in uncertainty.
- For others: Welcome their visibility without judgment or comparison.
- For the community: Remember that each act of presence strengthens the collective field of trust.
- For reflection: What makes it most difficult for you to let yourself be seen? How might you take a step toward greater visibility in your community?

This willingness to step into visibility prepares the ground for the next movement: truly seeing others. Being seen opens the door; seeing others completes the exchange.

The Practice of Seeing Others

The gift of presence flows in both directions. Just as you offer your truth to be witnessed, you are called to witness the truth of others.

Seeing others is not passive observation. To see another is active engagement with presence, attention, and care.

- **Deep Listening:** Hearing what is said without rushing to respond or fix.
- **Curiosity Without Intrusion:** Being interested without demanding what someone is not ready to share.
- **Reflecting Truth Without Distortion:** Offering back what you have witnessed in a way that honors the speaker's experience.

When you truly see another, you affirm their presence without taking over their story.

Showing Up as a Witness in Seeing Others

- For self: Notice when your own need to respond overshadows your ability to listen. Practice staying with silence.
- For others: Offer your attention as a steady presence, not a demand. Let them set the pace of what is shared.
- For the community: Protect the integrity of the shared space by honoring each person's truth without distortion.

- For reflection: Do you tend to listen in order to understand, or to prepare your response? How can you open more space for another's truth to stand on its own?

When these two practices meet, they form a current of reciprocity — the sacred exchange that keeps a witness community alive.

Reciprocity as Sacred Exchange

Being seen and seeing others form a reciprocal current. This current is what keeps a witness community alive and responsive. In practice this current moves like breath — the inhale of receiving presence, and the exhale of offering presence. When either side is withheld, the rhythm can falter and the vitality of the community dims.

Imbalance takes many forms. If too many only want to be seen, the space tilts toward performance and self-display, leaving little room for genuine connection. If too many only see others without offering their own truth, the field grows thin, marked by silence and absence. In both cases, the current of reciprocity is interrupted — one direction dominates, and the circle of witness begins to unravel.

Reciprocity does not ask for perfect symmetry in every moment. It asks for faithfulness over time — the willingness to both give and receive, to both witness and be witnessed. This is what allows a community to remain resilient and coherent, even as individuals move through different seasons of visibility and presence.

Showing Up as a Witness

- For self: Allow your presence to be visible. Share from where you are, even if your truth feels incomplete or tender.
- For others: Offer steady attention without intrusion. Hold what is shared with respect, and reflect it back without distortion.
- For the community: Remember that the health of the whole depends on each member's willingness to both reveal and receive.
- For reflection: Where in your own participation do you lean more heavily — toward being seen, or toward seeing others? How might you step more fully into the other direction to strengthen the flow of reciprocity?

This is the invitation at the heart of witnessing: to hold both directions as a way of being, not just an occasional act.

Holding Both Directions

The art of witnessing is not just about skill; it is about willingness. It is the choice, over and over, to be present in both directions — to offer your presence to others and to receive theirs in return.

When both being seen and seeing others are valued equally, the community becomes more than the sum of its members. It becomes a living field where every truth has a place, and every person knows they belong.

Witnessing is not performance and it is not invisibility. It is the sacred reciprocity of presence, a current that flows only when both directions are honored. To give and to receive, to see and to be seen — this is the heartbeat that sustains a witness community and allows it to thrive in depth, trust, and coherence.

WHEN PRESENCE BECOMES THE PRACTICE

Presence as the Foundation

In a witness community, presence is not just a courtesy. Presence is the ground the community stands on, the air the community breathes together, the medium through which witnessing becomes possible. Without presence, even the most beautiful agreements and intentions are only theory.

Presence is the first act of witness. Before words are spoken or truths are shared, presence declares: *I am here with you*. It is the living proof that connection is possible, the signal that each person can risk truth because others are truly alongside them.

Presence is more than physical attendance. Presence is the alignment of body, mind, heart, and soul in the moment — attention gathered, openness offered, willingness engaged. Presence is both simple and profound: a choice to arrive fully instead of holding back, a choice to remain steady instead of withdrawing.

When presence is offered, trust begins to grow. When it is withheld, the fabric of the community frays. For this reason, presence is not a minor courtesy but the foundation of everything that follows.

What Presence Looks Like in Practice

Presence takes shape in many ways, each one a signal that you are here — attention of body, mind, and heart aligned with the moment.

Physical Presence

Showing up when you say you will. Placing your body in the chair or your face on the screen so that others know you are with them. In a virtual space, it may mean keeping your camera on when visibility is part of the agreement. In all spaces, it is the simple act of arriving fully, not halfway.

Emotional Presence

Listening with engagement, even when your shoulders tighten or your jaw clenches in disagreement. Choosing to stay open when discomfort stirs or when someone else's truth feels as a challenge to your own. Emotional presence is responding thoughtfully instead of reacting automatically — bringing curiosity where defensiveness wants to take hold.

Energetic Presence

Gathering your focus into the here-and-now instead of scattering it across distractions. Noticing when your mind drifts to tomorrow's to-do list and gently calling it back. Energetic presence is both receptive and grounded — open enough to receive others fully, steady enough to hold yourself without collapsing.

When these layers of presence come together, they create a felt field in which witnessing can take root. Presence becomes not just something you bring, but something everyone can lean into.

Presence as a Discipline

Presence is easy when conditions are comfortable. The real practice begins when resistance, discomfort, or boredom arise — and you still choose to remain engaged. In these moments, presence shifts from a pleasant state to a deliberate discipline.

Discipline shows itself in the small choices:

- Not disappearing into your phone when restlessness stirs.
- Not mentally rehearsing your response while someone else is still speaking.
- Not fleeing the room, inwardly or outwardly, when the conversation slows.

Presence as discipline is the willingness to remain steady in awkward pauses, to breathe through silences that hold depth, to tolerate the unease of not knowing what comes next.

This discipline does not demand perfection. It asks only for return — returning again and again to the moment, to yourself, and to the people before you. Each return is an act of devotion that strengthens trust and coherence.

In this way, presence becomes more than a fleeting state. Presence becomes a practiced muscle, built by choice after choice to stay here, in this moment, with these people — even when every distraction pulls you away.

The Ripple Effect of Presence

Presence does not stay contained within one person. Presence ripples outward, touching every interaction and shaping the atmosphere of the whole community. When you are fully present, you invite others to step in more fully as well. Presence is contagious, drawing out trust, deepening connection, and opening the way for truth to be spoken without fear of distortion.

A single moment of true presence can shift the entire field of experience. A nod of attention, an unhurried silence, a steady gaze — these simple acts tell others: *you matter, and I am here with you*. Such presence accelerates connection, clears space for honesty, and allows the work to reach layers that remain inaccessible without it.

The absence of presence creates a different ripple. When attention drifts, others feel the gap. When one member withdraws, the current weakens, and the group must work harder to sustain depth. Silence becomes avoidance instead of invitation. Conversation grows shallow, carried more by habit than by meaning.

Presence is never neutral. It either strengthens the collective field or leaves it straining to find coherence. To offer your presence is therefore not a small courtesy — personal presence is a contribution that shapes what becomes possible for everyone, including you.

Presence as the Practice

In a witness community, presence is not optional. Presence is the practice itself. Presence is the soil in which trust grows, the air through which connection breathes, and the fire that keeps depth alive. Without presence, even the most carefully built agreements cannot take root.

We do not come here simply to exchange words or ideas. We come here to meet one another in real time — body, heart, and spirit aligned in the living moment — and to hold that moment with care. Presence is the offering that allows every other practice to flourish: reciprocity, trust, vulnerability, and coherence.

When presence becomes the practice, everything else has a place to grow. When presence is withheld, nothing else can truly anchor. Presence is both the beginning and the sustaining force of witness.

To practice presence is to say: *I am here, with myself and with you.*

Presence is the most essential act of witness, the one upon which all others depend.

HOLDING SPACE WITHOUT LOSING YOURSELF

The Balance Point

Witnessing is an act of generosity, a choice to be present for someone else's truth without judgment, to hold space for their unfolding. Presence offered in this way is a profound gift telling another: *your truth matters enough for me to stay here with you.*

Yet generosity without boundaries can quietly erode the witness. If you give without anchoring in yourself, your presence begins to leak energy rather than sustain it. Depletion follows, and with it resentment, fatigue, or the dulling of clarity. When you are drained, you can no longer witness with steadiness or care.

Holding space is not the same as carrying someone else's load. Holding space is not the same as abandoning your own needs to meet theirs. Healthy space-holding is a balance point: standing firmly in your own power while opening to another's truth. In a witness community, holding space and holding yourself are not competing acts. They are equal priorities, woven together so that both witness and witnessed remain whole.

Recognizing Over-Extension

Generosity becomes costly when it slips beyond the edges of your own power. You may believe you are offering presence, but in truth you may be giving yourself away. The signs are often subtle at first, building quietly until you realize you've stepped beyond what is sustainable.

You may be losing yourself in space-holding if:

- You leave interactions feeling consistently drained, resentful, or diminished.
- You find yourself carrying someone else's emotions or story long after the moment has passed, as if their weight has taken up residence inside you.
- You neglect your own needs, silence your truth, or override your boundaries in the name of keeping harmony.

Over-extension does not always arrive with a dramatic collapse. More often, it accumulates through small erosions of presence — a little less steadiness here, a little more self-abandonment there. Over time, the balance tips, and what was once an act of empowered generosity becomes an act of depletion.

Recognizing these signs is not failure. Recognition is the first step back toward standing firmly in your own power while still opening to another's truth.

Boundaries as Protection

Boundaries are not barriers against connection — they are the structures that allow connection to remain clear, healthy, and strong. In a witness community, boundaries protect both the witness and the receiver, ensuring that presence flows from personal power rather than from depletion.

- **Know What's Yours to Carry:** Your responsibility is to stand in your own power and speak your truth. You are not responsible for fixing, completing, or carrying someone else's process.
- **Return What Belongs to the Other:** Offer your witness with care, but allow their emotions, choices, and outcomes to remain theirs. Witnessing empowers; absorbing disempowers.
- **Stay in Your Power:** Keep part of your awareness anchored in yourself, even while your attention is with another. This balance allows you to extend presence without abandoning your own center.

Boundaries are not walls. They are more like the banks of a river — shaping the current so it can move with strength and direction. Without them, presence spills out, thins, and loses its power. With them, connection becomes sustainable: each person stands whole, able to meet the other without collapse or distortion.

Sustainable Space-Holding Practices

In a witness community, sustainable space-holding begins with self-witnessing. Before and after entering a community experience, participants can pause to notice breath, body, and energy. The question is simple: *Am I standing in my power right now, or have I slipped toward depletion?* This self-awareness is not indulgence — it is the foundation that allows each participant to engage from steadiness rather than strain.

The leader of the community holds the container through presence, not control. Leadership in this context means guiding the current of connection, protecting the integrity of agreements, and ensuring that every voice has room. Participants strengthen this leadership by showing up in their own power — bringing clarity, consistency, and openness without handing responsibility for their experience to the leader or to others.

Sustainability also depends on thresholds. When a community experience begins, step in with intention; when it ends, release it with the same care. This might take the form of a breath, a phrase, or even a silent acknowledgment that the container has opened and then closed. These

thresholds help participants contribute fully in the moment without carrying what is not theirs once the experience is complete.

Practices like these ensure that holding space remains life-giving for everyone involved. They affirm that generosity and power can co-exist, and that presence does not demand depletion. Sustainable space-holding is the discipline of offering connection without losing self, allowing both the leader and participants to remain strong, clear, and trustworthy in the shared work of community.

When You Hold Both Space and Self

A witness community thrives when its members understand that the depth of the space is only as strong as the people within it. To participate without losing yourself is to embody balance: extending presence generously while standing firmly in your own power.

When participants remain in their power, their witness carries clarity instead of confusion, steadiness instead of strain. Others feel the difference — they can trust the exchange because they sense that each person is present without abandoning themselves in the process. This trust becomes the foundation on which true depth rests.

Holding both space and self is not selfishness. It is strength. It ensures that generosity flows without depletion, that compassion does not turn into collapse, and that care remains sustainable for all.

In the end, showing up without losing yourself is not only a kindness to you — it is a gift to everyone who shares the space. To encounter someone present, whole, and standing in their power is to encounter witness at its strongest: clear, compassionate, and enduring.

ABOUT CHERYL MARLENE



ANCIENT SPIRITUAL DEPTH AND AKASHIC RECORDS WISDOM

Cheryl Marlene is a pioneering guide in spiritual consciousness and the Akashic Records. She works with those who are done with surface-level answers and ready to move into the deeper truth of who they are becoming.

A mystic, futurist, and trailblazer, Cheryl brings the Akashic Records into living motion—beyond outdated ideas, into a dynamic spiritual practice where divine and human meet in everyday presence. Her work invites profound healing, courageous honesty, and personal power rooted in inner knowing.

Through private sessions, mentoring, business insight, and teaching, Cheryl helps seekers and creators uncover the wisdom already alive within them.

She's the creator of the [Akashic Records Intensive](#) and author of [Akashic Records Masterclass](#), among many other books. Her students describe her as insightful, real, and deeply present—willing to sit with what others avoid.

When not writing or teaching, Cheryl is often on a trail somewhere, listening to the wind and following the quiet pulse of the mountain.

Her intention, refined over years of personal and spiritual unfolding, can be summed in seven words:

BELIEVE. Laugh. Learn. Love. Be. Become. Always.