

Phyllis Cole Dai's "Five Great Releases" to include in our wintering "soul work."

(Adapted and reflection questions added by Brigid Beckman)

**1. Letting go of our need for the past to have been other than what it was.**

The past matters; it will always inform our life. But if it's a burden rather than a boon, weighing us down rather than propelling us forward, embittering rather than empowering, let's choose to lay it down.

*We release the past by transmuting its energy into blessing, using every tool at our disposal. We journal. We pray or meditate. We engage in gratitude or mindfulness practice. We seek counseling. We study. We create. We experiment with new ways of being. We step into community service. The list of possibilities is endless. When we're at our lowest, it might start with just getting out of bed.*

Always, we work at paying attention. Whenever we notice that we're feeding the beast of our own negativity (often by reciting stories of our woundedness), we take a deep breath and gently, consciously turn our thoughts from the past to the present.

We release the past by transmuting its energy into blessing.

***What experience, relationship or situation can you transmute by blessing it. Can you envision opening your hands, your heart, and letting it slip away, released to the blessing?***

**2. Letting go of what we think we know.** This great release also involves surrendering our certainty and our self-righteousness when we're convinced that we're right and therefore on the moral high ground.

But what if we don't know everything? And what if our moral high ground is actually lowland?

Acknowledging that we don't—and can't—know everything can shift the world, helping to make the impossible possible.

***Can you hold a situation, an experience or relationship in gentle, loving curiosity instead of certainty? Can you "rest in the questions" and find peace in the unfolding?***

**3. Letting go of personal grievance.** We don't have to take the details of our lives as personally as we usually do. What happens to us, and how it happens, matters. But it isn't all that matters.

Let's not reduce ourselves to our perception of how we've been wronged, or to the significance we attach to the injury. Instead, let's zoom out to the big picture and it allows you to have inner peace."

***Forgiveness does not mean, “What you did is okay to me.” It simply means, “I am no longer willing to carry around pain in response to your actions.” Can you forgive yourself, or another and find peace?***

**4. Letting go of the need to control.** Want to control your cat? The conversation? The creative process? The weather? Other people’s lives, choices, beliefs, and bodies? The country? The future? Death?

Simply put, we aren’t in charge. What’s in charge is Mystery, and that Mystery lives in us. It invites us every day to do our humble yet appreciable part in its unfolding (as well as our own).

***“God is the name of the blanket we put over the mystery to give it shape.” Can you settle in with the blanket around your shoulders, and take comfort in the Divine mystery alive in you, leading you?***

**5. Letting go of the *outcome* of our actions.** Of course, we will still harbor hopes: for resolution of a conflict; for betterment of a situation; for success in an undertaking; for happy endings of all sorts.

But hoping that something might happen is a different energy from needing it to happen. Hope opens; need constricts. Hope empowers; need clamps down. Hope frees; need possesses.

None of these “great releases” are easy. We must continually rededicate ourselves to this soul work of “opening,” as suggested in this excerpt from “Manifesto” by Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer:

Perhaps we start  
tonight—...to meet this moment exactly  
as it is... What if we did it together—  
opened all those closed doors inside  
us? **What if we let the opening do  
what opening does?**