



## **The Magic of Appreciation**

We become reactive divas when fear enters our system, flooding us with messages that activate the sympathetic (rev-up) and parasympathetic (rev-down) nervous systems. Fear can also hijack our thinking brain as our blood flow reroutes in an attempt to protect us from our imagined (or real) enemy.

There exists a wonderful antidote to fear: **Appreciation.**

In his book “What Happy People Know” (which we encourage you to read) Dan Baker describes appreciation as the highest form of love. Appreciation is pure love, not romantic love (although it can be a part of romantic love). Think of the feeling you get when you stop and watch the sun set or rise! Or when a child touches your cheek. Or when your dog cocks her head like she knows exactly what you are saying. Or when you clear out a drawer and find that picture of a happy time you had carefully placed in your mind’s memory box...and so many more.

### **Why Is Appreciation Magic?**

Because when you are in a state of appreciation you cannot experience fear. They cannot coexist biologically! During states of active appreciation, the threatening messages from your emotional and reptilian brain cannot reach your thinking brain where they can create damaging thoughts.

Dan Baker and Paul Pearsall and the good group at the Heartmath Institute remind us that appreciation calms the heart. In a heart rhythm study, heart rhythms were smooth and ordered when people experienced appreciation. Because the heart is constantly sending message to the brain, it can play a large role in encouraging the nervous system to regulate and smooth the True Diva flow.

The True Diva Heart Breathing exercise encourages you to **think** about some of the things you appreciate to engage your neo cortex and integrate all areas of your brain. This exercise provides some much needed perspective when you enter the realm of fear.

### **So let's get Appreciative!**

Place your hands over the heart area of your chest. Close your eyes. Imagine that you are breathing deeply into your heart area. With each breath picture your heart pumping. Inhale and imagine your chest and tummy expanding. Exhale as if you are completely deflating your chest and tummy and making your belly button touch your spine. Imagine that with each inhalation your heart grows stronger as it is fed with oxygen. As you continue breathing in this manner, speak kindly to yourself and your precious heart.

Thank your heart for never giving up on you. Appreciate that it was formed before you had a brain and that its memory is vital. Appreciate that your feelings and heart senses have knowledge separate and apart from your thinking brain and that you can access this information at any time. Thank your heart for how it loves and protects you. Know that you can consult it any time. Gently promise to visit it more often.

Continue to consciously breathe in this manner for as long as you desire. When you are ready, gently open your eyes and then slowly remove your hands from your chest.

### **If you wish, add in other Appreciations**

Use the same deep breathing with your hand on your heart area and imagine 5 different things that always make you smile. One easy way to do this is to create your Top Five Favourites like:

- Top Five Favourite People
- Top Five All-time Vacations
- Top Five Things I Love About Someone
- Top Five Favourite Foods
- Top Five Things I Am Looking Forward to

### ***Heart Breathing with a Partner***

Many people find they can access their emotions to explain themselves and to understand others by using the partner version of the Heart Breath. With a loved one such as an adult partner or a child, place your hand (always with permission) on their heart area while they place their hand on your heart area. Quietly breathe and note if your hearts gradually beat at a similar rate. Share thoughts, concerns, worries, or appreciations verbally as you both relax.