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In Honor of Memorial Day, Cultivate Your Warrior's Heart

By Ana Forrest

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Monday is Memorial Day. My intent at this time is to sit with our honored dead. Our warriors who died with a very big mission. They died attempting to do what they thought was right and it reinforces my own pledge of doing what I can to support our people on active duty as well as our veterans. I am grateful for them because I know that I can partly sit peacefully and in freedom because of their willingness to put their lives on the line.

In the Native American tradition, we have a place for the soldiers and the warriors. This includes what we call the "dog soldiers," who keep the laws of the people, like tribal law, like our police force. There are practices and ceremonies for each of these kinds of "keepers of the people" to help them cleanse and re-center on a regular basis as part of their

career and Spirit-chosen job. Within "Forrest Yoga," I created practices and ceremonies to cleanse and re-center, and to connect with what matters most to you.

I speak in "Forrest Yoga" about connecting to the warrior's heart. One aspect of this is learning to be responsive internally to our world. It is easy to cultivate impervious walls. It takes a lot more courage to feel and care for one's self and for those around us. Finding your warrior's heart means being willing to take responsibility for living in freedom. This includes identifying where we need healing and reaching out to those who can help us. Another aspect is to dig for and recognize our personal gifts and develop them. When we develop our gifts we give back to the world by bringing our gifts out. These are the responsibilities of a warrior's heart.

Here are some simple practices from Forrest Yoga to connect with your own warrior's heart. First, bring breath into your heart. By breathing into the muscles of your heart you increase the oxygen levels in your blood which moves out the toxicity in your cell tissue faster. This practice also relieves the tightness and pressure so many of us carry in the chest and upper back which helps us be more at ease in our bodies. Your basic health and attitude will improve by breathing into your heart.

Start right now. Put your hands on your heart. Take at least ten deep breaths into your heart, chest, and/or your upper back. Use the warmth of your hands to defrost the shielding and scars around your heart. Next, breathe into your heart with a willingness to feel your world, if only for a few minutes a day, including those moments that are kind of scary and

painful. Now focus on something of beauty to you, whether it's your child or pet or the vast blue sky. Deliberately breathe that beauty into your heart, learning to nourish your heart.

No one else can do this for you. In cultivating a warrior's heart, we learn to grow up and tend to our own needs. The next step is to ask your heart what is precious to you, what matters to you. Write it down, even if you feel foolish doing it. Do this practice every day so you build a repertoire of your heart's priorities. What a great way to start your morning -- breathe into your heart, ask what it needs, and then *do something* each day that nourishes your heart, even if for just a few minutes a day.

I ask the ones who want to live with a warrior's heart to live a life you can be proud of. How fun it is that you get to define what that means!

Stay tuned for an interview with a young woman fighter pilot who practices Forrest Yoga!

Ana Forrest, Creatrix of [Forrest Yoga](#) and author of "Fierce Medicine."