



The Source

club
psora

From our founder

“

The source is the sun, the food we eat, the earth we walk on, the idea that all of this and all of us are connected and came from the same explosion of atoms in space. The source is how you connect to your higher Self, who do you want to be in this life? See that person, that you, and begin to walk towards them.

Greetings and welcome to the first pillar of club psora's cycle of healing!

A few years ago, I was living in New York and working as a filmmaker when I experienced my first severe psoriasis outbreak. I was just shy of my 30th birthday and lesions covered pretty well every inch of my body — though I was lucky to not have many on my face, hands and feet.



This began my year-long journey into self-healing which ultimately led to remission and a career refocus in wellness. In 2019, I received my 200-hour teacher training through NYC's Sky Ting Yoga and now, my teaching style is informed by vinyasa, Traditional Chinese Medicine, meditation, embodiment and stress-management techniques. In 2021 I became a certified functional nutrition coach and began working 1:1 with clients.

I founded club psora for the skin sensitive community — to provide for others what was missing for me when I needed it most: a safe container offering access to specialists, resources, personal stories and community. I'm led by my fascination with pathologies and the narratives which affect them. I seek to uncover how a deeper understanding of Self can lead to a healthier existence.

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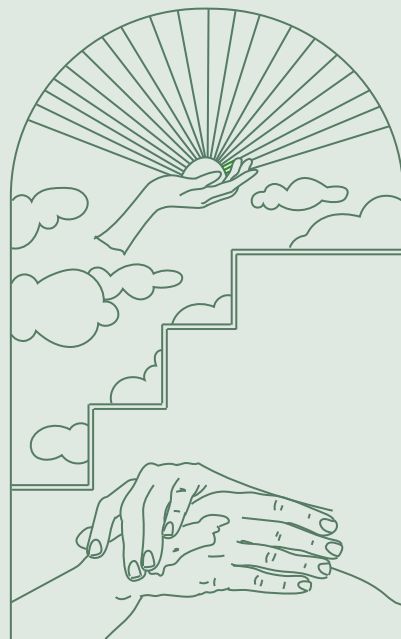
- Miriam Thom

The Source

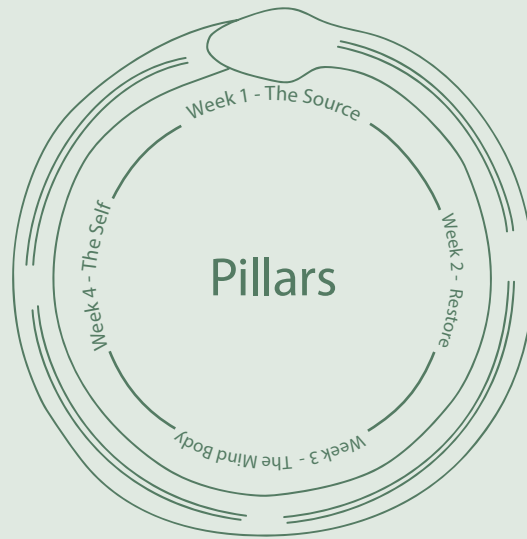
As a Pillar of Self-Healing 01

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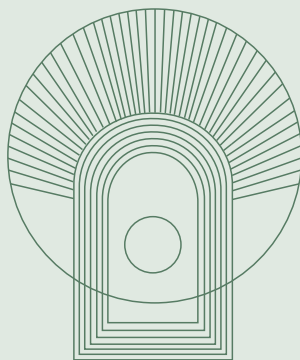


Consider the
ouroboros, the
ancient symbol of a
serpent eating its tail.
It signifies infinity
and the cycle of life.
For us, it's the
ultimate metaphor
for the healing
journey.

You've likely begun your Dailies (journaling + 9 minutes of quiet), now it's time to focus on becoming consistent. The beginning of club psora's Cycle of Healing starts with The Source. This pillar has its own set of themes designed to update your lifestyle towards healing skin. Digest this information at your own pace and remember that you can return to it at anytime. These are not temporary lifestyle fads, these are lifelong changes that will help you heal and find balance.

Be kind to yourself in the next month. You'll be implementing new behaviours and it can take time for the mind and body to adjust. Quiet time feeling emotionally charged? Craving a glass of wine or a plate of pasta? Weeping over journal entries realizing how much you've been holding with your skin condition? Take a deep breath, and your challenges in stride. We're all in this together.

Remember, we don't think of healing as a straight, linear path. It's more like a circle — an ongoing cycle you can return to over the course of your life. We'll dedicate the next month to our first principle of healing, the Source. After that, we consider gut health in our Restore chapter, tackle the Mind-Body and return to the Self in the fourth pillar. As for the Source, this chapter is about establishing a commitment to yourself and understanding the reasons you're undertaking this challenge. Let's get started!



The Source

The Source is the first step in the healing journey. It refers to the source of your commitment to healing your skin. It's your "why?" — the reason you're undertaking this challenge. Why are you here? Why is clear skin so important?

The answers to these questions will become your guiding light. When the challenges of life threaten to take you away from your path, you can turn to the Source — the reason you're here, and make choices in keeping with those goals.

Think of your body like a vessel. This pillar is about giving the vase of your being a good scrub down and getting rid of mental, emotional and physical debris — anything holding you back from healing. Let go of the challenges that have previously held you back from your healing. Wash your linens, vacuum your space, clean your room, open your windows and let some air in. Put the fresh in starting fresh.

Now is the time to return to the Source. Select an area of your life that you want to focus on for the next week or so:

- time management
- meditation
- diet
- exercise
- work-life balance
- career
- digital detox
- relationships with others (singular or plural)
- your relationship with yourself

Every week this focus can change. Sometimes, you'll want to linger on something for more than a week because those areas of your life may take longer to rebuild. Continue the work until your vision becomes a reality.



PAUSE

Take a moment to flip back through your journal and read over the Declaration to yourself in remission that you wrote while going through your Newbies package. Does it still resonate? You can always edit for authenticity.

Have you noticed any new connections between your triggers since you joined club psora? A trigger can illuminate an area of your life that needs updating.

Take inventory of how many days you practiced being quiet and writing in your journal since you began this course. The answer might give you a reading on the strength of your commitment to healing right now.

HOT TIP: If you're not sure what to start with, consistency and keeping your word to yourself is a wonderful practice to support your future lifestyle.



Journal

Choose an area of your life you want to work on this month. Select from the list on p.5 or create your own. Explain why that's your chosen focus. Then, just as you did with your Declaration to yourself in remission, write from the voice of your future self after you've gone clear. Create a vision for what that part of your life looks.

Write in the present tense.

During the week, I wake up early enough to go for a run and meditate before I eat breakfast and start work. I've set a boundary with my boss and they know that after 5pm, the night belongs to me.

If your vision feels very, very far away, don't fret. Let's break it down. Set three goals for yourself to improve this aspect of your life over the next month:

1

I put my phone on 'do not disturb' at 9pm so I can go to sleep at 10pm and wake up refreshed at 7am.

2

I never eat while I work. I take breaks to rest and digest and use the time when I'm working to be turned on and productive.

3

I prepare breakfast the night before so I have more time in the morning.

The 101

on psoriasis, eczema and general skin health

The Autoimmune Connection: Psoriasis and Eczema

More and more, eczema is being studied and considered as autoimmune in nature and we are certainly in this camp! Previously eczema was seen as an activation of the innate immune system causing a hypersensitivity or allergic response. Psoriasis was classified as more of an autoimmune condition in which our adaptive immune system, which normally targets foreign invaders (e.g. viruses, bacteria, tumours) starts to attack our own cells.

As our understanding of psoriasis and eczema improve, we're seeing more and more crossover between these two conditions. We now know that there is a dysregulation of both the innate and adaptive immune systems in each of these conditions. This means that atopic dermatitis like eczema can involve many of the same triggers and healing methods as psoriasis and necessitate the same stress management techniques. Most of this section will be very applicable to both psoriasis and eczema.

We've indicated if any information only applies to one condition.

The Immune Dysregulation Pathway



Remember your DNA staircase from Newbies? Your body reacts to a trigger or change in the environment that activates the chemical tag for psoriasis or eczema.



Once activated, the immune system begins to over-produce T-cells, whose main job is to fight pathogens and keep you healthy.



The T-cells release cytokines — proteins that act like little soldiers filing out to regulate things like inflammation and the production of white blood cells (handy when your body is trying to fight or heal something). You can think of cytokines like the alarm that sounds to let your immune system know it needs to get moving!



T-cells and cytokines encourage our white blood cells to form antibodies, which mark the infection or pathogen for attack and removal. But too much of a good thing can have negative implications. With psoriasis and eczema, an overproduction of T-cells and cytokines results in excess inflammation, an overactivation of the immune system, and the attack on normal skin cells (keratinocytes).



The epidermis goes on the defensive and sends out all of its troops without a strategy. This translates to a rapid overproduction of skin cells that causes scales and plaques with psoriasis, and the thickening and cracking of skin with eczema. It's the sign of the body attacking itself, the most essential definition of the autoimmune.

Psoriasis vs. Eczema

There is still a lot to discover about these two complex conditions, but one of the main differences between them appears to be the type of cytokines (immune cells) released by the immune system during a psoriasis response versus an eczema response — this is one of the reasons they present somewhat differently in their skin symptoms and location on the body.

Say it with
us now:



the link between skin
conditions and
mental health is
undeniable.



The Mental Health Connection

Cytokines not only have a direct impact on our immune function and skin cells, they are also one of the aspects of psoriasis and eczema that affects our brain chemistry. Research shows that an inflamed cytokine called the TNF-alpha is released with both eczema and psoriasis and can disrupt serotonin activity. Serotonin is the happy hormone that we naturally produce and can be stimulated through exercise, bright light, massage and some foods. Cytokines act as the detour sign and misdirect serotonin from its pathways in the body. In addition to mental health impacts caused by the cosmetic problems and physical pain of psoriasis and eczema, this process is one of the major factors linking these conditions with depression.

Triggers

Autoimmune conditions like ours are mysterious and perpetuating. Often, they are triggered by the body's instinctive response to what it perceives as foreign invader. In attacking the invader, it also attacks itself.

These triggers are largely applicable to both eczema and psoriasis. We've indicated if any triggers are known to correlate with one condition only.

Sometimes an autoimmune response is triggered by a lifestyle choice:

- Your body is having a hard time tolerating something like processed foods or alcohol.
- You regularly consume something you've developed an allergy to.
- You've adopted an inactive lifestyle.

Other times it's exposure to an irritant or pathogen:

- You're reacting to the presence of asbestos in your home.
- You caught a virus and your immune system is in overdrive trying to defeat it.
- You're consuming heavy metals in your drinking water.

Often it's an imbalance in the mind that's become intimately linked to the nervous system.

- You have a high-stress job that keeps you in a state of survival mode.
- Your sleep is uneven and disrupted because of conflict or anxiety.
- You suffer from depression and/or anxiety and it makes productivity extra challenging.

Triggers commonly associated with psoriasis and eczema

- Emotional stress
- Exposure to heavy metals, pollutants, irritants and chemicals
- Obesity or weight gain
- Inconsistent dosage or usage of corticosteroid
- Physical trauma with the Koebner phenomenon for instance, psoriasis is localised around a site of injury. Friction, harsh weather and excessive hand washing can all contribute to eczema and psoriasis symptoms
- Medications, beta-blockers and some non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) are known to incite autoimmune responses including eczema and psoriasis, and/or worsen their symptoms. Antimalarials and lithium are also known to trigger or worsen psoriasis but have no known correlation to eczema
- Parasites and bacterial, viral or fungal infections (mainly psoriasis; only triggers eczema in certain cases): strep throat often precedes the first presentation of guttate psoriasis (no known correlation to eczema). Infection is not generally a trigger for eczema, with the exception of localized skin infections. Fungal, viral, or bacterial skin infection can trigger eczema flares



It's not always as simple as eliminating the identified sensitivity.

Once the DNA containing the genetic variant of psoriasis or eczema has been switched on, there are a multitude of other factors at play that can keep us in a state of inflammation.

Yes, we use the term toxin.

To be clear, we use toxins as a useful catch-all term for the thousands of pollutants (tar, microplastics), irritants (pollen, mold), chemicals (parabens, aspartame), heavy metals (lead, mercury), and pathogens (viruses and other cells carrying disease) that we interact with on a daily basis. Toxins like those listed above have a proven negative effect on the body including triggering autoimmune conditions.

Other known contributors to psoriasis and eczema

Leaky gut and microbial imbalances

We'll dive deeper into the correlation between gut health and skin conditions in Week 2. A leaky gut is when the semi-permeable barrier lining your gastrointestinal tract has become weakened and has a harder time absorbing nutrients and keeping pathogens out (exhausting the immune system over time).

Related, the millions of good and bad bacteria that live in your stomach, intestinal tracks and other components of the gut are referred to as microbiota, microbiome or gut flora. When the ratio of good to bad bacteria falls out of balance it results in conditions like small intestine bacterial overgrowth (SIBO), dysregulated gut microbiota, and dysbiosis — all known correlates of psoriasis and eczema.

Food sensitivities

If someone is hypersensitive to a food they eat often (for instance, gluten), when the food reaches their gut, the immune system will recognize it as a harmful substance and produce proinflammatory signals that cause chronic and systemic inflammation. Several of these signals are associated with psoriasis and eczema flares.

Inflammation

Psoriasis and eczema are inflammatory by nature. It begins when the T-helper cells of the immune system become overactive. This results in a cascade of cytokines, which cause inflammation. It's inflammation in the body that incites the red, itchy, painful and thickened skin as well as the comorbidities associated with these conditions. In many cases, we can use diet and lifestyle to decrease inflammation in the body and reduce flares — for instance, removing and reducing inflammatory foods (red meat, saturated fats, sugar, refined carbs and alcohol) and including anti-inflammatory foods (cold water fish, berries, broccoli and omega-3 fatty acids).

Climate

Cold and dry climates in particular can further irritate the skin.

Vitamin D deficiency

In addition to its role in the immune system, vitamin D is directly involved in the healthy replication of skin cells. Low vitamin D can contribute to the development of psoriasis and eczema and in fact vitamin D has become a novel treatment for these conditions.

Stress

Cortisol is commonly known as the stress hormone. In healthy amounts, cortisol helps the body respond to stressful situations by boosting energy, blood flow, and even decreasing inflammation. On the flip side, chronic stress results in the prolonged overproduction of cortisol. This increases inflammation in the body and can lead to psoriasis or eczema flares.



JOURNAL

Spend some time reflecting on possible triggers and factors that could be contributing to your skin condition. It's okay if this list is short, or if you don't come up with anything — that's why you're here! Write down what comes to mind so you can refer back later.

How has your understanding of your triggers changed over time? What have you discovered is not a trigger for you? These are all clues to going clear.

Symptom Management

While you're working on healing from the inside out, we know you've still got these spots to reckon with



— dry, itchy, flakey, and labelled as “unsightly.”



You can use each of the following practices for both eczema and psoriasis, unless otherwise indicated. They work to gently strengthen and soothe the skin barrier without aggravating it or drying it out.

Cleaning

Start with your personal environment.



Wash your sheets once a week

If you don't have convenient laundry, do it bi-weekly. It's a wonderful way to increase your quality of life when you have flakes, but it's also a hassle when you have to walk to the laundromat. Find your own balance.



Vacuum often

It helps diminish the trail that our skin often leaves behind.



Use simple cleaning products

Heavily fragranced dishwashing liquid, surface cleaner and laundry detergents contain chemicals that can further irritate the skin. You can replace a lot with diluted white vinegar, lemon and essential oils. Scent-free dishwashing liquid is making a huge comeback alongside a host of other hypoallergenic cleaning products.

Clothing + Homeware



Choose breathable materials

If it's touching your skin, make it breathable, This goes for clothing as well as bed sheets. Materials made from natural fibers like cotton or linen are excellent go-tos. Your skin needs to breathe and synthetic materials can sometimes inhibit its ability to do so.



Consider air quality

A home humidifier greatly helps reduce dryness for those of us up here in the northern hemisphere. This is especially important if you experience cold, dry winters with closed windows and central heating. Dry air can irritate existing lesions. Make sure you remember to clean your humidifier regularly!

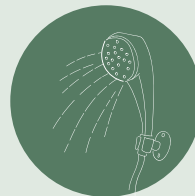
Bathing



Don't overshower

There are mixed reviews about how much is too much but we recommend soaking more than you're showering and not doing either more than once a day. As long as you haven't been excessively sweating, only use soap on your private parts (armpits and groin) when you shower. Overwashing can strip your skin of its natural sebum and dry it out.

Sebum is a word you'll be hearing a lot! It's the layer of natural oil that sits atop the epidermis. It helps to lock in moisture and creates an additional barrier for the skin. While excess sebum can lead to problems like acne, overwashing the skin (especially with strong soaps) can remove too much sebum, leaving the skin dry, dehydrated and overexposed to the elements!



A ScandinaVe "Swim"

Brace yourself! Begin or end your shower with 15 counts of cold water (one-mississippi-style). It's a wonderful method to reduce itchiness, improve circulation and boost immunity — but let's be honest, cold showers are not for everyone.

Get in the tub (if you've got one)

Baths are a great way to make sure your skin gets the chance to absorb additional treatments (more below). Your bath should be warm, not too hot (too much heat can cause further outbreak or irritation) and never tepid (because that's just sad). In short, somewhere comfortable.

Exfoliating

A tough one. This can be helpful for some as it removes scales and that can help with the overall healing of lesions. But it's not recommended for everyone because it can also make the skin more irritated. Exfoliating should always be done gently with a warm washcloth. The trick here is to loosen any scales that are ready to go but allow your skin to regenerate in its own time.

Towel Terms

When you get out of the tub or shower, pat your skin instead of rubbing yourself dry. It helps to lock in the remaining water.

Moisture



Self-care

Treat your skin like a god or goddess worth worshipping. It's important to integrate a ritual of self-care when you get out of the shower. Leave enough time to apply moisturizer and let it absorb before getting dressed. If this process is tedious for you, close the curtains, put on some music and dance naked to a few bangers (5 to 10 minutes). Suddenly it's a party!

Use fragrance-free products

Especially soap and moisturizer. If this is accessible to you, prioritize products made using whole and organic ingredients which are less likely to irritate the skin. Get into the habit of reading the backs of labels and don't be fooled by "natural" branding. It's important to make sure creams and topicals are clinically-tested and free of harsh chemicals. A great option for scented products are those made with natural fragrances like essential oils.

A good rule of thumb is to read up on ingredients you don't recognize to find out if they're chemically manufactured. We don't endorse products but there are a selection of psoriasis and eczema brands out there currently excelling in this category!

Different creams for different flares

Creams + butters

For everyday, go for moisture with a thick consistency. Butters and creams that contain vitamin B3 and vitamin E can help restore the skin barrier. When you're in full flare, shea butters and similarly thicker creams can provide more of a barrier between your lesions and the environment (dry air, chemicals, etc.)

Medical grade manuka honey barrier cream is also an excellent option. It tends to be more expensive than other creams and thus can be reserved for spot treatments or used on small areas.

Balms + salves

Simple balms and salves enriched with skin-restoring vitamins (e.g. B and E) and stored in small vessels make great spot treatments, especially when you're in transit and lesions become irritated.

Oils + emollients

When your skin is clear but you're still feeling the itch, you may prefer something smooth and easily absorbent like almond oil. An emollient is as close as you can get to a typical body lotion while providing moisture (many people find that standard body lotions don't provide enough moisture retention for skin with psoriasis or other skin conditions).

Look for:

- Clinically tested
- Paraben-free
- Perfume- and fragrance-free (unless specifically stated to use natural fragrances like essential oils)
- Whole and organic ingredients and minimal chemicals
- Vitamin B and vitamin E

Pro tip:
Oils are best applied to skin that is moist (slightly wet after a bath or shower). Lightly pat yourself dry, leaving some moisture on the skin for oil application.

Itch, burning, dryness + irritation



Oats

Adding ground up oats to your bath can soothe irritated skin. Use a strainer or line your drain with a nut bag or cheesecloth when you pull the plug to ensure it doesn't clog.

Best Practices

Test DIY remedies on a small patch of skin before using on larger areas. If a strong reaction occurs, avoid future use.

If you're pregnant or breastfeeding, always consult a doctor before trying any remedies at home!

If you're not sure how to implement a DIY remedy, try a trusted resource like the ones we've linked to on this page!

Apple cider vinegar

Make this a shelf staple in your kitchen and your bathroom. Not only is it antiseptic, it also helps to relieve itchiness. Pour some into your bath, scrub your scalp with it, or use a few drops in your toner or face cleanser. It can do a lot in the way of temporary relief and because it's antimicrobial, it can also help keep the bacteria levels on your skin (aka your skin's microbiota or flora) balanced. Because apple cider vinegar is strong, use it carefully! Here's a great run-down on how to use ACV safely.

Aloe vera

A great mid-day snack for your skin. Topical application can provide instant relief. However, aloe may increase the absorption of steroid creams (hydrocortisone) when used topically. If you're using a steroid cream, consult a healthcare practitioner before using!

Tea tree + other essential oils

Tea tree is an excellent antiseptic for open wounds that sometimes occur with psoriasis. It helps keep the area clean, prevents infection and unlike stronger antiseptics, is less likely to irritate the skin. This article offers an excellent round-up of which essential oils are best to use. These can be used in different ways: added to the bath, diluted and used as a swab, or added to homemade remedies.

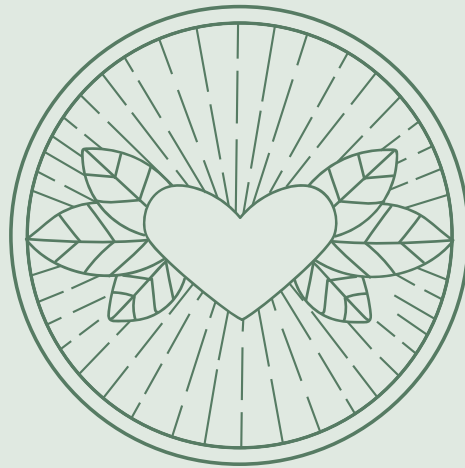
Dead sea + epsom salts

Using 1-2 cups in the bath can help loosen flakes, soothe itchiness and improve skin hydration.

Topical Vitamin D

Prescribed by an ND or MD, topical vitamin D can be very helpful for small, sensitive and difficult to treat areas like the face and groin which are more prone to skin atrophy from topical steroids. Topical vitamin D analogs have comparable efficacy to mid-potency topical corticosteroids but without the associated adverse effects.

After diagnosis, your
symptoms are no
longer a mystery.



Now, there's an easily
targeted perpetrator.
This is only one of the
moments where we risk
victimhood, finding
ourselves asking
Why me, why now?

The heartbreak of psoriasis is a popular phrase in the skin community, originally coined in the 1960s with the release of a new topical treatment called Tegrin (aka coal tar).

It's a tagline so many could relate to, and coal tar topicals remain popular to this day. Symptom-wise some say that can help with skin conditions like psoriasis but others suggest efficacy ranges and side effects can be unpleasant or severe.

It's important to remember that the narrative of heartbreak as a symptom of psoriasis was created by the advertising industry. The first heartbreak of psoriasis or eczema arrives after being told we have an incurable disease, and it's often echoed when treatments and protocols don't work or their side effects become difficult to manage, producing the sinking feeling you have no control.

Beyond the physical discomfort, the emotional isolation and stigma of skin conditions can be painful and traumatic. Psoriasis and other skin conditions are often represented as solely cosmetic in nature, but the physical discomfort, isolation and stigma make their effects more comparable to that of cancer, heart disease, diabetes or depression. The manifestation of your condition on a layer of yourself that you share with the world — your skin — can lead to self-confinement and cycles of self-blame and shame.

But from where we're sitting, it's imperative to alter our mindset to make room for our disease (and the dis-ease it causes) to serve its purpose as a message, one that says 'Slow down, listen closely. I have something to tell you.'

We know skin conditions are painful in more ways than one, but we invite you to explore what happens when you reverse the narrative of victimhood, heartbreak and having no control. Psoriasis and eczema may be incurable but remember: you can go clear without a cure.

The moment that you realize that your skin condition is happening with you, not against you — that's when healing starts.



JOURNAL

In the last year, month, or week, did you experience a loss that you later realized was a gain?

Perhaps a job that you didn't get but would have been too stressful if you had. Or, you experienced FOMO after missing a night out until you took an incredible bike ride early the next morning. Chart it down as a way to remind yourself that your psora is your secret weapon, sounding the alarm so you can make the changes your mind and body need!

“

Often, right before your skin starts to heal, you know — you can feel it. What is that feeling? It’s your body meeting the Source. Trust and you will learn to trust. Quietly whisper “I am healing everyday” and the journey has begun.

”

– Miriam

Be sure to check out The Source playlist on YouTube.

Next up:



Restore

Don’t forget to write in your journal and find 9 minutes of quiet time every day.

We’re here for you.

XO

club
psora

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