



i hold space
THE HEART OF CONNECTION

WAYS TO USE THE CARD DECK

Holding space is a powerful practice for cultivating and sustaining vibrant, authentic, meaningful connection — with ourselves, others and the world around us.

Connect with yourself.
Connect with others.
Connect with the world.



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Holding space is a way of interacting with yourself, others and the world around you that creates deep and meaningful connection.

There are many possible ways to use the **i hold space** deck! This PDF contains a few suggestions to get you started. The **i hold space** COMPANION offers more in depth background and resources (such as descriptions and practices for all thirty-six embodiment cards). Visit iholdspace.com for details.

The deck is designed to stimulate thought, inquiry and conversation, support you in strengthening your own holding space skills, as well as support you in introducing this powerful practice to others.

In addition to trying some of the options here, I invite you to experiment with more ways to include the deck in your life and work, customizing and inventing ways to engage with it that suit your unique and particular needs. Enjoy!

Heidi

(P.S. I love seeing and hearing how you are using the deck! If you feel like sharing, you can contact me at connect@heartwideopen.ca)

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Weekly Card Draw

PARTICIPANTS:

One

PURPOSE:

Deepening your practice

MATERIALS:

The card deck, i hold space journal (or notebook) and pen, fridge magnet or card stand

PREPARATION:

None

TIME NEEDED:

A few minutes once a week

This activity helps you deepen your practice of holding space by regularly engaging with the cards.

Once a week, choose a random card from the deck and make it the focus of your practice, looking for opportunities to use it throughout the week. For example, if your card is the OPENNESS to DIVERSITY card (I embrace and celebrate infinite ways of being), notice when you judge or turn away from an experience, and invite yourself to practice OPENNESS by making room for diverse ways of being. Refer to the OPENNESS section of the card deck booklet or the COMPANION for more resources. Note your observations and reactions in your **i hold space** journal.

Use a magnet to hang your chosen card on the fridge or whiteboard, or use the included stand to display the card on your desk, kitchen table or bookshelf as a reminder of which card you have drawn for the week.



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Refer to the card deck booklet for more resources. If you have access to the **i hold space** COMPANION, navigate to the Deep Dive Presentation and Resources section for each **essence** to find descriptions and reflections for the **essence** and **embodiment** cards.

Strengthening Skills

PARTICIPANTS:

One

PURPOSE:

Strengthening specific skills

MATERIALS:

The card deck, a table or flat surface, **i hold space** journal (or notebook), pen

PREPARATION:

Pull the centre card and the six essence cards out of the deck, sort the thirty-six embodiment cards into six stacks (sorted by essence)

TIME NEEDED:

1 + hour (or six sessions of 10 minutes each)



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This activity helps you strengthen your holding space skills by inviting deep reflection.

Place the centre card in the middle of a table or other flat surface. Slowly browse through each stack and choose one **embodiment** card from each of the six core **essence** categories. Choose one that you feel less confident with in your practice of holding space for yourself or others. Align these six cards around the hexagon of the **centre** card. Make a note of your selections either in your **i hold space** journal or by taking a photo. Working with one card at a time, ask yourself the following questions, noting your observations in your journal.

- Do I have any blocks or barriers to including this **embodiment** card in my practice of holding space? If so, what are they?
- What excites me about this **embodiment** card? How might it serve my heartfelt longing and/or be helpful in my practice of holding space for myself, others or the world around me?
- How can I support myself in becoming more comfortable and/or knowledgeable about this **embodiment** card?



Refer to the card deck booklet for more resources. If you have access to the **i hold space** COMPANION, navigate to the Deep Dive Presentation and Resources section for each **essence** and work through the Practice section for each of your chosen **embodiment** cards.

Preparing to Hold Space

PARTICIPANTS:

One

PURPOSE:

Grounding, deepening
your practice

MATERIALS:

The card deck, a table or
flat surface

PREPARATION:

Pull the centre cards out
of the deck, sort the thirty-six **embodiment** cards
into six stacks (sorted by
essence)

TIME NEEDED:

5 + minutes

This activity provides a powerful way of preparing yourself before you hold space for a particular occasion.

Begin by placing a **centre** card in the middle of a table or other flat surface. Slowly browse through each stack and choose one **embodiment** card from each of the six core **essence** categories that you would like to incorporate into your upcoming session.

Beginning with the **WELCOMING** **embodiment** card you have chosen, read the words slowly, allowing them to inform and inspire you. Sit with it for as long as you like, noticing any body sensations, emotions or thoughts that are present, and making room for everything just as it is.

Imagine several ways you could manifest the essential message of the card as you hold space, affirming to yourself your intention to bring it with you into your practice.

Repeat with each of the five remaining cards.



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If you have access to the **i hold space** COMPANION, navigate to the Deep Dive Presentation and Resources section for each **essence** to find descriptions and reflections for each of your chosen **embodiment** cards.

Balm for a Hard Day

PARTICIPANTS:

One

PURPOSE:

Support, reflection

MATERIALS:

The card deck,
i hold space journal (or
notebook) and pen, the
card deck booklet

PREPARATION:

Pull the six essence cards
out of the deck

TIME NEEDED:

5 + minutes

This activity uses reflection to support and inspire you when things are challenging.

Find a comfortable place to snuggle in where you will not be interrupted, and choose an **essence** card that feels supportive. Using the last question in the Reflection section of the card deck booklet for your specific card as a guide, imagine what you can offer yourself from that essence. If it feels helpful, choose an **embodiment** card or two to help you go deeper.

Note your ideas or observations in your **i hold space** journal.



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If you have access to the **i hold space** COMPANION, navigate to the Deep Dive Presentation and Resources section for each **essence** to find descriptions and reflections for your chosen **embodiment** cards.

Creating a More Beautiful World

PARTICIPANTS:

One

PURPOSE:

Deepening your practice, integration

MATERIALS:

The card deck, **i hold space** journal (or notebook) and pen

PREPARATION:

Pull the thirty-six **embodiment** cards out of the deck

TIME NEEDED:

5 + minutes

This activity invites you deepen and integrate your practice of holding space.

Begin by choosing an **embodiment** card from the deck. Read the words slowly, allowing them to inform and inspire you. Sit with the card for as long as you like, noticing any body sensations, emotions or thoughts that are present, and making room for everything just as it is.

Imagine how truly embodying the card, by bringing it into everyday life, could support you in creating the more beautiful world your heart knows is possible. Think big (large groups/global/years) or think small (individuals/local/days).

Ask yourself the following questions, noting your observations in your **i hold space** journal.

- If I included the embodiment practice on this card in my everyday life, what would change for me? What would change for those near me? What would become possible?
- If my entire community (family, clients, workplace, class) included the embodiment practice on this card in everyday life, what would change? What would become possible?
- What is one way I could begin to include this embodiment practice in my personal life right now? (Be as specific and concrete as possible. For example if your card is WELCOMING with OPEN ARMS, you might begin to invite opportunities for heartfelt sharing with a loved one each day.)
- What is one way I could begin to include this embodiment practice in my work life right now (today, tomorrow, this week)? (Be as specific and concrete as possible. For example if your card is OPENNESS to INTUITION, you might add a (formal or informal) moment of silence at strategic places in a session or meeting to allow inner wisdom to emerge.)



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If you have access to the **i hold space** COMPANION, navigate to the Deep Dive Presentation and Resources section for each **essence** to find descriptions and reflections for your chosen **embodiment** card.

Conversation Starter

PARTICIPANTS:

Two

PURPOSE:

Introducing holding space

MATERIALS:

The card deck, card deck booklet, a table or flat surface

PREPARATION:

pull the six **essence** cards and the five **centre** cards out of the deck

TIME NEEDED:

30 + minutes (or six sessions of 5 + minutes each)

This activity invites an exploration of the six **essence** cards and the card deck booklet.

To begin a conversation with another person (friend, family, student, client, staff etc.) on the practice of holding space, choose a **centre** card that matches your focus and place the six **essence** cards around it on a table or other flat surface. Beginning with the **WELCOMING** **essence** card, read the Description of the card from the booklet. Using the Reflection questions as a guide, invite discussion and sharing.

For a deeper experience, include the Benefits, Practice and Common Challenges sections for each essence.

Repeat for the five remaining **essence** cards.



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If you have access to the **i hold space** COMPANION, navigate to the Deep Dive Presentation and Resources section for each **essence** to find descriptions and reflections for your chosen **embodiment** cards.

Ignite and Inspire

PARTICIPANTS:

Two, or multiple pairs

PURPOSE:

Deepening your practice, reflection

MATERIALS:

The card deck, timer (or watch and bell)

PREPARATION:

Pull the thirty-six **embodiment** cards out of the deck

TIME NEEDED:

15 + minutes

This activity offers an opportunity to experience being both the “holder” and the “held” by pairing two people in a holding space dyad using the **embodiment** cards as fuel.

Invite participants to sit or stand comfortably, so that both people can see each other. Begin by choosing who will be held first. Invite the person being held to choose an **embodiment** card from the deck.

When both people are ready, the “holder” begins timing five minutes, and asks their dyad partner:

How does the **embodiment** card you have chosen resonate for you? How might you use it in your practice of holding space for yourself or others?

For the duration of the five minute dyad, the “holder” practices holding space in near silence, perhaps adding, “say more...” or “anything else?” if the “held” seems deeply stuck.

When the timer sounds, the dyad is complete. The two people may share a short debrief about the session, or move on.

Switch roles and repeat the dyad process with new cards as many times as desired, adding a short debrief between rounds if helpful.

To complete the practice, invite participants to thank each other for the gift of sharing space.

If you have access to the **i hold space** COMPANION, navigate to the Deep Dive Presentation and Resources section for each **essence** to find descriptions and reflections for each of the **embodiment** cards.



Helping Hand

PARTICIPANTS:

Two

PURPOSE:

Support for moving through challenging situations, deepening your practice

MATERIALS:

The card deck, a table or flat surface

PREPARATION:

Sort the thirty-six **embodiment** cards into six stacks (sorted by essence), and group them with their matching **essence** card to make stacks of seven cards

TIME NEEDED:

20 + minutes



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This activity offers a structure for receiving support when working through challenging situations.

Choose a **centre** card and place the six **essence** cards around it on a table or other flat surface. Briefly explain to the person lending a helping hand, the challenging situation you have been experiencing with a friend, colleague or co-worker (being mindful of confidentiality). Starting with WELCOMING, move around the hexagon together, trying to identify which essence seems to resonate the most with the challenge.

When you have chosen an essence to start with, place the matching **embodiment** cards next to the **essence** card one at a time, pausing if one of the cards resonates. Brainstorm together about how applying this **embodiment** card could help you move through the challenging situation in a way that aligns with your deepest heartfelt longing (values) and your heartfelt intentions, and supports you in creating the more beautiful world your heart knows is possible.

Repeat with as many **embodiment** cards (in the first essence or other ones) as needed until you find some inspiration and clarity to help you navigate the challenging situation.

Refer to the card deck booklet for more resources. Or, if you have access to the **i hold space COMPANION**, navigate to the Introduction chapter for each **essence** to find descriptions and reflections for the **embodiment** cards.



Conversations on Holding Space

PARTICIPANTS:

Small group

PURPOSE:

Introducing holding space

MATERIALS:

The card deck, card deck booklet, a table or flat surface

PREPARATION:

Pull the six essence cards and the five centre cards out of the deck

TIME NEEDED:

60 + minutes (or six sessions of 10 + minutes each)

This group activity invites an exploration of the six **essence** cards and the card deck booklet.

To begin a conversation about the practice of holding space with a small group, choose a **centre** card and place the six **essence** cards around it on a table or other flat surface. Beginning with the WELCOMING **essence** card, either ask a volunteer to read the Description of the card from the booklet, or present the information yourself.

Offer the Reflection questions from the booklet one at a time, inviting each member of the group to share their thoughts.

If time allows, share the Benefits, Practice and Common Challenges sections for each essence (either with a volunteer reading or presenting it yourself) followed by a simple discussion question such as, “Comments or thoughts?”, “Does this resonate with any of you?” or “What comes up for you?”

Repeat for the five remaining **essence** cards.



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If you have access to the **i hold space** COMPANION, navigate to the Deep Dive Presentation and Resources section for each **essence** to find descriptions and reflections for your chosen **embodiment** card.

Inspiring Opening Circle

PARTICIPANTS:

Group

PURPOSE:

Establishing a container, introducing holding space, shifting group culture

MATERIALS:

The card deck

PREPARATION:

Choose a single **essence** or **embodiment** card

TIME NEEDED:

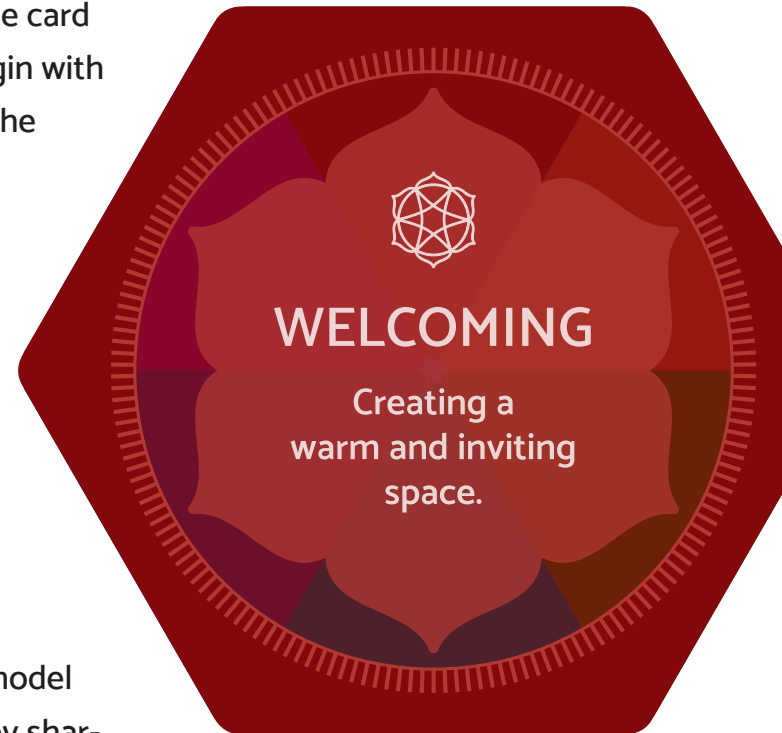
5 + minutes

This activity offers a way of generating questions for your “opening circle”.

As a way of establishing a container for your meeting, setting the tone, and slowly introducing the ideas and practices of holding space to your group, start your regular or recurring meetings (staff meetings, support group meetings, new moon circles, book clubs etc.) by sharing a single card and inviting a response. You may choose to begin with one of the six **essence** cards, or dive right into the **embodiment** cards.

At the beginning of each gathering, share a card with the group by holding it up and reading it aloud. Use a question to invite each person in the group to respond. For example, if your chosen card is the WELCOMING **essence** card, you may ask, “Please share one or two words that come to mind when you think of welcoming,” or “What is one thing that helps you feel welcome?” You may choose to model the length of the response you are hoping for by sharing first. For example, you could say, “Comfort and warmth,” or “I feel welcome when people make eye contact with me.” Then indicate which direction around the circle you wish to move.

Refer to the card deck booklet for more resources. Or, if you have access to the **i hold space** COMPANION, navigate to the Deep Dive Presentation and Resources section for each **essence** to find descriptions and reflections for your chosen **essence** or **embodiment** cards.



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Building Connection

PARTICIPANTS:

Group

PURPOSE:

Team building, introducing holding space, shifting group culture

MATERIALS:

The card deck, timer (or watch and bell)

PREPARATION:

Choose an **embodiment** card for each pair of the participants in your group, display your chosen reflection questions where all participants can see them

TIME NEEDED:

10 + minutes



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This activity engages simple reflection questions as fuel to ignite discussion.

Offer every second participant in the group an **embodiment** card. (You may choose random **embodiment** cards, or ones that particularly align with the values of your group). Ask the participant with the card to turn towards the person on their left to form a pair.

Set a timer for five minutes, and invite the pair to share their thoughts and experiences with each other using the two or three reflection questions that you have displayed for the group.

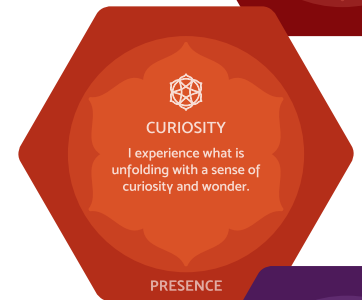
Examples of reflections:

- “Share a time when it was hard for you to do this.”
- “Share a time when it was easy for you to do this.”
- “Share some of the benefits you can imagine from this practice.”
- “Share some ways you could use this practice to support your work.”

After five minutes, ask the pairs to rejoin the larger group.

Invite them to read their card to the group and share one or two key insights they gained from their discussion.

If you have access to the **i hold space** COMPANION, navigate to the Deep Dive Presentation and Resources section for each **essence** to find descriptions and reflections for your chosen **embodiment** card.



Group Embodiment

PARTICIPANTS:
Group

PURPOSE:
Introducing or deepening the practice of holding space

MATERIALS:
The card deck, tables or flat surfaces, timer (or watch and bell), paper for recording brainstorming if desired

PREPARATION:
Sort the thirty-six **embodiment** cards into six stacks (sorted by essence), and group them with their matching **essence** card to make stacks of seven cards

TIME NEEDED:
1 + hour (or six sessions of 10 minutes each)



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This activity invites participants to share ideas about bringing the practice of holding space into their lives or work.

Divide your full group into six smaller groups, one for each **essence** card (or fewer if you would like to focus on fewer essences). Give each group one of the **essence** cards and the six matching **embodiment** cards. Invite the participants to arrange the cards on a table or flat surface where everyone can see them.

FIRST ROUND: (7 - 8 minutes) Invite the participants to brainstorm ways of bringing the **essence** card to life in the context of their work, class or team, and to record their brainstorm on paper if they wish.

For example, if you are offering a yoga teacher training, you could offer one group the **WELCOMING** **essence** card and the six matching **embodiment** cards, and invite them to brainstorm how they could make the first two minutes of a yoga class as welcoming as possible. And you could offer a second group the **OPENNESS** **essence** card and the six matching **embodiment** cards, and invite them to brainstorm how they could stay open to the diversity of what is unfolding for each person in their class.

OTHER ROUNDS: Repeat as needed to ensure all groups experience each of the essences you have chosen to include.

After all participants have returned to the full group, begin a debrief inviting one participant from each group to share some highlights of their discussion.

If you have access to the **i hold space** COMPANION, navigate to the Deep Dive Presentation and Resources section for each **essence** to find descriptions and reflections for your chosen **embodiment** card.



How Do We Want to Be Together?

PARTICIPANTS:

Group

PURPOSE:

Clarifying and deepening group intentions, creating community agreements

MATERIALS:

The card deck, a table or flat surface, white board/flip chart for recording and displaying

PREPARATION:

None

TIME NEEDED:

15 + minutes



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This activity offers a way of defining and clarifying group culture.

As a way of bringing the practice of holding space into the very fibre of your long term group or short-term gathering, the **embodiment** cards can be used to inspire community intentions and/or create community agreements.

Begin by placing the centre card in the middle of a flat surface and the six **essence** cards around it. Add the thirty-six **embodiment** cards, arranging them by each essence as you go. When all of the cards are arranged, pose the question: “How do we want to be together?” or “What are our intentions?”

Ask for a volunteer to choose the first card, based on what resonates the most for them. If the group feels good about setting the card as an intention or an agreement, then set it aside, and continue the process of inviting participants to choose cards that resonate for them.

You may wish to conclude the activity after a maximum of six or seven cards have been chosen, or you may wish to choose more and narrow it down as a group, taking the opportunity to deepen the group’s understanding and commitment to the intentions or agreements.

Finish the activity by displaying the group of chosen cards, or a written list of them, in a place where all participants can see it. (If you want to be more playful with the group intentions or agreements, you could use wooden pegs to fasten the cards to a “clothes line”, or display them around a centre flower vase or fruit bowl.)

If you have access to the **i hold space COMPANION**, navigate to the Deep Dive Presentation and Resources section for each **essence** to find descriptions and reflections for your chosen **embodiment** card.



Strengths and Challenges

PARTICIPANTS:

Group

PURPOSE:

Introducing or deepening the practice of holding space, team building

MATERIALS:

The card deck, tables or flat surfaces, white board/flip chart for recording brainstorming if desired

PREPARATION:

Sort the thirty-six **embodiment** cards into six stacks (sorted by essence), and group them with their matching **essence** card to make stacks of seven cards

TIME NEEDED:

25 + minutes



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This activity invites participants to share both their strengths and challenges with the essences of holding space.

Beginning with one of the six essences, share the definition on the card and invite a short brainstorm about what the idea of that essence means to the group. Repeat for the other five essences.

Divide the full group into six smaller groups (one for each essence), and give each group one of the **essence** cards and the six matching **embodiment** cards. Invite the participants to arrange the cards on a table or flat surface where everyone can see them.

FIRST ROUND: (7 - 8 minutes) Invite the participants to take turns sharing their personal **STRENGTHS** in the particular essence they have been given.

SECOND ROUND: (7 - 8 minutes) Invite the participants to take turns sharing their personal **CHALLENGES** in the particular essence they have been given.

After all participants have returned to the full group, begin a debrief inviting one participant from each group to share some highlights of their discussion.

Depending on the size of your group, you may choose two or three essences that seem most useful to your particular situation, and focus on those. If time allows, each group could experience two or more essences (one after another).

If you have access to the **i hold space COMPANION**, navigate to the Deep Dive Presentation and Resources section for each **essence** to find descriptions and reflections for the **embodiment** cards.



Holding Space for the World Around Us

PARTICIPANTS:

One, two or a group

PURPOSE:

Deepening your practice, reflection

MATERIALS:

The card deck, **i hold space** journal (or notebook) and pen if desired

PREPARATION:

Pull the thirty-six **embodiment** cards out of the deck

TIME NEEDED:

10 + minutes

This activity offers a way connecting with the world around us through reflection and embodied practice. Holding space for the world around us is a powerful way of expanding our perspective beyond ourselves and connecting with the wholeness of life. Offering this kind of welcoming, presence, openness, attention, empathy and awareness of boundaries to the greater world brings us closer to ourselves (because we are an inseparable part of the world), and closer to the more beautiful (and sustainable) future our hearts know is possible.

FIRST ROUND: Choose something around you that appeals to you (a flower, an animal, a rocking chair, your tea mug, the sound of a fan). Pull an **embodiment** card out of the deck and offer the practice on the card to your chosen focus. Notice what arises for you. Notice if anything in your relationship with it shifts. Note your observations in your **i hold space** journal (or share in pairs if working with two or more people). If desired, repeat with a few more embodiment cards.

SECOND ROUND: Choose something around you that does NOT appeal to you (a flower, an animal, a rocking chair, your tea mug, the sound of a fan). Pull an **embodiment** card out of the deck and offer the practice on the card to your chosen focus. Notice what arises for you. Notice if anything in your relationship with it shifts. Note your observations in your **i hold space** journal (or share in pairs if working with two or more people). If desired, repeat with a few more **embodiment** cards.

If offering this activity to a group, you may choose to end with a short debrief, inviting individuals to share thoughts and reflections with the group.

If you have access to the **i hold space** COMPANION, navigate to the Deep Dive Presentation and Resources section for each **essence** to find descriptions and reflections for your chosen **embodiment** card.



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