

The logo for 'allw@man' features the word 'allw@man' in a red, lowercase, serif font. The '@' symbol is replaced by two teal-colored spiral icons. The background of the entire page is a photograph of a winter landscape with snow-covered ground, bare trees, and a building in the distance under a bright, hazy sky.

allw@man

Winter Solstice

Reflection Pack

"Nature looks dead in winter because her life is gathered into her heart.

She withers the plant down to the root that she may grow it up again fairer and stronger.

She calls her family together within her inmost home to prepare them for being scattered abroad upon the face of the earth."

Hugh Macmillan

About Winter Solstice

Winter Solstice marks the first day of Winter and the shortest day of the year with almost nine hours less daylight than there was at the Summer Solstice in June. And from then on, the days start to get longer again.

Solstice actually means 'sun standing still' as the sun seems to stop at the Tropic of Capricorn and then reverses its direction. This turning of the sun on the Winter Solstice and the upcoming longer days have been marked throughout the world for centuries with festivals, feasts and holidays marking the triumph of light over darkness and the promise of Spring, rebirth and new life.

People in ancient times thought that if the sun kept sinking lower and lower, soon all would be in darkness and life would end, so the Winter Solstice is a day for celebration as the sun starts to climb back up into the sky and life can go on.

Solstice invites us to pause and reflect, to stand still for a moment and be.

It's a natural time to nourish ourselves within this seasonal pull that draws us down into the darkness, into stillness, quiet and contemplation. It's a time to rest and restore, to drift and dream, it's the pause before new buds arrive, new growth and offerings.

*"Winter is not the death of her life cycle .
But it's crucible."*

Katherine May

The inner cycles of life and of a woman's life are deeply connected with the seasons of nature around us. Winter time is reflective of our bleed time within the menstrual cycle and also representative of the Wise Woman, Crone or Hag time of our lives in archetypal terms - the time of Menopause.

These are times to go inwards, like Inanna journeying deep into the Underworld. To rest in the mystery, the unknown and to surrender to what is, to rest in the liminal space where nothing is clear, but where dreams and idea can flow and seeds can be planted which will emerge and sprout as we move into Imbolc and Spring.

It's a great time to drift and dream and let answers to questions you might have simply be received.

Here are a few self reflection questions to review and help you reflect on your journey since the Summer Solstice, the invitation is to go through these SLOWLY, maybe on a few different occasions, using each as a meditation, a tool for self enquiry in movement even perhaps. You could sit and meditate or lie down to rest and dream the answers into view or take them into a movement practice with you, see what works best for you.

Winter is a time of surrender, of decay and darkness where all that has been weighing you down can be laid to rest, your basket of burdens dropped, so that as we slip into the dark all can be revealed to us.... new insights and new possibilities. These become seeds planted deep into the soil of the Earth (your body, your Earth) waiting to sprout and become integrated into your life when the time is right.

Drift and dream and enjoy... a Restorative pose may be a perfect place to be for this

Take a little time to settle yourself wherever you are, feel your contact to the floor, however you have chosen to place yourself. Feel the weight and support of the ground beneath you, or support under or behind you and let yourself yield into it, drop down more deeply into it, so you can feel held and supported. You could perhaps even imagine the floor coming up to meet you.

As you settle in, invite for the eyes to scan around your space, letting them land on what they want to look at, the direction they want to go. See if you can look from the back of the eyes with a soft open gaze.

And start to become aware of your space, the colours, textures, light and sounds around you. Begin to cultivate some presence of the here and now, becoming aware of your body and your environment, your skin perhaps, your boundary and the contact that you have with the ground and the space around you.

Gently become aware of the sensations on your skin. You might bring touch in and explore how you want that touch to be soft and light or deeper and allow yourself to be held and stroked and gently soothed as you begin to settle more deeply into the place you've chosen to be, more deeply into your support, your body and your breath.

Invite for any intuitive movements to arise, any rocking or rolling or rhythmic movements the body wants to make as you begin to land and settle into the body. Letting calm and ease be magnified in the body. Where is feeling really comfy? See if you can zone in on that.

Take your time, enjoy the journey in.

Reorientating to your environment with open soft eyes whenever you need to if you feel yourself drifting away a little.

Notice where you might feel the breath most clearly in your body, its pace and rhythm and tune more deeply into that, no judgement, tune into the felt sense of the breath, any sensations you might feel, temperature, texture of the breath and notice your breathing rhythm, as it is, just observing.

Invite for your attention to spread out gently through your body as if you were soaking up your attention like a sponge and bring your focus into your heart perhaps or belly, or wombspaces or anywhere in your body that feels right for you so you can get a felt sense of what's going on inside you, what sensations you might feel inside: warmth, heat, tingling, maybe nothing, maybe numbness, all is welcome.

From here, from this visceral felt sense and awareness of internal sensations, when you review the invitational reflections, see if you can stay connected to your body at the same time to be able to feel and sense into how your body responds to the reflective questions as well as your mind. Maybe images arise or words, see what comes.

Perhaps answering from these three brains we have – Our belly or hara, the heart brain and mind – each place may respond differently and have a different view.

Just enquire and do what feels right for you.

Take your time and enjoy.
L x

This 3-blanket backbend set up is perfect for relaxing back into and simple to organise.

Pop a bolster or pillow under the knees, cover yourself in a blanket, lie back and enjoy!



These Yoga Nidra recordings are also a good support for your own reflective dream time.



Hygge Retreat
Journey into your underworld



Cave Breathing Space
Hypno Nidra

Winter Solstice

The gift of Spirit and Rebirth, Fermentation, Coagulation

What has been important to you? How does that feel in your body? What do you notice?

What have you learned this year? Why is this important? How did your body guide you in this learning?

What is it that you are incubating during this dark half of the year? What wants to grow? How do you know what's important to you? How does the body guide you in that?

Looking forward to the return of the light following the Winter Solstice, what changes do you want to start to seed now in order for them to blossom in Spring? What do you want more of?

What is important to you? How do you know? How does the body guide you in this knowing?

What do you value? How do you know? What does value feel like to you?

What do you want to blossom and grow into the light? What feels important right now?

What do you want to achieve? And this can be anything more time for pleasure and play for example, more time for fun!

What do you want to realise? What feels true for you right now in your life, what is guiding you?

What are the projects that you want to invest your time and energy in? How does it feel in your body when you think about completing them?

What do you want to let go of? What could you lay down and give to the ground right now?

What do you need to clear out to create more space? What is not supporting you right now? How do you know?

Also what is unknown right now?

If you are feeling lost and unclear, make a note of that and enquire into being with the mystery right now, waiting for direction to arrive when the time is right.

How might you be able to hold and contain yourself in this space of not knowing? What extra support might you need?

Using these reflective questions is just one way of connecting with your deeper self.

Some women might love this approach. Some might prefer to journal, walk in nature, languish in a hot bath or connect with themselves through yoga, meditation, dance or movement. Find what works for you.

And finally!

Consider what you need to do to make it through to Spring. What is needed right now to support you?

How do you intend to arrive there relaxed and reinvigorated ready for new beginnings?

What else can you do for your own wellbeing as the seasons transition?

"It is out of the darkness that flowers eventually emerge, babies are born, and inspiration for poetry and ideas are nurtured on the page and through our voices.

Surrender to your dreaming and celebrate the dark where your inner life is honoured and nurtured.

Relight your inner light.

What dreams do you carry inside?
What are you visioning or hoping for?"

Ruth Barrett

Women's Rites, Women's Mysteries

Yoga during this time is all about nurturing, growth, sensitivity and insight

It's all about slowing down and resting! This is time to be, not do.

“Let it go, let it flow.”

Key themes:

- Restorative movement practices – the art of stillness
- Coming back home
- Silence and Stillness
- Reflection and Rest
- Integration time
- Dream time

Winter Solstice is a time when deep within the Earth, roots are growing and expanding, the outer world has darkened so the inner world can expand and grow.

It's a great time to come out of hibernation, gather with friends and celebrate each other, the Earth and being alive.

- Within your Yoga practice at this reflective time of the year, you could explore staying in the gestures for a longer period of time, to invite more softness, stillness and space, focusing deeply inwards while relaxing into the pose more and more on each exhale.
- You could celebrate the returning sun with some flowing Sun Salutation (Surya Namaskara) sequences and variations flowing slowly with the breath.
- Or you could try a lovely relaxing Savasana, 20 minutes would be perfect!

- Or some simple Restorative Yoga gestures such as Legs Up The Wall (Viparita Karani) or Supported Child's Pose, surrendering completely, following your breath inwards and then just hanging out where you find yourself.
- Strengthening and grounding gestures such as Humble Warrior (Baddha Virabhadrasana), inward focusing Eagle Pose (Garudasana) Dragon, Seal (Yin version of Bhujangasana), Pigeon (Kapotasana)
- Forward folds are very reflective poses, allowing you to turn into yourself, lots of variations there for you to explore.

*Explore what your favourite practices are for
Winter*

Other ways to nourish and soothe yourself

In Winter, your agni or digestive fire is at its strongest as your body needs more food to stay warm and healthy. Eat more and enjoy it! Warming foods and drinks are good at this time of year.

Add more Kapha foods into your diet include eggs; vegetables such as beetroot, broccoli, carrots, cooked spinach, potatoes, Brussels sprouts, cabbage; all spices but especially ginger, garlic and black, cayenne and chilli pepper; lighter fruits such as baked or stewed apples and pears; meats like venison, chicken or turkey, as well as seafood; and cooked grains like oatmeal, cornmeal, barley, tapioca and basmati rice.

Treat yourself to a nurturing decongestant tea made with half a teaspoon each of dried ginger, cinnamon and cloves boiled in water for five minutes.

And a lovely treat just before bedtime to help you to sleep is a mug of warm milk with a pinch of turmeric or dried ginger and nutmeg.

Self massage, especially belly massage can be lovely to help with digestion if you've over indulged.

Lumi lights can help with Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) , getting out in the first light of the day and standing in the dark of night also helps reset our circadian rhythms

Slowing down and incorporating some hygge is a great approach, blankets and candles at the ready to help you get snuggling at home by the fire (if you have one!)

Sleep in bit later if you can.

Incorporating Yoga Nidra into your daily routines can have a powerful healing effect for body and mind.

Warm baths and hot water bottles

Warm body massage can real great too!

Citrus oils, such as Lemon or Orange, and Peppermint oil can boost your mood and if you suffer from aching joints or poor circulation, choose three of the following warming essential oils and add two drops of each to 10ml of carrier oil: Black Pepper, Cardamom, Clove Bud, Ginger, Juniper Berry, Marjoram or Rosemary. Then simply massage the oil into your fingers, toes and joints.

For blocked sinuses or congestion, you could try adding Cypress, Eucalyptus, Frankincense, Peppermint, Pine or Tea Tree oil to your diffuser or simply add two drops of your favourite three oils from the list above to a bowl of steaming hot water, and inhale.

"The winter phase is about letting go ... A lot of women feel they're supposed to keep going, and that there's something wrong with them because they want to stop."

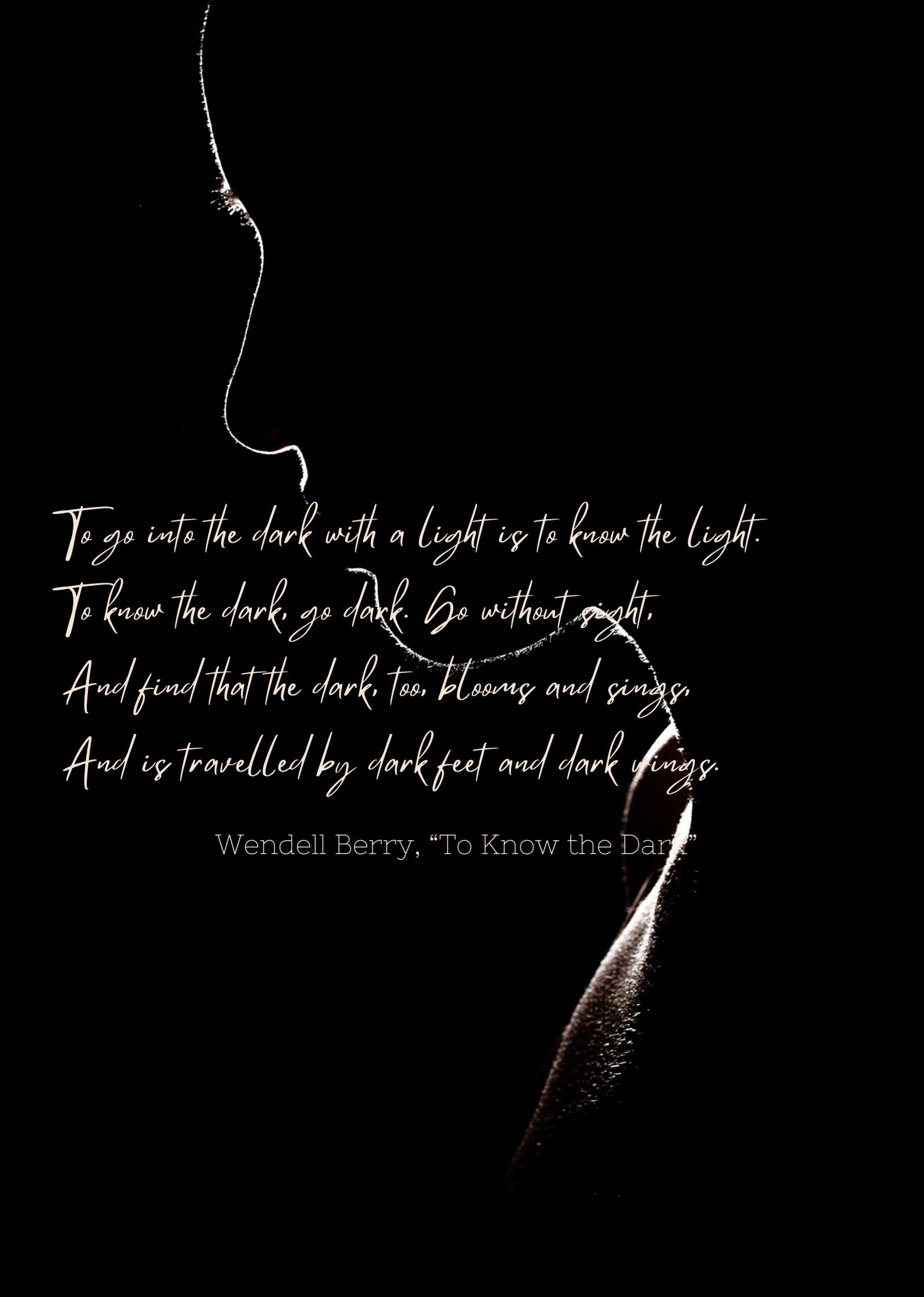
Alexandra Pope

So with this in mind...

Try this winter meditation several times as day, wherever you are as a quick mindfulness fix and move into stillness:

1. Take three light, full and deep reaching conscious breaths. (Imagine a feather you don't want to blow out underneath your nostrils).
2. Pause.
3. Feel your feet on the ground and root down, allow your mind to trace the path of your inhale and exhale, in and out of your body, for three complete breaths.
4. Follow the path of your breath with your awareness as it comes in from outside you, in through your nose, and down into your lungs.
5. Trace the path of your breath back up and out from your nostrils into the space around you.
6. As your mind follows your breath, feel how the movement of your breath causes your body to expand throughout all four sides of your torso, allowing more space in the body for your breath which brings more breath into the body for you.

Enjoy this time of surrender and rest and your family celebrations.



*To go into the dark with a light is to know the light.
To know the dark, go dark. Go without sight,
And find that the dark, too, blooms and sings,
And is travelled by dark feet and dark wings.*

Wendell Berry, "To Know the Dark"