

Day 1

Gather (in your mind's eye or in hand) a cluster of small, unrelated things, dust and rubble from the region where you want to train your attention. Before you write, tune in to any forces of attraction they have, for you or between themselves. Let a few of them get near each other. Form some sentences from this event. Follow the thought. Polish your sentences lovingly. Braid their hair and feed them well. This is a new thing in the world.

Warmup: Minute Lists

Use these to warm up your vocabulary and image registers. Decide in advance on four or five word lists. Here are some to use for today if you want: names for fruit desserts, words related to memory and remembering, words that start with the letter D, names you could give a pet salamander, street names real or invented. Set a timer for one minute, and for each list assignment, write any word that comes to mind even if it's a wrong answer (out of category or a phony word). Start the following list immediately when the timer rings.

Tuning: Retrospection/Prospection

Set a timer (duration up to you: five minutes, ten minutes, fifteen minutes). Write continuously but without rush. Reflect on the past and then project into the future, alternating the direction of your attention so that your writing interleaves what's been and what's to come. Use this to check in with the contents of your mind and the figures that populate your imagination. Be honest with yourself.

Generator: Empty Avenue

Take yourself, in your mind's eye, to an empty avenue. It could be a dirt road, a suburban causeway, a city street. Follow your interest and your mood. Let it be a place you've been before, though it might not have been empty when you were there. Visualize yourself there in its emptied state. See yourself navigate it. Tune in to sensory detail: what do you see, hear, smell, taste, touch? What is the weather, the time, the light? What is it emptied of? In what ways is it full of something else? Stay with the image in your mind's eye for about a minute, with eyes closed. Then open your eyes and record something about the experience—a reminder, a keepsake, a note to self, a caution.

Then disappear yourself from the image and allow a new figure from your imagination to enter the scene. Give that figure the thing you recorded, the knowledge or attention. Watch them navigate the place.

Make a one-page diagram-cartoon of the figure in this place, annotating details about both the environment and the figure's experience of it. On the reverse side of the page, grow something (a memory, a letter, a voicemail transcript, an inventory, a log) at the intersection of what they notice and what you gave them.

