



FREE PERSONAL RETREAT DAY

Welcome to the journey of surrendering to how beautiful you are. Choosing this retreat is the first gift of power you have given yourself along an inner passage. I want to acknowledge all the pieces you are holding right now – all the stories, feelings, aches, joys and dreams. Know that as you take this first step I am breathing all of you in and breathing out the knowing that you are a powerful creature capable and deserving of joy. Breathe with me?

The first step of this trek is to mark a day off your calendar that is just for you or for you and your girlfriends. If you can, go somewhere where you can be alone, free of the distractions that are currently in your life. Let go of feeling guilty for not being present to the people in your life and give yourself permission to release being a human doing and sink into being a human being. Don't worry. The interesting thing is that when we make time for ourselves our energy and vivacity ripple out and we make time for the world.

ITINERARY:

AM: Breakfast, Resting and Reading

11:00 Shake Your Beauty

11:45 Noticing

PM: 12:00 Lunch

1:00 Nap/Rest/Free time

2:00 Express Yourself

3:00 Don't forget to Breathe

4:00 Yoga

5:30 Dinner

6:30 Nap/Rest

7:30 Mindfulness as Medicine

8:00 Chocolate Pudding Bubble Bath

YOU WILL NEED:

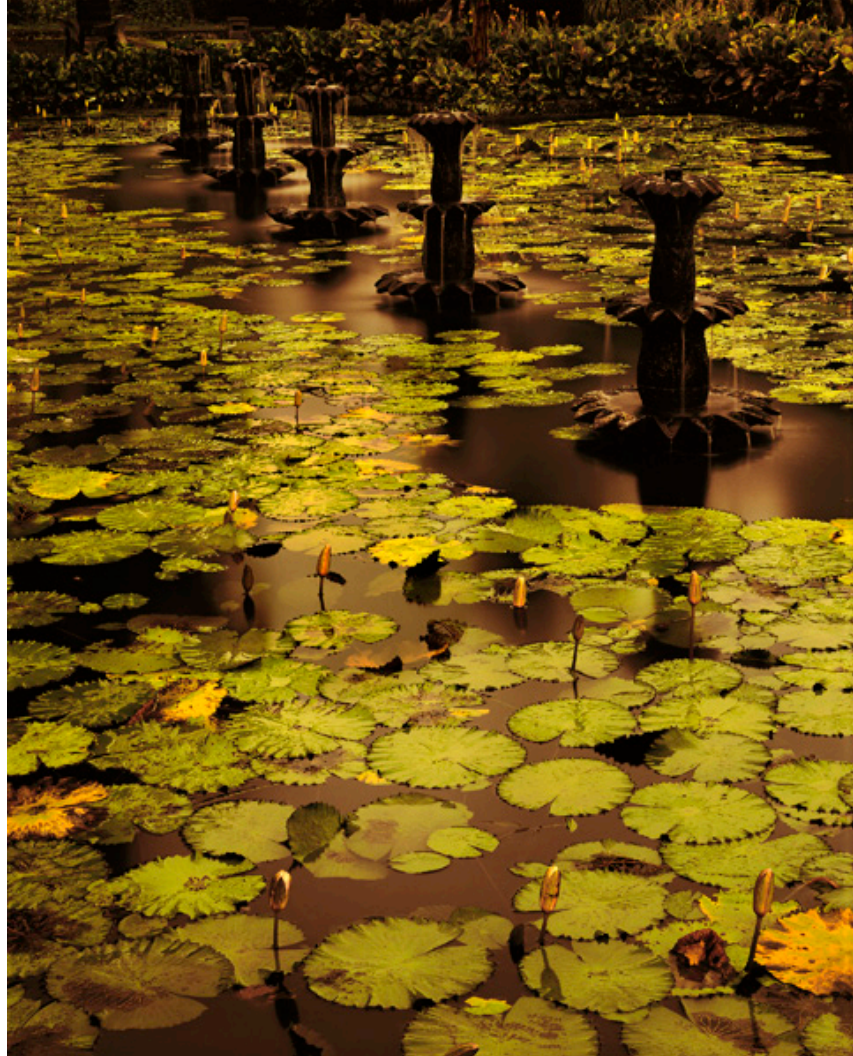
- 👉 Music
- 👉 Nail polish
- 👉 Skin cream
- 👉 Bubble bath
- 👉 A cushy towel
- 👉 A cushion to sit on
- 👉 A cushy comforter
- 👉 Your favorite book
- 👉 A yoga mat & DVD
- 👉 Your favorite movie
- 👉 Ample food to nourish your body for one day
- 👉 Canvas, paints and paintbrushes or paper and pencilcrayons

When fears come up around food, notice them and constructively continue with your task. It will take time to teach the bodymind new patterns. Be gentle and patient with the negative thoughts. They are visitors. You are engaged in a process of inviting loving company into your mind, and then realizing what is there before any company whatsoever arrived! This all takes time. Thank you for your courage, Petal.

The following is just an outline that you are free to change up according to your needs. Design a schedule that will suit you. If you like sleeping in, do it! If you like the wee hours of the morning, then that's a great time for mindfulness practice. If reading at night relaxes you, do it at that time. Our only goal for this retreat is to spend a full 24-hour period taking care of our wellbeing. I recommend bubble baths, pedicures, and restorative forms of exercise such as yoga that leave you feeling vital. We're also going to dig deep for the insights that can light our way out of disordered eating. Thank you for coming and welcome to the journey. I'm with you in spirit every single step of the way!

With my blessings for an exquisite personal retreat day,

Brie



WAKE UP EXERCISE: THE INNER SMILE

Welcome yourself to the world today by imagining a sun shining and smiling at you just outside your body. Breathing deeply, feel the sun move down your body, filling each and every cell with warmth and light. Take fifteen minutes to do this joyful exercise. What a way to say good morning to your body!

Breakfast: One reason why breakfast is an important meal is that our adrenals need to be fed in order to be supported. When our adrenals aren't fed, it can lead to emotional crashes and leave much remaining to be desired. I recommend starting the day out with my raw chocolate pudding recipe or wildberry parfait found on the Brielicious petal. If the voice is gnawing at you, try reading the breakfast loveletter for a little pre-breaky nourishment!

BREAKFAST LOVELETTER:

Daring to Live

You shouldn't have to die. Spread your wings and fly. Stop counting. Stop measuring. You are not the sum of your parts – all cut up, compartmentalized. No. You are the wind. You are the moonshine lacing the field with endless ice. You are the smile growing softly on the edge of time, then into the frame of your life like a moving picture. You are the crickets bed by that moon. You deserve to live even when you think you want to die. You will go on, sweet sister, be it that you rise to greet the day or slip transparent into the darkness of the womb, you will go on. Grab the day, my fair one. Hug it. Bite it. Dance with it, my dark one. The sheer force of your creative energy is indeed enough to keel you over, as 'tis enough to catapult you to the skies. Go to the seaside. Find the shore. Sink your feet in and watch the water race back to the source. Lay down your body. Lay down your soul. Allow the magic to happen as you did on your first day here. A suffering as purifying as the one you have known makes babes of women. Dare to call on the wide blue eyes. I am here to hold your hand, to help you breathe, to help you see through the mists... Now, after the storm, awake, break fast in a weary world rinsed clear by your new eyes. I kiss the softness of your innocence, praise the softness of your soul. As far as you can see, I will be with you. As deep as you go, I will not leave you. I trust you. Now it's your turn.

MORNING - RESTING AND READING

Go back to bed for as long as you like, girlfriend. Let your body and being kick back beneath the quilts and feel the rest find you. Let it sink into every pore of your precious body. One of the most powerful things I learned in my journey is that overstimulation and exhaustion create depression in me. When I commit to rest and quiet time, life becomes not only manageable but enjoyable. Getting the rest that we need is the first step to making our way home to our bodies. You may just want to rest for this period but if you're feeling like getting your brain currents going begin reading *The Beauty Myth*. Then make two lists: fat and thin. Fill in your lists with all the qualities that you equate with "being fat" and all the qualities that you equate with "being thin." Ask yourself honestly: Are my associations true? Where do they come from? Stay in bed throughout. ;)

11:00 - SHAKE YOUR BEAUTY

You got it, girlfriend! Be as wacky as you want. Put your favorite tunes on and get your groove back. Dancing is awesome for both our physical and emotional health and it's FUN! Now go enjoy the wonderful body that is where you will live and love for the rest of your life and shake your beauty sister!

11:45 - NOTICING

Change the music to something soft and slow and lie down on your back with your arms alongside your body, palms up. How do you feel at different times of the day? After different meals? After different conversations? When sipping tea? In the morning? Before exercising? After exercising? Before menstruating? During menstruation? Your own life is your best teacher. When we become mindful of the patterns that signal us to fly into the "I'm fat" state, it can enable us to make decisions that uplift us. What patterns would be strengthening for you to develop in your life?

12:00: LUNCH

Lunch is an important meal because our digestive fire is at its strongest between 10 and 2. If you're not sure what to eat, visit Brielicious for an array of recipes that you can choose from. Be gentle. Remember that the voice in your head is just that – it's not you. You are complete and whole as you are and you already have everything that you need. If you need a little extra love to get going, here are some lunchtime loveletters.

LUNCHTIME LOVELETTERS:

Making Love to Ourselves

We became so enraptured by creating heaven on earth, working and working and working to ward off the sham and drudgery. We cried out loud at the most remote inkling of war and raced furiously fast to kiss the wounded knees of our fallen ones, balancing a teacup on one hand for the world so that lighting a candle to our lives in the other became an impossibility. How far, far out of touch we can fly. Wrought with a world boiling over with stimulation, our minds have fought hard to counterbalance it all. We turned into overworked angels, our wings growing long where we forgot to clip them, and so covered in grime that they barely had the strength to lift off from the weight of this world.

My sweet loves, let us gather together and find the centre. Come, circle 'round; layer your perfect sentient beings 'round one another and become the ripples. The secret lives on the inside. Quiet the voices screaming otherwise. Watch as your valiant heart rises up in resilient challenge – not a fight against all the dust in the mind, but a power of love burning so powerfully and potently on the inside that it lights the way. The mind cannot but pursue the wisdom of the heart. You shine so brightly.

And suddenly we rejoice all at once, clipping each other's wings with deft calm, wiping the sleep from our own glistening eyes. Let the soul shine through. We have each other, must pour together through this tainted love to the other side. And we are so very many. So very many that the force of our coming to power will spill rainbows all over the earth.

Be you halfway down, allow love the privilege of breaking your fall. You don't have to go there. Shhh. There is not time for such madness. Go and light the candle. Sit with the book of poetry as the left hand pats the gray cat steadily nodding beside. Make the herbal tea. Add honey. Lots of it. Hold hands with a friend through the sunset. Hug often and much. Look in the mirror stripped down to the soul and dare to see yourself as you are. You are a creature of beauty here to dance across the earth and deserving of bountiful joy simply because you exist. Take your inner child here. Hold her quivering hand. Accept the shadows as you bring down the light. Here, your child can sleep, falling gently into the cradle of peace, the bed that eternally rocks the babe to the shores of perfect acceptance and perfect love. You are divine. Let the tears fall; let them fall madly. Like a rain. Like a mad summer rain. Like a wild fall torrent. Become the leaf that is ripped from the tree. Now bask as the sun's everlasting love licks you dry from the cleansing puddle you created. Breathe as the wind takes you in her sweet breath. Watch as you become the dance, the birch and maples quite shaking their applause. You are windshine. In this moment, take the child here. Show her the golden accents of her windsong fibers. Ask her what it is to see. And listen as she shares z with you.



"Life and death are one," she whispers, as you shudder at her knowing. All the energy that it took to show you of the darkness is but a door to everlasting light. For all merges into one on the highest level. Bounds collapse. Structures crumble, emblematic of the caving rigidity that we allowed to fester in the mind. "Go to the forest," she'll say. "Take your shoes off. Walk there and feel as the mother rolls beneath you. You are the earth, 'ma belle,' my beautiful, beautiful expression of the feminine.

Like the earth you keep on giving despite the wars that rage. Like the earth you spurt in river guise and flow in tree-like garb. Like the lake you are an endless reservoir, cleansing, cleansing, cleansing from the womb that you once came from. "This is your center, woman," speaks the girl, tugging on your cuff. "Go to the center and live with me there, I pray." Go to the place where the orgasm lingers waiting to be cast throughout the body like a shooting star. To the place where God waits. To the place you write from, paint from, laugh from, cry from. You have taken all the agony of the world straight to your stomach and it has made you sick. Spiritual food poisoning. Take back the stomach; let a healing touch warm the naval that the voice once beat the hell out of. Climb the tree you did as a child and lean the tummy against its cool arches long into the leaves' vespers. Cling to your belly as though 'tis your daughter. Hold it. Rock it. Reclaim it. You deserve it woman. Only you can slip back inside the gift of life that expresses your unique existence and only you have the power to invite that miracle. In the name of love, ask for the miraculous.

HONORING THE BODY

How could we deserve that love, that perfect love, that touch from a lover across our hollowing cheeks, the hand across our haunting frames? Our bodies like haunted houses filled with voices. We all partook, even when we felt girthful, we partook.

Until we stopped, calling back the spirit, light now dancing across the rose-colored walls of our brimming cheeks, flesh sprung up like newborn rabbits and wildflowers in spring. And here we stamped the inside of the ear in a resounding song. No going back. Survival to subsistence to thriving, yanking out the paint shirts, buying pens of purple and silver, learning to give thanks for life as only we could. Teaching the lovers to worship at the temple because we are worth it. Bow down and kiss the floor. You are in the presence of a spectacular monument. Hold your breath; you are on sacred ground.

1:00 NAP/REST/FREE TIME

2:00: EXPRESS YOURSELF

I have often heard that self-expression is the opposite of repression and depression and I have found in creativity a wondrous antidote to the inner dictator. Some use creativity as a practice the way that I use mindfulness practice. It is a way of shining light where something feels wet and gloomy. Our voices rise from the middle of the darkest storming ocean like lighthouses promising a shore. For me, writing has been a beacon in the dark. I was first inspired by the great Canadian author Lucy Maud Montgomery who wrote *Anne of Green Gables* (along with seven others in that series and many others altogether). Maud loved the Canadian wilderness and her descriptive passages about whispering poplars and babbling brooks came alive in me. I picked up my pen and wrote a play when I was 8. At 9 I began my first novel. But it wasn't until I was 12, 13, 14 and 15 that my diary became my solace.

I used to take my golden retriever Higgins out adventuring. Growing up on a lake in a forest outside a village of five hundred two and a half hours north of Toronto, this meant rambling over conglomerations of tree roots, swishing through ferns that brushed my thighs, and sitting on large boulders on the outside edge of soft pine forests that became bedrooms for my weekend afternoon naps. The two things that always came with me on those meanders were my diary and my pen. My pen rapidly became a sword of insight that cut to the chase in describing what I was experiencing. My page was a limitlessly receptive canvas of possibilities. When I felt painfully sad and disappointed with girlfriends – which I so often felt especially throughout high school – I wrote poems that expressed my angst. And on those days of clear blue skies, the autumn forest awash in a smattering of rubies, golds and orange, I would write descriptive passages about the natural world around me that inspired me forth. My pen was like a sacred elixir poured onto my page that like a cup runneth over.

What are your favorite mediums of self-expression? What creative process could you embrace along your journey? Yank out your canvas and your paints or your paper and pencil crayons and create something that uniquely expresses you. It doesn't matter what it looks like. What matters is that you let yourself enjoy the process.



3:00: DON'T FORGET TO BREATHE

We've all heard the expression trust your gut, but have you ever stopped to wonder what that's actually referring to? You know that feeling, that inner hunch or intuition that you sometimes get about something and you find yourself wanting to trust it? That's what it is. Take a few long, slow, deep breaths. Take your awareness to the space before the thoughts. This is where your wisdom lives. Wisdom is different than knowledge. Whereas with knowledge we might fill ourselves up with lots of information about this or that, wisdom is born of silence, experience and intuition. When we dive beneath the mental and emotional experience, deep into our tissues, bones, organs, and the great quiet mystery that our lives came out of, we find wisdom. She comes forth like a gale force wind when we embrace our bodies and recognize and trust that we are the experts of our own experience, which we always are, even when we pretend we're not. When we befriend wisdom, she becomes the north star of our lives, guiding us wherever we most need to go with fierce insight and impeccable perception. Sometimes we overlook the power that we already have to make decisions. We are able to take charge. The world is waiting for us to take charge. The power that lives within us is immense.

- **What is your gut or "inner wisdom" saying to you right now?**
- **If you could hear the voices of your female ancestors what would they be saying to you?**
- **What are some decisions that you already make each and every day that reflect your self-trust?**
- **Do you ever pretend that you don't know what's best for you? What happens when you make decisions based on what others think?**
- **What is one thing that you need to take charge of deciding for yourself?**

4:00: YOGA

Yoga has over and over again been proven to restore health and well-being in young women suffering from disordered eating. It is non-competitive and naturally puts us in touch with the direct sensory experience of our bodies. Restorative Yoga is especially lovely because it is really slow and gentle and is designed for deep relaxation. I like to hold restorative poses for fifteen minutes. The most important thing to remember here is that we are reversioning exercise which doesn't have to be driven and rigorous. The Chinese have long believed in exercises with slow movements and long-held postures. Their attitude towards exercise is holistic and focuses on the vitality of the vital organs as the greatest indicators of our health. Breathe deeply and enjoy. I am so excited to share with you that my yoga DVD is coming out this year!

5:30: DINNER

Mindful food preparation. Making our own food is a great way to nurture ourselves. Love the foods as you touch them. Feel their textures in your fingers. See their colors. Smell them. It actually signals your body to get your digestion ready for nourishment. Do you notice how your body salivates in response to foods?

Another thing to try is muscle testing. Try putting a food in your lap and make a ring with both thumbs and forefingers. Press the left ring tightly and place the right ring through its centre. Ask your body if this food is what your body wants right now, then pull the right ring across the left. If it breaks the food isn't a good choice right now. If it doesn't, then dig in!

DINNER LOVELETTERS:

Claiming Wings

Every step once felt like a camera at our backs, changing hands with every person that crossed our way. A different director. A different angle. And we became the actors trying to please. Until we might as well have become the lens for the transparency we developed. So firmly rooted in the heart are angels that having the filters in the mind necessary for this earth has never been natural to us.

Wherever you are, wherever you go, forget not that the very quality that allowed us to reach such depths of pain is the one that begs us to live for love. For there remains always something stronger than the dark voice that rings in our ears, demanding the extra kilometer, denying the extra cookie. That voice's sole purpose is to serve the illusion of our separateness, that we may go down in a belief in isolation – which is only disconnection from what really lives on the inside.

You are a child of the light. In actuality, you bear so much light in your being that you are permeable to all, absorbing others' emotions and fears, being inundated by the violence here. Take back the light, woman. Embrace your light, child. 'Tis yours and wanting only to shine. The power of your love runs deep and pure, like a river washing the world over. And the only way to let that light shine is to ward off the voice of deprecation and effacement with a conscious spiritual resolve to be become semi-permeable – transparent only to the beauty that is.

It's not your fault that you could clearly see the hurt, or that you were born with such finely tuned intuition that you could feel the collective unity of that hurt. It is, however, your responsibility to the light that is your spirit, to let go of the madness. Release the voice of ache and agony to the universe. Bring down the rains. And bring on the sun. In the silence of gentle perfect you, find the origin. Bring back treasures and lay them all around you. Immerse yourself in the beauty that is your soul. Tend yourself. Then, watch as the Goddess tends you. Step soundly away from those who hurt you. Wrap your wings about the sweet essence of your being. Open them again in the company of those who inspire, love, feed, give, nourish. Make your space, pure one. Make your space in a place of love with etchings of dreams and sounds of passion. A place to open. A place for the soul to flourish and fly. A place where you can touch the sky. Here you will take up space in the world. Because here, you are never asked to be anything different from that which you are: innocent.

FEEDING THE HUNGRY HEART

There's a little heart beating inside that body. A little heart that's with you as you place face to pillow at night, that beats a rhythm like a drum, thumping out a celebration of the you that rises in the night to taste the stars, the you whose dreams are still hidden somewhere underneath that blanket – dreams of stage performance, dreams of books with incorrigible heroines, dreams of love and of kisses through misty rains and of sunshine embraces on park blankets, dreams of riding a chestnut horse bareback across a beach at sunset, dreams of a three-year-old's legs burning a trail to mommy and daddy's bed in the wee hours of the morning, dreams of placing that child as a babe to a milky breast beneath a satiny robe on Christmas morning, of giving the gift of life, dreams of being utterly cherished and ravaged by the he that helped create that child, dreams of silent loving on a dock in moonlight, dreams of lamplight on a New England rain-drenched street...



Place your hand there on that heart. Listen as it whispers the secrets of the night. Remember the moments when it beat so fast! And you contained it! All the excitement a small heart could hold and you – you were the one to feel it. It has only slowed down, my sister, and it wants not to stop but to beat out the rhythm of the sky at twilight, to glide across a ballroom floor in silver slippers, to be kissed and nuzzled and warmed by the fires of love, to laugh as though it's flying. And you, you are the bearer of the torch. You are the one who lights the flame, breathing softly into the astounding ashes that have been allowed to fall about your feet. You are the one who stands up tall to face the wind at dark and to bear its chill as you would a child – with warrior peace. You are the one who says no to the violence, no to the ache. You are the guardian of the watchtower, the peacekeeper of the heart. Lay down the weapons of the opposition; lay them down with all your love; lay across them with your firm resistance – one founded in perfect peace. Call out to the healers. See them place the hands that guide, that are guided by the angels, that rise up in transparent disguise, trailing behind them as surely as the dust of their trying heals. Then watch the heart rise, sure as the blood of the Australian sun, up and out and into the world, across the world with all its might. You are strong, child. Bring back the shining heart, your will your very breath of light. Then watch as the voices that once plagued you, are blinded.

6:30 NAP/REST

7:30: MINDFULNESS AS MEDICINE

What I discover in my early twenties is to be, at last,
a skill that will sail me on through this tattered mass of thoughts and feelings that
have grown so rigorously across the living that lives as my life.
Sitting down, feeling breath and body,
allowing attention to fall open, noticing and opening every time
a thought or feeling arises, I at last find
what I have for my whole life been searching for:
ecstatic joy and the easing of suffering.

– from the chapter Aubretia, Freedom to Blossom – An Invitation to Shine

I now look back on my descent into my eating disorder and its ensuing depression as a gift because in that darkness I discovered the medicine in the mystery. I doubt I would have ventured mindfulness practice as rigorously as I did were my body not holding severe patterns of angst and anxiety. Now mindfulness is a touchstone for me. The breath and the body are two things we can always come back to that offer the promise of the present moment. And there is nothing as healing as being present. I invite you to try on this simple practice and really stick with it on a daily basis for a week.

Celebrated by the branch of psychoneuro-immunology in the field of western medicine, this practice has a proven track record of unlocking entrenched patterns of depression and allowing us to access that other 95% of the brain that we've only heard about. East and west converge in a practice that has enabled us to experience the freedom that is available to all of us: mindfulness practice.

Find a blank wall and sit facing it on a cushion high enough to allow you to hold your bum while both knees are balanced like a pyramid on the floor, spine erect. Nose over the navel, ears over the shoulders, open your peripheral vision and rest your hands comfortably on your knees. Uncomfortable? This is not unusual. At first, the posture may feel strange because our bodies are so accustomed to holding onto and expressing the states that are present for us in any given moment. This folding in, however, does not have to be. When we simply sit for half an hour and pay attention to our experiencing, we can open up the patterns that cause us to suffer. We can stop following

the thoughts that send us reeling into states of dissatisfaction and loathing and instead take the opportunity to allow attention to open and to settle evenly over the body as we feel our breath at the belly and open the eye-gaze. Every moment that we practice, we are wearing out patterns that do not serve us. Nowhere to go, no one to be, this freedom is what we already are and it is available the moment that we pay attention.

For the first while, it may be challenging. Seeing how we are, and the patterns that hurt and harm us is not comfortable. However, by making the choice to open, we are engaging with a radical alternative to acting out patterns. So the next time we get tied up in a knot from looking in the mirror or feel hurt by someone we thought was a friend, we can instead sit down, face the wall, and open. The patterns aren't who we are. They are clouds, and we, sister, are the sky.

Eventually, as time passes, and our embodiment of this open sky deepens, our patterns lose their grasp, their significance wanes, and the clear thing to do is respond to hunger with eating, and to a full belly with simply experiencing the sensations of that full belly, as it is, before good or bad.

As with flowers, when we have the nurture that we need – ample light and water, creative expression, friendship, gratitude, and in this case, mindfulness practice, we will grow forth robust and naturally turn and face the sun. Because we can all be free and we can all blossom into the radiance in which we arise.

8:00: CHOCOLATE PUDDING BUBBLEBATH

Paint your toes and fill yourself a bubblebath. (I like to do the former before the latter because I enjoy gazing at my pretty toes across the bubbles). I am also a sucker for combining bathing with eating chocolate pudding. I would eat the recipe from Brie-licious every day if I didn't have adrenal fatigue. Chocolate is so lovely for the heart and in its raw form is filled with brain-boosting chemicals and body-boosting minerals but it can be a little hard on our adrenals. Still, if you aren't too effected by a little caffeine before going off to sleep at night, and if your adrenals are still intact, what a way to celebrate the day!

As you sink beneath the bubbles imagine you are eighty-two years old walking down a beach reflecting back on your life. What would you change? What would you keep? What aspects of life surface as the most important? How would you spend your time if you had a chance to live it over? What are you grateful for? What is happening in your life that you feel warmly about? Who are the great influences in your life? Have you thanked them lately? After fluffing yourself with your cushy towel, as you tuck yourself in beneath the covers, what have you garnered from your retreat that you would like to take with you?