

**About the author:**  
**Jo Inkpin**



**The Revd Dr. Josephine Inkpin** is an Anglican priest and a transgender woman, with many years experience of ministry and advocacy for a more loving, just, and peaceful world. She currently lives and works in Brisbane as a Lecturer in Theology and is closely involved in and beyond the life of her own faith community and in building up strength and opportunities for gender diverse and other frequently marginalised people. She is one of a growing number of LGBTI+ faith leaders across the world

and she gives thanks for all the pioneers who have made it possible for her own spirit to flourish – this offering is part of trying to ‘pass it on’...

**Some links to other resources**

**Trans Spirit Flourishing** - <https://www.transspirit.org>

*Jo Inkpin's resource & blog seeking:*

- \* to shed light on transgender life & spiritual understanding
- \* to help develop support & encouragement for trans journeys
- \* to enlarge and deepen spiritual and religious life

**The Sibyls** - <http://sibyls.gndr.org.uk>

a UK-based (but with some Australian members) confidential Christian spirituality group for transgender people, their partners and supporters

**Equal Voices** - <https://equalvoices.org.au>

connecting LGBTIQ+ people and advocates across the Australian churches - including a trans & gender diverse people's national taskforce

**Transfaith** - <http://www.transfaithonline.org>

a USA-based multi-tradition, organization supporting trans spiritual work

# Defence Against the Dark Arts



**\* Nurturing our spirits**

**\* Dealing with spiritual shaming & oppression**

**\* Exploring spiritual resources to help us flourish**

## Things are improving for LGBTIQ+ people!

...yet there is still a way to go in affirming gender diverse people and celebrating our gifts. Homophobia & transphobia are real and come in many forms, some subtle and unconscious but nonetheless destructive. For our world also inculcates internal dis-ease. Religious and other spiritual influences have sadly played their part. No wonder the spirits of gender diverse people can sometimes be at a low ebb.

***The good news is that we can flourish***

***- even when transphobia and homophobia is evident around us.  
This pamphlet offers a few practical ways to do so, sharing some pointers to spiritual practices which can provide positive growth and 'defence against the dark arts'.***

## On transforming spiritually-based shame & prejudice

This leaflet is intended for people of all spiritual outlooks, including those who have suffered from damage that certain 'religious' people can inflict. As a result, in some cases, it is wise to distance ourselves



completely from religious triggers. However, as gender diverse people are found in all spaces, including all faiths – and as a source both of strength and challenge – some positive resources from the world's great wisdom traditions are also helpful. For the world's religions are nothing but diverse and continually

changing (if often painfully slowly) and some may find support there. It is hoped that such steadily growing religious resources may also be better known to defuse the toxic lie that being gender diverse is a spiritual problem. The reverse is the case – we gender diverse people have always been, are, and will be, gorgeous creations, full of amazing gifts and capable of sharing wondrous love!

***Let us shake off the dark arts and shine!!***

## B-A-L-A-N-C-E

***“Don't let the Muggles get you down”***

(Ron Weasley)

A healthy spirituality is one which has all elements of our life – body, mind and soul – in balance. This allows us to flourish (the purpose of our lives) in our own distinctive ways. For, as Jesus of Nazaret (following the Jewish tradition) put it: the heart of all life-giving spirituality is to *'love God* (pure love – the ultimate reality of all things *with all our heart, mind and soul, and to love our neighbour as ourselves*. This is the way to *'the fullness of life'* which he, the Buddha, and all the world's great wisdom teachers sought to point us to. This involves b-a-l-a-n-c-e – learning to:

**B**reathe

**A**cknowledge

**L**et Go

**A**ffirm

**N**urture

**C**onnect

**E**xplore

## On Harry Potter & the spiritual journey

This pamphlet acknowledges and draws on the inspiration of J.K. Rowling's fictional Harry Potter stories which explore the conflicts in and among us – between good and evil, courage and fear, living for life and death-dealing. For

*'a huge theme is that of the power of choice and the impact on our well-being, on our lives, and on the lives of others.'* ([www.enotes.com](http://www.enotes.com))

We can choose to deny the wonder of ourselves, try to be Muggles and bow the knee to Death-Eaters – or we can be who we were born to be.

see further eg:

<https://www.theodysseyonline.com/20-inspiring-harry-potter-quotes-to-help-you-battle-your-mental-illness>

## Breathe

*"Happiness can be found, even in the darkest of times,  
if only one remembers to turn on the light."  
(Albus Dumbledore)*

**Breathe** is the first and most essential thing. For breath, life and spirit are of course intimately connected. To live spiritually is to breathe freely and fully with the breath of existence. There are many simple breathing exercises you can use to centre yourself and calm down. Here are two:

- i) breathe in for four counts, hold for two, breathe out for six. Repeat ten times
- ii) rub the palms of your hands together until warm. Place your cupped palms over your closed eyes and breathe in and out five times. As you take your hands away and open your eyes notice how much clearer and brighter everything looks.

Other techniques you might use include Grounding Exercises, such as:

- observing the feel of each part of your body and how it connects to the ground and world around you
- hugging yourself with compassion
- progressively releasing muscular tension and/or consciously straightening your back

*see further:*

<http://contemplativemonk.com/breath-prayer>  
<http://hhri-gbv-manual.org/about/tools/grounding>



## Acknowledge

*"Understanding is the first step to acceptance,  
and only with acceptance can there be recovery."  
(Albus Dumbledore)*

**Acknowledge** is crucial for finding balance. It helps just to catch up with yourself and see properly how things are for you right now. Set aside a few moments by yourself just to reflect. You may like to have paper and pen handy just to note down anything you want to remember and maybe some coloured pens or pencils. If it feels good to you, light a candle and perhaps set a meditation timer - there are many freely available to download. Begin with one of the breathing exercises. Then scan your body to see where you are experiencing a pain or tightness, and try to breathe into that place. As you do so, see what thoughts and feelings are arising for you. As each one comes to consciousness acknowledge it, without trying to change it. You may like to write it down or doodle something that represents it.

*'I use the Pensieve. One simply siphons the excess thoughts from one's mind, pours them into the basin, and examines them at one's leisure. It becomes easier to spot patterns and links, you understand, when they are in this form.'* (Albus Dumbledore)

We are then able to reflect on our thoughts and feelings from a non-judgemental, third person, observer position – and/or we can simply put them aside. No longer fighting them and ourselves, or needing to find distractions or addictions, we can find inner peace and strength. Eastern traditions like Buddhism can help us in this, but such mindfulness meditation can be combined with all spiritual traditions and none.

**"Thoughts could leave deeper scars than almost anything else" -  
Madam Pomfrey**

**"Numbing the pain for a while will make it worse  
when you finally feel it"  
Albus Dumbledore**

## Let Go

***"The world isn't split into good people and Death Eaters. We've all got both light and dark inside us. What matters is the part we choose to act on. That's who we really are."***

(Sirius Black)

**Let Go** is about the choice to relax even when our circumstances might tempt us to stress and hold on. When we hold too tightly to the past, to painful memories or relationships, it is hard to move into something new. What fills your heart and mind and blocks you from opening to the promptings of your spirit?

"When I let go of what I am, I become what I might be." Lao Tzu

A simple way to practice letting go may be a clench and release exercise for the body, where you take a few minutes to clench the muscles of each part of your body in turn and then let them go. For 5-7 seconds tense the muscles of your legs, feet and bottom, and then release them for 10 seconds; repeat with the muscles of your stomach, chest and back; and then with your arms, shoulders, neck and face. Do not forget to combine this with some calm breathing.

Taking an intentional walk in nature is also a great opportunity for letting go. In some places the ancient practice of walking a labyrinth has been revived and this provides a particularly focused opportunity for letting go and reintegrating. For more information about labyrinths



see further eg:

<https://www.veriditas.org>  
[www.sydneylabyrinth.org](http://www.sydneylabyrinth.org)

## Affirm

***"I am what I am an' I'm not ashamed. 'Never be ashamed,' my ol' dad used ter say, 'there's some who'll hold it against you, but they're not worth botherin' with.'***

(Hagrid)

**Affirm** is about engaging with what is true and good and allowing it to permeate our lives. In the Christian scriptures the writer of the letter to the Philippians urges, "*whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.*" Like the practice of gratitude, in the face of those who attempt to shame us, affirmation is a way of keeping always in the forefront of our consciousness our infinite value and worth. It is a way to surround ourselves with positive energy.

***"The Patronus is a kind of Anti-Dementor – a guardian which acts as a shield between you and a Dementor. It is also a kind of positive force, a projection of the very things that the Dementor feeds upon – hope, happiness, a desire to survive – but it cannot feel despair as real humans can, so the Dementors can't hurt it."***

(Professor Lupin)

Take a pen and paper and find a quiet place. Give yourself some time to centre yourself. Write some short positive statements about yourself that begin 'I am'. Keep them simple, eg 'I am kind and gentle'. Then write some simple statements that begin 'I can' that recognise some of your gifts, eg 'I can walk briskly'. Finally look towards the future, and write some statements of positive change that begin 'I will' eg 'I will love myself more each day'. Practise repeating these affirmations each day.

***"Expecto Patronum"***

(Harry Potter)



## Nourish

*"Working hard is important. But there is something that matters even more, believing in yourself"*  
(Harry Potter)

**Nourish** is something to which we can often pay insufficient attention, especially if we struggle with self-worth, depression and identity. Some religious teachings also so over-emphasise abnegation and concern for others that we fail to love the very person closest to us – ourselves. Willingness to make self-sacrifices is an important part of a healthy life but it is not at all the same as the sacrifice of self! Unless we learn to love ourselves properly we cannot ever love others properly. Loving ourselves also means practicing it. Everyone needs to work out what works best but here a few starter ideas:

- celebrate good things about yourself – marking special moments in your life
- take some exercise: a proven way to combat the dark arts
- make a favourite food and serve it for yourself beautifully
- use some hand or body lotion to nurture your skin and enjoy being in your own skin
- make a playlist and enjoy the music which refreshes your soul
- learn to feel what is good in your body – try some regular stretches or yoga, go for a massage, dance...
- practice gratitude – eg at the end of each day, write down five things for which you are grateful
- create (a) safe space(s) for yourself – perhaps with inspiring or soothing images, candles or other aids - and/or find a place (perhaps in nature) where you can cultivate peace
- practice mindfulness
- explore what retreats and quiet days might offer you

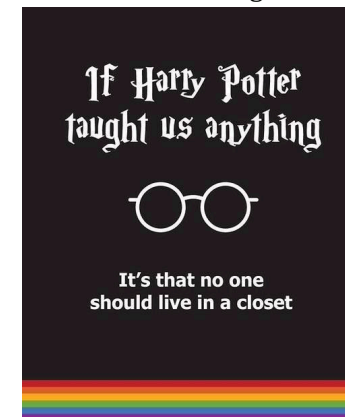


## Connect

*"No good sittin' worryin' about' it.  
What's comin' will come, an' we'll meet it when it does"*  
(Hagrid)

**Connect** is a vital way of growing in ourselves and finding more joy in life as well as support. After all, we exist to flourish with other human beings, with other creatures and aspects of our universe. Sometime even when we feel we have no energy or can even cope with ourselves connecting with others can change things. In doing so, we also bring joy and support to others who are in the same situation as ourselves. Sometimes we simply have to find solace in our own safe space, to learn to breathe, acknowledge, let go, affirm and nourish. Yet loving ourselves includes not denying ourselves the company of others. Letting go of ourselves – thinking, contacting and helping others helps combat loneliness of self and others and builds up compassion in our world. Here are a few ideas:

- Take time in nature, with animals, or (appropriately) children & other 'little ones' - can be more refreshing than adults!
- Make contact with a local support group
- Check out local clubs and meetings places
- Take a deeper look into your locality and engage with a local activity
- Become a volunteer for something new



# Explore

**"You sort of start thinking anything's possible  
if you've got enough nerve."**

(Ginny Weasley)

**Explore** is at the heart of being human. Little children are preeminent explorers, checking out all around them with curiosity and wonder. We can lose that essential spiritual capacity as we grow older but it is always in us. Perhaps we need some wisdom in how we explore but we typically err on the side of deadening caution. Not 'fitting' some of the expectations of our world can be hard to bear, but it is also an invitation to be something much greater and more life-giving than just being a fitting. The great spiritual writer John O'Donohue said that 'once you see God as an artist (rather than as a law-giver, judge, or director), everything changes'. Once we see ourselves as artists of our own lives, we can enjoy life as a true adventure, even with its challenges. We are each an unique joy. Let's show up to our own lives!

- Enjoy your wondrous difference!  
Don't think about the worst case scenario  
- you may be pleasantly surprised – trust  
in something better you may not even see  
at present
- Take small steps – every little thing  
makes a difference
- Find a friend or ally to explore with you
- Be inspired by others
- Explore different styles - especially in new spaces or on holiday
- Remember vulnerability is the place of true courage & new life
- Have patience with yourself – becoming more fully ourselves in  
every way is a life-long, eternal, journey



**"All was well"**

(J.K. Rowling)

## Responding to frequently employed religious and spiritual attacks

As mentioned in the introduction, no one should feel they need to deal with negative religious ideas and groups – and some indeed should steer clear of such religious triggers for their own health. We are likely to meet a few attacks however, so the following tips may be useful:

- *breathe* in all that is positive: love, joy, peace – spiritual fruits
- *acknowledge* & *let go* of what is negative: you do not need it; promoters are typically averse to genuine conversation
- *affirm* all that you find good, wherever you find it
- *nurture* what is good and loving in and around you
- *connect* with healthy people of life-giving spirit
- *explore* what brings joy and helps you and others flourish

### ***Some brief points about 'clobber' texts and propositions***

- Gender diverse people are found in all cultures (though the West has been slow to admit it) and in all faith groups (with increasing numbers of trans faith leaders and visibility today)
- All *great* religion is about cultivating compassion, not judgement and rejection – it is about *transformation* (about which gender diverse people know a huge amount!) and finding fullness of life, not torment and narrow tribalism
- Jesus *never* spoke against what today we call LGBTI+ people but (like Isaiah 56.3-5) rather spoke positively (Matthew 19.1 ff) about eunuchs (sex & gender diverse people in his own day)
- When Bible verses like Genesis 1.28 speak about God creating humanity 'male and female' this is meant to include all, not exclude anyone: just as saying God created 'day and night' is about a spectrum, including border elements like dawn & dusk
- prohibitions about crossdressing are about ancient conflicts
- *real 'sin' is always the failure to love*