

5 RHYTHMS® WORKSHOPS: A SURVIVAL GUIDE

- **Don't read this** until you have time to take it in properly. You're investing quite a bit of time and money in this workshop, and what follows will help you make the most of it. Unless you've already got quite a bit of experience doing workshops (classes are different, because they're shorter they probably won't challenge you in the same way), then put aside some time when you can read undisturbed, and absorb your responses as well as the information.

DO I REALLY NEED TO READ THIS?

Maybe not. The title is tongue in cheek to some extent - you'll survive and probably flourish wildly without reading it. Many people would say there's no preparation necessary. If your intuition tells you you'd rather not read this at all, that's fine — just show up and trust the process. However, if you're curious, read on... In particular the first sections which cover the time before you even get there.

The following notes come from what I've learned in 25 years of teaching and taking part in many hundreds of 5Rhythms workshops around the world. They are by no means the definitive truth, but I hope they will help you to get more out of the journey you're about to take.

Adam

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BEGINNINGS

As soon as you've booked your place on a workshop, the journey is already underway. It starts the moment you commit, and continues long after the group appears to separate at the end of the workshop. The group that you're now part of, and about to dance with, is a specific circle that constellates from the much wider circle of people who are practicing the 5Rhythms all over the world, which is in turn part of a wider circle of people who are consciously involved in any of the ten thousand practices proliferating around the world at this time.

The small focussed circle of this workshop is already forming, and we're so incredibly sensitive and empathic that on some subtle level we're all checking each other out already, sensing each others' approach. Over time this small circle will melt back into the wider circles, so in one sense there is no beginning or ending — only a change in focus — but at this point in time, that focus is sharpening as we all head towards the workshop.

So one bit of prep you can do is to simply know that you've already started. Just be aware. Let yourself feel it.

PRACTICE

Fundamentally the 5Rhythms *are* an awareness practice, and the more you practice in your day to day life, the more you'll get out of the workshop. If you do nothing before or after the workshop, no awareness practice of any kind, consuming mass media culture on every level from flat screens to junk food, the experience on the dance floor will still have some effect on your system. However, there are all sorts of things you can do in day to day life that emulate or resonate with what we're doing on the dance floor, and the more you do that, the more you'll create a kind of open gateway for your experience to integrate into daily life and deepen your capacity for creativity, love, and a life fully lived. Awareness is key.

"The fastest, cleanest, most joyful way to break out of your own box is by dancing. I'm not talking about doing the stand and sway. I'm talking about dancing so deep, so hard, so full of the beat, that you are nothing but the dance and the beat and the sweat and the heat... Surrendering to the movement practice teaches us to trust. When you dance, you experience God, that fierce force, the energy of that is the universe."

Gabrielle Roth

The rhythms will not make you a good person. They're designed to help you become a more real person, that's all — more you — and every step is simply a choice.

To Do:

So.... if you choose..... tune in and be aware of what's going on. Take a moment right now to check in with yourself.

- How does your body feel about the experience of this approaching workshop? Heavy? Light? Tingly? Trembly? Do you want to run? Towards or away?
- And how about emotionally? Scared or excited? Fierce or vulnerable?
- And what are you thinking? What are you expecting to happen?

If you have some experience of this kind of practice (or even if you don't actually), dance sometimes at home. As little as 5 minutes makes a difference (just try it — with no music you can even go through a whole wave in that time), you will be significantly more ripe for transformation than if you wait passively for the workshop to do something to you. Or go through body parts, letting each part of you speak of its relationship to the workshop coming. Or sit in silence and stillness a while, and let yourself feel.

*90% of winning is turning up.
American comedian*

As we get closer to our time together, particularly in the last few days, you may find yourself manifesting significant signs of fear. This could be clear and obvious fear, nervousness, anxiety, or excitement, but it could also show up in the form of denial, suppression, or avoidance patterns. Addictions could grab you, sleep patterns could change, or you might even find some seemingly good reasons not to do the workshop after all.

How you deal with all this most effectively is probably very personal to you, but there are several things that could help. I don't mean help to stop feeling what you're feeling — fear is appropriate before some big unknown experience — but to help you experience the fear for what it truly is, energy catalysing change and awareness in your whole system:

- Move your body. Go for a walk, do the gardening, dance, make love, or clean the kitchen. Do something physical — and do it with awareness.
- Hug a friend for longer than usual. Get a massage. Take a slow bath. Feed yourself particularly nourishing food and eat it slowly.
- Breathe more deeply and more consciously than normal.
- Don't believe everything you think.
- *Read that last line again*
- Listen to the anticipation. What's it saying? What's its texture? What does it want? How could you respond intelligently and creatively to that?

It's a good sign if you're tentative, or even a bit scared. It probably means you're about to do something that will have a genuine impact upon your life path.

Be courageous.

Feel the fear.

Show up anyway.

So that's preparation. There are also some things it's good to know for when you're actually in the room with us...

BEING THERE

Some of this may be particularly applicable to my teaching. Much of it is useful in any 5Rhythms room. *However, most important of all is to know that whilst all of this may be useful information, you don't have to read it. And if you do read it, do so lightly, without trying to grasp it in your memory. The last thing I would want you to do is worry that you need to remember a whole load of stuff and get into your head about it. Most of it is common sense. Relax. Dance. Trust your feet.....*

- Wearing thin layers so you can adjust your temperature is best. Bring spare layers if you tend to sweat a lot!
- Bare feet or flexible soft soled shoes that are not dirty from walking down the street.
- Avoid sharp/heavy jewellery.

- Chewing gum: just don't. (Unconscious movement and repeated tension in your jaw will sabotage the other things you're going to be doing.)
- Bring a bottle of water to drink.
- You are ultimately responsible for your own safety, well-being, and experience. I can take care of what's happening as a whole, but cannot take care of every step of every dancer. If you're uncertain, talk to one of the supporting teachers or crew, but good basics are to keep your eyes open, look after your body, don't dance in slippery socks, back off if someone is getting too close to you, drink water when you need to. *(Note, we will always have breaks for food and rest, but maybe not at the times your body is used to. If you get hypoglycaemic do what you need to do to take care of yourself, otherwise do an inspired "I'm hungry!" dance and within a moment you'll have moved on.)*
- Respect your limitations. Especially if you have an injury or medical condition of any kind, listen to your body's signals and know that it's always OK to slow down or even sit out if needed.
- The work we'll be doing is catalytic: it is likely to stir you up, creating change in the way you experience yourself, your relationships, and the way you move through world. You'll probably find yourself feeling stretched and challenged at times, more emotional than you're used to, maybe disoriented as though you're losing your normal sense of self. You may well get triggered at times if you're carrying emotional wounding from your past (who isn't?) *Consider reading the later section on trauma if this applies to you.*
- Please do not take photos during the workshop for any reason other than for your own personal use and then only during breaks. Ask before taking photos of others. *Nothing* on Facebook or any other platform.
- Please don't use Shazam etc to 'grab' music; that feels underhand in relation to me, and undermines what we're seeking as a level of consciousness. Relax. Switch off. Unplug. Be there for the moment itself, and for the practice.
- Don't use the workshop as a way to promote your own business — even in breaks people are 'in process' and this is unlikely to serve them, or you.
- If you need to talk to someone for more than one or two words while we're in session time, please go outside the working space. Chatting on the dance floor is distracting for others.

*Work on your stuff, or your
stuff will work on you.*
Steven Forrest

- The chances are that at times I will suggest doing something that doesn't feel right for you. There are two ways to go with that, both potentially fruitful: a) go your own way and explore what feels more natural, or b) try doing what's suggested even though it's outside of your comfort zone.
 - *How to get the best out of option b):* do what's being suggested, but in a way that gives space for your feelings about it to be experienced and expressed. So if you've chosen to take a partner even though you don't feel like it, explore that experience as a dance. How do you move when you are in a situation you don't like? Find out. Be curious and creative. If it begins to feel overwhelming, you can always choose to go back to what feels more natural — which in this example would be to leave the partnership and spend some time alone.
 - The good news is that with either option a) or b) you'll learn something, and as you get more experienced you'll get better at knowing what's most healthy for you, which becomes profoundly useful instinct for your life path.
- If you're moving with a partner, as long as you're not trying to manipulate or hurt them in some way, then their experience is not your responsibility. A 5Rhythms dance floor is a great laboratory for experimenting with ways of relating outside of what's normal and socially acceptable. Be yourself and let them handle how that is for them. This goes for people around you generally too; anyone who's clearly having a difficult time has probably danced a long way to get to that point, so *don't undermine that by trying to rescue them or make them feel better.*
- You may feel tired at times, in which case you are free to slow down, let your pace change. Find a way to stay in the meditation — even if you decide to step aside and rest awhile, do your best to stay present with your body. It may well be more fruitful to find ways to let that tiredness become a dance in itself, because so often tiredness is simply the first sign of something emerging that has been suppressed or hidden for a long time, and it would probably be a pity to re-suppress it by resting or eating chocolate, after having worked hard to get the cork loose! The way through it is often simple: go *into* whatever you're experiencing. Welcome it, even if it's uncomfortable, and turn it into a dance: move heavy, tired, struggling, or bored. With practice you can embrace discomfort with relish, knowing that you're almost certainly about to grow and learn in some fabulously unpredictable and ultimately beautiful way.

- This might seem to contradict the previous point, but really it goes alongside: sometimes you may need to stop. For example if you go through something profound or far outside your comfort zone emotionally, you may find as you come out the other side that you have a deep need to be still, sit at the side, or even go outside for some fresh air, and integrate for a while. It's OK to do that. Stay present with yourself, and watch for when it's time to come back in. Ask if you need support or company — there will usually be at least one assistant in the room you can ask.
- Let your state of being affect how you move, whether you're at the peak of health, moving with an injury or nursing a broken heart. There's no need to live up to some idea of how you should be moving, or match what someone else appears to be doing, or move like you did last week. It's OK to move in ways that are completely different to others. Be yourself and stay open to changing.
- During a workshop, it's likely that some people will cry at times, or laugh out loud, or shout. If it affects you strongly, be curious about that and explore the experience, maybe allowing yourself to go there too.
- Drop any idea that you should like everyone, or accept everyone as they are, or be non-judgemental. We will all judge each other at times, dislike each other at times, and wish each other would be different. That's natural. They are simply more opportunities to be creative: practice turning all that stuff into brilliant quirky dances. The moment you discover that being nasty can be a dance and doesn't need to actually hurt anyone can be incredibly liberating!
- You may want to consider not talking about what you're going through on the workshop to anyone who is not there — not during the workshop, and probably best not for a while afterwards as well. Even if that person has done things like this themselves, if they are not there, talking about it with them can subtly weaken your experience, like opening a flower before its petals are ready to be seen. Wait, and just be with the experience you're having on the inside. If someone asks, you could gently tell them you want to hold it inside you for maximum effectiveness, and keep quiet. Let it cook inside you, and best of all, your experience will simply become part of your being, affecting the way you move through the world in every way, then there's nothing to be said anyway; it's apparent.
- *Alongside the above paragraph:* if you find yourself really struggling, don't suffer in silence. Reach out, but reach out to someone who will understand. You're welcome to email me, or one of the assistants on the workshop if you wish, or the producer. If you choose to talk

to someone who's not in the workshop, do your best to choose someone who has some experience of this kind of process in their own life so they can genuinely empathise and not fall into being sorry for you, which won't help much.

"It is by going down into the abyss that we recover the treasures of life. Where you stumble, there lies your treasure. The very cave you are afraid to enter turns out to be the source of what you are looking for. The damned thing in the cave that was so dreaded has become the center."
~Joseph Campbell

- Please don't leave the workshop in the middle without speaking to me, or an assistant, or the producer. We will worry about you! Just let us know.
- Speak to me or one of the assistants if you're concerned about something.
- During the breaks, have something nourishing to eat, but not too much. You'll have a tough afternoon if you stuff yourself. Plenty of fluids.
- You'd probably be best off not scheduling too much before and after sessions. Leave some space, physically, mentally, emotionally. Breathe. Relax. Unplug.

IMPORTANT: None of what you will be learning is a training to teach the 5Rhythms® work yourself. If you're inspired to do that, there's a rigorous path that will take you steadily in that direction: find out more at www.5rhythms.com, or speak to me about it.

TRAUMA

The 5Rhythms are a way of turning your suffering into art, which is generally highly therapeutic, but it is not therapy. If you know you need therapy then take responsibility for that and travel that way, either instead of this or in parallel.

There's a lot of information below, which I've chosen to make quite thorough. Even if you feel it applies to you, to repeat: *in one way you don't need to read it*. People with severe trauma have been benefitting from 5Rhythms work for decades without having read any of it. On the other hand, reading through it once or more times and letting the information organically filter

into you — not necessary to attempt to have it all memorised! — may help you navigate your experience on the dance floor. Please feel free to speak to me before the workshop starts if you wish, either by email or in person once you arrive.

If you know that you are dealing with the impact of traumatic events in your life, know that you will be engaging in a practice that can stir you up in a big way, and is not entirely controllable. You may find yourself suddenly and unexpectedly 'triggered', with strong feelings, sensations, or memories flooding your awareness, often accompanied by a strong sense that something is wrong. This could seem to be something outside, like the music is too loud, or people are too much, or there's not enough fresh air, or the room is too cold, etc, or it could be something inside such as feeling nauseous, exhausted, or dizzy. The reality is that probably that nothing outside needs to change at all, and nothing is wrong with what's happening to you inside either, but rather a deeply buried 'wrongness' from the past is surfacing, giving you the opportunity to go through it in ways that can be healing, literally releasing you from your past.

The basic keys to going through this in a healthy way are: a) to 'stay present', and b) to self-regulate.

Staying present means having your attention on what is happening now rather than getting lost in high-speed thinking which tends to either go into the past or future, or frantically analyse the present in such a way as to keep you from really experiencing it.

Self-regulating means to know when and how to calm yourself down, or when and how to ride the energy you're experiencing by letting it go through some degree of catharsis and release.

The following points are all designed to help you with these two fundamental practices: to stay present and to self-regulate.

- If you believe there's something wrong, or that the room is not safe, you may want to tell one of the assistants. However, it may well be there's nothing actually 'wrong', even though your thoughts may tell you so. Even if you feel terribly uncomfortable or scared, it may be that what's happening is that old buried states of consciousness are coming to the surface because your body recognises the potential to revisit it in a healthy way, and to let it go. Carrying that pain is hard, and letting it go makes space for new growth, pleasure,

and love. The very time when everything feels the most 'off' could be the moment when it's all about to get easier, but you just can't see it yet.

- Keep your attention with your body — being aware of any physical sensations you are having, noticing your posture, sensing the way you're moving.
- Sometimes we need to be willing to feel overwhelmed — that's part of the journey and again, doesn't necessarily mean something's 'wrong' — but it takes quite a lot of inner resources to make good use of that: if you're not sure, know that it's totally OK to back off, slow down, and calm your system. You may wish to move more slowly, or get down near the floor instead of standing. It may help to push your weight into the floor using your feet or palms, or get your whole body down for full contact. Holding your body with your own hands may be useful, noticing what's going on in the room or observing the physical sensations going on, allowing your body to change its posture — whatever it takes to stay 'in' your body.
- Breathe! Staying aware of your breathing is tremendously helpful, and sometimes we need to take great big lungfuls when we're feeling a lot. Notice if you're holding your breath, or if you're breathing very slightly, and try opening your mouth and breathing more deeply. *(Note: if you breathe very strongly for some time without moving much, you may start feeling a tingling in your hands or feet, around your mouth, the back of your head or your chest, and feel the muscles there start to clench a bit. This means that you're hyperventilating — it's a physiological response to low CO₂ levels in your blood — and you'd be better off breathing more shallow and gentle, and starting to move again gently. These uncomfortable but not dangerous symptoms will then pass quite quickly).*
- Keep your eyes open, not getting fixated on one spot: orientate yourself in the space visually.
- You may need to scream or shout or cry out loud. Go for it! Sounds are often better than words. Remember to keep it physical though — notice if your body gets rigid and frozen, and guide yourself back into movement along with the sounds your body is needing to make.
- You may need to shake, or move very energetically, which will literally help your body to 'shake off' the strong feelings you're having. If you can feel the desire to shake or tremble, go with it, let it happen. This kind of release will probably come and go in waves; it's a

healthy physiological response that you can trust, and surrender to your body's natural instinct to heal and rebalance itself.

- It can sometimes be helpful to have someone with you, but you are likely to be extremely sensitive to the 'rightness' of their presence. A genuinely compassionate and accepting presence — a loving glance, a hand held, a respectful look, or just someone nearby, can make all the difference in helping you go through what you're experiencing. However, someone trying to make you feel better, or being sorry for you, being triggered themselves, or for any reason insensitive to you is likely to freeze your process to some extent, so if it doesn't feel right, do your best to signal to them, or tell them. *It's not your job to make them feel OK.*
- You can ask someone to help you stay present or self-regulate: signal to me or one of the assistants in the room. (If the situation is intense, you may find it difficult to speak or formulate the sentence or request that's in your head. Don't worry about that, use simple signals or gestures, and whatever words you can to convey. This will pass.)
- As you're coming out of the intense 'passage' of being triggered in some way, it will greatly help the whole process if you can stay with it as you lighten up, knowing that just because the peak has passed doesn't mean it's over, though it is easier and probably much sweeter from here on. Keep moving, or at least stay present with your body and breath. Look around the room, gradually take in what's happening outside of your own self. Maybe dance with some other people when you're ready. You'll enter a period of stillness eventually — value that time too, and let the calmness nourish you. It's OK to take time to be still and integrate even if the group is moving into other things. You can join back in when you're ready.
- At the next break, you may not feel like eating, but don't skip food. Begin with warm drinks then easily digestible foods; you may find your body wants salty or fatty foods, which both help. Getting something nourishing into your system will help you stay more present.
- You may also feel a profound need to rest or sleep. If this is the case, respect it. Be sure you are warm and comfortable.
- You may want to find someone during the next break with whom you can share some of your experience. Ask them first.
- Do you have the support you need outside of the workshop environment? Do you know what support you need? If you know you're dealing with severe trauma, it's probably as

well to have someone you're working with on an individual basis — a therapist for example, or a sensitive bodyworker — to help you integrate your experience on the dance floor.

I am highly experienced in this kind of healing work, both for myself personally and as a guide for others – I have utterly shattered, and come back, many many times. I've guided others through this many many times. In the end though, all the steps you take will be yours. The 5Rhythms practice is full on and not right for everyone all the time. It's bold and highly catalytic. Not entirely safe. Yes, you did just read that: this is not entirely safe. It's wild and alive and powerful, like the rest of life on earth. If you are anxious about your ability to handle your experience, please do talk to me about it.

My deep and sincere thanks to Karen Melin and Andreas Huckele for their insights and advice on this section.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

You'll find lots more information about this practice, how to use it, and how to integrate it into daily life, in the [Resources section of my website](#). I'd particularly recommend you look at the first few items on the [Downloads page](#), which has some useful after-workshop suggestions.

IN ESSENCE

This practice has a certain kind of magic about it that's essentially mysterious. We cannot entirely control what happens when we dive into it, and that's one of its great strengths. The dance is a wild card, a force of nature, a divine spark, and by surrendering to it you are choosing to trust that wilderness experience. After more than 25 years of doing so, and witnessing others do so too, I can honestly say that I've never seen anything like it. I trust it as fully, and love it as deeply, as I ever have done. I am more grateful than I can say to have found this way of working, to have studied with Gabrielle, and to be able to share this with you.

Adam