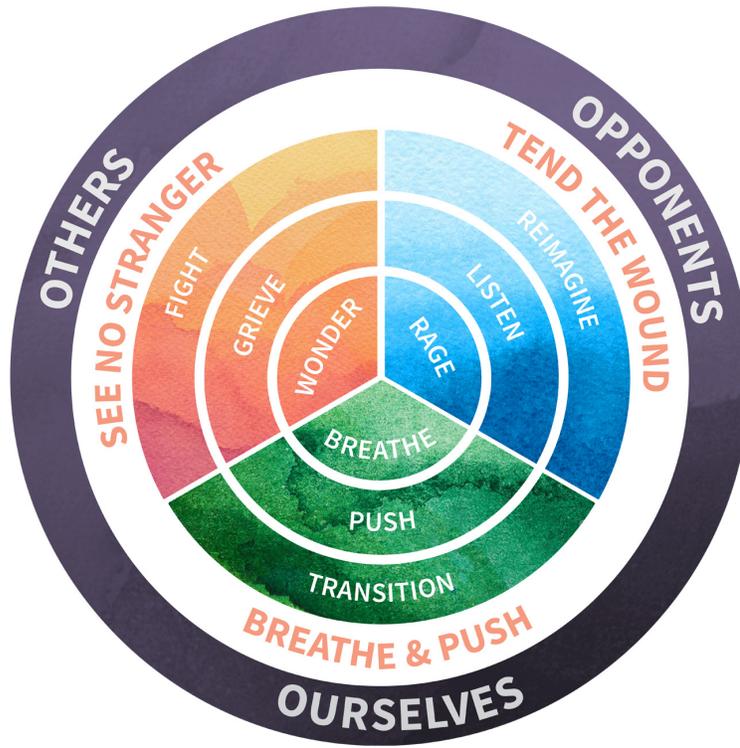


SEE NO STRANGER: A Guide to the Compass

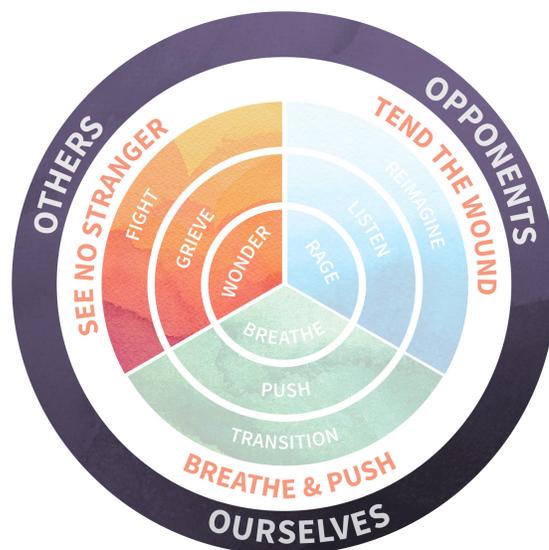


“Revolutionary love” is the choice to enter into labor for others, for our opponents, and for ourselves in order to transform the world around us. It is not a formal code or prescription but an orientation to life that is personal and political, rooted in joy. Loving only ourselves is escapism; loving only our opponents is self-loathing; loving only others is ineffective. All three practices together make love revolutionary.

Point the compass toward whomever you want to practice loving— another, an opponent, or yourself. The name of the practice is the outermost ring; the actions for that practice are within. Discern which action you need for the moment. The inner ring of the compass (*wonder, rage, breathe*) contains internal actions, where transformation happens primarily within one’s own mind and body. The middle ring (*grieve, listen, push*) contains interpersonal actions, where transformation happens in relationship with other people. The outer ring (*fight, reimagine, transition*) is made up of social actions, where transformation happens within the context of a community. All three levels of transformation—internal, interpersonal, and social—are engaged in the labor of revolutionary love.*

Love for Others: See No Stranger

Seeing no stranger begins in wonder. It is to look upon the face of anyone and choose to say: You are a part of me I do not yet know. Wonder is the wellspring for love. Who we wonder about determines whose stories we hear and whose joy and pain we share. Those we grieve with, those we sit with and weep with, are ultimately those we organize with and advocate for. When a critical mass of people come together to wonder about one another, grieve with one another, and fight with and for one another, we begin to build the solidarity needed for collective liberation and transformation—a solidarity rooted in love.



Out in the world, I notice the unconscious biases that arise in me when I look at faces on the street or in the news. To practice seeing each of them as a sister or brother or family member, I say in my mind: *You are a part of me I do not yet know*. Through conscious repetition, I am practicing orienting to the world with wonder and preparing myself for the possibility of connection. (Sometimes I do this with animals and the earth, too!) It opens me up to pay attention to their story. When their story is painful, I make excuses to turn back—“It’s too overwhelming” or “It’s not my place”—but I hold the compass and remember that all I need to do is be present to their pain and find a way to grieve with them. If I can sit with their pain, I begin to ask: *What do they need?* Listening to more stories, learning about a community’s history, or showing up to vigils or marches or memorials, gives me information for how to fight for them. I seek out organizations that are already fighting for them and offer my voice or time or money or labor to assist them. When I worry that I’m not enough, I ask myself: *What is my sword and shield? How will I fight? What will I risk?* When I get overwhelmed, I ask: *What is my role in this moment?* I remember that I have only to shine my light in my corner of sky.

Love for Opponents: Tend the Wound

An opponent is any person whose beliefs, words, or actions causes violence, injustice, or harm.

The word “enemy” implies permanence, but

“opponent” is fluid. We have a range of

opponents at any given time, distant and near.

Even the people closest to us can become our

opponents for a moment. It is daring to put all these people in one big category, but it is useful,

for whether our opponents are political or

personal, persistent or fleeting, we can practice

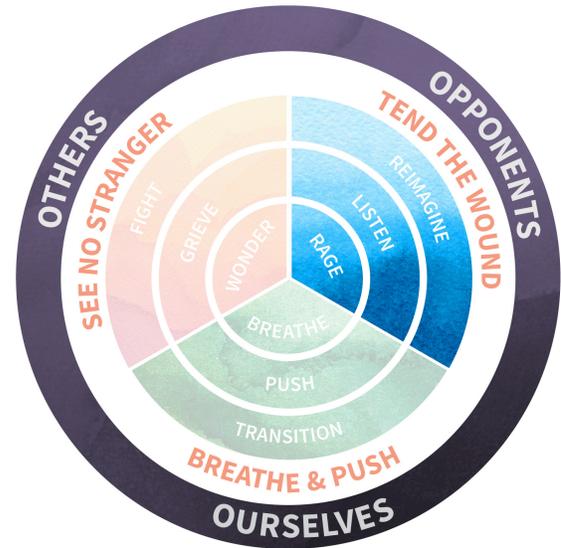
tending the wound—ours, and if it is safe, theirs. We can **rage** in safe containers to process our

pain, **listen** to understand the contexts that enable our opponents to cause harm, and use

that information to **reimagine** cultures and institutions that protect dignity for all of us.

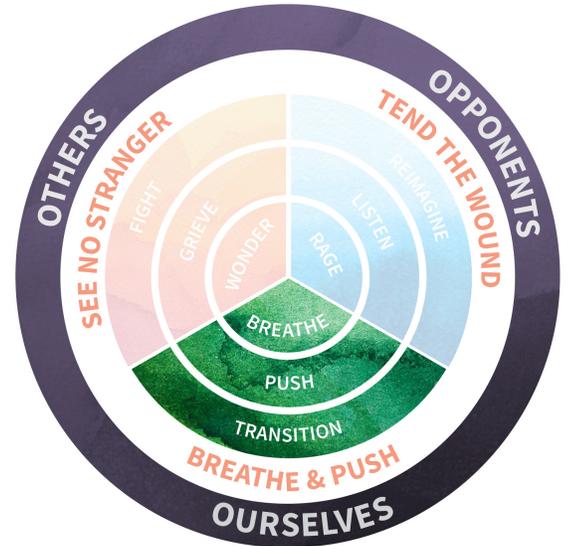
Tending the wound is not only moral but strategic: It is the labor of remaking the world.

Loving our opponents is *hard*. If we cannot summon love for all of our opponents in every moment, we have not failed. Revolutionary love is not an all-or-nothing metric. It is an ethic that sometimes feels like an aspiration rather than a reality. But the aspiration to love our opponents is itself revolutionary: It opens up space for us to let *other people* love those opponents when we cannot. Revolutionary love is not about making martyrs of ourselves but rather partaking in the labor that we are ready for at any moment. Tending wounds is the practice of a community, not the sacrifice of an individual.



Love for Ourselves: Breathe and Push

Loving ourselves is a feminist intervention: It is choosing to care for our own bodies and lives as a priority. In all of our various labors—making a life, raising a family, or building a movement—we can care for ourselves by remembering the wisdom of the midwife: breathe and push. We can *breathe* to draw energy and power into our bodies and let joy in. We can *push* through fear and pain to become our best selves, including through healing, forgiveness, and reconciliation. And in the most convulsive moments of our lives, we can summon our deepest wisdom and find the bravery to *transition*, undertaking the fiery and life-giving labor of moving from one reality into another. Laboring in love is how we birth the world to come.



*I use birthing labor as a metaphor for *any* person in the midst of creative endeavors. Only a subset of women give birth this way, *or* give birth at all. But the ability to create and nurture is a *human* right, not a biological one. If the metaphor of war offers wisdom for how to face injustice and fight the good fight, then perhaps the metaphor of birth can offer all of us wisdom about the courage needed to create something new.

Revolutionary love is practiced in community. Each of us has a role in any given time. We can all be midwives in this time of great transition. The future might still feel dark and unknown, and we might not live to see the world to come, but when we choose to show up with love, our labor becomes an end in itself. We can measure our lives not by what we produce, but by our faithfulness to the labor. Revolutionary love is demanding labor, but it is also creative,

transformative, and joyful labor— immeasurably complex and messy, tumultuous and revelatory, marked by wonder, and *worth it*. Revolutionary love is how we last.

I invite you to create your own pocket of revolutionary love—in your home, school, organization, or community. To learn more about each of the practices in the Revolutionary Love compass, **visit the revolutionary love learning hub**, or purchase the book **See No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love**.