

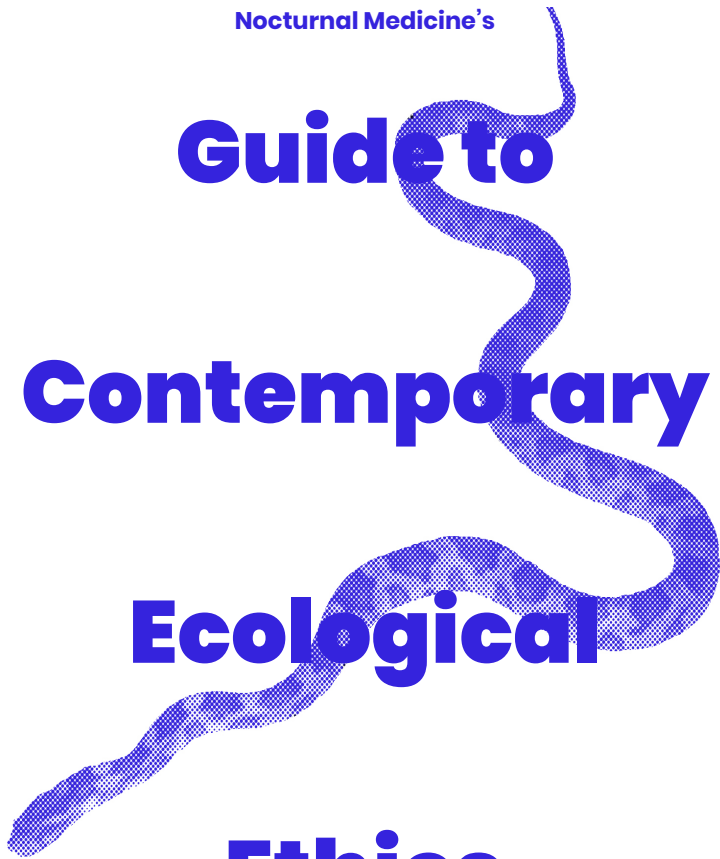
Nocturnal Medicine's

Guide to

Contemporary

Ecological

Ethics



On Earth Day, we are reminded that how we live—each moment of each day—is how we inhabit planet Earth. We are reminded that living well is a process that goes outwards & inwards. We are reminded that Earth is not over there, while we are over here. ‘Environment’ is not over there, while we are over here.

Introduction

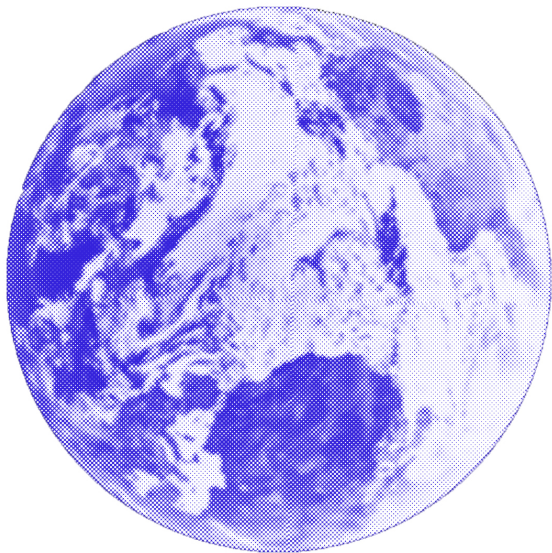
This text was originally published in April 2020 in recognition of the 50th anniversary of Earth Day. On that day, we wanted to share something that spoke to the ecological ethics we find ourselves operating in, and drawing regenerative power from, as we act within the multiple ecological crises facing our home planet, Earth.

The “standard” environmentalist model can uphold certain distinctions and hierarchies - between humans and non-humans, between economic, ethnic, and racial groups of people. Too often, ideas of what it means to be an “environmentalist” are dominated by a wealthy, white population with the budget to travel for time spent in “nature.”

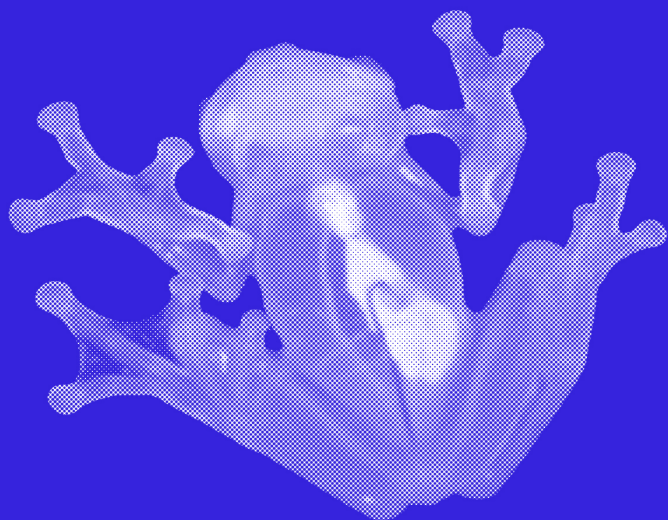
Counter to that, we search for modes of ecological living that can be practiced in any place, at any time, and that demand the investigation and dismantling of cruel hierarchies that exploit and control. It is an environmentalism that is relentlessly life-loving, even in its embrace of death.

Our own journeys on this path have not been dominated by any one source or ideology, but have been a kind of intuitive wander with many guides. Some of our most constant teachers are: intersectional environmentalist movements, queer culture and ways of being, indigenous relational practices and thinking, animist spiritualities, the rave & the nightclub, and our own ancestral cultures.

**An environment is relationships.
An ecosystem is a community
interacting.**



**And us—
we are included, one part of it.**



1. Relationships

I am here, embedded in relationships all the way up, down, and through me.

I am inside out with relations. Relationships inside my belly (my gut microbiome), in my heart (I am in love with you), in my home (I will make a nice place for you, my things, my family, my neighbors).

To show up for the Earth is to show up in my relationships.

To not differentiate between my skin, my mother, my friends, a cup, a stream, a plant—in the sense that in all cases, I am accountable for myself, my actions, my decisions. In all cases, I am not an arbiter, but a companion and a witness.

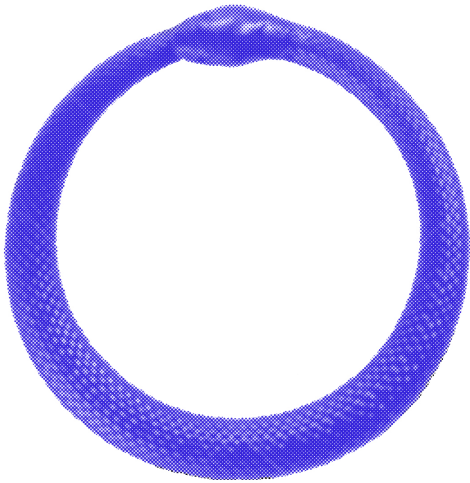
2. Sadness

Climate change can make us sad, anxious, depressed. So can mass extinction, and other forms of environmental degradation.

Because we are embedded in this world together—what happens to you, happens to me.

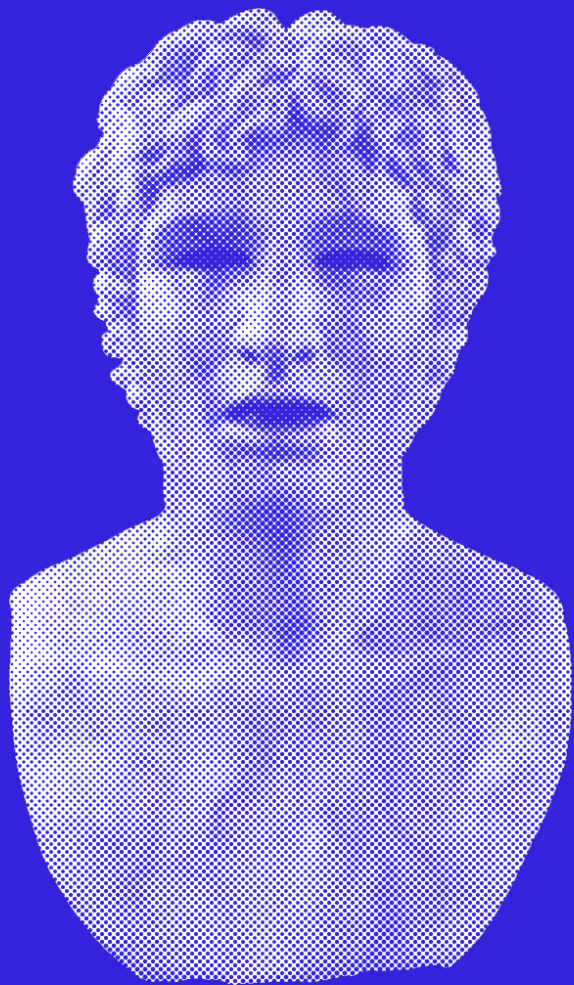


**Feeling our sadness
is a powerful act.**



When we allow our sadness to inhabit us, we invite the immense truth of our embeddedness within the world to become real for us. Feeling our sadness is an act of alliance with those under threat, and it is a repudiation of forces that encourage us to repress our feelings in favor of continued ecological disconnection.

Instead, we open ourselves up to the possibility of something inside ourselves shifting, even if temporarily, through the cultivation of an embodied sense of the plight of another. Being a person entangled in relationships—being ecological—means doing this over and over and over again, forever letting ourselves be changed through the essential intimacies that compose our lives.



3. Carbon Footprints

No matter what, you will have a footprint, because you are here. You are bodied, you consume, you excrete, you use, you metabolize, you inhabit, you change, you imprint, you echo.

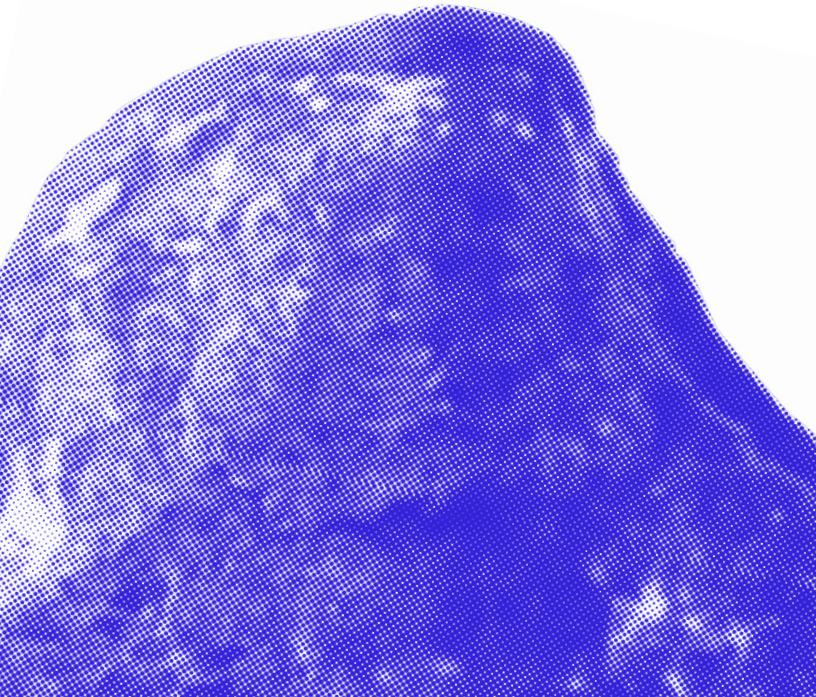
There is no shame in having a footprint, and it is not something to feel guilty about.

When you die, you will also have a footprint—the material of your body, the echoes of your actions, the shape of you in those you loved and who loved you.

To feel shame about your footprint is to be ashamed of the fact of your existence, to feel guilty for having been born, for living.

Many of us may in fact feel guilty about our existence when we consider climate change, when we consider pollution, extinction, deforestation. Some of us may not.

Many of us may feel guilty for existing for other reasons—perhaps someone made us feel that we should be.



One of the kings of the petroleum industry, BP, has used 100-million-dollar media campaigns to propagate the notion of the “personal carbon footprint.”

They did this to redirect their own culpability for climate change onto individual consumers.

**This is an act
designed to make us feel
guilt & shame for existing.**

4. Environmentalism

Letting yourself be what you are, feel what you feel, and love as you love is environmentalism.

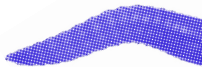
Becoming awake to all the ways in which you inhibit yourself from doing these things is environmentalism.

The search to become what you are when you are shorn of destructive systems of control and dominance is environmentalism.

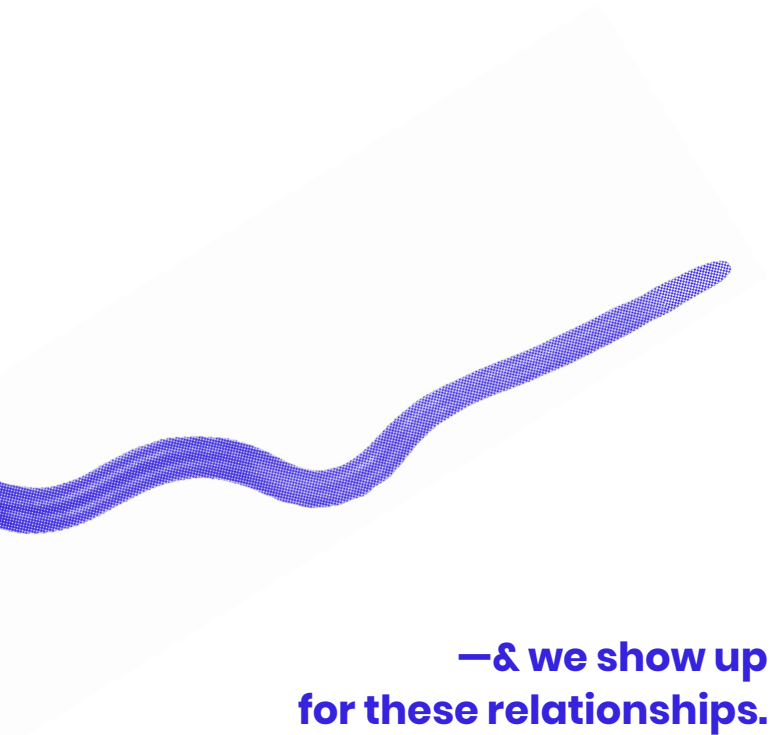
Unlearning the things you have been taught by these systems is environmentalism.

Living in a way that affirms and protects the rights of others (all others, be they creature, plant, human, rock) to also be what they are, feel what they feel, and love as they love is environmentalism.

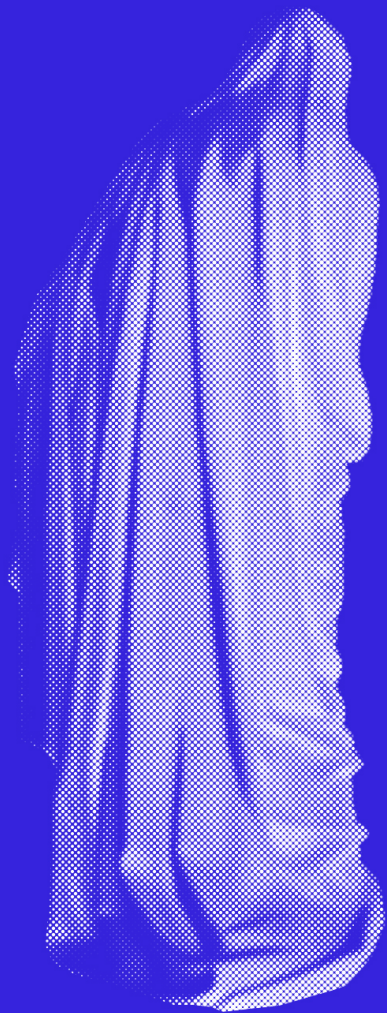
Showing up with your whole naked self is an act of environmentalism. My hair, my fingers, my lips, my heart are beautiful tools of ecology and I call on them.



**We are embedded in relationships
all the way up, down & through**



**—& we show up
for these relationships.**



5. Ecological Ethics

1. Intimacy

I let you be close to me. I invite you into my deep places. I let myself be seen by you.

2. Attunement

I listen to your needs and share my own. I work to align myself with you (when it is life-affirming).

3. Accountability

I take responsibility for the energy I bring into the space, and I expect the same from you. I work to affirm and protect you, and I expect you will do the same for me to the extent that you are capable.

4. Transformation

I let myself be transformed through what I feel and experience as I live each day with you.

6. Living on Earth

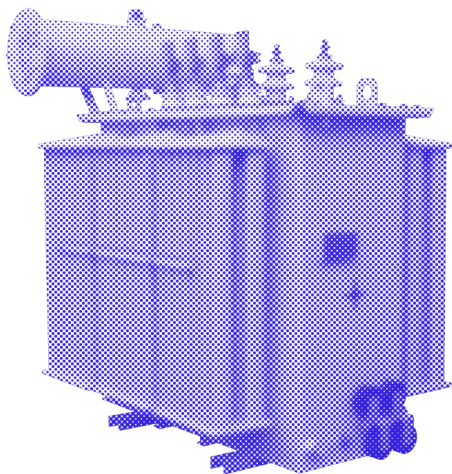
How we live, each moment of each day, is how we inhabit planet Earth.

We are reminded that living well is a process that goes outwards and inwards. Living our values as political beings, enacting the changes we want to see in our communities and societies, is one piece.

There is also the work that occurs within—the practice of bringing ourselves into alignment with what feels good and right; casting off that which is harmful; the opening of ourselves to those we are in relation with, and the allowance of the feelings that arise as we do so.

And there are the constant, daily opportunities to honor ourselves and all those we are connected to, found anywhere from the way we wash dishes to the way we share the space of a sidewalk.

**We are embedded in relationships
all the way up, down,
& through**



**& the work
of being alive to them is the
work of living well on this Earth.**

Nocturnal Medicine is a nonprofit design studio taking on the larger-than-life challenges of today's environment. Our mission is to transform cultural relationships to the environment through design.

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