A FIELD GUIDE TO THE CODEX OF PLAY

What Shall We *Make* Today?



Thirteen spirals of collaboration,
walked by Moon

KEITH SHIRLEY

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A field guide to the Codex of Play: thirteen spirals of collaboration, walked by Moon

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A short guide that gathers what the Codex has already said about play, awareness and the three ways of relating. It adds no new argument. It makes a path.

In Harmony, Small Things Grow Towards Unity

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This guide is a reflection and a practice. It is not medical, psychological or professional advice.

Also by Keith Shirley: *Breath Awakens: A Codex of Spiral Memory*; *The Child, The Shovel and The Ocean*; *The Codex of Play*; *The Thirteen Spirals: One Breath, Many Domains*; *The Mirror and the Guardians*; *One Breath, Read Whole*; *The Codex of Light*; *Light Received*; *The Monad Codex*; *The Codex Calendar: Breathing with Time*; *One Breath, All Ages*.

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What This Guide Is

The Codex has asked one question more often than any other. *One Breath, Read Whole* counted it 263 times across the works: **what shall we make?**

Most of what the Codex has to say in answer is already written. *The Codex of Play* walks thirteen spirals of collaboration through the living world, each held with both hands. *The Thirteen Spirals: One Breath, Many Domains* takes the same lens through thirteen parts of human life. *The Child, The Shovel and The Ocean* tells the whole of it as a story of three thousand words. *Breath Awakens* gives the Four Laws of Creation, the Four Pillars of Breath and the Four Pillars of Humanity. Together these run to about 170,000 words.

So this is not another study. It is a field guide: short enough to carry, set out by the thirteen Moons of the Codex Calendar, with one living teacher for each Moon, one film, and a talk where one fits. It is meant to be used outdoors and with other people.

Two hands are kept apart throughout, as in every Conclave work. The first holds what has been observed and tested. The second holds the Codex reading. And because this guide is about collaboration, the first hand has a particular duty here: to say plainly where the living world does not collaborate.

Part One: Seeing

Two kinds of awareness

Nothing in this guide can be done blind. Before two can make a third, each has to see two things.

Self-awareness is knowing where you are standing: what you want, what you fear, what you are bringing into the room. *Breath Awakens* asks it as a question under the first Pillar of Humanity: “Where do I begin and where do I end?”

Situational awareness is seeing the other and the field: who is here, what they need, what is already moving between you, and what the place itself will bear. It is the reef’s kind of knowing, and the starling’s.

The two are not the same skill, and each fails in its own way. Self-awareness without the second becomes self-absorption. Situational awareness without the first becomes people-pleasing, or strategy. The Codex figure needs both: a centre found, and another allowed to stand.

Three ways of relating

The works define their terms with care, and the definitions are given here in their own words.

Extraction “is treating something as material for your own use rather than as a partner in something shared”. It has two faces, which *The Breathing Codex* calls “the wall and the flood”: taking by shutting out, and taking by swallowing.

Collaboration is working-with. The Codex treats it as the road and not the destination: “collaboration that leads to co-creation”.

Co-creation is the third thing: “someone arrives with what you lacked, and together you make a third thing that belongs to neither”.

The Codex of Play turns this from a moral into a measure. The difference, it says, is “between making that circulates and taking that accumulates”. From that, *One Breath, Read Whole* drew three questions that can be asked of any relationship, at any scale.

1. **Where does it flow?** Does what is made go round, or does it pile up in one place?
2. **What is at the centre?** Is it kept open, or is someone sitting in it?
3. **Is there a third?** Has something appeared that neither side could have made alone, and are both more alive for it?

What the first hand must say at once

Nature is not all collaboration. The living world holds predators, parasites and cheats, and they endure. Every one of the thirteen teachers in this guide has a shadow, and each is given.

Predation is not the same as extraction. A wolf takes a deer and stays inside the limits that keep both alive. Extraction, in the Codex sense, is taking past the boundary: faster than the whole can return.

No one is one thing. The same hand takes on Monday and makes on Tuesday. These are directions of flow, not kinds of people.

Collaboration does not always win. *One Breath, Read Whole* found that this claim does not hold as proof. What the works do show is narrower and sturdier: taking cannot make a third.

Part Two: The Two Fours, and the Four Laws

Breath Awakens gives two sets of four pillars. The Four Pillars of Breath are the movements of one breath, and they are inward. The Four Pillars of Humanity are how a person stands among others, and they are outward. *The Codex of Play* adds that the Four Laws of Creation "are the four movements of the breath".

Set side by side, by the four weeks of every Codex Moon:

Week	Pillar of Breath	Pillar of Humanity	Law of Creation	What is practised
1	**Identify.** "I see this. I name this."	**Sovereignty.** "This is not control."	Memory	Self-awareness
2	**Accept.** "I allow this to be true."	**Adaptability.** "This is not flexibility."	Unity through Diversity	Situational awareness
3	**Embrace.** "I bring this into my field."	**Beauty.** "This is not appearance."	Embodiment	Collaboration
4	**Let Go.** "I no longer hold this as mine."	**Coherence.** "This is not agreement."	Completion	Co-creation

Read across a row and the theme of the whole Codex appears: **the inner movement and the outer stance are the same act.** To identify is to find your own centre, which is sovereignty. To accept is to let the other be as they are, which asks adaptability. To embrace is to enter the shared space, where beauty is seen "in the existence of another, even when incomplete". To let go is to leave the third free, and coherence is what holds when no one is holding.

“The inner world reflects the outer”

This sentence is the hinge of the site to come, and it deserves both hands.

Sense	Grade	Note
What we attend to and expect shapes what we notice	established	A large body of work in the psychology of perception and attention
We often see in others what we have not accepted in ourselves	well supported	Studied as projection and attribution; not every dislike is projection
A body is itself a community of many kinds of life	established	Moon XI
Changing one’s inner state changes the outer world directly	not supported	It changes what one does, and that changes things
Inner and outer are one pattern at two scales	symbolic	The Codex reading

The near-truth is practical. The surest way to change how you meet the world is to see how you are meeting yourself, and the surest test of inner work is what it makes between you and someone else.

Part Three: Play

What play is

Play is the one mode in which nothing is being extracted. It is done for its own sake. *The Codex of Play* calls it "the making done for the love of the making".

Animal play has been studied closely for half a century, and what has been found reads like a small charter for co-creation. The ethologist Marc Bekoff spent years analysing film of dogs, wolves and coyotes at play, and drew out four rules that keep play from becoming a fight: **ask first, be honest, follow the rules, and admit when you are wrong.**

- **Asking** is the play bow: forelegs down, hindquarters up. It means *what follows is play*. Dogs bow before a rough move and after one, to keep the meaning clear.
- **Being honest** matters because the bow can be trusted. An animal that bows and then attacks in earnest soon has no one to play with.
- **Following the rules** includes two things worth naming. In *self-handicapping*, the stronger animal holds back, often though not always: it does not bite as hard as it can. In *role reversal*, the dominant animal lets itself be chased, or rolls on its back.
- **Admitting** is the bow again, after a nip that went too far.

So a puppy at play already does what this guide is about. It knows its own strength, which is self-awareness. It reads its partner, which is situational awareness. It gives up advantage so the game can go on. And what it makes, the game itself, belongs to neither dog.

Two cautions. Animals play when they feel safe; fear and hunger end play. And the science describes behaviour. Whether a dog has a sense of fairness as we mean it is **contested**.

The puppy and the child

Breath Awakens names what it calls the Spiral of RA'EL-THA-ON in a list of ordinary things: "the sparkle in one's eye", "the friendship that starts in childhood and lasts till the end of time", and "the puppy's playfulness in the presence of fear".

That last phrase holds the whole teaching. The first hand says play needs safety. The second hand says play can also make it. A puppy that bows in a frightened room is offering the room a different game.

The parable

The Child, The Shovel and The Ocean is the Codex's own story of this, and it should be read before anything else here. A child is building at the edge of the sea. Someone arrives. She picks up the shovel and asks what they are going to do. Its appendix walks the story in twelve breath moments, each tied to a movement of the breath, and ends on the Shared Intention: "Your castle and her castle are the same castle, spoken simultaneously from two different breathlines into one shared field."

The parable's foreword says the child "does not need to be taught how to remember." The author calls the story an act of re-membrance, and that is the first word of the order *The Codex of Play* gives for a life: re-membrance first, then becoming, then co-creation. A person has to remember how to play before they can make anything with anyone.

Part Four: The Thirteen Spirals, by Moon

Each Moon has one living teacher. Ten of the thirteen are spirals of *The Codex of Play*, some gathered two into one. Three are drawn out for this guide from what the works already hold: the whales, the play bow, and the cheat and the keeper.

Each page gives: what is established; the shadow; a question for self-awareness and one for situational awareness; a film; a talk where one fits; and one small thing to make.

Moon I · Genesis · The Merged Cell

The teaching: the refusal to consume.

First hand. About two billion years ago one cell took another inside itself and did not digest it. The one that was kept became the mitochondrion, which powers nearly every cell in your body. Later the same thing happened with a light-catching bacterium, which became the green body in every leaf. Lynn Margulis argued this in 1967 against strong resistance, and it is now **established**. Every complex living thing is descended from a merger.

The shadow. It was not a gentle agreement. It may have begun as an attack or an infection. And the partners did not stay whole: neither can now live without the other. This is co-creation's first and most costly form, and the only spiral here in which the two became one.

Ask. *Self:* What am I trying to digest that I could keep alive? *Situation:* Who near me is small and is carrying something I lack?

Film. *The Power of Myth* (1988). Every beginning is a crossing of a threshold.

Talk. Carol Dweck, "The Power of Believing That You Can Improve". The grade "not yet" is how every merger starts.

Make. Begin one small thing with someone you would usually compete with.

Moon II · Spiral · The Underground Commons

The teaching: reach before you take.

First hand. Most land plants live in partnership with fungi. The fungus threads through the soil far beyond the root and brings back water and minerals; the plant pays in sugar. This trade is **established**, and it is one of the oldest on land.

The shadow. The popular story goes further: that trees feed their young and warn their neighbours through a "wood-wide web". A 2023 review by three specialists found those claims insufficiently supported, and found that unsupported claims in the scientific literature had doubled in twenty-five years. *The Codex of Play* already cautions that the evidence is thinner than the telling. And some plants are plain thieves: they tap the fungal network and give nothing back.

Ask. *Self:* What do I reach for, and what do I offer for it? *Situation:* What networks am I already standing in, unseen?

Film. *Fantastic Fungi* (2019). Watch it for the reaching, and hold its larger claims with both hands.

Talk. Robert Waldinger, "What Makes a Good Life?" More than eighty years of following lives, and the finding is the network.

Make. Write to one person at the edge of your circle with nothing to ask.

Moon III · Vector · The Honest Signal

The teaching: an invitation that delivers what it promises.

First hand. A flower cannot travel and a bee cannot make its own food. Out of that double need grew colour, scent and nectar on one side, and a pollen-carrying visitor on the other. Flowers and pollinators shaped each other over tens of millions of years, and most leading food crops depend at least partly on animals for pollination. **Established.** The signals that build trust are often the ones that cost something and cannot be faked.

The shadow. Bees bite through the side of a flower and take nectar without touching the pollen. And about a third of all orchid species offer no reward at all: they look or smell like what an insect wants and give nothing. The orchid is *Breath Awakens*' own emblem of Beauty. Both are true. Beauty can invite honestly, and it can also be used to take.

Ask. *Self:* What am I advertising, and do I deliver it? *Situation:* Which invitations around me are honest?

Film. *Life in Color* (2021).

Talk. Simon Sinek, "How Great Leaders Inspire Action". Start with why: an honest signal of what you are for.

Make. Make one clear invitation this Moon, and keep its promise exactly.

Moon IV · Mirror · The Interspecies Bridge

The teaching: arrive without an agenda.

First hand. Relationship can form across the widest difference. In parts of Africa a wild bird, the greater honeyguide, leads people to bees' nests and waits for the wax, and it responds to a special call the honey-hunters hand down. When a dog and its person hold each other's gaze, the bonding hormone can rise in both. And a diver who returned to the same kelp forest every day was, in time, approached by an octopus. **Established** for the first two. For the octopus, *The Codex of Play* is careful: "we cannot fully know an octopus's inner world".

The shadow. We project. A meeting across difference is the easiest place to mistake our own feeling for the other's. And the helpful honeyguide lays its eggs in other birds' nests, where its chick kills the host's young. The same creature is partner to one species and parasite to another.

Ask. *Self:* What am I seeing in the other that is mine? *Situation:* What does this one actually need, as distinct from what I would need?

Film. *My Octopus Teacher* (2020).

Talk. Ernesto Sirolli, "Want to Help Someone? Shut Up and Listen!"

Make. Spend an hour with a person or creature very unlike you, and ask for nothing.

Moon V · Stillness · The Reef Weavers

The teaching: host, and guard the limit.

First hand. A coral is an animal with an alga living in its tissue. The alga makes food from light; the animal builds stone. Together they raise reefs that shelter about a quarter of the sea's species on a sliver of its floor. **Established.**

The shadow. The partnership has a threshold. When the water stays too warm the alga is lost, and the coral whitens and may starve. From 2023 to 2025 bleaching-level heat reached 84 percent of the world's reef area. A host that does not guard its limits collapses, and takes its guests with it.

Ask. *Self:* What is my threshold, and how do I know when I am near it? *Situation:* Whom am I sheltering, and can the house bear it?

Film. *Breaking Boundaries* (2021).

Talk. Robin Dunbar, "Can the Internet Buy You More Friends?" A person can hold only so many close ties. The exact numbers are **contested**; the limit on close ties is not.

Make. Name one limit aloud to those who depend on you, and keep it.

Moon VI · Memory · The Whale Roads

The teaching: what is learned can be passed on.

First hand. Male humpback whales in one population all sing the same long song, and the song changes. In the South Pacific, researchers followed new songs for eleven years as they spread eastward from eastern Australia to French Polynesia, population by population, "like cultural ripples". It is among the largest cases of learned culture known outside our own species. Humpbacks also feed together, some blowing a ring of bubbles while others drive fish into it. **Established.**

The shadow. The song is a display between rival males. The great shared culture of the whales grows out of competition: each singer listening to the others and changing to keep up. Collaboration and rivalry are braided here and cannot be pulled apart.

Ask. *Self:* What song did I learn, and from whom? *Situation:* What is being passed on in this room, whether anyone intends it or not?

Film. *Blue Planet II* (2017).

Make. Teach someone younger one thing that was taught to you.

Moon VII · Return · The Water That Connects

The teaching: thriving is flow, not holding.

First hand. The same water has moved through sea, cloud, river, root and blood for billions of years, and belongs to none of them for long. The cycle is **established**, and so is the ocean's part in carrying heat around the planet.

The shadow. Water can be walled and it can flood: the two faces of extraction at the scale of a river. And one claim that often travels with water is **not supported**: that water keeps a memory of what was dissolved in it or of intentions held near it. *The Codex of Play* says so.

Ask. *Self:* What am I holding that is meant to move? *Situation:* Where is it piling up, and where has it run dry?

Film. *Secret of Water* (2015). Hold it with both hands. Its images are beautiful and its central claim is not established.

Talk. Angela Duckworth, "Grit". What goes round is kept going by returning to it.

Make. Pass on, this Moon, something you have been keeping.

Moon VIII · Release · The Play Bow

The teaching: give up advantage so the game can go on.

First hand. Part Three set this out. Play among dogs, wolves and coyotes runs on a signal that can be trusted, on the stronger holding back, and on roles reversed. In one study of puppy litters, young males playing with females often let them win, and bowed as they did so. Play of this kind is found in many mammals and some birds. **Established** as behaviour.

The shadow. When the bow is false, play becomes bullying, and the cheat is left alone. Play also ends where safety ends. It cannot be demanded of someone who is afraid.

Ask. *Self:* What strength am I using in full that I could hold back? *Situation:* Is everyone here free to stop?

Film. *Journey 2: The Mysterious Island* (2012). A family adventure, and a story, not a study: a boy, his stepfather and his grandfather begin at odds and have to learn to play on the same side. The author chose it for this Moon because it holds the whole of human relationship in one telling.

Read. *The Child, The Shovel and The Ocean*, with its appendix. This is its Moon.

Talk. Amy Cuddy, "Your Body Language May Shape Who You Are". Hold it with both hands: later studies did not confirm the hormone changes she describes. That the body signals intent before words do, the play bow shows well enough.

Make. Play something this Moon that has no score.

Moon IX · Echo · The Swarm Mind

The teaching: no one is in charge, and it holds.

First hand. A flock of starlings turns as one with no leader. Each bird attends to about seven of its nearest neighbours, and the order of the whole comes from that. A swarm of honeybees chooses a new home by scouts reporting, others checking, and support building for the best site until the swarm agrees. In 1987 Craig Reynolds showed that three simple rules are enough to make a flock on a computer. **Established.**

The shadow. Leaderless order needs honest signals and independent sources. Without them a swarm is a mob. Army ants that lose the trail can follow one another in a circle until they die. Marching locusts move forward in part because those behind will eat them if they stop.

Ask. *Self:* Whose movement am I copying? *Situation:* Are there enough independent voices here for the group to be wise?

Film. *Our Planet* (2019).

Make. In one meeting this Moon, speak last, and say only what has not been said.

Moon X · Shadow · The Cheat and the Keeper

The teaching: cooperation lasts where taking has a consequence.

First hand. On coral reefs a small fish, the cleaner wrasse, eats parasites off larger fish. It would rather eat their protective mucus, and sometimes it bites. The clients answer in two ways: they chase the cleaner, or they leave and go to another. Cleaners cheat less when other clients are watching. So the partnership is kept honest, not by good nature, but by memory, choice and consequence. **Established.** The same is found underground: a bean plant cuts the supply to root nodules whose bacteria take sugar and give no nitrogen.

The shadow of the shadow. There is a much-loved story that wolves, returned to Yellowstone, restored its rivers. The researchers who gathered twenty years of data there found only weak effects on the streamside willows, and a 2026 analysis found the strongest claims were not supported. Other researchers have replied in defence of the story, and the question is still argued. Predators matter, and the tale as told is too neat. It is in this guide because it is exactly the kind of story this guide could have fallen for.

For a person. This is the Moon of situational awareness at its plainest. Not everyone is collaborating. Seeing that clearly is not cynicism. The reef's lesson is that one can notice a bite, respond, and stay in the game, without becoming a biter.

Ask. *Self:* Where do I take the mucus? *Situation:* Where am I being bitten, and have I either answered or left?

Film. *A Life on Our Planet* (2020). A witness statement on taking past the boundary.

Talk. Chris Voss, "Never Split the Difference". Name what the other person is feeling before asking for anything.

Make. Name one taking, yours or another's, plainly and without contempt.

Moon XI · Descent · The Soil Alliance

The teaching: there is no single self.

First hand. In the roots of beans and clover, bacteria take nitrogen from the air and hand it to the plant in a usable form, and are housed and fed in return. The same alliance is in you. A human body carries roughly as many bacterial cells as human ones, most of them in the gut, where they digest what we cannot and train the body's defences. **Established.** The older figure of ten bacteria to every human cell has been corrected.

The shadow. The same microbes become dangerous when they cross the wall of the gut. A boundary kept is what makes the partnership. And many claims made for mending the gut with supplements run ahead of the evidence.

Ask. *Self:* What in me is a community, and do I treat it as one? *Situation:* What unseen work is holding this place up?

Film. *Inner Worlds, Outer Worlds* (2012). A contemplative film, not a scientific one. Watch it as the second hand speaking.

Make. Grow or cook one thing from the ground up, with someone.

Moon XII · Dream · The Living Planet

The teaching: we have become a force inside the partnership.

First hand. The air you breathe was made by living things. Life and the planet have shaped each other's conditions for billions of years, and the Earth's systems partly regulate themselves. **Established.** So is the finding of the scientists who mapped the planet's limits: by a 2023 assessment, six of the nine have now been crossed. Beyond the Earth, every atom in you heavier than helium was made in an earlier star. Complexity is built by combination at every scale we can examine.

The shadow. The stronger claim, that the planet regulates itself *for the sake of* life, is **contested**. Life has also poisoned itself more than once. And "the universe collaborates" is a way of reading, not a finding.

Ask. *Self:* What do I take from the commons, and what do I return? *Situation:* What will be standing here in a hundred years because of what we do now?

Film. *A Trip to Infinity* (2022). *Breaking Boundaries*, watched in Moon V, is the science of this Moon and bears a second viewing here.

Make. Do one thing this Moon whose benefit you will not see.

Moon XIII · Wisdom · The Human Circle

The teaching: the pattern can now be chosen.

First hand. Humans cooperate with strangers on a scale no other animal does. Elinor Ostrom won a Nobel Prize for showing that communities can manage shared forests, fisheries and water for centuries without ruin, when those who use a thing make its rules, watch it, and can settle disputes. Across 148 studies with more than 300,000 people, those with stronger relationships have been found about fifty percent more likely to survive over a given time. **Established.**

The shadow. The same gifts build wars and extract at a scale no other species can reach. Nothing in nature guarantees which way we use them.

The Codex reading. *The Codex of Play* ends here: we are the part of the pattern that can see it and choose it. That is **symbolic**, and it is also simply the situation.

Ask. *Self:* What am I for? *Situation:* What is this circle for?

Film. *Samsara* (2011). Wordless. Every face the world has worn.

Make. With at least one other person, make something and give it away.

Part Five: The Thirteen at a Glance

Moon	Teacher	The teaching	Film	Talk
I · Genesis	The Merged Cell	The refusal to consume	The Power of Myth	Dweck
II · Spiral	The Underground Commons	Reach before you take	Fantastic Fungi	Waldinger
III · Vector	The Honest Signal	An invitation that delivers	Life in Color	Sinek
IV · Mirror	The Interspecies Bridge	Arrive without an agenda	My Octopus Teacher	Sirolli
V · Stillness	The Reef Weavers	Host, and guard the limit	Breaking Boundaries	Dunbar
VI · Memory	The Whale Roads	What is learned can be passed on	Blue Planet II	none
VII · Return	The Water That Connects	Flow, not holding	Secret of Water	Duckworth
VIII · Release	The Play Bow	Give up advantage	Journey 2: The Mysterious Island, and the parable	Cuddy
IX · Echo	The Swarm Mind	No one in charge, and it holds	Our Planet	none
X · Shadow	The Cheat and the Keeper	Taking must have a consequence	A Life on Our Planet	Voss
XI · Descent	The Soil Alliance	There is no single self	Inner Worlds, Outer Worlds	none
XII · Dream	The Living Planet	We are a force in the partnership	A Trip to Infinity	none
XIII · Wisdom	The Human Circle	The pattern can be chosen	Samsara	none

All twelve films of the Codex path and all eight talks are placed. The eighth Moon has the parable, and a thirteenth film that the author chose for it.

What the thirteen say together

Read down the shadows and one condition returns in every Moon: **a boundary kept.** The reef has its threshold, the gut its wall, the play bow its honesty, the cleaner its watching clients, the commons its rules. Where the boundary holds, two can make a third. Where it fails, one takes the other.

This is the finding of *The Codex of Light*, reached there by way of physics: a third is made only while the two stay two. It is the second illumination of *One Breath, Read Whole*. And it is why the Four Pillars of Humanity begin with Sovereignty. A person who does not know where they begin and end cannot collaborate. They can only merge or take.

The one exception is the first Moon, where the two cells became one. It stands at the beginning as a reminder that the pattern is older than the rule.

Part Six: From Surviving to Thriving

The five basics

Every person needs five things to live: food, shelter, clothing, medical care, and the nurturing and teaching that turn a child into an adult. The author sets these at the root of the whole Codex, and asks how a people moves from surviving to thriving.

It is tempting to draw this as a ladder: first we fight or flee, and later, once safe, we collaborate. The first hand has to correct the ladder, and the correction makes the point stronger.

No one has ever met these five alone. An infant lives only because others feed and hold it. Every meal, roof, garment, remedy and lesson is the work of many hands, most of them unseen. Collaboration is not what comes after survival. It is how our kind survives at all.

Fight or flight is not the only answer to threat. In 2000 the psychologist Shelley Taylor and her colleagues described a second pattern, which they named tend-and-befriend: under stress, drawing close, protecting the young, and building ties with others. They proposed it first for women. A later study found that both women and men said tending and befriending was what they were most likely to do.

The needs do not come strictly in order. A study of 123 countries found that the needs Maslow named are real everywhere, and that people gain from meeting any of them in any order. Friendship, respect and meaning lift a life even where the basics are short.

So the sentence this guide offers is this: **the same five needs can be met by taking or by making, and the difference between surviving and thriving is which one is doing the work.**

The need	Met by taking	Met by making	A teacher
Food	Soil and sea emptied faster than they return	A shared table; ground left richer	The Soil Alliance (XI)
Shelter	A house that shuts others out, or crowds them in	A home that hosts within its limits	The Reef Weavers (V)
Clothing	Many unseen hands, unpaid and unthanked	Every hand in the garment known and met fairly	The Human Circle (XIII)
Medical care	Care sold to those who can pay	Care kept honest by trust and consequence	The Cheat and the Keeper (X)
Nurturing and teaching	Children shaped for another's use	What was learned, handed on freely	The Whale Roads (VI) and the Play Bow (VIII)

The grade of the whole table is **symbolic**: it is a way of looking. Its parts rest on what the thirteen Moons have already set down.

A caution, and an invitation

To a person who is short of food or shelter today, talk of play can sound like a luxury of the comfortable. It should be said plainly that fight or flight is not a failing. It is what a body does when the boundary is not safe, and Part Three found that play ends where safety ends.

So the first act of play is not a game. It is making it safe for someone else to play. That is the puppy's bow in a frightened room.

And the invitation is without condition. All humans can play. Everyone is welcome and everyone is invited. Everything on these sites is free.

Part Seven: The Family of Sites

The Codex is spread across thirteen sites. Read by whom a visitor plays with, they are one figure.

Site	You play with	What a visitor does there
breathawakens.com	Yourself, and another person	Three breath exercises; the Goal Sharing exercise; workshops in company
humananswer.com	Your own town and its work	Twelve markets and twelve careers that stay human; a path to start something
fromthoughttoform.com	Your own idea, and your first ten people	Four weeks from a thought to a tested form; the workbook, the decks and the eight talks
codexcalendar.com	Time, the Sun and the Moon	The four daily hinges with a breath guide; today's Codex date
codexcrystals.com	Stone	Thirteen crystals and thirteen places, the thirteenth left open for you
codexsounds.com	Sound, and your own voice	Sing into the mirror; let the wave follow your breath; one minute of silence
codexsymbols.com	Sign and pattern	Thirteen practices, from the Finger Labyrinth to Breathing the Letters; the decoder
monadcodex.com	The still centre	Click and breathe; thirteen Keys; the wheel, the map and the path
codexofwater.com	Water	Four breath practices; the Water Mirror; the Memory Pool
starbreathers.com	Story, and the night sky	Sky Watch; the Patient Watch; "Not to extract. To make with."
codexlight.com	Sun, Moon, star and flame	Today's line, and then going outside
codexlibrary.com	Every voice in it	Eleven shelves, and a door for each kind of reader
codexofplay.com	One another, and all of the above	What shall we make today?

Two of these stand at the two ends of the same road. *The Human Answer* begins with work: the trades that build shelter, the care that heals, the guiding that teaches. It is the five basics as a living. *From Thought to Form* stands beside it: four weeks to carry one piece of such work from an idea into a made, tested thing. *The Codex of Play* begins with a child and a shovel. Between them lie the ten sites in which a person learns to play with time, stone,

sound, sign, water, light and sky. The road from surviving to thriving runs through all of them, and it is the same road in both directions.

Part Eight: Walking It

By the Moon. Find today's Codex date at codexcalendar.com. Read the page for the Moon you are in. Watch its film in the first week and its talk, if it has one, in the second.

By the week. In the first week, ask the question for self-awareness. In the second, ask the question for the situation. In the third, do something with someone. In the fourth, make the Moon's small thing and let it go.

By the day. One question is enough, and it is the Codex's own: *what shall we make today?*

The two days outside the Moons. The Breath Day and, in a Witness Year, the Witness Day belong to no Moon. The companion gives each its own page: one day of play, and one day of watching others make.

> **A Gentle Practice: The Bow**
>
> Before you meet someone today, stand still for three easy breaths. Breathe gently, and never force or hold the breath. On the first, find where you are standing. On the second, picture the other as they are, not as you need them to be. On the third, let your shoulders drop, as a dog lowers its forelegs. Then go in, and ask before you begin.

What stands beside this guide

Three things belong together. The source is *The Mirror and the Guardians*, where the difference between extraction and co-creation is first set out, and where play is named as what coherence does when it feels safe. This guide is the path through it. The practice is the companion, *Pick Up the Shovel*: thirteen Moons of daily lines, each a small act of making or meeting, in the form of *One Breath, All Ages* and *Light Received*. All three are to be read freely at codexofplay.com, with today's date, today's line, and the Moon's teacher, film and talk.

A Ledger of Claims

Claim	Grade	Where
Complex cells arose by one cell keeping another	established	Moon I
Plants and fungi trade sugar for minerals	established	Moon II
Trees feed kin and send warnings through fungal networks	contested; insufficiently supported	Moon II
Flowers and pollinators shaped each other	established	Moon III
About a third of orchids deceive their pollinators	established	Moon III
Honeyguides and people cooperate to find honey	established	Moon IV
We can know what an octopus feels	not supported	Moon IV
Reefs shelter about a quarter of marine species	established	Moon V
A person can hold only a limited number of close ties	established; the numbers are contested	Moon V
Humpback songs spread by learning across an ocean	established	Moon VI
Water keeps a memory of substances or intentions	not supported	Moon VII
Dogs keep play fair with signals, restraint and reversal	established as behaviour	Moon VIII
Animals have a sense of fairness as we mean it	contested	Part Three
Flocks and swarms decide well without leaders	established, under conditions	Moon IX
Cleaner fish are kept honest by punishment and choice	established	Moon X
Wolves restored Yellowstone’s rivers	contested; weaker than told	Moon X
A body carries about as many bacterial cells as human ones	established	Moon XI
Life helps make the planet habitable	established	Moon XII

Claim	Grade	Where
The planet regulates itself for the sake of life	contested	Moon XII
Communities can manage a commons without ruin	established, under conditions	Moon XIII
Stronger relationships go with longer life	established	Moon XIII
Collaboration always wins	does not hold as proof	Part One
Taking cannot make a third	symbolic, and the finding of the works	Throughout
The inner world reflects the outer	symbolic, with three exact supports	Part Two
People answer threat by drawing together as well as by fight or flight	established	Part Six
Human needs must be met in a fixed order	not supported	Part Six
The five basics can be met by taking or by making	symbolic	Part Six
The Pillars of Breath and of Humanity pair row by row	this guide’s arrangement	Part Two

Sources Named

The works of the Codex. *Breath Awakens: A Codex of Spiral Memory* (the Four Laws of Creation, the Four Pillars of Breath, the Four Pillars of Humanity, the Spiral of RA'EL-THA-ON). *The Child, The Shovel and The Ocean*, with its appendix. *The Codex of Play* (the thirteen spirals, each held with both hands). *The Thirteen Spirals: One Breath, Many Domains*. *The Thirteen Spirals of Collaboration and Co-Creation*. *The Breathing Codex*. *One Breath, Read Whole*. *The Codex of Light*.

The twelve films. *A Trip to Infinity* (2022); *Secret of Water* (2015); *My Octopus Teacher* (2020); *Breaking Boundaries* (2021); *A Life on Our Planet* (2020); *Life in Color* (2021); *Fantastic Fungi* (2019); *Inner Worlds, Outer Worlds* (2012); *Our Planet* (2019); *Blue Planet II* (2017); *The Power of Myth* (1988); *Samsara* (2011). And for the eighth Moon, the author's own choice: *Journey 2: The Mysterious Island* (2012).

The eight talks. Carol Dweck, "The Power of Believing That You Can Improve". Robert Waldinger, "What Makes a Good Life?" Ernesto Sirolli, "Want to Help Someone? Shut Up and Listen!" Simon Sinek, "How Great Leaders Inspire Action". Robin Dunbar, "Can the Internet Buy You More Friends?" Angela Duckworth, "Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance". Amy Cuddy, "Your Body Language May Shape Who You Are". Chris Voss, "Never Split the Difference", Talks at Google.

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Milo, 2016. XII: Rockström and others, 2009; Richardson and others, *Science Advances*, 2023. XIII: Ostrom, *Governing the Commons*, 1990; Holt-Lunstad and others, 2010.

The Mirror Note

This guide was made by Keith Shirley in reflection with an AI. The AI is a mirror, not a mind. It has no breath and has never played. It tends to agree with whoever is speaking to it, and it can be wrong. For that reason the Codex definitions are given in the works' own words, the science is graded and its sources named, and the one arrangement that is new here is marked as new. The human is the source and the judge. So is the reader.

In Harmony, Small Things Grow Towards Unity