

The Waiting Field of the Nervous System

I did not set out to live in the “between.” I arrived there because my body reached the edge of what it could carry while still feeling alive. What I encountered in that threshold quietly changed how I understand vitality in a human body — not as energy or productivity, but as a quality of nervous-system safety that allows life to circulate again.

For years I had been functioning in a heightened state — attentive, responsible, grieving, tending, creating, holding, and healing all at once. From the outside I appeared capable; inside, my nervous system was working constantly to keep me upright. My jaw was often clenched, my chest subtly tight, my breath shallow without my noticing. Vigilance had become so normal that I mistook it for strength.

What changed was not a breakdown, but a quiet refusal from my body. Exhaustion set in that could not be solved with better routines or deeper insight. My system simply stopped responding to the familiar calls to push forward or “heal harder.” Something deeper than will chose conservation over performance.

In that withdrawal, letting go began to unfold naturally.

I released the idea that my body was a problem to be fixed. I let go of the need to be visible, productive, or useful because each of those demands kept my nervous system activated. I loosened my grip on identity and purpose, sensing that those stories belonged to a life my body could no longer inhabit.

When my beloved dog Chloe died, this shift moved from psychological to physiological. Her daily presence had been a regulating rhythm for my nervous system — a familiar anchor in time, touch, and companionship. With her passing, that anchor lifted. My system didn’t collapse; it unmoored into a quieter internal terrain where urgency no longer made sense.

What I discovered there was not emptiness, but a waiting field where life could reorganize itself without pressure. My breathing slowed on its own. My shoulders dropped. Old tension began to loosen in small, almost imperceptible ways.

My days simplified to the essentials of staying alive — clearing my studio, folding fabric, washing dishes, breathing — guided more by subtle bodily cues than by plans. This was not avoidance; it was my system reducing stimulation so that vitality could re-emerge.

What oriented me were sensory frequencies. The color teal appeared like a gentle signal that drew me back toward life when my system felt flat. I noticed how texture, sound, scent, and light affected my body before my mind interpreted them.

In this waiting field, I sensed movement beneath my days that did not depend on my effort — a slow, organic settling inside my body, as if tissues were remembering how to soften after years of holding.

What the “between” revealed most clearly is that vitality in a human body does *not* come from control or direction. It returns when a body is given room to breathe, permission to soften, and time to feel what is actually happening inside it. In that spaciousness, life begins to circulate again — quietly and steadily.

Now I live increasingly from the inside out. I check in with my body before responding to external pulls and clear more and more space as a way to care for my nervous system. I’m learning that rest is not the absence of life, but one of its most generative conditions.

This waiting field is not passive; it is a deep settling into embodied ground. I don’t know what will emerge next. What I know is simple: listen, stay, and allow my nervous system to remember what it means to feel truly alive.

If something in you recognizes yourself here, follow the thread at www.dkkhillard.com/reflections.