

You are receiving **Potent Alchemy** because you shared your contact details with us in the past. We send only 2-3 newsletters/yr. If you **do not wish** to receive these, please do **unsubscribe** using the link at the bottom of the page. We hope you choose to stay connected!

Potent Alchemy

changing without trying?

Attending to the war within...



"Just doing my job!"

There is no escaping the date and the anniversary it marks. 25 February 2006 was the day, my mother died.

On that date in 2022, I woke to the reality that on 24 February, Putin had ordered the Russian army to invade Ukraine and to bomb, shoot, kill and maim its citizens. He calls it a 'military operation'. Most of the rest of the world call it a war. We can get into arguments about 'what' we call it but this distracts us from the facts on the ground. People (men?) in the Russian army are following orders from those who 'tell them what to do' whether or not they 'agree' with what they are being asked to do; whether or not they know what they are 'fighting for'. They follow(ed) orders. Just as they did, when Putin ordered them to invade Crimea in 2014. Imagine being in the Russian military right now. Imagine working for the government or government-controlled media organisations. [Seize the Day's](#) compelling song from the 1990's turns from a disarming cheery start into a tension-building, gut-wrenching account, illuminating that very many of us may be unwittingly implicated in atrocities, particularly when we blindly continue to justify our actions as 'just doing my job'.

What would you do if you were in their shoes? For all the myriad practical, (ir)rational reasons you might think of... there would likely be one common, non-conscious denominator: self-protection. Protecting yourself from what others might do to you IF you do not do as your commanders command; your bosses demand? And what if you have Russian **and** Ukrainian parents, grand-parents and friends living in Ukraine and/or Russia, as so many people in Russia and Ukraine do? How would this affect you and the subsequent actions you take? It is nigh on impossible to actually know for sure, how any of us might react/respond until we find ourselves in such situations.

The Ukrainian people were not threatening aggression towards the Russian nation. However, it seems that Putin BELIEVES that if Ukraine were to join Europe and/or NATO, then the future of Russia would be at risk. More importantly, HE is likely to be (non-)consciously believing that he, himself, is at risk. So what does a fear-driven living being - human or animal - do under threat? Flee, freeze or fight. He went on the offensive, based on what he is believing. Ukrainian people started fighting back in the face of ACTUAL (facts) bombs, tanks and artillery attacks. Putin did



[Friend on Facebook](#)



[Follow on Twitter](#)



[Forward to a Friend](#)



Upcoming Events

Potent 6: [LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES](#)

✿ **Accessing the Praxis of Presence-in-Action**
POPIA Training: Four-day intensive
[Eventbrite](#)

Register! FOUR places left: 2022 in-person,
 Edinburgh - [12-15 May](#)

Register: 2022 ONLINE - [12-15 September](#)

✿ **PIA Coaching & Coaching Supervision**
Enhancing your personal & professional practice
In-person, whastapp and online; individuals and groups

P6 website: [PIA Coaching + Supervision](#)
Interested?

[Ask Louie](#)

✿ **Koans + Poems: life-changing,**
contemplative conversations
Naturally inclusional self-centering
 monthly mid-week musings

Register: 2022 ONLINE - [starting 18 May 2022](#)

Interested?

[Ask Louie](#)

✿ **Crucial Difference: Coaching Supervision**
Training

(Certificate, Diploma & Advanced programmes -
 EMCC accredited + ICF CCEUs)

The ONLY supervision training attuned
to natural inclusionality & Presence in Action

[Explore more](#)

2022 ONLINE - starting 13 October 2022 - 16 March
2023

Interested?

[Ask Jo](#)

Presence in Action (PIA) Collective: [Eventbrite](#)

OPEN ACCESS

✿ **Co-creating consciously conversations**
exploring how Presence in Action supports
us everywhere we are

[Ask Laura](#)

For PIA COLLECTIVE MEMBERS

✿ **Sharing, learning and playing together!**
PIA Praxis retreat - Extending wide, diving deep: 2022 -

10-13 June

Subscribe Past Issues

not anticipate that so many Ukrainian people would stay to defend/protect themselves; to fight... for their lives, their land, their families, their freedom to determine their own way in the world. Ordinary citizens, mothers, grandmothers, sisters willing to stay; ready to die alongside their brothers, fathers and grandfathers - for the sake of preserving their cultural identity, their country and their way of life - to be free of the grip of an autocratic oppressor.

Yet, since starting to write this, it is clear too that over 4 million people have left Ukraine - mostly women and children. Leaving their homes, families, friends, communities - their place of belonging in the world - is also a self-protective act, just as fighting back is. Yet consider this: what would it take for **you** to leave behind everything you know - your home, friends, work, some or all of your family - not knowing if you will ever return; ever see your loved ones again?

I frequently find myself pondering on the personal and global legacy of this monumental act of aggression: on those who stay (if they survive); on those who leave, seeking refuge elsewhere in the world; and yes, also on those fighting in the name of Russia; on those in Russia and others across the world, who do not agree with Putin yet seemingly do nothing; and on those who do speak out and take action? Life will never be what it was before this time. How will they 'live' with what they did or did not do; did or did not say?

But wait. I notice how my attention is on others and invite myself to tune in to my own **feelings** and the meanings I am making (N.B. I use the catch-all term, '**fiction**', to refer to '*what my mind does*' with things I experience and feel i.e. labelling, caegorising, accusations, judgements, conclusions, myths, etc.) about myself, in the face of what is happening in Ukraine. What is mine to do here, now? I notice an urge to reactively jump into taking action and quickly realise that this would be about assuaging my own feelings of guilt and shame, recognising that, currently, my practical day-to-day living is barely affected by what is happening in Ukraine. Noticing how shallow my breath is, I slow down, softening the tension in my belly so as to draw air deeper into my lungs. Again. Again. I sit with tsunami waves of discomfort rising in me. I allow the fictions I am making to show themselves - fictions, not only about Putin and people who are supporting his decisions, but also about myself and anyone else who is on the periphery, seemingly doing nothing. I feel distress, terror, guilt, shame and rage. I notice wanting to accuse and blame others whom, I am believing, should be doing more. Yet in truth, I am accusing myself, believing I am doing 'nothing' of use. In this internal vortex of **feelings**, accusatory **fictions** and wild imaginings of what the future **outcomes** might behold, I recognise that I am at war within myself. I know that until I attend to what is roiling around uncontrollably in me, I will remain entrapped; unable to tap into what liberates me into coherent, presence-ful, trustworthy action.

I bring my attention back to me and my life. I reflect on when things do not go the way I want or expect them to; when others do what they do and mess up my idea of how things should be; when I want to lash out at those whom, I believe, are making my life more difficult than it ever needs to be. And sometimes, I experience terror at the enormity of my own impotence to make others and the wider world HOW I WANT THEM and IT to be. I remember times of old, when my feelings of rage and fear would consume me. What is it like for you? Are you equipped to take personal responsibility for what is running within you and driving you to be and do what you DO NOT want to be and do? **Presence in Action** helps me attend to the ways in which I 'wage mini-wars' every day. It helps me safeguard my trustworthiness in relation to myself and others; and through it, I free myself of non-conscious fears and stuck patterns that otherwise, would bring out the worst in me.

Make no mistake, the unpredictable interplay that goes on in me, occurs in all of us - until or unless we engage in ways that help us transcend our non-conscious, myopic, reactivity, and instead deliver us into acting for the wellbeing of more than ourselves. For instance, what moved **Marina Ovsyannikova**, of Russia's state-controlled RT TV channel, to rush onscreen behind the newsreader with a hand-written poster denouncing the war and trying to expose Russian propaganda? What about the swathes of recent resignations of journalists and presenters from Russian media outlets? What about Russian civilians demonstrating on the streets in Russian cities, risking imprisonment? What about the thousands across Europe opening their homes to Ukrainians - to strangers - without knowing who might arrive or how long it might go on? These are folk, tapping into something more potent and far-reaching: the capacity to love; the capacity to act for something greater than oneself, regardless of personal consequences; the capacity to attend to the here and now, with what 'is' rather than being driven by past experiences or channelled by future-fictions - catastrophic imaginings of what MIGHT happen (to us) - and using these fearful imaginings as reasons to not act with one's conscience. Not everyone is in a position to open their homes yet there are countless people taking quiet, compassionate action beyond the glare of cameras and social media. Every action we take, no matter how seemingly small, contributes to what is unfolding. To keep my conscience alert, I know I need to keep asking myself: "Who/what is this thing I am doing, really for? What is 'in it' for me to be doing this, now?" I know that if I cannot face my own discomfort about (some of) my answers to these questions, I am unlikely to liberate myself from what holds me back from acting with courage, compassion and wisdom.

Ask Sam
Translate ▼

RSS

CIP gathering, hybrid/Leatherhead Institute,

Surrey: 2022 - 16 June

Reflexive Integration, hybrid/Leatherhead Institute,

Surrey: 2022 - 17 June

[Ask Judith](#)

CIP gathering, hybrid/Vine Trust, Edinburgh: 2022 - 8
October

Reflexive Integration, hybrid/Vine Trust,

Edinburgh: 2022 - 9 October

[Ask Judith](#)



Shop with us

Visit our [Potent 6 shop](#) to see what resources might support your personal and professional practice.

PIA Collective Members: [accessible with password](#)

Cushions and other artefacts ordered via [Potent 6](#):

Take your emotions in hand!



For your own Emotions Palette - [buy here](#)

POPIA Place... the space in



which to come home to yourself...



My Mum (Jean) and me, breakfast in Sheffield, 1994.

Now, given that my mother brought us into this exploration, you might be wondering what she would have to say about it all? That's easy! She would urge me to follow my conscience; to do what I am called to do, even though, in so doing, I may feel afraid that *'people will judge and attack me; or they will leave me and I will be (forever!) isolated and alone'*. Future fictions such as these plague us all, not only me!

Unearthing and laying aside this kind of (non-)sense is not a 'once in a while' internal conversation. For me, living through all I experience every day, requires ongoing navigation - daily practising, sometimes several times a day. This is the nature of being human. The praxis of Presence in Action helps me attend to whatever is going on in me, amidst whatever is happening around me. Through it, I get quicker at freeing myself from the grip of past, present and future fictions and to meeting whatever life is bringing me, with more clarity and coherence... and a whole lot more joy!

If you are finding that what you do and how you navigate your life is no longer serving you, perhaps Presence in Action might support you too?

And finally...

If you remain subscribed to the Potent Alchemy database, we will not share nor use your contact details for any other purpose than sending you this newsletter - unless you have said we can. You may unsubscribe at any time and ask to see what contact details we hold for you.



Ma favourite rug

a poem by PIA Collective member, Erin Williams,
Reproductive Biologist, Scotland

I highly recommend listening to this [audio file](#) to hear Erin's dulcet rendition in her mellow, lyrical Scottish tones.

I'm sittin here this mornin' just watchin ma wee dug
As she sprawls like a monarch on the livin room rug
The sun beams in across the scullery flare
An she lies in it, bakin, way her wee legs in the air

Oh tae be toasty like ma wee broon dug
Sinkin intae the pile on ma favourite rug
Ah've got wan ye see, it a fine lukkin thing
And so's the wee cabin it's hidden within
It's no faur fae the sea on a street no weel kent
But I tell ye, see if ye go there, ye'll be gled that ye went

If yer wits are aboot ye ye'll notice a door
Through a wee tunnel ye go, a new world tae explore
Among big trees and wee trees and richt bonny flo'ors
A portal in Porty, ye could stay there for oors

If ye keek in the windae ye'll see the rug richt there
It's sittin pride o place in the middle ay the flair
It's thick and gigantic, a fair sicht tae be seen
And it's woven fae threads in braw shades ay bricht green

When ye step ontae this rug somethin magic aboonds
The air tends tae settle and there's nary a soond
Six portals in Porty, potent and true
Unlock magic and wisdom that's ae been inside you

Ye'll laugh, ye'll greet and mibby even ye'll roar
As whit's been locked up inside ye finally makes its way out
the door
Wave cheerio tae they havers that've been haudin ye doon
And say come awa in tae the love that appears in the room

I ken this sounds fanciful, ye micht even ca' me a fool
For haverin on aboot a portal woven in saft green and white
wool
But I promise ye, see on that rug somehin magic goes oan
Let's go the gether an I'll show ye, c'mere, gie me yer hawn

We'll be toasty and happy like ma wee broon dug
Sinkin intae the pile on ma favourite rug



Flow to receptive space...