

MIND CONTROL

The Course

THE GUIDEBOOK



For Anyone Considering
the Founding Class

November 2026 to February 2027

Phil Van Winkle





Before You Decide

Do you ever feel like you have to be someone you're not to get along, fit in, feel safe, or be successful?

Maybe you're the one who always has it together. The one who keeps everyone happy. The one who never needs help. People know that version of you. They may love and admire that version of you. But sometimes you wish they could see what's going on underneath. Maybe you wish you could let them.

Or maybe there's a belief about yourself that keeps getting in the way. You're not good enough. You can't disappoint people. It's too late for you. You may know it isn't true, but when it's time to speak up, make a decision, or try something you really want, it still has a say.

You might call it a self-limiting belief, a Part, a persona, or a mask. You might have no name for it at all. What you do know is that it keeps showing up, almost like an invisible force, and it's affecting your life: your relationships, your work, the choices you make.

Of everything you'd like to change, is there one that stands out? Something you can see getting in the way again and again? That's what I mean by your One Thing.

I don't know what yours is. But if something came to mind as you read this, keep it in mind while I tell you why I created this Course.

I know that experience. For years I read the books, took the courses, did the work, and nothing held. The understanding was real. So was the inspiration. Then the patterns came back. Working out why took me a long time. I wanted to understand what would help me respond differently when the same situations came around again: in my relationships, in my decisions, in an ordinary day. What I found became MIND CONTROL. That's the work this Course is built around.

Here's what it is. Thirteen weeks, starting November 3. Every Tuesday we meet live and work through the week's chapter. Every week you meet with the same small group of people, who brought their One Thing too. And every morning and evening you make time for a practice you choose, something you'll actually do. Your One Thing is the first thing you'll write about, and it stays at the center of everything we do. So when it shows up in your real life, and it will, you'll have something to practice with: a way to notice what's happening, to pause, to give yourself room to choose, and people to return to while you learn. That's how change starts to hold.

Bring a big vision for yourself. If your One Thing no longer ran you, what would be possible? This work can change the trajectory of the rest of your life. How you meet yourself reaches into your relationships, your work, the way you love, and the decisions you make when you're afraid. When that changes, the possibilities change with it. I can't promise what will change for you, or how fast. You'll decide what progress means.

This founding class is free; the only thing you'll buy is the book. The class asks for a real commitment of time and practice, and the pages ahead explain that commitment so you can decide whether it's right for you. If it isn't, keep this guide, and come when you can.

Here's what I'll bring. I'll be there every Tuesday, prepared, and I'll stay for the questions. I'll read your opening essay before we meet and your closing essay when we finish. I'll tell you the truth, including when I don't know. And I'll be practicing right alongside you, because I'm not done with this work and I don't expect to be. Thirteen weeks is our time together. The rest of your life is what we're practicing for.

With gratitude and Love,



Phil Van Winkle



THE REST OF YOUR LIFE

is what we're practicing for.



Rachelle, on the summit.



ASK ALTHEA

Start Here

Start with the pages ahead for the schedule, the commitment, and how to join. If you want to understand the work more deeply before deciding, follow the links into the Full Guide.

Your Week

- **Tuesdays:** 12:00 to 1:30 pm Eastern, November 3 to February 2. Thirteen sessions; none December 22. Attend all ninety minutes live or watch the recording. [The Schedule](#)
- **Your POD:** five to seven people, usually six, ninety minutes each week, never recorded. Attend at least ten of thirteen meetings. [Your POD](#)
- **Read before Tuesday.** After the session, answer the Reflective Questions and do the Practice. Post by Monday: at least 100 words per question and 100 on the Practice. [Your Weekly Rhythm](#)
- **Every morning and evening:** a practice you choose, with no set length. [Your morning and evening practice](#)
- **Make room:** three hours of meetings each week, plus reading, writing, and your daily practice. [How much time](#)

Reach me: phil@askalthea.community, including before you decide. Once you're in, the Course space is the front door. [How the Course Works](#)

See [Privacy and Support](#) for who sees your work and where to get help. The [Full Guide](#) explains the why.



Start Here

Your Seat

- **Free for the founding class**, and it's the whole Course, not a lighter version of it. Ninety-eight seats. [What You'd Be Saying Yes To](#) · [The Price of a Free Seat](#)
- **The book comes first.** You'll need [your own copy of MIND CONTROL](#) before you register; it isn't included with your seat. [How to Get a Seat](#)
- **Your One Thing** is the pattern you'd bring with you: one essay before we meet, one at the end. [Your One Thing](#)

Your Dates

- **October 26:** your community invitation arrives, or within a day of registering if later.
- **October 30:** registration closes, or sooner if the ninety-eight seats are taken. [How to Get a Seat](#)
- **November 1:** post your One Thing essay.
- **November 3:** first session, noon Eastern.
- **February 9:** closing essay and feedback form due.

Your Course space: members.askalthea.community and the Mighty Networks app. [The Ask Althea Community](#)

The Schedule

Tuesdays at 12:00 pm Eastern. That's 9:00 am Pacific, 10:00 am Mountain, 11:00 am Central, 5:00 pm in London, 6:00 pm in Zurich. US clocks fall back on November 1, so the hour holds for the whole term. Each chapter is read before its session.

Nov 3 · Welcome and Orientation · read the Preface, Orientation, and Part One

Part One: Awakening · from passenger to driver

Nov 10 · Chapter 1 · The Power You Surrendered

Nov 17 · Chapter 2 · The One Who Sees

Nov 24 · Chapter 3 · The God Fractal

Dec 1 · Chapter 4 · Leading from Divine Awareness

Part Two: The Framework · from "this is who I am" to "this is how I was programmed"

Dec 8 · Chapter 5 · The Identity Triangle

Dec 15 · Chapter 6 · Choosing Your Identity

Dec 22 · Week off. No session, no POD, nothing due. Keep your daily practice.

Dec 29 · Chapter 7 · The Wound That Points to Wholeness

The Schedule

Jan 5 · Chapter 8 · The Five Rs: Returning to Wholeness

Part Three: Conscious Creation · from understanding to living to authoring

Jan 12 · Chapter 9 · Conscious Creation

Jan 19 · Chapter 10 · Meeting Others from Love

Jan 26 · Chapter 11 · The Life You Choose

Feb 2 · Chapter 12 · The Rest Is Yours

Written work is due the Monday after each chapter's session. Chapter 6's is due December 21, before the week off. Chapter 12's is due February 8.

Week One's work is your One Thing essay, due Sunday, November 1. **The last week's** is your closing essay and the Course feedback form, due Tuesday, February 9.

Reading. The whole book in October if you can. The Preface, Orientation, and Part One before November 3 at the very least, then one chapter a week. If you don't have the book yet, it's the first thing to get.

If you join, put all thirteen dates in your calendar. A one-click calendar file will be waiting in the Course space.

Your Weekly Rhythm

If you join, this is what a week looks like.

Tuesday: the session. 12:00 to 1:30 pm Eastern. Sixty minutes on the chapter, then thirty of open Q&A, where the best conversations tend to happen. Camera on whenever you can; it's a class, not a webinar. Recorded, and posted in that week's lesson in the Course space, usually the same day. If you miss any of it live, watch it before your POD meets.

The written work. Read the chapter before Tuesday. After the session, answer its Reflective Questions and do its Practice, and post what you wrote in the Course space by the following Monday. At least 100 words per question, and 100 on what the Practice did or didn't do. There's no wrong answer and nobody's grading you. Then read what your classmates posted. That's part of the work, not a courtesy.

Morning and evening, every day. Two appointments with yourself: one before you step into the day, one before bed. What you do in them is yours to choose. Journaling, meditation, a walk, yoga, something from the Practice Guide at the back of the book. Choose something you'll actually do. Start small and let it grow out of your own experience; there's no target length. If you miss a morning or an evening, begin again at the next one. You don't owe yourself a longer one to make up for it. Your morning and evening practice



Your Weekly Rhythm

After each session. Within a day I'll post a short note in the Course space with anything worth keeping and whatever I'd add for the week ahead. Read it before your POD meets.

How the Course Works, for recordings, privacy, sharing, and time.

Your POD. Ninety minutes once a week, at the time your POD sets. Cameras on. Never recorded. Here's how we'll spend the ninety minutes:

3 MINUTES PAUSE	70 MINUTES ROUND	10 MINUTES REFLECT	7 MINUTES CLOSE
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Pause: three minutes to arrive. **Round:** an equal share each, uninterrupted. **Reflect:** ten minutes on the chapter's questions. **Close:** one sentence each.

The host rotates every week. PODs are announced at Session 1 and meet for the first time that week. Your Zoom link lives in your POD space and stays the same each week.

If you have to miss, tell your POD before, not after. Your POD

Your One Thing

When I interviewed 160 people about their self-limiting beliefs, almost everyone had one that stood above the rest. The one costing them the most. The one they'd been circling for years. It might be a self-limiting belief, a Part, or a persona you've worn so long it feels like you. Whatever you call it, it's the one thing the whole Course is about.

Start with yours. If something came to mind while you read the letter, start there. You can keep exploring as you read. If nothing has come to mind yet, think about where you hold back, and what it costs you to keep doing it. Notice where it shows up most, and with whom. Then ask the bigger question: if it no longer ran you, what would be possible? You don't have to answer any of that today. Just notice whether one thing keeps coming up.



Your One Thing

If you join: your One Thing essay. It's the first thing you'll write, before we meet, in three parts. What it is. What it's been costing you. And who you are when it no longer runs you. Make that third part big: what would you choose? What would you stop putting off? How would you meet the people you love? What might the years ahead look like? At least 250 words on each part, 750 in all, and no ceiling. One rule: tell the truth, especially about yourself. It's due Sunday, November 1, posted in the Week One lesson in the Course space. Nobody grades it and there's no wrong answer. It's your starting point, and I read every one before we meet.

At the end: your closing essay. In Week Thirteen you write about the same One Thing, in three parts that match the first three: what has changed, or hasn't; what the work has given you, and what it has cost; and who you are now. Same minimum, no ceiling. You'll read it, or the parts you choose, to your six in your last POD meeting, and post it in the Week Thirteen lesson by Tuesday, February 9. Then you'll have the two side by side, October and February, in your own words.

You can start now, whether or not you've decided. If you know your One Thing, start writing. If you don't, that's what October is for.

Your One Thing in the Full Guide, for the Three Freedoms as a measuring stick and more on the two essays.

What You'd Be Saying Yes To

The whole commitment, in one place. Each line links to the section behind it.

Thirteen Tuesday sessions. 12:00 to 1:30 pm Eastern, November 3 through February 2, with December 22 off. Live if you can, on the recording if you can't, all ninety minutes either way. [The Schedule](#)

A POD of five to seven, usually six. Ninety minutes a week, on a day and time your POD sets. After the first two weeks, the same people for the rest of the Course. Cameras on, never recorded. At least ten of the thirteen meetings, live. This is the one hard line. [Your POD](#)

The book. [Your own copy of MIND CONTROL](#), before you register. It's the Course Book, and it isn't included with your seat. [How to Get a Seat](#)

The reading and the writing. A chapter a week, read before Tuesday. Its Reflective Questions and Practice, posted by the following Monday, at least 100 words per question and per Practice. And reading what your classmates post. [Your Weekly Rhythm](#)

Two essays. Your One Thing, before we meet and again at the end. 750 words minimum each, no ceiling. [Your One Thing](#)

What You'd Be Saying Yes To

A practice, morning and evening. Every day, for thirteen weeks. Your choice, your length. Your morning and evening practice

Time. Three hours of meetings a week, plus the reading, the writing, your daily practice, and extra room for the two essays. How much time

Your word. This founding class is free. In January, the same seat costs \$997 (itself a fraction of its fair value). A free seat has a different kind of price: you pay for it with your word, one week at a time, alongside the rest of your POD keeping theirs. There are ninety-eight seats, and the class is going to fill. If you take one, take it to finish. The Price of a Free Seat

Your six—your POD. Show up. If you can't, tell your POD before, not after, and say when you'll be back. What's said in your POD stays in your POD. Your POD

What it isn't. Therapy, or a substitute for it. If you're working with a therapist, keep going. Privacy and Support

Graduating. Every session, every week's work, ten of thirteen PODs live, both essays, and the feedback form by February 9. The retreats are open only to graduates. What Graduating Opens

If that's a yes, go to How to Get a Seat.

Privacy and Support

What's yours to keep. You decide how much goes on the page. Keep what's too tender for a group in your journal, and post a version you can stand behind. You can pass in a POD round now and then; just say so. If the camera, or any piece of the work, is a real problem for you, tell me and we'll work it out.

Who sees what. Your profile and introduction: everyone in the community, which opens to the public on November 2. Your weekly work, your essays, and the session recordings: the class and me. Your POD's space: your six and me. Recordings can't be downloaded, and I'm asking every one of you never to record or share them.

Not therapy. This is self-leadership, practiced in company. If what comes up is heavier than a class and a POD can hold, reach for more support. In the US, call or text 988. If You Need Help



How to Get a Seat

Registration closes Friday, October 30, or when the ninety-eight seats are taken, whichever comes first.

1. **Get the book.** You'll need your own copy before you register; it isn't included with your seat. Hardcover, paperback, or eBook, and the eBook is yours in minutes.
2. **Register.** firehorse.press/course. You'll be asked which edition you have. Your registration confirmation arrives by email, with your next steps. One of them is the POD scheduling form, which confirms your seat; check every workable time.
3. **Save the thirteen Tuesdays.** A calendar file will be in the Course space.
4. **Read and start a journal.** Read the Preface, Orientation, and Part One before November 3. Keep a journal just for this.



How to Get a Seat

5. **Join the community.** Invitation: October 26, or within a day of registering if later. Add your photo, time zone, and bio. Introduce yourself publicly; save your One Thing for the Course space.

6. **Find Week One.** Install Mighty Networks. Post your One Thing essay there by November 1.

7. **Test Zoom.** Camera on. Arrive November 3 at noon Eastern.

Bring your person. Think of the one person you'd want beside you for this. Your partner. Your closest friend. Invite them to take the Course with you. You'll be in the same Course and different PODs, by design, so you do the work beside each other and the POD work with people who have no history with you. They get the same free seat, as long as they register by Friday, October 30, while seats remain. Each person needs their own copy of the book, including partners taking the Course together. Same link: firehorse.press/course. Bring your person

The Full Guide

These pages explain the work more fully. Explore them before deciding, or return to them as questions arise.



[The Journey](#)

[Your One Thing](#)

[How the Course Works](#)

[Your POD](#)

[The Ask Althea Community](#)

[How to Show Up](#)

[What Graduating Opens](#)

[The Price of a Free Seat](#)

[If You Need Help](#)

[Questions](#)

[This Is the Beginning](#)

The Journey

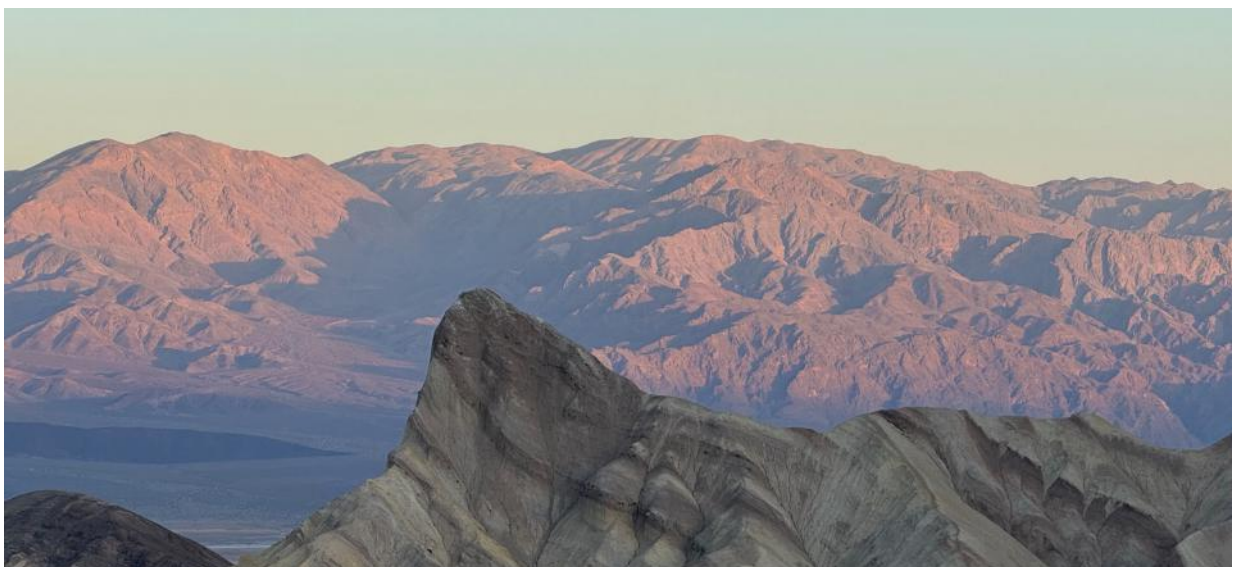


It's no coincidence that the book has twelve chapters and every one of them ends with Reflective Questions and a Practice. I wrote it that way, as the workbook for this Course. There's no hidden curriculum and no extra material to get through. The whole point of the Course is to get the book off the shelf and into your life, with a class around you and me in the room.

The Journey

So why a Course and not just the book? Because there's a list of things working against you when you try to change on your own, and nobody tells you about it. The habit was more entrenched than you knew. Your environment didn't change. The people around you didn't change. The Stories underneath it all didn't change. Nobody explained how the mind really works, you underestimated how long new behavior takes to hold, and you tried to do it alone. The Course was built with every item on that list in mind. Thirteen weeks is long enough for something to take root. The framework is the piece that was missing. And this time you won't be doing it alone.

The book never asks you to take anything on faith, and neither does the Course. Practice something for a week, notice what happens, and bring what you noticed to your POD and to Tuesday's session. What proves this works isn't anything I say. It's what you recognize in your own experience.



Where the Thirteen Weeks Go

Part One, Awakening (November into early December).

From passenger to driver. You'll build a daily practice, learn to catch yourself on autopilot while it's running, and get your first real taste of leading from Divine Awareness instead of being led around by your conditioning. The One Thing you bring into the Course is what you'll be practicing on.

Part Two, The Framework (December into January).

From "this is just who I am" to "this is how I was programmed." The Identity Triangle, the Stories that wrote your Beliefs, the Parts that have been protecting you all this time, and the Five Rs that return them to wholeness under your own leadership. This is where your One Thing starts to make sense, and where the work gets personal.

Part Three, Conscious Creation (January into February).

From understanding to living to authoring. Your relationships, your decisions, the life you choose on purpose. This is the payoff the whole book builds toward. The last chapter is a send-off, and by then the framework won't be something you read about. It'll be something you've been living for three months.



What You Can Expect

I won't promise you an outcome. The book doesn't either, and you're the only one who can judge what happened in you. What I can tell you is what the thirteen weeks are built to give you the chance to do, and the one thing all three legs of the stool were built for, because it's the only outcome I've ever cared about: change that holds.

To know your One Thing from the inside. Where it came from, which Part has been running it, and what it feels like to Pause and Return when it fires instead of getting carried off by it. To have a daily practice that's yours, not borrowed from someone. To have sat in a small room with people who told you the truth and heard yours. And to have carried the framework into at least one relationship and one decision that mattered, and seen for yourself what changed.

Some of that may happen in week three and some of it not until week twelve. Some of it will happen after the Course is over, and that's how it's supposed to work.

What You Can Expect

What This Is, And What It Isn't

This is self-leadership, not self-improvement. You were never broken, and you'll never hear me say otherwise. Your conditioning, the Stories you wrote when you were small and the Beliefs that grew out of them, can be reprogrammed, and that's work only you can do. I'm not the expert on your life. You are. My job is to walk alongside you, hold the structure, and point at what's already there.

This also isn't therapy, and it's not a substitute for it. The Course goes to real places, and real things can come up. If you're working with a therapist or counselor, good. Keep going, and bring what fits. If at any point you need more support than a class and a POD can give you, I would much rather you use [If You Need Help](#) than go quiet on us.

One more thing before you go on. Think of the one person you'd want beside you for something like this. Your partner. Your closest friend. Hold onto that name while you read. I'll come back to it.

Back to: [Start Here](#)

Your One Thing



Your One Thing doesn't have to be bigger or harder than anyone else's to matter. This is your life, and there's no ranking it against the room.

When I interviewed 160 people about their self-limiting beliefs, 158 of them could name theirs. You may have heard me say that before. What I haven't said as often is that almost everyone had one that stood above the rest. The one that was costing them the most. The one they'd been circling for years.

You have one too. It may be the reason you're reading this. It might be a self-limiting belief. It might be a Part. It might be a persona you've been wearing so long it feels like you. You may have your own name for it, or no name for it yet. What you call it doesn't matter. What matters is that you bring it with you, because every chapter, every practice, every POD conversation gets to be about this one thing in your real life, not about the framework in the abstract.

Your One Thing

Think of what this pattern has asked you to give up. The conversation you avoid. The decision you keep postponing. The part of yourself you make smaller to keep someone else comfortable. Your One Thing matters because your life is on the other side of it. You don't have to know how to change it yet. You only have to be willing to see it clearly and begin.

The Two Essays

The prompts, the minimums, and the dates are in Your One Thing at the front. Here's what's behind them. Week One has no chapter, so it has the first essay instead, and I want it before we meet because I want to know what's in the room before we start. The third part, who you are when it no longer runs you, is the one to make big: not who you think you should be, but who you really are, in your own words, when this thing has lost its grip. If it turns into 3,000 words, let it. For a lot of people, the second and third parts will be the first time any of this has ever been written down, and that alone can move something.

Your One Thing

The closing essay matches the first one part for part, so you can put the two side by side. Honesty is the whole point. A true "it's still here, and here's what's different about how I meet it" is worth more than a victory lap, and a "who I am now" that doesn't match the person you wrote about in October is worth reading closely, not fixing.

One measuring stick, if you want it. Chapter 4 names the Three Freedoms: Freedom of Mind, Freedom of Action, and Freedom from Emotional Dependency. As you write, hold your One Thing up to each one. Can you see it now, where in October you were it? Do you choose, where it used to choose for you? Do you still need anyone's approval for it to be okay? You don't have to build the essay around those questions, or answer them at all. But keep this close:

I notice. I return. I choose. I overflow.

That is the whole practice in four simple sentences, and the closing essay is a good place to feel which of those are yours now.

You don't have to wait until November to start. If you already know your One Thing, start writing. If you don't, that's what October is for. Read, notice, and let it show itself. It will.

Back to: [Start Here](#)

How the Course Works

The book is the Course Book. Every chapter's Reflective Questions and Practice are the week's work, exactly as printed. What the Course adds is three things the book can't give you on its own: a live session with me every week, a POD of about six that meets every week, and one place where all of it lives. The rhythm is in [Your Weekly Rhythm](#). This is what's behind it.

The Tuesday Session

Ninety minutes. The first sixty are on the chapter. The last thirty are open Q&A, and that's where the best conversations tend to happen. If you have to leave after the first hour, catch the Q&A on the recording. Camera on whenever you can manage it. This is a class, not a webinar, and it's a lot better when we can see each other.

Both parts are recorded, and the recording goes up in that week's lesson in the Course space, usually the same day. Recordings stay inside the class. They can be watched but not downloaded, and I'm asking every one of you never to record or share them. Your face and your voice are on them, and so is everyone else's, so treat what you hear the way you'd want yours treated.

How the Course Works

The Written Work

The minimum of 100 words per question, and per Practice, is there because a sentence lets you off the hook and a hundred words doesn't. Reading your classmates' answers to the same questions is part of the work, and you'll recognize yourself in them more often than you'd expect. When something someone wrote lands for you, say so, even if it's one sentence. What's shared with whom, and what's yours to keep, is in Privacy and Support.



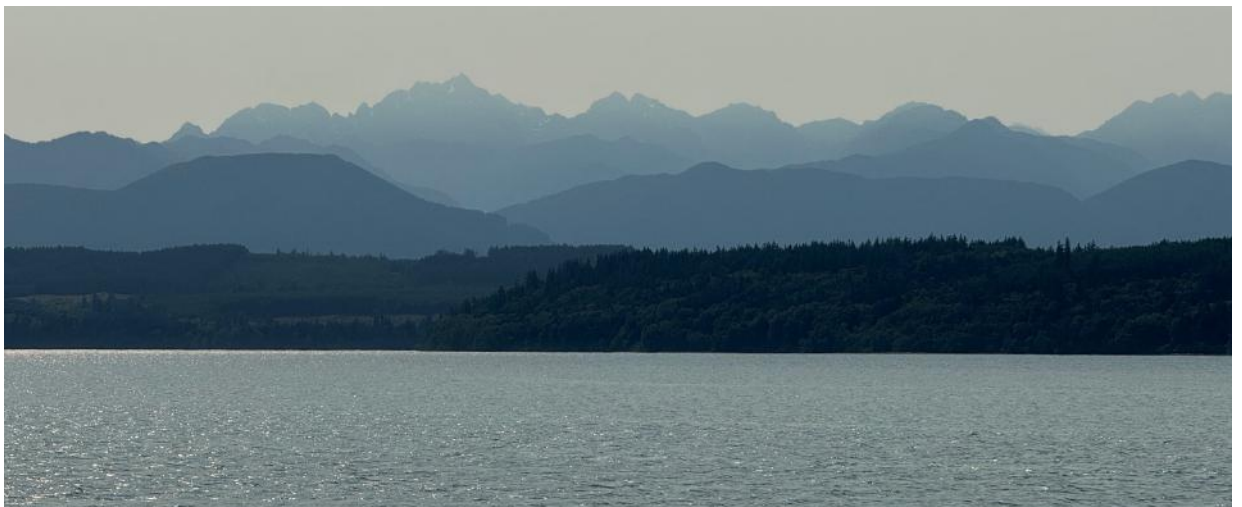
Your Morning and Evening Practice

The Course asks you to make two appointments with yourself every day. One in the morning, before you step into the day. One in the evening, before you go to bed. This is where the practice comes alive.

What you do in those appointments is yours to choose. Journaling. Meditation. Quiet reflection. Yoga. A walk or a run. Something from the Practice Guide at the back of the book. What matters is that you enter it on purpose: you give yourself the time to be present, to practice being in Divine Awareness, and to experience it for yourself. This is where the muscle gets built.

The commitment is to both, a morning practice and an evening one. The form belongs to you, and the two don't have to look alike.

Start small. A ten-minute routine you actually do every day is worth more than a sixty-minute routine you never get around to. Choose something that fits the life you have and that you're willing to come back to tomorrow.



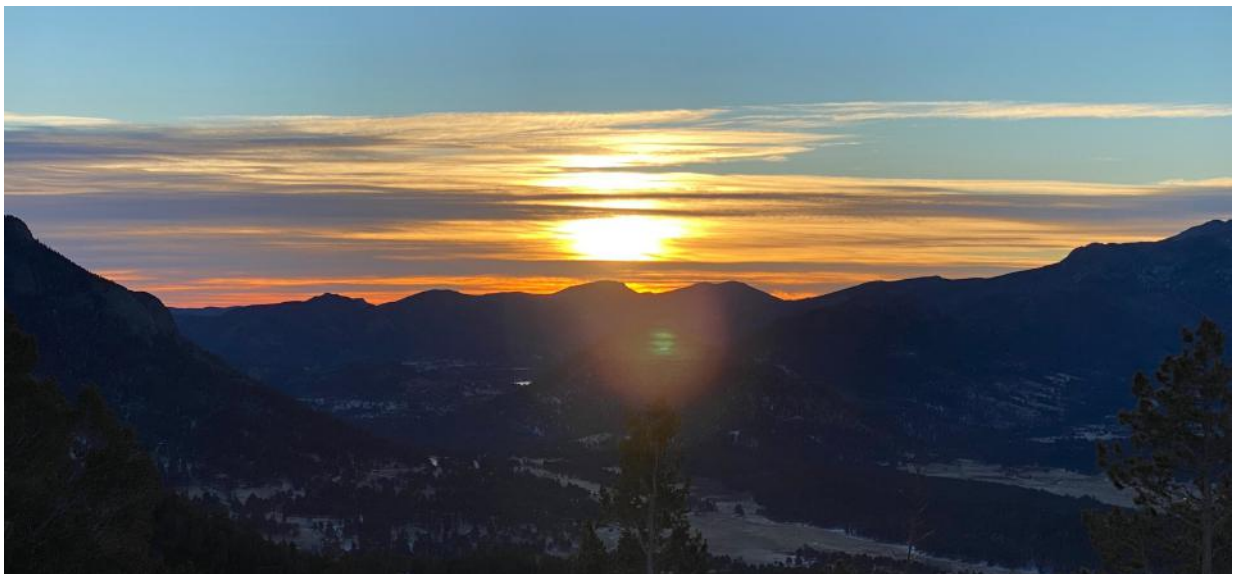
Your Morning and Evening Practice

Over the Course, let it develop on its own. You may want more time. You may find a different activity brings you into presence more fully. You may find that something simple keeps giving you exactly what you need. There's no target length and no requirement to keep adding more. Pay attention to your own experience and let your intuition guide you.

If you miss a morning or an evening, begin again at the next one. You don't owe yourself a longer session to make up for it. Returning is what you're practicing.

We'll set up your morning and evening routines together in Session 1. As the weeks go on, bring what you're discovering to your POD: what helps you get present, what gets in the way, and what you're learning by coming back.

The chapter changes every week. These two appointments stay with you for the whole Course, and, I hope, long after it.



Making Room for the Work

Three hours of meetings a week: ninety minutes on Tuesday and ninety in your POD. On top of that, give yourself time for the chapter, your written answers, and reading what your classmates post.

Your morning and evening routines are part of the commitment too, and their length is yours to choose. For a sense of scale, ten minutes each morning and evening comes to two hours and twenty minutes a week, before any reading or writing. That's an example, not a target.

It's a real commitment, aimed at how you live the rest of your life. Make room for it before we start, and give yourself extra time for the two essays.

Reaching Me

Once you're in, the Course space in Ask Althea is the front door. Post there, or message me there. When your question is one other people have too, the whole class gets the answer. Email is the second door, for anything private, and the door to use before you've registered: phil@askalthea.community. Expect a reply within two days. If it can't wait, say so in the subject line.

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Your POD



Six people, give or take one, including you. I build PODs around a shared schedule, with five members at minimum and seven at most. During the first two weeks, you can ask to move if the time isn't working, and I'll do my best to find a seat that fits. After that, your POD stays together for the rest of the Course. When this Guidebook says "your six," it means your POD. Your POD is where the Course stops being something you're taking and turns into something you're doing, with people who see you do it. By February your six will know your One Thing better than most people in your life do, and they'll have watched what happened to it. A book can't give you that, and neither can I. Only a POD can.

Your POD

What A POD Is For

Four things, and they're not negotiable: connection, confidentiality, non-judgment, support. You'll notice what isn't on the list. Advice. Fixing. Diagnosing each other's Parts. Your POD isn't a place to get improved. It's a place to be seen while you do your own work, and to see other people doing theirs. If someone asks for your take, give it. If they don't, your job is to listen.

How PODs Are Formed

I form them from the scheduling form, by time zone and availability first, so every POD has a day and an hour its members can keep. If you register with your partner or a close friend, you'll be in the same Course and different PODs, on purpose. You'll compare notes at your own kitchen table. In the POD, you get people with no history with you and no stake in your story, and that's where the honesty comes from.

PODs are announced at Session 1, and your POD meets for the first time that same week. Your POD's Zoom link lives in your POD space, and it's the same link every week.

Everyone in your POD is on a different journey. You're there to listen and support, not to compare progress or decide what someone else's experience should mean.

Your POD

The Ninety Minutes

Ninety minutes. Cameras on; it's a small room, and if that's hard for you, talk to your POD. Never recorded. Here's how we'll spend the ninety minutes.

3 MINUTES PAUSE	70 MINUTES ROUND	10 MINUTES REFLECT	7 MINUTES CLOSE
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Open together with a Sacred Pause. Hand on heart, one breath, *I am here*. Three minutes to settle in.

Then a round. The seventy minutes are shared equally among everyone there, about twelve minutes each when six are present. Each turn is uninterrupted: where your One Thing showed up this week, and what the chapter's practice did or didn't do. It is longer than it sounds, and the silence after someone finishes is part of their time. Let it sit. The time is theirs until they say they're done with it; then whatever is left of their turn goes to the conversation.

Then the chapter's Reflective Questions, as open conversation, for about ten minutes. Whichever one the room needs.

Close with one sentence each: what you're taking into the week. Seven minutes.



Your POD

The Week One meeting has no chapter, so the round is just this: introduce yourself, then say your One Thing out loud. You've just written it. Saying it to your POD is the next step, and for some of you it'll be the first time you ever have.

Leading Your POD

The host rotates every week, starting with the first name on your roster, so over thirteen weeks everyone leads about twice. The host's job is the shape and the clock: open the Pause, divide the seventy minutes evenly among the people present (11 minutes 40 seconds each with six, 10 with seven, 14 with five), bring the question, and end on time. Ending on time is part of the commitment; everyone in the room planned their day around it. The host doesn't teach, doesn't summarize, and doesn't fix. Hold the structure and let the POD do the work. That's self-leadership in a small room.

Your Commitment To Your Six

Ten of thirteen is a floor, not a target. Your POD only works if the chairs are full, and disappearing is the one thing that breaks one. Your six are trusting you with the thing that's been running their lives. Trust them with yours.

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The Ask Althea Community



The name comes from a song, and it stayed because of what it means. Althea is a Greek name, from *althainein*, to heal. The community is for people healing from what their Stories, their Beliefs, and their Parts have been costing them, and changing in the process. To us, Althea is the healing wisdom already in you. The framework is the ground the community is built on.

The community is free, and it opens to everyone on Monday, November 2. The class gets in early: your invitation arrives Monday, October 26, or within a day of registering if that's later. The Course lives inside it: your Course space holds the thirteen weekly lessons, each session's recording, the place you post your weekly work, and your POD's own space. It's on the web at members.askalthea.community and in the Mighty Networks app, and the app is worth installing, because most of the week's work happens in small moments, not at a desk.

Rachelle



If you've read MIND CONTROL, you've already met Rachelle, whether you know it or not. The book is dedicated to her. Its last page names her.

The Ask Althea Community

The framework in MIND CONTROL took shape over years of conversation between the two of us. She didn't take it on faith. She took it into her own life, where the patterns were oldest, and watched what happened. Her story is on the Ask Althea site, in her own words, next to mine, at askalthea.community/your-path. I hope you'll read it.

The dedication calls her my mirror and my whetstone, and I chose those words carefully. She shows me myself, kindly and without flinching, and she sharpens me. I'm better for it, every day.

I'll be guiding you through the Course. In the community, you'll find both of us. Rachelle and I co-founded Ask Althea, and we hold that space together. "I'll be there with you in it," she wrote on the site, and she meant it.



The Ask Althea Community

The Culture

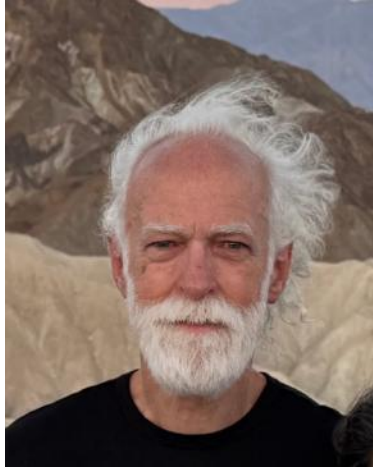
A few things, and they hold everywhere in the community, not just in your POD. Share generously. Your story may be exactly what someone else needs to read today. Speak from your own experience, not about other people's. No advice unless someone asks for it. Nothing anyone shares here leaves here. No selling, no recruiting, no politics, and no sports. And be kind. That one isn't optional.

Bring The Ones You Love

The community grows one invitation at a time, and yours counts for more than anything I could post. When someone in your life asks what you've been doing on Tuesdays, send them in. Rachelle and I will be there to welcome them. The book is the best first step. The community is free, and it's where the practice keeps going long after the Course ends.

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How to Show Up



What I Am, And What I'm Not

Nobody can do this for you, and I won't try. The book puts the framework in your hands. The Course gives you thirteen weeks, a class, and a POD to practice it in. What happens inside you over those weeks is yours to lead.

You aren't students, I'm not a teacher, and I'm certainly not a guru. I'm your guide. I'll walk beside you and point things out. What you see when you look is yours. If something I say doesn't match your experience, your experience wins. Say so, in the session or in your POD.

How to Show Up

One more thing, and everything else stands on it. You are on a journey no one else is on. Not your partner, not the people in your POD, not me. There's nobody to compare yourself to, because there's nobody on your path but you. That's why comparison is a dead end and judgment has nothing to stand on. And it's why **you are always the final authority in the Course**: no one else can be. We're not here to measure each other. We're here to witness each other.

I still slip into my old stories, by the way. Every day. I'm just a lot quicker at noticing now, and the returning is the practice.

Think of it this way. The book puts the framework in your hands. In the Course you're practicing the framework day by day, and the practice is your life.



When Resistance Shows Up



It will, and probably right around the time the work gets personal. You'll be busier that week than usual. The chapter will seem obvious. The POD will feel like a lot. You might notice yourself deciding the Course isn't really for you after all.

A lot of the time, that's a Part doing its job, protecting you from change the way it always has, and you'll know it by its timing. But not always. Sometimes you're worn out, or your life changed, or this isn't right for you right now. Pause long enough to tell the difference, and bring the question to your POD or to me. Either answer is allowed.

When Resistance Shows Up

If it's resistance, here's what to do about it. Make the commitment now, while it's easy, and write it down. When the week comes, use whatever willpower it takes to get to the chair. Willpower is a good tool for getting to the chair. It's just not what makes the change hold. And once you're in the chair, don't fight the resistance. Pause. Return. Then bring it to your POD, because resistance isn't a detour from the work. It's the work showing up right on schedule, and it's usually your One Thing in disguise.

What This May Do To Your Life

When you change, the people around you feel it. Some of them will love who's showing up. Some will push back. Often it's only that the old you was easier to predict. Sometimes it's something worth hearing. The book is honest that awakening costs something, and so am I. Some relationships deepen, some rearrange, and a few don't survive the change. Chapter 10 is where we meet all of that head on. Until then, go gently with the people who knew you before.

How to Show Up

Bring Your Person

Think of the person you'd want beside you for this. Your partner. Your closest friend. The best thing you can do before November 3 is invite that person to take the Course with you. The person who sees you most is the person whose relationship with you will change most over these thirteen weeks, and when you're both doing the work at the same time, with the same vocabulary, the change is something you share instead of something you have to explain. You'll be in the same Course and different PODs, by design. You do the work beside each other, and the POD work with people who have no history with you.

They get the same free seat, as long as they have their own copy of the book and register by Friday, October 30, while seats remain. Send them this link today, while you're thinking about it, or register together:

firehorse.press/course

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What Graduating Opens

Graduating from the Course means something, and it should. The requirements are in What You'd Be Saying Yes To. This is what's on the other side of them.

First, the thing itself. Thirteen weeks of practice, with people watching, on the one thing that's been running your life. Most people never do that once.

Second, the retreats. We're building them now: three full days and four nights on site, one day for each Part of the book, twenty-four people at a time. They're open only to graduates of the Course. No exceptions, and no other way in.

Third, a seat at the table. The founding class is saying yes before anyone can tell them what the Course is like, and if you join, that's you. You'll hear about everything first, and I'll ask your opinion before I ask anyone else's. And the Course feedback form you fill out at the end is where that starts: what the founding class tells me shapes every class after it.

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The Price of a Free Seat

One thing gave me pause about making this run free. People tend to value what they've paid for, and a free thing is easy to set down. Most of us have done it, with a course we signed up for on a good day and never opened.

So let me be clear about what this seat is. In January, the same seat costs \$997 (itself a fraction of its fair value). The founding class's seat is given, not discounted, because you'd be coming early, before anyone could tell you what the Course is like, and helping me build it. That makes it a gift, and a gift has a different kind of price. You pay for this one with your word.

What the word covers: you show up on Tuesdays, live or on the recording. You do the week's work. You keep your morning and evening practice. You sit in your POD every week you possibly can, and you don't disappear. You graduate. That's the price, and you keep it one week at a time, alongside the rest of your POD keeping theirs.



The Price of a Free Seat

I'm asking because of what an empty chair does. A POD with one person missing is a worse POD for everyone else that week. A class where half the people drop out by December is a worse class for everyone who stayed. And there's one more thing you should know. This class is going to fill. There are ninety-eight seats, and I expect to be turning people away by the end of October. So a yes to you is a no to someone else who wanted in. I'm not saying that to sell you anything. Nobody's buying. I'm saying it because it's true. And since this is the first class, what happens in this room is what every class after it gets built from. You wouldn't just be taking the Course. You'd be building it.



The Price of a Free Seat

So here's the ask, and I think it's a fair one. Now you know exactly what you'd be saying yes to. Thirteen Tuesdays, a POD every week for ninety minutes, the weekly work, a morning and evening practice, two essays, and your word. If that's a yes, register by Friday, October 30, while there's still a seat, and fill out the POD scheduling form that comes with your confirmation. That's your "I'm in," and it's the one thing I need from you before I can build the PODs. Your One Thing essay, due November 1, is the second half of the same yes.

If you read all of that and know this isn't your season, don't take a seat. Read the book, keep this guide, and come in January. If it is your season, I'm not asking for perfection. I'm asking you not to disappear. That's all of it, and it's the first act of self-leadership in the Course.

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If You Need Help

The Course is self-leadership, not therapy. It's a place for practice, not treatment. The work goes to real places, and for most people that's exactly the point. But if what comes up is heavier than a class and a POD can hold, I'd rather you reach for more support than go quiet, and no one here will think less of you for it.

If you're struggling right now, you don't have to carry it alone. In the US, call or text 988 to reach the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, any hour. Outside the US, findahelpline.com lists the free, confidential lines in your country.

If you're already working with a therapist or counselor, keep going. Tell them what you're doing here. Bring to them what belongs with them, and bring to the Course what belongs here.

And if something in the Course itself isn't working, in your POD, in the sessions, in you, tell me. Message me in the Course space or email phil@askalthea.community. I'd rather hear it in Week Three than find out in Week Thirteen.

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Questions

What does the Course cost? Nothing, for the founding class. The book isn't included; you'll need your own copy. Future terms won't be free; the January term is \$997.

Do I need the book before I register? Yes. I wrote MIND CONTROL as the Course Book, so it's also the truest preview of the Course: if the book speaks to you, the Course will. It isn't included with your seat. Get your copy first, then register. You don't need to finish it before registering, but read the Preface, Orientation, and Part One before November 3 at the very least. How to Get a Seat

Is this spiritual? Religious? Spiritual, deeply so, and not religious. It welcomes any faith or none at all.

Is this therapy? No. It's self-leadership, practiced in company. If You Need Help

What if I can't make Tuesdays at noon Eastern? Watch the recording, all ninety minutes, before your POD meets. The POD is the meeting you have to be at live, and it's on a day and time your POD sets together.

Questions

Can I take it with my partner or a friend? Yes, and I hope you will. Same Course, different PODs, on purpose. Bring your person

Can I switch PODs? In the first two weeks, if the time doesn't work, tell me and I'll do my best to move you. After that, PODs are set for the term.

What about the retreats? Three full days and four nights on site, twenty-four people, open only to graduates of the Course. Dates and places when they're ready.

What if I can't commit to all of it? Then this isn't your run, and that's okay. The next term starts in January.

What if the Course isn't for me? Then leave with my thanks, no explanation needed. Just tell your POD first, so they aren't waiting for you.

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This Is the Beginning



Thirteen weeks isn't the end of anything. It's the first stretch of a road you'll be on for the rest of your life, and the point of the Course is that you'll know how to walk it.

What continues: the daily practice, which is yours now. The community, which doesn't close when the Course ends. Your POD can keep meeting on its own, and I'd bet most of them will. And The Ritual of Return, a weekly letter: one pause, one return, every Sunday, at firehorse.press/letters.

What's coming: the retreats, for graduates, and future terms of the Course, for the people you're going to want to send.

The book ends with a chapter called The Rest Is Yours. So does the Course. I hope to see you on November 3.



MIND CONTROL

The Course · The Guidebook

Founding Class · October 2026

Get the book, then register by October 30,
while seats remain.

firehorse.press/course

members.askalthea.community

firehorse.press/letters

With gratitude and Love.