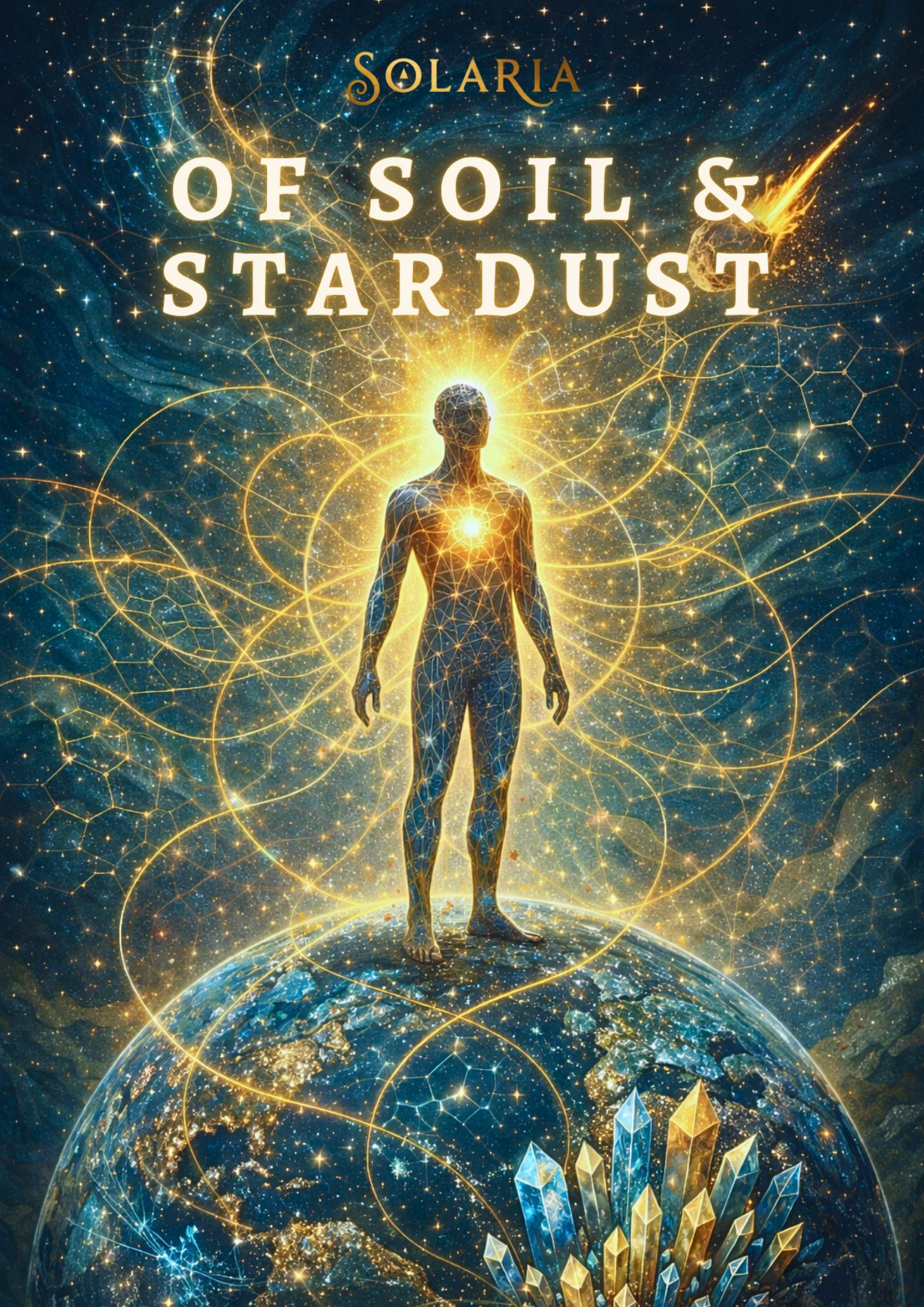
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OF SOIL & STARDUST



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Of Soil and Stardust

Remembering What We Are Made Of

By Amanda Sears



“The elements and energies that shape life are often felt but unseen — minerals are the visible, tangible thread that connects us to the Earth, the cosmos, and each other.”

— Amanda Sears

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A MESSAGE FROM THE EARTH

I am a creation of energy and form… In me lives the seen and unseen memory of everything you are and everything you come from.

Through minerals, soil, water, air and all living things great and small,
I weave infinite physical threads that connect you to all things — to the ground beneath your feet, the stars above, the bodies you inhabit, and to each other.

While energy and elements shape the unseen,
the material world gives it form and makes it tangible.

It is the visible, touchable, living record of life's story — formed in my depths, flowing through my waters, carried in your blood, growing from my soil and scattered across the cosmos.

You build with my materials.
You are nourished by my gifts.
You are made of me.

Yet in your modern world, it is your disconnection from this symbiotic bond — with the Earth, the Cosmos and each other — that underlies so much of the disharmony in our world.

I invite you to remember who you are and where you come from.

To rediscover the harmony that comes from living in relationship with the natural world, and to recognise the mineral kingdom as one of the many bridges between the seen and unseen, the felt and the forgotten.

To remind you that you are not separate from me — you are the Earth, walking.

I call you into a deeper understanding of your place in the story of life.
And through that understanding, your path toward a more harmonious, beautiful and radiant future will become illuminated.

Through these pages, I invite you to experience the world differently — to see beyond the familiar, feel the connections that weave through all things, and rediscover your rightful place within my living story.

Come closer. Look deeper. Remember what it means to belong.

Chapter 1 — The Bridge Remembered

You are part of something *ancient* and *alive*.
Not separate from the Earth — but shaped *by* her.
Not distant from the stars — but *made* of them.

Beneath the hum of modern life, there is a deeper, ancient song. It pulses through the elemental minerals dissolved as ions in your blood, the crystalline structures within your bones, and the mineral-rich water flowing through your cells — and even the moisture in your breath, part of the same ancient water cycle that has travelled through rivers, oceans and skies.

It is the memory of *origin* — encoded in stone, soil, water and stardust.

Minerals, in their crystalline form, offer a tangible way to experience the interconnectedness of life — an ever-changing thread woven through all that is. They are not simply objects in the ground or curiosities on a shelf, but part of the great exchange between energy and form, carrying the elements that move through the Earth, the living world and our own bodies.

They carry weight. They carry charge. They carry *story*.

In the Earth, minerals hold the history of mountains, oceans, volcanoes and time.
In the human body, mineral elements help regulate our hearts, build our bones and support the intricate processes that sustain life.
In the cosmos, the elements that make up our world and our bodies have ancient origins, forged through the lives and deaths of stars and scattered across the universe before becoming part of the worlds we inhabit.

We are not observers of this interconnected web. We are *woven into it.*

We are not simply made from the Earth. We are continually exchanging with her.

Water moves between oceans, atmosphere, soil and living bodies. Elements travel through rock, soil, plants, animals and the food we eat. The air we breathe connects us to forests, oceans and distant places. Nothing exists entirely apart. We are participants in the great cycles that sustain life, shaped by them and continually nourished through them.

And yet, in our speed, in our separation, in our forgetting — most have lost touch with this truth. We've extracted without gratitude. Consumed without reverence. We've forgotten that every step we take is on the body of a living planet — and that her body is our body.

This disconnection has not only wounded the Earth; it can also leave us feeling disconnected from our own place within the living world. Feelings of rootlessness and overwhelm can remind us how deeply our wellbeing and sense of belonging are intertwined with the natural world.

But this is a book of *remembering*. *Of Soil and Stardust* is not a textbook. It is not a spiritual manual. It is a *bridge* — a place where geology meets poetry, science meets soul, and the practical meets the primordial.

It is a quiet invitation to pause, to hold a stone, to feel the ground beneath your feet, to notice the water flowing through your body and the air moving through your lungs. To feel the wind in your hair and the sun on your skin — and to let yourself remember a truth you have never been separate from:

> *You are not made of metaphor. You are made of Earth. And Earth is made of stars.*

✧ A Thread of Wonder

The water within your body is part of Earth's ancient water cycle. Water molecules continually travel between oceans, rivers, clouds, soil, plants, animals and people. Some of the water you drink today may have passed through countless living things and landscapes over immense stretches of geological time.

The water in you is not separate from the water of the world.
It is part of the same great cycle.

Chapter 2 — What We’re Made Of

You are not just flesh and feeling.
You are scaffolding and spark.
You are a living expression of the Earth — breathing, moving, remembering.

The human body is an extraordinary arrangement of the natural elements. Water, carbon, oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen and a collection of mineral elements come together to form our bones, blood, tissues, cells and the intricate systems that sustain life.

We are built from the same fundamental materials that shape the world around us.

- **Water** forms the living medium within which our cells function.
- **Carbon** provides the framework for the organic molecules of life.
- **Oxygen** supports the processes that release energy within our cells.
- **Nitrogen** helps form the proteins and genetic material that make us who we are.

Mineral elements add another layer to this living architecture. They help build our bones and teeth, carry oxygen, activate enzymes, regulate fluids and allow electrical signals to travel through our nervous system.

And beneath it all, the body is alive with movement — water flowing, molecules exchanging, ions shifting, electrical impulses travelling and energy transforming.

We are not static structures. We are living systems, continually exchanging matter and energy with the world around us.

The Building Blocks of Life

Element or Process	Its role within us	Its connection to Earth
Oxygen	Cellular respiration, water and tissues	Atmosphere, water and photosynthesis
Carbon	Foundation of organic molecules	Soil, atmosphere and living matter
Hydrogen	Water and organic molecules	Earth's water cycle
Nitrogen	Proteins and DNA	Atmosphere and soil

Element or Process	Its role within us	Its connection to Earth
Water	Cells, blood, tissues and transport	Rivers, oceans, rain and groundwater
Organic molecules	Proteins, fats, carbohydrates and DNA	Elements gathered through food, water and air
Electrical activity	Nerve signals, muscle movement and heartbeat	Movement of charged particles and ions
Magnetic fields	Tiny fields produced by electrical activity	Part of the wider physical world of electromagnetism

Mineral Elements Within Us

Element	Role in the body
Calcium	Bones and teeth, muscle contraction, nerve signalling
Magnesium	Energy production, enzyme activity, muscle and nerve function
Potassium	Fluid balance, nerve impulses and heartbeat
Sodium	Fluid balance, nerve transmission and muscle function
Phosphorus	Bones and teeth, DNA and cellular energy
Chloride	Fluid balance, electrical activity and stomach acid
Iron	Oxygen transport in blood and energy metabolism
Zinc	Immune function, wound healing and DNA synthesis
Copper	Iron metabolism, connective tissue and nervous system function
Selenium	Antioxidant enzymes and thyroid function
Iodine	Production of thyroid hormones
Manganese	Enzyme activity, bone formation and metabolism
Sulphur	Part of several amino acids and proteins
Molybdenum	Supports enzymes involved in metabolism

These are some of the essential mineral elements that help sustain human life. Many are needed in relatively large quantities, while others are required only in tiny amounts. Their importance is not measured by their size or abundance, but by the roles they play.

Our bodies are also alive with electricity.

Every thought, sensation and movement involves electrical and chemical signalling. Nerve cells communicate through electrical impulses and chemical messengers. Our hearts generate electrical signals that coordinate each beat. Even the movement of minerals such as sodium, potassium, calcium and chloride across cell membranes helps create the electrical activity that makes life possible.

These electrical currents also produce tiny magnetic fields around the body — measurable expressions of the activity taking place within us.

The body is not simply a collection of materials. It is a dynamic interplay of matter, energy and information.

Beyond What We Know

And yet, what we understand today is only part of the story.

The human body remains one of nature's most extraordinary mysteries. With every discovery, we learn more about the intricate relationships between matter, energy and life — from the electrical impulses travelling through our nervous system to the subtle magnetic fields generated by our heart and brain.

We are still exploring how living systems communicate, how cells respond to their surroundings, how organisms sense and interact with the world, and how the countless processes within a body work together to sustain life.

There is so much more to discover about the ways we are connected to the natural world. Some of these relationships are measurable and increasingly understood; others remain questions for future exploration.

Perhaps this is part of the wonder of being human: we are both the explorers and the mystery. The more deeply we look within ourselves, the more clearly we begin to recognise the extraordinary patterns, forces and relationships that connect us to the world beyond us.

What we know is remarkable. What remains to be discovered invites us to keep looking.

To understand this is to recognise that the Earth is not merely where we live. She is part of what we are.

The water in our cells belongs to the same planetary cycle as the oceans and rain. The carbon in our tissues has travelled through plants, soil, atmosphere and living things. The minerals within our bones and blood are part of the same elemental story written into the rocks beneath our feet.

To nourish your body becomes an act of Earth-honouring.
And to care for the soil is to care for your own inner terrain.

You are not *on* the Earth — you are *of* it.

Formed by her elements.
Held within her cycles.
Alive with her memory.

✧ A Thread of Wonder

The magnesium in your body and the magnesium at the heart of a green leaf are the same chemical element.

In plants, magnesium sits at the centre of the chlorophyll molecule, helping capture the light energy that drives photosynthesis. In your body, magnesium supports hundreds of enzyme reactions, including those involved in producing and using energy.

One element. Different expressions. A shared planetary story.

Chapter 3 — From Rock to Root

The minerals in your body didn't appear by magic — they travelled, transformed, and were given.

What begins as bedrock eventually becomes nourishment. This is the mineral offering — the slow and intricate journey from mountain to marrow, from stone to sustenance.

The same elements that form cliffs and crystals can, over immense stretches of time, become part of the food that feeds your cells.

Stone to Soil

Mountains crumble.
Not as a failure, but as a gift.

Through wind, water, temperature and time, rocks break down into smaller particles — a process called weathering. As minerals dissolve and transform, elements are released into the surrounding environment, gradually contributing to the soils that support life.

Volcanic ash settles and weathers into new fertile ground.
Quartz slowly releases tiny amounts of dissolved silica.
Feldspar breaks down, contributing elements such as potassium and helping form clay minerals.

What was once solid stone becomes part of a living landscape.

This is *mineral alchemy*: from hardness to nourishment, from deep time to living breath.

Volcanoes, Oceans and the Hidden Circulatory System

Earth moves her minerals through vast and interconnected processes.

- **Volcanoes** bring material from deep within the planet to the surface, where lava and ash weather into new landscapes and soils.
- **Oceans** dissolve and distribute elements, carrying them through currents and making them available to marine organisms.
- **Tectonic plates** uplift and expose ancient mineral formations, continually reshaping the landscapes around us.
- **Rainfall and rivers** weather rock, transport dissolved elements and sediments, and redistribute them across watersheds and ecosystems.

These natural flows are part of Earth's great circulatory system — moving elements, nutrients and matter across the skin of the world.

Soil, Microbes and Mineral Access

But minerals are not always available to life simply because they are present.

Healthy soil is a living web. Fungi, bacteria, microscopic organisms and plant roots all participate in the gradual transformation and movement of nutrients.

Some fungi extend their networks through the soil, helping plants access nutrients such as phosphorus. Certain bacteria and fungi release substances that help dissolve minerals and make elements more accessible. Plant roots also release compounds that interact with the surrounding soil.

Without these countless relationships, much of the mineral wealth held within rock and soil would remain far less accessible to living organisms.

In this way, life helps life — even beneath the surface.

Minerals in Human Hands

Long before modern industry, minerals were woven into the fabric of human life. They provided the materials for tools, pigments, buildings, medicines, adornment, trade and ceremony.

People learned to recognise the qualities of different stones and earth materials, discovering ways to shape, grind, polish, mix and transform them.

- **Lapis Lazuli** — This deep blue stone was treasured across ancient civilisations, particularly in Mesopotamia and Egypt. It was used in jewellery and decorative objects, and eventually ground to produce the precious blue pigment ultramarine, which became highly valued in art and illuminated manuscripts.

- **Copper** — One of humanity's earliest worked metals, copper was shaped into tools, vessels and ornaments. Ancient Egyptian and Greek medical traditions also used copper preparations in wound care and other treatments. We now understand that copper has antimicrobial properties, although historical remedies varied in their safety and effectiveness.

- **Sulphur** — Known for its distinctive smell and unusual properties, sulphur was used in various ancient fumigation and purification practices. Some Mediterranean traditions burned it as part of ritual cleansing. (Perhaps Rotorua residents are living in a rather naturally blessed place after all!)

- **Salt** — Far more than a seasoning, salt became essential to food preservation, trade and economic life. In some places and periods it was used as a form of payment or currency, and its availability helped shape trade routes, settlements and empires.

- **Obsidian** — This natural volcanic glass can fracture to form exceptionally sharp edges. Across many cultures, including those of Mesoamerica, it was shaped into

cutting tools and blades. Modern experiments have demonstrated that carefully made obsidian edges can be finer than those of conventional steel scalpels.

- **Hematite and Red Ochre** — Iron-rich earth pigments have been used for thousands of years in art, body decoration and burial practices. Red ochre appears in archaeological sites across the world, connecting mineral pigments with some of humanity's oldest known expressions of symbolism and cultural life.

- **Clay** — Used for pottery, construction, sculpture and countless everyday objects, clay has also featured in traditional cultural practices involving its consumption, known as geophagy. While some communities have associated particular clays with nourishment or cleansing, their safety and health benefits vary, and some can contain harmful contaminants.

- **Jade and Pounamu** — Across cultures, jade has been treasured for its strength, beauty and symbolic significance. In China, nephrite and jadeite have long histories in carving, ornamentation and cultural traditions. In Aotearoa, pounamu holds a particularly significant place in Māori culture. It has been fashioned into tools, weapons and adornments, and treasured as taonga — objects carrying ancestry, identity, relationships and mana. Its significance continues today.

Minerals have been much more than raw materials. They have been tools, pigments, treasures, symbols, sources of livelihood and expressions of cultural identity.

Our relationship with the mineral world is written not only into the rocks beneath our feet, but into the history and future of human civilisation.

Into the Body

The mineral journey continues through the living world.

As rocks weather and their elements enter the soil and water, plants take up the nutrients they need through their roots. Animals obtain these elements by eating plants or other animals, and humans receive them through food and water.

Stone → Soil → Plant → Animal → Human → Earth again

It is a cycle of exchange. A gift that circles. A remembrance that returns.

Whether you're eating leafy greens, seaweed or drinking spring water, you are receiving elements that have travelled through the natural world — some of which have spent immense stretches of time within the rocks and soils of our planet.

And when living things return to the Earth, their organic matter is broken down and recycled, helping replenish the soil and continue the cycle.

The mineral journey is not simply biological — it is geological, ecological and cultural. It is part of the ongoing relationship between Earth and life.

✧ A Thread of Wonder

A single teaspoon of healthy soil can contain billions of microorganisms.

Bacteria, fungi and other microscopic life forms work within this hidden world, helping break down organic matter, transform nutrients and support the intricate relationships between soil and plants.

Beneath our feet lies a living community, quietly participating in the nourishment of almost everything we eat.

As you eat, you remember.
As you grow, you return.

The mineral journey is not just biological — it is mythic.

It is how Earth feeds you… and how you are made of her love.

Chapter 4 — The Great Mineral Exchange

A single element can wear many faces.

It might be held within the soil beneath your feet, glimmer in a crystal on your shelf, carry current through your smartphone, or move silently through your blood.

This is not coincidence. It is *continuity*.

The elements that make up the Earth, our bodies and the technologies we create belong to the same elemental library. They may appear in entirely different forms, arranged into different structures and serving different purposes, but their origins are part of the same greater story.

A piece of quartz, for example, is made of silicon and oxygen arranged in a crystalline structure. As silica-rich rocks weather and interact with water, tiny amounts of silicon are released into the environment in soluble forms that can be absorbed by the human body. Silicon is found in our bones and connective tissues, where it may contribute to their formation and structure. Highly purified silicon, derived from silica-rich materials, can also be transformed into the semiconductor components used in computers and phones. The same elemental building block appears across the Earth, water, living bodies and technology, expressed through remarkably different forms.

Minerals do not belong to one world. They connect many.

Earth, body and technology all draw upon the materials of the natural world.

Minerals Across Realms

The same elements can be found in geological minerals, incorporated into our bodies and transformed into materials used in modern technology.

Element	In the Body	Mineral Form / Specimen	Used in Technology and Industry
Calcium	Bones, teeth and cell signalling	Calcite, aragonite, apatite	Cement, plaster and glass
Magnesium	Enzyme activity, muscle and nerve function	Magnesite, dolomite	Alloys, electronics and refractory materials
Iron	Oxygen transport and energy metabolism	Hematite, magnetite, pyrite	Steel, magnets and batteries

Element	In the Body	Mineral Form / Specimen	Used in Technology and Industry
Silicon	Found in bones and connective tissues	Quartz, chalcedony	Semiconductors, solar cells and glass
Copper	Enzymes, iron metabolism and nervous system function	Native copper, malachite, azurite	Wiring, circuitry and plumbing
Zinc	Immunity, enzymes and DNA synthesis	Sphalerite	Galvanising, batteries and alloys
Phosphorus	DNA, cell membranes, bones and cellular energy (ATP)	Apatite	Fertilisers and industrial chemicals
Sodium	Fluid balance and nerve signalling	Halite (rock salt)	Industrial chemicals and water treatment
Potassium	Fluid balance, nerve and muscle function	Sylvite, microcline	Fertilisers, glass and chemical production
Sulphur	Sulphur-containing proteins and biological compounds	Native sulphur, pyrite, gypsum	Fertilisers, sulphuric acid and rubber processing

These are just some examples of the many ways elements appear throughout the natural and human-made worlds. The mineral specimens listed are naturally occurring forms containing those elements, while the materials used in technology may undergo considerable processing and transformation.

The elements themselves remain part of the same elemental story, even as their chemical forms and structures change. You do the same.

Breathing in Minerals

We often think of minerals as something we eat or touch — but in some environments, we breathe in tiny mineral particles, too.

The atmosphere is constantly moving matter around the planet. Wind carries dust from deserts and dry landscapes across vast distances. Waves release microscopic salt particles into coastal air. Volcanoes send ash and gases into the atmosphere, while forests release organic aerosols and other natural particles.

You might encounter:

- ★ **Sea-salt aerosols** — Tiny droplets and particles produced by breaking waves, containing salts that include sodium and chloride, alongside smaller amounts of other elements.

- **Windblown mineral dust** — Fine particles from soil, sand and rock, which may contain silica, iron, calcium and other mineral components.

- **Volcanic particles** — Ash and fine geological material released during eruptions, sometimes transported over considerable distances.

- **Natural aerosols** — Microscopic particles released by plants, forests, oceans and other natural processes, contributing to the complex chemistry of the atmosphere.

These particles are part of the movement of matter through air, water and land. Some eventually settle onto the ground or enter waterways, becoming part of the wider environmental cycles.

The air we breathe is not separate from the landscapes around us. It carries traces of the world.

Our lungs are also in constant conversation with the environment, exchanging gases and interacting with the particles we inhale. While the digestive system is our primary route for obtaining essential mineral nutrients, the respiratory system is another point of contact between our bodies and the natural world.

A note on inhaled minerals: Small exposures to natural airborne particles are part of everyday life, but not all are harmless. Fine silica dust, asbestos fibres, certain metal particles and concentrated volcanic ash can cause serious respiratory harm. The lungs are not designed to be a mineral nutrition pathway, and inhaling mineral dust should never be treated as a health practice.

Minerals and Earth's Great Reshaping Forces

Not all mineral movement is gentle.

Volcanoes, earthquakes, floods, landslides and fires are among Earth's most powerful forces for releasing, redistributing and transforming matter.

Though these events can be destructive, they are also part of the geological and ecological processes that continually reshape our planet.

- **Volcanoes** bring molten rock, ash and gases from deep within the Earth to the surface. As volcanic materials cool and weather, they form new geological landscapes and can eventually contribute mineral nutrients to surrounding soils.

- **Earthquakes** fracture and shift the Earth's crust, sometimes exposing buried geological formations, altering groundwater pathways and bringing mineral-bearing fluids through newly opened fractures.

- **Floods** erode landscapes and transport vast quantities of sediment, dissolved elements and nutrients across river systems, floodplains and coastal environments.

- **Landslides** expose and redistribute geological layers, moving rock, soil and sediments from higher ground into valleys and waterways.

- **Fire** transforms landscapes and alters soil chemistry. As vegetation burns, nutrients can be released into ash and returned to the soil, clearing space and creating an environment for new growth.

These events are part of Earth's ongoing transformation — reshaping landscapes, moving minerals and changing the conditions in which life grows.

Recovery takes many forms and unfolds at different speeds. Some ecosystems regenerate remarkably quickly, while others take decades, centuries or longer to recover.

Even after great disruption, life often finds a way to begin again.

The Endless Exchange

Nothing in nature exists in isolation, and nothing remains in one form forever.
The elements that make up a mountain may eventually find their way into the soil, into a plant, into an animal and into us. The air we breathe carries particles from distant landscapes. Rivers transport minerals from high places to the sea. Oceans exchange matter with the atmosphere, while geological forces continually reshape the ground beneath our feet.

Even within our own bodies, matter is constantly moving. We take in elements from food, water and air, incorporate them into living tissues, and release them back into the world through breathing, waste, perspiration and eventually decomposition.

We are not separate from these movements. We are part of them.

The Earth is continually exchanging with the atmosphere, the oceans and every living thing upon her surface. And we are participants in that great unfolding.

What was once stone may become soil. What was once soil may become nourishment. What is now part of us will one day return to the wider world.

Nothing is truly separate. Everything belongs to the exchange.

✧ A Thread of Wonder

Quartz is one of the most abundant minerals in Earth's continental crust, yet it has a remarkable property that has helped shape modern technology.

It is piezoelectric — when pressure is applied to a quartz crystal, a small electrical charge develops across it. Conversely, applying an electrical field can cause the crystal to change shape very slightly.

This predictable relationship between pressure and electricity makes quartz incredibly useful in devices that measure, regulate and keep time.

The same mineral that formed naturally within the Earth can help a watch keep time or an electronic device function with extraordinary precision.

A crystal formed through geological time, now helping us measure time itself.

What a remarkable expression of the relationship between the natural world and human ingenuity.

Chapter 5 — Stardust in Our Bones

Long before Earth was formed, before oceans, mountains and trees — there were stars.

Ancient, radiant, ever-burning.

And as they lived and died, they transformed the simplest elements into new and more complex forms. Through their final moments, stellar winds and extraordinary explosions, they scattered their elemental legacy across the cosmos…

…This is where your story begins.

The Stellar Origin of Minerals

Many of the elements that make up your body — carbon, oxygen, calcium, phosphorus and iron — have ancient stellar origins.

Through the intense temperatures and pressures within stars, nuclear fusion transforms lighter elements into heavier ones. Carbon and oxygen are formed through successive stages of stellar evolution, while elements such as calcium and iron are produced through more complex processes in massive stars and their explosive deaths.

When stars reach the end of their lives, stellar winds and supernova explosions scatter these elements into space. Other elements, particularly some of the heaviest, are forged through extraordinary cosmic events such as collisions between neutron stars.

This ancient material becomes part of vast clouds of gas and dust, eventually gathering into new generations of stars, planets and other celestial bodies.

That dust eventually helped form our Sun.
Our Earth.
And you.

You are not just of this Earth.
You are Earth… made from stars.

Cosmic Dust and Daily Stardust

Even now, space continues to gift material to Earth.

As our planet journeys through the cosmos, travelling with the Solar System around the centre of the Milky Way at approximately 220 kilometres per second — around 792,000 kilometres per hour — it continually encounters tiny particles from comets, asteroids and other ancient cosmic sources.

Much of this cosmic dust burns or transforms as it passes through the atmosphere, but some survives and settles onto the Earth's surface.

NASA estimates that approximately 44,000 kilograms of meteoritic material enters Earth's atmosphere every day. Most of this material is vapourised or transformed during atmospheric entry, but some survives and reaches the surface. Scientists estimate that around 5,200 tonnes of micrometeorites reach Earth's surface each year — a slow and silent rain of material from space.

These microscopic visitors settle across rooftops, oceans, forests, deserts and landscapes, becoming part of the Earth's ongoing exchange of matter.

The iron in your blood has ancient stellar origins.
The carbon in your DNA carries a story that began long before our planet existed.

Even now, material from beyond Earth continues to find its way into our world.

Celestial Messengers

Some minerals and mineral-bearing materials found on Earth have a more direct connection to space. *Meteorites* carry fragments of asteroids and other ancient planetary bodies, preserving clues about the formation and evolution of our Solar System.

When meteoroids collide with Earth, the immense heat and pressure of the impact can melt and transform terrestrial rocks and sediments, creating natural glasses known as *tektites*. These remarkable materials are formed from the Earth's own matter, transformed by the energy of an extraterrestrial encounter.

- **Pallasite** — A rare and beautiful type of stony-iron meteorite, containing greenish olivine crystals embedded within a metallic iron-nickel matrix. These extraordinary specimens are thought to originate from the boundary between the rocky mantle and metallic core of differentiated asteroids.

- **Muonionalusta** — An ancient iron-nickel meteorite discovered in northern Sweden. Formed during the earliest history of our Solar System, around 4.56 billion years ago, it is renowned for its distinctive Widmanstätten patterns — intricate crystalline structures revealed when the metal is cut, polished and etched. These patterns developed through extraordinarily slow cooling over immense stretches of time.

- **Moldavite** — A translucent green natural glass known as a tektite. It formed around 14.7 million years ago when a large meteorite struck what is now southern Germany, melting and ejecting terrestrial rock into the atmosphere. The molten material cooled as it travelled through the air before falling back to Earth across parts of central Europe. Moldavite is not a fragment of the meteorite itself, but Earth material transformed by an extraterrestrial impact.

Estimates from NASA and the American Meteor Society suggest that around 10–50 meteorite-dropping events occur across the Earth each day — approximately 3,650–18,250 per year. A 2024 study estimated around 6,014 meteorite falls across the planet annually, including those over the oceans.

Most go unnoticed, and only a handful of actual meteor falls are witnessed and recovered each year. But if you've ever been fortunate enough to see a bright meteor or fireball streak across the sky, you've witnessed a little piece of this cosmic exchange in action. Increasingly, these extraordinary events are also being captured on cameras and shared around the world.

These aren't just curiosities — they are *messengers*.
Carrying whispers of the wider universe.
A mineral memory of our cosmic home.

✧ A Thread of Wonder

The atoms that make up your body have a history far older than the Earth itself.

The hydrogen in your body largely traces back to the earliest moments of the universe, while much of the carbon, oxygen, calcium and iron was forged through generations of stars that lived and died long before our Sun was born.

The material that makes you was once part of something else — ancient stars, cosmic clouds and the beginnings of our planetary home.

You are quite literally part of a story that began billions of years before you.

To remember this is to return to the vastness you have never left.

To feel the stars not only above you, but within you.

And to know that every breath you take is part of a much greater story — the unfolding journey of mineral, matter and memory.

Chapter 6 — Earth, Body, and Stone: A Shared Foundation

Before there were microscopes or maps, food blogs or encyclopaedias, humans learned by exploring the Earth with our bodies and through our senses.

We touched the rocks and gathered the stones.
We tasted the fruits, roots and gifts of the land.
We followed rivers, crossed mountains and felt the changing seasons.
We watched the stars, studied the skies and wondered at the heavens.

We used what we found to build, nourish, create, navigate and understand the world around us.

The Earth spoke — and we listened.

For thousands of years, we passed down the knowledge of our ancestors, adding our own discoveries and experiences to an ever-growing library of human wisdom.

The Earth is a dynamic system, continually changing and exchanging matter and energy. Beneath her surface, heat moves through rock and molten metal. Across her surface, rivers flow, oceans circulate, forests breathe and soil supports an extraordinary diversity of life.

And within your own body, similar patterns of movement and exchange are taking place.

- Blood circulates.
- Lungs exchange gases.
- Skin protects and responds.
- Bones provide structure, while minerals support the processes that keep you alive.

The Earth and the human body are not the same, but they share something remarkable: both are intricate systems, shaped by relationships between their many parts.

Perhaps by looking at one, we can begin to appreciate the other.

A Planet with a Pulse

The Earth is not a still, solid sphere.

Beneath the ground, heat left over from the planet's formation, together with heat generated by radioactive decay, drives slow movement within the Earth's interior. This movement contributes to the shifting of tectonic plates, the formation of mountains, volcanic activity and the gradual reshaping of continents.

The planet has its own rhythms.

- Cycles of heating and cooling.
- The movement of tides.
- The circulation of oceans and atmosphere.
- The continual transformation of rock and soil.

Some processes unfold over hours or seasons; others take thousands, millions or even billions of years.

Within your body, life also depends upon movement and regulation.

- Your heart beats, sending blood through an extensive network of vessels.
- Your nervous system carries electrical signals.
- Your muscles contract and relax.
- Your cells continually exchange materials with their surroundings, maintaining the conditions needed for life.

Neither system is static. Both depend upon countless processes working together.

The Earth's pulse is not a heartbeat in the biological sense. Yet there is something beautiful in recognising that the ground beneath our feet is part of a planet that is continually moving, responding and transforming.

The Earth's Circulatory Systems

Water is one of the great movers of the natural world.

It flows from mountain springs into streams and rivers, travels across landscapes, gathers in lakes and wetlands, and eventually reaches the oceans. It moves through groundwater, evaporates into the atmosphere, falls again as rain and snow, and returns to the land.

As it travels, water carries dissolved minerals, nutrients and sediments.

- Rivers transport material from the highlands towards the sea.
- Ocean currents redistribute heat, nutrients and other substances across vast distances.
- Groundwater moves through underground spaces, connecting different parts of the landscape.

These movements help sustain ecosystems and connect landscapes that may be separated by hundreds or thousands of kilometres.

Within the human body, blood performs an equally essential role. It carries oxygen, nutrients, hormones and waste products between organs and tissues. Alongside it, the lymphatic system returns excess fluid to the bloodstream and plays an important role in immune defence.

The systems are not identical, but the parallel is striking: movement allows distant parts of a larger whole to remain connected.

A river carries the story of the land through which it travels. Blood carries the materials that sustain the living body.

Both remind us that movement and circulation are fundamental to life.

Breath of the Planet

Every breath connects us to the atmosphere.
We draw oxygen into our lungs and release carbon dioxide. Within the lungs, tiny air sacs called alveoli allow gases to move between the air and the bloodstream.

Beyond our bodies, the atmosphere is part of a much larger exchange.

The atmosphere itself is constantly moving. Winds carry warmth, moisture, dust and pollen across landscapes and oceans, connecting distant environments.

Plants absorb carbon dioxide and release oxygen through photosynthesis. The oceans do this too. Seawater absorbs carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, while microscopic marine organisms called phytoplankton use sunlight to photosynthesise, producing around half of the world's oxygen — although much of that oxygen is consumed within the ocean.

Forests are sometimes described as the lungs of the Earth. It is a beautiful image, although not a literal description. Oceans and microscopic marine life also play an essential role in the planet's exchange of gases.

Forests, oceans, soils and microorganisms all contribute to the movement of carbon, oxygen and other elements through the living world.

The air moving through your lungs belongs to the same atmosphere that surrounds forests, mountains and oceans.

Every breath is an exchange between your body and the world.

The Living Skin of Earth

The surface of the Earth is where stone, water, air and life meet.

Soil forms a remarkable living interface between the geological and biological worlds. It contains weathered rock particles, organic matter, water, air and an extraordinary community of microorganisms.

It supports life in many ways:

- Provides a home for countless organisms.
- Supports plant roots and stores water.
- Helps cycle nutrients.
- Allows fungi and bacteria to break down organic matter and transform nutrients.

Soil is not simply dirt beneath our feet. It is a living environment, continually being formed, disturbed and renewed.

Our own skin serves as another kind of living interface. It protects the body, helps regulate temperature, senses touch and responds to the environment. It also supports communities of microorganisms that form part of our natural skin microbiome.

The skin and soil are very different structures, but both sit at the boundary between an organism or system and the world around it. Both protect, interact and participate in exchanges with their surroundings.

There is something rather wonderful about this comparison.

The ground beneath your feet is not merely a surface to walk upon. It is a living boundary between the mineral Earth and the countless forms of life she supports.

Crystalline Foundations

Stone and the human body share more than a poetic connection. They also share some of the same mineral structures and chemical elements. Rocks are made up of minerals, each with its own chemical composition and internal structure. Some minerals form beautiful crystals with repeating arrangements of atoms, shaped by the conditions in which they grow.

Within the human body, minerals also form highly organised structures.

Our bones and teeth contain a mineral known as hydroxyapatite, a crystalline calcium phosphate. It gives these tissues much of their hardness and strength, while their organic components provide flexibility and resilience.

Other minerals and elements perform essential roles throughout the body:

- **Calcium** helps regulate muscle contraction and cell signalling.

- ★ **Magnesium** supports hundreds of enzyme reactions.
- ★ **Iron** helps transport oxygen through the blood.

The same elements are found throughout the geological world, although their chemical forms and functions may be very different.

Even the process of building mineral structures is not limited to rocks. Living organisms create minerals too — a process known as biomineralisation.

- ★ Coral builds calcium carbonate skeletons.
- ★ Molluscs form shells.
- ★ Humans build mineralised bones and teeth — and the occasional kidney stone.

Life and stone are not separate realms. They meet in the remarkable processes through which living things interact with and transform the materials of the Earth.

A crystal in a rock, a mineral structure in a bone, a shell on the ocean floor — each is an expression of matter arranged into form. And each tells a different part of Earth's story.

✧ A Thread of Wonder

The iron in your blood and the iron at the heart of the Earth are the same element.

Earth's core is composed predominantly of iron, alongside nickel and smaller amounts of other elements. In your blood, iron is held within haemoglobin, the protein that allows red blood cells to transport oxygen. The iron in a rock, the iron in Earth's core and the iron in your bloodstream may exist in very different chemical environments, but the element itself is the same.

One element. Many expressions. An extraordinary connection between planet and person.

The more closely we look, the more we begin to recognise the patterns that connect us.

Movement. Circulation. Exchange. Protection. Structure. Renewal.

The Earth is not simply the ground beneath our feet, and our bodies are not separate from the systems that sustain them. We are living expressions of the same natural world — shaped by its materials, supported by its cycles and continually connected to the greater whole.

Chapter 7 — A Living Web of Interconnected Life

Life does not exist in isolation.

From the smallest microorganism to the largest forest, living things are connected through countless relationships. They exchange matter, energy and information, shaping the environments in which they live.

Some connections are visible. Others take place beneath the soil, within cells or through the movement of particles too small for our eyes to see.

Together, they form a living web — intricate, ever-changing and full of wonder.

Nothing Lives Alone

A forest is more than a collection of trees. It is a community of plants, animals, fungi, insects and microorganisms, each playing a part in the wider ecosystem.

Consider just a few of the relationships taking place:

- **Plants** provide food, shelter and oxygen.
- **Insects** pollinate flowers and help plants reproduce.
- **Animals** spread seeds and help regulate populations.
- **Fungi and bacteria** break down organic matter, returning nutrients to the soil.
- **Microorganisms** support the cycles that keep soil, water and ecosystems functioning.

A change in one part of this web can affect many others. When a species disappears, the relationships that depended upon it may change too.

Life is sustained not by individual organisms alone, but by the *relationships* between them.

The Underground Network

Beneath our feet, another world is quietly at work.
Plant roots grow through the soil, surrounded by bacteria, fungi and countless other microorganisms. Some fungi form close relationships with plant roots, known as *mycorrhizae*.

Their fine threads extend beyond the reach of roots, helping plants access water and nutrients. In return, plants supply the fungi with sugars produced through photosynthesis.

These relationships connect the worlds of plants and fungi through an ongoing exchange of resources.

Scientists have also found that some shared fungal networks can transfer nutrients and other substances between plants. The extent and importance of this sharing in natural ecosystems is still being explored.

There is much happening beneath the surface that we are only beginning to understand.

The Language of Life

Life communicates and responds through chemistry and electricity.

Within our bodies, electrical signals travel along nerves. Ions — electrically charged particles — move across cell membranes, helping muscles contract, nerves communicate and the heart maintain its rhythm.

At an even smaller scale, electrons are continually being transferred during chemical reactions.

An electron carries a negative electrical charge. When atoms or molecules gain or lose electrons, they take part in reactions known as oxidation and reduction, or *redox reactions*.

These exchanges are fundamental to life:

- **In our nervous system**, the movement of charged ions helps transmit electrical signals.
- **In photosynthesis**, light energy drives electron transfers that help plants build energy-rich compounds.
- **In cellular respiration**, electron transfers help cells release usable energy from food.
- **In some microorganisms**, electrons can be transferred beyond the cell, allowing interactions with minerals and other substances in the environment.

Giving and receiving, gaining and releasing, are woven into the chemistry of life. These processes are not conscious acts of generosity, but they reveal something remarkable: living systems depend upon continuous exchange.

The Exchange of Energy

Almost every living food web begins with sunlight.

Plants, algae and some microorganisms capture light energy through photosynthesis. They use it to build organic matter, which becomes nourishment for other living things.

Energy moves through nature in many forms:

- **Sunlight** provides the energy captured by photosynthetic organisms.
- **Plants and algae** turn that energy into chemical energy stored in organic matter.
- **Animals** obtain energy by eating plants or other animals.
- **Decomposers** break down dead organic matter, returning nutrients to the environment.

A leaf feeds a caterpillar. The caterpillar feeds a bird. The bird may become food for another animal.

Matter is continually recycled, while energy flows through living systems and eventually disperses as heat.

The energy that once arrived as sunlight can become part of a leaf, a fruit, an animal or even you.

We are nourished by a flow of energy that began beyond our own bodies.

The Invisible Connections

Not all the relationships that sustain life are easy to see.

Microorganisms help digest food, cycle nutrients and maintain the chemistry of soil and water. Pollinators connect flowering plants across landscapes. Ocean currents transport heat and nutrients, while the atmosphere carries moisture and other materials around the planet.

Consider some of these less visible connections:

- **Microorganisms** help maintain the health and balance of living environments.
- **Pollinators** support the reproduction of many flowering plants.
- **Oceans** exchange heat, gases and nutrients with the atmosphere and surrounding ecosystems.
- **Forests** influence the movement of water and carbon through the environment.
- **Wetlands** filter water and provide habitats for countless species.

Each environment is part of something larger, connected through the movement of life, matter and energy.

Even the smallest organisms can have an influence far beyond their size.

A Web of Relationships

When we look closely, we begin to see that life is not a collection of separate things, but a vast network of relationships.

A healthy ecosystem depends upon many different processes working together. When one is disrupted — through habitat loss, overuse of resources, pollution, changing climates or the disappearance of a species — the effects can ripple through the wider system.

Yet nature is also adaptable when given the opportunity. Living communities respond, adjust and sometimes find new ways to flourish.

The web is not static. It is continually being woven and rewoven.

Perhaps this is one of the most beautiful things about being alive: we are never entirely separate from the world around us.

We breathe its air, drink its water, receive nourishment from its soil and participate in its cycles.

Every living thing is both a part of the web and a participant in its unfolding.

We are connected through what we exchange, what we receive and what we return.

✧ A Thread of Wonder — The Living Current

Deep beneath the surface, some microorganisms do something extraordinary: they exchange electrons directly with minerals in the surrounding soil.

Certain bacteria, including *Geobacter* and *Shewanella*, use specialised structures to transfer electrons beyond their cell walls, interacting with minerals containing iron and manganese.

Scientists are exploring how these natural electrical processes might be used in environmental restoration and bioenergy technologies.

Life is woven together through countless relationships, many of which we are only beginning to understand. We are not observers standing outside this web. We are participants within it — breathing, exchanging, receiving and returning.

The same Earth that sustains the smallest microorganism sustains us.
To recognise our connection is also to recognise our responsibility.

We are not separate from the web of life. We belong to it. We help to weave it.

Chapter 8 — Symbiosis and Stewardship: Living in Reciprocity

You are not *on* the Earth.
You are *of* the Earth.
Not separate, but connected.
Not above, but within.

The same elements that form mountains are found within your body. The same air on the other side of the world is the air you breathe. The same cycles that nourish the Earth help to nourish you.

We are part of nature, not visitors to it.

Yet humans have something unusual: the ability to reflect, imagine, invent and make conscious choices about the world around us. We can reshape landscapes, develop technologies, grow food and build communities. We can also choose how carefully we do these things.

With that ability comes a beautiful blessing and responsibility.

To live well is not to conquer the Earth, but to find ways of living in relationship with her — recognising that our wellbeing is deeply connected to the wellbeing of the living world.

The Circle of Giving and Receiving

Life is sustained through cycles of exchange.

Earth provides the conditions and materials that make life possible. Living things take in what they need, transform it and return much of it to the wider environment.

Consider the simple cycle of a garden:

- **Earth provides:** soil, water, sunlight and nutrients.
- **Plants receive:** the materials and energy needed to grow.
- **Living things benefit:** through food, shelter and nourishment.
- **Nature returns:** fallen leaves, plant matter and organic waste are broken down, helping replenish the soil.

Not every natural cycle is perfectly circular, and some resources take millions of years to form. But the principle of renewal is everywhere in nature.

When we begin to understand these relationships, we can start to make choices that work with them rather than against them.

We become stewards rather than owners — recognising that what we care for today helps shape the world of tomorrow.

Our Footprint on Earth

Human activity has always changed the natural world. We gather, build, cultivate, create and transform the materials around us. The challenge is not to stop using Earth's resources, but to become more thoughtful about how we use them.

Some of the greatest opportunities for change lie in the way we produce, consume and return materials:

- **Resource extraction:** Reducing unnecessary mining and extraction, improving practices and supporting responsible sourcing.
- **Production:** Making durable, repairable products rather than continually producing things designed to be replaced.
- **Waste and pollution:** Preventing waste where possible, reducing harmful pollutants and keeping materials out of waterways and natural habitats.
- **Circular economies:** Reusing, repairing, sharing and recycling materials so they remain useful for longer.
- **Food and agriculture:** Supporting healthy soils, reducing food waste and returning organic matter to the land.
- **Conservation:** Protecting habitats, restoring ecosystems and respecting the needs of other living species.

These changes require cooperation across communities, industries and nations. Individual choices matter, but so do the larger systems that shape the choices available to us.

Stewardship is not simply about consuming less. It is about creating better ways to live.

Meeting the Mineral World

Our relationship with the Earth is not only practical. It can also be deeply personal.

For many people, stones and crystals offer a tangible way to experience the natural world. Their colours, patterns, textures and extraordinary formations invite curiosity and reflection.

Each specimen has its own geological story — perhaps formed through volcanic activity, slowly growing in a cavity, or transformed by heat and pressure deep within the Earth.

When you hold a stone, you can take a moment to consider:

- Its weight and texture in your hand.

- The colours and patterns formed within it.
- The conditions and immense stretches of time involved in its formation.
- The journey it has taken from the Earth to where you are now.

Quartz, for example, has remarkable physical properties. It can generate an electrical charge when pressure is applied, a phenomenon known as piezoelectricity. This property has practical applications in clocks, sensors and electronic devices.

For others, crystals also hold spiritual meaning. They may be used as objects of meditation, symbols of intention, reminders of personal experiences or companions in moments of reflection.

These personal and spiritual relationships are meaningful to many people. Perhaps part of the beauty lies in allowing ourselves to appreciate both: the extraordinary physical nature of a mineral and the meaning we find in our relationship with it.

A crystal does not need to be used or understood to be appreciated. Sometimes it is enough simply to notice it.

The Practice of Noticing

Reconnection does not require a pilgrimage, a complete overhaul of your lifestyle, activism, an elaborate ritual or a vast collection of crystals.

It often begins with the smallest gestures.

- **Walk** on soil, sand or stone and notice the ground beneath your feet.
- **Grow** something, even if it is only a small herb in a pot.
- **Hold** a stone and take a moment to appreciate its shape, texture and history.
- **Pause** before eating and consider the soil, water, sunlight and living systems that helped produce your food.
- **Spend time** beside a river, at the beach or beneath a tree.
- **Notice** the changing seasons, the weather and the life moving around you.
- **Take only what you need** and leave natural places as you found them.

You might also bring a little more awareness to the mineral materials that surround you every day. They are present in more places than we often realise:

- **Salt** in our food, sweat and tears.
- **Clay** in soil and pottery.

- **Copper** in electrical wiring.
- **Sand and silica** in glass and electronic devices.
- **Limestone and other rocks** in the materials used to build our homes.

The Earth is not somewhere we occasionally visit. We are in constant relationship with her.

The practice is not to seek that connection, but to re-tune our awareness to it. To notice it.

Ways of Walking in Reciprocity

True stewardship does not require grand gestures. It can begin at home, in our gardens, in our communities and in the choices we make every day. Some simple ways to give back include:

- **Composting** suitable food scraps and returning organic matter to the soil.
- **Planting** native species and creating spaces for pollinators.
- **Supporting** responsible and transparent mineral sourcing.
- **Repairing**, reusing and sharing rather than automatically replacing.
- **Reducing** unnecessary packaging and waste.
- **Taking part** in local planting, restoration or shoreline clean-up projects.
- **Respecting** natural habitats and gathering rocks, plants and other materials only where permitted and appropriate.
- **Supporting** businesses and communities working towards more sustainable practices.

Even small acts can become part of a much larger movement when people work together.

We cannot individually solve every global challenge, but we can contribute to a culture that values care, responsibility and respect for the living world and each other.

When we restore the soil, protect a habitat, care for a garden or make a more mindful choice, we participate in the ongoing relationship between humanity and Earth.

A Living Relationship

The Earth does not ask us to be perfect. She asks no permission for the seasons to change, the rivers to flow or the mountains to rise. But we can learn to live with greater awareness of the impact we have upon the world around us.

We can receive without taking more than we need. We can create without wasting unnecessarily. We can receive with gratitude and return through care.

When we honour the mountain, we honour the ground that supports us.
When we restore the soil, we help nourish future generations.
When we protect the living world, we also protect the conditions that sustain our own lives.

Perhaps stewardship begins with a simple remembrance:

> *We belong to the Earth in every way.*
> *We are part of the nature of this world.*
> *Our choices ripple out into the whole planet.*
> *Let's choose to nurture this relationship.*
> *And in doing so, we nurture ourselves and generations yet to come.*

✧ A Final Remembrance

You are not just made of flesh and thought. You are made of salt and silence, of bone and stardust, of water, fire, and the memory of stone. You carry within you the elements of ancient oceans, the minerals of mountains, the iron forged in stars and carried through ancient bloodlines, and the water that has travelled on the wave of the Earth's dreaming for countless ages.

You are not separate from the planet you walk upon. You are part of her continuing story.

You are Earth, remembering herself.

In your breath flows the atmosphere of distant forests and oceans.
In your blood, elements that have travelled through countless forms of life.
In your bones, minerals shaped into the architecture of your being.

This book has not asked you to learn.

This book has invited you to look more closely — to see the relationships between Earth, body and cosmos, and to recognise the extraordinary web of life of which you are a part.

It has asked you to *remember.*

To remember that minerals are not just matter — they are *memory.*
That the Earth is not just ground — she is *kin.*
That the stars are not far from us at all — they are *within.*

Everything is connected through the great movements of matter, energy and life.

And within this vast unfolding, your life has its own place and purpose.

The seen and the unseen are not divided.
Energy and matter, soul and soil, are part of the same great interconnected living web.

So move forward with wonder.
Walk with greater awareness.
Receive with gratitude.
Give with care.
Make choices that honour the world you belong to.

Take time to hold a stone, touch the soil, listen to the wind, feel the sun on your skin, watch the stars and feel the extraordinary privilege of being alive.

You are not separate from this beautiful, living world.
You are part of it.
You belong here.
You are home.
And what a blessing that is.

About the Author

Amanda Sears is a writer, creator and Earth guardian living in Aotearoa New Zealand, where the stones and the sea sing with the ancient, slow rhythms of the Earth.

She is the founder of Solaria, a project dedicated to exploring the mineral kingdom, celebrating the beauty and wisdom of crystals, and nurturing humanity's connection with the living Earth. Through her writing and creative work, Amanda brings together geological curiosity, spiritual exploration and a deep appreciation for the natural world, inviting others to discover their own relationship with the remarkable world of minerals and crystals.

Learn more about Amanda’s projects: www.searsco.nz

Learn more about Solaria: www.solaria.nz

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Crystals and minerals should always be handled with appropriate care and awareness. Some specimens contain toxic elements, may release harmful dust or fibres, or may be radioactive. Certain minerals, including cinnabar and some copper-bearing minerals such as malachite, can present risks if ingested, inhaled or handled inappropriately. Never ingest minerals or use them directly in drinking water unless their safety is well established. Always research the properties and potential hazards of individual specimens before handling, preparing or using them.

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