

Excerpt from *Estranged: A Meditative Reflection on Loss, Grief, and Rebirth*

The days and weeks leading up to our physical separation left me feeling uncertain about many things. In the midst of this physical and emotional upheaval, I came to a life-changing realization. I had lost myself in our marriage. I became so focused on attending to the needs and wants of others, that I had completely neglected my own. I recall, one time in the midst of an argument, she said to me, “You make me feel small.” As I stood alone, sorting through my tiny corner of belongings, I realized that it was I, who was the small one. By devaluing myself and placing everyone else first, I had minimized my presence in the relationship—both emotionally and materially. This was manifested in multiple ways, such as rarely buying anything for myself; having difficulty accepting gifts; and believing that it was acceptable to stay in a marriage devoid of intimacy, emotional safety, and romantic love. This moment awakened me. I realized, if I planned to create a life with meaning beyond my prescribed roles as: father, husband, and employee—then I had to nurture, love, and value myself.