

TOGETHER, ALONE MASTERCLASS

GROUNDING



BY KATHRYN RATTRAY

ALL ABOUT KATHRYN

Kathryn Rattray is a freelance photographer and visual artist based in Dundee. Kathryn is self-taught in all aspects of her photography and artist's practice.

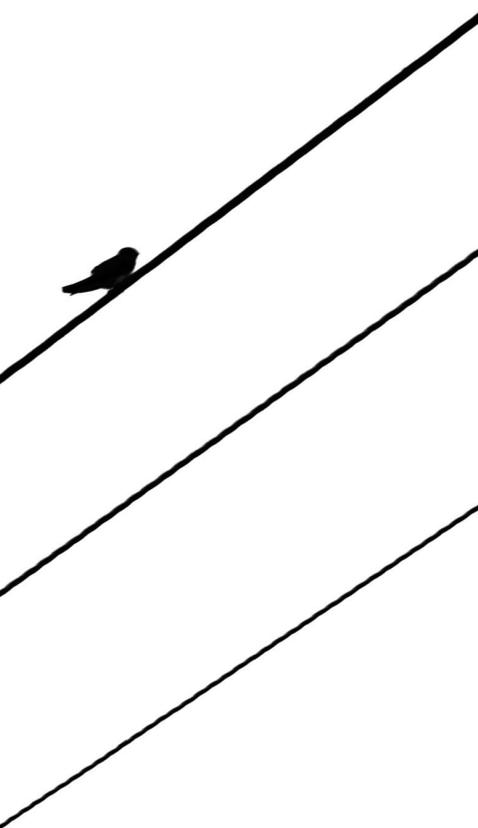
Over the past decade Kathryn has worked extensively across her hometown of Dundee where she has established herself as a photographer working in the arts. During this time Kathryn has created a diverse and extensive portfolio as well as being commissioned to undertake a large body of commercial and private client work.

Her photographs have been represented online, in art magazines, books and other media. The arts are her passion and she excels when engaged in this field. Her style is bold and contemporary with an exceptional use of colour and her admiration of the changing nature of light is central to how she creates her work.

Kathryn lives in Dundee with her two children - she spends her free time filling their lives with adventures.



GROUNDING



Last night I was muttering to myself, setting the scene for this masterclass in my head, imagining how I'd start it and what I'd put in it. The first thing I thought I would mention is the fact that me and the kids have been struck down by a horrible #noncovid cold for days now. I was the worst hit and this led to me spending three full days in my bed, watching box sets, editing photos, all the while delving deep into the art of black and white photography and the practice of 'grounding'.

I've done a lot of thinking about Grounding and what it means to me from my bed recently and realised how important it is as a self-care practice. I have developed my own methods of grounding myself over the years. I'm prone to getting very carried away with all of life - the good, the bad and the indifferent. Sometimes my mind will hurtle faster than I can keep up with it and I can often be heard saying "I have an idea!". The older I get, the more able I am to grab onto the highs and bring them down from the ethers. I like using grounding exercises at night, using simple calming thoughts before I got to sleep. I often imagine as I

slip into a meditative state just before falling asleep that there are beautiful strong roots growing out of the soles of my feet, burrowing deep into the ground keeping me rooted to the earth.

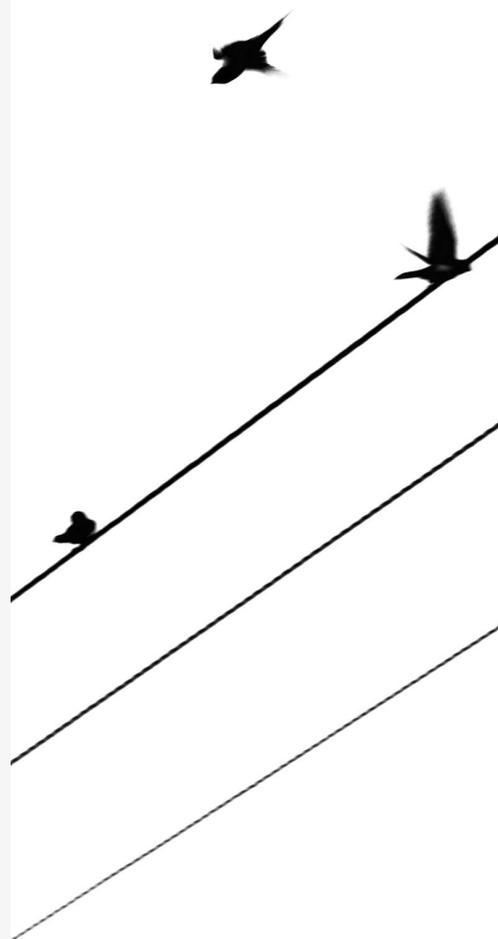
Crystals and stones also have a great grounding significance to me. Let's turn the clock back 14 years ago when I found myself slap bang in the middle of the biggest energy shift of my entire life. To cut a long story short I found myself working in a crystal shop selling healing crystals and books on Reiki and divination. Now if you were to tell me in a previous life that by holding onto a stone would make you feel better, I would have laughed and shook my head. Today, it's more unusual for me not to carry a crystal than it is to carry one. I often sleep with one in my hand, (my kids use them too) and I am a firm believer in the power of energies and the impact they have on your mind, body and soul - both positive and negative.

And of course, there's also walking. Walking grounds me, it helps to clear my mind and energises my system. You can read more about how I have used walking as a form of self-care recently here in my first blog for Together Alone.

During one of our masterclass meetings, Anna (who I want to give a big shout out to right now! 'Anna you been an absolute rock during the development of these masterclasses, always there for me, brilliant at dishing out the guidance, listening and pulling apart my ideas and making sense of them too, THANK YOU!') Anyway, Anna introduced me to the grounding exercise 54321. I'd never heard of it before but instantly connected with the idea. I was left, however, pondering how I could turn this into a photography masterclass.

All the classes so far have been very vibrant and full of colour, a real representation of my own photographic style. But for this one I wanted to go back to the start and try something different, taking out all of the colour from 5 4 & 3 and shooting in black and white.

This didn't quite translate to all elements, however. I tried taking the colour out of 2 and 1, but these images did not work in black and white. Photography is very much like that; some things work better in colour and some things better in mono. I hope one of the takeaways from this is that it's OK to try something out and realise it doesn't work – photography is often about being brave and trusting what you feel about the images, as well as trying different things out.

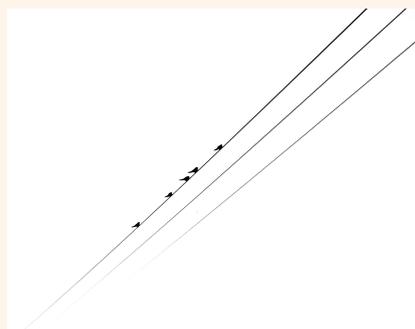


MY 5-4-3-2-1

This technique is used by a lot of people when they are feeling anxious, out of control or experiencing the aftereffects of trauma. It involves bringing yourself back into the present by naming things around you – 5 things you can see, 4 things you can touch, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell and 1 thing you can taste. I've used this as inspiration for this masterclass, translating it into a photography exercise. Hopefully you will find the process of taking your own set of photos

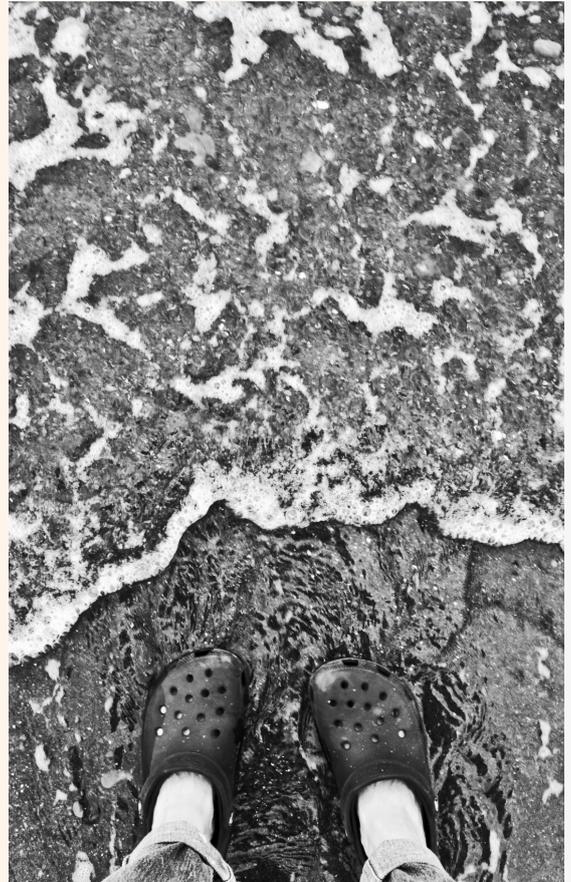
grounding, as well as providing you with photographs that you can then use to ground yourself when you feel you need them.

To represent my 5-4-3-2-1, I decided to take different pictures of the same thing for each category. This allowed me to enjoy the subtle differences between each shot. When doing yours, feel free to take photos of different things e.g. take photos of 5 different things you can see/find grounding to look at.



5 THINGS YOU SEE

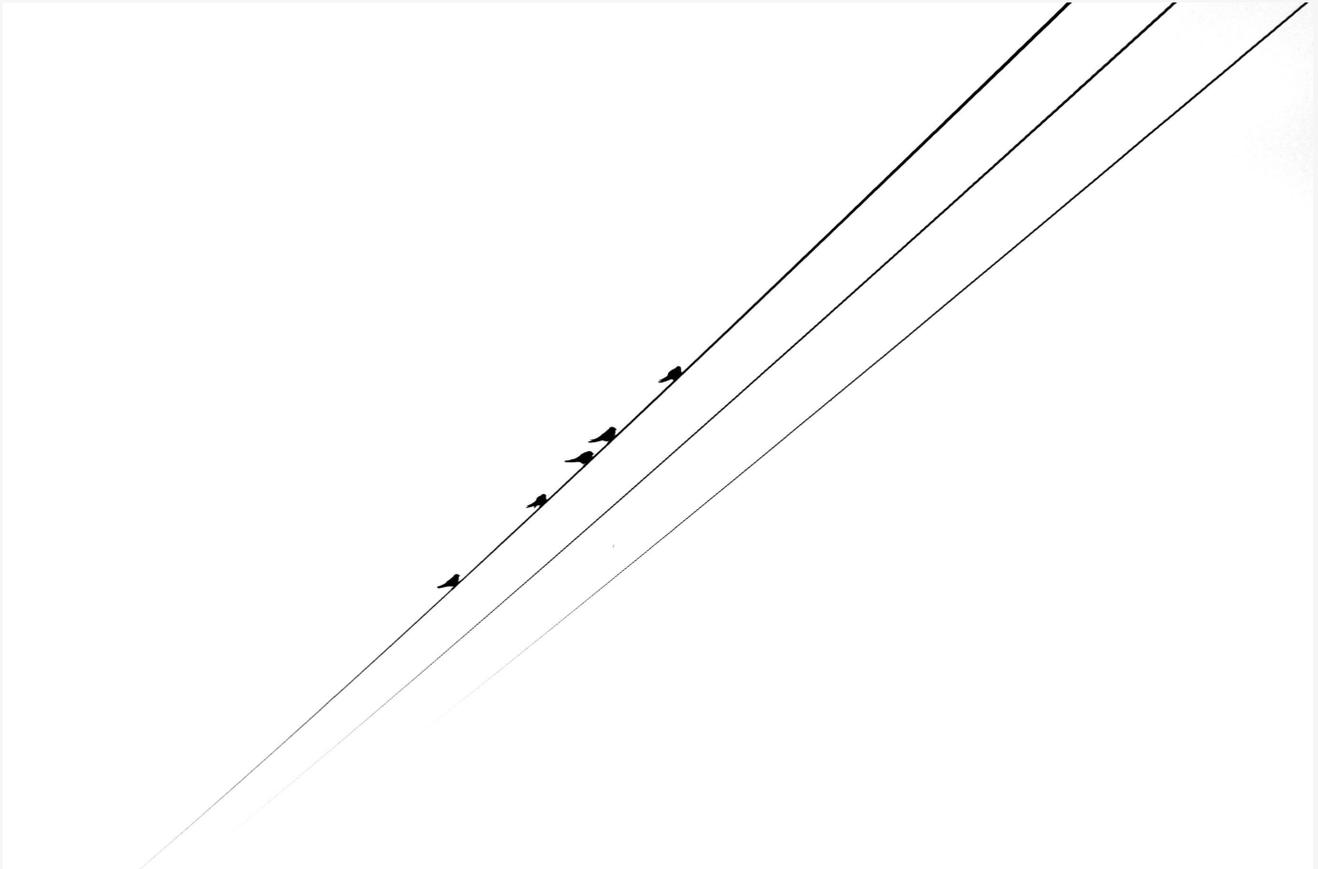
Standing at the edge of the North Sea with my trusty crocs on, I allowed the water to just wash up. Firstly, I became very aware of my body and the stresses that I was holding. I noticed my jaw was clenched and my shoulders raised and hunched. I shook out the physical tension, closed my eyes and took several deep breaths. This allowed me to 'just be' for those few minutes before the kids started shouting "MUUUM". Sometimes, it's difficult to feel gratitude when daily life brings you down. As I stood at the edge of the North Sea, I found myself saying "thank you". And then there were tears. I felt a release - not entirely sure what it was, but it was out.



4 THINGS YOU CAN TOUCH



I'm sure you are aware by now that I love crystals and stones. I collected around 20 of these beautiful flat stones, (15 of which I sent to Anna to add to the Together Alone workshop packs). The stones are so incredibly tactile and I've even got a dish in my kitchen filled with them. Sometimes when I'm thinking, I'll reach for one. Same for when my anxiety levels are on the up. They feel especially nice as they heat up gently in your hand. I like to put an intention into the stone and carry it with me for the day, using it as a reminder of how I want to feel and be.



3 THINGS YOU CAN HEAR

My love for walking now has its own theme tune - "Bird on a Wire" by Leonard Cohen. I only recently realised that for the past 8 weeks every morning this incredible song plays on repeat in my head when I look up and see the birds sitting on the wire.

I find that an amazing way to ground yourself is put on that song, you know the one, the one that helps, always. For me, the album of choice that without a shadow of doubt never fails to soothe, heal and entertain is Leonard Cohen's greatest hits 1976-2001. I know the true diehard Cohen fans will laugh at the 'greatest hits' selection, but I don't care! I just adore this album.

The birds in these photographs remind me that we are fragile, our hearts and minds are can be small and delicate and that there is often power in that. Just like the birds flying from the wire, we too need time to let our minds fly away, to imagine and to dream.

2 THINGS YOU CAN SMELL

I love lemons, I add them to everything, to curries, salads, peppermint tea, ordinary tea - I make lemon and ginger tea with honey mostly. The list goes on. I'm a VIT C addict, there I've said it. I use it all the time, mostly in powder form in a hydro flask with a litre of water. VIT C is my self-care go to daily ritual. No matter what the ailment, I use it.

I REALLY tried to take these photos in black and white, but I just didn't think they worked. While sipping a hot coffee, I googled black and white lemons, but even google couldn't come up with the images I hoped for. I set the camera in black and white, but they still looked awful. I went outside and while they looked better, they still looked boring, bland and really strange to me. In the end, I opted for the vibrant yellows because it made more sense to me!





1 THING YOU CAN TASTE

Freshly brewed coffee; it's fair to say I probably over consume it! It's the thing that makes me get out of bed in the morning! Lately I've been very decadent by adding lashings of double cream and honey to it. I try not to drink it past 1pm as I'm sure it keeps me awake, although lately I have been sneaking a couple of cups late afternoon.

I'm not a coffee snob, I like the instant stuff too. One thing I try not to do though is go to the big global capitalist coffee houses in the town, I always opt for the independents. My coffee of choice is an Americano, I'm at my happiest with 1 of those in my hand.



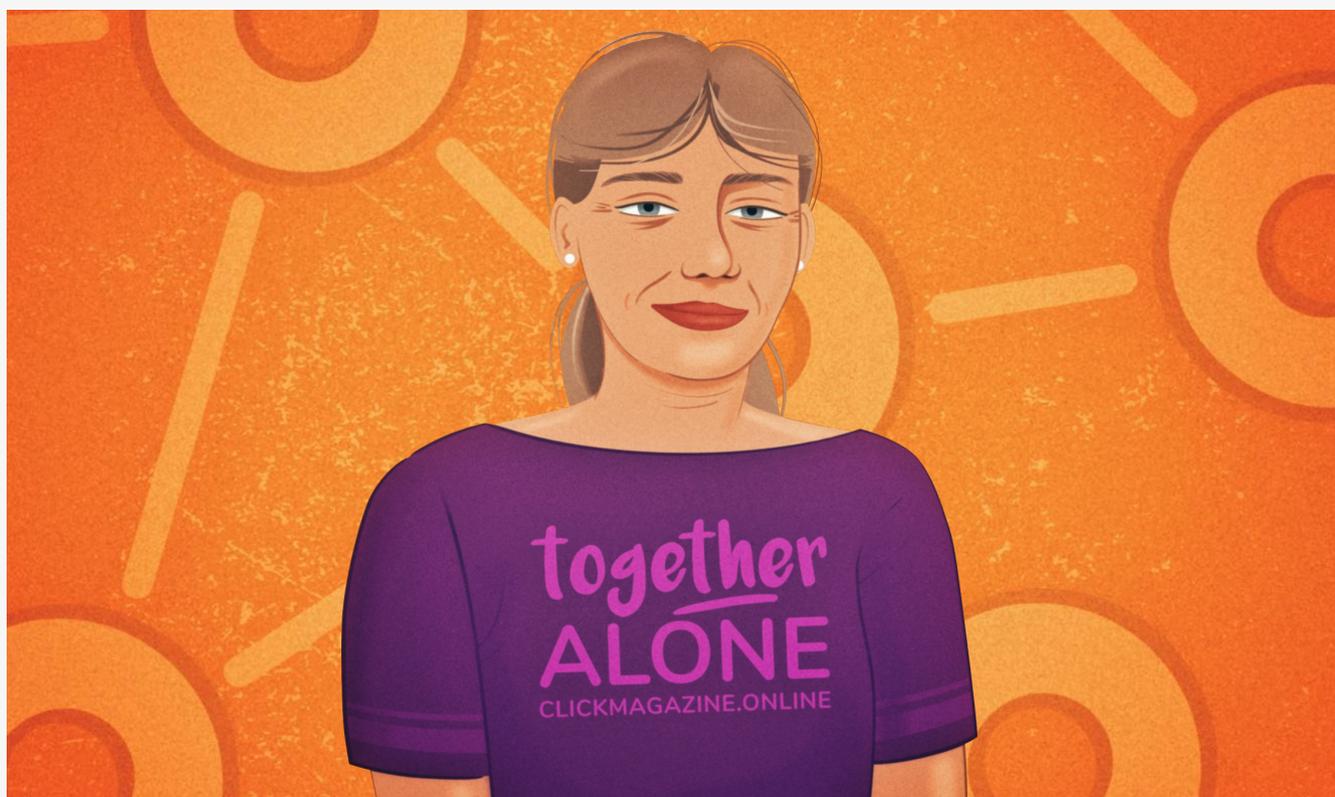
HINTS 'N' TIPS FOR GROUNDING

- Think about all the things that make you feel grounded, happy and safe
- Let your mind drift as you think of what you want to take photos of
- Think about how you want to represent those things – will you take a photo of something outside, or do you want to set up a home studio?
- Keep it simple, these photos are yours, they are for you to feel grounded and connected
- Plan how you will get the photos – you could go on a walk, head to the beach, the park, somewhere quiet. Have a rummage in the cupboards, take pics of the things you love
- Think of all the things that you have learned in the previous 4 classes and implement them now – think about texture, colour, light. Know you have built up skills over the past 5 weeks and trust in them
- Pick your favourite song, take photos that represent the words and how you feel
- Think of a place you find grounding and think about what photos you could take there
- What do you have in your house that represents something you find grounding?
- Try shooting in black and white. Trust your instincts if you think the picture would be better in colour



- Stop and listen to how you speak to yourself. Try to be kind and compassionate towards yourself
- Try to quieten your mind when taking the pictures – use the process of taking them as a grounding exercise as much as the result
- Think of how far you've come in the past 5 weeks
- Say thank you to yourself for all of your amazing hard work
- Try to be present when taking the photos
- When you're happy with the photos, you can save them onto the camera roll on your phone for you to look back through when you feel you need them
- Use the photos anywhere and at any time when you feel like you need to regain focus and connection
- You can save my photos to your camera phone too, or even print them out and keep them in your bag for when you might need them

ABOUT TOGETHER, ALONE



For many women in the sex industry, the coronavirus pandemic is exacerbating feelings of stigma, loneliness, and social isolation. Together, Alone is our wellbeing based arts project which aims to foster a sense of community and solidarity by building a “self-care toolkit”. We invite women to creatively share what self-care means to them. What works? What doesn’t work? And where self-care doesn’t go far enough, what needs to be done to better support the mental wellbeing of women?

This will be a place where we will share tips, as well as focus on the links between self-care and creativity with masterclasses from artists to build skills and ideas. You can find all the masterclasses at www.clickmagazine.online and we can also send you out a workshop pack with copies of the masterclasses, along with all the materials you might need to do them.

We would love to hear from you about what works / doesn’t work for you, any tips that you have and what you think about the masterclasses. We can’t wait to build Together, Alone with you!