

A Journey Toward Mindfulness

*And you? When will you begin
that long journey into yourself?*

– Rumi



We invite you on a journey — a journey toward mindfulness.

A little bit of self-care goes a long way. Practicing mindfulness is one way to take care of yourself. The benefits are tremendous. Not only might it smooth out the rough spots in your day, it may also have long-lasting health benefits and become a way of life. Whole health includes the mind, body and spirit. These aspects of oneself are intertwined and as you treat one aspect of yourself gently and with care, the other aspects benefit as well.

Being mindful, or mindfulness, is the practice of becoming aware — of noticing, of paying attention in the moment. Awareness may be joyful, include laughter and playfulness, thought provoking, serious and profound. Yes, it takes time — but so much can be accomplished in a few short minutes. And, as one practices, it can become a way of life, incorporated into the fabric of your being and living. The effects on one's well-being justify the time it takes to stop and be present. We not only experience a quiet and peacefulness as the insistent and incessant thoughts in our mind subside, but we may also become increasingly aware of all that we have to be grateful for.


Being mindful allows the mind and the body to slow down, to become aware, to focus on what is at hand. So often we hear or read about “being in the present moment.” All of these are descriptions of being mindful or practicing mindfulness. At the most simplistic level, mindfulness is paying attention in the present moment.

Paying attention sounds simple but is not necessarily easy. We all experience thoughts and feelings from moment to moment but are we capable of actually observing these thoughts and feelings without reaction or judgement. Our thoughts and feelings are not labeled as good or bad — they just are. You are just observing. Distractions are normal. They will subside naturally, your mind will quiet over time and your body will relax bringing a sense of peacefulness.

This is an example of paying attention internally. Externally, we can observe what is going on around us — animals, sky, wind, people, trains, etc. It can take a bit of practice to awaken our senses to the experience at hand, observe without reaction. This pause in reacting and judging allows us to take something in, digest it and respond, if desired or needed, with consideration. The outcome is that our life no longer passes us by — we become an active participant.

The imagery in this workbook invites you into a space that fosters quietness and peace. Nature is an amazing resource for the practice of mindfulness. Some of us are fortunate enough to have beautiful parks or wilderness areas close at hand. Others find nature just outside our front door as we walk our neighborhood or in our back yard. Nature has a unique way of giving us a place and the space to turn our awareness both outward and inward. It offers us beauty, quiet and peace. In nature's presence, we are gently taken away from our day-to-day pace and thoughts. We more readily turn our attention to what is around us. As we shift to being conscious of our surroundings, we can also shift to being more aware of ourselves.





Mindfulness can be practiced as we drink our morning cup of coffee, shower or bathe, eat a meal with friends, participate in meetings and many other daily events, by paying attention and being fully present in whatever we are doing.

The following pages are for you! You might wish to journal what you observe while being mindful, or you may want to write about the changes you observe in yourself and how your view of the world changes as you become more mindful.

All of the pages can be reprinted as often as you like. The last page has no image — allowing you to add your own artwork, doodles or pasting. Please use it to express yourself. Allow these pages to flow with your personal style and change as you change. Make them uniquely Yours.

Tips

- Set some time aside to practice.
- To help your mind slow down and let go, keep a notepad and jot down the things you think you need to remember.
- Start with taking a few minutes to notice your breath, following its flow and rise and fall.
- Make a conscious effort to tune in your senses, sight, touch, smell, taste. Notice colors, the light, textures, the sensations of your skin.
- Bring your mind to your body. Notice any sensations.
- Take time to do nothing — literally nothing.
- Be playful, adventurous and have fun.

Ideas for Practicing Mindfulness

Morning Mindfulness

Where are you this morning — at your dining table, out on the patio enjoying a summer morning, taking your morning walk? Regardless of where you are, take a moment to slow down and become aware of your surroundings. Take in what is around you through all of your senses. What aromas, sensations and sights are you sensing? Is there a light breeze or is the air soft and warm? How does it feel against your skin and in your hair? Is someone cooking breakfast or brewing coffee? Is the light gentle or more brilliant? Are others around you — people, pets, plants?

Now, take a moment and look inward. Watch your thoughts come and go. Watch your breath.

Stay in this place of awareness as long as you are able to. When you are ready to move into your day notice if your mind has slowed. Has your heart become gentle and your body relaxed?

The more you practice, the more you will be able to slip into this place easily and begin to carry it forward throughout your day.

A Mindful Cup of Coffee/Tea

Drinking a cup of coffee, or tea, is one of the more ubiquitous habits we seem to have. In fact, it has become social event — we plan to get together with others over a cup of coffee or tea. This simple act can be used as a mindful practice.

As you begin to take your first sip, bring your awareness to this moment. What does your cup feel like in your hand. Have you chosen your favorite mug? Is the shape, color and

texture pleasing? What aromas float in the air? Let your first sip linger on your tongue and consider the flavor and taste. Consider how it feels as it slides down your throat.

Bring your awareness to your body. Are you relaxed and nourished? Has the “noise” around you receded to the background?

This simple exercise can be done whether you are alone or, once you are familiar with it, in a group. Most likely no one you are with will have noticed what you are doing. Afterward, you might turn this same mindful technique toward the others you are with, observing and paying attention to each moment.

In Nature

You might simply step into your backyard, walk in the neighborhood park or take a trail in the wilderness. Walk slowly and deliberately pay attention to your surroundings. Take some deep breaths and notice the air as it fills your lungs. Turn your awareness to what is around you, taking it in with all of your senses. Continue to walk in this fashion for as long as you are able.

Find a comfortable place to sit, settle yourself and begin to listen to sounds — bird song, street noises, familiar voices. Take note and just follow the different cadences. Simply listen and observe how these sounds make you feel.

Let your surroundings help you be still in the moment. The sound of the fan. The smell of a candle. Be still, aware, and present.



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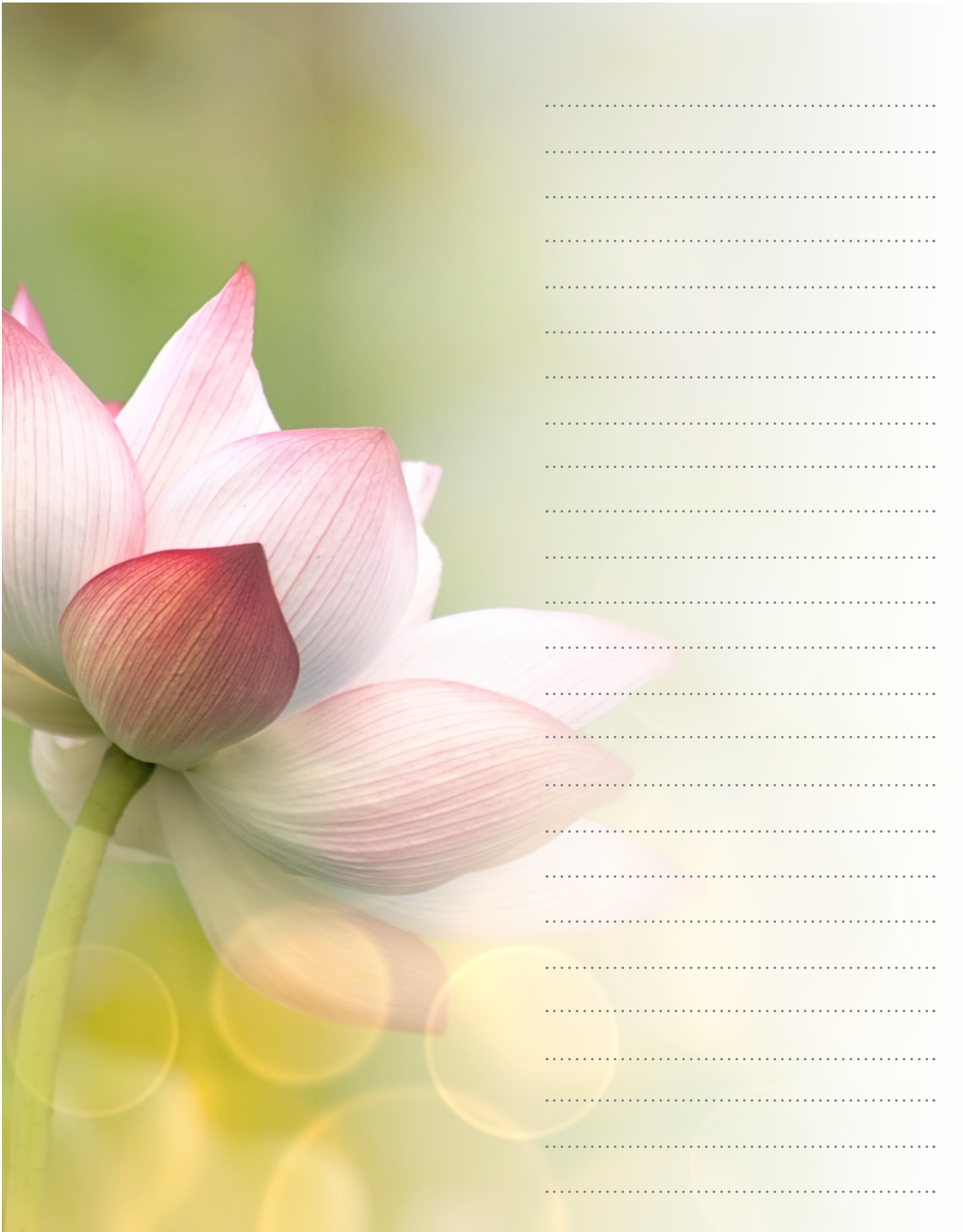
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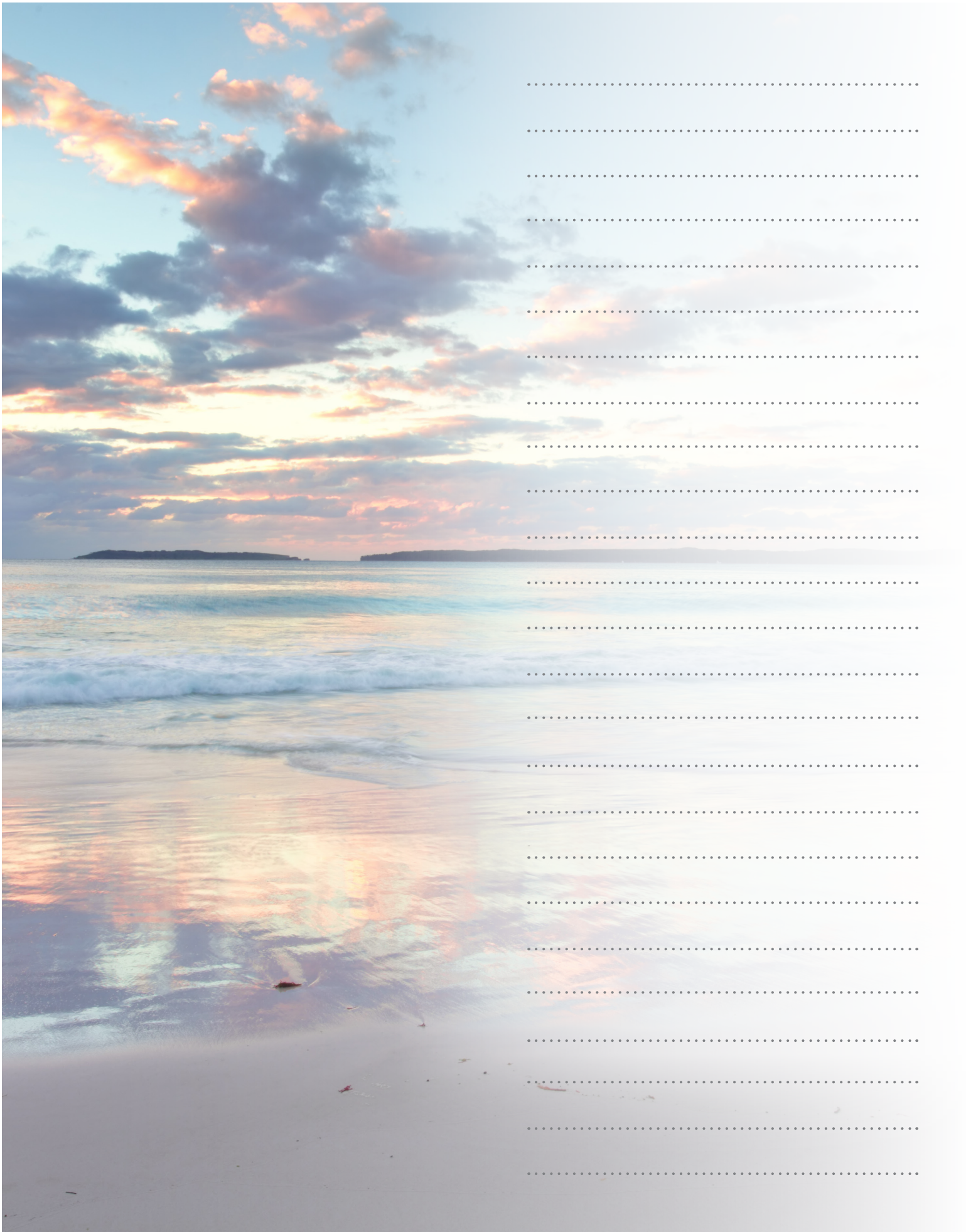
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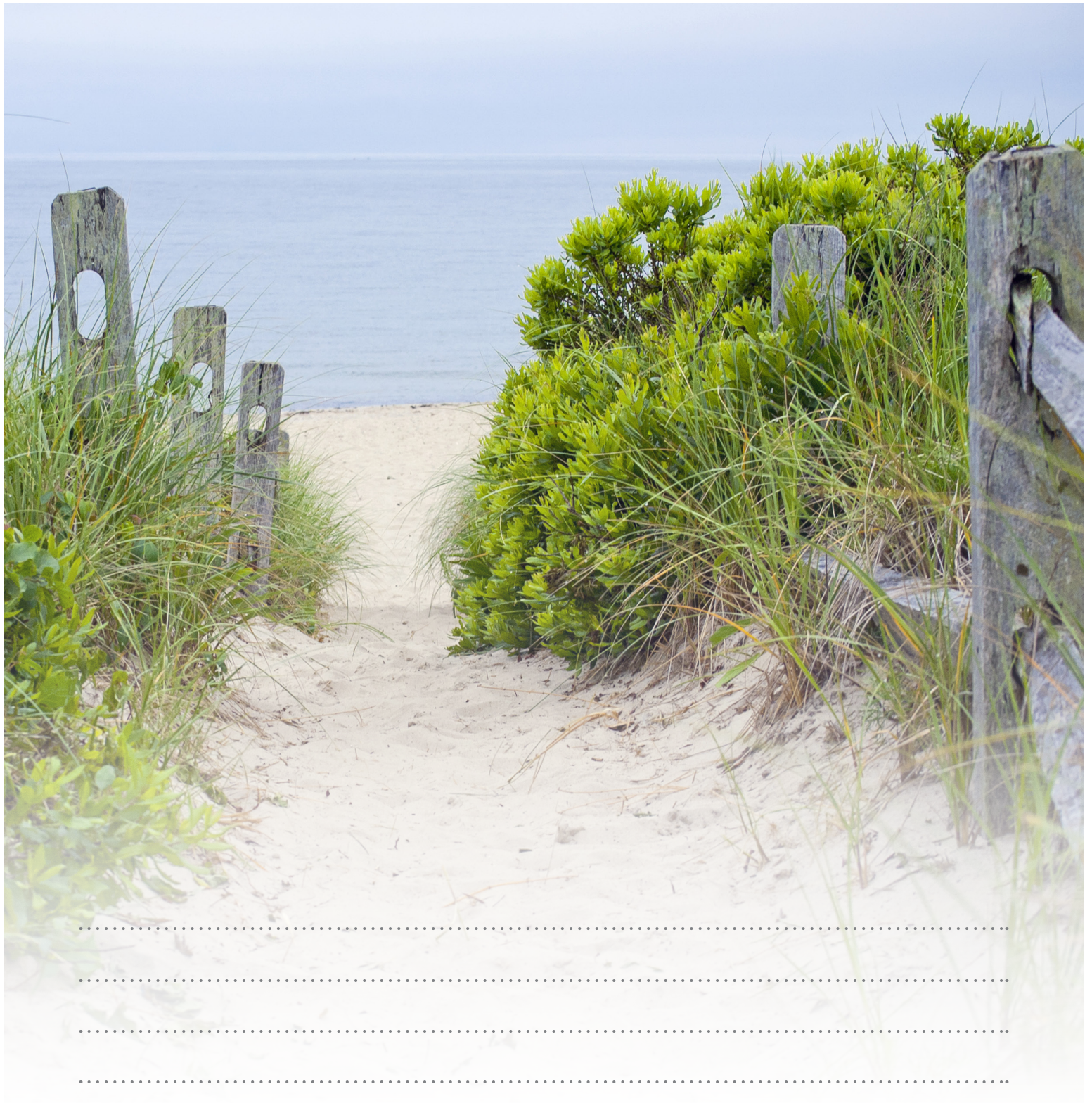
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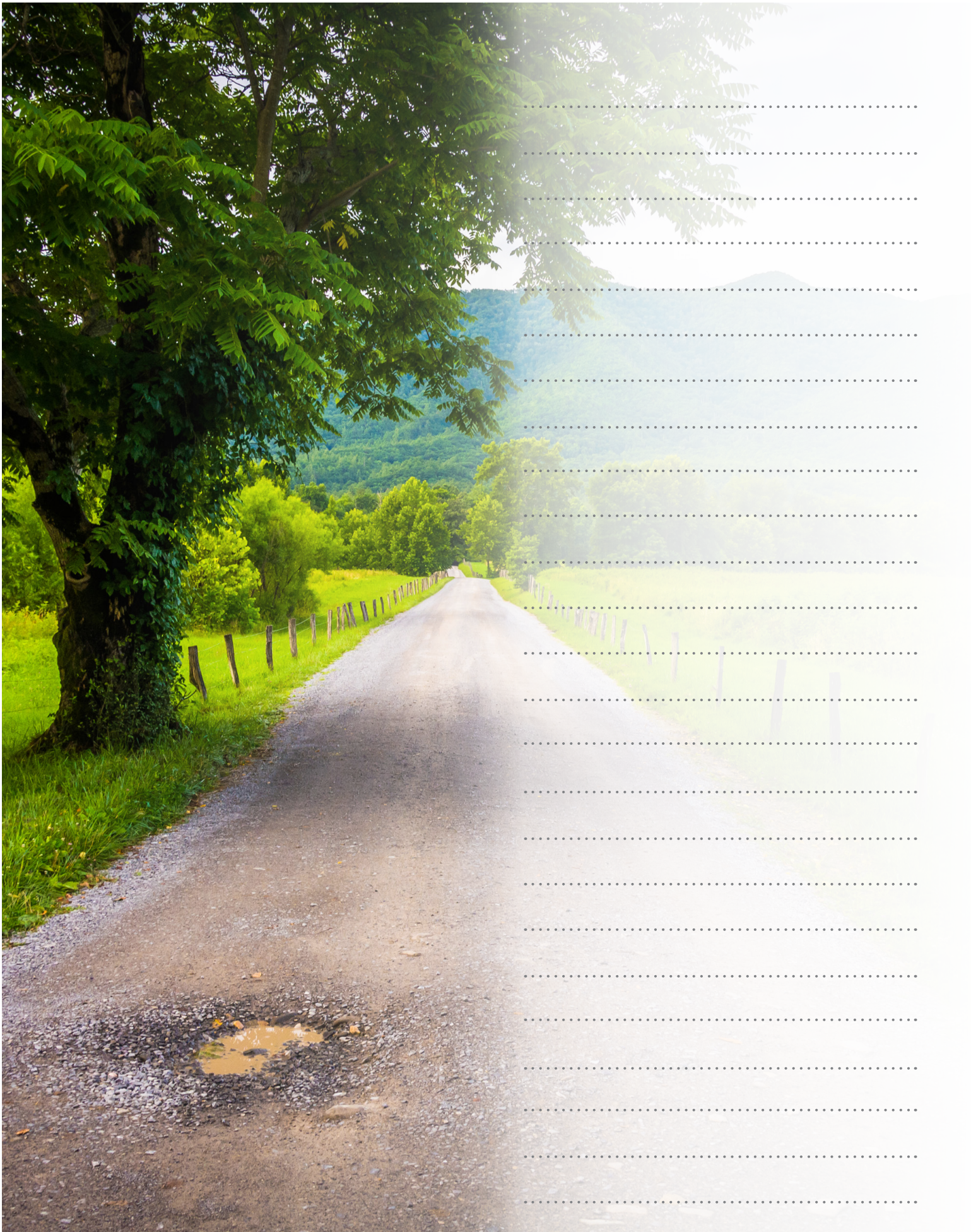
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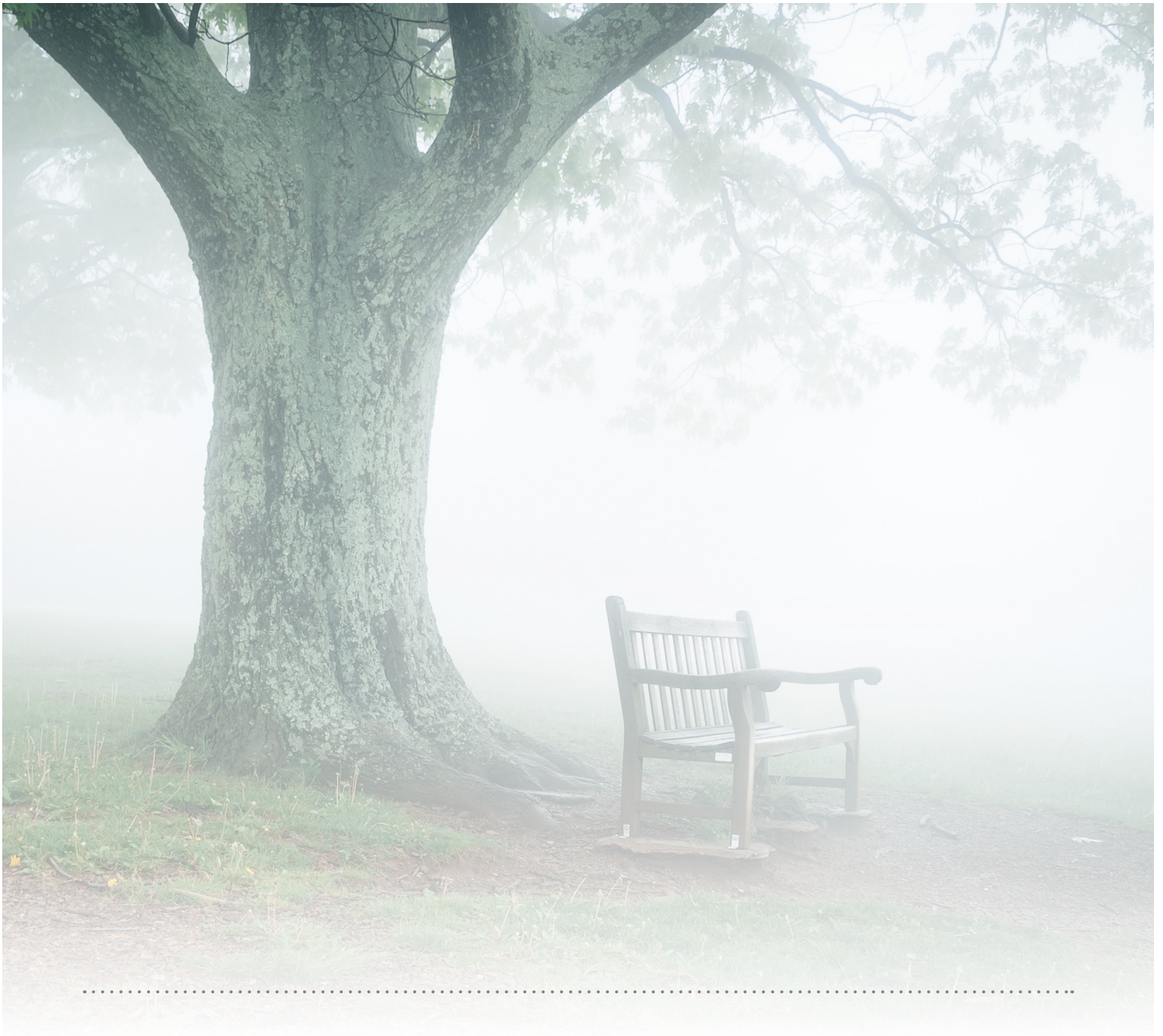
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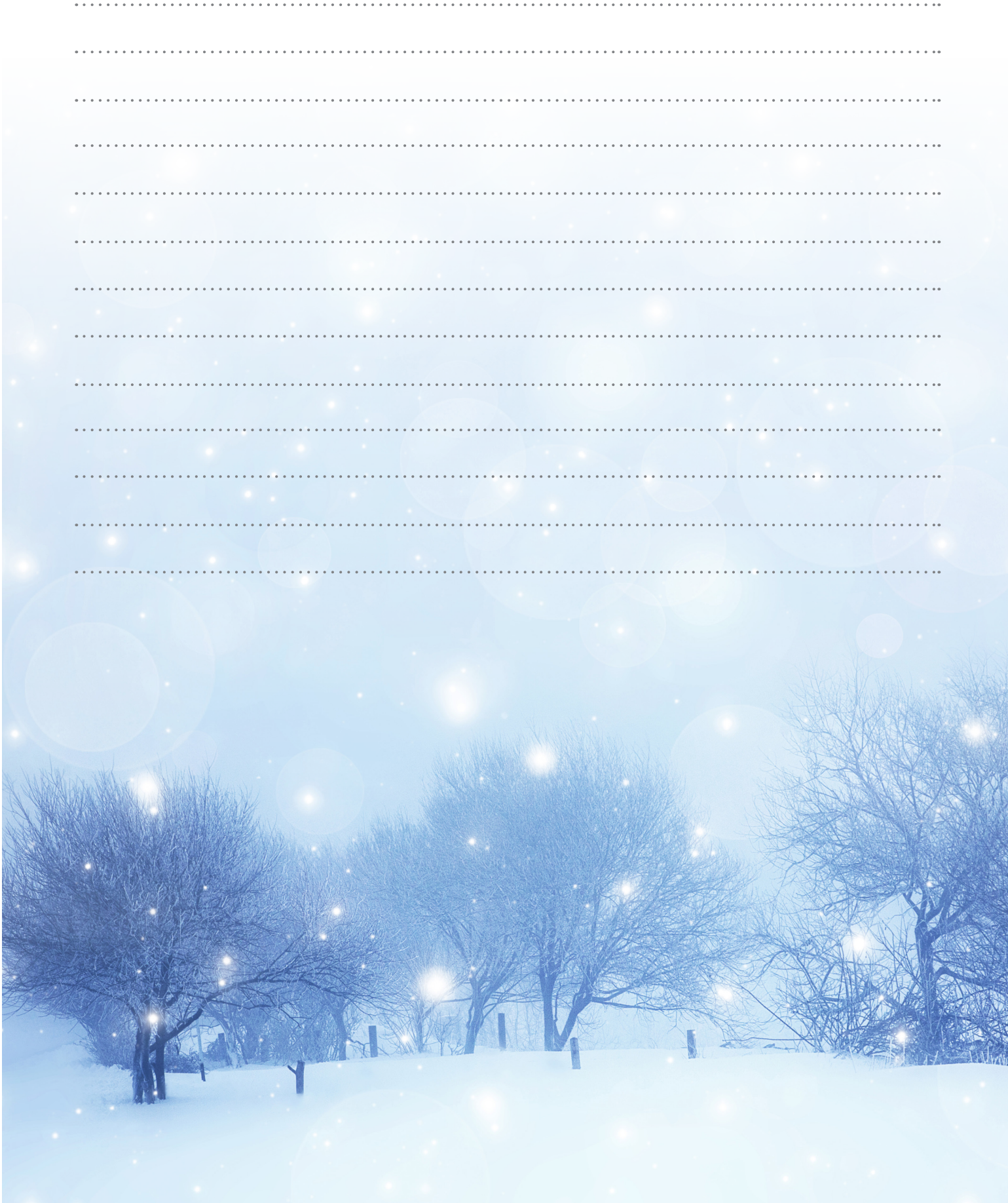






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