



Poetry shared at The Carers Network Mindfulness sessions

selected by Kate Mishcon, www.mishcon-mindfulness.com

Begin From *The Essential Brendan Kennelly*

Begin again to the summoning birds
to the sight of the light at the window,
begin to the roar of morning traffic
all along Pembroke Road.
Every beginning is a promise
born in light and dying in dark
determination and exaltation of springtime
flowering the way to work.
Begin to the pageant of queuing girls
the arrogant loneliness of swans in the canal
bridges linking the past and future
old friends passing though with us still.
Begin to the loneliness that cannot end
since it perhaps is what makes us begin,
begin to wonder at unknown faces
at crying birds in the sudden rain
at branches stark in the willing sunlight
at seagulls foraging for bread
at couples sharing a sunny secret
alone together while making good.
Though we live in a world that dreams of ending
that always seems about to give in
something that will not acknowledge conclusion
insists that we forever begin.

Be Empty of Worrying by Rumi

Be empty of worrying
Think of who created thought
Why do you stay in prison
When the door is so wide open
Move outside the tangle of fear thinking
Live in silence
Flow down and down
Into always widening
Rings of being

The Summer Day, Mary Oliver

Who made the world? Who made the swan, and the black bear?
Who made the grasshopper? This grasshopper, I mean-- the one
who has flung herself out of the grass, the one who is eating
sugar out of my hand, who is moving her jaws back and forth
instead of up and down-- who is gazing around with her
enormous and complicated eyes. Now she lifts her pale forearms
and thoroughly washes her face. Now she snaps her wings open,
and floats away. I don't know exactly what a prayer is. I do know
how to pay attention, how to fall down into the grass, how to
kneel down in the grass, how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll
through the fields, which is what I have been doing all day. Tell
me, what else should I have done? Tell me, what is it you plan to
do with your one wild and precious life?

Mary Oliver, The House of Light, Beacon Press, Boston, 1990.

First Lesson – Philip Booth

Lie back daughter, let your head be tipped back in the cup of my hand. Gently, and I will hold you. Spread your arms wide, lie out on the stream and look high at the gulls. A dead- man's float is face down. You will dive and swim soon enough where this tidewater ebbs to the sea. Daughter, believe me, when you tire on the long thrash to your island, lie up, and survive. As you float now, where I held you and let go, remember when fear cramps your heart what I told you: lie gently and wide to the light-year stars, lie back, and the sea will hold you.

Rumi, The Guest House

This being human is a guest house. Every morning a new arrival. A joy, a depression, a meanness, some momentary awareness comes as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all! Even if they are a crowd of sorrows, who violently sweep your house empty of its furniture, still, treat each guest honorably. He may be clearing you out for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice. meet them at the door laughing and invite them in.

Be grateful for whatever comes. because each has been sent as a guide from beyond.

Wild Geese, Mary Oliver

You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves.
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.
Meanwhile the world goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain
are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers.
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,
are heading home again.
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting—
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.

Walk slowly, Donna Faulds

It only takes a reminder to breathe, a moment to be still, and just
like that, something in me settles, softens, makes space for
imperfection.

The harsh voice of judgment drops to a whisper and I remember
again that life isn't a relay race; that we will all cross the finish
line; that waking up to life is what we were born for.

As many times as I forget, catch myself charging forward without
even knowing where I'm going, that many times I can make the
choice to stop, to breathe, and be, and walk slowly into the
mystery.

Such Singing in the Wild Branches, Mary Oliver

It was spring
and I finally heard him
among the first leaves – –
then I saw him clutching the limb
in an island of shade
with his red-brown feathers
all trim and neat for the new year.
First, I stood still
and thought of nothing.
Then I began to listen.
Then I was filled with gladness – –
and that's when it happened,
when I seemed to float,
to be, myself, a wing or a tree – –
and I began to understand
what the bird was saying,
and the sands in the glass
stopped
for a pure white moment
while gravity sprinkled upward
like rain, rising,
and in fact
it became difficult to tell just what it was that was singing – –
it was the thrush for sure, but it seemed
not a single thrush, but himself, and all his brothers,
and also the trees around them,
as well as the gliding, long-tailed clouds
in the perfect blue sky – – – all of them
were singing.
And, of course, so it seemed,
so was I.
Such soft and solemn and perfect music doesn't last
For more than a few moments.
It's one of those magical places wise people
like to talk about.
One of the things they say about it, that is true,

is that, once you've been there,
you're there forever.
Listen, everyone has a chance.
Is it spring, is it morning?
Are there trees near you,
and does your own soul need comforting?
Quick, then – open the door and fly on your heavy feet; the song
may already be drifting away.

Jon Kabat Zinn, Loving Kindness Poem

May I be happy
May I be healthy
May I ride the waves of my life
May I live in peace
No matter what I am given

May you be happy
May you be healthy
May you ride the waves of your life
May you live in peace
No matter what you are given

May we be happy
May we be healthy
May we ride the waves of our lives
May we live in peace
No matter what we are given.

Between the Branches, Christian Williams

There is knowledge to be had
In this world
Not like pouring liquid
In a bucket
Not like collecting
Small round tokens
Not like amassing anything

Knowledge is admiring
Beautiful tiny veins
Of a small soft leaf.
It just left the tree
And now lives
Between these two fingers
Pinching it together.

Knowledge creates a smile
Aware that the leaf
Looks back.
We two have broken away
We two are falling slowly and gracefully
We two have touched
The earth.

The leaf turns over.
It shows its face
That sees through me,
The tree
And the infinite blue
Lost
Between the branches

Willingness, Donna Faulds

In the willingness to feel, there is healing.
In the choice not to closet, cast aside of deny experience,
energy is freed, and I dive deeper into life.

There may be maturity in choosing not to act,
but there are no rewards for suppression and denial.

To fully alive is saying yes to the wide array of human feelings.

When I soften, release and breathe,
I discover that I am more than
what I think, feel, reason or believe.

Unconditional, Jennifer Paine Welwood

Willing to experience aloneness,
I discover connection everywhere;
Turning to face my fear,
I meet the warrior who lives within;
Opening to my loss,
I gain the embrace of the universe;
Surrendering into emptiness,
I find fullness without end.

Each condition I flee from pursues me,
Each condition I welcome transforms me
And becomes itself transformed
Into its radiant jewel-like essence.
I bow to the one who has made it so,
Who has crafted this Master Game.
To play it is purest delight;
To honor its form — true devotion.

Allow it all, Danna Faulds

There is no controlling life.
Try corralling a lightning bolt,
containing a tornado. Dam a
stream and it will create a new
channel. Resist, and the tide
will sweep you off your feet.
Allow, and grace will carry
you to higher ground. The only
safety lies in letting it all in –
the wild and the weak; fear,
fantasies, failures and success.
When loss rips off the doors of
the heart, or sadness veils your
vision with despair, practice
becomes simply bearing the truth.
In the choice to let go of your
known way of being, the whole
world is revealed to your new eyes.

Ryokan, Poem from 'One night one bowl'

After a night of rain, water covers the village path.
This morning the thick grass by my hut is cool.
In the window, distant mountains the color of blue-green jade.
Outside, a river flows like shimmering silk.
Under a cliff near my hut, I wash out my sore ear with pure
spring water.
In the trees, cicadas recite their fall verse.
I had prepared my robe and staff for a walk,
But the quiet beauty keeps me here

Go in and in, Donna Faulds

Be the space between two cells,
the vast, resounding
silence in which
spirit dwells.

Be sugar dissolving
on the tongue of life.

Dive in and in,
as deep as you can dive.

Be infinite, ecstatic truth.

Be love conceived and born in union.

Be exactly what you seek,
singing Yes,

tasting Yes, embracing Yes,
until there is only essence;

the All of Everything
expressing through you

as you. Go in and in
and turn away from
nothing that you find.

She Let Go, Reverend Safire Rose

Pause... Take a breathe... Read...

See what arises.

She let go.

She let go.

Without a thought or a word, she let go.

She let go of the fear.

She let go of the judgements.

She let go of the confluence of opinions swarming around her head.

She let go of the committee of indecision within her.

She let go of all the 'right' reasons.

Wholly and completely, without hesitation or worry,
she just let go.

She didn't ask anyone for advice.

She didn't read a book on how to let go.

She didn't search the scriptures.

She just let go.

She let go of all the memories that held her back.

She let go of all the anxiety that kept her from moving forward.

She let go of all the planning and all of the calculations
about how to do it just right.

She didn't promise to let go.

She didn't journal about it.

She didn't write the projected date in her Day-Timer.

She made no public announcement and put no ad in the paper.

She didn't check the weather report or read her daily horoscope.

She just let go.

She didn't analyse whether she should let go.

She didn't call her friends to discuss the matter.

She didn't do a five-step Spiritual Mind Treatment.

She didn't call the prayer-line.

She didn't utter one word.

She just let go.

No one was around when it happened.
There was no applause or congratulations.
No one thanked her or praised her.
No one noticed a thing.
Like a leaf falling from a tree, she just let go.

There was no effort.
There was no struggle.
It wasn't good and it wasn't bad.
It was what it was, and it is just that.
In the space of letting go, she let it all be.

A small smile came over her face.
A light breeze blew through her.
And the sun and the moon shone
forever more...

Love after love, Derek Walcott

The time will come
when, with elation
you will greet yourself arriving
at your own door, in your own mirror
and each will smile at the other's welcome,

and say, sit here. Eat.
You will love again the stranger who was your self.
Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart
to itself, to the stranger who has loved you

all your life, whom you ignored
for another, who knows you by heart.
Take down the love letters from the bookshelf,

the photographs, the desperate notes,
peel your own image from the mirror.
Sit. Feast on your life.

Nayyirah Waheed

“and i said to my body. softly. ‘i want to be your friend.’ it took a long breath. and replied ‘i have been waiting my whole life for this.”

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The way it is, William Stafford

There’s a thread you follow. It goes among
things that change. But it doesn’t change.
People wonder about what you are pursuing.
You have to explain about the thread.
But it is hard for others to see.
While you hold it you can’t get lost.
Tragedies happen; people get hurt
or die; and you suffer and get old.
Nothing you do can stop time’s unfolding.
You don’t ever let go of the thread.

Beannacht (“Blessing”), John O’Donohue

On the day when the weight deadens on your shoulders and you
stumble, may the clay dance to balance you.

And when your eyes freeze behind the grey window and the ghost
of loss gets in to you, may a flock of colours, indigo, red, green,
and azure blue come to awaken in you a meadow of delight.

When the canvas frays in the currach* of thought and a stain of
ocean blackens beneath you, may there come across the waters a
path of yellow moonlight to bring you safely home.

May the nourishment of the earth be yours, may the clarity of
light be yours, may the fluency of the ocean be yours, may the
protection of the ancestors be yours.

And so may a slow wind work these words of love around you, an
invisible cloak to mind your life

Forget The Past: A Poem, Steve Taylor

Forget the past.
It's just a dream you keep alive by dreaming
A balloon that wants to hit the ground and burst
But which you keep afloat by thinking.
The past is only a tail
You keep dragging behind you
Collecting dust and dirt
Until it's so heavy with bitterness and regret
It stops you moving forward.
You don't have to sit there and watch
While the scenes of your past play back
The tragi-comedy of your life
Simmering with hurt and envy
Shuddering with embarrassment
Stabbing yourself with pangs of regret.
There is no past
There are only memories of events
And every memory is refracted through
A hall of mental mirrors
Until whatever once was true
Dissipates and disappears
Like vapour trails fading in the sky.
So cut the tail, and cut the tale
Turn the mental projector off
Don't strain your eyes trying to see through the fog
When the panorama of the present stretches
Clear and bright around you.

The Cure for it all, Julia Fehrenbacher

Go gently today, don't hurry
or think about the next thing. Walk
with the quiet trees, can you believe
how brave they are—how kind? Model your life
after theirs. Blow kisses
at yourself in the mirror
especially when
you think you've messed up. Forgive
yourself for not meeting your unreasonable
expectations. You are human, not
God—don't be so arrogant.
Praise fresh air
clean water, good dogs. Spin
something from joy. Open
a window, even if
it's cold outside. Sit. Close
your eyes. Breathe. Allow
the river
of it all to pulse
through eyelashes
fingertips, bare toes. Breathe in
breathe out. Breathe until
you feel
your bigness, until the sun
rises in your veins. Breathe
until you stop needing
anything
to be different.

Don't go outside, Kabir

Don't go outside your house to see the flowers.
My friend, don't bother with that excursion.
Inside your body there are flowers.
One flower has a thousand petals.
That will do for a place to sit.
Sitting there you will have a glimpse of beauty
Inside the body and out of it,
Before gardens and after gardens.

Peace Is This Moment Without Judgment, Dorothy Hunt

Do you think peace requires an end to war?
Or tigers eating only vegetables?
Does peace require an absence from
your boss, your spouse, yourself?...
Do you think peace will come some other place than here?
Some other time than Now?
In some other heart than yours?

Peace is this moment without judgment.
That is all. This moment in the Heart-space
where everything that is is welcome.
Peace is this moment without thinking
that it should be some other way,
that you should feel some other thing,
that your life should unfold according to your plans.

Peace is this moment without judgment,
this moment in the Heart-space where
everything that is is welcome.

The patience of ordinary things, Pat Schneider

It is a kind of love, is it not?
How the cup holds the tea,
How the chair stands sturdy and foursquare,
How the floor receives the bottoms of shoes
Or toes. How soles of feet know
Where they're supposed to be.
I've been thinking about the patience
Of ordinary things, how clothes
Wait respectfully in closets
And soap dries quietly in the dish,
And towels drink the wet
From the skin of the back.
And the lovely repetition of stairs.
And what is more generous than a window?

Warrior, Laura Ding-Edwards @rainbirdroots

When the world is on your shoulders
And your heart feels full of lead
And your stomach churns like butter
And the voice inside your head
Is reminding you of everything
You've ever said or done
All your failures and regrets
All the times your fear has won
Take a minute to remember
That you've survived this all before
You've battled and you've conquered
When you thought you had no more
You are stronger than you realise
You are brave and wise and kind
And you know you're so much bigger
Than the doubts that fill your mind
So breathe it in then let it out
Allow the ebb and flow
You can win this war, you always do
You're a warrior you know.

Why I Wake Early

by Mary Oliver

Hello, sun in my face.
Hello, you who make the morning
and spread it over the fields
and into the faces of the tulips
and the nodding morning glories,
and into the windows of, even, the
miserable and crotchety—

best preacher that ever was,
dear star, that just happens
to be where you are in the universe
to keep us from ever-darkness,
to ease us with warm touching,
to hold us in the great hands of light—
good morning, good morning, good morning.

Watch, now, how I start the day
in happiness, in kindness