

Mindful Self-Compassion Poetry and Web Links

Just For Me

Anon.

What if a poem were just for me? What if I were audience enough because I am, Because this person here is alive, is flesh, Is conscious, has feelings, counts? What if this one person mattered not just for what She can do in the world But because she is part of the world And has a soft and tender heart? What if that heart mattered, if kindness to this one mattered? What if she were not distinct from all others, But instead connected to others in her sense of being distinct, of being alone, Of being uniquely isolated, the one piece removed from the picture— All the while vulnerable under, deep under, the layers of sedimentary defense.

Oh let me hide Let me be ultimately great, Ultimately shy, Remove me, then I don't have to... be...

But I am. Through all the antics of distinctness from others, or not-really-there-ness, I remain No matter what my disguise— Genius, idiot, gloriousness, scum— Underneath, it's still just me, still here, Still warm and breathing and human With another chance simply to say hi, and recognize my tenderness And be just a little bit kind to this one as well, Because she counts, too.

Kindness

Naomi Shihab Nye

Before you know what kindness really is you must lose things, feel the future dissolve in a moment

like salt in a weakened broth. What you held in your hand, what you counted and carefully saved, all this must go so you know how desolate the landscape can be between the regions of kindness. How you ride and ride thinking the bus will never stop, the passengers eating maize and chicken will stare out the window forever.

Before you learn the tender gravity of kindness, you must travel where the Indian in a white poncho lies dead by the side of the road. You must see how this could be you, how he too was someone who journeyed through the night with plans and the simple breath that kept him alive.

Before you know kindness as the deepest thing inside, you must know sorrow as the other deepest thing. You must wake up with sorrow. You must speak to it till your voice catches the thread of all sorrows and you see the size of the cloth.

Then it is only kindness that makes sense anymore, only kindness that ties your shoes and sends you out into the day to mail letters and

purchase bread, only kindness that raises its head from the crowd of the world to say it is I you have been looking for, and then goes with you every where like a shadow or a friend.

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 clear 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.

The Journey

Mary Oliver

One day you finally knew what you had to do, and began, though the voices around you kept shouting their bad advice-- though the whole house began to tremble and you felt the old tug at your ankles. "Mend my life!" each voice cried. But you didn't stop. You knew what you had to do, though the wind pried with its stiff fingers at the very foundations,..... though their melancholy was terrible. It was already late enough, and a wild night, and the road full of fallen branches and stones. But little by little, as you left their voices behind, the stars began to burn through the sheets of clouds, and there was a new voice which you slowly recognized as your own, that kept you company

as you strode deeper and deeper into the world, determined to do the only thing you could do-- determined to save

the only life you could save.

From Out of the Cave

Joyce Kilpack

When you have been

at war with yourself

for so many years that

you have forgotten why,

when you have been driving

for hours and only

gradually begin to realize

that you have lost the way,
when you have cut
hastily into the fabric,
when you have signed
papers in distraction,
when it has been centuries
since you watched the sun set
or the rain fall, and the clouds,
drifting overhead, pass as flat
as anything on a postcard;
when, in the midst of these
everyday nightmares, you understand that you could
wake up,
you could turn
and go back
to the last thing you
remember doing
with your whole heart:
that passionate kiss,
the brilliant drop of love
rolling along the tongue of a green leaf,
then you wake,
you stumble from your cave,
blinking in the sun,
naming every shadow
as it slips.

Start Close In

David Whyte

Start close in, don't take the second step or the third, start with the first thing close in, the step you don't want to take.

Start with the ground you know, the pale ground beneath your feet, your own

way of starting the conversation.

Start with your own question, give up on other people's questions, don't let them smother something simple.

To find another's voice, follow your own voice, wait until that voice becomes a private ear listening to another.

Start right now take a small step you can call your own don't follow someone else's heroics, be humble and focused,

start close in, don't mistake that other for your own.

Start close in, don't take the second step or the third, start with the first thing

close in, the step you don't want to take.

Everything is Waiting for You

David Whyte

Your great mistake is to act the drama as if you were alone. As if life were a progressive and cunning crime with no witness to

the tiny hidden transgressions. To feel abandoned is to deny the intimacy of your surroundings. Surely, even you, at times, have felt the grand array; the swelling presence, and the chorus, crowding out your solo voice You must note the way the soap dish enables you, or the window latch grants you freedom. Alertness is the hidden discipline of familiarity. The stairs are your mentor of things to come, the doors have always been there to frighten you and invite you, and the tiny speaker in the phone is your dream-ladder to divinity.

Put down the weight of your aloneness and ease into the conversation. The kettle is singing even as it pours you a drink, the cooking pots have left their arrogant aloofness and seen the good in you at last. All the birds

and creatures of the world are unutterably themselves. Everything is waiting for you.

The Silence

Wendell Berry

Though the air is full of singing my head is loud with the labor of words.

Though the season is rich with fruit, my tongue hungers for the sweet of speech.

Though the beech is golden I cannot stand beside it mute, but must say

"It is golden," while the leaves stir and fall with a sound that is not a name.

It is in the silence that my hope is, and my aim. A song whose lines

I cannot make or sing sounds men's silence like a root. Let me say

and not mourn: the world lives in the death of speech and sings there

The Guest House

Rumi

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're 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 whoever comes, because each has been sent as a guide from beyond.

Aimless Love

Billy Collins

This morning as I walked along the lakeshore, I fell in love with a wren and later in the day with a mouse the cat had dropped under the dining room table.

In the shadows of an autumn evening, I fell for a seamstress still at her machine in the tailor's window, and later for a bowl of broth,

steam rising like smoke from a naval battle.

This is the best kind of love, I thought, without recompense, without gifts, or unkind words, without suspicion, or silence on the telephone.

The love of the chestnut, the jazz cap and one hand on the wheel.

No lust, no slam of the door – the love of the miniature orange tree, the clean white shirt, the hot evening shower, the highway that cuts across Florida.

No waiting, no huffiness, or rancor – just a twinge every now and then

for the wren who had built her nest on a low branch overhanging the water and for the dead mouse, still dressed in its light brown suit.

But my heart is always propped up in a field on its tripod, ready for the next arrow.

After I carried the mouse by the tail to a pile of leaves in the woods, I found myself standing at the bathroom sink gazing down affectionately at the soap,

so patient and soluble, so at home in its pale green soap dish. I could feel myself falling again as I felt its turning in my wet hands and caught the scent of lavender and stone.

Awareness

John Astin

Awareness – her gaze is so constant, our every move watched with such affection, a ceaseless vigil without condition or agenda, silent, patient, unrelenting in her

embrace.

There is endless room in the heart of this lover, infinite space for whatever foolishness we may toss her way.

But she is also crafty, this one – a thief who will steal away everything we ever cherished, all our beliefs, all our ideas, all our philosophies, until nothing is left but her shimmering wakefulness, this simple love for what is.

Myself and My Person

Anna Swir (Swirscynska)

There are moments when I feel more clearly than ever that I am in the company of my own person. This comforts and reassures me, this heartens me, just as my tridimensional body is heartened by my own authentic shadow.

There are moments when I really feel more clearly than ever that I am in the company of my own person.

I stop at a street corner to turn left and I wonder what would happen if my own person walked to the right.

Until now that has not happened
but it does not settle the question.

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 yourself
Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart
To itself, to the stranger who has loved you
All you life, whom you have 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

Saint Francis and the Sow

Galway Kinnell

The bud stands for all things, even for those things that don't flower, for everything flowers, from within, of self-blessing; though sometimes it is necessary to re-teach a thing its loveliness, to put a hand on its brow of the flower and retell it in words and in touch it is lovely until it flowers again from within, of self-blessing; as Saint Francis put his hand on the creased

forehead of the sow, and told her in words and in touch blessings of earth on the sow, and the sow began remembering all down her thick length, from the earthen snout all the way through the fodder and slops to the spiritual curl of the tail, from the hard spininess spiked out from the spine

down through the great broken heart to the sheer blue milken dreaminess spurting and shuddering from the fourteen teats into the fourteen mouths sucking and

blowing beneath them: the long, perfect, loveliness of sow.

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.

With That Moon Language

Hafiz

Admit something: Everyone you see, you say to them, "Love me." Of course you do not do this out loud, otherwise someone would call the cops. Still, though, think about this, this great pull in us to connect. Why not become the one who lives with a full moon in each eye that is always saying, with that sweet moon language, what every other eye in this world is dying to hear?

Unconditional

Jennifer 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

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.

Awakening Rights

Mark Nepo

We waste so much energy trying to cover up who we are when beneath every attitude is the want to be loved, and beneath every anger is a wound to be healed and beneath every sadness is the fear that there will not be enough time. Our challenge each day is not to get dressed to face the world but to unglove ourselves so that the doorknob feels cold and the car handle feels wet and the kiss goodbye feels like the lips of another being, soft and unrepeatable.

The Velveteen Rabbit

"What is REAL?" asked the Rabbit one day, when they were lying side by side near the nursery fender, before Nana came to tidy the room. "Does it mean having things that buzz inside you and a stick-out handle?"

"Real isn't how you are made," said the Skin Horse. "It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real."

"Does it hurt?" asked the Rabbit.

"Sometimes," said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. "When you are Real you don't mind being hurt."

"Does it happen all at once, like being wound up," he asked, "or bit by bit?"

"It doesn't happen all at once," said the Skin Horse. "You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't happen often to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand."

"I suppose you are real?" said the Rabbit. And then he wished he had not said it, for he thought the Skin Horse might be sensitive.

But the Skin Horse only smiled.

WEB LINKS

Center for Mindful Self-Compassion

www.CenterForMSC.org

University of California, San Diego, Center for Mindfulness Mindfulness-Based Professional Training Institute <http://mbpti.org/>

Center for MSC YouTube Channel

www.youtube.com/channel/UCH6fuu1ChJNrs7ecSDdR8QQ

Kristin Neff

www.Self-Compassion.org

Chris Germer

www.MindfulSelfCompassion.org www.MeditationAndPsychotherapy.org

Other Links

Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education

www.ccare.stanford.edu

Greater Good Science Center

www.GreaterGood.com

Center for Investigating Healthy Minds

<http://www.investigatinghealthyminds.org/>

Paul Gilbert – Compassionate Mind Foundation

www.CompassionateMind.co.uk