

Please find a comfortable position. Take a deep breath in and out. I will read the following poem, Wild Geese by Mary Oliver, three times through. Before each read through, I will prompt you with a guiding question. After each read through, we will have a full minute of silence. As I read Wild Geese by Mary Oliver this first time, pay attention to what comes up for you. It may be a phrase. It may be a word. You may wish to write it down, though this is not necessary.

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 you to like the wild geese, harsh and exciting, over and over announcing your place in the family of things.

As I read this poem again a second time, note what feelings come up for you. 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 you to like the wild geese, harsh and exciting, over and over announcing your place in the family of things.

As I read through this poem again, a third and final time, notice a word or phrase that stands out for you. This might be the same as the first time. This might be different. 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.

As you notice what came up for you during this time, think about what you are doing next in your day. Perhaps whatever arose for you could be rested for now, or maybe this focus time highlights someone you can and would like to call today. Perhaps to check in on, or to seek support from. Did a question arise that you'd like to explore further? Perhaps in an extended journal entry, or mulled over on a walk. Please take this next minute now to visualize what you are heading into next in your day, and how you might integrate this contemplative time.