

Mindful Self-Compassion Poetry, Video, and Web Links

Just For Me

Anna Villalobos

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 Sutphen

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.

One Morning
Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer

One morning
we will wake up
and forget to build
that wall we've been building,
the one between us
the one we've been building
for years, perhaps
out of some sense
of right and boundary,
perhaps out of habit.

One morning
we will wake up
and let our empty hands
hang empty at our sides.
Perhaps they will rise,
as empty things
sometimes do
when blown

by the wind.
Perhaps they simply
will not remember
how to grasp, how to rage.

We will wake up
that morning
and we will have
misplaced all our theories
about why and how
and who did what
to whom, we will have mislaid
all our timelines
of when and plans of what
and we will not scramble
to write the plans and theories anew.

On that morning,
not much else
will have changed.
Whatever is blooming
will still be in bloom.
Whatever is wilting
will wilt. There will be fields
to plow and trains
to load and children
to feed and work to do.
And in every moment,
in every action, we will
feel the urge to say thank you,
we will follow the urge to bow.

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?

Belonging

John O'Donohue

May you listen to your longing to be free.
May the frames of your belonging be generous enough for your dreams.
May you arise each day with a voice of blessing whispering in your heart.
May you find a harmony between your soul and your life.
May the sanctuary of your soul never be haunted.
May you know the eternal longing that lives at the heart of time.
May there be kindness in your gaze when you look within
May you never place walls between the light and yourself.
May you allow the wild beauty of the invisible world to gather you,
Mind you, and embrace you in belonging.

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.

**currach* = type of Irish boat

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.

The Word

by Tony Hoagland

Down near the bottom
of the crossed-out list
of things you have to do today,

between "green thread"
and "broccoli," you find
that you have penciled "sunlight."

Resting on the page, the word
is beautiful. It touches you
as if you had a friend

and sunlight were a present
he had sent from someplace distant
as this morning- to cheer you up,

and to remind you that,
among your duties, pleasure
is a thing

that also needs accomplishing.
Do you remember?
that time and light are kinds

of love, and love
is no less practical
than a coffee grinder

or a sage spare tire?
Tomorrow you may be utterly
without a clue,

but today you get a telegram
from the heart in exile,
proclaiming that the kingdom

still exists,
the king and queen alive,
still speaking to their children,

-to any one among them
who can find the time

to sit out in the sun and listen.

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.

Compassion

Miller Williams

Have compassion for everyone you meet, even if they don't want it.
What appears bad manners,
an ill temper or cynicism is always a sign of things
no ears have heard, no eyes have seen.
You do not know what wars are going on
down there where the spirit meets the bone.

Taking bold poetic license, the same poem can be reinterpreted as a self-compassion poem by inserting the following italicized words

Have compassion for *yourself*, even if *you* don't want it.
What appears bad manners,
an ill temper or cynicism *may* be a sign of things
your ears *could no longer hear*,
your eyes have *since overlooked*
You *may* not know what wars are going on
down there where the spirit meets the bone.

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.

Links for Videos

Moments: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jNVPalNZD_I

Twin boys talking: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_JmA2CIUvUY

Good Will Hunting: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=92D15qtI_Gk

The Fly: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dSsAEWkmBFU>

Empathy with Matthieu Ricard: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=khjPsVG-6QA>

Bodhisattva in the Metro: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kKnY8tBLG3g>

My Son Ruined My Life: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FRbL46mWx9w>

Japanese Bowls –Peter Mayer: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qOAzobTIGr8>

WEB LINKS

Center for Mindful Self-Compassion

www.CenterForMSC.org

Kristin Neff

www.Self-Compassion.org

Chris Germer

www.MindfulSelfCompassion.org

University of California, San Diego

Mindfulness-Based Professional Training Institute

<http://mbpti.org/msc-mindful-self-compassion-teacher-training>

Compassionate Mind Foundation

<http://compassionatemind.co.uk>

Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education

www.CCare.Stanford.edu

Center for Healthy Minds
<http://centerhealthyminds.org>

Greater Good Science Center
www.GreaterGood.com