

Inner Healing

Sustaining Our Wholeness

by Nicole Kahn



At the moment of our conception, we begin life with the potential for wholeness. We are then birthed into the physical world with a full sense of aliveness: balanced, connected, and attuned to ourselves and those around us. We are whole, complete, and perfect. As we pulsate through time and space, we endure wounds and internalize these events, hardening our hearts. As we mature, life becomes an arduous juggling act of responsibilities, emotions, needs, and wants. This constructed chaos can take a toll on our wellbeing, leaving us with a sense of imbalance. It disconnects us from our true nature, as well as that of others. Such detachment drives us to live in our minds, fueling the wearisome cycle of our superficial search for completeness. We get tricked into believing that wholeness exists outside of ourselves and can be derived through our accomplishments or the love of another. Yet beneath the surface of our thoughts, we may have a sense of unevenness. It is in this deep knowing that we find the spark that has the power to return us to our original wholeness.

Coming back to ourselves in this way reveals our capacity to sustain our inner balance, creating a life filled with ease, abundance and joy. This requires that we take a candid self-inventory of both the inner gifts that we are willing to own, as well as the inner demons that we struggle so tirelessly against. Begin to ask yourself questions such as: What do I like about myself? If I could change one thing about myself, what would that be? What values have I taken with me into adulthood? How do I spend my time? Where do I fit in? When do I feel most unlike myself? As we authentically answer these core questions, we gain a heightened awareness into the essence of ourselves and ultimately see the paradoxically imperfect nature of our humanness.

Becoming aware of both sides of our inner landscape—giving/selfish, truthful/dishonest, loving/hateful, compassionate/judgmental, proud/shameful, connected/aloof—without judgment or aversion, are the seeds that actualize our true nature once again. Attuning to our paradoxical nature in this way, just as we did when we took our first few breaths, provides us with a sense of completeness; nothing is lacking. Allowing and accepting our imperfect foundation leads us to a fluid integration of our many parts.

Maintaining this integration requires that we compassionately return to the truthfulness of our existence, again and again. This homecoming compels us to cultivate self-awareness, which softens our hearts and promotes radical self-acceptance. Well known writer and Buddhist nun Pema Chodron reminds us to “Stop. Notice. Appreciate. Share.” These four words can be pivotal in staying awake to who we are, while providing us with a simple structure to use throughout our daily lives.

Each day, in the morning as you arise and in the evening as you lie down to sleep, begin a practice of mindfulness, using the structure of Stop-Notice-Appreciate-Share. First, simply stop. Take a comfortable seat in a quiet place. Next, begin to notice the quality of your breath. Is it shallow or deep, forced or easy? Begin to fully experience your breath. Watch, sense, and hear it. You may become distracted with thoughts, yet each distraction is an opportunity to return to yourself. Coming back to the breath again and again connects us to our true nature and deepens our sense of completeness. As you go through the cycles of distraction and awareness, gently bring yourself back to the breath without judgment or disdain. Next, identify one thing in your experience that merits appreciation. Maybe it's your ability to take the time to stop, or the calm you feel as you sit. Perhaps it's appreciating the pain you feel and your ability to develop compassion for others. Once identified, share this appreciation with others. Sharing takes on many forms—through helpful actions, verbal expression, or prayer. This simple practice of authentically being with ourselves is all we need to reconnect with our completeness and perfection. It is the ground that fully supports and sustains our wholeness.

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