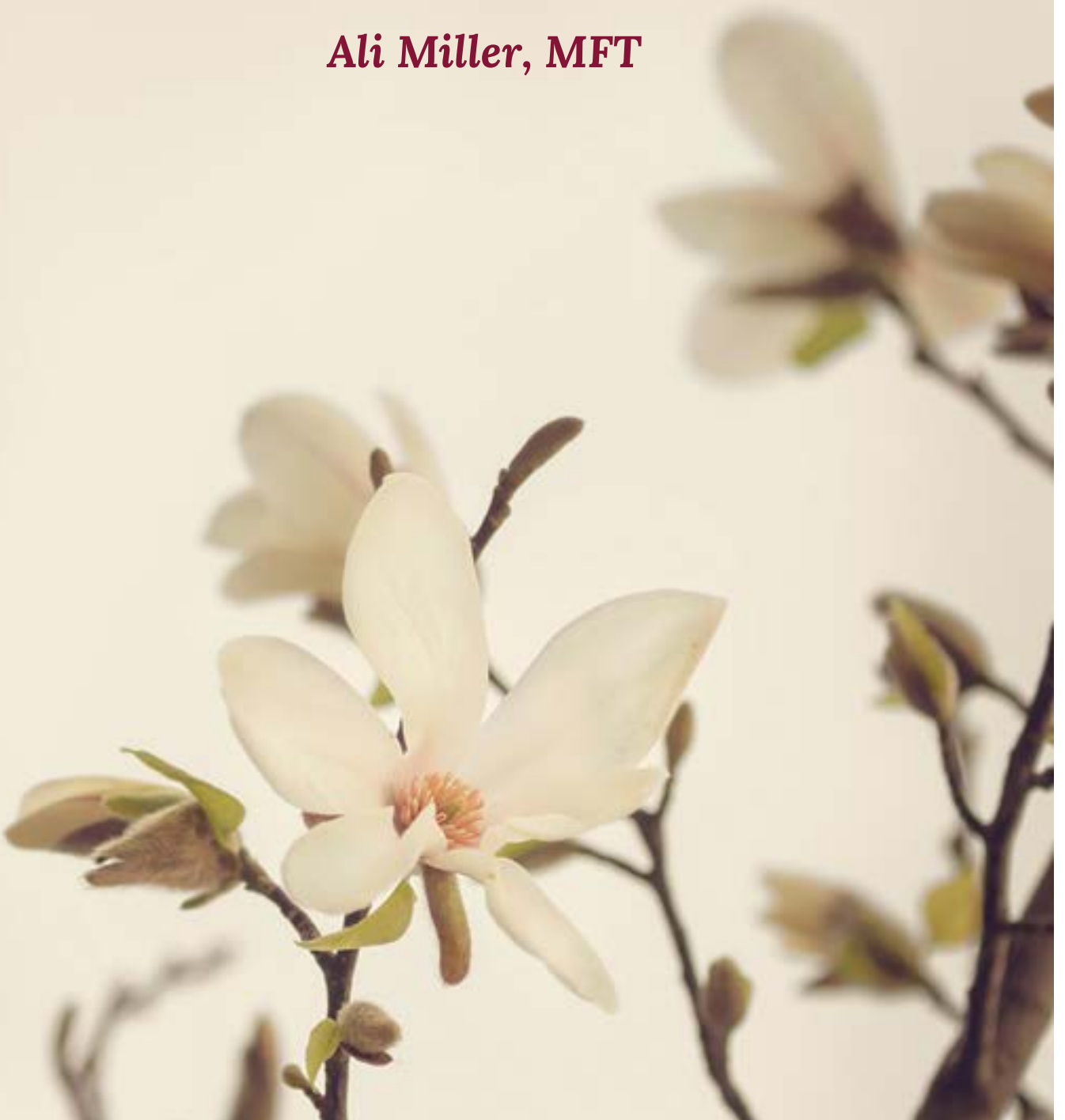


Befriending Ourselves

Resources for Inner Peace
and Compassionate Self-Care

Ali Miller, MFT



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How Do You Care for Yourself When Life Gets Hard?

You've probably realized by now that life can feel really hard: You don't always get what you want, and you often get what you don't want. Have you ever stopped to notice how you relate to yourself when difficulties arise?

Tuning In to Your Inner Dialogue

Oftentimes, when things don't go our way and we experience difficult emotions, we can become our own worst enemy. Have you ever listened to your inner dialogue and how violent it can be? We fail a test and criticize ourselves as stupid. We don't get the job we wanted and tell ourselves we'll never amount to anything. We get angry about something and berate ourselves for not being "nice" or "spiritual" or a "good person."

Befriending Yourself

If this harsh way of relating to yourself sounds familiar, you are not alone! Many of us have learned to criticize ourselves from our families and a culture that is focused on perpetual self-improvement. But what if there was another way you could relate to yourself when you're having an experience you'd rather not be having? What if instead of being your own worst enemy you could be your own best friend?

How?

The practices and resources in this collection are here to help you relate to pain, anger, fear, anxiety, disappointment, loneliness, shame, sadness, and any other difficult emotional experience with compassion. If you're tired of being in conflict with yourself and are longing for inner peace, I encourage you to check out these resources. You will learn about a variety of practices for inner peace and compassionate self-care, and you can start implementing all of these tools immediately. All of these practices are intended to help you treat yourself with the kindness and love you would bestow upon your best friend, a beloved pet, or your own real or imagined baby.



Mindfulness

What is Mindfulness?

Want a quick and easy way to clear your mind and let go of your worries? Try mindfulness. Mindfulness can be defined as simply being aware of what is happening in the present moment. Without this awareness of the moment, we are usually lost in thought about the past or the future. Many of us spend most of our lives caught up in a virtual reality of thought, disconnected from the aliveness of this present moment, and this contributes to a lot of the everyday suffering that seems to characterize the human condition. Mindfulness practices help us get in touch with our senses so that we can fully experience this life as it unfolds moment by moment.

Practicing Mindfulness

Here are some mindfulness practices you can experiment with right now:

1) **Mindfulness of Breath:** Bring your attention to your breath. As you breathe in, feel your belly rise. As you breathe out, feel your belly fall. Try not to manipulate the breath; simply breathe naturally with awareness. Do this several times. You'll probably notice that your attention will soon begin to wander, and you'll forget all about your breath. Don't fret! When you realize that your mind has wandered (and that you were probably thinking about something), gently acknowledge that you were thinking (say to yourself, "Ah, thinking,") and KINDLY return your attention to the belly rising and falling. (Caution: Please don't beat yourself up for having a wandering mind! It is the nature of the mind to wander. Compassion is key here.) Simply breathing, and knowing that you're breathing.

2) **Mindfulness of Eating:** One of the classic practices taught in mindfulness classes is the raisin exercise. Give yourself a full minute to really experience eating one raisin. Begin by looking at the raisin, smelling it, feeling it in your hand. Place it on your tongue and sense how it feels in your mouth. Slowly begin to chew and notice the sensations of chewing. As you swallow, pay attention to the many processes involved in swallowing. Don't *think about* the experience; allow yourself to fully *experience* the sensations. Any time you eat is an opportunity to practice mindfulness since so many senses are involved. Simply eating, and knowing that you're eating.

3) **Mindfulness of Emotions:** It seems to be a human tendency to push away unpleasant emotions and cling to pleasant emotions. When fear or envy or nervousness or sadness, or any "negative" emotion arises, see if you can simply notice it and name it, rather than pushing it away and trying to feel something else. How does the fear feel in your body? Where in your body do you feel it? Can you turn your attention away from the thoughts about yourself or the situation and just pay attention to the sensation of fear itself? Simply feeling, and knowing that you're feeling.

4) **Mindfulness of Sound:** Wherever you are right now, take a few minutes to listen to sounds as they arise and pass away. Clock ticking, cars driving by, the humming of electricity, birds chirping. See if you can simply attend to the sounds, without focusing on the thoughts about the sound. Simply hearing, and knowing that you're hearing.

5) **Mindfulness of Walking:** Anytime you are walking, you can practice mindfulness of walking. As your left foot rises, pay attention to the sensations in your foot, and as you place your left foot down, be there for that moment. Do the same when your right foot lifts and moves and lowers. You can even repeat silently to yourself, "Lift, move, lower, lift, move, lower..." When you realize your attention has moved from walking to thinking, gently notice that and bring your attention compassionately back to walking. Simply walking, and knowing that you're walking.



Befriending Ourselves with Mindfulness

All of the practices for inner peace and self-compassion depend on a certain degree of mindfulness. How can you tend to your emotional pain if you are not even aware that you are in pain? The more aware we are of what is going on inside ourselves, the more choices we have about how to respond. Do you want to respond harshly, or do you want to respond kindly? The choice is yours.

How Do I Learn More?

Mindfulness has its roots in Buddhist meditation, but it is not limited to spiritual practice. Many Western health care professionals are incorporating mindfulness into their treatment plans. For more information on mindfulness in health care, check out the [Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society](#).

If you are interested in getting formal mindfulness training, there are many options, from classes to daylongs to retreats. Two popular programs are Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT).

Recommended Reading:

- [Wherever You Go There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life](#) by Jon Kabat-Zinn
- [The Mindful Way Through Depression: Freeing Yourself from Chronic Unhappiness](#) by Williams, Teasdale, Segal, and Kabat-Zinn
- [Radical Acceptance: Embracing Your Life With the Heart of a Buddha](#) by Tara Brach
- [Open Mind: Women's Daily Inspiration for Becoming Mindful](#) by Diane Mariechild

Emotional Freedom Techniques

What is EFT?

EFT (Emotional Freedom Techniques) is a tool that integrates aspects of all of the practices described here: mindfulness, lovingkindness, tonglen, and self-empathy. It was developed by Gary Craig, a Stanford engineering graduate and minister, and he calls it “an emotional version of acupuncture.”

Components of EFT

EFT involves three steps:

- Acknowledging and naming a specific experience that is troubling you
- Tapping on acupressure points on your body (see video below)
- Offering yourself a compassionate affirmation (see below)

[Watch a video of someone doing EFT](#) to get a sense of where the acupressure points are (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X4EDgTc0AyQ>).

Practicing EFT

Take a moment to check in with yourself right now. Notice any physical or emotional discomfort, any experience you are having that you would rather not be having.

Begin by tapping on the first acupressure point described in the video above, while saying to yourself, “Even though I’m feeling _____, I deeply and completely accept myself.” Continue repeating this affirmation to yourself as you move through the tapping points.

Like all the practices on this website, EFT can be used when you are experiencing something unpleasant and are wanting to take good care of yourself. For example, let’s say you are feeling nervous because you have to give a presentation. If you are like most people, when you are nervous your mind is occupied by worst-case scenarios, which makes the nervousness even stronger. Instead of following those negative thoughts about an unknown future, next time try tapping on the acupressure points and silently repeat to yourself, “Even though I’m feeling nervous, I deeply and completely accept myself.”

How Do I Learn More?

Gary Craig, the creator of EFT, has a [website](#) with a plethora of information about EFT, including a free tutorial.

Self-Empathy

What is Self-Empathy?

When you think of empathy, you probably think of putting yourself in someone else's shoes, imagining what their life is like. Empathy is about connecting with what it's like to be someone else. In order to empathize with someone, you need to pay attention to them and really listen to them. Self-empathy is similar, but it's about really listening to yourself. It's about connecting with what's alive in you, turning your attention inward to see what is going on for you. Ideally, it's about turning towards yourself with loving, warm attention. Self-empathy is particularly helpful when you're experiencing some sort of emotional discomfort. It is a way to stay connected and compassionate with yourself when your tendency is to avoid, distract, or judge.

Some Background about Self-Empathy

Self-empathy is a term used in Nonviolent Communication (NVC), which is a process that was developed by an international peacemaker and psychologist named Marshall Rosenberg. NVC provides tools for thinking, speaking, and listening in ways that foster connection and understanding. It is a practice that helps us connect with ourselves and others.

Marshall Rosenberg described empathy as "pure presence to what is alive in a person at this moment." We can connect with what is alive in a person (including ourselves) by tuning in to their feelings and needs. A key NVC teaching is that all people have the same universal human needs, and that we are attempting to meet needs in everything we say and do. These needs include connection, well-being, honesty, play, peace, meaning, and autonomy, among many others. We feel certain emotions when our needs are met, and other emotions when our needs are not met. Feelings, then, are pointers to our precious human needs.

Practicing Self-Empathy

Practicing self-empathy can be very helpful in cultivating inner peace and self-compassion. The practice of self-empathy involves being present with yourself and turning your attention inward by asking yourself four questions: (it can be simpler if you drop the first and fourth questions)

What am I observing?

What am I feeling?

What am I needing right now?

Do I have a request of myself or someone else?

For instance, you may find yourself feeling lonely. Next time you notice yourself feeling lonely, rather than avoiding the feeling, distracting yourself away from the feeling, or beating yourself up or even subtly judging or criticizing yourself for having the feeling, try this instead:

1) Observation: Identify what the triggering event was. e.g. I saw on Facebook that an acquaintance is having a party and I wasn't invited.

2) Feeling: Ask yourself, "What am I feeling?" e.g. I feel lonely.

3) Need: Connect that feeling to a need/value and ask yourself, "What need is not met?" e.g. I have a need for connection.

3a) Give yourself a minute or so to "sit with" that need and how important it (e.g. connection) is to you. See if you can find care and compassion for yourself for having an unmet need for connection in this moment.

4) Request: After "sitting with" that need for connection, do you have any request of yourself or someone else to help you meet that need? e.g. How about calling a friend and making a date to hang out?

Isn't that a much kinder way of responding to yourself than telling yourself what a loser you are and how you're not worthy of being invited to parties?

This process will help you direct your attention downward from the head (where the negative thinking resides), down into the heart (where the feelings reside), and into the belly (where the precious needs reside). In this way, self-empathy is another tool for helping you get out of your head and into your heart and body.

How Do I Learn More?

[The Center for Nonviolent Communication](#) is a great resource for learning more about self-empathy and NVC in general. For a printable list of feelings, click [here](#), and for a printable list of universal human needs, click [here](#) (<https://www.cnvc.org/training/resource/needs-inventory>).

[The Communication Dojo](#) is a great resource to get lots of practice and tips with all things NVC. Newt Bailey and Ali Miller teach the [Introduction to Connected Communication Online Course](#).

[BayNVC](#) offers a multitude of classes, workshops, and retreats on Nonviolent Communication. A wonderful resource for those living in or visiting the Bay Area.

[NVC Academy](#) offers a wide range of high-quality NVC elearning courses, programs and resources. Another great way to learn more about NVC without even leaving your bed!

Recommended reading:

[Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life](#) by Marshall Rosenberg



Tonglen

A Buddhist Perspective on Emotional Suffering

We all want to be happy. It is human nature to seek pleasure and avoid pain. Most of us spend our lives trying to attain as much happiness as possible and prevent as much sadness as possible. The paradox is, however, that this causes suffering.

Buddhist teachings point out that suffering arises when we resist whatever is happening in the present moment. When we don't accept the moment as it is, we suffer. While it is the most natural thing in the world to try to avoid pain, pain is unavoidable; it is a fact of life. When we resist this fact, we suffer.

What is Tonglen?

Tonglen can be translated from Tibetan into English as "taking in and sending out." It is a Tibetan Buddhist practice that can assist us in countering the human tendency to resist emotional discomfort. Instead of engaging in the habitual response of pushing away pain, the practice of tonglen invites us to bring the discomfort close. It is totally counter-intuitive, yet it is a profound way to cultivate inner peace and compassion.

Practicing Tonglen

Take a moment right now to check in with yourself. Take a few mindful breaths. Notice how you are feeling in your body. Is there any physical discomfort? How are you feeling emotionally? Any emotional discomfort? If nothing is standing out right now, think of a time recently when you were experiencing an unpleasant emotion—could be anything, like sadness, fear, or anger. Instead of trying to talk yourself out of the feeling or judging yourself for having had the feeling, hold the feeling in your awareness, and as you breathe in, breathe in the feeling. If it is sadness, for example, breathe in the sadness. As you do this, imagine you are connecting with all the other people on the planet who are experiencing sadness right now. You breathe in sadness for all of them. Then, as you breathe out, breathe out compassion for yourself and all people who experience sadness. Breathe in the sadness, and breathe out compassion.



We're All in this Together

Practicing tonglen is a powerful way to connect with yourself and all of humanity. We all experience sadness and other difficult emotions at different times, yet when we do, we often feel very alone in it. This practice reminds us that we're not alone when we are in pain. If we have the courage to break the habitual pattern of pushing away the pain, we can experience deep compassion for ourselves and all beings.

How Do I Learn More?

Pema Chodron is an American-born Tibetan Buddhist nun and popular teacher who writes, speaks, and teaches about tonglen. [Here](#) is an audio teaching on tonglen by Pema Chodron.

Recommended Reading:

[How to Practice Tonglen](#) by Pema Chodron

[Start Where You Are: A Guide to Compassionate Living](#) by Pema Chodron

Lovingkindness

What is Lovingkindness?

Take a moment to reflect on what you most want for yourself and those you care about. Happiness? Peace? Health? We all want to be well, and lovingkindness is a practice for wishing ourselves and others well. It is a simple way to direct our attention away from suffering-inducing thoughts and towards what we most want, and this tends to bring about a sense of inner peace and compassion for ourselves and all beings.

(Lovingkindness is the English translation of the Pali word, Metta, so you may also hear this practice called Metta. Pali is the language of the earliest Buddhist texts.)

Practicing Lovingkindness

In formal lovingkindness meditation practice, start by directing kind attention to yourself, by silently saying to yourself:

May I be happy.
May I be safe.
May I be healthy.
May I live with ease.

Then, imagine in your mind's eye someone who is easy for you to love, and say silently to yourself:

May [name] be happy.
May [name] be safe.
May [name] be healthy.
May [name] live with ease.

Next, bring to mind someone who is challenging for you to love, and repeat the above phrases (That can be a hard one--go easy on yourself!).

Finally, expand your well wishes to all beings: those you like, those you don't like, those you are indifferent to, all beings known and unknown:

May all beings be happy.
May all beings be safe.
May all beings be healthy.
May all beings live with ease.



Since it is often easier to wish others well and harder to wish ourselves well, try sticking with yourself for a little longer than feels comfortable. This practice can be used more informally and casually, such as when you are reading the news, walking down the street, or waiting in line. Next time you're suffering, no matter how major or minor the difficulty, ask yourself this question by Diane Mariechild, a Buddhist teacher and author:

"Am I relating with lovingkindness to this unfolding process of life?"

If the answer is no, offer yourself some lovingkindness:

May I be happy.
May I be safe.
May I be healthy.
May I live with ease.

See what happens.

Recommended Reading:
[Lovingkindness: The Revolutionary Art of Happiness](#) by Sharon Salzberg



Books

[Radical Acceptance: Embracing Your Life With the Heart of a Buddha](#) by Tara Brach

[Start Where You Are: A Guide to Compassionate Living](#) by Pema Chodron

[When Things Fall Apart: Heart Advice for Difficult Times](#) by Pema Chodron

[The Self-Compassion Skills Workbook](#) by Tim Desmond

[There is Nothing Wrong With You](#) by Cheri Huber

[Wherever You Go There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life](#) by Jon Kabat-Zinn

[Open Mind: Women's Daily Inspiration for Becoming Mindful](#) by Diane Mariechild

[Self-Compassion](#) by Kristin Neff

[Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life](#) by Marshall Rosenberg

[Women Food and God: An Unexpected Path to Almost Everything](#) by Geneen Roth

[Lovingkindness: The Revolutionary Art of Happiness](#) by Sharon Salzberg

[Embracing Your Inner Critic: Turning Self-Criticism into a Creative Asset](#) by Hal and Sidra Stone

[Ending the Struggle Against Yourself: A Workbook for Developing Deep Confidence & Self-Acceptance](#) by Stan Taubman

[The Power of Now](#) by Eckhart Tolle

[Practicing the Power of Now](#) by Eckhart Tolle



Quotes

The following quotes are related to self-compassion and will give you a sense of my approach to healing.

“Compassion isn’t some kind of self-improvement project or ideal that we’re trying to live up to. Having compassion starts and ends with having compassion for all those unwanted parts of ourselves, all those imperfections that we don’t even want to look at.” [Pema Chodron](#)

“If you aren’t good at loving yourself, you will have a difficult time loving anyone, since you’ll resent the time and energy you give another person that you aren’t even giving to yourself.” [Barbara De Angelis](#)

“The healing comes from letting there be room for all of this to happen: room for grief, for relief, for misery, for joy.” [Pema Chodron](#)

“You have been taught that there is something wrong with you and that you are imperfect, but there isn’t and you’re not.” [Cheri Huber](#)

“What we do about our feelings determines the quality of our relationship with ourselves.” [Cheri Huber](#)

“Change is possible, but it must start with self-acceptance.” Alexander Lowen

“If you want to do your best for future generations of humanity, for your friends and family, you must begin by taking good care of yourself.” Tarthang Tulku Rinpoche

“Allow whatever this moment contains. No matter what event or happening or situation, say ‘yes’ to it. Allow it to be.” [Eckhart Tolle](#)

“To love oneself is the beginning of a life-long romance.” Oscar Wilde

“In all the great spiritual traditions, at their heart is tenderness—just to be kind inside, and then everything rights itself. Fear rests. Confusion rests.” [Pamela Wilson](#)

“It is lack of love for ourselves that inhibits our compassion toward others. If we make friends with ourselves, then there is no obstacle to opening our hearts and minds to others.” Unknown

“Hoping a situation will change keeps you at a distance from your true feelings—sadness, anger, fear. Each of these feelings is best appreciated up close. Feel them deeply, and they will cease to bother you. Hope they’ll go away, and they’ll bother you all day.” [Gay Hendricks](#)

“Self-compassion is approaching ourselves, our inner experience with spaciousness, with the quality of allowing which has a quality of gentleness. Instead of our usual tendency to want to get over something, to fix it, to make it go away, the path of compassion is totally different. Compassion allows.” [Robert Gonzales](#)

“Don’t forget to love yourself.” Soren Kierkegaard

“Healing the self means committing ourselves to a wholehearted willingness to be what and how we are—beings frail and fragile, strong and passionate, neurotic and balanced, diseased and whole, partial and complete, stingy and generous, twisted and straight, storm-tossed and quiescent, bound and free.” [Paula Gunn Allen](#)

“Often life is a frantic avoidance of the truth.” [Adyashanti](#)

“Welcome [fear] completely, be ready to live with your fear. The moment you are ready to live with it, without trying to do anything about it, it’s already neutralized because you are already free from it.” [Francis Lucille](#)

“Enlightenment is intimacy with all things.” Dogen Zenji

“Friendship with one’s self is all important, because without it, one cannot be friends with anyone else in the world.” Eleanor Roosevelt

“Often we treat certain aspects of ourselves as junk, having no value. We try to throw parts of ourselves in the garbage. But a human being is an ecosystem, and everything in that system is of value to the whole.” [Stephen Schwartz](#)

"An important aspect of self-compassion is to be able to empathically hold both parts of ourselves--the self that regrets a past action and the self that took the action in the first place." [Marshall Rosenberg](#)

"Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare." [Audre Lorde](#)

"Radical self-care is what we've been longing for, desperate for, our entire lives--friendship with our own hearts." [Anne Lamott](#)

"We want people to change because they see better ways of meeting their needs at less cost, not because of fear that we're going to punish them, or 'guilt' them if they don't. This applies to ourselves as well." [Marshall Rosenberg](#)

"When hard times come, the greatest danger does not necessarily lie in the circumstances we face, but rather in the way we treat ourselves at the time. Nothing is more dangerous than self-hate. Nothing makes it more difficult to heal or to find the grace of peace than self-attack and the agony of self-doubt." [Stephen Schwartz](#)

"The real connection we long for is the connection with ourselves; the connection with where we are here and now...When the connection with our own presence is broken everything just starts to feel empty." [Jeff Foster](#)

"Be kind to yourself, dear - to our innocent follies.
Forget any sounds or touch you knew that did not help you dance.
You will come to see that all evolves us." Rumi

"Let everything happen to you: beauty and terror.
Just keep going. No feeling is final." [Rainer Maria Rilke](#)

"It's like a mother, when the baby is crying, she picks up the baby and she holds the baby tenderly in her arms. Your pain, your anxiety is your baby. You have to take care of it. You have to go back to yourself, to recognize the suffering in you, embrace the suffering, and you get a relief."
[Thich Nhat Hanh](#)

"I was obsessed with being perfect and beautiful, like a porcelain doll, forgetting that the purpose of life is to live fully, not to die perfect." [Kimber Simpkins](#)

"If your compassion does not include yourself, it is incomplete." [Jack Kornfield](#)

"You don't want to beat yourself up for beating yourself up in the vain hope that it will somehow make you stop beating yourself up. Just as hate can't conquer hate -- but only strengthens and reinforces it -- self-judgment can't stop self-judgment." [Kristin Neff](#)

"Feeling compassion for ourselves in no way releases us from responsibility for our actions. Rather, it releases us from the self-hatred that prevents us from responding to our life with clarity and balance." [Tara Brach](#)

"Ours is not a culture that respects the sick, the old or the vulnerable. We strive for independence, competence, and mastery. In embracing such 'frontier' values, we may become intolerant of human wholeness, contemptuous of anything in ourselves, and in others, that has needs or is capable of suffering. The denial of a vulnerability is the ultimate barrier to compassion." [Rachel Naomi Remen, MD](#)

"All any feeling wants is to be welcomed with tenderness. It wants room to unfold. It wants to relax and tell its story. It wants to dissolve like a thousand writhing snakes that with a flick of kindness become harmless strands of rope." [Geneen Roth](#)

"For some reason, we are truly convinced that if we criticize ourselves, the criticism will lead to change. If we are harsh, we believe we will end up being kind. If we shame ourselves, we believe we will end up loving ourselves. It has never been true, not for a moment, that shame leads to love. Only love leads to love." [Geneen Roth](#)

"As you breathe in, cherish yourself. As you breathe out, cherish all beings." His Holiness the 14th [Dalai Lama](#)

"Go back and take care of yourself. Your body needs you, your feelings need you, your perceptions need you. Your suffering needs you to acknowledge it. Go home and be there for all these things." [Thich Nhat Hanh](#)

"Compassion is not a relationship between the healer and the wounded. It's a relationship between equals. Only when we know our own darkness well can we be present with the darkness of others. Compassion becomes real when we recognize our shared humanity." Pema Chödrön

"We cannot change anything until we accept it. Condemnation does not liberate, it oppresses." ~Carl Jung

"When we demand perfection of ourselves, we disconnect from our own Hearts...and when we demand that of others, we disconnect from them as well...profound loneliness infuses a culture based on not being 'good enough.'" -Shoshi Morginn

"Just like our organs, our anger is part of us. When we are angry, we have to go back to ourselves and take good care of our anger. We cannot say, 'Go away, anger, I don't want you.' When you have a stomachache, you don't say, 'I don't want you, stomach, go away.' No, you take care of it. In the same way, we have to embrace and take good care of our anger." -Thich Nhat Hanh

Be softer with you.
you are a breathing thing.
a memory to someone.
a home to a life.

~[Nayyirah Waheed](#)

Poetry

The Guest House

by Jelaluddin Balkhi 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.

Love After Love

by 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.

Love Sorrow

by Mary Oliver

Love sorrow. She is yours now, and you must
take care of what has been
given. Brush her hair, help her
into her little coat, hold her hand,
especially when crossing a street. For, think,

what if you should lose her? Then you would be
sorrow yourself; her drawn face, her sleeplessness
would be yours. Take care, touch
her forehead that she feel herself not so

utterly alone. And smile, that she does not
altogether forget the world before the lesson.
Have patience in abundance. And do not
ever lie or ever leave her even for a moment

by herself, which is to say, possibly, again,
abandoned. She is strange, mute, difficult,
sometimes unmanageable but, remember, she is a child.
And amazing things can happen. And you may see,

as the two of you go
walking together in the morning light, how
little by little she relaxes; she looks about her;
she begins to grow.

Crying

by Galway Kinnell

Crying only a little bit
is no use. You must cry
until your pillow is soaked!
Then you can get up and laugh,
Then you can jump in the shower
and splash-splash-splash!
Then you can throw open your
window and "Ha ha! Ha ha!"
And if people say, "Hey,
What's going on up there?"
"Ha ha!" sing back, "Happiness
was hiding in the last tear!
I wept it! Ha ha."

I Swear My Dear Son

by Jelaluddin Balkhi Rumi

I swear my dear son,
no one in the entire world
is as precious as you are.

Look at that mirror.
Take a good look at yourself.
Who else is there above and beyond you?

Now give yourself a kiss
and with sweet whispers
fill your ears to the brim.

Watch for all that beauty
reflecting from you
and sing a love song to your existence.

You can never overdo
praising your own soul.
You can never over-pamper your heart.

You are both
the father and the son,
the sugar and the sugar cane.

Who else but you?
Please tell me who else
can ever take your place?

Now give yourself a smile.
What is the worth of a diamond
if it doesn't shine?

How can I ever put a price
on the diamond that you are?
You are the entire treasure of the house.

You and your shadow
are forever present in this world.
You're that glorious bird of paradise.

Kindness

by 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.

Be Gentle With Anger

by Jeff Foster

Be gentle with anger.
Bow before it.
It is not what you think it is.

Let it come closer, let it enter you if it must.
Feel its power.
Until there is no division between 'self'
and 'anger'.
Until you cannot call it 'anger' at all.
Until there is only fire, passion.
But no violence.

Anger is the roar of a lion, the cry of a
universe longing to be born.
It reminds you, when you have forgotten,
That the power of life moves through you.
That you have a voice.

Do not push your anger away, or label it
'negative' or 'unspiritual'.
Do not pretend it is not there.
No need to act it out, either.

Feel its pounding, its vibrations, its longing to
be acknowledged, held.
At its burning core, discover courage.

The courage to be yourself.
To hold your path, fearlessly.
To speak for those without a voice.
To stand up for truth, with passion and
dignity.
To roar with love.

Know that your heart is vast and spacious,
and anger, so often misunderstood,
has a home in you,
a sanctuary.



Closing

I hope these resources have and will continue to support you in befriending yourself and all of your experiences. I would be honored to support you on your journey, so please don't hesitate to reach out to me. You can learn more about my offerings at www.AliMillerMFT.com, and feel free to email me at ali@alimillermft.com or call me at (415) 820-1433. I'd love to hear from you.

Warmly,
Ali