

Week Ten Practice

Breathing with the Earth

Mindfulness teacher Susan Bauer-Wu invites us into a way of praying with and for the Earth:

Please start by grounding yourself with the Earth beneath you. Pay attention to how your feet or any other part of your body that is touching the floor is placed. Notice how you are rooted, through a chair or floor, to the Earth and how she literally holds you up—unconditionally, effortlessly, compassionately....

Notice your incoming breath—the air entering your nostrils, your mouth, filling up your belly.... Every aspect of you right now, the air that fills your lungs, the clothes that you wear, the food you ate today, all of that comes from outside of you. This ever-present, life-encompassing, compassionate Earth sustains you. You are part of this effortless cycle of give-and-take. You are participating in an exchange with the elements, with other living beings, with the Earth herself. With each inhale, breathe in the Earth's compassion and with each exhale, breathe out gratitude.

Relax here in this indivisible connection with all that surrounds you; breathe in compassion, and breathe out gratitude.

Now comes the hard part. Visualize a place or being or community you love that is suffering from climate and environmental harm.... Resting in and rooted by the compassion and gratitude you hold, I want you to access your intention, your motivation to alleviate the suffering of your beloved. Now, when you inhale, breathe in their suffering; and when you exhale, breathe out your compassion....

When you are ready ... let yourself inhale the Earth's gratitude for your existence; and when you exhale, offer the compassion and love you have for her. You are inextricably connected with her in every moment and there is no division here

COMPASSION FATIGUE SELF-TEST: AN ASSESSMENT

Answer the questions below to the best of your knowledge. There is no right or wrong answer.

Assign one of these numbers to each one of the questions below:

Responses: 1 = Very True 2 = Somewhat True 3 = Rarely True

You will find summation directions at the end of the test.

1. ____ When people get upset, I try to smooth things out.
2. ____ I am able to listen to other's problems without trying to "fix" them and/or take away their pain.
3. ____ My self-worth is determined by how others perceive me.
4. ____ When I am exposed to conflict, I feel it is my fault.
5. ____ I feel guilty when others are disappointed by my actions.
6. ____ When I make a mistake, I tend to be extremely critical of myself. I have difficulty forgiving myself.
7. ____ I usually know how I want other people to treat me.
8. ____ I tell people how I prefer to be treated.
9. ____ My achievements define my self-worth.
10. ____ I feel anxious in most situations involving confrontation.
11. ____ In relationships, it is easier for me to "give" than to "receive".
12. ____ I can be so focused on someone I am helping that I lose sight of my own perceptions, interests and desires.
13. ____ It is hard for me to express sadness.
14. ____ To make mistakes means that I am weak.
15. ____ It is best to not "rock the boat" or "make waves."

16. ____ It is important to put people at ease.
17. ____ It is best not to need others.
18. ____ If I cannot solve a problem, I feel like a failure.
19. ____ I often feel "used up" at the end of the day.
20. ____ I take work home frequently.
21. ____ I can ask for help but only if the situation is serious.
22. ____ I am willing to sacrifice my needs in order to please others.
23. ____ When faced with uncertainty, I feel that things will get totally out of control.
24. ____ I am uncomfortable when others do not see me as being strong and self-sufficient.
25. ____ In intimate relationships, I am drawn to people who are needy or need me.
26. ____ I have difficulty expressing my differing opinion in the face of an opposing viewpoint.
27. ____ When I say "no," I feel guilty.
28. ____ When others distance from me, I feel anxious.
29. ____ When listening to someone's problems, I am more aware of their feelings than I am of my own feelings.
30. ____ I find it difficult to stand up for myself and express my feelings when someone treats me in an insensitive manner.
31. ____ I feel anxious when I am not busy.
32. ____ I believe that expressing resentments is wrong.
33. ____ I am more comfortable giving than receiving.
34. ____ I become anxious when I think I've disappointed someone.
35. ____ Work dominates much of my life.
36. ____ I seem to be working harder and accomplishing less.
37. ____ I feel most worthwhile and alive in crisis situations.

38. ____ I have difficulty saying "no" and setting limits.

39. ____ My interests and values reflect what others expect of me rather than my own interests and values.

40. ____ People rely on me for support.

It is important for you to periodically review your self-care, along with your needs and action plans to meet those needs. If you find that you responded with a 1 (Very True) to more than 15 of these items, it's definitely time to take a close and careful look at self-care issues.

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