

Spirit & Soul: Using Writing in a Mindful Awareness Practice

Intro

Many years ago, the poet Mira (1498 – 1550) was born in India. One of Mira’s celebrated poems invites the reader to contemplate beauty. It’s called, “A Hundred Objects Close By.” For today’s practice, we are going to read this poem aloud, reflect and write. Feel free to adapt this practice to make it work for you.

Thanks for trying something different. Now, let’s practice.

¹“Love Poems From God: Twelve Sacred Voices from the East and West” translated by Daniel Ladinsky, Penguin Compass 2002, p 241.

Practice

First, let's begin by finding a comfortable posture. You may choose to sit, lay down, or even stand. Take your time. The key is simply to be as comfortable as possible.

(Pause)

Is it possible to relax your body more? It may be or may not be possible. However, see if it is possible today. Try letting your jaw, your shoulders, your abdomen soften and melt just a bit. Let the chair, couch, bed, floor or whatever is supporting your body in this moment \take on the work of holding the body.

(Pause)

Next, for this practice, we will read Mira's poem. Consider reading slowly and out loud as if you have all the time in the world.

(If you are doing this practice in a group, ask if someone might volunteer to read this poem.)
Let's give it a try.

A HUNDRED OBJECTS CLOSE BY

I know a cure for sadness:
Let your hands touch something that
Makes your eyes
Smile.

I bet there are a hundred objects close by
That can do that.

Look at
Beauty's gift to us---
Her power is so great she enlivens
The earth, the sky, our
Soul.

(After the poem is read, pause for 10 or 15 seconds.)

Thanks for reading. Let's take the next 15 seconds and simply relax. Letting the words we just heard simply be.

Next, let's read this poem a second time. In the second reading, let's do something different. Let's listen for a *word or phrase* that stands out for you in this poem. If you find one then you can write down that word or phrase on a sheet of paper. Is this clear?

Just to repeat--we will read the poem a second time and notice if there is a word or phrase that you are drawn to, that stands out for you today. And, if you notice this word or phrase, the instruction is simply to write that word or phrase down on paper. Okay?

(If you are doing this practice in a group, ask if someone else might volunteer to read this poem. Or, have the entire group read it. Or, you might consider reading it yourself.)

Ready?

Let's read the poem a second time.

A HUNDRED OBJECTS CLOSE BY

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Beauty's gift to us---
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Write down a word or phrase from the poem.

(Pause)

Did everyone have a chance to do this?

Next, let's take a couple of minutes and write down some of the thoughts or feelings which arise as you reflect on the word or phrase that you chose from this poem. Here, we are simply writing down our own reflections on the words or phrases that stood out. Is this clear?

(Feel free to assist participants.)

Next, I would like to invite you to share some of your thoughts and feelings with the group. It is perfectly fine to pass.

(Here, simply invite members to share what they wrote. Facilitators might want to share some of their thoughts and feelings on the words they chose as a way of modeling. Ask for a volunteer to go first. After each participant's response, simply say, "Thank you" and ask if there are other participants who would be willing to share.)

Let's take a few moments of silence to reflect on what you wrote.

(Pause for 10 to 15 seconds.)

Thanks for your practice today and for trying out something different.

Questions

1. What are some of the moments of beauty in your life? What “makes your eyes smile?”
2. What are objects around you right now that make your eyes smile?
3. Do you have books or poems that you might read in this way? Would you consider making this part of your mindful awareness practice tomorrow?
4. What are “beauty’s gifts” to you today? How might you bring those gifts into your life more, and how might you share these gifts with others?