

## Exercise Details

### BENEFITS

Mindfulness  
Heart opening

### WHAT YOU NEED

Any outdoor expanse

### REFLECTION VERSE

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.  
~Mary Oliver

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# IN THE FAMILY

A forest bathing exercise inspired by poetry



## Exercise Notes

### FOREST BATHING CENTRAL

Today's exercise will be based on this poem,  
Wild Geese by 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 clean 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.



# In the Family

## A POEM MEDITATION

- Sit or stand in a comfortable position outdoors.
- Close your eyes and take a few deep, centering breaths.
- Next, bring your awareness to nature around you. You may sit or walk around slowly.
- Read the first three or so lines of the poem and allow the nature around you to help you process it.
- Then read the following line and really allow this line to penetrate deeply.

*"You only have to let the soft animal of your body love what it loves."*

- Take deep deep breaths and let the animalistic love inside of you come out.
- Walk around and allow yourself to love what it loves. Allow it to love anything around you.
- Now read the next few lines. They repeat, meanwhile, meanwhile, meanwhile.
- As you slowly wander, think about all the things that are happening in parallel. You're walking through the forest, meanwhile, the stream behind you is rinsing the soil. Meanwhile, bees are busy filling a nest. Meanwhile...
- Read the last few lines starting with "Whoever you are..."
- Take a minute to pause over the idea that the world offers itself to your imagination.
- Pause again to think about your place in the family of things. Take as much time as you need as this can be deeply moving.
- Now read through the entire poem one last time and take a few minutes to jot down any notes.
- When you feel like you've given this exercise enough time, carefully return your awareness and breath to where you are and begin the journey back home.
- Take this poem with you today.
- Return to this poem whenever you're feeling particularly lonely



