

Self - Care September
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A Month of Mindfulness

30 brief daily meditations
to develop a routine of self-compassion

©Maureen Germein

Banksia Yoga, September 2017

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Why Self Care?

I am a giver. I work as a counsellor, often being with people in times of distress, stress, trauma or anxiety. Some evenings I teach yoga and offer practices that care for peoples' bodies and minds. In between, I care for my four children, two dogs, nine chickens, garden and the Earth.

My lesson is how to receive. I am blessed with a great family and many caring friends. However, I have also had to learn how to offer myself compassion and kindness, and consider this to be my ongoing learning.

The idea for "Self-care September" came after my training on Mindful Self-compassion. I was struck by how much I needed to incorporate these practices into my daily life, to develop a routine so that I can continue to give to others without experiencing burnout or 'compassion' fatigue.

I also know that habits are hard to form, and that smaller is better. I wanted to create a daily reminder for myself that self-compassion practices don't have to take a long time, that 5 minutes or less is often all that is needed.

The self-compassion practices I have chosen to incorporate use a variety of methods from mindfulness practices, positive psychology and compassion focused therapy. I have added my yoga understandings and somatic practices to develop 30 different meditations for body, breath and mind.

There is a suggested practice for each day. One for each day in September. The practice includes brief guidelines, a quote and picture to reflect on. On the four Sundays in the month, I have a suggested longer meditation practice, based on mindful self-compassion and yoga nidra meditations, with links to the audio to practice these guided meditations.

The practices are based on the components of self-compassion:

- Offering yourself soothing touch
- Offering yourself kind thoughts
- Savouring the world using your senses
- Offering gratitude and kindness towards others
- Recognising our common humanity

If you practice, you may also wish to keep a journal to reflect on which practices resonated, and what you notice throughout the journey. I will also open a face-book group where you might like to share your reflections with others.

Have a wonderful month, taking care of yourself.

Lots of love to you.

Maureen x

Land Softly

"Let your practice be the celebration of life"
- Seido Lee de Barros

Place your hands together, on your belly, your heart, or somewhere else they feel comfortable.

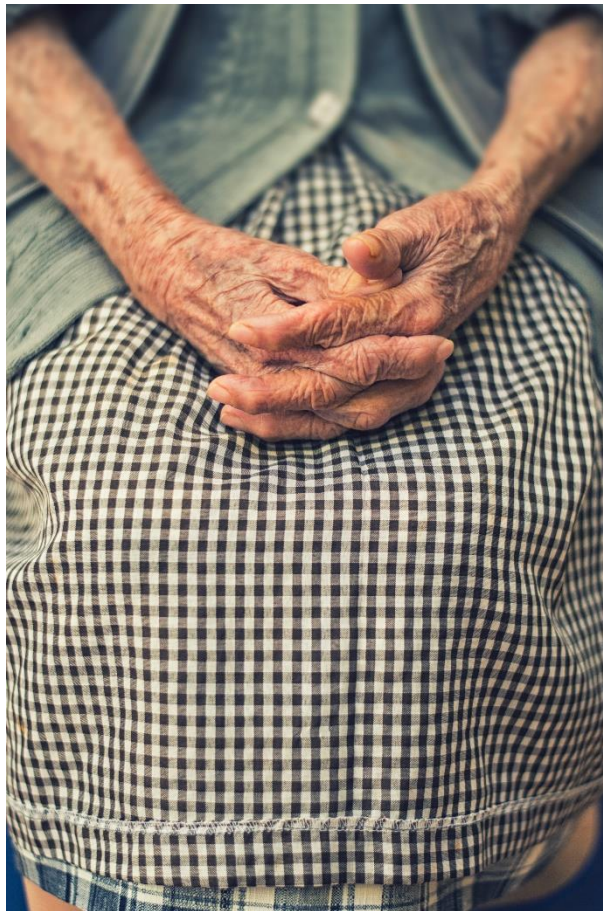
Offer yourself some soothing touch.

Take a moment to connect with your body.

How does it feel in this moment? Allow everything to be here.

Take a breath and soften into this moment.

Do this anytime throughout the day you remember.



Make a Wish

"Everyday when I wake, I make a wish to be useful to others"
- His Holiness, the Dalai Llama

Place your hands on your heart.

Take a moment to connect with your body. How does it feel in this moment? Allow everything to be here. As you breathe, soften into this moment.

Connect with your deepest desire for yourself, and for others.

Form a wish. Start with "May I..."

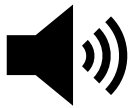
Perhaps it might go something like.. "May I be kind to myself", "may I accept myself", "may I have courage and support".

Formulate another wish for others, such as: 'may all beings be free, happy, at ease...."

Repeat mentally to yourself throughout the day, whenever you get a chance.



Compassionate Body Scan



*"Beauty is about being comfortable in your own skin.
It's about knowing and accepting who you are"*
-Ellen DeGeneres

We live in our bodies, so to fully appreciate life, we need to fully appreciate our body.

The guided body scan meditation will take 10 minutes. You can use the [audio I have created](#), or just spend time travelling through and appreciating your body.

You can lie down or sit.

Remember to allow whatever arises to be as it is, moment to moment.



Jaw Massage

*"Notice that the stiffest tree is most easily cracked,
while the bamboo or willow survives by bending in the wind"*
-Bruce Lee

Place your fingertips on your cheeks in front of your ears. Clench your teeth and feel the muscles there. This is where I store a lot of my tension. How about you?

Allow the jaw to soften as you slowly massage small circles with your fingers in both directions. Stay in this spot for about a minute, before moving to different parts of the jaw.

When this muscle is very tight, daily massage will help ease tension.



Floss your Spine

"Moving the spine in all possible planes- forward, back, sideways, and in rotation, is a means of maintaining its flexibility, and mobility"

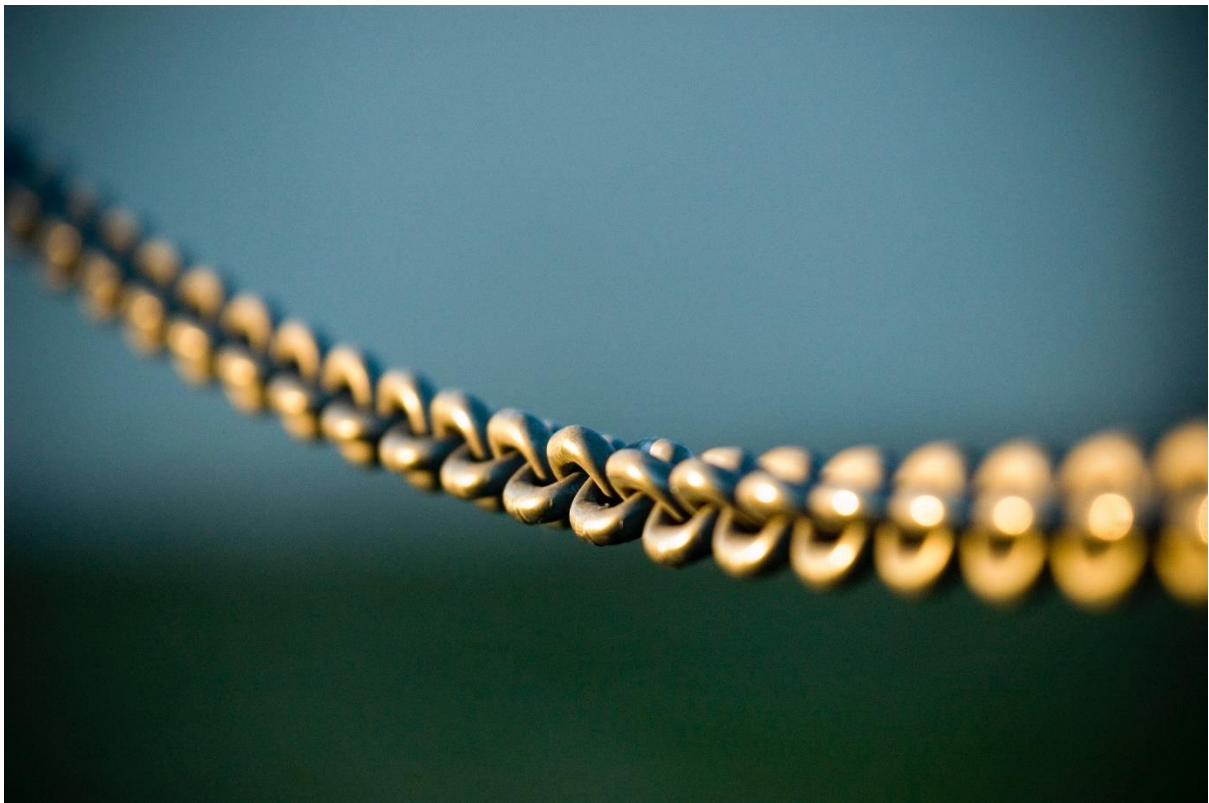
- Donna Farhi

Come on to hands and knees when you get a chance. Start slowly with the head, and make small figure 8's, slowly and carefully at first, and then get larger.

Then go to your tail bone. Move your tail bone around in all different directions. Then move your head and tail and all your spine in between, taking the spine forward, back, round, side to side.

Allow the movements to come spontaneously, flossing the spine.

Rest in a comfortable position for a moment or two when you are done.



River of Thoughts

"Many a calm river begins as a turbulent waterfall, yet none hurtles and foams all the way to the sea"

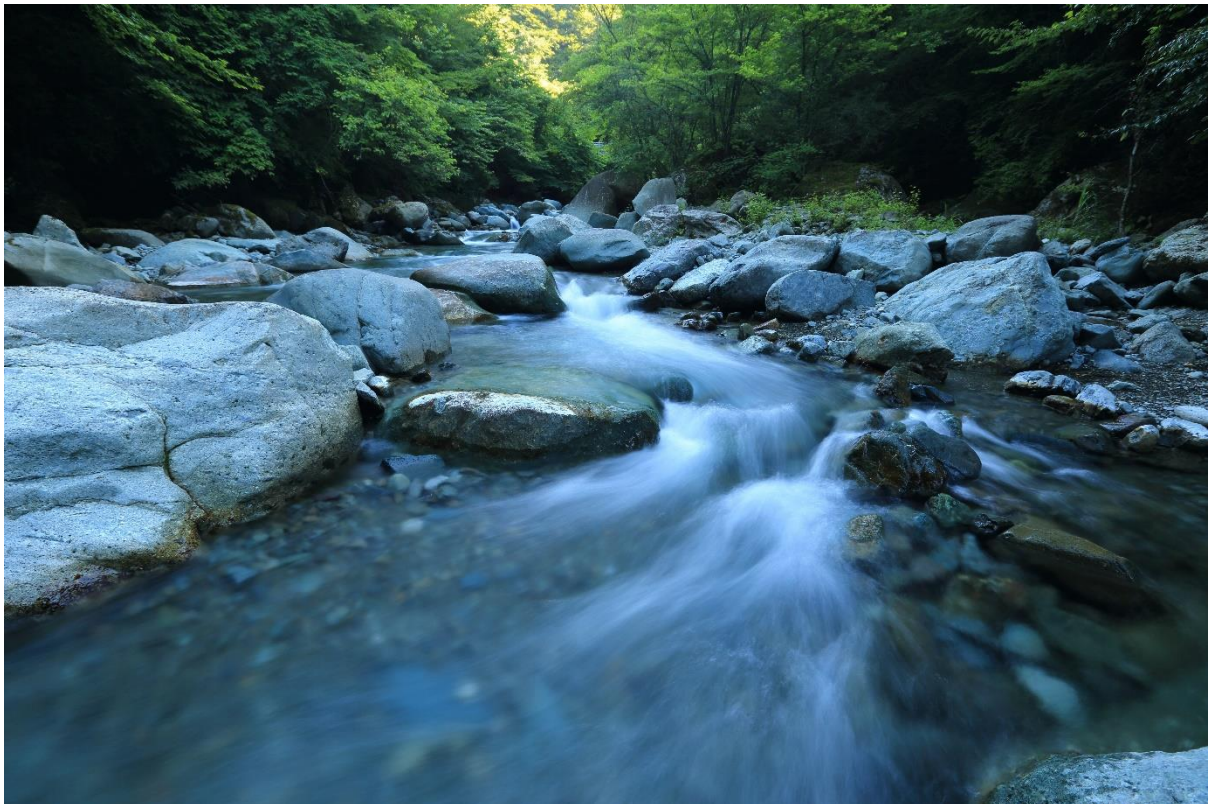
-Mikhail Lermontov

Sit still for 5 minutes in any comfortable position. You can lie down if you like. Maybe use a timer so you know when you are done.

As you sit, watch your thoughts. Meditation is not about stilling thoughts, it is about paying attention with a non-judgemental attitude.

Allow your thoughts to float on the river of your awareness, as though they were leaves moving with the current.

Just allow the thoughts to come, and then to flow. Repeat.



Stand Up and Stretch

"If you want to untie a knot, you must look at the cord carefully then gently undo the tangle.

Yanking on the cord will only make the knot tighter."

-Thomas Hanna

Stand up with your feet wide and your arms reaching up. We are going to go into pandiculation, where we deliberately contract and then release tight muscles.

Reach your right arm up and turn your head towards it, if comfortable. Reach your left arm down and away from your right arm while you inhale. As you exhale, relax the reach and bring both arms loosely overhead. As you inhale reach your left arm up, turning your head, if comfortable, while reaching down and away with your right. Exhale, relax the reach, both arms up.

Repeat three times to each side.



Three Things

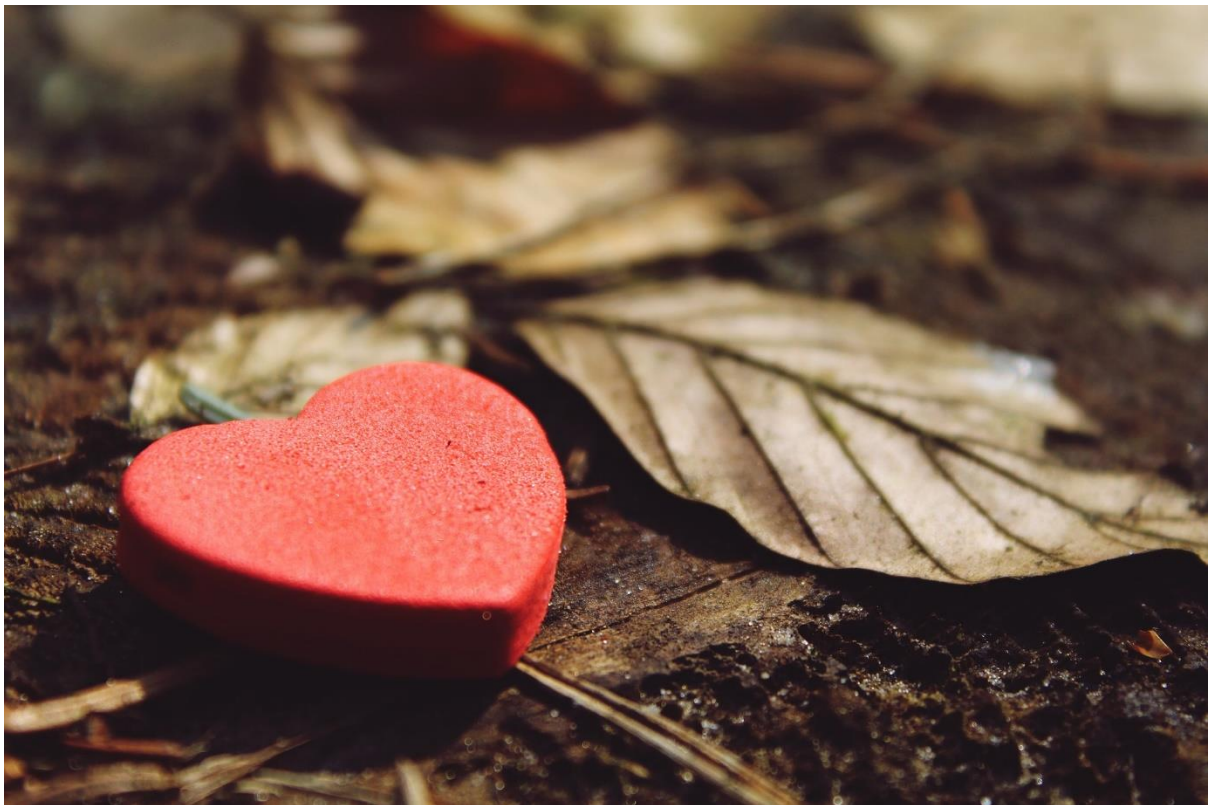
"Enjoy the little things, for one day you may look back and realise they were the big things."

-Robert Brault

Think back on your day today.

What were three things that happened that you were grateful for?

You can record these if you wish in your journal, or just remember these things as you go to sleep.



Savour the Outdoors

"Forget not that the earth delights to feel your bare feet and the winds long to play with your hair".

-Khalil Gibran

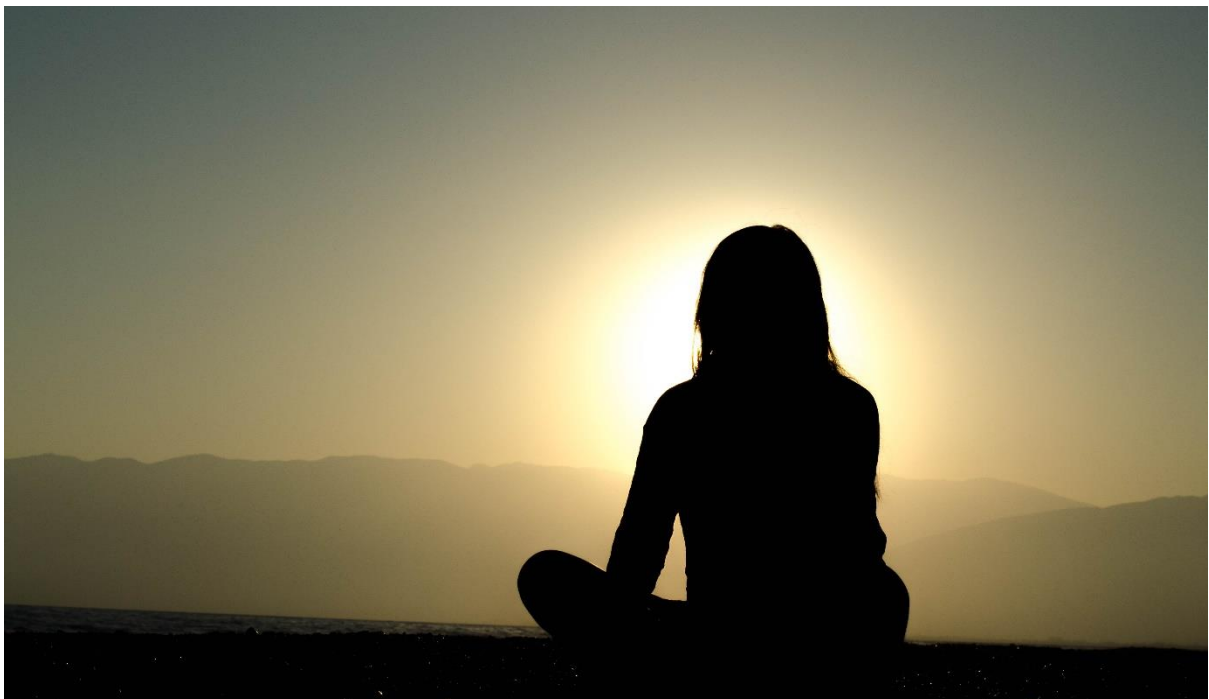
Go outside. Take the time to savour the world using as many senses as you can. Soak everything in. What can you see? Shapes, colours, patterns?

What can you hear? Constant sounds, close sounds, distant sounds, sounds that come and go, sounds that are pleasant, sounds that are grating?

What can you smell? What can you taste?

What can you feel? You could go outside with bare feet, or sit somewhere and notice how it feels. What textures, or temperatures are there?

Use all your senses to absorb the environment around you, just for a few moments of the day.



Create your Safe Space

"The ache for home lives in all of us, the safe place where we can go and not be questioned."

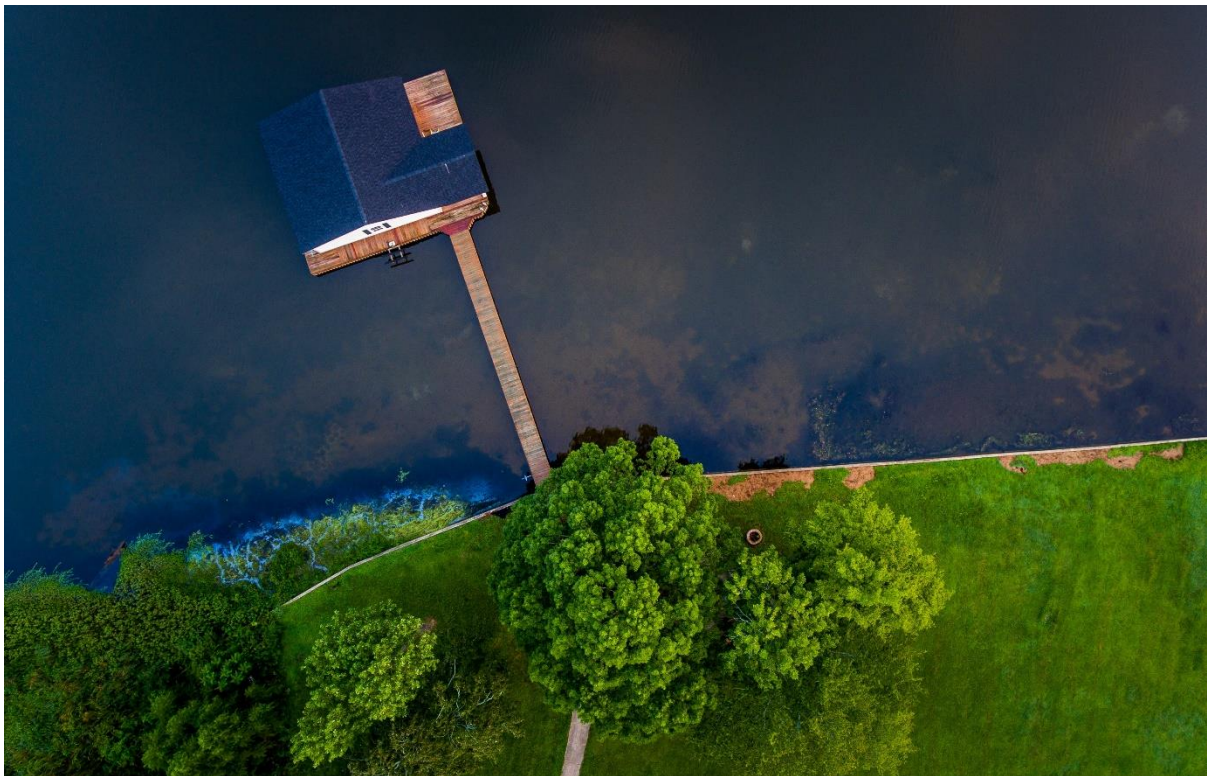
-Maya Angelou

If you have time, practice using the guided audio yoga nidra to develop your safe space, or inner resource. This space can be anywhere, real or imaginary where you feel completely comfortable and at ease.

The audio practice can be found at the [Banksia Yoga Soundcloud page](#).



If you are short of time, take a moment to close your eyes and remind yourself of this place briefly.



Constructive Rest

"The greatest luxury in an over-scheduled life is simply unfilled time"
-Judith Hanson Lasater

Take 5 minutes to practice this amazing pose. Lie on your back with your knees bent, soles of the feet on the floor, chin tucked in gently so jaw can relax, and arms by your side. Keep your feet in line with your hips and far enough away from the pelvis so that there is some space under the knees- imagine you are building a house of cards with your upper and lower leg bones. Allow your weight to be centred evenly through the balls and heels of the feet.

This is a being pose, not a doing pose. Can you just be here, without doing anything except noticing the sensations in your own body? Observe the weight of the pelvis on the floor, is it even on left to right? Feel the weight of the feet on the floor- is it more in the heels or the balls of feet? Notice the relaxation as it spreads from the jaw to belly, to buttocks.

Just be.



Present Moment Gratitude

*"Life is all memory,
except for the one present moment that goes by you so quickly you hardly catch it going."
-Tennessee Williams*

As you go through your day, pause now and then, and remember to be grateful.

For whatever it is you are doing in that moment.

Perhaps every time you have a sip of tea or coffee. Remember to be grateful to the people who have grown the tea leaves or coffee beans, who were involved in its production, who made it for you or sold it to you.

Offer thanks in the moment and practice present moment gratitude.



Ground into the Earth

"The Earth does not belong to us: we belong to the Earth".

-Marlee Matlin

Pause for a moment, you can go outside, or stay inside.

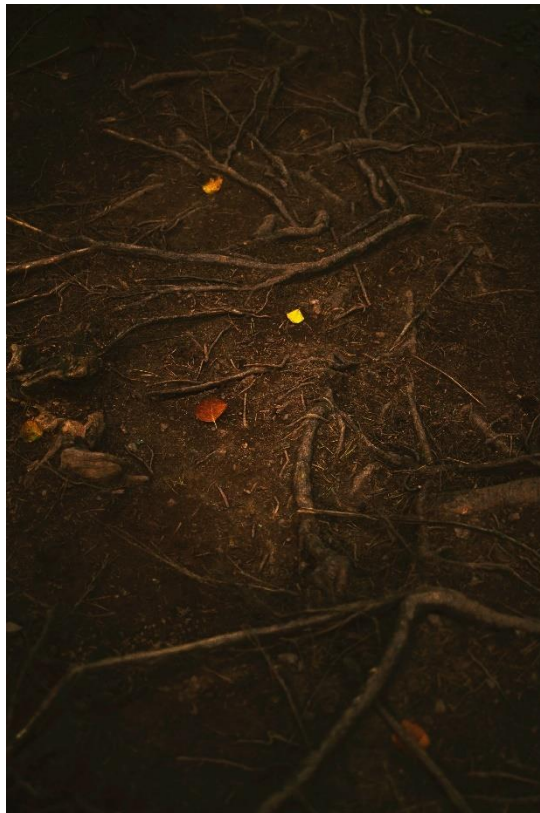
Bring your attention down towards your feet. Wriggle your feet in your shoes, or feel your bare feet on the ground.

What do you need to do to feel a little more connected to the earth right now? Transfer your weight?

Spread your toes?

Allow yourself to feel as though you are sending roots into the earth from your feet.

Feel your feet connect to the Earth. Feel your Self connect to the Earth.



Even Breathing

*Breathing in, I calm body and mind, breathing out, I smile.
Dwelling in the present moment, I know this is the only moment*
-Thich Nhat Hanh

From any comfortable position, maybe constructive rest, tune in to your breathing.

Allow the breathing to find its own natural spontaneous rhythm. Eventually you may notice the breath becomes steady and even.

Focus on this pattern.

Follow the breath as it enters the body. Watch as it stays a short while, and allow it to leave. Be present in pause at the end of the breath and notice as the next breath comes and the process starts again.

Moment to moment.



Seated Cat Pose

"There is a vitality, a life force, an energy, a quickening, that is translated through you into action, and because there is only one of you in all time, this expression is unique."

-Martha Graham

Stop in your seat for a moment and feel the bones in your pelvis. Become aware of your spine growing upward from this base.

As you inhale, allow the spine to gently arch and look up.

As you exhale allow the spine to gently round and gaze down.

Do a few more rounds. Feel the sensations in your spine.

Feel the subtle movements you create through this practice.



Mindful Eating

*"Food reveals our connection with the Earth. Each bite contains the life of the sun and the earth.
We can see and taste the whole universe in a piece of bread".
-Thich Nhat Hahn*

Today when you eat, eat slowly.

Use all of your senses. Feel the food in your hand or feel the utensils and notice the difference between an empty spoon and a full spoon.

Notice the colours and shapes. Be aware of what part of the rainbow you are eating from.

Smell the food and as you place each small morsel in your mouth, savour the taste and texture. Chew well and slowly.

Notice the impact the food has on your body after it has been eaten.

Remember to offer gratitude to those who may have grown your food, packaged your food, or sold you your food. Offer thanks if an animal has offered their life for yours.



Affectionate Breathing

Life is a moving, breathing thing. We have to be willing to constantly evolve.

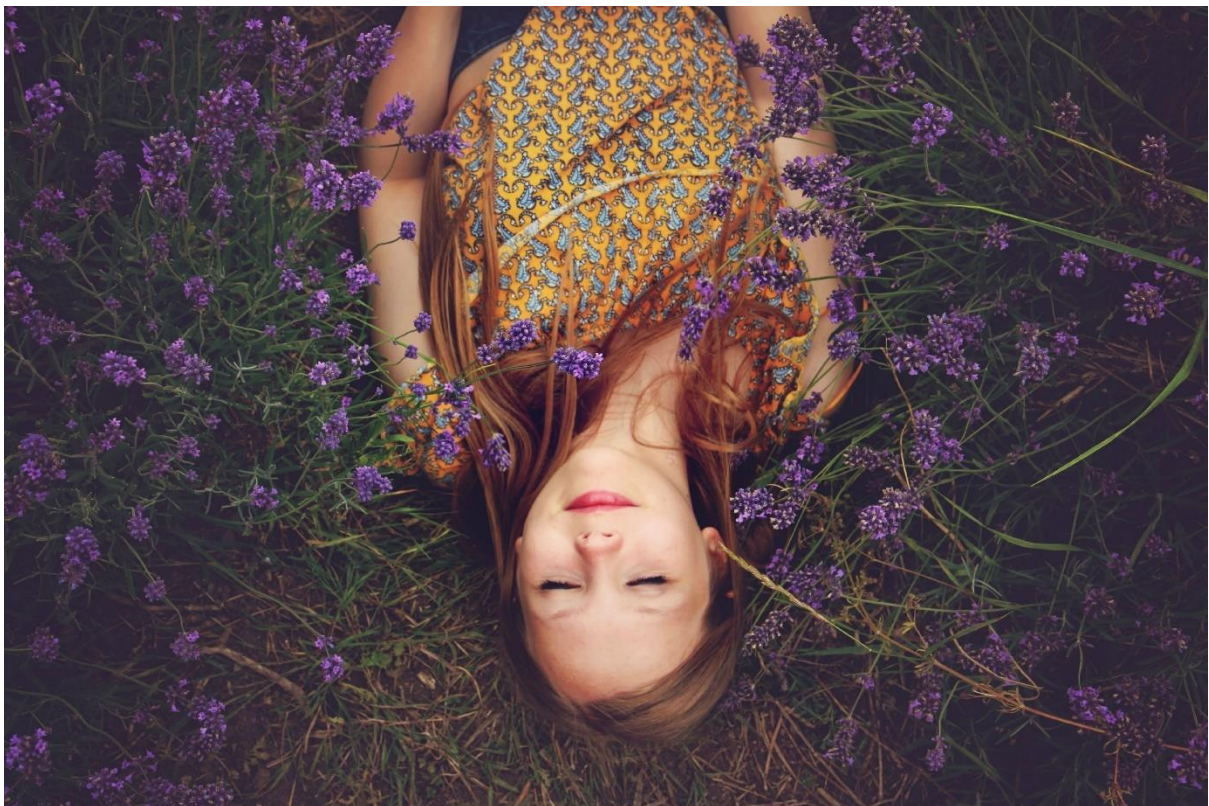
Perfection is constant transformation.

- Nia Peeples



Settle into a comfortable position and follow this [guided meditation](#), of about 12 minutes.

Or, just sit, allow a smile to come to your face and gently focus on your breath. Remind yourself that the mind always wanders, and just gently return your awareness back to the breath whenever you notice it is somewhere else.



Tree Pose Balance



*Stand tall and proud
Sink your roots deeply into the earth
Reflect the light of your true nature
Think long term
Go out on a limb
Remember your place among all living beings
Embrace with joy the changing seasons
For each yields its own abundance
The energy and birth of spring
The growth and contentment of summer
The wisdom to let go the leaves in the fall
The rest and quiet renewal of winter
Feel the wind and the sun
And delight in their presence
Look up at the moon that shines down upon you
And the mystery of the stars at night
Seek nourishment from the good things in life
Simple pleasures
Earth, fresh air, light
Be content with your natural beauty
Drink plenty of water
Let your limbs sway and dance in the breezes
Be flexible
Remember your roots
Enjoy the view!*

-Advice from a Tree, by Ilan Shamir

Stand on two feet and feel yourself grounding into the Earth.

When you are ready pick up one leg and place it against your foot, or your other leg, wherever it is comfortable.

Breathe and smile.

Stay for a while and then when you are ready, repeat on the other leg.

Purposeful Act of Kindness

“While the phrase “random acts of kindness” definitely rolls off the tongue, the best acts of kindness ideas aren’t random at all, but fiercely purposeful ones”
-Galit Breen.

Here are some ideas to offer kindness to others, purposefully and with intention:

- Give someone a compliment
- Email/text a friend to ask how they are.
- Tell a carer they are doing a good job and that their kids are delightful.
- Send a thank you card to a teacher
- Assume the best.
- Smile at a stranger.
- Let someone go before you in line.
- Make a positive comment on social media.
- Pick up the phone and call someone.
- Cook someone lunch.
- Say thank you to the bus driver when you get off.
- Pause, look someone in the eye, and wait after asking, “how are you?”



Bathe your Eyes

"It's true about the eyes being the window to the soul. Your face can be etched with worry, and twisted by ageing, but the eyes tell the true story of who you are."

-Naomie Harris

Pause and take your glasses off if you wear them. Without moving your head, gently look up, and down, and from side to side. Gaze at the tip of your nose and then at something in the far distance. Practice these gentle movements to ease the muscles of your eyes.

Once you are finished, vigorously rub the palms of your hands together to create heat. Cup the warm palms over the eyes and leave them there for a few breaths.



Use Humour

There's no life without humour. It can make the wonderful moments of life truly glorious, and it can make tragic moments more bearable.

-Rufus Wainwright

Can you find the funny side in something today?

Perhaps retell your favourite 'Dad joke'. Or try this one:

Knock knock

Who's there?

Lettuce

Lettuce who?

Lettuce in and I'll tell you.

Or perhaps you can laugh at yourself and not take things too seriously?



Shoulder and Arm Movements

"Your arms start from your back because they were once wings"
-Martha Graham

Sit or stand comfortably and bring your attention to your shoulders and arms. Become aware of the shoulder blades, the tops of the shoulders, the elbows, wrists, palms of the hands and the fingers.

Notice where the shoulders sit, close to your ears or away from them. Rounded forward, or dropping back. Is there any tension or tightness? Can you notice without judging?

When you are ready, very slowly, roll your shoulders up towards your ears as you inhale. Pause and hold them here for a moment before releasing them slowly and smoothly on an inhale breath.

Repeat a few times going forwards and then backwards.



Compassionate Friend

"My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive; and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humour, and some style".

-Maya Angelou

Today, treat yourself as though you were your own best friend.

Talk to yourself kindly, compassionately and with wisdom.

Encourage and motivate yourself with gentleness and understanding.

Smile at yourself in the mirror.

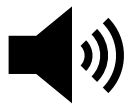
Tell yourself that you are happy to be you.



Loving Kindness Meditation

*"I believe in kindness. Also in mischief. Also in singing,
especially when singing is not necessarily prescribed."*

-Mary Oliver



If possible, find 20 minutes to practice [this guided meditation](#) based on the traditional Buddhist mindfulness practice – offering yourselves and others kind thoughts.

If no time, visualise a rose at your chest and as it blooms allow it to spread the qualities of peace, love and compassion to the space around you,



Do Something for the Earth

"We do not inherit the Earth from our ancestors. We borrow it from our children"
-Indigenous American proverb

Today, tread a little more lightly on the earth.

Can you turn off an unused light?

Take soft plastics to be recycled? Plant a tree? Water a plant?

Perform any small act, with intention and kindness towards the planet that is our home.



Part of the whole

*"We are part of this universe; we are in this universe,
but perhaps more important than both of those facts, is that the universe is in us".*

-Neil deGrasse Tyson

From a comfortable position, feel the inner landscape of your body. Simultaneously become aware of the world around you.

Can you allow the boundaries between yourself and the world to blur?

Can you sense yourself as connected to everything else that exists?

Spend a moment remembering, you are part of the whole.



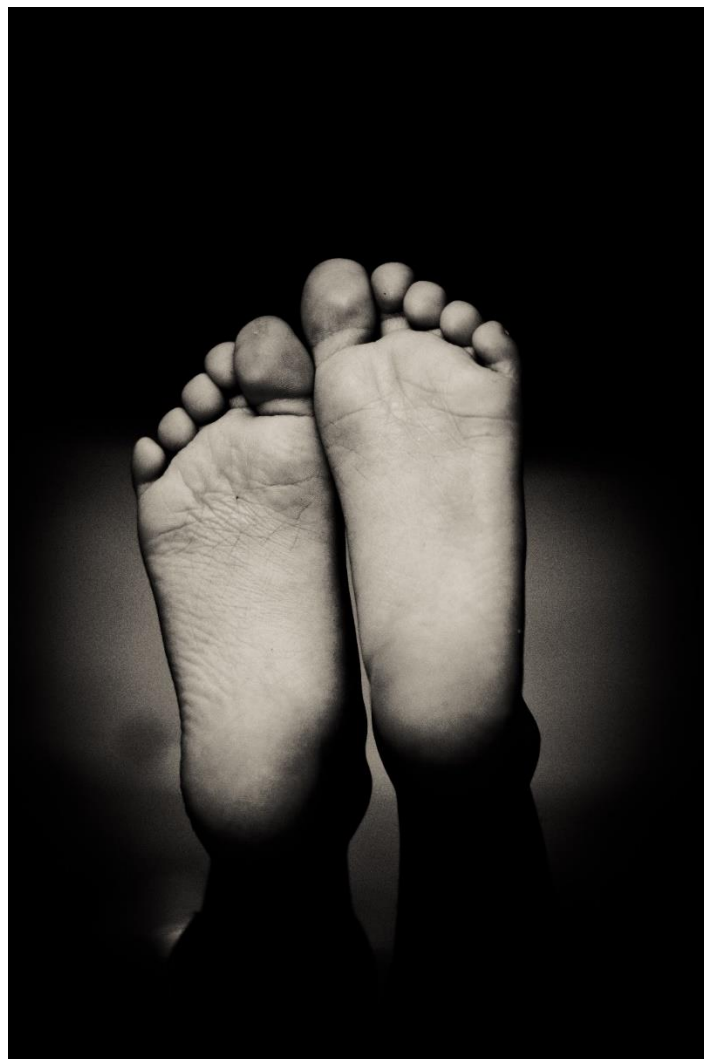
Foot Massage

*"The human foot is a masterpiece of engineering and a work of art".
-Leonardo da Vinci*

At the end of the day, before bed, grab some of your favourite cream or oil, and rub into your feet.

Take your time, massage the inner edge and the outer edge, the top of the foot as well as the toes and all the spaces in between.

Appreciate your feet. Thank them for everything they have done for you during the day.



The Good China

"I have to really enjoy the good things because it makes the bad things OK".

-Emma Watson

Do you have special plates or cups that you bring out when important guests visit?

Perhaps a tea pot or tea cups? Or a wine glass, or special vase?

Get this precious item out and use it for yourself. Take your time to appreciate what makes it special. Its age? Its colours and patterns? It's story and significance? Take the time to appreciate the object fully, and then use it for yourself.

Remind yourself that like this good china, you are special.



Do Something You Enjoy

"None of us are getting out of here alive, so please stop treating yourself like an afterthought. Eat the delicious food. Walk in the sunshine. Jump in the ocean. Say the truth you're carrying in your heart like hidden treasure. Be silly. Be kind. Be weird. There's no time for anything else."

-Nanea Hoffman

Anything.

Something.

Big or Small.

What do you want to do today?

And if you can't do something you enjoy, can you enjoy something that you have to do?



Walk in Nature

"The Earth is what we all have in common"

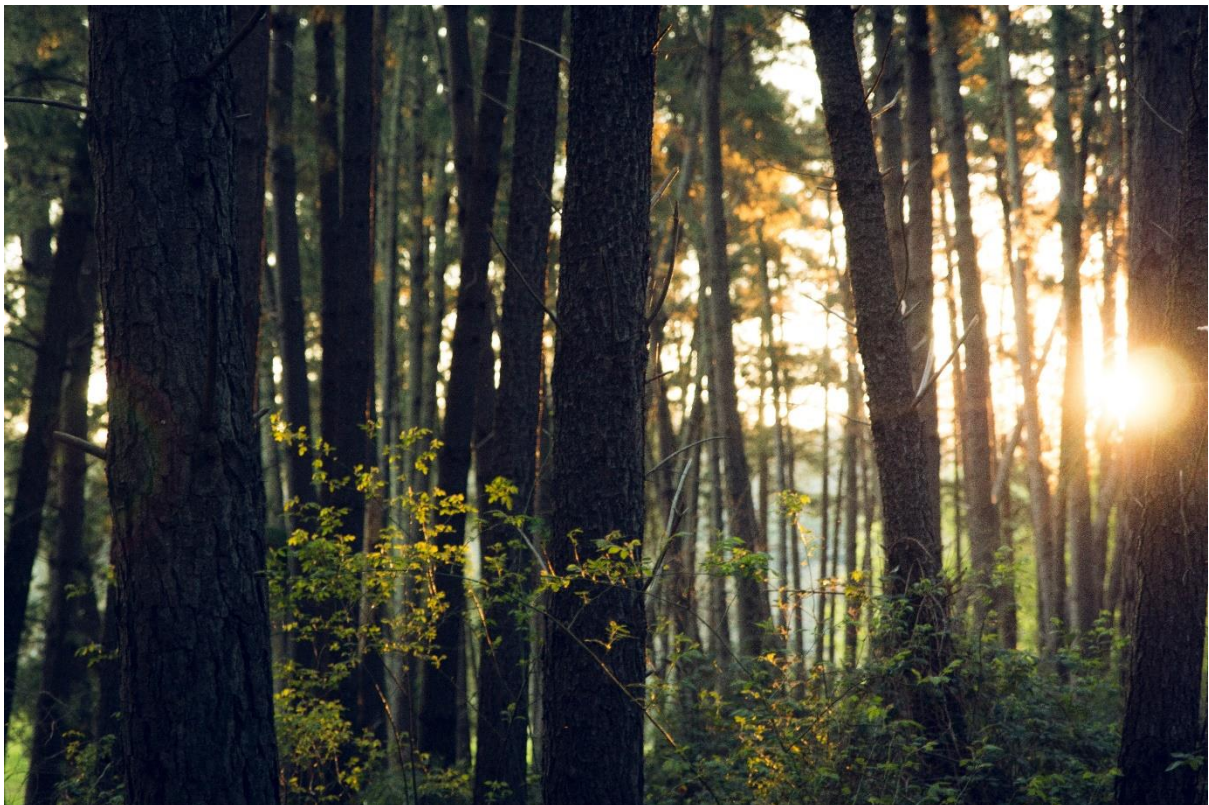
-Wendell Berry

The Japanese have a concept of "forest bathing".

It goes something like this: Go to a forest. Walk slowly. Open all of your senses. Allow the sights, sounds and smells to come to you. Breathe in the forest air. It is said to help improve the immune system, increase liveliness and relieve stress.

Allow your walk in nature to be calm and relaxed.

Why not try it with some friends?



What Have you Noticed?

*"Instructions for living a life.
Pay attention.
Be astonished.
Tell about it."*

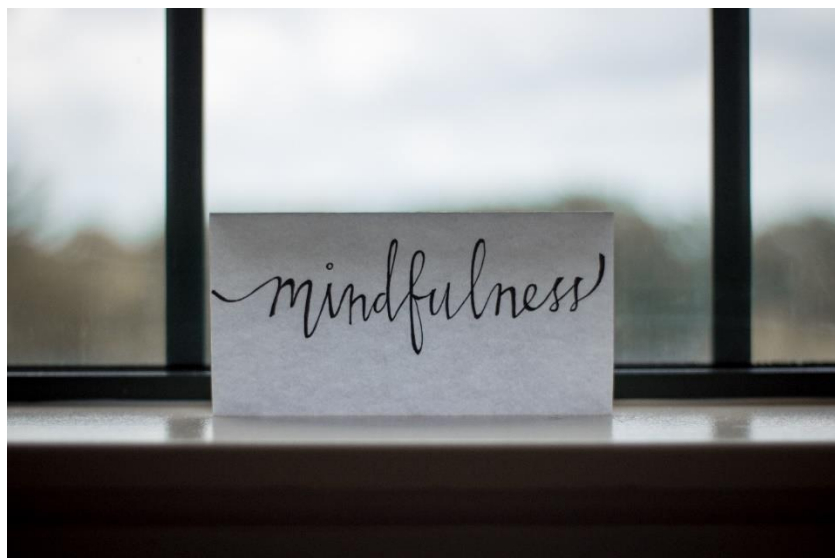
-Mary Oliver

We have reached the end of our 30 days. It is time to pause to reflect on what you have noticed. Were some of the practices more accessible for you than others? At what point, if any, did you become bored, disinterested, too busy?

Notice without judgement what the experience was like for you. Are there some practices you would like to build on, try again, forget?

Mindfulness is the practice of paying attention, without judgement. Again, and again.

I hope there have been some suggestions in this ebook which have resonated with you. I would love to hear about your journey into self-care. Join me in the Self-care September face book group, or email me at banksiayoga@gmail.com



Resources and Further Reading

Here is a list of some of my favourite books, readings and resources that have helped shaped this ebook.

Mindful Self Compassion

Christopher K Germer PhD, The mindful path to Self-compassion, Guilford Press, 2009

Stephen McKenzie , Heartfulness, Exisle Publishing, 2016

Kristin Neff, Web based meditations: <http://self-compassion.org/category/exercises/>

Mindfulness - Books

Thich Nhat Hahn, Mindful Movement, Parallax Press, 2008

Malcom Huxter, Healing the Heart and Mind with Mindfulness: Ancient Path, Present Moment, Routledge 2016

Richard Miller, Yoga Nidra, a meditative practice for deep relaxation and healing, Sounds True, 2012

Yoga and Movement practices

Ruthie Fraser, Stack your bones, Workman Publishing Company, 2017

Donna Farhi, Yoga, mind, body and Spirit, Owl books, 2000

Linda Hartley Wisdom of the body moving, North Atlantic Books, 1995

Martha Peterson, Move without pain, Sterling 2011

Breathing Practices

Donna Farhi, The Breathing Book, Henry Holt and Company, 1996.

Self Massage

Kristine kaoverrii Weber, Complete Self Massage, Collins and Brown 2005.

Other Resources

Dadirri (deep listening) <http://www.miriamrosefoundation.org.au/about-us/who-miriamrose>

Forest Bathing: <https://qz.com/804022/health-benefits-japanese-forest-bathing/>

For more information about Banksia Yoga, please visit www.banksiayoga.com

Acknowledgements and Thanks

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Especially I would like to thank past, current and future yoga students who attend classes at the Blackwood Uniting Church, and who are the people I had in mind to share this book with. Thank you for being part of this journey towards self-care, and reminding me of how important it is for myself. Thank you also to Jacqui Harrison and the other people at the Blackwood Uniting Church Community Program.

Thank you to my good friend and photographer Vanessa Craggs, from Adelaide Real Estate Photography for the picture of me in constructive rest, taken at the beautiful Yoga Spirit Studios. Vanessa is also the creator of the Banksia Yoga Logo. All other images and picture credits go to the talented photographers who have generously made their work available through www.unsplash.com



*My deepest appreciation to **you** for reading.*

May you remember your own worth, and be your own best friend.