

## Pausing to Regenerate Ourselves with Love and Gratitude

How can it possibly be December already? Some people love the festive season, but a lot of us find it quite stressful and some people really cannot stand it. So this month, I want to share with you a fantastically simple, but truly effective practice for de-stressing ourselves at any point during the day.

I have taken this practice from a really inspiring but totally practical book *Heart Intelligence* which is all about the crucial role our heart plays in contributing to our overall sense of well-being. The key is to centre in our heart on a very regular basis and then to bring a regenerative emotion into our heart. What is a regenerative emotion? It is any really positive emotion such as love, compassion or gratitude. A lot of books now talk about the power of positive thinking, but it turns out that our brains are far less powerful than our hearts in creating a wonderful future for ourselves and our beautiful planet.

For centuries, the brightest human brains have tried to figure out lasting solutions to all our endless problems and although they have come up with some ingenious inventions - antibiotics and hairdryers for example - in the long run, the human race seems just as troubled as it has always been and faces as many threats as ever. Maybe it really is time to try a completely different approach? Perhaps it is time to take a pretty short, but highly significant journey down from our heads to our hearts so that we can begin to live our lives in lasting love, joy and peace, rather than constant stress, irritation and anxiety.

Maybe we can all finally realise that our hearts are linked to a higher intelligence that is designed to provide the intuitive guidance we need to successfully navigate the extremely choppy waters of life on Planet Earth. We just need to learn how to tap into this higher intelligence at will. Now I do have to warn you that this will take some practice, because we are all so used to trying to use our mind's reason and logic to solve all our problems, even though this rarely works well! So we do have to dedicate some time and effort to learning how to tune into the higher wisdom and love in our hearts on a very regular basis. But I promise you that this effort will be totally worth it.

According to the authors of *Heart Intelligence*, researchers have now documented that whenever we hold onto negative emotions, such as fear or anger of any kind, they throw our nervous system out of sync and then our heart rhythms become disordered and jagged. On the other hand, experiencing positive emotions, such as appreciation or love, increases order and balance in our nervous system. We then automatically create harmonious heart rhythms that not only reduce our feelings of stress, but also assist us to think more clearly.

*Heart Intelligence* gives us a really simple exercise for changing our heart rhythms from jagged to harmonious and here it is – or rather my slightly amended version of it.

Step 1. Focus your attention in the area of your physical heart.

Step 2. Breathe in and out slowly and smoothly and imagine that you are breathing in and out of your heart.

Step 3. Bring a feeling of love or gratitude into your heart

Step 4. Let go of any thinking and just bathe in the feeling of love or gratitude for as long as you like.

In step 1, I like to place the fingertips of both hands near or around my physical heart as I do this.

During step 3, I like to think about how grateful I am to someone in my life who has been really kind, loving, or helpful to me. Sometimes, I think about a really kind uncle I remember from my childhood. At other times, I send heartfelt thanks to my first meditation teacher Ken Mellor who has been like a spiritual father to me, or silently send love and gratitude to Gloria or one of my other really supportive women friends.

I have been practising this exercise more or less every day for a while now and I have to report that it works. If I am feeling agitated or stressed, doing this exercise for just a minute or two really calms me down. If I am feeling a little blue, it really cheers me up. If I notice I have any anxieties about the future, they seem to dissolve away in the positive energy of love and gratitude. I particularly appreciate that changing my attention from destructive feelings such as anger or anxiety to a regenerative emotion such as gratitude can be done in just one minute!

So why not give yourself an early Christmas present that is really worth receiving and practise this simple, heart-centred one minute exercise this month? Whenever you notice that you are feeling even a little bit anxious or irritated, pause, slow down your breathing and bring a feeling of love or gratitude into your heart. SIMPLES!

Finally, thank you so much for reading these 2018 monthly messages. I love writing to them and really look forwards to beginning a new year of messages in 2019.

Peggy Foster  
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