

The Guest House

This exercise involves reading a poem while you're in a mindful state and just noticing your reactions to it.

First, make yourself comfortable in your chair. Take a few moments to notice your breathing. Close your eyes, and focusing on your breath ... Noticing how breath travels into your body, through your body, and back out of your body ... noticing any tension in your body ... and gently letting it go ... Spending a few moments just focusing your attention on your breath ... Now I would like to read you a poem and have you focus your attention on your reactions to the poem.

"The Guest House"

This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,
Some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,

still treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing,
and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.

(Rumi, from Barks & Moyne, 1995)