

Poetry for Wellbeing

The following are some exercises that were created to accompany our 2019 exhibition 'Prescribe Culture'. You are welcome to re-use them. They are designed to aid a deep slow reading of poetry that has been shown to ease and calm the mind.

We have given a reference of a poem for each exercise, but you can use any poetry that appeals to you. You will find lots of poems available online from our website. You can borrow poetry books from our Library or your own local public library.

Exercise 1 Read Slow

Exercise 2 Deep Reading

Exercise 3 Read and Respond

Exercise 1 Read Slow

Using a poem, or part of a poem – you're look for between 6-8 lines. We used:

New Every Morning

Susan Coolidge(1835-1905)

Morgan, G (ed) (2019) Poems for Happiness. London:Macmillan. P.99

Read the poem and then read the poem again.

Now, take a deep breath, hold it for 1,2,3,4, and then let go of the breath. Return to the poem. Read whilst following the instructions for breathing in and out, that are in **bold** and **italicised**. Take your time. This is slow reading and will take practice.

Breathe in deeply , hold and read

Read the first line

and let go of breath slowly.

Breathe in deeply , hold and read

Read the second line

and let go of breath slowly.

Breathe in deeply, hold in breath and read

Third line.

and let go of breath slowly.

Breathe in deeply, hold in breath and read

Fourth line

and let go of breath slowly.

Breathe in deeply, hold in breath and read

Fifth line

and let go of breath slowly.

Breathe in deeply, hold in breath and read

Sixth line

***and let go of breath slowly.
Breathe in deeply, hold in breath and read***

Seventh line

***and let go of breath slowly.
Breathe in deeply, hold in breath and read***

Eighth line

***and let go of breath slowly.
Breathe in deeply and let go of breath slowly.***

Repeat this if you want to. Remember to take your time with your breaths, you can to help- breathe in for 1,2,3,4 and let go for 1,2,3,4.

PRESCRIBE CULTURE

POETRY & WELLBEING

Exercise 2 Deep Reading

Scottish **Poetry** Library

Bringing people and poems together

This exercise has been shown to calm and focus the mind. You will need two pieces of paper and a pen or pencil .

Find a poem, or part of a poem 8-10 lines. We used:

Perseverance

Steve Langley

Saint, A (ed) (1992) *Here to dare, 10 black gay poets*. New York: Galiens Press p.92

Take a long deep breath and then let that long deep breath go. Take time to look around. Notice the books around you, where the light is coming from, take as long as you need to be present and in this space. Then, narrow your focus to the seat you are in and the poem in front of you. Read the poem once. Read the poem twice. Take a long deep breath and then let that long deep breath go. On your piece of paper write the title of the poem. Take a moment to look at the title. Then continue to write out the poem on your piece of paper. Taking a new line as needed. Once you have finished. Take a moment to read the poem you have written out. Then begin to write out the poem again on your second sheet of paper.

Exercise 3 Read and Respond

Find a poem 15-25 lines. We used:

Wild Geese

Mary Oliver

Sieghart, W. (2017) *The Poetry Pharmacy; Tried-and-True Prescriptions for the heart, mind and soul*. Milton Keynes: Penguin Random House. p.61

Read the poem once.

Read the poem twice.

Take your piece of paper and write at the top of the piece of paper, *Wild Geese by Mary Oliver- My Response*.

Read once more the poem. Taking a moment at the end of each line.

On your piece of paper, feel free to respond to the poem as you wish. You might draw a picture, or doodle. You may write words or just a word. You might write a poem of your own or a sentence, or a list. You may write out the poem or part of the poem.

Take your time.

Read the poem again.

Use the paper to respond however you want to the poem, or to the act of reading the poem.

This is your response and it can't be wrong.