

October Theme for Exploration: CULTIVATING COMPASSION

This list of questions is an aid for deep reflection. They are meant not so much to be answered as to take you somewhere. Your question may not be listed below. If the questions don't include what life is asking from you, spend the month listening to your days to find it.

Read through the list 2-3 times until one question sticks out for you and captures your attention. Then reflect further with questions such as:

- *What is going on in my life right now that makes this question so pronounced for me?*
- *What might the question be inviting me to revisit? And why?*
- *How might Life be speaking through the question to offer me a word of comfort or challenge?*
- **A note about self-care:** *Often these questions take us to a vulnerable space. How might my inner voice be trying to speak to me through it? It is OKAY to ignore the questions that may be triggering – or lean in if that feels safe.*

1. Has compassion ever helped you find your way home?
2. When were you offered compassion in an unexpected or unique way.?
3. What's your first memory of being compassionate with yourself?
4. Who is to thank for the way compassion "naturally" arises in you?
5. Where did your unkind and self-critical inner voice come from? Or maybe the better question is, whose unkind and self-critical voice taught your brain how to talk?
6. What do you need to do to stay tender and compassionate in the face of our consistently cruel political culture that wants you to go numb?
7. Which of these self-diminishing cultural lies do you struggle with the most, maybe without even realizing it: 1. I am what I have, 2. I am what I do, 3. I am what other people say or think about me, 4. I am nothing more than my worst moment?
8. Is it possible that your self-improvement efforts have subtly become acts of self-aggression?
9. How would your feelings about and actions with that "difficult person" in your life change if you somehow discovered they were doing the best they can or that their aggravating behavior is not a character defect but a wound that runs deep?
10. In a world that needs so much compassion, many of us feel tangled up in and worn down by compassion fatigue. How might that struggle be eased if you more regularly asked yourself: What's mine to do? What's not mine to do? What's mine to say? What's not mine to say? What's mine to care about? What's not mine to care about?
11. Is it time to stop beating yourself up for that poor decision you made long ago? Is it time to remind yourself that you made the best decision you could have with the information and skills you had at the time?
12. What if your busy and important life is the true enemy of your compassion?