



Article by Mary Ann Iyer, MD, MA

Good Enough

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Every morning before heading out into the world, I go inward to bask in the deep quiet of my soul. There are umpteen books scattered around my upstairs writing alcove, where I nest for this ritual. Inner Guidance tells me which book to pick up, and what to read. Invariably, the various passages I turn to will be saying the same thing. They may be written hundreds of years apart, but the message is the same. I still find this astonishing.

A few mornings ago, the focus of my reading was “never being enough”. A recent New Connexion newspaper had an article by a woman whose mother had died¹. She noted this as being mostly a relief, and described how she felt like she was worthwhile for the first time in her life, as she sat with her mother in the last stages of her mom’s life. Her mother had Alzheimer’s, and because she didn’t remember who Carolyn was, she treated her like she treated all other strangers — which was a whole lot better than she had ever treated her as her daughter.

This got Carolyn to thinking about the general topic of “being enough”. Her eventual conclusion was: “What if not being enough is just fine?” This slightly different spin on the topic really hit home for me. What if I sit here and say: “It’s just perfectly fine to be not enough”? Then, a question like: “What would it take to be good enough?” - or trying to convince myself I am good enough, becomes irrelevant. This idea reframed the whole ongoing “good enough” conversation for me. I suddenly don’t need to meet anyone’s expectations when I drop that as the impossible standard I’m perpetually trying to meet.

I don’t know anybody who is free of the feeling that they are never quite enough — and it’s such a source of suffering. It defines a place in us where we’re just plain not OK in our own skin. I don’t think anything can be more painful than living every day with the scorching thoughts of: “I’m somehow not OK. There is something wrong with me. I can’t quite figure it out, but I’m sure I need to fix something about me to make me OK.” That’s torture. That’s hell. And, that place is defined exactly by the messages of “not good enough” we’ve absorbed.

This topic has loomed especially large in my mind recently because my mother died last month. Most of us don’t feel perfectly mothered. But a very interesting thing happened when my mother died. She had increasingly lived her life as the martyr that the faith in her religion encouraged her to be. She perfected

that act through her entire adulthood. It became quite gruesome, and she died the way she had lived — suffering horribly.

Throughout my last two months with her, I focused on trying to release the chains of the patriarchal religion which had so convinced her of her unworthiness. I wanted her to taste what it was like to be mothered in a loving way as she became more and more dependent. At the very end — in the last two days — I held her and rocked her, as her breath became more labored and she could no longer resist. I reminded her: “Right here, God loves you. The Angels are holding you. You did nothing wrong. You are innocent.” She finally began to lighten in the last hour, tears streaming down her face (and mine).

Two nights after that, I bolted straight up in bed. I was feeling the most intense loving, divine Presence. It was my mother! I felt then, and it has been absolutely there ever since, “This is what it is like without all the ‘garb’.” The garbage of condemnation. “This is what it’s like to just feel loved!”

Now, here’s a confession. I’m named after the Blessed Virgin Mary, and her mother, Anne. I have a Kuan Yin statue. I’ve tried so hard to connect to/with some idea of some Divine Mother. I have wonderful girlfriends. I feel enormous love in my life. But in spite of believing that I had already freed my heart and mind from the influence of the martyrdom by which I was raised, I had never really felt the Divine Mother as a loving presence. I went through a phase of rebellion deep inside of me that took me on a path of researching Goddess religions. I had an intense curiosity about who we were before patriarchy began the brainwashing of inferiority. Who were we? I can’t say I got the answer from the many books I read, which were mostly either academic or really angry. These consoled me for about a week before I realized I still didn’t have the answer I needed.

And — here, in the middle of the night, I suddenly “got it” — without the garbage. It’s the most intensely beautiful, sublime, amazing sensation. Just to be loved, with absolutely no conditions.

What so many of us are dealing with, I’m convinced, is all that garbage wrapped like barnacles around the skin of the feminine. I believe this is true for both men and women. The depth of this is so profound. There is no part of us that was ever taught that just to be female (or, in the case of men, to contain “feminine qualities”) is glorious. By female energy I mean the soft, receptive, gentle quality of nurturance. We haven’t learned that this energy is unique, precious and needed. The world is desperately starving to feel loved by in a way that doesn’t have judgment in it, and to dare to love without conditions of “performance” attached. Just imagine that!

I see this deprivation as the starvation behind so many addictions and pains. The real hunger is our cells craving acceptance. This is the True Mother energy: that which accepts us as we are. I think of the thousands of women who have coursed through my Mindful Eating classes, with their desperate stories of craving acceptance. I think of my own two year sojourn into a heavyweight darkness after a painful divorce. All of us longing for that elusive state that would tell us that we were finally, irrevocably accepted. Wanted, even. There are millions glued to TV screens, computer terminals and hopping in

and out of sex-only beds who are craving that which will fill them up enough that they can finally settle down into their own skins. Just – acceptance.

This is not to vilify any mother anywhere. No one of us is the perfect embodiment of the fully nurturing energy. The role of motherhood on the planet is huge enough without adding the layers of “should be better”. The point of this conversation is that within each of us resides the space of the Divine Mother. It is that loving space to which we can retreat for sustenance and acceptance. Experiencing it might be easier if our earth-mother modeled this attitude, but if we grew up in the environment of one who was too caught in her own suffering to be able to do this, it does not detract from the Space itself.

Sometimes, we glimpse an awareness of this Divine Space in those moments when our minds are so focused on what is in front of us, we have no room for other niggling thoughts . Martha Beck² describes this. She claims that it often happens under times of great stress because the brain is so engaged in the impossibility of the moment – it just stops for a moment. One of the ways I perceive this happening is that the “doing” aspect of our brain just falls away and our mind rests for a moment in space. It is part of the patriarchal teaching that our brain has to “figure it out”. In believing we are not yet enough for acceptance, we think we need to *do* something more to get there. If we make it just another project to access the Divine Mother space by making the active mind behave itself, we’re once again caught in trying to control the whole thing.

Spaciousness comes not by our bidding. It is always there – always available, when we stop agitating against it, believing we have to “do something” to earn it, to deserve it, to find it. Being loved has as its only prerequisite that we exist. We really are enough. Who – or what – else could we possibly be?

¹ Carolyn Campbell, *New Connexion*, Jan/Feb 2012

² Martha Beck, *Steering by Starlight*. 2008

I offer an audio exercise as a meditation to facilitate opening into this healing Space. You can access that by clicking [here](#).

I offer the following exercise as a meditation to facilitate opening into this healing Space:

“Good Enough”

Exercise:

Mary Ann Iyer, MD

(I encourage you to record this to listen to it, pausing between each paragraph.)

See if these words can penetrate a place inside of you.

Just for a moment, notice in your body, the feeling of hearing the words of “backing down” inside the self. And – imagine the possibility – of trusting – that you are taken care of. That you are safe. And you are loved, honestly, as you are. Notice where your breath goes in your body. Imagine for a moment – that you can trust. That you are loved – just like this. That you don’t have to do anything to earn it.

The mind conjures the reasons “why not”. The mind conjures the arguments. The mind conjures what we have to do to prove it or have it proven to us.

I invite you to close your eyes for a moment. I invite you to just notice your breath. Just for a moment, notice your breath. And - notice the clinging of the mind. Give permission – just for this moment – to settle back down into the breath.

Just for this moment, give permission to entertain the possibility – that everything your mind says might not be the whole truth. Just allow for that possibility. And given that, follow your breath down into the body.

Notice the sensation of the breath coming in. And ask yourself: “Will I do any harm, if I believe that I am loved as I am?”

Entertain that possibility. I invite you to feel, around you, the ambiance of the air. Recognize the fact that this life is supporting you. You’re not doing a single thing right now. And life is supporting you – every breath in is life. You’re not doing anything to deserve this right now. You’re breathing. Just stay with that for a moment.

[Pause]

Now, please take your diaries/notebooks – and when you’re ready – write a letter. Think of *the* person who comes to mind whom you absolutely love without condition. A person whom you wish with all your heart would know how precious they are. Whom you wish with all your heart would not have to suffer. Who could feel their preciousness. Who could feel how much you loved her or him.

And write a letter to that person. Just write what comes up in your heart.

When you are finished (do not rush this), close your books and go back inside for a few minutes.

[Stop tape until finished with letter]

Feel inside of you the intensity of love and tenderness for this person. It is as if your heart swells and explodes. You can barely contain it.

Your goodwill. Your wishing for this person – all good intentions. Your desire that this person not have pain; that this person would experience the intensity of this love that you know that you have in your body – in your heart – in your soul. This person is like an anchor that allows you to feel that upwelling inside of you. Just be aware of this. The intensity of your love. Sit with that for a minute.

As if the person were right in front of you; and now there are no words. Just allow your heart to be open. No words. As if your eyes could penetrate right down into their Being. And you could connect – with no words.

[Pause]

All right. Now – there is a precious being inside of you who is hungry to know that (s)he is loved. Notice. Turn your eyes around, now, to notice yourself. All the lies that you believed, and believe, that would in *any* way make you think that (s)he does not deserve this love – are wrong.

Now, go back to your letter. Go back to the very beginning of it. And – in the beginning, there – where you have written, “Dear So and So”, just put a line through the “So and so” and write your name. And then read the letter that you have written to yourself. Take your time with this. Read it slowly and take it in as much as you can.

[Pause]

Then write down any thoughts that occur to you. Any insights or awareness.

Notice how this letter rings with truth and authenticity – for you. The ripple of healing that can come from this can be mind-boggling.

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MARY ANN IYER, M.D., is a physician whose primary focus is mind-body and spiritual healing. She is a pioneer in the field of mind-body medicine, and is the author of *The Heart of Healing* and *Mindful Eating: Mindful Life*, (under author name: Mary Ann Wallace, MD) as well as numerous guided meditation CDs, available at any bookstore, Amazon or www.maryanniyer.com.