

## START CLOSE IN

By David Whyte

from his poetry collection 'River Flow'



Start close in,  
don't take the second step  
or the third,  
start with the first  
thing  
close in,  
the step  
you don't want to take.

Start with  
the ground  
you know,  
the pale ground  
beneath your feet,  
your own  
way of starting  
the conversation.

Start with your own  
question,  
give up on other  
people's questions,  
don't let them  
smother something  
simple.

To find  
another's voice,  
follow  
your own voice,  
wait until  
that voice  
becomes a  
private ear  
listening  
to another.

Start right now  
take a small step  
you can call your own  
don't follow  
someone else's  
heroics, be humble  
and focused,  
start close in,  
don't mistake  
that other  
for your own.

*Start close in,  
don't take  
the second step  
or the third,  
start with the first  
thing  
close in,  
the step  
you don't want to take.*

Recommended – David Whyte reciting this poem himself on YouTube, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=030YqrN4SFC>

## **Hold Out Your Hand**

Let's forget the world for a while  
fall back and back  
into the hush and holy  
of now  
are you listening? This breath  
invites you  
to write the first word  
of your new story  
your new story begins with this:  
You matter  
you are needed — empty  
and naked  
willing to say yes  
and yes and yes.



Do you see  
the sun shines, day after day  
whether you have faith  
or not  
the sparrows continue  
to sing their song  
even when you forget to sing  
yours  
stop asking: Am I good enough?  
Ask only  
Am I showing up  
with love?  
Life is not a straight line  
it's a downpour of gifts, please —  
hold out your hand  
*Julia Fehrenbache*

If you can sit quietly after difficult news:

If in financial downturns you remain perfectly calm;

If you can see your neighbours travel to fantastic places without a twinge of jealousy;

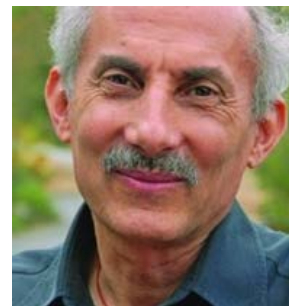
If you can happily eat whatever is put on your plate;

If you can fall asleep after a day of running around without a drink or a pill;

If you can find contentment just where you are:

You are probably ... a dog.

***Attributed to Jack Kornfield***



## **Oriah Mountain Dreamer**

What if there is no need to change?  
No need to try to transform yourself  
Into someone who is more compassionate, more present, more loving,  
or wise?  
How would this affect all the places in your life where you are endlessly  
trying to be better?

What if the task is simply to unfold,  
To become who you already are in your essential nature:  
Gentle, compassionate, and capable of living fully and passionately  
present?

What if the question is not  
"Why am I so infrequently the person I really want to be?"  
But "Why do I so infrequently want to be the person I really am?"  
How would this change what you think you have to learn?

What if becoming who and what we truly are happens not through  
striving and trying  
But by recognising and receiving the people and places and practices  
That are for us the warmth of encouragement we need to unfold?  
How would this shape the choices you make about how to spend today?

What if you knew that the impulse to move in a way that creates beauty  
in the world  
Will arise from deep within  
And guide you every time you simply pay attention  
And wait.

How would this shape your stillness, your movement,  
Your willingness to follow this impulse  
To just let go  
And dance?

***from the Prelude to "The Dance", 2001. Harper Collins***

## ***A Morning Offering***

*I bless the night that nourished my heart  
To set the ghosts of longing free  
Into the flow and figure of dream  
That went to harvest from the dark  
Bread for the hunger no one sees.  
All that is eternal in me  
Welcome the wonder of this day,  
The field of brightness it creates  
Offering time for each thing  
To arise and illuminate.  
I place on the altar of dawn:  
The quiet loyalty of breath,  
The tent of thought where I shelter,  
Wave of desire I am shore to  
And all beauty drawn to the eye.  
May my mind come alive today  
To the invisible geography  
That invites me to new frontiers,  
To break the dead shell of yesterdays,  
To risk being disturbed and changed.  
May I have the courage today  
To live the life that I would love,  
To postpone my dream no longer  
But do at last what I came here for  
And waste my heart on fear no more.*

***~ John O'Donohue ~***



**Kindness**  
**Naomi Shihab Nye, 1952**

*Before you know what kindness really is  
you must lose things,  
feel the future dissolve in a moment  
like salt in a weakened broth.  
What you held in your hand,  
what you counted and carefully saved,  
all this must go so you know  
how desolate the landscape can be  
between the regions of kindness.  
How you ride and ride  
thinking the bus will never stop,  
the passengers eating maize and chicken  
will stare out the window forever.*



*Before you learn the tender gravity of kindness  
you must travel where the Indian in a white poncho  
lies dead by the side of the road.  
You must see how this could be you,  
how he too was someone  
who journeyed through the night with plans  
and the simple breath that kept him alive.*

*Before you know kindness as the deepest thing inside,  
you must know sorrow as the other deepest thing.  
You must wake up with sorrow.  
You must speak to it till your voice  
catches the thread of all sorrows  
and you see the size of the cloth.  
Then it is only kindness that makes sense anymore,  
only kindness that ties your shoes  
and sends you out into the day to gaze at bread,  
only kindness that raises its head  
from the crowd of the world to say  
It is I you have been looking for,  
and then goes with you everywhere  
like a shadow or a friend.*