

Space for making notes

An Awareness Walk

Become inclined to watch the way of rain

When it falls slow and free.

Imitate the habit of twilight,

Taking time to open the well of colour

That fostered the brightness of day.

Draw alongside the silence of stone

Until its calmness can claim you.

Be excessively gentle with yourself.

- John O'Donohue "A Blessing for One Who is Exhausted"

Set off alone. Find your own space and breathe deeply. Be aware of your own body.

Start walking. Feel your limbs and the ground under your feet ... pavement, tarmac, shingle, grass, steps, sand, gravel.

Smell the air. What can you smell ... car exhaust fumes, earth, food, flowers, perfume.

Look at the sky ... the many shades of blue, grey, pink ... the clouds, their movement, colour and shape.

Listen to all the sounds around you, near and distant ... traffic, voices, birds, wind, planes, machinery, music. You may like to make a list.

Touch things as you walk along. Feel the textures of wood, stone, brick, concrete, metal, fabric, soil, vegetation.

Look at things near and far ... shapes, colours, textures.

Be aware of the people you pass (without staring too hard!) ... their faces, eyes, skin, hair, their dress. How are they walking? What are they carrying?

Do stuff. Be clenched, curious. Not waiting for inspiration's shove or society's kiss on your forehead.

Pay attention. It's all about paying attention.

Attention is vitality. It connects you with others.

It makes you eager. Stay eager.

– Susan Sontag

Be aware of litter, gutters, cracks, dark corners, signs of death and decay. Perhaps you may find something unexpected there.

Look at the buildings – you may like to choose one in particular. Their shape on the skyline, roofs, chimney pots. Shapes of doors and windows. Ornamentation. Colour of walls. Any graffiti?

Look closely at the patterns and colour of one brick/stone. Feel the texture. Where may it have been made or quarried? Is the building casting shadows about it? What is the building used for? Perhaps its use has changed through time?

Find a tree, bush or plant to look at.

Look at its overall shape, its silhouette against the sky, the way the branches fall. Go up close and feel the bark or stem, look at the patterns and colour.

Look at a leaf, its shape, colour and texture.

Perhaps you may like to pick up a small object from the ground ... a stone, seed pod, coin, piece of gravel, metal or plastic.

Look at its shape and colour. Feel its texture. What may its journey have been to the place where you picked it up?

To see a World in a Grain of Sand

And a Heaven in a Wild Flower

Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand

And Eternity in an hour

– William Blake "Auguries of Innocence"

The dream of my life

Is to lie down by a slow river

And stare at the light in the trees –

To learn something by being nothing

A little while but the rich

Lens of attention.

– Mary Oliver, "Entering the Kingdom"