

## The Yes Practice:

from *Perfect Love Imperfect Relationships* by John Welwood

You can develop a simple practice of saying yes to yourself each day. Stop for a moment, pay attention to whatever's going on inside you, and then acknowledge it in a neutral way: "Yes, this is what's here." "Yes, I'm nervous," lightly meeting or touching the nervousness with your awareness. *Don't reject anything you are experiencing.* Meet it instead in a brief moment of nonjudgmental awareness – touching it and letting it be. This is a simple way of saying yes to yourself, a shorthand form of unconditional love, and presence that you can practice at any moment, wherever you are, whatever you are doing.

"Yes, there's worry." Touch that and let be, lightly making contact with the sense of worry in your body. "Yes, I'm acting in a stingy way," and notice how it affects you to be aware of that, without judgment or manipulation. Yes here does not mean, "I like it," "I approve of it," "I think it's good," or "I'm glad it's like this." It simply means, "Yes, this is what's here right now. I can meet this because it's what is happening. And I can stay open to myself even though this is coming up." When you can offer that kind of yes to yourself, it silences the critic and puts a stop to the inner trial.

If you have a hard time saying yes to something, you can also say yes to that: "Yes, I am struggling with this; I'm having a hard time letting it be." "Yes, I'm not accepting this right now; there's a refusal in me." Notice and feel the resistance or refusal and let it be, with awareness. Don't just observe it, but feel it and give it room to have its energetic play, while remaining aware of it nonjudgmentally. If you judge, then be aware of that, and again: "Yes, there is judgment." Let the judgment simply be there in awareness, without judging the judgment. "Yes, I am here for myself even though self-judgment is arising." See if you can be an interested, neutral witness of what happens in your mind and emotions, extending warmth and openness to whatever is there, in the spirit of "Yes, yes, this is what's here."

Don't let this be a conceptual exercise. You don't have to verbalize the "yes," though that can often be helpful. What's most important is to touch what's there for a moment, let it be, and experience yourself there with it, in openness, allowing yourself to be as you are, even though you may not like what you are feeling. "Yes, I can be here with myself even though anxiety is arising ... even though self-doubt is present ... even though loneliness is here."

As you open briefly to whatever state you're in, directly experience the openness that can see and let be. Notice that this openness is much larger than any of the states you go through. Be this openness, which can hold your experience in a kind and gentle way. This puts you in touch with the larger being that you are, who is not trapped in any of these states of mind.