

Week 1: Radical Gentleness

Day 3: Cultivating Gentleness (It Starts with Me)



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It's tempting to see this for the cartoon it is, but if we stop just for a moment...

There's probably more truth to this than we would like to acknowledge.

Practicing radical gentleness is a much more difficult path if we don't first do the work of looking at the way we treat ourselves. Yes, I mean rest and good self-care. But gentleness is more than that.

How often do you get caught up in perfectionism? How much pressure do you put on yourself to get everything done right, done now, done better?

And what about self-talk? We say a lot to ourselves that we don't even acknowledge. Try for just one day to be mindful of the times you speak to yourself and listen to what you say. How often do you put yourself down? How often do you beat yourself up for the smallest of slights? I'm not saying we should acknowledge and correct mistakes, or that we shouldn't always be growing in our interactions in the world. I'm simply saying that the language we use with ourselves in those moments can make a big difference. "Well, I really don't like the way I handled that. Next time, I'll do better," is a long way from, "I can't believe you did something so stupid! When are you going to learn?!"

Have you ever looked at the language of your family (both current and family of origin)? Many of us live with or come from families where affection is often expressed in put-downs or name-calling (even in jest). Even if this comes from a place of love, and you are secure in the affections of your family, over time these things can pile up. It creates the lens through which we view ourselves, and then the lens through which we view and interact with others.

To get to a place where we can live out gentle approach and gentle response (our reflection from yesterday), we first must be gentle with ourselves. That is as good a place as any to start our journey.

God of all grace, help me to be mindful of my words and my attitudes toward myself. You ask us to love our neighbor as ourselves. Help me to remember that this is not possible without loving myself. Help me to be ever gentler with myself each day. Amen.