



SEVEN EMPOWERMENTS FOR INNER PEACE

Silent Awareness in Everyday Life

By Cynthia Overweg

1. Love. Be close to those you love and to the world at-large with an awakened awareness of your own five senses: ***Touch, Taste, Smell, Listening and Seeing.*** We often take them for granted, going through each day without realizing what they can contribute to an awakened life.

Touch. When you touch someone or something, *feel* the touch. Be inwardly aware of the feeling that touch evokes. When we touch someone, whether it's a simple handshake or a loving embrace, it's a moment of authentic relationship. Touch communicates in a way that words do not.

Taste. We usually eat our meals without much awareness. Eating is habitual; we eat because we're hungry or simply because it's time to eat. Sometimes we rush through a meal, hardly noticing the taste and texture of our food. We need food to survive, yet we're rarely aware of the multitude of people involved in growing, harvesting and packaging our food before we even buy it. Being grateful for the ease of acquiring our food and for how it nourishes us brings a more subtle level of awareness into the body.

Smell. Let yourself really enjoy the pleasant scent and fragrances of everyday life—the fresh smell of rain; salt in an ocean breeze; the perfume of a rose; the aroma of roasted coffee beans. Our sense of smell can also help us avoid what may be unhealthy, even toxic. But like our other senses, we take the sense of smell for granted, unaware of how it enriches our life in so many ways. For me, the scent of sandalwood or the aroma of simmering home-made spaghetti sauce makes me smile.

Listen. To consciously listen to the pulse of life enlivens all of our senses. Listen to a breeze fluttering through a tree; to the call of an eagle or hawk, the hoot of an owl; a lovely piece

of music or to the voice of someone speaking to you—really listen without inner comment or judgment. Listening connects you to yourself and the world around you in a much deeper way. When we listen with our full attention to the movement of a river, to another person, or a buzzing bee landing on a flower, our listening rests in silent awareness, a state of being where there is no separation within us or outside of us; there is only the listening.

Seeing. To see what is true is a gift of grace. Silent seeing arises when the mind is quiet. In such quietude, a silent perception occurs without the mind's commentary. Try looking into the eyes of a person, an animal, or a bird without an opinion and without naming what you see. If it's impossible not to name what you see, it's okay. Let it be. Look from curiosity and kindness. As you look, notice the eyes looking back at you. Watch what happens within you when your eyes meet. Silent seeing is an act of love.

2. Acknowledge Sorrow and Loss. Sorrow is a Wisdom Teacher in disguise.

"Where there is sorrow, there is holy ground," said Oscar Wilde when he was in prison, alone and frightened.¹ Yet his loneliness and sorrow awakened a spiritual dimension in his life that had been hidden. He found compassion for himself and for others, including those who harmed him. Sorrow prompts us to reflect on what matters most in life. I have found that the crucible of sorrow reveals the depths of love.

3. Be Grateful for the Simple Joys of Life.

Gratitude takes us out of ourselves and affirms our basic goodness. Be grateful for the beauty we forget to see, like a bird chirping in a tree; a butterfly dancing in the air; the face of a child bursting with curiosity; pizza and a movie with a friend; a sunlight morning with a loved one; the unconditional love of your pet companion. Attend to these simple joys with gratitude each day and watch how love enters your heart and reaches out to others.

4. Awaken your Muse.

Keep a journal or sketch book, starting today. Don't censor yourself; just write or draw. Or learn to play an instrument; take a poetry, music or swimming class. Learn to play chess or ride a horse. Dive into your creativity, whether it's stamp collecting, needlework, table tennis, gardening, hiking, biking, dancing—whatever opens you to the creative pulse of life. Life is creative so open yourself to your muse. Be playful. Have fun. Don't delay. Begin today!

5. Breath Awareness.

Morning, Afternoon, Evening. *Breathe consciously.*

Take a deep breath, fill your body with fresh air. Then slowly exhale. Your breath is connected to the rhythm of life. *Just 10 Seconds of Breath Awareness 3 times per day!* You may notice a significant difference in energy, awareness and contentment.

¹ *De Profundis* by Oscar Wilde.

6. **Embrace the Blessing of Wonder.** The human spirit thrives in the open arms of wonder. Wonder gives us resilience and joy. It energizes the body. Start by looking up at the sky. Look as if it's the very first time you've ever seen it. Notice it's changing colors and cloud formations; look at how vast and spacious it is; how the sky above seems endless. And notice what happens inside you when you see that.
7. **Be Kind.** The Dalai Lama put it this way: *"My religion is to be kind."* Being kind to others, to animals and all living beings is to be aligned with the goodness in oneself and in creation. To be kind enhances the lives of others and nourishes our own well-being because an act of genuine kindness is unselfish. Kindness makes a difference in the world in seen and unseen ways.

*"If you think you are too small to make a difference,
try living with a mosquito."*

The Dalai Lama

*"When you are a light to yourself,
you are a light to the world."*

J. Krishnamurti

