

## Press Kit:

### *Poetry of Presence: An Anthology of Mindfulness Poems*

Phyllis Cole-Dai & Ruby R. Wilson, Editors

<http://www.poetryofpresencebook.com>

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- 1. Book description.** *Poetry of Presence* is a collection of more than 150 mindfulness poems, mostly by contemporary or recent poets. Mindfulness poems invite us to bring our whole self to whatever moment we're in, and truly live it. They encourage us to be more present, more attentive and compassionate, in the living of our days. They grant us a taste of being good enough, just as we are, in this world, just as it is.

Anthologized poets include Yehuda Amichai • Margaret Atwood • Ellen Bass • Wendell Berry • Robert Bly • Billy Collins • Mahmoud Darwish • Thich Nhat Hanh • Joy Harjo • Tony Hoagland • Miroslav Holub • Marie Howe • Erica Jong • Kabir • Galway Kinnell • Ted Kooser • Howard Nemerov • Kathleen Norris • Mary Oliver • Rainer Maria Rilke • Rumi • May Sarton • William Stafford • David Wagoner • Alice Walker [and many more](#).

- 2. Book information.** [Poetry of Presence: An Anthology of Mindfulness Poems](#), edited by Phyllis Cole-Dai and Ruby R. Wilson. Price: \$21.95. Quality paperback: 248 pp. Publisher: Grayson Books (September 5, 2017). ISBN: 978-0-9982588-3-6. Product dimensions: 6 x 9 inches. See "Images" [#13] for high-resolution images.
- 3. Target audience.** *Poetry of Presence* is an inspiring read for lovers of beautiful, accessible poetry. It's also a valuable resource for literature teachers, spiritual directors, meditators, interfaith clergy, mindfulness trainers, social workers, counselors, poetry therapists, hospice and grief workers, and medical personnel.
- 4. Book one-sheet (flyer).** Click [here](#) to view or download.

5. **Retail information.** Available through the [editors](#), the publisher [Grayson Books](#), and all major retailers, including [Amazon](#) and [Barnes & Noble](#). Quantity discounts are available.
6. **Book trailer.** [Click here](#) to view.
7. **Praise for *Poetry of Presence*.**

“Reading poetry is *transitional meditation*. Reading great poetry is like finding a breath on the page that’s your own. Together these poets form a powerful sea of words. Individually, each poem is a story coming to life. I’ll keep this by my side to read one poem a day to return to a state of mindfulness, breathing language through the heart. If you choose one anthology, I say let it be this one for the amazement—for the voices that, surprisingly, will speak to what you want to find in yourself.”

Grace Cavalieri  
Host and Producer, “The Poet and the Poem from the Library of Congress”

“The poems in this book, arranged gently and creatively, are an invitation to mindful presence and to a world where words and phrases initiate us, wake us up, and guide us home.”

Kelly Boys  
Host of *The Year of Mindfulness* and mindfulness consultant to the  
United Nations Foundation

“These poems remind us to live ‘undefended.’ To stand, deliberately and consciously, as witnesses of the present moment. To gaze upon existence from the place of Divine Intimacy. To reach out from that place to those who suffer. Living this way takes lots of practice. *Poetry of Presence* will be a companion and guide, leading us into deeper communion with the world.”

Fr. Richard Rohr  
Founder of the Center for Action and Contemplation, and author of such  
books as *The Naked Now: Learning to See as the Mystics See*

“After reading just a poem or two in *Poetry of Presence*, I started quieting down, breathing easier. The poems had already begun to do their work. What a gift! This will be a book I will return to again and again to find the peaceful presence I need to face the day.”

Megan Scribner  
Co-author of *Teaching with Heart: Poetry that Speaks to the Courage to Teach*

"Especially in times of challenge, I turn to poetry in my life, and in my work. Poetry expresses the ineffable—that which is beyond logic and linear thinking—like God, or love or presence. In my mindfulness teaching, poetry is always present and I look forward to using the poems in this beautiful collection on a regular basis."

Rabbi Jill Berkson Zimmerman  
 Founder of the Jewish Mindfulness Network

"This collection of poems is an invitation toward 'being' with the present moment, through the written word. I am moved, inspired and surprised by the powerful and clear voices in these poems: both new gems, and old friends. In teaching Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction, I know *Poetry of Presence* will be a regular resource, as it speaks directly to the heart of being fully human."

Holly Nelson-Johnson, MSN, APN, FNP-BC  
 Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction teacher, MBSR Mentor for the University of California-San Diego Mindfulness-Based Professional Training Institute, and president of Mindfulness for Living

"Phyllis Cole-Dai and Ruby Wilson have collected an extensive anthology of exquisite poetry that can open the minds and hearts of readers to the richness and vastness of the present moment. As a Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction teacher, I find this collection to be a true gift, with poems that I will share with the participants in my classes for years to come."

Diane Reibel, Ph.D.  
 Director of the Mindfulness Institute at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital and coauthor of *Teaching Mindfulness: A Practical Guide for Clinicians and Educators*

## 8. Excerpt from "The Invitation," the book's introduction.

Mindfulness is a buzzword these days, whether in health and wellness, parenting, education, the workforce, counseling, spirituality ... but what does it mean? Here's one way to understand it: *Mindfulness is keeping our heads and hearts where our bodies are.* Moment by moment, we sustain a deep, nonjudgmental awareness of our thoughts, emotions, physical sensations and surroundings, right where we are.

In reading this page, for example, you invest your full self in the act of reading. You're right here, right now, experiencing the text ... until a moment arrives when you're not. Sooner or later, that moment will come. Guaranteed. A sound or smell will distract you. A stray thought will lead you into a thicket of ideas. You'll be snagged by sentiment, or caught up in a rush of feeling. That's okay. Once you notice the drift of your attention, you return to the page. *Gently.* Rather than blame or scold yourself for wandering off, you accept that it happened and bring yourself back.

We cultivate mindfulness throughout our days by returning to the present moment, again and again. This allows us to actually live our lives instead of just going through the motions. The more mindful we become over time, the happier we are. Studies reveal that regular mindfulness practice reduces stress, promotes health, stimulates learning and creativity, enhances relationships, helps us face suffering and loss, and strengthens our compassion for others.

Many resources for mindfulness practice quote snippets of poetry or even publish entire poems. The website of the Center for Mindfulness at the University of California San Diego, for instance, will provide you with links to around eighty poems used in its Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction classes. Jon Kabat-Zinn, Sharon Salzberg, Joseph Goldstein and other esteemed mindfulness teachers

regularly invoke poetry in their books and workshops. What accounts for this popular coupling of poetry and mindfulness?

As its very appearance makes plain, poetry invites a different kind of reading than prose. The white space around the text slows us down. Like an island on the page, its shape appeals to the eye. It begs for attention. It wants to be heard. When we choose to listen, we bring the poem to life. Our voice revels in the musicality, our breath is shaped by the lines. The imagery heightens our senses. The language revives our spirits.

The act of reading a poem—any poem—can therefore become an exercise in mindfulness. And our experience of the poem is magnified when its *subject* is particularly mindful. The poem might demonstrate what mindfulness is, recount an experience of it, or offer advice on how to practice it; perhaps it fleshes out a mindfulness theme, such as acceptance, impermanence, non-clinging (“letting go”), compassion, or the unity of all things. Such *mindfulness poems* inspire us to live better, and to make our world better; at the same time, they grant us a taste of being good enough, just as we are, in this world, just as it is.

*Poetry of Presence* contains over 150 mindfulness poems. Of course, you don’t have to be interested in mindfulness to enjoy them. You can simply delight in their beautiful language, their vivid imagery, their uncommon wisdom. But if you sit down with this book in companionable silence, as with a cherished friend, the poems will teach you about mindfulness without your asking.

9. **Contents of the Book.** Click [here](#) to view or download.

10. **Sample interview Q & A.**

***What is mindfulness poetry? Why is it important?***

Let’s start with that word “mindfulness.” It’s a buzzword these days, whether in health and wellness, parenting, education, the workforce, counseling, spirituality ... but what does it mean? Here’s one way to understand it: *Mindfulness is keeping our heads and hearts where our bodies are.* Moment by moment, we sustain a deep, nonjudgmental awareness of our thoughts, emotions, physical sensations and surroundings, right where we are.

We cultivate mindfulness throughout our days by returning to the present moment, again and again. This allows us to actually live our lives instead of just going through the motions.

A poem whose subject is particularly “mindful” is a *mindfulness poem*. Perhaps it demonstrates what mindfulness is, recounts an experience of it, or offers advice on how to practice it. Perhaps it fleshes out a mindfulness theme, such as acceptance, impermanence, non-clinging (“letting go”), compassion, or the unity of all things.

Mindfulness poems inspire us to live better, and to make our world better. At the same time, they grant us a taste of being good enough, just as we are, in this world, just as it is.

***How will readers benefit from this book?***

In general, *Poetry of Presence* is an inspiring read for lovers of beautiful, accessible poetry. But it's also a book that can help us become more mindful in these anxious and tumultuous times. Studies have shown that the more mindful we become, the happier we are. Regular mindfulness practice (which can include poetry reading) reduces stress, promotes health, stimulates learning and creativity, enhances relationships, helps us face suffering and loss, and strengthens our compassion for others.

This book will also be a valuable professional resource for literature teachers, spiritual directors, meditators, interfaith clergy, mindfulness trainers, social workers, counselors, poetry therapists, hospice and grief workers, medical personnel and more.

***Who are some of your favorite mindfulness poets?***

Some favorite poets from the more distant past would include Rumi, Hafiz and Rilke. But our anthology focuses more on works by recent and contemporary poets, like Ellen Bass, Wendell Berry, Joy Harjo, Jane Hirshfield, Ted Kooser, Naomi Shihab Nye, Mary Oliver, Alice Walker, William Stafford, Barbara Crooker, Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer.... Too many to mention, and we're always finding new ones. The other day we heard about Peggy Freyberg, whose first book, *Poems from the Pond*, was published after her death at age 107. The sample we read of her work was all about mindfulness, though she didn't call it that.

***What in your background prepared the two of you to do this work? How did you decide to work together?***

*Phyllis:* Shall I start? I've practiced mindfulness meditation for more than half my life. Over the years, without intending to, I collected a pile of poems that were particularly "mindful" in content. That stash became the seed for a daily blog of mindfulness poetry. The blog grew rapidly, taking on a life of its own. Eventually I invited Ruby to help manage it. The project enjoyed a tremendous three-year run, with thousands of followers. Their feedback convinced us that mindfulness poetry can help change lives. Indeed, we believe it can help change the world—one poem, one reader, at a time. Yet, to our knowledge, no anthology of mindfulness poetry by a traditional publisher existed. The book was begging to be done.

*Ruby:* We are fellow writers and great friends, and we knew we would enjoy working together to create such a collection. Besides that, we have complementary strengths and felt that we would make an excellent team. Phyllis brought her experience with mindfulness practice to the project. I brought my experience as a poet, including the habit of attentiveness and a love for language. We were united by our firm conviction that poetry—mindfulness poetry especially—has the power to unify all of us in community and transform our world.

***What were your greatest challenges in creating this anthology? The greatest rewards?***

The first challenge was determining which mindfulness poems to include. We wanted the collection to be a diverse mix of accessible works by both acclaimed and lesser known poets. We couldn't begin to use every poem on our wish list. So, like many anthologies, this book is merely a sampler. We trust it will give readers a sense of, and a taste for, mindfulness poetry.

Another challenge has been securing and paying for all the permissions to reprint previously published poems. That task is painfully slow and incredibly expensive. (Permissions eat up money faster than teenagers devour pizza.) With each new printing, we will need to renew permissions and pay more fees. If readers want to help keep this anthology in print, we invite them to make a donation on our website to defray the cost of permissions, which we've been paying out of pocket.

As for “greatest rewards,” that’s easy to answer. The two of us had the absolute joy of reading together mountains of great poetry and identifying poems we would like to anthologize. Then we got to shape all those wonderful poems into a unified collection. That process was very intuitive, very *mindful*. It required lots of coffee, hair-pulling, laughter, and long walks. It taught us even more than we knew about the relationship between mindfulness and poetry. We’re so grateful to have had the opportunity.

## 11. Editor bios.

Originally from Ohio, **Phyllis Cole-Dai** now makes her home in Brookings, South Dakota, where she resides with her husband and teenage son in a cozy 120-year-old house. *Poetry of Presence* is her seventh book, and her only volume of poetry. She has also created four music albums and is in demand as a public speaker. “My profession,” she likes to joke, “is whatever doesn’t pay well.” But don’t let her humor fool you. Her work is driven by a profound desire to help create a more humane world for this and future generations. In 2013 her adopted city awarded her the 14th annual Dorothy and Eugene Butler Human Rights Award.

**Ruby R. Wilson** graduated from South Dakota State University with majors in German and Geography. Though she had a hard time figuring out what she wanted to be when she grew up, she has now found her niche as an archivist in the University Archives & Special Collections Department at SDSU and as a freelance writer and photographer. She has published three poetry chapbooks: *Campus Sketches: Images of South Dakota State University in Word and Photograph* (2012), *At the Rim of the Horizon* (Finishing Line Press, 2014), and *Maybe the Moon is Falling* (South Dakota State Poetry Society, 2014), one of four winners of the Society’s chapbook competition. She lives on a small acreage in rural Brookings County with her husband Jim. She can sometimes be seen gathering seeds from big bluestem and other native plants, or gazing at stars that aren’t crowded out by city lights.

Fellow writers and great friends, Phyllis and Ruby brought complementary strengths to the creation of *Poetry of Presence*. Phyllis has practiced mindfulness meditation for more than half her life. Ruby possesses a poet’s eye and ear, and a passionate love of language. They share the belief that mindfulness poetry can help change the world—one poem, one reader, at a time.

**12. Editor contact information.** Email: [editors@poetryofpresencebook.com](mailto:editors@poetryofpresencebook.com). Website: [www.poetryofpresencebook.com](http://www.poetryofpresencebook.com). Facebook: [@PoetryofPresence](https://www.facebook.com/PoetryofPresence). Twitter: [@PoetryofPresenz](https://twitter.com/PoetryofPresenz). Phone: Phyllis Cole-Dai (605-592-6293), Ruby R. Wilson (605-690-1593).

**13. Image Links.** High-resolution photographs may be downloaded using these links: [book cover](#), [Phyllis Cole-Dai](#), and [Ruby R. Wilson](#).