

# You Do Not Have To Be Good

## You Do Not Have To Be Good

*by Mary Oliver*

You do not have to be good.  
You do not have to walk on your knees  
For a hundred miles through the desert, repenting.  
You only have to let the soft animal of your body  
love what it loves.  
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.  
Meanwhile the world goes on.  
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain  
are moving across the landscapes,  
over the prairies and the deep trees,  
the mountains and the rivers.  
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,  
are heading home again.  
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,  
the world offers itself to your imagination,  
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting –  
over and over announcing your place  
in the family of things.

This poem says that is enough to just be. That we aren't human doings, but human beings and our value isn't based on what we do, that we are worthy because we exist. She says beautifully that even grief is part of the human landscape and that no matter your circumstances, you belong to this amazing world which is constantly assuring us that we belong in a spirit of abiding contentment. You don't have to prove yourself. You already are.

In yoga, we practice being more than doing. The movement and the postures simply arrest our attention and show us the being part of human being.

Find your place in the family of things. Somehow this practice, just like the wild geese, is the journey back home.

✘ *Scott Moore is a senior teacher of yoga and mindfulness in New York City and when he's not teaching or conducting retreats, he writes for Conscious Life News, Elephant Journal, Mantra Magazine, and his own blog at [scottmooreyoga.com](http://scottmooreyoga.com). Scott also loves to trail run, play the saxophone, and travel with his wife and son.*