

## The Gentlest Thing in the World

by Byron Katie

The gentlest thing in the world is an open mind. Since it doesn't believe what it thinks, it is flexible, porous, without opposition, without defense. Nothing has power over it. Nothing can resist it. Even the hardest thing in the world — a closed mind — can't resist the power of openness. Ultimately the truth flows into it and through it, like water through rock.

"When the mind first becomes a student of itself, it learns that nothing in the world can possibly oppose it: everything is for it, everything adds to it, enlightens it, nourishes it, reveals it. It continues to open, because it's in a fearless, undefended state, and it's hungry for knowledge. And when it realizes that it's nothing, it can penetrate everywhere, even when there's no room for it, no place to receive it.

People are afraid to be nothing. But being nothing is only one aspect of it. Not only is it nothing to be afraid of, it's a cause for celebration. Without your stressful story, there is no stress — obviously! When you don't believe your thoughts, there's only laughter and peace. There are names for a place like that. I call it heaven. And how can people know what nothingness is while they still believe what they think? — Something is better than nothing — can you absolutely know that that's true?

The truly open mind doesn't have a goal or a purpose other than to be what it is. It's not attached to concepts of self or other. It realizes that ultimately there are no humans, there is no mind. When the mind opens, you lose everything, gratefully. I'm sitting here as a woman, and in the next realization I'm a galaxy or an ant. It doesn't matter. You lose everything, and then there's the reentry. On a good-hair day, don't you love to look in the mirror? That's what it's like. You're looking in the mirror at nothing, delighted. When you're nothing, it's always a good-hair day. [...]

Mind appears, if it appears, only to end itself. The projected world goes first, then the mind that projected it. No trace of it remains. Silence is all that's possible — the openness of never having existed in the first place. That's where I live. When it's over, it's over. You can't create or uncreate it. You wouldn't want to.

-- Byron Katie, in "A Thousand Names for Joy"