

Breathe

She sat at the back
and they said she was shy,
She led from the front
and they hated her pride.

They asked her advice
and then questioned her guidance,
They branded her loud
then were shocked by her silence,

When she shared no ambition
they said it was sad,
So she told them her dreams
and they said she was mad,

They told her they'd listen
then covered their ears,
And gave her a hug while
they laughed at her fears,

And she listened to all of it
thinking she should,
Be the girl they told her to be
best as she could,

But one day she asked
what was best for herself,
Instead of trying
to please everyone else,

So she walked to the forest
and stood with the trees,
She heard the wind whisper
and dance with the leaves,

She spoke to the willow,
the elm and the pine,
And she told them what she'd
been told time after time,

She told them she felt
she was never enough,
She was either too little
or far far too much,

Too loud or too quiet,
too fierce or too weak,
Too wise or too foolish,
too bold or too meek,

Then she found a small clearing
surrounded by firs,
And she stopped...and she heard
what the trees said to her,

And she sat there for hours
not wanting to leave,
For the forest said nothing
it just let her breathe.

Becky Hemsley
Talking to the Wild¹

¹ [Breathe A poem by Becky Helmsley - Talking to the Wild | Holistically Whole \(holistically-whole.co.uk\)](https://www.holistically-whole.co.uk)
(assessed October 25, 2023).

Storytelling in a small group or personal reflection. One by one, each person shares their answer to the first prompt below. Then go to the next question and so forth. A person can pass.

- 1. Share who's voices you heard from your own life as you read *Breathe***
(i.e., father, mother, God, brothers, sisters, spouse/partner, teachers, religious/spiritual leaders/teachers, friends, co-workers, bosses, etc.)
- 2. Share about the person(s) who told you the most about being the "girl" or "boy" they thought you should become.** What is one thing they taught you?
- 3. Share an experience when you did something different from what others told you to do.** How did that make you feel at the time? How did that change, or not change, how you thought about listening to yourself more clearly and then taking the risk(s) to do what you felt was the right thing to do for you?
- 4. Share about who or what helped you to love yourself more fully, to be present in the moment, to take risks, and/or to sit and walk in nature.**
(someone, a group, an author(s)/book(s), thinking, being in nature, music, art, praying/meditating/yoga/exercise, a pet, schooling, work, journaling, parenting, aging, illness, death of a loved one, relationship beginning or ending, caregiving, being cared for, life transitions, etc.)