

My Purple Crocus

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When I decided to take meditation seriously years ago, it seemed meditation would not take me seriously. Looking for a way to balance modern life's demands —marriage, family, career— became even more pressing when I was diagnosed with thyroid cancer. I joined a meditation group, worked with a teacher to polish techniques, read books, and began a daily practice. Months passed, I practiced—breathing and being “in the moment,” as my teacher, Jennie, invoked again and again. Instead of the promised tranquility, I felt frustration. I was, for lack of a better word, meditation-challenged. Why didn't I get it? Perhaps I didn't understand what being in the moment meant. I was ready to quit and take my next self-help elixir.

But one morning, bracing myself for a hectic day, I rushed out of the house. My mind was already at top speed thinking of all the things I needed to do. I had just closed the door behind me and stepped down the stairs of the front porch to the flag-stoned walkway leading to the garage. And there I saw, planted on the wet and muddy ground, undaunted by the soggy spring, a very tiny crocus flower.

I could have missed it, or worse, trampled it underfoot since it was perched perilously close to the flagstones. It was certainly not the most beautiful flower I'd ever seen. But something made me stop.

“Take the time. Look at me,” it commanded. Without further prodding, my eyes feasted on its rich purple petals speckled with white and even darker purple veins. Gazing at its bold yellow stamen designed to attract and to tease, I knelt on the ground to smell its fragrance. The little flower came alive, even proud, as I touched it lightly. Engrossed with this tiny spectacle, my senses awakened. I experienced a kind of contentment like never before. For what seemed like eternity although it was but a few minutes, I became aware of the moment, transformed into the sentient being that Jennie had gently beseeched me to try to become.

A bird shrieked loudly in the distance and jolted me back to the yard. But the feeling of contentment remained with me for much of the day. For once, I did not need to hurry. These days when my wheels are spinning hastily, I visualize my special crocus and listen for its instructions on achieving tranquility, even if it's just for the moment.