Glimmers From Mary

BY DIANE BAKER


Vuk Saric

5 a.m. "It is a serious thing just to be alive on this fresh morning in this broken world."

I woke up to an insistent alarm on a Monday morning. Sleepily, I picked up my phone from the bedside table and glanced at the quote on the lock screen. The moment I heard the alarm, my thoughts were flooded with my to-do list, creating some anxiety about the day ahead. As I was hitting snooze, the quote dropped down from the top of my phone screen, and I felt a calm spread through me because I had been reminded by Mary Oliver's words of the blessing of having been fortunate enough just to wake up this morning.

6 a.m. "Listen — are you breathing just a little, and calling it a life?"

I'm an hour into my morning and have been busy with chores involving my dogs, my home, and getting ready for the day. My husband just left for work with the lunch I packed. This quote pops up on my watch screen as I check the time. I realize, at that moment, I'm not breathing calmly. It's shallow because I am full of stress; I think I will try to fit in a morning walk. »



7 a.m. "I saw that worrying had come to nothing and gave it up and took my old body and went out into the morning and sang."

I've spent most of the last hour on the phone checking on my mother, my children, making future appointments, and paying bills. I see this message on my lock screen while starting a podcast that will get me through folding clothes and doing dishes. It resonates with me, and I am reminded that every day will always involve worries, but it also must involve joy, and a walk with some music always makes me happy.

Like many people, Mary Oliver's poetry has been encouraging me for years. Last year, I set up my favorite inspirational Mary Oliver quotes to be delivered to my devices every hour or so as gentle reminders to enjoy my day and my life. The previous year, I found an app that was geared toward sending myself diet and exercise encouragement. It sent messages reading, "Get in your 10,000 steps today," and "Hydrate." Over time, I found those types of reminders no longer served me. More often than not, they created stress. I needed a different type of positive push during the day. The app I use for this is called "Hi Future Self." It's a simple tool that lets me schedule uplifting messages — quotes, reminders, or words of encouragement — to appear on my lock screen at any interval I choose. The quotes show up on my screen only for a moment, and they serve as a glimmer rather than a trigger. I am often busy and miss the message, but I do find that I often see one right when I need it the most.


Arri GND photography


Yipengge

8 a.m. "If you have ever gone to the woods with me, I must love you very much."

I hear this quote delivered through my earbuds as I was returning home from a walk in our beautiful woods. I had belted out some Lumineers' tunes to the trees. It was a gorgeous morning; the weather was cool and breezy and inviting, so much so that I decided to send my husband a quick text inviting him on an after-dinner walk when he got home from work. I'd enjoy two walks in one day!

9 a.m. "If you suddenly and unexpectedly feel joy, don't hesitate. Give in to it."

I finish my morning yoga and snuggle my dogs for a few moments.

10 a.m. "Keep some room in your heart for the unimaginable."

I am at home all day on this Monday and plan to devote several hours to writing.

11 a.m. "You want to cry aloud for your mistakes. But to tell the truth, the world doesn't need any more of that sound."

I've been stalled with my writing for the last hour. I had an outline of what I wanted to accomplish, but I'm stuck. My mind has drifted to the career I lost last year, a loss that is the reason I'm at home each day. I had to retire from working with students and horses after a successful 40-year career of teaching and training, and I miss it terribly. Some days, I absolutely ache to ride a horse through the woods, and my mind drifted back over the years. »

12 p.m. "Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?"

This reminder stops me from further musing about the past. I give myself a quick pep talk. I was so fortunate to have lived my passion and gift for 40 years, and I am also fortunate right now to be home writing on this beautiful day.

1 p.m. "And to tell the truth, I don't want to let go of the wrists of idleness, I don't want to sell my life for money, I don't even want to come in out of the rain."

Once I redirected my thinking, I wrote for an hour with some success. This quote reminded me not to worry about having less income now. At my age, I am grateful just to have enough: my family, a home, and freedom. I am also grateful to have time to focus on other gifts and joys.

3 p.m. "You too have come into the world to do this, to go easy, to be filled with light, and to shine."

The writing is flowing. I stopped and made grilled cheese with tomato soup for a late lunch earlier, and then continued.

4 p.m. "I want to think again of dangerous and noble things, I want to be light and frolicsome, I want to be improbable, beautiful, and afraid of nothing, as though I had wings."

My computer shows this message at the top-right corner of the screen, and it makes me smile with hope. My three dogs are draped sleepily around me on the couch. An old movie is playing softly in the background as I write.

5 p.m. "I tell you this to break your heart, by which I mean only that it break open and never close again to the rest of the world."

Mary Oliver's words fill me with openness and love for the world. I had a successful day writing and then spent the last hour doing more chores around the house and feeding my dogs dinner. My heart is grateful as I head to the kitchen to cook. I'm thinking of making something elaborate for my husband — Sunday dinner on a Monday — steaks, salads, some crusty bread, and a rich red wine. **»**



Madisonwi


Everything I release
creates space for
everything I need


Chalffy

7 p.m. "Sometimes I need only to stand wherever I am to be blessed."

I'm standing in the woods behind our home with my husband. We have paused near the creek on our walk to discuss our day and enjoy the bubbling water and the pleasant breeze. I am so blessed.

10 p.m. "When it is over, I don't want to wonder if I have made of my life something particular and real. I don't want to find myself sighing and frightened or full of argument. I don't want to end up simply having visited this world."

Playing my Scrabble words while lying in bed, the last message of the day drops down at the top of my phone screen. Yes! Thank you, Mary Oliver! I sleepily turn out the light, full of beautiful intentions for tomorrow.

Diane Baker is a freelance writer and photographer. She spends her days with her husband and their Cavalier King Charles Spaniels at their home in North Carolina, writing, walking in the woods, and pursuing a simple, happy life. She is forever seeking everyday magic and always seems to find it.

Technology is often portrayed in a negative light, but it can also be a source of encouragement and inspiration. Take a cue from Diane Baker, who uses it to send herself uplifting quotes and messages throughout the day — gentle reminders to pause, breathe, and stay motivated.

What words would you want to receive, and when would they mean the most?



"I know you think this world is too dark to even dream in color, but I've seen flowers bloom at midnight. I've seen kites fly in gray skies and they were real close to looking like the sunrise, and sometimes it takes the most wounded wings the most broken things to notice how strong the breeze is, how precious the flight."

— Andrea Gibson

Serts