

## **Call of the Mountain**

I woke with a dull ache in my chest. I was unsettled, and my mind kept going off on tangents of worry. Recent unwelcome changes created anxiety in me. I was waging an internal war between acceptance and clinging to what was. Emotion frequently shows up in the center of my chest. The intensity of the sensation varies depending on the feeling expressing itself. In this case, it was sadness.

It was a glorious late summer day in northern Vermont, and my partner and I decided to hike. Nature was precisely what my soul needed. As we began our walk, my mantra was, "All is well, always," and "Think less, Feel more." After a while, I shifted to a gratitude practice that culminated in focusing on the mountain's flora.

The rhythm of my footfalls and the exertion of my breath provided a powerful call into the present and out of my worrying brain. Halfway up the mountain, I found myself immersed in the mountain's wild. Scents wafted through the air, bird calls serenaded me, and the wildflowers delighted me. I noted each variety of flower on the way up so I could take pictures of them on the way down.

I noticed butterflies eagerly feeding on the pollen of the flowers. I spotted a tiny mushroom growing out of Kelly-green moss. When I walked deep into the foliage to take a picture of dark purple flowers, something caught my eye. I looked closer. It was a baseball-sized toad. It was multi-colored and covered with bumps. I was thrilled by my citing. My impromptu nature study pulled me to the present, and once I tuned in, the wonder and gratitude I felt lifted my spirit and regulated my nervous system.

By Diane R. Jones  
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