

## **Seeing your inner strength**

Welcome to the RelationKit mindfulness series. Today we will take time to see your inner strength and help build it up even more.

So, begin to take some deep breaths 'here', 'now', in and out of your body; your body that is home to a life that works hard to keep things ticking over; that has the strength to get up the morning to climb another 'parenting' mountain that is your day. Can you just take a moment to appreciate your body?

You can also reflect on the simple strength in breathing or the beat of your heart keeping you alive. These simple things that often get taken for granted, which in this moment we can acknowledge: the strength in your presence as you sit here with your breath, for helping you choose the best way to respond in moments of your life, a presence that allows you to mindfully listen to your own or another's needs.

As you continue to breath and stay present, begin to bring to mind a time when you felt strong. It could be a time when you were lifting something, a physical weight or doing something physical with your children, when you were moving with aliveness, energy and strength.

You could think about a time when you stood up for someone else and felt strong or you came through on a tough situation the birth of your child, the first few months of their life. Maybe you have got through a loss of something, or stood up for yourself in your relationship in a healthy strong way, or. a time when you were determined about something. Whatever it is, see if you can invite it to your mind now.

A moment or a period when you felt strong, like you had true courage and bravery inside to keep going, because you were strong, and you did push through, as you kept going; as you continued to be a pillar of strength through a difficult situation, maybe in your family life.

You are calling to mind and seeing if you can re-live these feelings of strength now, feeling it in your body. What does strength feel like in you, the felt sense of this hardiness or stability in your body? Is it a warm feeling? Powerful? Enduring? A buzzing sensation or a sense of vitality or healthy belief in yourself? And what about in your face: how does your face feel when there is an inner strength? What expression is there? And what about in your eyes now, what is the look in your eyes when you are strong; sure of yourself; when things really matter to you? The feeling in your eyes, your face and your body? when you are intent on doing something; not an aggressive or unhealthy power over someone or something, but a healthy fighting attitude to get something positive done.

Open up to this 'felt strength' in you, feeling it in your body, feeling it even if you are in any discomfort or pain, if you have had any setbacks in life, feeling this sense of staying power - an ongoing but gentle 'will' to carry on.

And can you smile in recognition of the feeling of strength within you? But also open up to any doubts or fears you have about fully realising your strength - this potential within you - it's okay to have them as well.

This strength that is completely yours, it's in you, it belongs to you, and it has the strength to change something in your life for the better, changing your response to something instead of changing someone else. Re-claim and restore the inner strength that is truly yours to use for good purposes, reflecting on anything you would like to change. You can find new ways to be in your relationships, for example, to be more consistent in your parenting, to stand up to or to stand out, and remind yourself it's okay to find that strength and courage and to be that strong, to have confidence in making changes for your family's future.

Allow this feeling again and again of your own inner strength, this sense of strength, perhaps like a wave of strength flowing through you, a movement within you going with it, propelling you in the right direction.

As you feel this power of strength within you now, and stay present with its feeling, maybe you can also gently reflect on those aspects of your life that you don't feel as strong in, where there might be a feeling of weakness, or feelings of not being enough, feelings of lack or being beaten by something. Whatever comes up for you, without judging, just reflect on one area that comes to mind and can you sit in your feeling of 'strength', and tenderly look into those weaker sides or corners of you, which we all have, and maybe you can get a sense of moving, inviting that strength into those places that feel more delicate? So, spreading that feeling of strength into those places too, those corners of you that feel more shaky or unsure. Remember not to pass over those feelings, push them away or under, but to be alongside them, accepting them as part of you and gently moving into them with this re-ignition or renewal of strength that is there within you, getting a sense of how you can replace or re-write those weaker stories that you tell yourself about your ability, with this sense of strength, sensing those feelings of vitality and will-power taking hold now.

Letting go of any sense of weakness now and resting in this energy of strength within your body. You are a strong parent.

And as we begin to come the end of the practice, you might like to imagine taking part in an aspect of your life with this strength, for example: putting healthy boundaries in place to protect yourself better asking for more support, taking care of specific things in your family life, taking responsibility in a new way with this new sense of inner strength - your work, your finances, your mental health - areas of your life where you can draw upon this inner strength to engage more healthily with them. Can you imagine what that part of your life would look like if you were living from, or being carried along by, this inner strength that is within you, bringing that strength into a situation. Imagine the achievement you might have, meeting whatever the world throws at you from this place of strength.

When we become and feel stronger in ourselves, we can also show our strength by giving praise to the effort in others, and to highlight to them, their strengths. So take a moment to think about your child's strengths, for example, their qualities of strength: maybe their kindness, or their determined behaviour, their natural ability to be present in the moment. And now consider your child's other parent and their efforts and strengths, appreciating that they too may need a reminder of their strengths, re-igniting the flames within them, so that they too can make the changes they need or meet the world with a healthy deter-

mined strength. They too, in their own ways, are a strong parent. Imagining what you could both achieve meeting the world with this inner strength.

And I'd like to finish this practice with a quote for you from a very wise character from a children's book. It's from Winnie the Pooh by A. A. Milne. Christopher says to Pooh: "You are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think."

So, returning to your breath now, feeling your body breathing in and feeling your body breathing out, coming back to the feeling of contact where your body meets the support of the chair or the ground beneath you, and in your own time, gently blink your eyes open if they've been closed.

Take care 'til next time.