

*When I'm not sure what to do next in my life,  
I start with two things:  
First, I draw on napkins until my body remembers that my  
brain has no real idea what it's doing,  
so why are we even listening to it in the first place?  
Then I stop worrying about it because even if I just sat here  
& drew on napkins all day long, that'd be a pretty good life.*

*But a lot of times I can only do this for a little while  
before I get hungry  
& have to go make toast  
& then it's pretty clear what to do next with my life  
& voila, problem solved.*

“Toast” by Brian Andreas  
from *Impossible to Know*, 2015

Life lately is confusing, and hectic, and disordered. We know that we are supposed to stay home, be productive, rest, keep up with all our normal tasks, do chores around the house, and be around the same small number of people ALL the time. I have found myself thinking about the desert hermits of early Christianity and their spiritual practice of asceticism. (Don't worry, that's not what we're doing today.)

There are times in life when I feel like the poem printed above. Sometimes it was what is the next BIG thing I do with my life, and lately it has been what do I do in the next hour? This afternoon? Tomorrow? I particularly love this poem because it's called “Toast,” and growing up when almost anything was wrong my mom would “fix it” with cinnamon sugar toast and ginger ale. These things were originally intended to soothe my stomach I'm sure, but have now come to make my emotions feel better too. It really doesn't matter what's wrong, toast

and a ginger ale calm me down, help me “do something,” and somehow manage to make me think everything is alright.

... I'll admit it, I've been eating a lot of cinnamon sugar toast lately, and I've been averaging a ginger ale every other day.

So our “Spiritual Practice” this week isn't that complicated, and one could debate that it's more self care than spiritual, but I'm fine with overlapping those two fields. This week let's only look one step ahead for a little bit. What am I going to do right now that will make me feel a little bit better, a little bit calmer, and a little bit safer? Is it making a piece of toast? Is it hugging a pet or family member? Is it sitting in the sunshine and just being grateful that it feels nice on your face?

As you calm yourself, and care for yourself, take a big, deep, long breath, and heave a big ole sigh when you exhale... that felt pretty good right? Do it again. And on your second, or third, or fourth big breath remind yourself that your brain doesn't always have to be busy, it's programmed to pay the most attention to what scares us and you are allowed to reset it. You are allowed to just be present in this moment, sitting in the sun, eating toast, sipping tea, hugging your dog, or running as fast as you can. You don't have to know what to do next, but please remember to give yourself a snack.

Shalom,  
Julia