

The Magical Wooded Path

Mindfulness for Kids (and Adults)

Each of the following soundtracks in ***The Magical Wooded Path*** includes a beautifully narrated story to engage your children and guide them on the path to focus, wisdom, happiness, centeredness and kindness. What follows is a transcript of each of these powerful and illuminating stories.

Track #1: **The Path to Focus (with Francesca)**

Track #2: **The Path to Wisdom (with Oliver)**

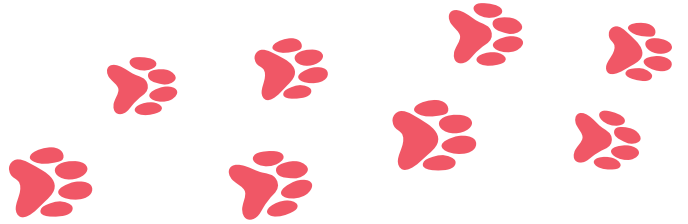
Track #3: **The Path to Happiness (with Penelope)**

Track #4: **The Path to Centeredness (with Montgomery)**

Track #5: **The Path to Kindness (with Dalrymple)**



The Path to Focus with Francesca the Fox



Imagine that you're taking a walk outside on a beautiful day. The air is crisp and clear. Birds are singing and darting through the sky, and the sun is shining on your skin, making you feel warm, happy, and light.

You walk across a grassy meadow toward a lush green forest, thick with trees. You notice a secluded path that leads deeper into the woods. This forest seems different than other forests you've seen. You can't tell for sure what it is yet but you know that there is something magical and mysterious about this forest.

Feeling curious but safe, you decide to enter the woods and walk along this unusual winding path. The sunlight flickers through the branches high above your head. Leaves and pine needles crunch under your feet. You notice an old tree stump, some green ferns and lovely soft moss wrapped around some of the thick tree trunks. Little insects skitter here and there, some flying from flower to tree, others climbing over roots and rocks, all going about their busy bug lives. You stop for a moment and take a nice...deep...breath. Ahhhh! There's something magical about this place!

As you continue walking along the woodsy path, you find yourself becoming very calm and peaceful. You notice that your breathing is now deep and easy, flowing in...and out...in...and out...

This wooded path is truly enchanting! Never have you felt so calm and peaceful. As you step forward, even deeper into the forest, you begin to feel that you are not alone. Someone has noticed you. Who is it?

As you look around you notice something over to your left...among the green ferns. On a short flat tree stump there's a flash of something red, the quick flick of a furry tail. "What could that be?" you wonder aloud, peering through the leaves. As you slowly move closer you can see paws, ears...and soon you realize — it's a fox!

This is no common fox. She seems to be holding perfectly still, except for an occasional twitch of her fluffy red tail. She is sitting upright, her paws carefully folded in her lap, and although her eyes are closed you have a very clear sense that she is watching you with keen awareness. She is completely calm and quiet, and if it weren't for her occasional tail twitch she could almost fool you into thinking she was only a statue someone had left there on the stump.

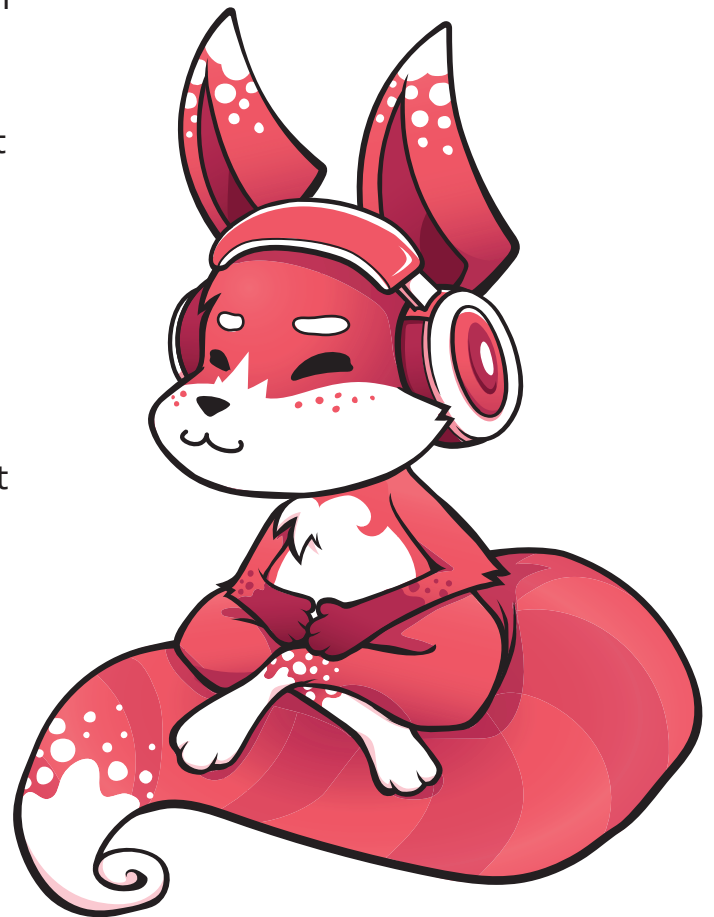
Suddenly the fox opens one eye and speaks to you in a soothing voice. "Welcome, my friend," she says calmly.

"Who are you?" you ask, "and what is it that you're doing?"

Now the fox opens both eyes and smiles, "I'm Francesca! But you can call me Fran. And I'm doing my daily mindfulness meditation, of course!"

"Your daily what?" you ask.

Now Fran's eyes open wider as she looks at you with a bit of surprise. "My mindfulness meditation. Surely you know how to meditate!"



You think about that for a moment. You've heard about meditation, but perhaps you really don't know much about it.

"It's very simple to do," Fran assures you. "Just a matter of sitting in a quiet place and breathing evenly and watching whatever happens inside."

"Okay I guess that's easy enough, but why bother doing that when you could be doing so many other things?" you ask Fran the Fox.

Fran suddenly leaps down from her tree stump and approaches you. She rises up on her back legs and looks you right in the eye. Playfully poking your forehead with a soft paw she says, "Don't you want your mind to be sharp and keen like mine? Wouldn't you like your brain to be clear of worry and fret? My mind stays calm no matter what because I sit like that on my stump for a little while each day. I can always focus on what I want to do because I'm not busy with distractions or worries!"

"I have to admit, that sounds pretty good," you say. "Can you show me how to do it?"

Fran looks around as though making sure no one else is listening and then leans in and whispers, "You're listening to my story aren't you? So in a way you're doing it right now! Keep walking along The Magical Wooded Path..." And then in a flash Francesca the Fox vanishes right before your eyes!

"That's very odd!" you say to yourself, looking around. "I wonder who else lives in these woods." And you continue along the path...

-- Now, just relax and keep listening until the music stops.

The Path to Wisdom with Oliver the Owl



You're walking along a Magical Wooded Path thinking about Fran the Fox and her meditation. You wonder whether it's true that you can make your brain work better just by sitting still and quiet for a while each day.

As you follow the path deeper into the forest you look upwards, marveling at the tall trees all around you. You notice them gently swaying a little bit in the breeze. You feel relaxed and happy as you take your time walking through the woods. You're in no hurry, there's no place you need to be other than exactly where you are.

The trees are so tall and stately-looking. It's as if they're silently protecting this land, and all who live within it. The trees seem very old and you wonder just how long they've been here.

They seem to be watching over you with kindness and care. As you walk among these giants of the forest you begin to sense that something else is watching you too.

At first you see no one, nothing other than the towering trees. As your gaze lands on one particularly imposing tree you spot two enormous round, golden eyes looking back at you from a mossy branch.



"Who are you?" you ask aloud.

"Who? Who? Who am I?" comes a voice. "Is that an owl joke?" You look again and see that it is, indeed, a large owl looking right back at you.

"Oh! No, I'm sorry. Not a joke!" you tell the owl. "I'm just walking along this path, looking at the trees. I didn't mean to bother you."



The owl suddenly stretches out his great feathery wings and swoops down towards you, finding a perch on a branch much closer to the ground. "You're welcome in these woods," the owl says in a surprisingly deep voice, "and trees are tremendously good things to look at! I'm Oliver. Some people call me Ollie. I'm the wisdom-keeper of these woods. I know everything there is to know about them."

You introduce yourself and thank Ollie for welcoming you, and then you ask, "What's a wisdom-keeper?"

"Well I'm glad you asked!" Ollie says, his big eyes gleaming like candle flames. "Asking a question like that shows you might just be a wisdom-keeper too! In fact, now that I look closely at you, I can see that it's true. You're much wiser than you realize! You are definitely a wisdom-keeper."

Ollie leans down closer and explains, "Wisdom keepers are those who pay attention to things. They keep their minds flexible and open to learning what's what and what might just be so. They ask questions. They look alllll around them," and Ollie turns his head almost completely around as owls like to do.

"They save knowledge and wisdom in their minds so they can teach others what they've learned. They're very smart, you know. Always hungry for knowledge, always learning, investigating! Wondering!"

"Oh I see," you say, "but I'm not so sure I'm a wisdom keeper."

Ollie eyes you carefully for a moment and says, "It might not feel like it sometimes, but you are! You must trust me in these matters, for I am a wisdom keeper and I know these things. All you need is a little more awareness! All you need is to be still for a little while and pay close attention to what you're thinking and feeling. There is much wisdom in stillness. When you're still you can notice things you wouldn't notice otherwise. Notice everything, starting with the insides and going out!"

"The insides going out? What's that mean?" you ask, genuinely curious.

"Aha! Another good question. See!" Ollie says happily, "notice what you are feeling and thinking inside. No need to worry about what it should or should not be. Notice it with your mind, just like you noticed me sitting way up there on that branch. Most people just walk right on by, you know. But you noticed me! You can know things just by noticing. Knowing yourself, and noticing how your mind works and what you truly feel inside...that is the beginning of wisdom. That is what makes a wisdom-keeper."

You stop and think about this for a moment. And you begin to pay attention to that very thought and the feelings that come with it. "Hmmm," you say to Ollie, "maybe you're right! Maybe I am a wisdom-keeper!"

Ollie leans right into your face, his golden eyes ablaze, "Of course I am and of course you are!" he says knowingly. "Keep noticing, from the insides going out!" And he suddenly spreads his long wings and with a few flapping motions lifts himself gracefully into the air, sending a gentle breeze into your face. "Goodbye for now, fellow wisdom-keeper!" he calls from above, "and enjoy your journey along The Magical Wooded Path!"

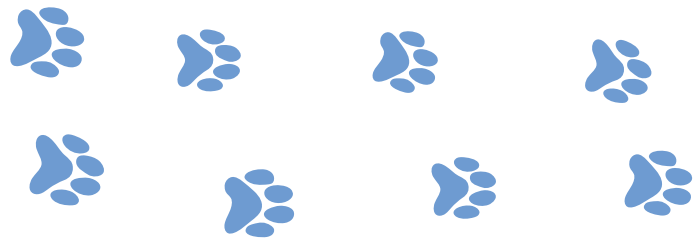
Ollie disappears into the lush green and brown branches high overhead, leaving you to ponder his words. "Notice. From the inside out," you repeat to yourself. You decide to continue along the path, now, as a true wisdom-keeper, gathering new wisdom with each and every step.

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The Path to Happiness

with Penelope the Panda



Resuming your journey through the magical forest, you're still pondering Fran the Fox and her advice to practice mindfulness to make your mind razor sharp, and about Ollie who taught you to gain wisdom by noticing your thoughts and feelings. This forest sure seems to hold many secrets!

Through the canopy of trees stretching high above your head you can see the sun casting beams of golden light all the way down to the soft ground of the path ahead. Continuing to stroll along you can't help but smile. What a magical day this is turning out to be!

The path ahead twists and turns through thick ferns and blackberry bushes. You stop a moment to gather a handful of juicy, sweet berries and pop them into your mouth. So delicious!

You can hear something ahead. It sounds like rushing water. Making your way along the narrowing path you suddenly come upon the source of the sound — a splendid bubbling stream, with clear blue water cascading over big charcoal colored rocks and spiraling into little foamy circles. Trees and plants line much of the stream's shoreline, some of their branches dipping into the crystal clear water, almost as if dangling their toes in its cool flow. A few yellow and orange butterflies whirl around above the stream, darting up and then down and then away. What a peaceful sight!

Spotting a large rock covered in blueish moss near the edge of the stream, you decide that this would be the perfect place to rest a bit before traveling onward. The mossy rock proves to be a nice soft place to relax next to the cool stream. Letting yourself lean back, you put your hands behind your head and listen to the water trickling by and the gentle birdsong echoing through the forest.

Your thoughts begin to fade, your body feels heavy, and your eyes begin to close as you drift into a sweet and shallow slumber. You must be dozing off because a few moments later you begin to hear yourself snoring.

But wait...that's not you snoring! It's...it's...coming from the mossy rock you're resting against! Even though this is a magical forest, you're pretty sure that even here rocks do not snore.

As you turn around and get to your feet, you realize that the rock is not covered in moss at all. It's covered in fur! And it's moving!

You take a couple of steps backward as the rock rolls completely over, then back, then forward again. It finally rolls to a stop and that's when a round head appears and two fuzzy ears pop out on top. Beneath the ears is a pudgy face with closed eyes. One thing's for sure. This is not a rock! It's hard to believe, but what you're now looking at is a velvety soft blue and white panda bear!



The panda reaches upwards with two soft thick arms, stretches, and yawns one of the biggest yawns you've ever seen. Yawns are contagious so you start to yawn too. Then the panda yawns again, causing you to yawn again. How long will this yawning contest go on for?! The panda seems to be waking up from a nice long nap. Finally, she opens her two big brown eyes and notices you for the first time.

"Oh hello! It's funny, I was just dreaming about someone just like you walking through this forest!" she says.

"I'm really sorry to wake you," you say.

The panda stretches again, "Oh no problem! Nothing much bothers me! My name's happy and I'm Penelope — whoops! I mean! — My name is Penelope — well, people call me Penny — and I'm happy!"

"You are?" you ask. "Why?"

Penny looks at you with a confused expression. "Why am I Penelope? That's just the name my parents gave me."

"No," you say, shaking your head, "I mean...why are you happy? What makes you so happy?"

Penny still looks confused, "Well..." she says, tapping her chin and thinking to herself. Finally a big smile emerges on her velvety face, "I guess I do! Yeah! Me! Just me! I make me happy! Don't you make you happy?"

"Sometimes...I guess," you say, "but mostly other things make me happy. And I'm not happy all the time, that's for sure."

Penny scratches one of her fluffy ears. "Hmmm, well it's okay not to be happy sometimes. You can be sad or mad or all kinds of other things too. But I much prefer being happy! So that's what I choose to be! Happy!"

This makes you stop and think for a moment. Something about Penny's words seem so simple and yet so hard to understand. "So...you just choose to be happy without anything to make you happy? Don't you feel happy when you get to eat whatever you want? Or get a nice gift for your birthday? Or play games? Or get to stay up late?" you ask.

Penny emits a giggle, "Well of course I do! But I don't wait for those things to happen before I am happy. Don't you see? Things like happiness and joy aren't over there —" (she points across the stream) "— or up there —" (she points up into the trees), "— or to your left or your right or your tomorrow or your someday. Happiness is something inside you all the time." And she points at your forehead like Francesca did.

"It doesn't always feel that way," you point out.

Penny points toward the shallow bubbling water, "See that stream flowing next to us? It just flows and flows all the time. I've been here a long time and I've never seen it stop! Sometimes I get so used to it that I forget it's even there, but it is! When I forget it's there, all I have to do is stop and listen for a moment and like magic, there it is! That's how happiness works. Happiness is something you make inside yourself by choosing what to think about. It's always there even if you stopped noticing it. If you stop and look and listen for it, it will appear."

Now you begin to understand. All this time you've spent waiting for things to come along in life that make you feel happy. You really hadn't considered that happiness could come from a kind of choice you make inside. And if Penny was right, it means you can be happy almost any time you want.

"It's hard for me to feel happy sometimes," you tell Penny. "Sometimes bad things happen that don't make me happy at all! Can it really just be a matter of thinking happy thoughts in your mind?"

Penny rolls over to you like a big furry beach ball and says, "Well, it's not always easy, of course. But it is simple. Two different things, you know: easy and simple. But your mind is where your feelings come from, did you know that? It might not be easy sometimes, but you can use your mind to create a feeling by choosing the thoughts you think. When I want to feel happy I sometimes think of Fran sitting on her stump with her twitching tail, or butterflies or beetles. Sometimes I think of something funny that happened, like the time I accidentally rolled right into Ollie's tree causing him to almost fall off his branch, and it makes me laugh. That's how thoughts lead to feelings."

It seemed like a lot to ponder. Penny gives you a great big smile and whispers, "Hey! Do you want to hear a secret chant I say whenever I want to feel happy? It works every time if you do it enough times!"

"Sure!" you say, excited to learn Penny's secret chant to be happy.

Penny stands up on her stubby legs, closes her eyes, looks to the sky with a smile, and with her arms held up high in the air in a spirit of joyfulness she sings out:

I feel joyful!

I feel free!

Happiness bubbles up in me!

Watching her sing out like that brings a smile to your face almost as big as hers. She really is filled with joy and just like her yawns, her happiness is catching! Penny is definitely the happiest panda you've ever seen. She keeps up her happiness chant and takes your hand in her fuzzy paw and holds it up to the sky. She wants you to join in her simple chant!

I feel joyful!

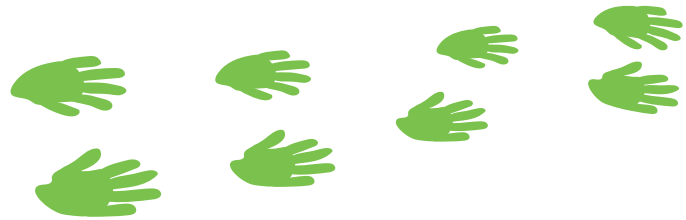
I feel free!

Happiness bubbles up in me!

Penny lets go of your hand and waves goodbye as you decide, in the midst of your joyfulness, to dance into the cool, shallow stream — seeming to bubble up happily just like Penny and you — and then you cross to the other side where The Magical Wooded Path continues.

-- Now, just relax and keep listening until the music stops.

The Path to Centeredness with Montgomery the Monkey

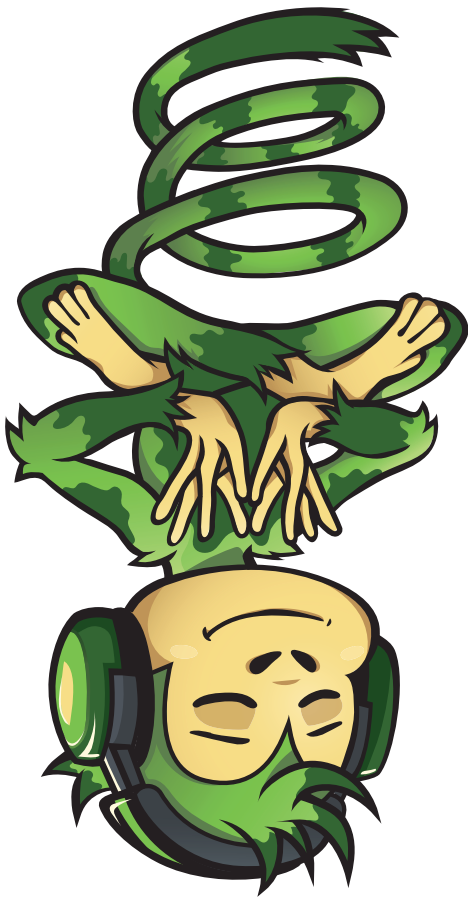


In the short time you've been walking along the Magical Wooded Path you have already met three remarkable friends, each one giving you something new to think about. Each with something important to share. Are there more friends inhabiting these wonderful woods? Something tells you there are!

You take a deep breath to inhale the crisp scent of the tall trees and sweet-smelling flowers around you. The sun is beginning to sink toward the horizon, but you are eager to see what other secrets this path holds for you before you return home.

The pathway leads upward, twisting itself up along a rocky tree-covered hillside. As you ascend along the way, you begin to hear an interesting sound — a buzzing sound.

As you round one of the twisty bends of the path, the sound becomes louder. Looking upward you see a curious sight. Suspended from a tree limb by his tail is a monkey, his legs crossed, his eyes closed, a look of serene peacefulness on his face. Positioned in a perfect meditation pose, but hanging upside down, he sways gently in the wind, completely calm and undisturbed.



By now you've become accustomed to some pretty extraordinary things in this magical forest, but you definitely did not expect to see a meditating monkey hanging by his tail! And what makes his calm appearance all the more surprising is that spinning and circling all around him are dozens of bees. They zip this way and that, buzzing around his ears, his elbows, even his feet! But the monkey remained still and unbothered as though the bees weren't even there.

"So that's where the buzzing sound's coming from!" you say aloud.

The monkey's bright green eyes open and he looks down upon you from his branch with a smile, "What buzzing sound?" he says, and then a little black and yellow bee lands right on his nose, making the monkey cross his eyes. "Oh, THAT buzzing sound!"

"How on Earth do you put up with all those bees flying around you?" you ask the monkey.

The monkey flips himself upright, climbs down to a lower branch, and then drops from there right down on the ground before you. "Oh I like bees," he says in a childlike voice, "and I like ladybugs and butterflies and ants and beetles and caterpillars and worms and...even spiders! They don't bother me at all. In fact nothing really does."

"Even while you're trying to meditate?" you ask. "Of course! That's the whole reason I meditate! To find my center. As long as I find my center nothing upsets me, not even all those little buzzing, crawling, flying friends!" the monkey explains. "Oh by the way, I'm Montgomery."

"Let me guess," you say, "people call you Monty!"

Montgomery cocks his head at you and says, "They do? Oh! I had no idea! Well that's okay by me! Monty! I like it! Yeah call me Monty!"

This gives you a chuckle, but you have another question for Monty, "What do you mean about finding your center? You mean like your belly?" you ask, pointing to his fuzzy middle.

"Well sorta!" Monty says with a grin. "See, your center is not just the middle of you but also a little like the middle of your mind, where it's calm and balanced. When you find your center, nothing much bothers you at all, not even a few bees buzzing around or the occasional ear tickle from a ladybug! Your center is where you can find the calmest feelings. It makes you feel light and easy, like a cloud just floating along in the sky," Monty says, gazing up at some pinkish clouds slowly passing far above.

Well that's an interesting idea, you think to yourself as you watch the cottony clouds overhead. You can remember lots of times when you'd been bothered by something or someone. If only you could have found your center during those times. Wouldn't it be nice to float above everything like a cloud?

Monty explains further by saying, "Everyone has a center point inside themselves where they feel a perfect balance. You can become good at finding that center point when you meditate or even when you use your breath. I know a secret trick to help you find your center. Want to see?"

"Definitely!" you say with enthusiasm.

"Okay," Monty says, "now stand here just like me." Monty stands up straight and tall and puts his feet a little bit apart, flat on the ground, so you do the same thing. "Now tilt your head up just a little bit," Monty instructs.

"And here comes the fun part: take a slow but deep breath in through your nose while counting, 1, 2, 3, and 4 in your mind — you can even stick your belly out when you fill up with air! Now hold your breath while counting 1, 2, 3, and 4, and then exhale through your nose counting 1, 2, 3 and 4 making your belly deflate like a balloon. Let's try it together!"

You and Monty practice this simple breathing trick, inhaling for a count of four, holding for a count of four, and exhaling for a count of four. "Wow, that's easy!" you say.

After you're done you find yourself feeling completely at ease and notice a kind of calmness right in your center, a feeling you get only when you're totally peaceful.

"How do you feel?" Monty asks.

You look at him with a smile. "I think I found my center already!"

"Good!" cheers Monty, bouncing on his springy legs. "Anytime you feel bothered you can do that little breathing trick to find your center! But remember to practice it every day so it becomes natural."

"Thank you!" you say as Monty climbs back up to his branch.

"Oh one more thing!" you remember, "is there anyone else in this forest I should meet? I've met Francesca, Oliver, Penelope, and you." Monty raises his eyebrows and scratches his chin as though thinking it through. Finally he snaps his fingers and says, "Oh of course! There is one more but..."

"But what?" you ask, concerned that Monty is hesitating.

"Well...I don't want to worry you or anything but this resident of the forest lives in a dark and scary cave just up ahead. And...well...you see...He's a dragon!"

Your eyes open wide. A dragon! Now hold on a moment. Owls and monkeys are one thing. But a real live dragon? A dragon is not something easy to confront. You know from stories that dragons can be fierce, and are legendary for their savagery. You think of the fire-breathing flying beasts you've seen in the movies and suddenly you're not too sure if you really want to meet this last resident of the magical forest.

Monty sees the worry on your face and lowers himself down to your eye level, "Hey did you forget already?!" And he takes in a deep breath, counting one, two, three, and four, and holds it for a count of four, and then finally exhales for a count of four. "Remember now, find your center and nothing will bother you! Not even a dragon!"

You practice finding your center again and then nod at Monty to show him you're ready to proceed. Monty raises his hands in cheerful support, and then points ahead along the path. You take one more deep breath and set out one more time, ready to confront the dragon at the end of The Magical Wooded Path.

-- Now, just relax and keep listening until the music stops.

The Path to Kindness with Dalrymple the Dragon



As the sun sinks lower in the sky you continue to walk The Magical Wooded Path. The path becomes narrow now, and winds up along the side of a mountain. The shadows grow long in the twilight but you remember your lessons: to find your center with your breath, stay focused and aware, and choose happiness over fear. Monty said there was a dragon living within a cave up ahead and while you aren't quite sure you are ready to meet a dragon, you have a feeling deep inside that things are going to be just fine.

After what seems like a rather long time you come to the entrance of a dark cave. You shudder a little as a gust of cold air comes howling out of the cave, a couple of bats dart and flutter past you, squealing off into the twilight sky. Peering inside you can't see much of anything. This must be the dragon's home, you realize. You really wish you'd brought a flashlight with you. You know it isn't wise to wander into a dark cave alone without a light, so you lean in, just barely, through the entrance, your eyes adjusting to the darkness, searching for any sign of the dragon.

Could the dragon be sleeping inside? Just waiting for someone to wander in? What else could be in this cave? More bats? Bones? Bears? As you peer through the entrance you think you detect movement — a rustling sound like something skittering around in the darkness. Straining your eyes you try to make out any shapes or other movements inside. You take a deep breath and hold it for a moment, so you can hear better.

That's when you hear a voice, but not from the cave. The voice is coming from right behind you! And it whispers in your ear, "Hey! Whatcha looking at??"

Spinning around in surprise and find yourself staring right into the violet eyes of a purple dragon! "Whoa!" you say, stepping back.

Yes, it's a dragon, that much is certain. But not the kind of dragon you were expecting. No snarling mouth filled with sharp fangs. No big leathery wings or fiery breath or huge horned head. In fact, this dragon is just about the same size as you, and he is smiling as if he'd just met a good friend he's wanted to see for a long time.

He is certainly an unusual-looking thing, with funny fringes on either side of his head and little claws on his hands and feet. His small wings seem unlikely to be able to lift his round body off the ground and his tail is slowly wagging as he watches you with a silly grin.

Remembering the dragon's question you finally manage to say, "Uh, well I guess I was looking for you! Isn't this cave your home?"

"Sure is!" the dragon says happily. "This is the home of Dalrymple the Kind! That's me!"



"Dalrymple the Kind?" you say, beginning to realize you have nothing to fear from this friendly dragon. "That's kind of a funny name for a dragon, isn't it?"

"Well yes, it is, I guess. My original dragon name was Dalrinius the Dangerous!" Dalrymple explains. "But I pretty much just go by Dally now."

So what happened, Dally?" you ask.

The purple dragon lets out a long sigh and says, "Well it's kind of a long story, but why don't you come on inside and I'll try to explain."

You follow Dally into the cave, staying close to his swaying tail as he steps further into the dark. Although you and Dally are deep inside the cave you begin to notice that ever so gradually, it's becoming lighter.

Entering a large chamber you find yourself bathed in the soft glow of candles, lanterns, and some unusual crystals that glow and shimmer with a magical light. "Wow! This place is amazing!" You say.

"Well thank you, it's pretty cozy isn't it!" says Dally. "It's really nice to have a visitor," Dally tells you, taking a seat on a great big cushion, "Most people tend to avoid dragons, you know."

You tell Dally about the other friends you met along The Magical Wooded Path, and Dally nods and smiles at the mention of each of their names, his little wings fluttering. "Aren't they great!" says Dally. "Such good friends!"

Dally's violet eyes suddenly light up, "Hey! This cave is a little chilly this evening. I need something to warm me up. Would you join me for some hot cocoa!"

That sounds pretty good to you, so you accept Dally's offer. He gathers a couple of large mugs and a kettle full of water. Taking a deep breath, he then exhales a stream of fire right under the kettle, immediately causing the water inside to boil and steam. Stirring the hot water into the mugs of cocoa he gently hands a cup to you and keeps the other for himself.

Taking a sip, Dally lets out a long "Ahhhhh!" his breath hanging in the air for a moment. "That's good!" You take a sip and agree. In fact, this dragon-made brew is about the best hot cocoa you've ever had.

"Thank you, this is delicious!" you say. "So you were going to tell me why you're not Dalrinus the Dangerous anymore and why you're called Dalrymple the Kind," you remind Dally.

"Well have a seat and I'll try to explain..." You find a boulder with a smaller cushion on it. Giving it a poke just to make sure it isn't a sleeping panda bear, you settle down on the rock and Dally tells his story.

"Dragons, as everybody knows, are supposed to be ferocious things. They're big, intimidating, beastly, always flying around frightening people, all that fire breathing and roaring. Goodness they make such a racket sometimes! I had a lot of trouble being a good dragon, or at least the kind of dragon I thought I was supposed to be. I didn't really like scaring people and stomping around like a vicious monster. And if you haven't noticed, I really don't look the part! Some of the other dragons loved to point that out. They said, 'Little Darinius isn't much of a dragon is he! Look at his flimsy little wings and his kind violet eyes. His teeth aren't very sharp and his claws are short and dull. Darinius the Dangerous?' they mocked me, 'he'll never be dangerous. He's just too kind and compassionate.'

"Their words hurt my feelings, but of course I knew they were right. I was different and felt ashamed of myself. Some dragon I was! I couldn't even scare a bunny rabbit! And the only thing I used my fire for was to make hot cocoa!"

"Those other dragons seem pretty mean to me," you point out, taking another sip of your hot cocoa.

Dally nods, "Yes some of them could be mean, but in a way they also helped me. They wouldn't let me forget that I was different and not like them." Dally continued, "Even though they upset me, I started to realize that getting mad at them didn't help much. Feeling sad all the time just made me sadder.

"So one day I decided to get away and take a walk through this forest, along the same Magical Wooded Path you've taken today. That's when I met all the same friends you met today. They taught me how to become mindful of my feelings, how to sharpen my focus and awareness, how to find my center and be happy! It was then that I realized something really important — I'd spent so much time trying to be like the other dragons that I didn't even notice that it was okay to be different. I hadn't seen that me being different wasn't such a bad thing at all. In fact, the more I showed myself some kindness and compassion, the happier I became!"

"So now you're Dalrymple the Kind?" you ask.

Dally nods his head and wiggles his tail, “Yep! That’s me! I started by being kind to myself and now I am kind to everyone I meet. Kindness is always needed in this world. After all, there are plenty of scary dragons out there. But not too many compassionate ones!”

“That’s very true!” you tell Dally. “I think it makes sense for everyone to try to be kind whenever they can. If kindness makes a person a little different, that makes it all the more important to be kind!”

Dally’s wings flutter so fast he actually does rise up off of his cushion. “You got it! That’s exactly right!”

You realize that Dally has shown you a special form of kindness. Not just by sharing his cocoa with you, but by sharing his story and what he learned about himself. That kind of sharing — when someone tells you about themselves in a way that helps you learn — is indeed a kind of treasure.

You finish your mug of tasty hot dragon-made cocoa and suddenly realize that it must be getting pretty late by now. You hop up from your seat and say, “Dally, thank you for telling me your story and for the cocoa! I have a long journey back home and I’m afraid it’ll be long past dark before I get there.”

Dally smiles and says, “Don’t you remember...you’re in a magical forest! Watch this!” Dally steps over to one of the big glowing crystals shining from the wall of the chamber and touches it with his tail. Immediately, a bright lavender ray of light radiates out, casting a circular beam on the floor of the cave. “Step inside the light,” Dally says, “it’s perfectly safe.”

You walk toward the beam, but just before stepping into its light, you turn to give Dally a goodbye hug, knowing this might be the only chance you have to hug a kindhearted purple dragon!

“Goodbye my friend! Come back anytime you wish!” he says.

You take one last look around before stepping into the lavender light. As you do you feel a gust of warm air surround you. At first you see nothing but the purplish light, but as Dally and his cave disappear before you, you begin to see new features as though a fog is lifting. As the light around you grows fainter, you no longer find yourself in the cave. Instead you’re back in the meadow you started from earlier this morning. Darkness has now fallen, but surrounding you are dozens of lightning bugs who are lighting your pathway all the way back home.

Walking through the meadow you reflect back on this remarkable and magical day. You’ll always remember your friends from The Magical Wooded Path and the lessons and stories they shared with you. As you finally make it all the way back home, you feel a sense of gratitude and satisfaction for what was a truly meaningful and memorable day. And maybe, just maybe, your new friends will stay with you forever.

-- Now, just relax and keep listening until the music stops.