



Honoring the Gill Inside You, by Mark Nepo

A simple fish nosing its way along the bottom is in itself a profound teacher, and like the deepest teachers, it doesn't even know it is teaching. Yet in its tiny, efficient gill lives the mystery of how to live as a spirit on Earth.

As we all know, by swimming, the smallest fish takes in water, and its gill turns that water into the air by which it lives. Though there are biological details that explain the mechanics of this, it is, in essence, a mystery.

The question is, what in us is our gill? Our heart, our mind, our spirit, a mix of all three? Whatever it is, like the smallest fish, we must turn water into air in order to live, which for us means turning our experience into something that can sustain us. It means turning pain into wonder, heartache into joy.

Nothing else matters, and just like fish we must keep swimming to stay alive. We must keep swimming through the days. We cannot stop the flow of experience or the need to take it in. Rather, all our efforts must go into learning the secret of the gill, the secret of transforming what we go through into air.

So, what is your gill? For me, it is my heart, and love becomes the unseeable trail I leave behind. But whatever it might be for you, it is more important to swim through the days and honor the gill inside you than to figure out how it all works.

-- Mark Nepo, _Simple as a Fish, The Book of Awakening_