Hi everybody it's Linda, coming to you from the Botanic Garden in Chicago. Just thought I'd take you on my walk because it's been a while since I've been here. It's good to have you with me. I think last time I was here I had cancer and was going through chemo. Now I'm finished with chemo and God willing, I'm finished with cancer. I've come here to be grateful, to share some love, and to also share the ABCs of Happiness. I've been thinking about it a lot lately, especially with the holidays.

I love this bridge, it always takes me to the Japanese side where my little Zen garden is. It reminds to let go of my ego, shedding of myself, and just give way to the inspiration of my soul. I encourage you to do the same, so I just wanted to come to you briefly because I know the holidays can be stressful and anytime can be stressful. I was thinking about the ABCs and what they are in a nutshell is acceptance, balance, and compassion.

So take a deep breath and I will too. Let's think about what it means to be accepting. Sometimes that's harder to do than we think. The serenity prayer says help me to accept the things I cannot change and the wisdom to know the difference. There's a lot we cannot change. There's a lot we cannot change about the people we love. So part of our opportunity over the holidays and whatever, is to just accept them. Quit trying to change them. Sometimes you may choose to put up boundaries, or even to leave them or leave the relationship, but you can do so with acceptance. Non-judgment, just a calm witnessing presence of this is what it is and they are who they are. I can choose to engage or not, but I don't have to worry about how to change them because as Al-Anon says, step one we're powerless to change anyone else. The only the person we can change is ourself. So as I round the turn at the Botanic and take you with me the A is acceptance.

The B of happiness and happy relationships is balance, and that's also a challenge at times because there's a lot of things we can balance. I think if we start to balance in our needs, as well as taking care of the needs of others. Especially around this holiday season and any season, we're gonna feel much more open and willing to participate and share if we balanced our needs in there. I'm gonna say balance them first, put your needs at the top of the list, put your meditation, your yoga, your walk, your communing with nature first. Then you'll have so much more to share. Now I'm getting to my favorite bridge, it reminds me of relationships. Sometimes you have to meet in the middle, it's not a straight line to have a healthy relationship you have to learn how to put your needs out there and then accommodate the needs of someone else. But to do it in a way where you both hold onto your individuality. You both hold onto the essence of who you are at your core. You find someone that can appreciate that and celebrate that, and help you incorporate more of that truthful, soulful living into your life.

So the ABCs, acceptance, balance, and compassion. Deep breath. Now in that compassion add yourself. I'm sure if you're like most of us you have much more compassion for others than you do yourself. So take a moment and have compassion for everything that you're feeling and have compassion for everything you're not allowing yourself to feel. All the exiled sadness and fears or hurt or anger, just have compassion. Because when you have compassion those feelings soften, those feelings can move through you, and those feelings allow you to be more present. So have compassion for yourself first, and then you'll have more space to be compassionate with the people around you.

As I'm walking I'm approaching the Island of Everlasting Happiness and the sign says it's unattainable. Everlasting happiness is unattainable, so even though we can never get to everlasting happiness we can sure choose happiness in the moment. So if there's something that's challenging you right now, or something that's bothering you, something that's stressing you out just see which of the ABCs will help you right now. Acceptance, balance, and compassion.

Now we're gonna go into my little Zen area, my little garden where other people come but I like to think of it as a place where I can go and meditate and bring you sometimes with me. It's just up this little path, and it borders on a Zen garden. I come here to sit, meditate, pray, give thanks, I bring people here who I love. Maybe some day you'll get here we can share it. There's my little spot, and there's the garden, and here it is. So take a breath and see what you can accept right now in this moment. Without needing to change it, save it, make it better, improve it, change it, just accept. Who can you accept, yourself, your partner, your children, your parents, your coworkers, your employer, your employees. Who can you accept?

Again you may need to set some boundaries, some relationships you may need to leave, but just accept first. It makes it easier. Then balance, balance your needs with the needs of others. Putting your needs first, your oxygen mask on first, so you have more space to take care of other people. Then take a breath because when you accept the way things are, when you balance your needs with others and when you have compassion for yourself first and then other people. You'll find that you're gonna be a lot happier, and your relationships will be a lot happier.

So I'm gonna take you for a little spin around my Zen Den. This is what it looks like, it's a beautiful brisk day in Chicago at the Chicago Botanic Gardens. I just wanted you to have an opportunity to be here with me because wherever you are, whatever you're doing, whatever you're feeling, I'm hoping that you find more peace, love and joy in your life, in your relationships, in your families, your communities, in this country, in this world, and on this planet. So I'm sending you a lot of love, a lot of light from heart to your heart. Bless you all. Have a very healthy and happy holiday season and New Year and I look forward to connecting with you soon. Sending a lot of love and hugs to you all. Bye for now, buh-bye.