

You do not need to be afraid of who you are.

Beach Talk 3/06/16
(rouse intention, motivation and lineage.)
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Two weeks ago Pat talked about maitri or metta in Pali, which is the development of self compassion and loving kindness to ourselves. She spoke about how under developed the skill set is in knowing or being comfortable receiving love, kindness and help. We could get our head around giving compassion but not receiving it, like we're unworthy or it's socially not cool to accept help. And Jaynine lead the Shambhala Sadhana which is repetition over and over that goodness is the building block of it all.

This made me reflect about a talk Trungpa Rinpoche gave once where virtually the entire talk was him going over and over the statement: 'You don't need to be afraid of who you are.' I have to admit it was one of those 'dah' moments for me as I didn't really get what he was saying. OK, we don't need to be afraid of who we are. Huh?

About 10 years later, I was on a solitary mountain retreat and I realized I was frightened all the time. I was frightened to go outside and pee. I was frightened about my very existence and that was the reason for all that talking inside my head. I was frightened. I was scared of myself, scared of aloneness, scared of death, and frightened about life. I flashed to the talk Trungpa Rinpoche had given and finally got what he was saying. Today, I'd like to talk about the work and kindness it takes to not be afraid of ourselves.

Trungpa Rinpoche defined maitri as unconditional friendliness to ourselves. Even the thought of unconditional friendliness to myself is not kosher. It's not Midwestern, like one has to constantly be vigilant and nasty to oneself. It was kind of an unwritten law. Over the years of being a life coach and a meditation instructor, I would say this is the hardest program I have seen in our worlds. I'm afraid it may be a remnant of original sin, but it's epidemic. We're certain somehow that we're bad or unworthy. If we examine much of our self talk, much of it is that we're suspicious characters. We don't measure up to some crazy making standard.

And it seems to be our Western culture. I've read the Dalai Lama's writing about how shocking this was for him to get, that we as westerners thought bad of ourselves and our lives. He said, certainly, you don't want bad things to happen to yourself. You wish yourself well and the answer is shocking-not so much. That is why this piece of maitri is such a pivotal piece in our path. When some fundamental shift happens about our goodness, the path becomes ever so much easier, and so much more joyous.

How does one be friendly to oneself? I'd like to talk about 3 levels: outer, inner and secret teachings on how we can allow maitri to seep into our being.

The first, the outer way, is of course the sitting practice of meditation. Every time we interrupt a thought, we're interrupting a fear on some level. Most of our discursiveness is covering that fact that we have little or no control in our lives, and if that isn't insulting enough, then we die. Even that, we don't get to control. So every time we say 'thinking' or let go of our thinking with a smile, we allow a puka or hole of unadulterated uncontrollable fresh air into our system. We relax in the not knowing. Pema says it well, we start getting comfortable with uncertainty.

We start to dismantle the edifice of uptightness, of control, of permanence, of trying to make permanence out of impermanence. That is a brave step towards friendliness to ourselves. We can relax in our worlds, and we can in fact cheer up. More and more I've been advocating that the third aspect of meditation practice is this humor or lightness to ourselves. It's allowing some head shake at how crazy we are, and how we've tied ourselves into knots. It's a laugh or cry situation and it's more beneficial to laugh. The outer way to start this friendship, unconditional friendship with ourselves is the sitting practice. We practice this kindness of fresh air of lightness to ourselves. We do not need to be afraid of who we are.

Trungpa wrote a beautiful line about sitting meditation from the Shambhala teachings: "that fearful mind should be put in the cradle of loving kindness". That is what we're doing with sitting meditation: putting that fearful mind in the cradle of loving kindness. We're starting to learn to be kind to ourselves.

The inner practice is a sort of neutral, frank self assessment, like examining a diamond in the rough or a big golden nugget not formed into an ornament. The inner process is based on the outer humor and non judgment. Although you're not harshly judging, it's not like all of our actions and thoughts get a pass. There's a self examination or feeling ourselves in learning kindness. Trungpa Rinpoche talked about grandmother's compassion as a kind of stupid complete acceptance of dumb behavior: a oh isn't that cute when you poop on the floor. His metaphor was that compassion was like milk that had a little Tabasco in it. We can feel ourselves and our motives. We don't let ourselves off the hook and we don't beat ourselves up for entertainment.

In sweeping terms we know when we are causing harm to ourselves and others. The letting go of the story lines in meditation practice sharpens our acuity for our actions and self talk. There's a mind training slogan that really helps me here: 'Of the 2 judges hold the principle one.' No one knows yourself like yourself. You've been there for the whole gig. So you can know most of the time when you're trying to pull a fast one and when your motivation was pretty clean. This builds a confidence and more letting go. You can say, I was being a rascal and confess, make amends and commit to do better. It's a process of the unconditional friendliness that you don't let yourself hurt yourself and others. You also don't let yourself stab yourself over and over with the hook. A frank assessment of what was going on here really helps and then no secondary torture sessions. Back to the outer step of letting stuff be in guilelessness and humor. Milk with tabasco, a sharpening of prajna, which is our intelligence about motivation and intent.

The secret training or aspect of maitri is what Jaynine was saying last week with the Shambhala Sadhana. When you have knowledge and confidence about what you're made from, the whole thing relaxes. But we're dense, we have to say it over and over. It is in fact all good. I appreciate Einstein so much because he framed things in such innocent terms. This great scientist said we really only had to answer one question in our lives: "Is the universe a friendly place?"

In other words, once you've decided the universe is not out to burn you to hell, but is good and kind and gracious, the game is over. You're built from good stuff, so how bad can you be? You deserve unconditional friendliness to yourself, because you're built from wisdom and compassion. It's the secret of secrets. The path is in the having no doubt about your own goodness. That's the secret aspect of unconditional friendliness.

Doing redundant maitri or metta practice is probably the biggest surge of connection to the path and the

teachings. Because you can be kind to yourself, your view of other changes. You see how we're all working so hard and how much fundamental fear and anxiety we live in. The softening allows for even more joy and relaxation.

Maitri or self kindness leads to compassion to self and to others. This leads to profound realization of inter connectedness which leads to openness which leads to ease and joy which leads to wisdom and to the 4 limitless ones of love, compassion, joy and equanimity.