

Living Beautifully Meditation Book Group Meeting 3 Homework
Saturday, November 3, 2012

1. Homework Suggestions

- a. *Get the rest you need*
- b. *Meditate for 10 minutes in the morning & evening*
 - i. *Try setting an intention & building the length of time*
- c. *Reflect on this week's reflection questions & try the exercises*
- d. *Consider journaling*
- e. *Suggested reading*
 - i. *Living Beautifully with Uncertainty & Change, Chapters 9, 10 & 11*

2. Reflection Questions & Exercises: Chapters 6, 7 & 8

- a. *In Chapter 6, Beyond Our Comfort Zone, P introduces the 2nd Commitment to take care of on another, the Bodhisattva Vow. She brings us back to our basic goodness, to trust in our innate ability to go beyond prejudice, fixed opinion, to open our hearts to everyone. The degree of openness arises from trusting in the belief that we all have basic goodness. Consider the level of trust you have.*
- b. *Pema observes that most of us aren't ready to jump into complete openness, that much groundlessness. She suggests that we open to everyone perhaps only briefly at first. She encourages us to start with a strong intention to keep opening the door bit by bit and in this way we build a reserve of inner strength. Consider how open you are today and how you might open further.*
- c. *Pema says keeping the 2nd commitment is like mission impossible. We break it whenever we close our hearts and minds to someone including ourselves! Consider the ways you might close down or even denigrate yourself and others.*
- d. *Pema teaches that the 1st commitment, to not cause harm by training in not acting or speaking in ways that escalate suffering, acknowledging our triggers and staying present with discomfort, is the foundation for the 2nd commitment, to take*

- care of one another. It's based on self-honesty which requires that we refrain from rationalizing questionable behavior and, if possible, self-deception. Consider the behaviors you might be rationalizing and/or the ways you might be deceiving yourself.*
- e. Pema challenges us to consider our "own special gurus", those people we really dislike and wish would simply go away. She says it's the trouble-makers in our lives that help us see when we've shut down. Consider the your special gurus and how willing you are to make them the subject for practice.*
 - f. The aspiration is not to close down even when a personal relationship falters. The dynamics can trigger behaviors we thought were long outgrown. Sometimes it's the seemingly unresolvable relationship that teaches us the most. She challenges us to practice ways in which we can wish for the person's deepest well being. We're challenged to shed our own protective layers and to try to see the other person free from our own labels and fixed ideas. Consider the person or people in your life that these teachings might apply to.*
 - g. Pema is urging us to question our fixed ideas, our conventional mindset, even our perception of reality as being "the reality". In yoga there is a practice in the Sutras called: Pratipaksha Bhavana, Pratipaksha means opposite and bhavana means contemplation or meditation. Try this method as a way of questioning a certainty that may be holding you back.*
 - h. In Chapter 7, Pema introduces the Tonglen practice of breathing in that which is unpleasant and breath out that which is pleasing, relieving, enjoyable. The teaching encourages us to invite suffering into our hearts and connect with compassion. She says this practice will awaken our natural empathy. If we can stay with unwanted feelings we can use then as stepping-stones to understanding the pain and fear of others. Consider using this practice on the spot in the midst of your daily life.*
 - i. Pema says the practice is especially useful when we get into a conflict with someone and feel our own pain and confusion arising. The impulse is often to shut down, go blank or obsess*

about the situation. We can use Tonglen to work with our emotions on the spot. The body doesn't lie – you can use all the physiological signs to connect with what's really happening.

- j. Pema cautions against self-denigration when we falter. We can simply try again. Our wish for others is the same for ourselves: to appreciate ourselves, recognize when we're caught and disentangle ourselves and to experience the goodness of being human. We can't force it or it will likely backfire. The pain of the world pierces the heart but we never forget the goodness of being alive. Consider your capacity to feel the pain and also the spaciousness and wonder of being alive.*
- k. In Chapter 8, Catalyst for Compassion, Pema says that when we make the commitment to help one another, it sows a seed deep in our unconscious, our minds, our hearts that never goes away. This seed is a catalyst that jump starts our inherent capacity for love, compassion & empathy. Consider this metaphor of planting seeds in your body, heart, mind. What is growing now and what would you like to cultivate in the future?*
- l. Pema describes the 3 ways to enter the commitment to benefit others, the Bodhisattva Vow: as a monarch, ferryman and/or shepherd. Most of us use all 3 approaches. Consider how you use these ways of connecting and helping yourself and others. Acknowledge yourself for these efforts.*

3. Other Resources

- a. The PBS Documentary: Half the Sky – Turning Oppression to Opportunity for Women Worldwide
 - i. <http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/half-the-sky/>
- b. Ethel: The Personal Untold Story of Ethel Kennedy
 - i. <http://ethelthemovie.com>

