

Living Beautifully Meditation Book Group Meeting 4 Homework
Saturday, November 10, 2012

1. Homework Suggestions

- a. *Get the rest you need*
- b. *Meditate daily*
- c. *Reflect on this week's reflection questions & try the exercises*
- d. *Explore continuing education resources*

2. Reflection Questions & Exercises: Chapters 9, 10 & 11

- a. *In Chapter 9, Nowhere to Hide, Pema suggests that hearing along with our other sense perceptions is the doorway to sacred world. Whatever we hear is the sound of emptiness, of awakened energy, ungraspable yet audible . . . "a raven with its raucous cry, that's the wound of awakened energy, the voice of the teacher waking us up." Observe your response to sights, sounds, smells, tastes & touch – can you experience them directly?*
- b. *Pema says we need the deep training in the first two commitments, refraining from harming, not closing our hearts and minds to anyone, to reach the place where everything becomes a path to practice. The 3rd Commitment is about direct experience without coloring our sense perceptions with concepts, internal dialog or interpretations of what's going on. It requires that we bear witness to ourselves with compassion. In this way we come to know ourselves with kindness and immense honesty. Experiment with being present in a challenging situation while refraining from coloring your experience.*
- c. *Pema describes each person's life like a mandala (Sanskrit word for circle). Everything we see, hear and think forms the mandala of our live. All that we perceive is a manifestation of enlightened energy that is a doorway to sacred world. The pain of our confusion and the brilliance of our awakened mind make up the mandala of our lives. Birth and death, depression and joy coexist. We can embrace it all. Consider your current*

circumstances in terms of this view. How might this view alter your experience of life?

- d. Pema says that what's happening on our earth today is the result of collective minds of everyone on the planet. Each of us has to take responsibility for our own state of mind. She says that the 3rd Commitment points to how the world could be transformed from a place of escalating aggression with everyone defending territory and fixed ideas to a place of awakening. We work on the mind, then, based on this work we take action. Consider the work you are willing to do.*
- e. In Chapter 10, Awakening in the Charnel Ground, Pema confronts us with the vivid images of impermanence and death. She says it is a metaphor for life exactly as it is rather than how we would like it to be. By confronting with life's most extreme moments our willingness to embrace the world is tested. In the charnel ground we meet wretchedness and splendidness, the totality of life. If we can stay present even in the most challenging circumstances the intensity of the situation will transform us. Consider what you have learned from meeting your life's most challenging moments. How would you respond differently in view of these teachings?*
- f. Pema encourages us to be aware of our tendency to project on our outer situation and to refrain from reacting in the same old ways by feeling emotions directly. Directly means without commentary and/or interpretation. If thoughts arise she encourages us to interrupt them by letting them go and return to the rawness of the energy we're feeling. Next time you're feeling a strong emotion experiment with how long you can stay with it directly.*
- g. Pema says it's crucial for all of us to find a practice that will help us have a direct relationship with groundlessness and impermanence and death. A practice that enables us to experience the transitory nature of our thoughts and emotions. If we're always struggling to find stability in a shifting world,*

old age and death will come as a terrible shock. Consider what might help you in preparing for old age and death.

- h. In the final Chapter, We Are Needed, Pema asks if you are ready to make a Commitment. If you are she encourages you to voice it to yourself and a caring friends or teacher.*
- i. Pema acknowledges that it's natural to want relief from stress. She suggests having a degree of support while we're weaning ourselves off certainty. She closes by saying that she had wanted to be a lone wolf. We're all so interconnected that we can't awaken without each other. Consider the sources of support you have – will they support your ability to continue embracing life just as it is?*

3. Other Resources

- a. Meditation Groups in Seattle Area
 - i. Shambhala Meditation Center of Seattle
 - 1. <http://seattle.shambhala.org>
 - ii. Eastside Shambhala Meditation Location
 - 1. <http://seattle.shambhala.org/eastside/>
 - iii. Seattle Insight Meditation Society
 - 1. <http://www.seattleinsight.org>
 - iv. Seattle Insight Meditation Neighborhood Sitting Groups
 - 1. <http://www.seattleinsight.org/Sangha/NeighborhoodSittingGroups/tabid/73/Default.aspx>
- b. Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death, and Hope in a Mumbai Undercity by Katherine Boo
 - i. http://www.amazon.com/Behind-Beautiful-Forevers-Mumbai-Undercity/dp/1400067553/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1352238104&sr=1-1&keywords=katherine+boo
- c. City of Joy by Dominique Lapierre
 - i. http://www.amazon.com/City-Joy-Dominique-Lapierre/dp/0446355569/ref=la_B000AP9G6Y_1_3?ie=UTF8&qid=1352323256&sr=1-3
- d. Still Here by Ram Dass

- i. http://www.amazon.com/Still-Here-Embracing-Aging-Changing/dp/1573228710/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1352323341&sr=1-1&keywords=still+here+ram+dass
 - e. The documentary Ram Dass: Fierce Grace
<http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/ramdass/>
 - f. The documentary Community Stories: Healing a Soldier's Heart
 - i. <http://www.mindful.org/Coping%20with%20Difficulty/healing-a-soldier>
- 4. Books to consider for next Yoga Bliss Meditation Book Group
 - a. Yoga for a World Out of Balance by Michael Stone
 - i. http://www.amazon.com/Yoga-World-Out-Balance-Teachings/dp/1590307054/ref=la_B004GR1NTK_1_3?ie=UTF8&qid=1352670275&sr=1-3
 - b. Active Hope by Joanna Macy
 - i. http://www.amazon.com/Active-Hope-without-Going-Crazy/dp/1577319729/ref=sr_1_fkmr0_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1352670392&sr=1-1-fkmr0&keywords=awakened+hope+joanna+macy