In her book *Comfortable With Uncertainty*, Buddhist nun Pema Chodron asks central question: How is there going to be less aggression on the planet rather than more?

This is an urgent question. Anyone who takes up Metta practice implicitly acknowledges the need to do what they can to minimize aggression and promote caring and generosity.

In Buddhist teaching, aggression is one of what is called the Three Poisons, along

with greed and ignorance, also called delusion. The Buddha taught that these three poisons are the root causes of distress and suffering. They continually show up in our own hearts and minds and they also become institutionalized – woven into the fabric of our collective life. It is imperative that we contend with the three poisons if we want to live for the benefit of all beings.

We cannot transform collective, institutional aggression until and unless we learn to identify and transform it at a personal level. We have to understand how aggressive dynamics are at work in our relationships both with ourselves and others. We don’t always see aggression for what it is. For example, our constant inner harping at ourselves to be better, be more, be different, be this, be that, is a subtle but pernicious form of aggression—a sort of bullying ourselves into chasing something forever beyond our reach. This bullying not only harms us, but it can also unwittingly become the template for how we approach others.

How do we overcome this and other ingrained habits of aggression? The first step is learning to see them for what they are. And to do that, we need to relax precisely where we are right now. Another way to say this is we need to accept where we are right now, over and over and over again throughout our day. Here’s a revelation: There’s no problem with being where you are right now, even if where you are is grumpy, angry, resentful, and simmering with ill will. You can’t scold yourself out of it. No amount of scolding ourselves can replace the simple act of kindness of acknowledging our pain *to ourselves*.

Pema Chodron makes the point that healing is found in the tenderness of the pain itself.

But we often bypass the tenderness of the pain by focusing on our story lines about

it; for instance, the ways in which we were wronged, or should not have been

subjected to whatever gave rise to the pain, or we tell ourselves it’s our own

fault or we stew and fuss about how to fix it etc etc etc. When we can shift

our attention from the story line and instead acknowledge, respect, and touch the

tenderness of our pain, we can be where we are and at the same time leave open the possibility of moving beyond it. This expansion cannot happen through aggression,

pushing or striving. When we are willing to be mindful not only of what

feels comfortable but also what pain feels like, then we can

begin to live out of the soft spot of bodhicitta.

Offer Metta around transforming aggression using the following phrases, or those of your own choosing.

May I accept my pain, knowing that it does not make me bad or wrong

May I accept my suffering, knowing that I am not my suffering

May I accept my anger, fear, and sadness, knowing that they need not limit the openness of my heart

May I live out of the soft spot of bodhicitta