

Life is Not Fair: Get Over It!

I am rather heartbroken at the moment because several of my absolutely lovely Tai Chi students who come to my weekly class at Gorton monastery are either seriously unwell or in quite a lot of pain from bad injuries. This sad situation has got me reflecting on how unfair life can seem to be. The nicest of people get horrible diseases and some not so nice individuals seem to sail through life without encountering any kind of serious trouble whatsoever.

How often do you rage at the apparent unfairness of this world? How frequently do you get angry or upset about something unjust in the news or something awful that is happening to a loved one? I know I still complain far too often about the state of our world and how unfair it is that so many innocent individuals are suffering so badly from wars, poverty, racism, cancer etc., but I also know how bad this is for my long term health and well-being.

I saw a report the other day that said that individuals who identify themselves as social justice warriors fighting numerous forms of injustice and discrimination in our modern world tended to be much less happy than the norm. I was not surprised. When we constantly focus on everything that is wrong with our world, when we fight angrily against every possible injustice, we suffer. When we insist that the government/ our partner/ our daughter-in-law/the weather/our health *has* to change before we can be content with our life, we suffer.

Now don't get me wrong here. Of course, we can, and should, do everything in our power to assist those less fortunate than ourselves. We can definitely take all kinds of positive actions to try and bring about helpful changes in our totally unfair world. But unless we do all of this with unconditional love in our hearts for all sentient beings, we are in grave danger of simply adding yet more dark and terribly dangerous rage to a world that is already boiling over with rage in so many places.

I find it so ironic that thousands of protestors will go out onto the streets and scream with rage in support of an end to some kind of armed conflict such as the war in Gaza. No one really believes that protesting angrily in the streets of the UK will force a peaceful settlement of some kind in the Middle East.

However it seems that protestors are so enraged that they just have to let off steam by shouting angrily for hours in city centres every weekend.

All the greatest spiritual teachers including the Buddha and Jesus have taught that if we want to live in a more peaceful world, we need to make every possible effort to cultivate a more peaceful mind and heart. We then need to extend peace, love and compassion out into the troubled world around us so that this uplifting energy can act as a soothing balm over troubled waters.

When Jesus insisted over 2000 years ago that his disciples should love and forgive all their enemies over and over again, I do not believe that he was giving them some kind of moral code to live by so that a judgemental, wrathful God would let them into heaven after they died. I am now convinced that Jesus was trying to show his followers how to be happy right there and then in the horribly troubled world in which they were living over 2000 years ago.

Ironically, nothing much has changed since the time of Jesus. We are of course so much more comfortable than our ancestors - with our centrally heated houses, pain-relieving drugs and so many other modern wonders. But are we really that much happier? I am not at all sure that we are. We certainly seem to have exceptionally high rates of depression and anxiety in our sophisticated modern society, and even those of us who are not currently clinically depressed seem to feel pretty downhearted a lot of the time. I for one get upset on a regular basis when I see pictures of terrible suffering on TV, including those charity ads about suffering animals that are so horrific that I now often turn the TV off when they take over an ad break.

On the other hand, I now know without a doubt that when I sit quietly for a while to connect to a well of pure love at my very core, I start to feel wonderful. I also know just how good I feel when I then do my very best to extend wave after wave of loving kindness to everyone I know who is having a really terrible time in our world at the moment – and that includes Russian soldiers as well as Ukrainians and Israeli soldiers as well as all the suffering children of Gaza.

Is it fair that innocent children in Gaza have been suffering so terribly for such a long time recently? What do you think? However, puffing ourselves up with self-righteous indignation makes not a blind bit of difference to their suffering.

Now, I have no real idea whether extending unconditional love energy out into the world at the end of all my meditations makes any kind of positive difference in this world. But I choose to have faith that it does because I do believe that love can move mountains.

Plus, whenever I extend just a little love energy out into the world, I have a strong sense that it merges into much, much greater streams of love and light generated by all those amazing individuals - such as nuns and monks of many different religious persuasions - who pray almost unceasingly for world peace and harmony.

Now I can hear you protesting at this point that all that praying does not seem to have achieved much over the last few thousand years. All I can say in response is: 'Have we any idea how more violent this world might be without all those prayers for peace?' Have we any idea how much healthier and more content we might be if we stopped complaining so much about all the injustices in our world and started to give heartfelt thanks and practical support to all those wonderful individuals all over the planet who work tirelessly to help the least fortunate members of the human race?

I think we all have a fundamental choice to make when life here seems unbearably unfair and unjustly cruel. We can either huff and puff and fill our whole being with self-righteous angry energy that will then spill out into the atmosphere like a dark, toxic cloud, or we can calm down, sit still for a while to fill our whole being with light and love. We can then do our absolute best to extend love and light out into the world around us. We can also vow to perform small acts of kindness on a regular basis, even if those little acts of love are just a drop in the ocean. I know which choice I long to make this month. What about you?

Shall we commit this month to pausing whenever we notice we are becoming angry about how unfair life seems to be down here? Shall we do our best not to fan that toxic flame, but instead wrap that angry energy in the healing energy of self-compassion and loving kindness? If we or a loved one are sick or upset at some point during the month ahead, maybe we could commit to refraining from ruminating angrily or fearfully on, 'Why is this happening to

me/them?’ and instead focus on what we can do in the present moment to alleviate any kind of distress in a really compassionate, non-judgemental way?

So let’s just keep sending waves of unconditional love out into the unfair world around us throughout the marvellous month of August. Of course, I cannot promise you that these small acts will dramatically transform your own life or indeed our troubled world this month, but I can promise you that replacing your anger, fear, or resentment with unconditional love and compassion will feel absolutely wonderful.

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August 2025