

One Choice: Love or Fear?

Life on this beautiful but challenging planet can seem pretty crazy and scary much of the time can't it? So many people these days seem to think that we are living through particularly turbulent times, but as someone who studied history at university, I have to tell you that it is virtually impossible to find any time throughout human history that wasn't pretty violent and frightening. These days, I love reading historical novels. I must have read at least 100 novels about the Tudor period, and I have to tell you that the awful fate of people who were tortured to death, burnt at the stake, or had their head chopped off during that time is just mind-blowing.

So please, do not tell me that you cannot enjoy your life whilst the modern world is in such a terrible state. If you wait for this world to be free from conflict and violence before you can live a life full of peace, love and joy, you will be waiting until the day you drop dead! On the other hand, if you practise making the simple choice I am going to outline in this message, you may just begin to find that life is quite a bit less scary and quite a lot more fulfilling.

The key to living your day to day life in peace, love and joy definitely does not lie in going out into the world day after day, frantically running around and fighting for a more peaceful or just world. I greatly admire individuals who fight the good fight on behalf of all oppressed people in our modern world. But I know that they are always fighting a long, hard, losing battle. This world will only change for the better when more and more of us change our own minds and choose to become unconditionally loving in a world full of anger and hatred.

So the key question we need to ask ourselves - probably several times every day - is this: Am I living in fear or love right now? Most of us spend an awful lot of our time listening to a catastrophizing loud voice of doom and gloom that broadcasts more or less constantly from the centre of our head. For example, we get up in the morning, have a quick listen to the morning news, and then spend the rest of the day convinced that we are all facing an economic, political, or health disaster of epic proportions.

So much of the so-called news these days is fearful 'What if?' news. 'What if climate change is now irreversible and we are all going to die soon from uncontrollable floods/viruses/droughts/wild fires?' 'What if the world runs out of jet fuel and none of us can ever fly again?' 'What if that bacon butty I have as a treat once a week is going to give me colon cancer?'

Give us a break! There is now virtually nothing that we can eat or drink without some 'expert' insisting that it will slowly kill us. There is now no enjoyable leisure

activity that some puritanical kill joy does not want to ban. No wonder we are all in a perpetual state of at the very least mild anxiety about the future. But is this really any way to live our relatively short lives here? Surely there must be a better way?

Well, what about this? Whenever we notice that we are lost in a train of fearful thoughts about any particular situation in our life, we can pause for a moment or two, take one or two calming deep breaths and then ask ourselves: Are these fearful predictions really true or is my biological brain catastrophizing in a misguided attempt to keep me safe from future danger that will probably never come to pass? For example, you notice the thought, 'This UK government is going to bankrupt our country and we will all be living on the breadline.' floating through your mind. So, you mindfully pause and ask yourself, 'Can I absolutely know that is true?' Of course, the answer has to be 'No!' Or, you find a new mole on your arm and that pesky loud voice in your head screams at you 'It's most likely skin cancer!' Again, unless maybe you are a consultant dermatologist, you cannot possibly know that this frightening voice is right.

Unfortunately, challenging your fearful 'What if?' thoughts like this over and over again only gets you so far. The next and most important step in this process of choosing love over fear is to move your awareness down from your fearful, deluded brain to your loving, infinitely wise heart. Then just ask yourself: 'What would my loving heart want to tell me about this scary situation?'

Now, if you have never listened to the compassionate wisdom of your own heart before, you may be really surprised to find that your heart can speak to you. You may not hear words as such, but if you settle into the silence of your heart for a while, it is perfectly possible to receive truly loving messages from it. These compassionate messages will then always reassure you that all is well despite your horrendous fears about any particularly challenging situation in your life at the moment.

For example, suppose you are extremely worried about the health of a loved one. The voice in your head will churn out a load of worst case scenarios that just ramp up your anxiety such as 'Maybe they are going to die and leave me!' But when you take time out to consult your own wise heart, it reassures you that whatever happens in terms of your loved-one's physical health, all will be well with both of you on the highest and deepest of levels.

Your wise, compassionate heart may also whisper to you that everything that happens in this world is just like a passing dream of no lasting consequence. Everything in this physical world dies sooner or later, but the love that you share with your partner/parent/child is real and everlasting. In fact, you and your loved one are always divinely protected, guided and cherished beyond your wildest dreams.

If that last bit sounds like a wild fantasy to you, I fully understand where you are coming from. As a young woman, I was at least a little anxious virtually all of the time, and panic stricken quite often, because I totally believed that loud voice in my head telling me that disaster was just around the corner.

Then two wonderful things happened. First, I got to that stage in life where I could look back and see that virtually all the disasters that my egoic thought system had predicted would happen to me and the world in general never happened, and that when occasionally something bad did happen to me, I got through it with surprising ease. Second, after many years of meditating and spiritual awakening, I began to know without a shadow of a doubt that we are all protected always by Love Itself – which is the name I use for God because I still find the word ‘God’ somewhat problematic.

Finally, I want to emphasise that whenever we make the choice to listen to the voice of love/compassion/forgiveness/kindness, we reinforce the ultimate truth that love will always prevail over any and all kinds of fear just as light always dissolves away the darkness.

Whenever we take a break from worrying to listen to the voice of love rather than the voice of fear, we not only do ourselves a huge favour, we also extend just a little more unconditional love out into a relatively loveless world. We thus become part of the ultimate solution to all the world’s seemingly endless problems, rather than simply joining in the collective angst that now constantly threatens to destroy our inner peace and constantly distracts us from the deepest truth that all is love and all is well always.

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