

## Choosing Peace Over and Over and Over Again

I do apologise if you feel a sense of déjà vu reading this month's message, but the practice of cultivating inner peace day by day is so crucial for our own well-being and the well-being of our whole planet that I think it is worth focussing on it once again in this beautiful month of May.

After following the Buddhist monks amazing 2300 mile Peace Walk through America earlier this year, I am still waking up every day and saying to myself: *Today is going to be my peaceful day*. Then before long, I notice that something in the world around me - such as the news or an unhelpful shop assistant - has pushed my buttons and my inner peace has flown out the window yet again. No matter. Whenever I notice I have lost my inner peace these days, I do my very best to get it back as quickly as possible because I am *finally* realising that cultivating inner peace is the absolutely essential foundation for creating a truly happy life for ourselves. Let me explain.

Please think carefully about this for a moment or two. When you are irritated with someone do you feel joyful? When you are anxious about the future, do you feel happy? When you are holding onto a grievance about something someone did to you in the past, do you feel content? When you are in an agitated rush, do you feel in love with the world? I think if you reflect on these questions, you will come to the same conclusion I have recently reached. Without cultivating inner peace on a day to day basis, our life in this world is more or less constantly filled with angst, pain (emotional, mental and physical). When we are not at peace, we all tend to experience life here as an endless struggle to find just a little happiness that then never seems to last for long.

For many years, in fact until I was in my late 40s, I was desperately seeking romantic love. Seeking inner peace did not appeal to me one iota. Then as I began to awake spiritually, I started to seek for divine love rather than romantic love. But I still did not realise that we are only going to feel any kind of love for any length of time when we are at peace with ourselves and at peace with the crazy world all around us. Time has rushed by and I am now in my 70s. I certainly do not feel peaceful all of the time yet, not at all! But at least I now fully recognise how essential cultivating inner peace is for our overall health and well-being.

One way to connect to an infinite well of inner peace is to sit still and meditate on nestling into the simple peace of our heart for say 20-30 minutes every day. However, I am coming to realise that even doing this with great discipline every day is not enough. I have found that I can mediate for 20 minutes at the start of my day and feel so peaceful, and then within minutes of resuming my daily activities, I am back to feeling at least a little agitated or anxious once again.

As I often say when I am talking about meditation in my tai chi classes, the point of regularly adopting some kind of meditation practice is definitely not to become really good at meditating – So what? The real purpose of adopting a regular meditation practice is to become good at living on this stunningly beautiful, but incredibly challenging planet.

So, if we still feel agitated a lot of the time despite meditating regularly, maybe we need to adopt an additional practice that will assist us to return home to inner peace more and more quickly throughout every beautiful but challenging day down here. The good news is that this

really is not a difficult or complex practice to adopt. We simply have to cultivate enough mindfulness to notice whenever we are feeling even the slightest bit agitated. We can then pause for a moment or two, and say gently to ourselves, *I could see peace instead of this.* (*A Course in Miracles* Lesson 34) Then, we can take one or two deep relaxing, softening breaths as we let our agitated thoughts and feelings dissolve away into the atmosphere with each slow, deep, releasing outbreath.

A dear friend of ours now breaths slowly and deeply for a minute or so whenever she feels anxious and she recently told Gloria that this has made a surprisingly big difference to her quality of life. So please do not go on waiting for the world to be more peaceful, *be* the peace you want to see in the world and don't worry if that commitment takes you the rest of your life to perfect. As *A Course in Miracles* so wisely points out, *Peace of mind is clearly an internal matter. It must begin with your own thoughts and then extend outward. It is from your peace of mind that a peaceful perception of the world arises.*

Now this month, if you would like a really gentle kick start to cultivating peace day by day, hour by hour and moment by moment, I strongly recommend a short guided meditation on YouTube led by Bruce Davis entitled *This Moment of Peace*.

In this meditation, Bruce Davis says some really inspiring things about cultivating inner peace. So I am now going to quote him at some length to encourage you to actually do the meditation with him!

*Every day there are so many moments when we can choose to be busy, worried, upset, frustrated, or we can choose a moment of peace. Our life is where our attention is. Usually our attention is caught up by fearful thoughts streaming through our mind, but our attention can also be on this moment of peace and the openness and gentleness of our own heart.*

*We need to keep falling into deep inner peace. When we touch base with inner peace, everything is OK. There is no struggle just openness, space, and more and more peace. Every day when we choose peace, the garden of peace grows stronger, more beautiful, more perfect until ultimately we are peace.*

If that sounds as wonderful to you as it does to me, please compassionately keep reminding yourself that you can always choose peace over fear or anger at any time - day or night. Each time you pause to reconnect to the simple peace of your own loving heart, you add another foundation stone to an inner temple of perfect peace that you are now building – a temple that is always filled with so much love, joy and heavenly light.

Of course, I cannot promise you that you will immediately feel love, light and joy pouring into every cell of your being the moment that you begin to cultivate a little more inner peace. However, I can guarantee that if you start every day from now on with the statement 'Today is going to be my peaceful day.' and then do your best to return home to peace every time you notice that your mind has wandered off into anxiety or irritation, sooner or later, you will be amazed at how much happier you have become.

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