



DEEP SPRING CENTER NEWSLETTER

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Transforming Habit / Exercising Free Will / Practicing Kindness

October 22, 2011

Saturday Howell Retreat (partial talk)



Barbara

Letter from Barbara

Dear friends,

As you read this, I'll be boarding a plane to Brazil for my annual trip to John of God's "Casa de Dom Inácio," with the 20 adventurers who have joined my tour this year. Each year this trip takes me to a deeper understanding of consciousness, spirit, healing and freedom. Equally important to that learning are my vipassana practice and the growing insights in areas of spirit and consciousness that come as I work with Aaron.

With this in mind, my focus in this newsletter runs in two directions. First is meditation, for me, vipassana, which grounds our spiritual practice. Just as I had reviewed the transcript of vipassana instructions I gave in a class this fall, Ann Barden, one of our senior DSC teachers, sent me a copy of her basic instructions for her half-day introductory course. We both feel they fit well together. Ann said, "Based on my teaching experience, your instructions are more like what I would use with people who have some experience and confidence with sitting still, eyes closed, and bringing the mind to just one point of attention. I love the quality that you bring to your instructions, of loving attention and acceptance." I also love the clarity of her instructions. These are not conflicting instructions; nor are they identical. Different voices reach different ears. We'd welcome feedback; what works for you?

The other important area of learning for me these past few years has been with Aaron on "the akashic field." I find it a challenge to put these insights into words and am only now giving a first attempt to write about it. The akasha is one of the elements and yet different from the others. In a certain state of consciousness, while there is still a conscious-perceiving faculty, awareness notes the Unconditioned itself (still as object and not from within) and notes that everything is expressing out of that Unconditioned. At the point of expression, awareness finds a one-way permeable membrane. The distortions of the mundane cannot pour back into the Unconditioned. But the entirety of the Unconditioned is constantly emerging into the mundane realm. Aaron likens it to a pure underground spring expressing up to the surface and pouring into a stream. In that stream there will be the ever-perfect water and distortions. The ever-perfect is accessible right there; we don't need to go into the source, just filter out the distortions and take the pure water. Just at that point of emergence is the akashic field.

What is the point of recognizing this field? It's the place of possibilities. I find myself moving into this field to explore emotions, physical distortions such as the dead

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Aaron: My blessings and love to you all. I am Aaron, and I greet you in light and in love.

You are beings of light. That does not mean there's no darkness within you, but your essence is light, and you have come into the incarnation to learn better how to live that light in the world.

You came into the body of a mammal. It's a deeply conditioned life form. In some incarnations, perhaps you were an animal like a horse, which, if a fly bites his back, will flick his tail to remove the fly. He's not concerned about whether or not he kills the fly. He acts instinctively to remove the irritation. Scientist friends tell me that if you look at a tiny microorganism under a microscope and move the point of a needle toward it, it will withdraw, pull back. It is deeply conditioned to protect itself.

To protect oneself by withdrawal or by attack, whichever is most appropriate, is deeply conditioned. You have eons of that conditioning. We don't think of the horse as having free will to flick off the fly or not flick off the fly. This is simply what the horse does. A she-wolf will protect her cubs fiercely. This is what the wolf does. A rabbit will run and burrow.

So here you are, born into this human body, this precious human form, with something new added to the mammalian instincts. You have free will, and an enormous capacity of mind and of heart. That means you have the ability to choose rather than simply to act instinctively. When the fly bites you, you can

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nerves in my ears, and karmic habits. I come to a place where all the possibilities exist and find the power to choose based on highest intention. Thus, it is a very powerful way to resolve old karma. Again, it is hard to verbalize this.

Many of you have worked with Aaron and me with the Four Empowerments and Seven-Branch Prayer. Here we see the repetitive habit that no longer has roots yet keeps repeating; express “compassionate regret” that it keeps coming, ask spirit for help to release it, and work with practices to balance the old patterns. This practice is very helpful; it does release the patterns. Yet I have also seen that if done unskillfully, it can lead to more “fixing” that tends to perpetuate rather than release. The akashic-field work has taken it a step further. Within this field, we come to the place just before the move to distortion, and mirror back to mind and body, literally to the cells, the ever-perfect condition before the distortion first expressed. This still must be done without grasping, only with inviting from our highest intention for the good of all beings. This ability to invite with no grasping is the fruit of the vipassana practice; it does all come together! I experience something different, then, than with the Seven-Branch-Prayer work; there is simultaneous, instant release because the body shifts, at a cellular level to the place where the distortion never happened. The mind releases the old pattern completely.

Learning to access the akashic field has been in stages: first, getting to know the direct experience of the mundane elements—earth, air, fire and water—in the body and in the physical and energetic world. Once the basic elements were clear in mind and body, I turned to the fifth element, akasha. It is less apparent than the others, so my way of experiencing it was to open strongly to one of the other elements, and enter into the “field” wherein that element was expressing out from the Unconditioned. For example, sitting by the sea, I could strongly feel the water element in myself and in the ocean. But within the hot sun there on the beach is also fire element. Where is the place where they emerge together out of the Unconditioned? Parallel to this exploration has been some practice with Light and energy from the Dzogchen tradition.

Once there is a clear experience of the field, and with deep intention to purify old karma or the present physical or emotional distortion for the highest good of all beings, I enter into that field. The possibilities shimmer; I can find no other way to say it. Each is seen as it unravels into the mundane world we inhabit, and the results of that unraveling, both wholesome and unwholesome, are also seen. I find a place of choice, a place where the karma can back onto itself and dissolve. It is the place Aaron speaks of when he says, “That which is aware of anger is not angry. That which is aware of fear is not afraid.” Yet it goes a step further than just this awareness. It involves responsibility and choice, and letting go of an eternity of conditioning, right here in this moment.

As a simple example, recently certain conditions brought up the experience of anger. I saw the conditioning there and previously would have just sat quietly until the anger dissolved, or perhaps worked with the Seven-Branch Prayer. That day I decided to take it into the akashic field. In meditation awareness entered a time/place (since all time is simultaneous I still can’t explain this seeming paradox) before there was anger in this stream of consciousness about such condi-

tions, and was able to reflect it back to the present consciousness, which then seemed to instantly shift into a place of openheartedness and non-anger. It seemed as simple as that. Anger with those conditions has not repeated itself.

I am just learning about this, and far from an expert. But after two years of working with it, it feels like time to offer it out as we have done this year with the Venture Fourth program participants and some others of you.

If pursuing Aaron’s teaching on this interests you, go to the Deep Spring main site. <http://deepspring.org/>. Under “archives” type in “akashic field” and you will find many transcripts from Aaron with reference to it or focus upon it.

As a final item of interest. I’m delighted to inform you of the publication of Aaron’s and my newest book, *The Aaron/Q’uo Dialogues: An Extraordinary Conversation between Two Spiritual Guides*, released Dec. 6, 2011 by North Atlantic Books. This book is co-channeled over a ten-year period with my dear friend Carla Rueckert, with Aaron and Q’uo in dialogue. Carla is best known for her channeling of The Law of One, also called The Ra Material. She lives in Anchorage, Kentucky. From a reviewer, “The Aaron-Q’uo Dialogues shows how fear—fear of being too human, fear of death and dying, fear of failing to change with the times—holds us back, limiting our full potential and enjoyment of life. Addressing questions from a wide range of spiritual seekers who attended these sessions, Aaron and Q’uo answer a host of fundamental questions for living with more awareness and compassion. With warmth and humor, these conversations offer the spiritual seeker a valuable template for living a life of selflessness and spiritual peace.” The book is available from me, from Deep Spring Center, from Amazon, or at your local bookstore.

I wish each of you a blessed holiday season and pray for a new year of peace and happiness for this entire earth.

With love,
Barbara

Looking Within

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GUIDED VIPASSANA MEDITATION (excerpt)

Barbara

After the body is settled (*we began with posture and body awareness*), start the practice in various ways, but always by bringing attention to a primary object. The breath is a common one to use, especially for beginners. Begin by bringing attention to the breath, feeling it as touch at the nostril. The inhalation is cooler, and the exhalation warmer and stronger. *Touching, touching*. Know the direct experience of the breath in this way. We call this a primary object.

Other primary objects might be the touch of the hands on the lap or the touch of buttocks on chair or cushion. It might be a sound, either a strong external sound or nada, the sound of silence that is sometimes called the “cosmic om,” *hearing, hearing*. This sounds like crickets singing. It might be strong inner light, *seeing, seeing*, seeing that luminosity. Rest attention gently but firmly with this primary object. For more experienced meditators, it may be spaciousness itself, emptiness.

Soon you will observe that other objects become predominant and take the attention from the primary object. Move attention to anything that arises to predominance, like a physical sensation, thought or emotion; just note it and stay with the experience until it changes or dissolves; then return to the primary object. If it is a physical object, the sensation is noted as touch, pulsation, tingling, throbbing, pressure or however it is experienced. Stay with it until it changes or dissolves. Then return attention to the primary object.

An emotion will also stay for a while. How is it experienced in the body? What is the direct experience of joy, sadness, excitement, dullness, and other such emotions? What happens to it as you watch it?

If a thought arises, note thinking —planning, remembering, judging, whatever—and then return to the primary object since the mind is no longer holding that thought. There may be desire to return to the thought though; if so, note that as grasping or wanting.

As we watch objects arise and pass away, start to bring attention to the stillness that is right there with the arising and passing object.

It's like the ocean. The nature of the ocean is fluidity, and there's a vast stillness to it. When the wind blows or the currents are present, waves will arise. When the wind stops, the waves will settle down. Sometimes the waves are predominant and sometimes the stillness. Be with it just as it is.

Whatever arises into your experience, let it be just as it is. Sometimes it's pleasant; sometimes it's unpleasant; sometimes neutral. If it's pleasant, be aware that it's pleasant. If it's unpleasant, be aware that it's unpleasant.

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Huilai Shi, *Content Layout*
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email: rori.dsc.nl@gmail.com

3003 Washtenaw Avenue, Suite 2
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104
734-477-5848
web: deepspring.org
email: info@deepspring.org

When an object is unpleasant, there's sometimes aversion to the object and we want to push it away. You're not going to do that in this practice; there is nothing to be pushed away. But if there's a **wanting** to push, be aware of it just as tension. "I don't want this." *Tension, tension*. As the tension fades, if the earlier object is still predominant in your attention, be with it. If the object itself has also gone—for example, a brief pain in the back or the knee—feeling discomfort, unpleasant, aversion, "I don't want this," *tension, tension*. And then the tension fades, the sensation is also gone, and we move attention back to the primary object.

Sometimes the pain is still there; sometimes it's gone. Let it be just as it is. If it no longer holds your attention, come back to the breath. Sometimes a very pleasant object like joy may arise. Feeling immense joy, light, ease—*pleasant, pleasant*. And then sometimes there's a wanting to hold on to it. And wanting to hold on to it, there's also tension. So if that arises, be aware of that tension too. Can it be noted gently, with an open heart? *Tension, tension*. This noting with an open heart and without trying to change anything is the core of loving-kindness.

As it changes or dissolves, come back to the breath ... There can be an endless stream of visitors, pleasant and unpleasant body sensations, pleasant and unpleasant thoughts or emotions—a joy, a sadness, fear. Feelings of bliss, anger, loving kindness—each will come in its turn. Rumi has a beautiful poem in which he talks about these visitors and says, "Invite them in. They are your guests. Invite them in." Whatever is there, be present with it. (See Aaron's talk in this newsletter for the full poem.)

You may find you can move into the space beyond the objects without abandoning the objects. They will come; they will pass away. What remains? Rest in that vast spaciousness of the loving heart/mind, the vast spaciousness and ease of being ...

(pause)

Nothing to change, nothing to fix. Everything perfect, just as it is, sometimes pleasant, sometimes unpleasant. Just let it be and rest in the loving heart. Use the breath to help you center. So, as objects pass away, bring attention back to the breath (or the primary object you are using), feeling the direct physical experience of the in-breath and of the out-breath. Know if it's a short breath or a long breath, fine or coarse, aware of the texture of the breath, aware of the texture of the body and/or mind in this moment.

(pause)

Resting in spaciousness. Nothing to fix; nothing to do. Just watching this passing show.

(pause)

If at times movement stops and everything becomes still, don't try to hold to the stillness. Know it as the innate nature of your being and simply rest there with joy and ease. That stillness may be fleeting or may be come huge, filling everything. Let it be as it is.

(pause)

If suddenly there is strong restlessness or tension again, simply greet it. You can even raise your hands and bow to it. "Hello, restlessness. Hello, pain sensation. Hello, tension. Have a seat."

(pause)

This full presence with all that arises is the true meditative state, opening to that infinity of being and the ever-open heart.

(bell, bell, bell)



INTRODUCTION TO INSIGHT MEDITATION

Ann Barden (2010)

These are basic instructions for beginning Insight Meditation. I have deliberately tried to keep them simple but clear. As your own meditation practice grows and matures, you may change some things, add others, and make it unique to the body/mind with which you are practicing. That is as it should be. Most important is that you begin, and begin, and begin again. The only mistake you can possibly make is to not. You can't mess this up, because every moment you get to begin again.

Insight Meditation is about paying attention, about being present with an experience and seeing it clearly. How many times, while we are working at some task, is the mind actually longing to sit and talk with a friend? Then, when we are with that friend, the mind keeps jumping ahead to think of other tasks that are waiting to be done! Life might feel quite different if our mind was able to just be with a task, then be with a friend, then be with planning how to schedule the day, or make a grocery list, or walk the dog. Just this, then this ...

So this practice is about training the mind to do just that— be present in each moment of life. We begin the training by sitting down and closing our eyes because, in that mode, there are fewer external distractions and it easier to pay attention to each body/mind experience. Like any training process, we start with simple, basic practices. It takes a lot of voice lessons and practicing to be ready to sing at the Met, and a lot of coaching, dribbling and throwing a basketball to be an NBA player. So we begin.

Body Awareness

Find a comfortable enough posture that you can sit still, without moving, for a while. Make adjustments now, if you need to, and then commit yourself to stillness for this period. Close your eyes.

Bring your attention to the crown of your head. Notice any sensations that may be present there. Nothing needs to change, just notice. Then let attention move slowly over your face, still just noticing. You may feel some relaxation as you do this—or not. Let attention move down the neck onto the shoulders, then down the chest. Be aware of the movement of breathing. Notice the back; that it also moves with the breath. Feel clothing where it touches the body. Feel the belly, with awareness of any tension held there. Feel the weight of the body where it meets the chair or cushion. Let attention move slowly down over the thighs, the knees, the ankles, the soles of the feet. Then let attention go where it is drawn by one sensation or another, moving gently over the body and knowing it. Take a breath of gratitude for this body that brought you to wherever you are today.

Concentration

We begin training the mind by focusing our attention on one object, excluding other experiences or objects from our attention. This is called Concentration Practice and is very useful as we begin this training process. It is also useful at the beginning of each period of meditation. It brings a sense of calmness and focus to our sitting. The “object” we use is one point—at the tip of the nostrils, the upper lip, perhaps a bit further into the nose or even the back of the throat. At this point, we can feel the movement of air, the breath, as it passes. We simply notice that touch of the breath and keep our attention focused at that point, waiting for the next breath. We are not following the breath through the body, as in yoga practice. We are simply holding our attention on this one spot.

Now, distractions happen! There are other body/mind sensations—itches, pressures, thoughts, sounds—all pull our attention away from that spot that is our object of attention. We ignore them. We mentally say not now and gently return our attention to that point where we are waiting for the sensation of breath to pass. Every time attention returns to that point, the ability to concentrate is strengthened. We are training ourselves to concentrate.

Insight

Insight Practice is inclusive, as differing from the exclusive practice of Concentration. With Insight Practice, those experiences that

were distractions in Concentration become objects of attention. We begin with attention on the sensation of breath. Then, when other experiences arise, we briefly notice them and then return to the breath. The return is immediate but gentle. We are training. We want the mind to want to return to the sensation of breath. It is the “home base.” If you have ever trained a puppy, you know you get him to come through calm, assertive and gentle direction. The same quality is beneficial in this training.

Insight Practice moves back and forth. The sensation of breath is the base, but every experience that arises is briefly the object of attention. We pay attention one moment at a time to just what is happening in that moment. With practice, we will be able to let attention move from one object to another object without returning to the sensation of breath each time. In the beginning, though, it is helpful to use the return as a reminder of one point of attention and to avoid getting caught in wandering thoughts.

Noting

Meditation can seem very busy now that we are seeing all our experiences. The feeling of calm that we had in Concentration Practice is gone. Noting can be an important tool in the beginning to help us look clearly at our experience. Eventually, it will be replaced by a wordless noticing. We use a word in noting, spoken in the mind, that neutrally describes the experience. Noting is like a frame that holds the experience while we identify it without getting involved in thinking about it. It is like “stop action” in a film—a brief pause to see exactly what is there, then moving on. Some examples of neutral noting would be itching, hearing, swallowing, thinking. Sometimes, we may use more specific terms like planning, worrying, remembering. The terms we use are still impersonal. We don’t say “I am planning.” We don’t follow the experience and get caught in a thought process about it. We are still simply observing. If we do find ourselves planning or remembering, we simply note that and return to the breath.

Mindfulness

Insight Meditation is sometimes called Mindfulness Meditation because mindfulness is the quality of attention we use. It is bare attention—bare of judgment, commentary, and decision. These particular patterns of thought are named because they are so common. “I shouldn’t do that when I am meditating” (judgment), “I wonder if anyone else is doing this or noticing what I am doing” (commentary), “I am going to tell my friend about this when I see her tomorrow” (decision). Mindfulness simply observes, simply sees. If judgment, commentary, or decision arises, we note them as judging, commenting, deciding.

Feelings

Feelings, in this context, are not about emotions. Feelings are characteristics of experience that are either pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral (neither pleasant or unpleasant). Every experience has one of these characteristics associated with it. Why is it important to notice this? Because it is right there, with that characteristic, that reactivity arises. When an experience is pleasant, we want

it to continue. When an experience is unpleasant, we want it to stop! That wanting can be very strong and can lead us to some unskillful and even unwholesome speech or action that we may later regret. When we note or notice the pleasant or unpleasant quality, we have, in that moment, the opportunity to put a wedge of mindfulness in between the experience and our reaction to it. We then have time to respond more carefully and thoughtfully. This is a powerful daily-life practice as well as a meditation practice.

This is a bare beginning for what I hope will be a life-long practice for you. To support that practice, look for books to read, places to go and sit in silence with others, classes or lectures to attend, and eventually meditation retreats for deeper practice over several days. Most important is a friend, a spiritual friend, with whom you can talk about your meditation experiences and what you are learning. See it for yourself!

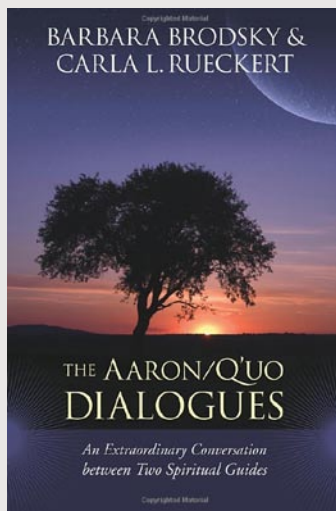


(continued from page 1)

slap it and kill it. You can brush it off, or you can let it bite. I'm not saying you *should* let it bite you; the point here is simply you have a free will choice, to flow with the eons of conditioning or to make a different choice that is not just in service to the self but service to all beings, with awareness of the needs of all beings and compassion for that hungry fly. It's compassionate to brush it off and say, "No, you may not eat me. Go eat elsewhere." But perhaps you don't have to kill it.

Often by the time you reach human form, there's anger involved in this movement to protect the self, even hatred of anything that would assail you. To quote the Buddha, "Hatred never resolves hatred. Only love will resolve hatred." This is what you have the opportunity to learn in a human incarnation: how to love. When you are pushed into a corner, and seemingly attacked, how do you hold a space of loving-kindness? Love does not mean you let the enemy kill you. It's not kind to let somebody kill you. He or she finds a lot of unwholesome karma in killing you. It's kind to say no. But what says no, fear and hatred, or kindness? How does one say no with kindness?

So much of your human experiences are about learning how to respond with kindness, even when something is seemingly attacking you, disturbing you or creating discomfort. Herein is the expression of free will. In the manifestation of that free will is the bringing forth of light, of your true inner light, which has the capacity literally to shift the whole world. There's a song out there, "If everyone lit just one little candle ..." Each of you is that candle hidden in the dark. Are you going to allow its light to be



The Aaron/Q'uo Dialogues: An Extraordinary Conversation between Two Spiritual Guides

Barbara Brodsky and Carla Rueckert

Available in December, this book offers the teachings of the dialogues between Aaron and Q'uo provided from a "positive channeling" or "positive polarity" perspective. These conversations and responses to the questions of spiritual seekers present at the sessions reveal direction for living with more awareness and compassion. With warmth and humor, these conversations offer the spiritual seeker a valuable template for living a life of selflessness and spiritual peace.

seen? Or are you going to keep it dark? It's your choice. It is so easy to go with the habits of thousands of years and keep the light dimmed. To shine your light forth requires real effort and presence, because everything in your history is saying, "Close it up!"

You come into the human experience with habitual patterns of thousands of years, as humans and all that you were before you were human. There is, for each of you, a lifetime of awakening. This is not necessarily the final awakening, the final liberation, but it is an awakening of awareness of your human capacity for choice. You may choose for the highest good of all beings or only for the self. You may choose from the perspective of anger, hatred, and oppression, or from the perspective of loving-kindness. The force of habit is strong. It takes a lot of work to overcome those habits of fear, greed and self-centeredness. First comes the awakening into choice, and only then, the development of increasingly loving choice.

We do an exercise sometimes where we have people move into pairs. One person pushes. The other person sits with eyes closed, experiencing that push, experiencing the contraction that arises when you are pushed. *Tension, tension*. And aware, just because this object of contraction, of tension, of discomfort, has arisen

What do you do when the world pushes at you and creates discomfort? Can you go against eons of conditioning and choose kindness?

does not mean you must act it out by withdrawal or aggression. What do you do when the world pushes at you and creates discomfort? Can you go against eons of conditioning and choose kindness?

So the awakening is about the awakening into the truth that you do have free will, that you do have choice, and no matter how strong the conditioning is, to pull back or to surge forth and attack, you do not have to do that. You are an awake, radiant, divine being, and the free will choice to manifest and transmit light is always there.

Barbara was reading an interesting book last week, a work of fiction but very beautifully written as though it were a true story and based on true stories. An interesting title, *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society*. It's fiction, but the basic story is real, of people on the Isle of Guernsey off the coast of England during World War II, and the German occupation there. It tells how certain individuals related to occupation with hatred and fear and some with the ability to say no with compassion and to see the humanity of the conquerors. I'm not saying without fear, but not to become slaves of that hatred. It tells how some of them were able to save others' lives. How people in concentra-

tion camps were able to save others' lives by holding the enemy in their hearts as well as their comrades in the camp, and by not being swept away by hatred.

There are stories that come out of those years, not just in this book but also in other places, about the power of love to choose for the highest good, and the transformative power of love. Fortunately, you are not living in the time and place when you are likely to be imprisoned in concentration camps. But there is constantly "the enemy" around you, terrorists crashing airplanes into buildings, criminals on the street that would attack you. And on a smaller level, the small fly who would bite you. It doesn't matter what scope it is; how do you respond?

There are stories of incredible bravery that came out of the attack on September 11, ten years ago: people who, instead of fleeing to save their own lives, went back in and carried others out of burning buildings. People did this at great risk to themselves. This is the beauty of the human heart. So many of you doubt your capacity for that kind of courage and love, but it is within each of you, the possibility of love, wisdom, and courage.

And so we practice. You practice each morning on your cushion. You come to a retreat and you practice. You simply close your eyes and sit, and you experience the small unpleasanties that arise in the body and in the mind. Feeling body pain, feeling confusion, experiencing the mind that is agitated. The emotions of anger, fear, and so forth will arise. They will all come. You know they will come. To quote Rumi:

The Guest House by Rumi
translated by Coleman Barks, from *The Essential Rumi*,
(San Francisco, Harper San Francisco) 1995, p. 109.

This human being is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing,
and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.

So your practice is not about stopping these emotions, but changing the response to them. It is literally the practice of how to transform the habitual patterns of eons, changing the karma, literally, from being the one who slaps and reacts to finding that voice that says, "No, I don't have to be reactive in this moment." You begin to know, "Right here with fear, with hatred, with impatience, is love. My highest intention is to manifest that loving kindness in the world, and thereby to transform myself and my own karma, and to transform the world."

It takes enormous dedication to sit day after day after day with this stream of catalyst pouring down on you, and to hold your heart open and trust deeply in the dhamma: "There is liberation from this suffering, and I have the capacity as a human to manifest this liberation, for myself and for others."

Your practice is not about stopping these emotions, but changing the response to them.

The bodhisattva vow says, "I will save all beings from suffering." How do you save all beings when you can't even save yourself? But each time you work within yourself to transform the old habits of reactivity to negative experience, you bring that possibility more into fruition in the world. If the room was completely dark and one person lit a small candle, it would remind others that they could light a candle. After awhile there are millions of candles. What if nobody ever lit that first candle? What if they said, "Well, it's just dark and I'm going to have to resign myself to darkness forever"?

These habitual patterns run deep in you, so the work is not easy. But all of you have had the success of seeing that when you are present with what arises in your experience, and hold it in kindness, there is freedom. This is the heart of what I teach. Most of you have read my book, *Presence, Kindness, and Freedom*, named because that's it: when you're present with an attitude of kindness, there's freedom. Freedom in small increments, yes; not immediate total freedom. But it's got to start somewhere.

Free will is a core of this. You have the capacity to observe what arises, see the contraction, negativity, and fear in it, and say, "No, I'm not going to be swept along with it."

There's a guided meditation I've done before but I think it's valuable enough to do again. Let's go rafting down a river. I've got an inner tube for each of you, and a paddle. The river flows down a mountain; we'll take a bus to the top and start high up the mountain. It flows at a good pace, but the water almost all the way down is open, sometimes swift, sometimes becoming more quiet as the river bed widens.

For the most part you are able to follow the flow of the river, just letting the current push you, but I warn you there's one place where the river has a fork. The current seems to flow directly ahead, and if you go with that current, you're going to go over a series of jagged rocks and small waterfalls. You will be bashed and bruised. It's not going to be pleasant. But if you're watchful, you'll see that there's a channel on your right and that you can paddle into it. It's not so hard when you are aware. It flows way around so instead of going steeply down, it glides gradually and takes you down to the same lower pool without any rocks or waterfalls, and without any bruises. It's a lovely, scenic journey. But the current carries you into the steep channel. You've got to be aware. Before we come to this fork I'm going to call out to you, "Here it is. Be ready."

"Okay, Aaron," you say, "thank you for warning me." Off we go down the river for about a half an hour, going through scenic ravines and quiet pools, lulled by the sun and the beauty of the scenery. Then I call out to you, "We're approaching the fork whereupon you must act and choose." "Okay, I'm ready."

So much of your human experiences are about learning how to respond with kindness, even when something is seemingly attacking you, disturbing you or creating discomfort. Herein is the expression of free will. In the manifestation of that free will is the bringing forth of light, of your true inner light, which has the capacity literally to shift the whole world.

But just at that moment, as you see a channel toward your right, a big fish jumps in front of you. "Oh, look at that! Isn't it beautiful!" Your attention is caught by it for a moment, and then it's too late to get into that side channel. Bump! Crash! Scraped elbows, bruised. You come to the bottom, all of you together. Everybody has missed that fork.

Okay. Now you know where the fork is. Are you ready to try it again? Into the bus, up we go. Put your inner tube back in the river. Let's float down again, each of you saying to yourself, "I know I won't miss it this time." But you're lost in a bit of a daydream. You've been thinking about how you're going to do it successfully this time, how good it's going to feel to get it right. Whoosh! There it went! Again, bump! Crash! Bruises, blood.

So we try it again. The third time you're certain you can't miss it. You're on to the ego; you're on to the displays like fish. But as

you come down, suddenly a companion starts to sing and you join in. And of course, there you go past it again.

How many times will it take you before finally you know the channel is coming, and you prepare yourself. You know you have a free will choice to be pulled aside by the distractions or to stay alert and not be pulled by that current of habit, but to choose in a much wiser and compassionate way. This time you prepare, stay present, paddle your boat into this side channel, and drift down this lovely waterway.

We go up one more time. This next time it's easier. You've done it once. You know how it feels. You're ready for it. At that point where the river pushes you, instead of pushing back you simply note, "Time to swerve. Time not to react and push back but simply to choose a different direction," and off you go down the side channel. After a dozen more times down the river, you don't even think of going down that steep waterfall; it's simply no longer an option. It doesn't pull to you.

Your life is like that. Today some of you have reflected on the things that push at you, the places where you get caught and why you get caught. Some of you have looked at the opportunity for free will choice to regard that pull and say, "No, I do not choose that." At first the choice may be made from fear, but after a while, it's made from compassion for this human self that doesn't wish to be bruised and bloodied on the rocks. Why would you choose to keep being bruised and bloodied? What chooses that? Just habit, the ancient conditioning. Your dharma practice gives you a chance to transform those old reflexes, those old habitual patterns, and to choose in a much wiser and more loving way.

... (example omitted)

So you constantly have free will choice, and each choice gives you the opportunity to transform not only yourself but also the whole world. You live in a world where there is enormous hatred and fear, terrible violence, and you wonder, how can we save the world? Only by this work you do on yourselves.

Nothing is lost. No act of violence is without results; no act of kindness is without results. It's hard to trust that, I know.

You constantly come to the fork in the river, the place where you can choose the old habitual patterns or say, "No, this time I'm going to stay awake and see that there are new possibilities." At first there may not seem like big possibilities. I took you down that gentle branch of the river, but when you first missed that fork, you may simply have found you could beach your inner tube and climb down a path rather than being thrown against the rocks. It may have taken a dozen tries before you notice that there's a different fork you can take.

Each time you feel yourself pushed into the old habitual way of thinking, simply note, "Contracting" and "I have a choice. Am I going to get thrown against these rocks and cry and moan, 'Why me? Who's to blame?' Or am I going to acknowledge I had a choice, and I did not recognize that choice but let myself be swept through?" What sweeps you through? Only the habitual patterns, the patterns of eons.

The release and balancing of karma is about shifting these patterns, beginning with recognizing that they exist, and recognizing that you have the responsibility of choice to go with the patterns or not. Often they're not such sharp patterns as being thrown down a rocky waterfall. It may simply be the way you react with irritation when there's a traffic jam and you're in a hurry. Tensing, anger.

Is there anybody here who has never said to the slow driver ahead, "Get moving! Get moving!" or used stronger language? You're in your enclosed car; they don't hear you but the energy is there. Here is this person, you can see them talking on the phone, combing their hair; the light has changed; anger comes up. It's all a catalyst to remind you of your free will choice for more anger and going with that stream, or opening to compassion.

If that driver is still combing her hair—combing his hair, I don't want to be sexist, here—if he sits there combing his hair and talking on the phone, it's okay to honk your horn. Can the horn be honked with kindness and not anger? Just a gentle reminder, "Look up, the light has changed. There are people behind you." That driver may hear it as impatience, but if it's not offered as impatience, it does change the energy. It changes the energy in you so there is compassion in you. The next time anger may not even arise! You may still honk the horn!

At each juncture of the road, there are innumerable possibilities. Gradually, within your practice you begin to see the possibilities. You feel the mosquito alight on your arm, and you feel the tension ready to slap it. You breathe in and feel the sense of compassion for this hungry being seeking a meal. And you feel the compassion for you as a human being who does not choose to be that meal and is able to just gently brush it off. Why should it die just because it's hungry? But it can seek its meal elsewhere; you don't have to feed it. Or maybe you will feed it!

When someone is irate and yelling, you don't have to throw sticks and stones at him, and you don't have to turn your back and just let him abuse you. We learn how to say no from a place of compassion and kindness. It may not look much different on the surface, but it feels entirely different. "I see your pain, but you may not take your pain out on me." You can practice that a hundred times a week in small ways, silently

and inwardly, and outwardly, with your partners, your children and parents, your friends and neighbors, the people in your workplace.

... (omitted)

What is your highest intention here? Is it to be right or for harmony and loving relationship? Here we practice clear comprehension. Clear comprehension of purpose: what is your highest purpose in the moment? Clear comprehension of suitability: is what I am about to do or say appropriate to that purpose? Or am I simply acting out my old habits?

This transformation of the human from an aggressive reactive mammal into a conscious, openhearted, loving being is an act of many lifetimes, gradually taming those old habits. For many lifetimes you had no tools for that transformation of the habits, just running down the waterfall, bangs and bruises and blood, saying, "Whose fault is it now? Who can I blame?"

But now you have your dhamma practice. You have a precious tool. And it will bring you freedom from the old habits and reactivity, from the old boxes and beliefs and stories of innumerable lifetimes. The transformation that you seek for yourselves and the world is within you, so don't despair, but practice in every moment with as loving a heart as you can. And pay attention to the small changes.

Keep a spiritual journal so you can look back and see where you were five years ago, and if there has been change. Now when the spouse comes in yelling, "Why are you late?" instead of ruining the evening by yelling back, and later saying, "He's the one that ruined the evening. He's the one that yelled first." you're able to say, "I hear you're upset. You're afraid the Joneses will be angry that we're late. You don't like to be late. You don't want to offend people. I'm sorry I'm late but it was not planned. The cat got sick on the rug and it had to be cleaned up." Or simply, "I didn't pay attention to the time and I apologize. I really promise to do better in the future." What is your purpose here? Is it to be right or is it to help create harmony

through clear speech, clear speech that can only come from a clear, loving heart and intention.

In this way, we purify the karma of thousands of years, and it does not take thousands of years to purify it. One choice of a quiet, lovely stream shifts the karma and creates new opportunities so that the next time you come to a similar fork in the road, or fork in the river as it were, you're much better able to choose the loving course. Each time, it becomes easier. So practice with diligence and with love and you will find freedom from these old stories, these old myths about yourself and the world.



Oh So Dharmette!

Anonymous

AH, there is suffering in this life,
In this world;
SO, bake bread,
Make peace,
Share love,
See beauty.
Create joy-

in sun and in fog,
in song and in silence,
in mind and in heart,
in fullness and in emptiness,
in this day and in this night –

LIBERATE and CELEBRATE!

DONATIONS TO BARBARA

Barbara Brodsky is not paid a salary nor does she receive money from your donations to Deep Spring Center. Your support permits her to do full-time teaching, channeling and work on Aaron's books. You may offer your donations directly to Barbara.

Donations for Barbara may also be offered into the Roth Retirement Account started for her by sangha members. Make checks payable to: Oppenheimer custodian for Barbara Brodsky Roth IRA. Contributions can be sent to: Oppenheimer & Co. Inc. / Attn: Gary Austin, 301 E. Liberty Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48104 800-423-7491 or 734-747-8040



President's Letter

Lisa Zucker

Dear Ones,

It is my joy to be writing my first letter to you as president of Deep Spring's Board of Directors. It is my honor to serve in this way. I was chosen by the Board in September to take on this position and hope to serve the Sangha and the organization well.

I would like to thank Sherry Hansen for serving on the Board for the past three years, the last two in the critical role of treasurer. Her determination, expertise and commitment to DSC have provided a bedrock for the Board. You will be missed, Sherry.

I also want to thank Tom Slank, who served as president last year. His steadfastness, wisdom, and ease are a welcome addition when dealing with the difficult issues that the Board has had to address. Tom has graciously transitioned to the role of treasurer. Thank you, Tom!

Lastly, a very warm welcome to Tony Rome, for coming onto the DSC Board: we are glad to have you!

In terms of DSC finances, we remain in the red. Although it is a Board priority, the Board cannot fix it. We hope that, as a Sangha, DSC will continue to cultivate activities that remind people of the value of our connections, which will then increase support for the Sangha—not just financially but also in terms of volunteer efforts. We are truly blessed to be a part of Deep Spring Center, this rich, loving and supportive community, sharing the path of the Dharma.

As a result of one great event that took place this fall, DSC's first Silent Auction, our finances are now on an upward swing. We were able to net over \$2,000 towards DSC's bottom line. I would like to personally thank the Silent Auction Committee—Lalita Doke, Bilha Birma-Rivlin, and Kay Mahan—as well as Board members Sherry Hansen, Tom Slank, and myself for stepping up to this task and making this event such a success.

The Silent Auction Committee's intentions were two-fold. First, to raise some money, and second, to put some fun into the fundraiser. As the auction donation coordinator, my heart opened to see the generosity and love that came from so many of you in the form of auction donations ... services such as massages, home-cooked meals, consultations, jewelry, photos and paintings, a flash drive with dharma talks ... each of you looking into your heart and giving from this space. For more on the auction, and future planning for fundraising, see the Auction article in this newsletter.

The Board would also like to thank Tana Dean, our office manager, for her efforts. Tana's expertise allowed us to put the Silent Auction onto the DSC website and create the catalog of donations, which was updated daily. Tana has also put Deep Spring on Facebook and Twitter. New requests for information about classes and our DSC offerings arrive every day. Stop by the office at DSC during the week from 11 a.m. – 4 p.m. and say hello to her.

Fall classes have begun and are well-attended. Beginning Insight Meditation classes are being taught at both Rec and Ed and also at DSC; a variety of other classes are being offered as well. Barbara, Aaron and Anna Marie Henrich are teaching two sections of a class based on Barbara's book, Cosmic Healing. Many of those attending are new to Deep Spring. David Lawson and Ann Barden continue teaching their classes to advanced students, and Peg Tappe and Mary Grannan are teaching a Level 2 class at DSC. Susan Weir is leading the Teachers in Training. Introductions to insight meditation are also provided on half days every other month. A plethora of good dharma!

Meditation sittings continue to be held at DSC every Sunday morning from 10 a.m. until 11:30 a.m., with an hour-long sitting and a half hour of sharing. Meditation sessions (no instruction) are also available on Tuesday and Friday mornings at DSC from 6:30 a.m. – 7:15 a.m. All are welcome to attend these sits. As many go out for a meal afterward, it is a nice time to connect socially.

Can we envision a healthy organization for the year ahead, one that is thriving—with active participation in classes, sittings, retreats, and social events? One where people are committed to volunteering, be it on a committee or for a few hours in the office each week or month? The newsletter and website are good places to start looking for opportunities to join in.

A huge thank you is extended to those who devote hours of their time to the Newsletter, the Deep Spring Archives, the Retreat Committee, the Teachers, the Board and others. Please call or email lisazucker27@gmail.com or any other Board or committee member to

inquire about helping out.

And, of course, your questions and comments are always welcome. Please contact me or other Board members to let us know what is on your mind.

Finally, you will shortly be receiving the DSC end-of-year fundraising letter. Please look into your hearts and reflect upon how Deep Spring affects your life—and give generously. Consider a monthly donation. You can donate online. Let's put Deep Spring in the black before 2012!

May you be happy!

With deep gratitude and love,
Lisa Zucker



Retreat Committee News

The retreat committee gathered at Mary and Terry Gliedts' home for a potluck dinner in August. We had a lively discussion about new ideas for retreats and then selected managers for the retreats being held in the upcoming year. We welcome Adriana Medina, who volunteered to help manage the Spring retreat (March 16-18, 2012) at the Steiner house. Jan Eveswell, who managed the Steiner retreat for several years, resigned because of some health concerns. We will miss her enthusiasm and retreat managing expertise. Thanks for being a part of the committee, Jan.

The Fall Vipassana Retreat was held at the Howell Nature Center. There were 19 retreatants registered, with two unable to attend. It was a wonderful mix of people: members of DSC and first timers who found us online. Six retreatants also attend David Lawson's Thursday class and six are members of Barbara's Cosmic Healing class. Our teachers—Barbara Brodsky, John Orr, and Aaron—led us through a series of instructions that began with watching the breath and watching objects, to watching objects dissolve and then merging with the space that the object had once occupied. In the process, we also watched how the sense of self solidified or dissolved. John suggested noting the sense of the solid self as *selfing, selfing*. At the closing circle, retreatants shared openly and honestly from their hearts, and we felt the deep interconnection of love that we and our teachers had created. Diana and Neil Cramer managed the retreat and kept it running seamlessly. The glorious autumn weather capped a rich

experience for us all.

Following are three upcoming meditation retreat opportunities for 2012.

Spring Vipassana Retreat at the Steiner House in Ann Arbor: March 16-18, 2012.

Designed for first time retreatants, beginners, and those who want to work on meditation basics. It will be led by Deep Spring teachers. Retreatants have the opportunity to commute or to stay in a single or double room.

No-Frills Retreat at the Howell Nature Center: April 13-15, 2012.

Held in a center surrounded by natural beauty. Since there is no teacher, retreatants are required to have a stable practice and to have attended at least three teacher-led residential retreats, or receive permission from a DSC teacher. Retreatants share responsibilities for providing meals.

June Retreat at Emrich: June 16-22 or June 16-18, 2012.

An opportunity to experience a longer retreat for 6 days or choose the 3-day retreat. Camp-like atmosphere adjacent to a state park; hiking and swimming available. Tenting is an option. Teachers will be Barbara Brodsky, John Orr, and Aaron.

THE WORK

of Deep Spring Center (DSC), a nonprofit 501(c)3 tax exempt organization, is supported by your donations. Your contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. Make checks for donations, retreats and/or books payable directly to Deep Spring Center. Thank you for your help.



2011 Silent Auction

October 15, 2011 turned out to be a fun and exciting day. Deep Spring held its (first annual?) Silent Auction event at the Newport West Condo Clubhouse. Over seventy items or services were donated and put up for auction. Items ranged from hand-made crafts to fine art to beautiful jewelry to chauffeur, massage, and many other services—all donated by Sangha members and friends. Live entertainment was provided by Craig Brann and his band Bliss, and everyone enjoyed delicious food. About 50 – 60 people attended and had a good time looking at everything that was offered, bidding on what they liked. But what stood out most of all was the conversation and hugs shared by Deep Spring loved ones at a fun get-together. Some old friendships renewed and new ones begun. Sincere and loving thanks are due to many, many people who contributed hours of time and hard work to help make the event a success. Over a dozen people worked on the Silent Auction, but special thanks go out to Susan and Lou Weir for giving us access to the Newport West Clubhouse and to Sherry Hansen and Kay Mahan for taking care of all the food. Great work, Sherry and Kay! It was a fun social event that also turned a tidy profit for the center. Many are interested in making this an annual event. The idea of having a less formal spring rummage sale has also been suggested. If you're one of the people who enjoyed the Silent Auction and would like to help with the planning for next time, or with planning for the rummage sale, contact Tom Slank at thomasslank@yahoo.com. Thanks to Tony Romo for the photographs.



Bliss



Thanks to Tony Romo for the photographs



Deep Spring Around the World

Roann Altman

Deep Spring Center’s presence on the web has turned out to be a marvelous tool for attracting people interested in Barbara and Aaron’s work. One such person who found us years ago is Huilai Shi—from China. Huilai (wee lie)has been very active the past few years at DSC through her work as layout editor of this newsletter—and for this we are eternally grateful.

I, personally, am extremely grateful to Huilai for the hospitality she showed me on my recent trip to China. Huilai lives in a new city—Suzhou Industrial Park (though Suzhou Garden Park, the name given by China Railways, is a much more appropriate name)—outside the ancient city of Suzhou, northwest of Shanghai. I was thrilled to meet Huilai, as all of our work had been done electronically.

Huilai was a wonderful host for my day-long visit. She picked me up at the train station and showed me all around her beautiful city. She took me to Suzhou, where her charming assistant, Qiuya Ma, showed me all the sites in the canal city of Suzhou. All three of us then went to lunch.

I was delighted to have this opportunity to get to know Huilai. She is warm and caring: a perfect match for Deep Spring. She has been reading *Cosmic Healing* and recently joined the open Aaron night via Skype. I hope someday many of you will be able to meet Huilai at one of the DSC retreats. (She is often in the U.S. visiting her husband Zhongjie, who is an assistant professor at University of North Carolina at Charlotte teaching architecture. That’s some commuter marriage!)

In China, Huilai is a landscape architect and runs a fast-growing business that keeps her extremely busy. She is very interested in networking with landscape architects in the U.S., so if you know any, please get in touch with her at hshi@future-polis.com.

On behalf of all of us at Deep Spring Center, Huilai, thank you for all your hard work on the DSC newsletter. Please come visit us soon.



DEEP SPRING CENTER’S mission and goals are to:

- offer non-denominational spiritual teachings on non-duality
- teach and support the deepening of awareness on non-duality and related topics through the practice of meditation
- sponsor discussion groups, classes, retreats and workshops designed to provide support for spiritual growth and to further the teachings
- publish and distribute materials concerning these teachings
- foster a community of individuals interested in and practicing these teachings
- expand and redefine our specific teachings always with spiritual focus, into directions the teachings themselves lead.

Newsletter

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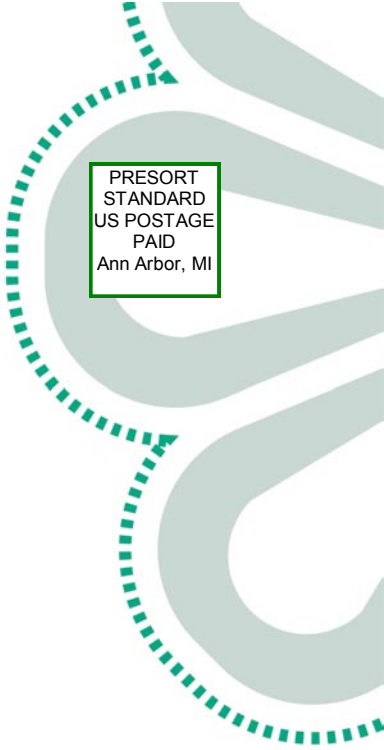
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3003 Washtenaw Ave., Ste. 2
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Aaron's Closing Thought

Now you have your *dhamma* practice. You have a precious tool. And it will bring you freedom from the old habits and reactivity, from the old boxes and beliefs and stories of innumerable lifetimes. The transformation that you seek for yourselves and the world is within you, so don't despair, but practice in every moment with as loving a heart as you can.

~ Aaron