

Upcoming Events

Meditation in Everyday Life

Level 1 Class April 8-May 27 2009

Wednesdays 6-8 pm. 8 weeks, \$160.
Basic instruction in calm-abiding meditation, mindfulness and compassion practices, discussion and talks on Buddhist psychology. Class size is limited.

April 11 - One day Meditation retreat

for those with experience in Shamatha meditation. Details upon request.

May (TBD) - Internet Marketing Workshop for healing arts practitioners.

Call Ker at 349-0595 for information & registration or check the Calendar page at www.ClearHeartCounseling.com

The Doorknob Gazette is available at my office, by mail, and at:

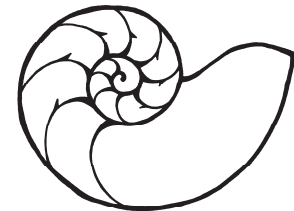
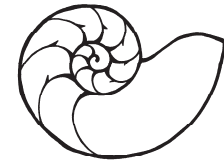
- Dr. Arthur Ticknor, DC Chiropractor
1245 Charnelton Street, Suite 7
- Dr. Virginia Oram, ND Naturopath
400 E. 2nd Avenue, Suite 105
- Coleen Stevenson, LMT, Bowen work
2401 River Road, Suite 102
- Tamarack Wellness Center
3575 Donald Street
- Acupuncture For the People
2833 Willamette St. Suite E
- Hazel Courtman, LMT
2691 McMillan Street
- Dr. Barbara Robertson, DC
A Healing Space, 380 W. 3rd

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Address Correction Requested



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*...when I realize it's just a voice,
that it has no substance...that it's a
habit, that what it says is not true, I
have a whole different relationship
with it. ~ Cheri Huber,
When You're Falling, Dive*

Greetings, Dear Ones...

It is popular at the moment to bemoan the state of the economy, the financial and emotional upheaval that seems to be everywhere. I find myself wondering how to make use of this in my spiritual practice, and how to use the rampant fear and anxiety to develop compassion and wisdom.

Bernard Madoff stole billions of dollars from people who trusted him. We respond in various ways to this story. Some of us think those people who gave Madoff their money were stupid, or greedy, or got what they deserved. We reject them. We reject Madoff, and feel angry with him for hurting people. Some of us grow frightened about our own money, and worried that our financial people are cheating us. We try to figure out how to keep our money safe, to hang on to it. We worry about spending or buying. Some of us couldn't care less. Those people, that amount of money? We can't relate. We barely know, maybe haven't even heard of Bernie Madoff. We aren't really noticing that stuff. Life goes on.

These are a few examples of reasonable, ordinary human responses. These, and most of our habitual responses, fall into three categories, known as the three poisons: rejecting, grasping and ignoring. That's pretty much how we humans react to our perceptions of the world. If you observe your mind closely, you will see this is true. It is also no big deal. The only problem with responding habitually is that we miss out on the real experience: the opportunity to connect deeply with ourselves and each


other.

The "poisons" are also medicine, and hold the key to their own antidotes. Each of them is a clue to how we can deepen our relationship with the world as it is, how to open our hearts. Each time we notice ourselves rejecting an experience, thinking we should be feeling differently than we are, or believing things should be happening some other way, this is our opportunity to practice patience. We could remember to bring compassion and a friendly curiosity to that moment. When we find ourselves trying to cling to and protect what we like, and hope to keep forever, this is our signal to offer up generosity, to cultivate contentment, to rest at ease. When we notice - and we do notice eventually, it is our nature to be aware - that we are in denial or ignoring what is happening around or within us, this is a chance to realize our innate wisdom, the insightful and awake qualities we carry within us, everywhere we go.

We can use these moments of aversion, attachment and ignorance to remind us to empathize and feel compassion. To fully feel how scary it is to lose all that money, how painful to have one's trust destroyed, how frightening to walk around in a bullet-proof vest because your actions caused people such pain they might want to kill you. To wonder, is it a relief to be found out and stopped? To wonder what it might be like to (perhaps) be resting in security, only to have it all fall apart in seconds.

We could allow ourselves to feel the pain of the whole situation, up to and including the pain of hoping for any kind

of security in this life, while knowing - and seeing it demonstrated - that it can't really be found. This is a difficult task. We might prefer to keep our judgment and illusion, to remove ourselves and run and hide. But we'd miss out. For these are the times we have an opportunity to connect with the deepest heart of our humanity.

Everyone is looking for the same things: happiness, peace, safety. We all want to love and be loved. We cannot hope to accomplish any of this with our minds cast down and our hearts clamped shut. We can only hope to touch these things, these common goals, by breathing in and breathing out, noticing that we are breathing and so is everyone else. We can notice our thoughts and feelings, our judgments and preferences, our stances and habits and reactions, and we can meet them with a tender, open curiosity. We can look beneath those habitual, automatic responses and wonder what it is like to be connected to all those other beings on the planet, every single one. Breathe in the suffering we each know, breathe out the wish to end suffering, and let our hearts crack open, together. As Leonard Cohen noted, that's how the light gets in. 

Ker Cleary, M.A. is a counselor in private practice in Eugene, Oregon. Trained in Contemplative Psychotherapy, she helps people discover friendship with themselves as the path to healing. For more information, call (541)349-0595 or visit www.ClearHeartCounseling.com May all beings benefit.