

Ker's Calendar of Events

December 6 - One day meditation retreat for those with some experience in Shamatha meditation. Donation/dana.

January 23-March 13 - Beginner's class in Shamatha (Calm-Abiding) Meditation.

8 weeks, Fridays 4-6pm. \$160. Meditation can help calm the mind and relax the body. May put things in perspective. People often feel happier from developing a meditation practice.


Call Ker at **349-0595** to register and for more info. Class size is limited.

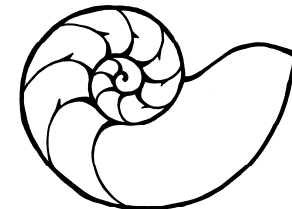
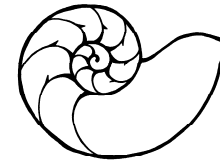
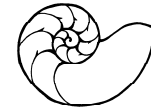
The Doorknob Gazette is available at my office, by mail, and at:

- 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
- Pam Farmer, Acupuncturist
1405 Mill 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 we begin to open we can see others and we can be there for them. But to the degree that we haven't worked with our own fear, we are going to shut down when others trigger our fear.

~ Pema Chödrön

Dear Ones,

I decided to send this out early this year.

If you are feeling stressed by upheavals in the world, if the season brings on old unwanted feelings, or if proximity to family members is hard for you, perhaps this will help. Being kind to ourselves and practicing *maitri* can help when we are triggered into old habits we'd rather not act out.

Very early, even as babies, we figure out strategies to keep us safe and alive in the face of threats to our wellbeing. Strategies vary, but eventually harden into habitual patterns of defense. We learned to shut up and shut down, disappear, get big and loud, go to anger, entertain, walk on eggshells, lose our boundaries, deny our feelings, and become excessively vigilant for subtle changes in people around us. *How we react to stress indicates our survival strategies.*

Unfortunately, at some point the strategies that kept us safe begin to backfire. We find we don't handle stress well, and our lives begin to feel unworkable. Friends, lovers and bosses complain about our behaviors, and we have trouble feeling happy, safe and connected with ourselves and others.

We try to get rid of these behaviors, rejecting them and attempting to force ourselves to react differently. This only increases our stress and sense of being attacked. We respond with - surprise! - more of our habitual survival patterns. What else can we do?

Since these patterns developed in order to protect us, any attempt to destroy them will be met with resistance. Our deepest allegiance is with survival, so ***it is impossible to alter these habits by force.*** Think about it - would you pass through a door more easily if it was opened for you with kindness, or if someone tried to shove you out from behind? These are ***survival patterns***; any

aggression towards them will be perceived (rightly) as a threat, and will only reinforce them.

The only effective path to resolving old problematic habitual patterns is a path of loving kindness, friendliness and appreciation. After all, these patterns kept us alive. We are living proof of their effectiveness. If they were going to leave easily, they wouldn't have been much use to us, would they? They deserve more than a shove out the door.

Even small events can trigger these habits. Triggered means we are suddenly acting out of an old pattern, beyond our control. When we are triggered, it is virtually impossible to change paths in midstream. However, if we practice unconditional, nonjudgmental friendliness toward ourselves on a regular basis, we become more able to resolve our triggered moments, and possibly have fewer of them.

Maitri Practice

Maitri ("my tree") is a Sanskrit word meaning "unconditional friendliness towards self which radiates out to others." Practicing *maitri* is an antidote for habitual self-hatred and fear.

Settle into a comfortable place where you will not be interrupted for 5-10 minutes and close your eyes.

To begin, imagine or recall a time when you were hurt or upset and someone showed you kindness, and cared for you in a way that was helpful. Maybe they picked you up when you scraped your knee, or hugged you when you were lonely or gave you direction when you were lost. If you can't recall a time, imagine what it would be like. What thoughts and feelings accompany this experience? What body sensations? What other sense impressions do you get: smells, sounds, visuals? Relax into the experience of receiving for a few minutes.

Next, recall or imagine a time when you showed compassion for another, a human or an animal, who was hurt or upset. How did you feel in your body? What thoughts or emotions did you experience? Let yourself deeply touch this experience of sending out kindness, and settle into it for a few minutes.

Now, complete the circle by both sending and receiving loving-kindness, compassion, *maitri* with yourself. Let yourself take it in and offer it to yourself unconditionally. You don't have to need it, or think you deserve it, or feel any particular way about it. Just let it flow through you, breathing in compassion, breathing out compassion, breathing in kindness, breathing out kindness, breathing in *maitri*, breathing out *maitri*. Notice thoughts, feelings and body sensations without judging or attaching to them. Stay with it for a few minutes.

To end, simply rest in a natural manner, spacious and peaceful. Repeat daily.

One of the most interesting side-effects of this practice is that we actually become more relaxed and comfortable human beings, able to express love and genuine compassion for others spontaneously and with ease. Isn't this what we've been trying to accomplish all along?



May this winter season bring maitri and peace to all beings. ~ Ker

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.