

Living from the Heart

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It's easy to lose heart today. The world seems more confusing and uncertain as the weeks go by, and it's easy to become discouraged and start to lose faith. Instead of expanding and offering more of ourselves, which is more our natural state, we instead find that we're contracting and withdrawing our energies and attention to others including even our love.

Recently I sat on a bench in Union Square Park, busily texting away. I was hardly aware of the man sitting close by feeding the pigeons. I then began talking on my cell paying him no mind but after I was done he spoke to me, "Hello,,,sir,,,sir" and then said something I couldn't quite make out, so I ignored him, not wanting any interruption as I again began my all important texting. When I finally was ready to attend to him on my own terms and ask what he wanted (an all too common protective strategy for a seasoned New Yorker), he grumbled something and got up and walked away. The protective stance I had taken, habituated by years of living in the city, certainly saved me from listening to another long drawn out story or being asked for something (usually money) but also caused me to miss an opportunity to connect with a fellow human being, even just for a moment and perhaps offer something of myself. In this case I'll never know which the better response was, but my attitude, perhaps closed-heartedness, prevented me from having the choice to make. Had I been more consciously living from my heart I surely would have given him the pro-

verbial time of day--perhaps that's all he was asking for. When he got up and walked away saying, "Never mind" in a somewhat angry and dejected tone, I felt a bit sad since the loss seemed to be clearly mine.

How often do we all let little opportunities pass by when we can lend a hand or perhaps open our hearts a little? Yes, we are constantly being bombarded with stimulus, especially those of us living in the city. And we do have to protect ourselves so as not to get overwhelmed. But there must be some kind of balance so that we don't completely lose ourselves and yet give when we are capable. How can we not lose heart with all that's amiss in our world and instead live from the heart more of the time?

Living from the heart is indeed a wonderful expression, as it implies consciously living in a loving way. Doing so can bring a myriad of rewards. It does take some faith and trust, and it needs to become a learned and consistent practice, a habit of sorts. If you're going to become a truly loving person it's important to learn to love unconditionally, not just when we're in the mood. We must start to live from this place where we firmly believe that loving someone can bring more love to both giver and receiver, and that there's no end to the supply of love. If we can choose once again to return to love we can allow this learning to deepen within ourselves and become a habit to live by. And once a habit's in place



we can relax into the flow of the energy of whatever the activity is: exercising and the wonderful way you feel afterwards, eating healthy and feeling a renewed vitality, and sharing ourselves and the reward of feeling our hearts open to another and the love that connects us all.

We can make this practice come alive by consciously being aware of all the opportunities around us each day to give love. In each of our own worlds we can probably think of ways to give to someone we know, to share some of our abundance with someone in need. And certainly, just by walking down the street it's easy to discover opportunities to give a smile, lend a hand, or contribute a dollar or two. All of us are capable of so much more, and by simply tuning into the love in our hearts we will know what to do. For me, sitting on a park bench will now be an experience where my awareness is expanded so that I'll be much more open to reaching out or at least being receptive to someone sitting in my circumference. You

might try reflecting on missed opportunities in your life, where you've overlooked where you could have made a difference. Instead of feeling bad, look inside yourself and try to discover what prevented you from reaching out, so that you can get to know yourself better and do it differently next time. In doing so you may end up healing something within your own heart that has pained you for some time. You may give up some resentment or judgment you've been holding onto or even forgive some aspect of yourself or another that has caused you suffering. By giving this loving kindness first to yourself it makes it easier to give to those around you.

Let's learn to live from the heart. It is certainly the one thing we can work at doing. And it may be just the thing that if we all start practicing, will transform the world as we know it. This would surely usher in a new paradigm of thinking and feeling where living from the love inside our hearts becomes the accepted way of being.



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