
TEACHING BEYOND THE PHYSICAL

FEBRUARY

THEME

Love

STORIES

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MUSIC

This month's curated playlist is all about love and allowing the power of love to radically transform our life.

FURTHER READING

Take this month's theme and lessons further with these additional books and resources.

There are certain things that mark a year and make each month meaningful in its own way. Last month, we welcomed new beginnings with the start of the year and January reminded us to embrace change as snow and colder days filled the air.

While nothing in particular really changes in regards to the weather as we come into February, February is a month when we make time for love, we show our love, and we celebrate the people in our lives that make our life more worthwhile.

As you jump into this month and give yourself permission to open your heart, remember that love takes many forms and this month isn't simply about Valentine's Day, red roses and conversation hearts. Rather, this month is an invitation to explore the places within yourself that you hold back love, whether it's towards others or yourself.

May you be reminded this month that all that love touches, it transforms and may you share your love with all those you meet, with yourself – and especially towards the people and situations that challenge you the most.

How Long Can You Keep Hate in Your Heart?

..... source unknown

One day a kindergarten teacher told each child in her class to bring in a plastic bag containing a few potatoes. Each potato would be given a name of a person that the child hates. So the number of potatoes that a child put in his or her bag would depend upon the number of people that he or she hates.

When the day came, every child brought in their bag of potatoes. Some had two potatoes, some three, while some had more than five potatoes! The teacher then instructed the children to carry the potatoes in the plastic bag with them wherever they went for one week.

Day after day passed, and the children started to complain about the unpleasant smell from the rotting potatoes in their plastic bags and how heavy their bags were.

Finally, at the end of the week, the teacher said that the game had ended. The children were relieved they wouldn't have to carry their bags of potatoes anymore.

The teacher asked her class: "How did you feel while carrying the potatoes with you for the week?"

The children let out their frustrations and started complaining about carrying the heavy and smelly potatoes with them wherever they went.

The teacher nodded and then said: "This is exactly what happens when you carry your hatred for someone inside your heart. The stench of hatred will contaminate your heart and you will carry it with you wherever you go. If you cannot tolerate the smell of rotten potatoes for just one week, can you imagine what is it like to have the stench of hatred in your heart for your lifetime?"

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & PROMPTS

OPENING CLASS

Hatred – whether it’s for others or ourselves – is a heavy burden to bear on our heart.

Is there some place your heart feels heavy? And if so, ask what it is you need to set down.

DURING CLASS

What can you feel tension? Where is your mind loud or unkind?

Where can you breathe into your heart?

CLOSING CLASS

There will be times in our life where others hurt us, let us down or are unkind to us. And when that happens, we bear hurt on our hearts. But, if in those moments, we can see past the hurt and pain – if we are willing to forgive the other person and not take on the hurt personally – we free our heart from carrying hatred.

See where you can fill your heart up with so much love it starts to pour out from you— onto your neighbor, then the person next to them, to this whole room, and then even bigger to your neighborhood, city, state – even bigger until you are showering the entire world with love.

EXTRAS

PRAYER OF LOVE

Love before me
Love at my left
Love at my right
Love above me
Love below me
Love in me
Love in my surroundings
Love to all
Love to the Universe

A Boat For All Feelings

..... source unknown (adapted and modified by Amy Fox)

Once there was an island where all the feelings and emotions lived together and one day a big storm from the sea was approaching, a storm that would overtake the entire island.

Every emotion on the island was afraid and unsure of what to do. Panic started to run around in circles. Fear curled up in a ball in the corner of her tiny hut. Even Happiness, known for her over-positive demeanor, wasn't sure what to make of the situation.

As all of this was going on, Love was busy making a boat and when she finished, she called out to all the emotions to climb aboard so that they might sail to safety.

All of the feelings began to jump in the boat with Excitement leading the way. But, something was missing, thought Love, *someone* was missing.

Love got down to see who it was and there, sitting behind a rock with his arms crossed was Ego. Love did her best to coax Ego onto the boat, but Ego shook his head from side to side and crossed his arms more intently.

"The storm is fast approached!" yelled Fear.

"We have to go right now!" echoed Panic.

"If Ego wants to stay, just leave him here!" shouted Anger.

But you see, Love couldn't just leave Ego, for she was Love and love was what she does best.

With that, she sent the other emotions on their way to safety and as they sailed away, she remained on the island with Ego where she perished in the storm.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & PROMPTS

OPENING CLASS

When we give into our ego – when we focus on our differences, what we don't like or approve of someone else – we kill our ability to love – to love others and ourselves.

Where in your life is ego running the show? And where can you soften around that noise with love?

DURING CLASS

Love doesn't have rules, standards or quotas – it just loves.

Where can you soften? Where can you accept where you are in your body, mind or spirit today?

CLOSING CLASS

Think of someone you care about a lot and as you hold the image of this person in your mind, mentally affirm to that person, "May you be happy. May you be healthy. May you be safe from harm. May all good come to you."

Next, think of someone you don't know, a stranger, a person who might be in line ahead of you at Starbucks and hold the image of this person you do not know in your minds eye as you mentally affirm to them, "May you be happy. May you be healthy. May you be safe from harm. May all good come to you."

Finally, think of someone who challenges you, the last person you'd want to send good will to and hold the image of this person in your mind as you mentally affirm to them, "May you be happy. May you be healthy. May you be safe from harm. May all good come to you."

EXTRAS

"Love is patient. Love is kind. Love does not envy or boast. It is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way. It is not irritable or resentful. It does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices with truth."

– 1 Corinthians 13:4–6

Symmetry of Kindness

..... Mark Nepo (adapted and modified by Amy Fox)

One day a train slammed into the station, injuring hundreds of passengers aboard the train. The engineer was critically hurt. People toppled over each other, bouncing across seats and against windows. There was blood and glass everywhere. One woman shimmied her way to the platform when part of the station ceiling fell, pinning her to the ground.

As she laid under the rubble, all she could think about was that this was how she was going to die. But, just then, the hands of fellow passengers began to lift pieces of the fallen ceiling off of her, freeing her from what she assumed would be a certain death.

Weeks later, after the accident, the woman wanted to thank all the people who had come to her aid and saved her life; but she did not know who to thank. After much investigating, she managed to retrieve a list of passengers who were on board the train that day. One by one, she began to look them up, asking if they had helped her.

Each person she spoke to kindly told her they hadn't helped her, but once she was with them, she began to notice things they needed help with and so she decided to help them along. She unpacked groceries for an old woman. She listened to a widower's story. She gave a single mom her umbrella on a particularly rainy day.

This went on for weeks where the woman tried to find those who helped her, only to help those whom she found.

It finally occurred to her that this was the symmetry of kindness – that we won't always know who helps us and how those acts will serve us in the future, but what we can do each day is help those we meet along the way.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & PROMPTS

OPENING CLASS

There's a saying that goes, "A little bit of kindness, goes a long way," and there's actually some truth to that. Turns out, acts of kindness benefit all those involved, both the giver and receiver.

When we practice kindness or perform an act of kindness, our bodies release serotonin and oxytocin, which help reduce anxiety and increase our level of happiness.

Where in your life, or on your mat, can you practice kindness today?

DURING CLASS

Kindness starts with yourself and we treat others in a more kind and gentle manner when we take care of ourselves.

Where can you lead with compassion?
Where can you follow with kindness?

CLOSING CLASS

Just like the woman in the story, we've all experienced acts of kindness, sometimes in the most unexpected ways. And if we can remember how those moments made us feel, how something as simple as a smile from a stranger transformed a difficult day, we can continue the chain of events and inspire someone else.

Where this week can you hold the door for a stranger, pay for the next customer's cup of coffee, or send a loving text to someone you haven't talked to in a while?

EXTRAS

"How do we change the world? One random act of kindness at a time."
– Morgan Freeman

What is Compassion?

..... source unknown

One day, a young disciple came to ask his Zen teacher, "Master, what is compassion?"

The Zen Master thought for a moment and then posed a question to the student's question: "An old man was begging at the corner of a busy street. First an old woman passed him by. She was infuriated by the beggar's poverty and so she gave him a single gold coin.

A few hours passed and a merchant overheard some men talking about the poor beggar and how sad his lot in life was. The merchant considered his own life, what good fortune he had, and since he had so much and the beggar so little, the Merchant decided to give five gold coins to the beggar. After placing the five gold coins in the beggar's hands, he walked away smugly, with his head high and a haughty smile on his face.

Then, late into the day, a small boy, who had gone to collect flowers for his mother, passed the beggar. He smiled at the beggar and decided to give him one of the flowers he had collected for his mother.

Which of these individuals do you think felt the most compassion for the beggar?"

Immediately the student replied, "The Merchant, of course. Surely he gave the most and therefore had the most compassion."

"No," said the Master, "You see, the Merchant acted out of pride, feeling that he was better than the beggar. The old lady, she acted out of pity, feeling a sense of obligation to 'do the right thing.' But, the boy, he was the one who demonstrated real compassion and it was with a deeper sense of connection that he gave."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & PROMPTS

OPENING CLASS

Compassion is a far greater and nobler a thing than pity or pride. Pity has its roots in fear, pride has its roots in ego; but compassion? It simply says, "I see you and you see me."

Where, as you arrive on your mat, can you offer compassion?

DURING CLASS

Place your hand on your heart in acknowledgment of the difficulty you are facing in this moment. Imagine the placing of the hand on the heart as symbolic of opening the heart to compassion or sending healing to the hurt place inside.

CLOSING CLASS

When we allow ourselves to care for ourselves and others, it is a profound act of kindness that refills the heart, energizes the body, and nourishes the soul. In that moment of opening our hearts to our self and others, we recognize the immense healing power of compassion and are able to better reconnect with life and love.

May you be free from suffering.

May your heart be filled with compassion.

EXTRAS

"If you want to be happy, practice compassion."

– The Dalai Lama

The Safe

..... source unknown (adapted and modified by Amy Fox)

Once upon a time there was a greedy, rich man who hired a well-known mathematician. The rich man wanted the mathematician to find the best way for him to make the greatest profit in everything he did. You see, the rich man was building a big safe and his greatest dream was to fill the safe with gold and jewels.

The mathematician worked on this task for months before finally coming to the rich man and telling him that he had found a solution; but the rich man was going away on a long journey the next day and didn't have time to listen to the mathematician's solution. He told the mathematician to take care of it while he was away and he promised to double his wages if he did so.

When the rich man returned months later, he was furious – all of his possessions were gone! He demanded to see the mathematician.

The mathematician calmly explained, "For months I analyzed how a rich man could gain the maximum benefit, but the solution was always limited because there is a limit to how much one man can do by himself. Then, I discovered that the key to maximizing gain was to help others in the process."

The rich man was incensed, having lost all his prized possessions, and stormed off. As he walked away with a heavy heart, several neighbors came over asking him what was the matter.

You see, these neighbors had been helped when the mathematician shared the rich man's fortune and they felt so indebted and grateful that they offered the hospitality of their houses, the clothes off their back, food and drink – anything he needed, they were willing to give.

Over the next few days, the rich man saw the results of what the mathematician had calculated. Wherever he went, he was received with great honor, and everyone was willing to help him in any way that they could. He realized that in giving, he received so much more in return.

In time, and with the help of his new-found friends, the rich man set up a flourishing business, but no longer did the rich man keep his wealth guarded in a safe. Instead, he shared out his fortune among his hundreds of friends, whose hearts he had converted into the most grateful and fruitful of safes.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & PROMPTS

OPENING CLASS

When we are in service, when we are helping others, we always end up bettering ourselves and enriching our lives.

Who can you dedicate your practice to today? Maybe it's someone you love like your kids or your husband or wife. Maybe it's someone you know is struggling and is in need of support. And if no one comes to mind, perhaps you can hold a broader intention for all those who are suffering.

DURING CLASS

Yoga is an inclusive practice and yoga literally means "to yoke" – to unite, to bring together. And it's the reminder that all beings deserve non-suffering and happiness.

Where can you send love? Where can you extend your light to others who need it today?

CLOSING CLASS

When we give, we experience a paradigm shift, a shift in our perception and a broadening of our heart, because instead of thinking about things we want or needs we have, we can recognize the needs and wants of another individual.

Where this week can you give?

EXTRAS

"Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them, humanity cannot survive."

– The Dalai Lama

FURTHER READING

For changing your life with kindness and compassion

[The Force of Kindness](#) by Sharon Salzberg

For deepening your understanding of healing

[The Heart of Healing](#) by Regina Rosenthal, PT, MA

For recognizing love and living with love

[Loveability](#) by Robert Holden, Ph.D.

For understanding the science of love

[Love 2.0](#) by Barbara L. Fredrickson, Ph.D.