

Buddhist Perspectives on Parker Palmer's Five Habits of the Heart:

1) An understanding that we are all in this together

There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones notices: When this is, that is. From the arising of this comes the arising of that. When this isn't, that isn't. From the cessation of this comes the cessation of that.

Angutarra Nikaya

If I am related to the sun and moon as you are related to the sun and moon, then how is it possible to say that I am here and you are there when we are always related? It's just your mind that says you are here and I am there, that's all. Originally, we are one with everything.

--Shunryu Suzuki, Not Always So.

The Buddhist doctrine of interdependence was expressed beautifully by a certain Christian minister:

We must all learn to live together as brothers or we will perish together as fools. We are tied together in the single garment of destiny, caught in an inescapable network of mutuality. And whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly. For some strange reason I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. And you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be.

--Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Reflection and inquiry:

How does being woven together with others become apparent in your daily life? How do you express your individuality in light of the fact that you are one with all beings? With this understanding as a foundation for your life, how might you choose to live?

2) An appreciation of the value of 'otherness'

The offspring of Buddha have thoroughly realized that distinctions are merely mundane conventions.

--Avatamsaka Sutra

Let none deceive another, or despise any being in any state. Let none through anger or ill-will wish harm upon another. Even as a mother protects with her life her only child, so with a boundless heart should one cherish all living beings – radiating kindness over the entire world, spreading upwards to the skies, and downwards to the depths, outwards and unbounded, freed from hatred and ill-will. Whether standing or walking, seated or lying down, one should sustain this recollection. This is said to be the sublime abiding.

--Sutta Nipata

Reflection and inquiry:

When you encounter another person, imagine that you are in their shoes and try to feel what it would be like to be that person. What leads us to define someone as “not

like me”? What are we missing when we do not see the value in things other than the familiar? How does this type of reflection affect your relations with others?

3) An ability to hold tension in life-giving ways

In each situation that you are faced with, just consider carefully, do anything which will bring even a little benefit to the person who is before you, without concern for what people will think of you.

--Eihei Dōgen, Shōbōgenzō Zuimonki

When someone whom I've assisted and in whom I place great hope inflicts upon me extremely bad harm, I shall view them that one as my supreme spiritual friend.

--Lagri Thag-pa Dorge Senge, Thought Transformation in 8 Stanzas

What are wholesome intentions? They are the intention of generosity, the intention of loving-kindness, and the intention of compassion. These are called wholesome intentions.

--Majjhima Nikaya

Reflection and inquiry:

How do we listen calmly to another's position that we strongly disagree with? How do we respond and state our own position in words that would be helpful in this situation? Can we “agree to disagree” without poisoning the relationship?

4) A sense of personal voice and agency

Come, Kalamas. Do not go upon what has been acquired by repeated hearing; nor upon tradition; nor upon rumor; nor upon what is in a scripture; nor upon surmise; nor upon an axiom; nor upon another's seeming ability; nor upon the consideration “The monk is our teacher.” Kalamas, when you yourselves know: ‘These things are good; these things are not blamable; these things are praised by the wise; undertaken and observed, these things lead to benefit and happiness’, enter on and abide in them.

--Anguttara Nikaya

Meditate on slanderous words and make them into friends

That will guide you on the way of the good.

If a slander raises hate in you,

How can you manifest the wisdom and compassion of the non-born?

--Yung-chia Hsuan-chueh, The Song of Awakening

Barefoot and shirtless, enter the market

Smiling through all dirt and grime.

No immortal powers, no secret spells,

Just teach the withered trees to bloom.

The Ten Oxherding Pictures

Reflection and inquiry:

What holds us back from offering our opinions in a group? How does speaking in a truthful, beneficial and kind way create a sense of courage and well-being? Can we be self-confident without the need to dominate and to be “right”?

5) A capacity to create community

“—one may know how admirable friendship, admirable companionship, admirable camaraderie is actually the whole of the holy life. It is in dependence upon the Buddha as an admirable friend that beings subject to birth have gained release from birth, that beings subject to aging have gained release from aging, that being subject to death have gained release from death, that beings subject to sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair have gained release. It is through this line of reasoning that one may know how admirable friendship, admirable companionship, admirable camaraderie is actually the whole of the holy life.”

--Uppaddha Sutta

‘Kind speech’ means that when you see sentient beings, you arouse the heart of compassion and offer words of loving care. It is contrary to cruel or violent speech. Know that kind speech arises from the kind heart, and the kind heart from the seed of compassionate heart. Ponder the fact that kind speech is not just praising the merit of others; it has the power to turn the destiny of the nation.

--Eihei Dōgen, The Bodhisattva’s Four Methods of Guidance

Reflection and inquiry:

What do we think of when we say “community,” only people who agree with us, only persons bound together by a common goal? What are my responsibilities toward my community? How do I reflect this in my daily life?