

## **The World in which We Live**

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### **In Openness Resilience Arises**

Every day we are assaulted by news that takes our breath away, news that causes us to recoil and recede into ourselves. Although in the past people have felt that the world was coming to an end, ours is the first generations to live with the possibility that we might annihilate all life, whether it be from nuclear holocaust, global warming, pollution, or over consumption. While the planet itself feels as though it sits on a precipice, information about all the problems comes at us at such a speed, in such great quantities, it overwhelms us, dumbs us down, and finally it numbs us out.

The possibility that there may be no future is an awareness that is hard to hold. It is a possibility so painful to contemplate that we try in thousands of ways to blot it out.

The issues are so huge, it seems like we can't have a meaningful impact. It is hard to face our feelings of grief, guilt and loss so we shut down.

But the degree to which we shut down is the degree to which we are not alive. In my book, *Practical Meditation for Busy Souls*, I talked about the ways in which a mechanistic world view, individualism, consumerism and mass media have held us in a dream of separation from ourselves, each other, the planet and spirit. The world is calling on us to awaken out of this dream to come back to life in all its fullness. How do we open to the challenges facing the world and step into our role in its healing?

This is no small task, but when we open to the state of the world, we awaken, come alive and become resilient. Breathing into pain opens space for healing and deepens understandings. Breath grounds us in the present, and we find a pathway to peace, to truth, and to what needs to change. Mindfulness reveals when constriction takes hold so we can then choose to open. This opening is not a process of pushing, pulling, or quick

fixes—it is emergent. The solutions become apparent as we open and respond to the truths of our times. Meditation allows us to move out of reactivity; rather than turning away and shutting down, we expand into wholeness. As we do so, we can each find our unique response to the times.

The world sits in such a delicate balance that the acts of any one of us might tip the balance. This is a time that is full of opportunity to create ways of living that hold the promise of sustaining humanity and the planet through millennia. The choice is upon the generations alive right now—that is us, all of us.

Be mindful as you read. You may want to run energy to stay centered. Vision how you would like the world to be. It is vision that provides guidance and inspiration as we each do our part in turning the tide. After each paragraph close your eyes, breathe, and let your deep self hear. It is our deepest selves that can get us through these times. Breathe, feel yourself alive, part of this great living earth that offers us home; part of humanity in all its great diversity. Feel yourself belonging.

### **Being Present to What Is Happening in the World**

Western culture's emphasis on rational thinking has led us to act as though we are separate from one another and the rest of nature. This false dualism has wreaked havoc on the world, splitting the self from nature, from the body and from others and has allowed economic growth to be the sole indicator of success. It has allowed colonization of indigenous people first inside Europe and then in the rest of the world. It has allowed the creation of a system where some were slaves and some owners.

There is nothing excluded in wholeness, but working in beta linear consciousness, modern economists have coined a term that allows economic activity to be split off from its consequences. "Externalities" refer to the "side effects" of making profit in any particular venture. Externalities are not included in calculations of profit and loss, whether they are environmental or human costs. It is a fancy term used to avoid

responsibility. As long as we think of the following consequences as “externalities,” we abdicate our ability to secure the future.

Only in wholeness can we act with integrity. People brought about the following conditions, but it is not too late to turn the tide. People make history; in wholeness we can act with integrity to remake it.

Some say that the trees are the lungs of the earth. If externalities are counted, then just one ninety-nine-cent hamburger costs fifty-five square feet of rainforest.<sup>1</sup> Imagine standing next to a big empty football field; notice its size. Now fill it with tropical trees, and birds, and all sorts of critters. Imagine the sounds of the forest and the moisture in the air. Feel the breath of the earth. Now imagine it full of birds calling, monkeys swinging, vines growing. Now let your heart know that every single second all this life is destroyed in the process of turning forests into grassland for cattle.<sup>1</sup>

We are losing our farmlands too; it takes nature three thousand years to create the soil needed to plant a crop. Fertile lands are disappearing while the deserts grow by ten million hectares a year—about the size of 17,000 football fields!<sup>3</sup> Whether in China, Brazil or Africa, millions of plants, people and animals have lost their home to the encroaching sands.<sup>4</sup>

The coral reefs are dying, taking with them all the glittering life that makes its home there. If global warming continues, all the reefs will be dead in twenty years. Glaciers melt and the oceans rise. By the end of the century all glaciers will be gone; islands and coastline everywhere will be swallowed by the sea.<sup>5</sup>

The web of life is under assault. Species are disappearing one thousand times faster than the natural rate of extinction. The fabulous diversity of species that share this wondrous planet that gives us home is under assault: birds’ songs will never be heard again, flowers will never be seen again, and insects and whales will be gone forever. Frogs and tigers may come to live only in fairy tales. At the present rate, every year

50,000 species disappear and by the turn of this century it is estimated that half of all species will be gone.<sup>6</sup>

And humanity is not faring much better. As biological diversity is being destroyed, so is cultural diversity. Of six thousand languages currently spoken around the world, only three hundred are being taught to children. Within a generation or two, none of the people from those cultures will have a direct connection to their history.<sup>7</sup> With the languages gone, the cultures disappear. McDonald's, Nike, Coca-Cola, Sony, Microsoft, and IBM are now the most recognized names on the planet.

The current economic system concentrates wealth, a process that makes for fewer and fewer rich people and more and more poor. One-fifth of the world's population lives on less than \$1 a day.<sup>8</sup> On the other side, the richest fifth consume 84 percent of its resources.<sup>9</sup> The assets of the three richest individuals in the world are equal to those of the 48 poorest countries.<sup>10</sup> One-fifth of U.S. citizens cannot meet basic needs.<sup>11</sup> The top 1 percent in the United States owns more wealth than the bottom 94 percent combined. Compensation for CEOs has skyrocketed, while regular wages have fallen for workers. For every dollar a company worker makes, its CEO receives over \$400.<sup>12</sup> As layoffs multiply, Manpower—a temp agency—has become the biggest employer in the United States.<sup>13</sup>

In a globalized economy trillions of dollars slosh across borders daily. Investors have transformed the world into a global casino.<sup>13a</sup> Money is protected with free trade agreements while it gobbles up resources at an unprecedented rate. Growth and “progress” are used as justification for these “externalities.” The imbalance causes more and more instability as this tendency accelerates. Cancer grows in total disregard for its environment. The transnational corporations operate in the same manner. Economic globalization rests on concepts that can only hold meaning to cold, calculating linear (beta) consciousness. Economic profits for the shareholders have become the sole criteria of success. The heart has a wider view.

Two of the “externalities” that have the corporate powers-that-be frightened are peak oil and global climate change.<sup>14</sup> Either one of these trends could drastically change life as we know it. Global climate threatens mass disruptions for all life on the planet.<sup>15</sup> at the same time, we now have reached (or will in the next few years) the peak of oil production.<sup>16</sup> Until now oil production has matched the increase in demand. Those days are over. It costs more and more to extract oil because there is less and less of it. The “externalities” are crashing in on us catalyzing a domino effect, from food shortages caused by lack of fuel and oil-derived fertilizer to massive unemployment associated with an economic downturn. Without oil we cannot fuel industrial society—our culture as it is now is doomed. These two phenomena are deeply interconnected by the addiction we have to material goods and cheap energy. Dale Allen Pfeiffer, describes the predicament of our times:

Like the withdrawal symptoms endured by an addict, the effects of the coming petroleum crisis will ravage the American body politic and work necessary but painful changes in the life of the entire human community. Just as that inexorable withdrawal closes in on us, we’re acquiring a new awareness of the damage already done by the petroleum addiction itself. Peak Oil is the crisis of getting off petroleum; climate change is the almost-irreversible legacy of two hundred years of fossil fuel pollution . . .

Corruption, income inequity, narco-traffic, money-laundering, the warfare state, loss of civil liberties, imperial overstretch, racism, and the constant recourse to violence as a tool of domestic and international policy—all the ailments of the republic are interconnected. At their center is an oil economy bound to militarism by the petrodollar money system. Change that system, and the other problems become far more amenable to rational reform.<sup>17</sup>

In the name of “progress,” the self-regulating and self-healing processes of the earth and our societies have been stripped away. The earth suffers while fewer and fewer get access to more and more, and the rest of us lose what little security we had. The vast majority of people on the planet would not choose this state of affairs. The gross inequities I have described above can only be perpetuated by coercion and manipulation.

This-profit driven system maintains an awesome apparatus of propaganda which generates false needs; a legal and regulatory infrastructure with “free trade agreements” and the World Trade Organization (WTO) which now make it against the law to meet local needs if it cuts into corporate profits; and military might that is used when the first two strategies fail. It thrives on economic blackmail or plain bribery—if your livelihood is at stake, you tend to play by the rules of the game. This is as true for individuals and communities as it is for nations.

The nonmilitary arm of this profiteering has been recently revealed by John Perkins. The profiteers describe themselves as Economic Hitmen who cheat nations around the world out of huge sums of money. They funnel money from international development and aid organizations into the pockets of transnational corporations and wealthy individuals. As Perkins said, “They play a game as old as empire, but one that has taken on new and terrifying dimensions during this time of globalization.”<sup>18</sup> These players have been the means by which international finance and aid has been used to control small and developing nations. When that fails, the CIA or the military are called in to enforce the rules.

As Perkins said, the game is not new. In 1935, General Smedley D. Butler testified before a congressional committee regarding his thirty-three-year Marine Corps career:

I spent most of my time being a high-class muscle man for big business, for Wall Street and for the bankers. In short, I was a racketeer for capitalism . . . Like all members of the military profession, I never had an original thought until I left the service . . . I obeyed the orders of the higher-ups. . . . I helped make Mexico and especially Tampico safe for American oil interests in 1914. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City Bank boys to collect revenues in. I helped in the raping of half a dozen Central American republics for the benefit of Wall Street.

The record of racketeering is long. I helped purify Nicaragua for the international banking house of Brown Brothers in 1909 to 1912. I brought light to the Dominican Republic for American sugar interests in 1916. I helped get Honduras “right” for American fruit companies in 1903. In China in 1927, I helped see to it that Standard Oil

went its way unmolested. U.S. military power was used to establish the ground rules within which American business could operate.<sup>19</sup>

In the second part of the twentieth century, the game continued with new intensity. Chile, Congo, Haiti, and Guatemala, and sixteen others have had freely elected democracies that fell victim to U.S. intervention (often carried out by the CIA).<sup>20</sup> Military regimes were supported in their place. Phillip Agee, ex-CIA operative said, “There have been more than one million killed—direct victims of the United States’ harsh policies.”<sup>21</sup>

Thomas Freidman laid out the relation of militarization and globalization:

To ignore the role of military security in an era of economic and information growth is like forgetting the importance of oxygen to our breathing. . . . Indeed McDonald’s cannot flourish without MacDonalld Douglas, the designer of the U.S. Air Force F-15. And the hidden fist that keeps the world safe for Silicon Valley’s technology to flourish is called the U.S. Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps. And these fighting forces and institutions are paid for by American tax dollars.<sup>22</sup>

The costs of the global corporate agenda, which places trade and profit above human or environmental needs, have come back home to the United States as budgets for human services get cut and environmental regulations get slashed. In the United States, prisons are popping up everywhere as school budgets decrease. Police are immune to prosecution if they kill innocent people, and incarceration rates are skyrocketing despite the fact that crime has gone down. Over 1.8 million people are currently imprisoned in the United States. Our country is seen as protecting freedom but is has the highest per capita incarceration rate in the history of the world.<sup>23</sup>

Citizens are being asked to give up our rights in the name of the “war on terrorism.” Untold numbers of innocent people are detained or killed both inside the country and out in this mistaken approach toward assuring security. One month after September 11, 2001, Thich Nhat Hanh’s words spun around the Internet, appealing to our highest sensibilities:

Terror is in the human heart. We must remove this terror from the heart. Destroying the human heart, both physically and psychologically, is what we should avoid. The root of terrorism should be identified so that it can be removed. The root of terrorism is misunderstanding, hatred, and violence.

This root cannot be located by the military. Bombs and missiles cannot reach it, let alone destroy it. Only with the practice of calming and looking deeply can our insight reveal and identify this root. Only with the practice of deep listening and compassion can it be transformed and removed. . . .

Only understanding and compassion can dissolve violence and hatred. . . . Acting without understanding, acting out of hatred, violence, and fear, we help sow more terror, bringing terror to the homes of others and bringing back terror to our own homes. . . .

Everyone has the seed of awakening and insight within his or her heart. Let us help each other touch these seeds in ourselves so that everyone could have the courage to speak out.<sup>24</sup>

We can share the earth's abundance in equitable and sustainable ways that honor the natural world. The U.N. Human Development Report tells us that \$210 billion would be enough both to solve the world's most pressing environmental problems (\$140 billion) and to eradicate absolute poverty worldwide (\$70 billion).<sup>25</sup> The United States has already spent twice that in the Iraq war.<sup>26</sup> We have the money and the know-how, we just need the will.

### **The World Reflected Inside**

The pseudo-surplus of capitalism leaves us unfulfilled. Competition and advertising combine to create needs that can never be satisfied. We become enslaved by the need for more. Those of us who have credit go deeper and deeper into the hole; those of us who have jobs become afraid to leave them. Materialism itself becomes a trap.

Freedom has come to mean we can get whatever we want. But the more we have, the more we become paralyzed. We get trapped by our fear of losing what we have and build walls around our houses. We are afraid of losing our jobs for fear that we will not be able to keep those houses. In 1820 when Big Soldier, an Osage chief, politely refused to become a part of "American Civilization" he said:

I see and admire your manner of living, your good warm houses; your extensive fields of corn, your gardens, your cows, oxen, workhorses, wagons, and thousands of machines, that I know not the use of. I see that you are able to clothe yourselves even from weeds and grasses. In short, you can do almost what you choose. You whites possess the power of subduing almost every animal to your use. You are surrounded by slaves. Everything about you is in chains and you are slaves yourselves. I fear if I exchange my pursuits for yours, I too should become a slave.<sup>26</sup>

Out there, alone, fending for ourselves, we cannot afford to be disapproved of or to be exposed. Our individuality never gets expressed as we squelch anything we think or feel that is out of line. In school and work, our creativity and spontaneity never get a chance. Our values imprison us, and our fear of disapproval is the guard that keeps us in jail. We have traded in subjective autonomy for the American myth of objective autonomy. A common deception rooted in individualism is that if everyone becomes self-aware and self-responsible, then society will no longer be askew. Again the sole focus is on “me.” We need to move our attention out and become aware of what is taking place around us. Individualism is a cancer; it makes us oblivious of the relations in which we are both embedded and dependent. We have all been indoctrinated into the system.

When we relax and meditate, our natural connectedness arises and we remember our gratitude. When we remember our connectedness, we can relax into the web of life that holds us all. We can raise our voices and claim our passions.

The paradox is that the more we are able to be in deep connection with ourselves and others, the more we are able to become autonomous.

### **Holographic Life**

There is an opportunity to awaken to the possibility of transformation:  
“Awareness Is the moment when we arise with eyes encrusted from self-induced dreams of control, domination, victimization, and self-hatred to catch a dream of the divine in the face of the other.”<sup>28</sup>

When we find ourselves upset about what is taking place in the world, it is a reminder that we are, indeed, interconnected. Though we may feel isolated, overwhelmed, or disconnected from what is taking place, whether we acknowledge it or not, we are each a part of the whole and there is no escape. When we shut down, we weaken the whole. If reality is an intricate, interconnected hologram, then we cannot turn away from any one part of it without damaging its integrity.

Conversely, as we open, we facilitate the circulation of energy, making room for the self-correcting, self-regulating, healing processes intrinsic to open systems. When challenges persist, open systems either evolve or fall apart. It is truly awesome to think that by cultivating a generous heart, we not only feel better, but we impact the whole world. Even relaxation is not a private experience! Open and you heal the world—what great powers reside in each and all of us!

I started this chapter noting that relaxing without going into denial, when focused on the state of the world, is a daunting task! It is as though we are being asked to be open in the face of our torturer. This takes a gigantic heart; I have to admit, a heart bigger than I possess. The process is like working with an affirmation. You would not need an affirmation if it were already true; an affirmation simply orients you to a desirable direction. Mindfulness helps us move into openness so we can witness suffering without withdrawing and shutting down. In receptivity, we talk to the issues facing us; we do not turn our back to them, but instead we imagine the stories that might carry us through.

We are called to bear witness: to bring peace to a war zone means keeping a peaceful heart in the midst of the fire. The current times call us to step into the fire. This is an immense challenge and a great act of courage. Envisioning peace in a quiet natural setting is not such a difficult task. Envisioning peace when you are informed of the issues that are fueling war is not at all easy.

If we believe that we are victims, we abdicate our power and feel as though life happens to us. Victim mentality dwells on hopelessness, sometimes with a righteous

tinge. We have been socialized to think that we are separate, and that the source of our problems are purely external or our own fault. In either case, we are expected to solve them on our own—no wonder it is so overwhelming!

But we are not separate. We are deeply connected, and our fates are entwined. We cannot deny the devastation. The good thing is that as we feel it, we come alive to our interconnections, and we open to awesome powers. The key is to feel what is true and align with the resilience of life to turn the tide. We can call on feelings as fierce as a mother who protects her young.

Some people believe they cannot contribute to the world until they have “gotten themselves together.” Others believe that they cannot attend to themselves because the world itself is in such dire straights that it needs all of their waking attention. We cannot “get ourselves together” separate from being in the world anymore than we can help the world while ignoring our own needs. *Just as we breathe in and out, we work on the inside and we work on the outside. One cannot breathe in one direction.*

Our hearts have been torn by dissociation from the earth and one another. The most powerful way I know to heal the rupture is to come to sense our inter-being, a word that Thich Nhat Hanh uses to name our true state of interconnection and interdependence.<sup>29</sup> Meditate on interbeing: life is woven together, as we breathe out, the trees breathe in. Follow your breath into the air and through the plants. Follow the water you drink through your body and back into the body of the earth. Witness the food you eat—its growth, the soil it came from and the many hands that brought it to your table. We live interbeing with each breath. With others, contemplate interbeing and share your sensations and visions; you will gain a wealth of alternative points of reference to supplant the limited ideas we have of ourselves as isolated beings.

We have been conditioned to think there is no point in embarking on a course of action unless we know that we will be successful. The scientific rational approach instructs us to carefully inspect all ideas and not to proceed until there is no doubt and the

efficacy of the approach has been proven. All ideas are suspect until they have weathered thorough debate. The heart, however, does not function this way. It moves us to action when whatever we care about is in peril. Whether we are successful at turning the tide is not the question to be asked, for we cannot know. We only know that we have an invitation to come alive. Responding to the call that lives in our hearts, we join with millions of others; that is the gift itself.<sup>29a</sup>

Answers emerge as we walk together.

### **Signs of Hope**

Every day, people love, give birth, plant gardens, sing, dance, create, play, take time with one another, and pause in a busy schedule to watch a flight of birds. When we take the time to breathe, life pulses around and through us. Every day, people act on faith and hope. The decision to embrace life, one moment at a time, is steadily moving all of us toward the possibilities of new ways of being with one another and the earth. Signs of hope are everywhere.

This sense of a new time emerging is being felt by many. For some, it is captured by the phrase “paradigm shift,” for others it is changing the cultural dream. Recently, some have said it is the rise of creativity over control. Joanna Macy calls it the “Great Turning.” She says that a revolution is underway as people begin to realize that all of our needs can be met without destroying our world

We have the technical knowledge, the communication tools, and material resources to grow enough food, ensure clean air and water, and meet rational energy needs.

“Future generations, if there is a livable world for them, will look back at the epochal transition we are making to a life-sustaining society. And they may well call this the time of the Great Turning. It is happening now. Whether or not it is recognized by the corporate-controlled media, the Great Turning is a reality. Although we cannot know yet if it will take hold in time for humans and other complex life forms to survive, we can know that it is under way. And it is gaining momentum, through the actions of countless

individuals and groups around the world. To see this as the larger context of our lives clears our vision and summons our courage.”<sup>30</sup>

There are three dimensions of this Great Turning: The first is holding actions that slow destruction of the earth and her peoples, the second is making structural analysis and beginning the creation of life sustaining institutions, and the third is a profound transformation of consciousness.

Actions to slow the damage to Earth and its beings are perhaps the most visible expression of the Great Turning. These activities include all the political, legislative, and legal work required to reduce destruction, as well as direct actions—blockades, boycotts, civil disobedience, and other forms of refusal.

Around the globe, people are resisting destruction: Mothers who lose children to violence organize to provide solace to one another, whether in Detroit or Buenos Aires; people band together to defend forests from untrammled cutting to keep farmland from being flooded; and to protect the earth from being scarred by toxins, coal mines or nuclear waste. In cities and towns across the country, people working for environmental justice are planting grasses to clean toxic soil, documenting the use of lead in paints and pipes of local schools and battling waves and winds to clean birds and wildlife suffocated by oil spills. In India, half a million farmers protested against Cargill to protect their traditional way of saving seed from one year to the next—an ancestral practice that secures each generation’s survival.<sup>31</sup>

Women around the world hold vigils for peace—inspired by the courage of Latin American, South African, Israeli, and Palestinian women; Women in Black; and the Mothers of the Disappeared. Their powerful but silent presence bears witness to alternatives to war. The persistent and imaginative protests against the World Bank, the World Trade Organization, and other trade institutions are among the most visible of these kinds of activities. Less dramatic but equally courageous are the people who have

come forward to testify about the corruption in corporate America and in the U.S. government.

The analysis of structural causes and the creation of structural alternatives, says Macy, is the second dimension of the Great Turning:

In order for us to free ourselves and our planet from the damage being inflicted by the Industrial Growth Society, we must understand its dynamics. We must understand the tacit agreements that create obscene wealth for a few, while progressively impoverishing the rest. What are the interlocking causes that indenture us to an insatiable economy that uses our Earth as both supply house and sewer? . . . When we see how this system operates, we are less tempted to demonize the politicians and corporate CEOs who are in bondage to it. And for all the apparent might of the Industrial Growth Society, we can also see its fragility—how dependent it is on our obedience, and how doomed it is to devour itself. In addition to learning how the present system works, we are also creating structural alternatives. In countless localities, like green shoots pushing up through the rubble, new social and economic arrangements are sprouting. Not waiting for our national or state politicians to catch up with us, we are banding together, and taking action in our own communities. Flowing from our creativity and collaboration on behalf of life, these actions may look marginal, but they hold the seeds for the future.<sup>32</sup>

Every spring, hundreds of thousands of people inside our nation's cities plant gardens, restoring the earth and their own sense of self-sufficiency. Young people are challenging car culture by critical mass bike rallies and converting old school buses into bio-diesel transport. 33

Alternative ways of living are emerging around the world: In Columbia, there is a community that is a hotbed of inventions for sustainability. For three decades, Gavioans—peasants, scientists, artists, and former street kids—have struggled to build an oasis of imagination and sustainability in the remote, barren savannas of eastern Colombia, an area ravaged by political terror. They have planted millions of trees, regenerating the rainforest. They farm organically and use wind and solar power. Every

family enjoys free housing, community meals, and schooling. There are no weapons, no police, no jail. There is no mayor.<sup>34</sup>

In a small German village called Stuyerburg, Lebensgarten, once a slave labor munitions factory for the Nazi regime, has been converted into a multigenerational ecological village. In Detroit, neighborhood groups are turning abandoned houses into homes for teen mothers, using principles of sustainable architecture.<sup>35</sup> Neighborhoods in Argentina form cooperatives in the wake of a collapsed economy. These cooperatives produce food, medicine, and goods necessary for daily life.<sup>36</sup> In the United States, urban communities (rich and poor) form direct relationships with small farms, creating community-supported agriculture, bypassing the distribution channels of mega-agribusiness.<sup>37</sup>

These activities are happening in backyards, village squares, bus stops, and on the Internet, where people make connections that are reshaping our world. New sources of information flow around the mainstream. Independent Media Centers have appeared in cities and communities around the world.<sup>38</sup> They and other media and technology initiatives provide an infrastructure for unfiltered news that is more global than the mainstream media.<sup>39</sup>

Indigenous people of all continents are reclaiming their culture and ways of being, not in selfish ingrown ways, but in service of the planet itself. In Ecuador, a complete and autonomous education system is growing out of indigenous peoples' working together to preserve their way of life and to come to the global community on their terms. The Intercultural Bilingual Education system is 2800 schools strong in which children learn first in their traditional language and then in Spanish. They are recovering orally-based knowledge that has survived and been maintained in indigenous people's daily life. They are educating new professionals who are committed to putting indigenous knowledge into practice" 40

Restorative Justice is taking root in many of our cities as a community-based way of dealing with people who commit criminal acts. Justice Works, and the Zen Peacemakers work with prisoners to create peace and dignity within the prison system and to support people when they are released.<sup>40</sup> And in the Indian state of Kerala, for nearly forty years almost three hundred murderers have lived in an open prison, without fences, armed guards, or surveillance towers. In all its years of functioning, there has been only one repeat offender and one escapee.<sup>41</sup>

These structural alternatives cannot take root and survive without our adopting values to sustain them—this is the third dimension of the Great Turning.

They must mirror what we want and how we relate to Earth and each other. They arise as grief for our world, giving the lie to old paradigm notions of rugged individualism, the essential separateness of the self. They spring up as glad response to breakthroughs in scientific thought, as reductionism and materialism give way to evidence of a living universe. And they come to pass in the resurgence of wisdom traditions, reminding us again that our world is a sacred whole, worthy of adoration and service.

Systems thinking, deep ecology, liberation theology, Creation Spirituality, shamanism, eco-psychology, and earth-based spiritual practices are all palpable evidence of this shift. Over the past century, there has been an influx—and by now a real groundswell—of Eastern religious thought and Buddhist practice in the West. Within Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, underground streams are emerging that express devotion to the living Earth. Everywhere, people are embracing holistic health, spiritual healing, and ways of understanding that harkens back to times before classical Western science.<sup>42</sup>

The Great Turning is built on trusting our true inner natures and all that exists. May we bring the great powers that live inside our hearts and spirits out into the world. It is in our hearts and our spirits that healing happens.

## Meditations

### Induction

Breathing with your belly, bring to your awareness your symbol for physical relaxation and feel the whole of your body relax . . . Breathe through tension, release it into the ground . . . Relax into the support of the earth . . . . .

When you are ready, bring to awareness your symbol for mental relaxation. Extend your awareness to include the vast reaches of the sky, the sky that extends out forever . . . Feel your mind relax into its natural state of spaciousness, as spacious as the skies . . . . .

Now bring in your symbol for emotional relaxation. Let go of the “shoulds.” Just as you can relax into the support of the earth, you can relax into the support of the community . . . Relaxing into the web-work of life, the net of relationships of which you are a part, support your life . . . . . Imagine that your heart relaxes into its natural state of love and compassion. However you experience this, breathe love and compassion. As you relax emotionally, your heart opens . . . love and compassion arise . . . . .

Bring to awareness your symbol for your creative, self-restoring center, where your expanding awareness flows . . . . . Here your heart opens and deep knowing grows . . . Here you can listen to the whispering of spirit . . . Here you can bear witness to what is true . . . This is where visions are born. And you can join in creating the world anew . . . This is where healing and creativity arise . . . Here you discover all that you need to heal and create the world anew . . .

Take a moment to honor what you hold sacred . . . Remember your gratitude for the gift of life . . . It is a gift to be alive . . . part of the whole and the whole lives inside . . . held in interbeing . . . . .

If you would like, you can invite spirits to accompany you in this work . . . beings of the past or future, or beings who occupy different life forms . . . If you would like, invite them to accompany you . . . Welcome them . . . . .

Feel your heart and spirit ready for the work you are about to embark on.

I am going to suggest several affirmations; if you wish to affirm them, repeat them to yourself after me, feeling as though they are fully true.

I believe in people . . .

I celebrate belonging to the community of life . . .

I relax into interbeing . . .

I believe in my family and friends . . .

We believe in our community; there is a free flow of support among us in creating change . . .

I honor the integrity of all people and all life . . .

I am visionary and courageous . . .

I am aware of the impact of all of my actions and I act with respect to all beings . . .

I cultivate a joyous and generous heart . . .

Time is generous, I relax into the moment and it carries me . . .

I am always attuned to what is needed for healing to happen on all levels of being . . .

I am glad to honor the earth with good care . . .

All my relationships are filled with empathy, and mutual care . . .

A spring of creativity continually moves through us . . .

We offer our gifts to healing the world . . .

We gain strength from our connection to the peoples of the world . . .

We have confidence in our ability to care for the world . . .

We learn from the past and welcome the future . . .

We work to bring about a positive future . . .

Take a moment and breathe in gratitude as you inhale . . . and breathe out compassion as you exhale . . . Gratitude to be alive; compassion for all life . . . all life on the planet . . . . .

Know that in focusing on affirmations you evoke powers from the depths of beingness itself, powers that manifest both within and around you. In focusing on affirmations, you cause yourself to align your energies with them, and you will discover yourself acting out of these very powers you have evoked . . .

Listen very carefully to all that is said letting the words draw up your deepest knowing, knowing from the depths of life itself.

### **From Holding to Opening into Interbeing Meditation**

Feel that as you are relaxed, you are open . . . your body opens . . . your mind opens . . . your feelings open . . . Enjoy this open state . . . Breathe out and feel openness . . . Find that place within you where you feel strong, and open . . . fully receptive in your strength . . . receptivity being your strength.

Let your awareness ride on your breath, your breath brings release, you open . . . Breathe. In openness you experience wholeness . . . With each exhalation, feel yourself relaxing into your natural state of wholeness . . . openness . . .

Experience openness allowing movement . . . Breath is easy . . . in openness there is fluidity . . . fluid motion moving through you . . . welcoming newness . . . It's this fluidity that gives you strength . . . supple . . . Shutting down brings rigidity, when you constrict and turn away from your experience, you fragment and weaken yourself—energy no longer flows through. Feel the power of flexibility . . . Wholeness is not static, it is always in motion . . .

In mindfulness, witness when constriction arises . . . All you need to do is breathe through and openness returns . . . As long as you are supple and open, you are carried by life force energies . . . Breathe, feel that you can open further as you breathe. Breathe and feel your life open . . .

Breathe life energy into any aspects of your being that have gotten rigid . . . . .  
Breathe life into those places that need it . . . Feel them breathe and become open, supple, fluid again . . . Let go and life carries you . . .

Tune in to your body and notice if there are any holding patterns . . . Send breath there . . . Breathe through and opening happens. With intention, aim your breath wherever you like . . . Feel opening happen. Breathe. Wholeness is a natural fluid state . . . . .

Extend your awareness to your environment . . . Extend this openness to the life that is around you . . . Watch your breath roll through you and into the trees . . . Out of the trees and into other beings . . . Breath weaves life. Interbeing . . . . .

Sense the many relations that connected to . . . Family . . . Others in your life . . .  
Bring to awareness the food you eat . . . those who worked to bring food to your table . . . You might want to tune to one kind of food . . . Imagine it alive and growing in the place from which it came . . . What nourished it to grow into its being? . . . Imagine all that took place that brought the food to your plate . . . the hands it has passed through . . . Community, exchange of energy . . . Interbeing. Witness it . . . . .

Imagine the different things that you do moving out and touching others on the web . . . Just as breath weaves life, all activity weaves the web of being . . . Awesome . . . All held in the web . . . All making the web. Imagine letting go into the web . . . . .

If you come across any tension breathe through it . . . Breathe. Feel your body softening, letting go and relaxing into the support of community . . . Feel yourself getting stronger and stronger as you relax into interbeing . . . . .

Become aware of your mind. Notice if you have any beliefs that have become rigid, or dogmatic, beliefs you hold onto tightly . . . If you come across any, breathe through and release them, Mental Houseclean them . . . Plant beliefs that inspire opening and trust . . . Notice if you have cynical ideas that say nothing will change anyway . . . Notice any beliefs that tell you that you have to fend for yourself, you have to defend yourself . . . Beliefs that tell you not to trust your own nature . . . not to trust nature . . . Breathe them out . . .

Remember the intelligence intrinsic to life itself, trust it, know that this intelligence moves through you too . . . . .

Send to your mind opening energy. Let your ideas be supple resilient and strong . . . Remember times you have felt most open and blessed to be alive . . . . Breathe in this energy . . . Feel it infuse your whole belief system with connectedness, gratitude to be alive . . . . . Feel the climate of your mind be open and relaxed, resilient and strong . . . Imagine that ideas grow and reach up to the sky . . . Feel curiosity awakening . . . Openness that welcomes insight to appear . . . . .

Now become aware of the emotional climate of your life. Notice any feelings in your emotional life that are tight, constricted, alienated . . . feelings of separation or loneliness, areas in your emotional life that have become parched and dry . . . or brittle and bitter . . . or cold and icy. Scan your life and notice if any of these feelings come out in the different circumstances . . . feelings that no longer receive the nurturance of others, of life itself, feelings that close you off and move you into further isolation, feelings that are dense, hard . . . Breathe through them. Offer yourself loving kindness . . . . . Feel your heart breathe. Remember times that have inspired your heart to sing . . . . . Feel your heart open . . . . .

Give yourself permission to be warm-hearted, to be light-hearted . . . If any beliefs crop up that stop you transform them as you did the others earlier . . . . .

Everyone has warm spots inside them. Give yourself permission to touch the warmth of others, to receive the warmth of others . . . Feel yourself soften, appreciate each other . . . Fill the hardness with softness . . . Moisten the dry spots with the love of life . . . Let yourself feel your gladness to be alive . . . open to life, open to others . . .

As you open, your spirit lightens. Feel the spirit of life percolating through. Let your spirit be open too . . . Let the openness extend to include all the people in your life . . . Let yourself be supported, flexible, a part of the life of the community you live in . . . Just as your heart pulses with life, feel your community pulsing with life . . . Alive.

Like breathing in and out, you receive from others and you give to others, life holds all . . . . . Flood yourself with the good feelings of community life . . . Breathe out any feelings of isolation . . . . .

Now look out into this coming week. Imagine the events unfolding . . . Witness if you tighten up, hold on, alienate yourself, or separate yourself anywhere. Witness your tendencies . . . . . Breathe openness into yourself in the scenes . . . Let the energy ground you in interbeing . . .

Notice how in doing so you find yourself with more energy, no longer expending it to hold on . . . as you open creativity, curiosity, and compassion all flow . . . Interbeing, exchange between you and community. The web is strong . . . . . You get your strength from community, no longer using up energy in separation, instead relaxing into life's natural state of interbeing . . .

Create a symbol for this experience . . . Tell yourself you will remember to bring it to awareness if ever you find yourself shutting down. In doing so, you open to the resilience of life and it lifts you up.

### **Toward a Balanced World: Distinguishing between Cravings and Needs Meditation**

Feel yourself in a very quiet place inside of yourself. Be in your own presence . . . Breathe . . . Reside in your own energy in this moment, breathing quietly . . . Simply be present with yourself . . . here in this moment . . .

Give yourself permission to feel your feelings . . . Be aware of all your feelings of desire and all your feelings of satisfaction which come a go like patterns of weather. Witness the flow of feelings through your experience . . . Notice how desire shows up in the landscape of your experience . . . Witness where desire is awakened in your life . . . . .

Now let the desires, the "shoulds," the "coulds," all of them, soak into the ground . . . Let yourself relax into the life that percolates through you . . . Become aware of the resilience of life . . . the continual renewal of life . . . transforming energies constantly,

the resilience, the renewal, the transformation . . . Life itself is abundant, it naturally renews itself . . . Let yourself relax into trusting life itself . . . Experiencing the intelligence of life, the self-clearing, self-healing capacities intrinsic to all life . . . Sense this self-healing intelligence inside you . . . Trust it . . . . .

Now bring back to your awareness those things you discovered as you scanned the landscape of your life. With the knowingness of life itself you will discover what is good for your life and what is not. Bring to mind one desire, be it a food, a thing, a type of relationship or activity . . . Choose one desire or habit to explore . . . If there are many choose one now, knowing you can explore others another time . . . Bring it into the light of awareness. Witness. Remember moments when this desire is alive in you . . . Notice its dimensions . . . . . Now notice what feelings resonate with this desire . . . Notice what each feeling is rooted in . . . . . Notice the quality of the feelings involved . . . Do they clamor or are they soft? . . . Imagine their shape, are they round or sharp? . . . Does they connect you with the harmonizing resilient forces of nature? . . . or do they feed alienation? . . . Witness what is so with this desire . . . . . If you discover harmonizing energy, let yourself rest in gratitude . . .

If you discover sharp, driven, hardened or discordant energy—qualities that likely take you away from the quiet presence inside, then you have found a craving . . . When you fulfill a craving you only feed more want—there is no satisfaction to be found . . . Witness what is true for you . . . . . If you find craving, imagine that there is a shell around it . . . Imagine cracking it off . . . inside you will discover a true need . . . It may be different than the original desire, but this need can be satisfied . . . . . Witness what is true for you . . . . . Breathe through the energy . . . Imagine that the shell is transformed in the soil, and feel yourself relax, let the discordant energy soak down into the ground . . .

Bring the qualities of generosity and gratitude in to the scene. Remember times these qualities have been present in your experience . . . Experience these qualities now . . . . Generosity . . . Gratitude . . . . . Breathe these qualities into the scene . . . Imagine the

feelings and situations that have been present absorbing the qualities of generosity and gratitude . . . Witness transformation taking place . . .

Witness how what you have been focusing on impacts other life. Broaden your view and witness what is the case . . . Notice where balance is found and everyone's needs are met . . . the earth is honored . . . . .

Now look out over the rest of the landscape of your life, notice the difference between your cravings and your needs . . . . .

Transform the cravings and honor the needs . . . Notice what part of yourself is desiring. If it resonates with life, or if it is a craving in compensation for disconnection . . . If you run across craving, let it be transformed by going through its surface and discovering what is inside . . . what true need is inside . . . Honor your true needs. Let go of the cravings . . . Bring in gratitude and generosity, these qualities heal. Mental Houseclean the old habits. Know that in doing so you are creating space to be even more attuned to what is healthful for yourself and others, for life itself . . . . .

Life becomes simple and satisfying with generosity and gratitude. Know that you fully deserve to have your needs met . . . Notice how as you honor your needs, you feel more connected to all the life within and around you . . . Notice the choices you can make to honor your needs.

Imagine a daily routine based on these choices . . . Honoring your needs, doing your part in keeping the place you occupy on the web strong and resilient . . . . . Feel gratitude to be alive. Know that in honoring only your needs you create room for others' true needs to be met too, for you have taken only your fair share . . . Honor the sanctity of all life . . .

### **Keeping the Faith Meditation**

As you hear the sounds of these words, feel yourself going deeper and deeper into the universal realms out of which all life springs . . . Feel yourself relaxing into the resilient support of the web of life. With each word you hear, you are becoming increasingly attuned to the connectedness of life, the mutuality of life . . . With the sounds of these words moving through your awareness, your consciousness expands. From your usual individual awareness into greater universal consciousness . . . Give yourself permission to enter into your natural state of fluid connectedness . . .

Feel the rhythms of life percolating through you . . . the pulse of life, the breath of life, the hum of life . . . Knowing life percolates through all creatures, through all people . . .

Sense the universal breath—what we breathe out, the plants breathe in . . . what the plants breathe out, we breathe in. Energy constantly supporting, transforming, moving—universal breath interweaves all that lives upon the earth . . .

Feel the great synchrony of the universe. The movement of electrons, the movement of planets, all in synchrony . . . Let your tensions be washed away by waves of universality . . . Feel yourself sinking deeper into the support of life itself . . .

Experience the fluidity of life . . . everything moving, carried by time . . . day into night, season to season, year to year. History is alive . . . Each generation gives life to the next . . . generation to generation to generation . . . Each generation dreams and struggles for a better life for the next, history in the making . . .

Remember those who passed before who cared . . . living, breathing beings devoted to life, dedicated their lives to the struggle for humanity . . . Remember them now . . . . .

They live on in the spirit of humanity . . . Summon up the courage of those who passed before . . . Breathe in courage . . . empowering ourselves, the spirit of humanity

lives and breathes in us now . . . Let our ancestors rejoice in our rising to the times . . . .  
. Aroused, together we take up the call, make history, create the future . . .

Feel life percolate through everyone; life regenerates itself. Life endowed us with  
life; now we are called to preserve life itself . . . We are part of the Great Turning, the  
great healing . . .

Give yourself permission to experience the fullness of your devotion to life, feel it  
in the depths of your heart, your soul, your whole being . . . Allow yourself to care . . .  
Remember the special moments in your life, times where your heart was warmed . . .  
celebrations . . . shared joys . . . shared love . . . majestic landscapes . . . the wonder of life  
itself. Remember what makes your heart sing . . . Feel your passion for life . . . . .

Let your feelings merge with the feelings of others who have a passion for life . . .  
passion ignites passion . . . ever-widening passion for the protection of life . . . everyone  
caring . . . forming a great wave of humanity to change the course of history; history is  
alive within us . . . Together we have great healing powers, together we transform  
ourselves and the world . . . We make room for healing to happen . . . . .

Remembering the powers, the power of people united, the power of life itself . . .  
healing powers are all around and within us . . . Let all the pain, the rage of yours, of the  
earth's, let it transform itself into a great healing force, a force as fierce as a mother  
protecting her young . . . . .

Let the power of life surge through you. Breathe it . . . Feel it in your heart . . .  
pulsing life . . . empowering you. Feel it uplift you . . . arousing you . . . Aroused,  
humanity forms a great moving wave . . . Passion for life carries us, empowers us to  
emancipate life itself . . . to create a future where the dignity of all life is respected . . .  
where the life of every single baby of every kind is honored. Our ancestors rejoice as we  
answer the call of history, protecting the claim of life itself . . .

You have your life to offer, you make a difference. You are alive in this great time . . . Feel purpose, . . . Feel passion, the power of life lives within you . . . Feel yourself a part of the great struggle, healing powers move through you . . . Listen to your heart . . . Listen to your convictions . . . Listen to your instincts . . . What cries out to you?

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Give yourself permission to struggle for what you believe in . . . Remember, there are many who share your cares . . . joining together, feel how much more powerful you are, everyone is, as we're joined together . . . Believe in our power. Feel it . . . Together we can make a difference . . . We are making a difference already . . . Life always wins in the end, grass grows up through concrete and reaches for the sky . . . Life regenerates itself, life always wins in the end . . .

Feel your connection with life itself . . . with other creatures . . . with the plant world . . . with other peoples . . . . . We all create a great wave of life protecting life, securing it for the next generations . . . Imagine that humanity pulls through, the spirit of humanity lives on and each generation continues to dream and to struggle for the next generation . . . trusting the future, keeping the faith . . . Let yourself be empowered by life itself . . . and we'll heal the future.

### **Count Out Meditation**

Begin to finish what you are doing and go over all the insights you have had and choices you have made . . . Breathe out, and project these visions into your life. Set the stage for action . . . . . Breathe and draw in these powers. Embody them . . . Live into the changes you are making . . . . .

Appreciate all the energies, spirits, and your own good will for accompanying you through your inner work . . . Thank you for your inner work.

Make yourself ready to come out to outer conscious levels . . .

In a moment I'm going to count from one to five . . . At the count of five, you will open your eyes, remembering all that you have experienced . . . feeling refreshed, revitalized, and relaxed, having brought with you the energies you became attuned to, ready and able to act on them.

One—becoming more aware of the room around you . . .

Two—coming up slowly now . . .

Three—at the count of five, you will open your eyes feeling relaxed, revitalized, and refreshed, remembering all that you have experienced . . .

Four—coming up now bringing with you what you have experienced . . .

Five!! Eyes open, feeling refreshed, revitalized, and relaxed, remembering all that you have experienced, feeling a sense of well-being, ready and able to act on the energies to which you have attuned yourself.

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