



One Earth Sangha

Session Three: Core Offering One

Transcript of EcoSattva Training 2022-23 Video

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Session Profile

Session Three: Compassionate Reflection

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Speakers in this video

- Kristin Barker - director and co-founder, One Earth Sangha
- Kritee Kanko

Transcript

Welcome to Session Three

Kristin Barker:

Well, hello everyone. And welcome to session three. I am so pleased that we are doing this. I'm welcoming to the Ecosattva training a person who I love, and we've been in collaboration for many years now. My dear dharma friend, Kritee Kanko. Kritee is a Buddhist Zen teacher, climate scientist, grief ritual leader, and social permaculture designer. She's founder of Boundless in Motion sangha, and is part of the Cold Mountain Zen tradition. She's also a founding member of the Rocky Mountain Ecodharma Retreat Center, a partner organization with One Earth Sangha. So there's much more to say about Kritee and I refer you to the course resources page or landing page for the Ecosattva



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training to learn more about her background. But I'd rather just hear from her, let's get into it. So Kritee, thank you so much for joining us. I'm so delighted to be doing this session three with you, and what you are offering to the training of helping us really begin this dive into the individual realm is just perfect. So welcome. And I'll turn it over to you and then we'll have some conversation.

Kritee Kanko:

Thank you so much, Kristin. It's lovely to be here. Lovely to be part of Ecosattva training again. And the topic that we are going to talk about today is really, I know both of us care so deeply about, so I'm looking forward to talking about this. I'm just going to share my screen here. I hope Kristen you'd let me know if you can't see the slides, right? I'm assuming it's OK. So I'm going to talk about first what we call the windows of tolerance and then move into how it relates to how we are experiencing trauma, individually, as families, as sanghas, and just as a global civilization, right? You might question, where is the civilization here, but just the humanity at large, and what I am positing here primarily is this. We have an enormous pool of trauma, which we've been taught traditionally to consider as garbage, but instead, what we can do is to bake the same waste and compost it to fuel our movement, right? I'm not the first one to posit it, but hopefully we are going to bring in some dharma perspective here and talk about climate science and the realities of our times and weave this all together to come to the same conclusion I just mentioned--that our enormous trauma load can be composted to fuel our movements. So let's drop in.

Comfort, Panic, Numbness

I will always keep inviting all of you as you are watching to please take a deep breath when you can, and especially at some marker slides. So let's first talk about what we call the comfort zone. All of us, me, Kristin, all of you listening, regardless of what we've gone through in our life, we have these moments, right? These hours, sometimes it can be days, where we are comfortable. The characteristics of this comfort zone, our sense of feeling content, confident, grateful. There is sense of love, safety. And you can think of this like a home base that we'd always like to come back to, right? This is when, if stress hits us, if we face external stresses from our family members, job situations or otherwise, we can come back to a sense of internal attunement, right? We can come back to a regulated way of being. The indicators of this comfort zone are that people naturally take long, deep breaths.



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In this situation, in this comfort zone, we are able to make eye contact with people around us. We are not in our internal dialogue. We are able to hear each other, hearing becomes better in this space. There is good amount of circulation of blood in our hands, our feet, and our extremities, and people have healthy digestion, healthy immune system, and people will sleep well if they are most of the time in this comfort zone, neurobiologically. Okay? However, however a healthy person's mental health might be, the truth is that we are never as human beings always in comfort zone. There is a neurological state of being that you can call panic mode, which evolutionarily exists because there were tigers and lions to run away from, right? When you naturally need your body to pump up more blood, have a faster heart rate, breathing rate to be able to run away from threats. The problem is that we end up in this hyper arousal zone, this panic zone, even without tigers around us. This zone gives us anxiety, gives us fear, hypervigilance. And as I said, it's not just because of tigers. The kind of oppression we see around us, our climate grief, trauma in the family, alcoholism in the family. These things can just bring up our nervous system to a level where we are always ready to fight or flight. The symptoms of being in panic mode are heart rate increases, blood pressure increases, people stop producing saliva. So you might see someone who looks okay, but is constantly letting their tongue touch their lips because they just get extreme dry mouth in this situation. Pupil size increases, people sweat a lot, there's adrenaline. Overall, just bodies getting ready to run or fight.

What decreases in this panic mode is digestion. As I said, salivation, immune response, and very crucially, ability to relate. Ability to hear and see well. Please, please make note of this because this is a crucial thing we'll come back to--ability to relate gets compromised in this zone. So now if you put these together, green is your comfort zone, red is your panic zone. In a healthy world, you would come to panic zone sometimes in your month, but with support of a loving community, your grounding practices, your nature practices, which I know Ecosattva training participants have heard about already, you will come back to your green zone, will come back neurobiologically to your comfort zone. But that's not always the case. Because of all these layers of trauma that we'll talk about in a few minutes, we end up spending a lot more time in the red zone, panic zone, as opposed to the green zone.

Yeah? Now let's talk about the third zone, which we are calling here numbness mode. Here in this mode the characteristics are exhaustion, depression, absence of emotion, lack of appetite. Okay? People might sleep a lot in this phase. And this is opposite of fight and flight in that this is a freezing zone. You go into numbness, you freeze, you are not able to feel much. Sometimes everyone else around us can see that you are depressed, but we just



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don't feel anymore. We've been numbed. And the symptoms of this on a personal level is that it increases energy storage, you start kind of conserving energy. It's like getting ready for hibernation and you get immobilized a little bit. It decreases heart rate, decreases blood pressure, body temperature can go down. Skin kind of becomes listless, right? Muscle tone changes, people stop making eye contact.

The breath becomes very shallow. So as opposed to being able to do belly breathing, that we emphasize a lot in our Zen tradition, people do very shallow breathing. You can actually feel their chest, upper chest being activated. And social behavior decreases, sexual and immune responses go low. And you're not attuned to voice, stop hearing, right? So I'm going to emphasize this part again. In fight or flight, the red zone or the blue zone, numbness zone, both of those, our ability to relate to others goes down. You stop seeing, stop hearing well, and that impacts our ability to form relationships and trust each other. Okay? So what we are saying here is that it is natural to have some days in a month, a year, where we get into panic zone or numbness zone, or maybe on a daily level, right?

You know, one of the good things about panic zone is that's what you need a little bit for sexual activity. So it's not all unhealthy. This is all a healthy part of having a neurobiological system. Our bodies have been designed evolutionarily to act in certain ways. If you see your tiger, you gotta run, right? And sometimes you need to hibernate. The problem is, as I was hinting earlier, that due to repeated stresses and traumas that we have all faced in our lives, we end up spending a lot more time in red and blue zone, as opposed to being in what is called a window of tolerance, right? So you are either too anxious, ready to fight, or you are not able to come up with a creative response and you go numb.

If you'd like to take a pause, you can take a pause here and contemplate and journal for yourself when you might find yourself in red zone versus blue zone. That can be a good exercise. Okay? So the next thing I want to talk about is that, as an extension of this fact that the circulation in different zones doesn't necessarily mean it's all unhealthy, I want to point out that all growth that human beings have spiritually, psychologically happens when we are a little bit out of our comfort zone, right? So what I'm trying to say is that it's not crucial that we always stay in comfort zone. That would just be too bad. We need a little bit of challenge, a little bit of stress to grow, to learn new things, but we just have to make sure that we don't get into panic.



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You might all remember those times. I certainly do from my classroom, when I used to sit in classrooms, that sometimes a little bit of stress makes you hyper vigilant. You focus on what someone is saying, and you are attentive, you're taking notes, you are soaking it in, but if it gets too complicated too soon, then I'm in my red panic zone. And then I stop being able to hear, stop being able to listen. Right? So I just wanted to point out that all of this neurobiology doesn't mean that we stay in comfort zone, green zone. Next thing I want to talk about, and if you haven't already been taking a break, I invite us to take a very deep breath.

An Epidemic of Trauma

I'm going to talk about here the scale of individual trauma. And if any of this resonates with you because of your life experience, I want you to know that this will appear as if I'm making some of you into a statistic, but I want to convey a deeper truth here. So please stay with me. In North America, one in three people have witnessed domestic violence just as kids, little kids. One in four have alcoholic relatives. This just doesn't mean alcoholic relatives anywhere in the family--the immediate family, parents, or maybe grandparents, in some cases. One in four, 25%, of us were beaten up to the extent that we have marks on our body. This is all from childhood, not after growing older. And one in five were sexually molested as a child.

If you put it all together, basically what it is saying is 60% of adults in America as kids had abuse in their life. When I first started thinking about these statistics, I was blown away. And also it was a huge moment for me to work with as a climate activist and scientist, because I was like, gosh, we are not paying attention to what people, our friends, colleagues are dealing with. We don't talk about this stuff, but more than half the people in a given room are dealing with this abuse, and it gets lodged in the bodies.

And what I just talked about is just the general statistic. On top of all of this, there is a large amount of racial trauma that some bodies experience and others don't. There is gender based trauma. There is class issues, economic trauma, and on top of all of this, climate trauma. So, if you haven't heard any of this before, this is intense and it has huge implications for us. The first implication that I like to talk about is that you and me, all of us listening to this, we are needed. There is no one, no one outside of us, a non-traumatized pool somewhere outside, that is going to lead the climate movement or the racial justice movement.



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We have to work with what we've got, this much trauma, 60% of people in any room, having this kind of trauma. Unless we compost it--we'll come back to this word, composting of trauma later. Unless we compost it, resolve this trauma, it will keep getting perpetuated. If we don't deal with it in our generation, we'll be definitely passing it on to next, right? This is something I always also say in dharma settings. We are not just here to heal ourselves, or get enlightened ourselves. We do it for all beings, but certainly for our own lineages, our own family. Because when we heal, we are not going to hand down the trauma to our children and grandchildren.

The other related thing is that I love one-on-one psychotherapy--it has helped me personally to emerge from some of the stresses and traumas my body was holding onto--but it is not going to be enough for the scale of traumas we are going to face as a collective. We are going through COVID, still going through COVID. We have financial crisis lurking in all of this. We have climate disasters, right? All of these disasters when they hit us--in California through the fires or the flooding that we have seen all across the world, in Europe, in Australia, India-- these things leave the most marginalized people away from all support, including psychological support. The one-on-one psychotherapy we don't have enough already for what people are going through. And as the climate crisis deepens, which it will, even if we stopped all greenhouse gas pollution today, the mental health system is not set up to hold that trauma. So what I'm trying to say here is that we, you and me and all of us, we need capacity to hold and compost our grief and trauma, as a collective.

Kristin Barker:

What I hear in this message that you're sending, the information that you're pointing to and bringing us to turn towards, is the reality of not the external reality, because we get a lot of that, but what's the internal reality that that's already here. It's just already here. And what an impact that has on both the way we see ourselves, one another, the world, how we see climate crisis; how could it not, how could it not be informing that, what we are bringing from childhood experiences, especially maybe to these moments. And so what to you is the invitation there? Can you say what is your kind of ideal responsiveness, like what does that look like? What's the opportunity with that information.

Kritee Kanko:

Thank you, Kristin. That's a wonderful question. The first step is just realizing that we are not alone. I have had people when I present data like this, tell me, I didn't realize that I wasn't the only one who had dealt with rape or abuse or incarceration or gunshot wounds



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in my family. Right? And I know you, too, are a part of the global work, the work that reconnects family, and I'll put it also in the traditional dharma perspective in a second. What I am basically doing here is inviting people to drop in, to slow down. First of all, slow down, see your own grief, see your own trauma, acknowledge it, and then begin to name it in a community. That's what I'm fundamentally saying. We spend so much of our conscious and subconscious energy to try to hide these things.

I want to appear happy. I want to appear content. This could be a shadow of our dharma work as well. Like people are sitting serenely on the cushion, our role models in dharma centers sit serenely. In my own Zen tradition, you know, my teacher, when I first started sitting and I didn't have stability to sit, even for five minutes, he would sit for three hours in a row and not move a muscle. So the image, the messaging that we get from dharma and non-dharma world is look happy, confident, in control of things. What I am saying is we are quite a bit broken inside, not just one or two of us, but most of us and we are broken because of multiple reasons. There are childhood reasons. There is the racial trauma. There is the intergenerational stuff, and there is the climate crisis, which is huge.

And we'll talk about that in the next part. All of these things, they are meant to give us grief. Evolution meant for painful things to give us grief. The word emotion, emotion, is there to set you to motion, if we don't feel. And Joanna Macy says that so brilliantly, if we don't feel, how are we going to act deeply? Right? So what I'm saying here is that let's take the time to reveal our emotions, our true stories to ourselves and to each other that will begin to compost this trauma that we've tried to make garbage out of. This doesn't belong in landfills. This is the raw material that can fuel us, right? And it will not get composted if we keep hiding, if we keep hiding our true stories, and it will take a lot of courage being vulnerable about what has happened in our families. To us it's hard. It needs a safe setting. It needs safe containers. But when that truly happens, I have seen magic happen. I have truly seen magic happen when people can truly get vulnerable. And there are so many interesting things I can tell you about how different groups of people take up this invitation or not. Beautiful.

Kristin Barker:

Yeah. Yeah. So one aspect of what you're speaking to here is that whether it's that image in the front of the room of the Buddha statue or my teacher who seems to embody this calm, fully, psychologically integrated state, and here I am a hot mess. And so I've got this sort of sense of a disconnect. Wow. I'm alone in this, I'm not where I should be, you know. And then we can talk about social media, sending all these signals about what I should be



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and everybody else is okay and fabulous. And, you know, so we get these signals and what you're describing is we kind of go under, right? Like there's something in us that runs and hides and says, I am not gonna let anybody know about this.

And so what you're saying is, no, the reality is that actually most of us are carrying this and you are so not alone with this. And we can be honest first with ourselves and then, carefully, with others. It's beautiful. There's another piece of this I'm seeing a parallel to--and again, we have to be careful and nuanced here--with the information deficit idea around climate crisis and ecological crises. That the job is for everybody to know, and we should just give them the information, and that is sufficient. Not recognizing that this information is brutal. It may be, you know, I have the information, like right on my front door. Many of us have out my front porch or maybe coming into the house, or the house is burned, or the neighborhood is burned.

But even if it's far away, this is part of earth and deeply sensitive to its belonging. This is brutal information. And yet we're given no tools, no acknowledgment that--trigger warning--this could break your heart. And if you feel yourself connected to the web of life, it will probably break your heart. So it feels like you're inviting that sense of making conscious what tends to go under, tends to be submerged, our psychological tax that we're all paying, carrying around this information about what it is that's underway in our world.

Kritee Kanko:

I mean, absolutely. Absolutely. You know, I say this so often in my climate scientist hat, wearing that hat. I know so many of my climate scientist colleagues get panic attacks these days, right? We can't sleep at night. We get the information a few years before it gets published. So even if you are not thinking about interconnected web of all life, this is truly brutal. And we cannot tackle that brutal information in isolation. Another point I'm making is if you drink fluids and your body produces urine, the kidney after a while doesn't care if the water it's processing comes from a juice, soup, water, or Coke, or whatever you drink, whatever your fancy drink is. In the body, similarly, trauma keeps piling up in some way.

So your childhood trauma on top of racial trauma on top of economic stresses, and you have this ecosystem crumbling around us. What I have found, especially in working with people of color in these grief circles that we'll hopefully touch into later on as well, is that you can't tell people to just somehow tackle the brutal news, the grief that comes from hearing climate news, from what they went through in childhood. The body needs to



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dislodge this. It's not a linear process that I'm going to somehow be able to take the brutal news, but it's not going to open up the wounds. And so what I'm inviting us most of all to think about is to creatively create spaces to slow down and enter this messy process of composting our grief and trauma, because we are getting buried under it, when some of it can be a great fuel. Right?

Kristin Barker:

Yeah. And that is necessarily part of what we can do for each other in these communities. So let's continue with your exploration, the next piece about how it is that this is differentiated among us.

The Emergence of Climate Distress

Kritee Kanko:

In the last two, three years, there has been an exponential interest within mainstream media to my surprise. It's a good thing, but it is a little surprising, this interest in talking about climate anxiety or climate grief. I just have a few examples here, but the bottom line is that even the American Psychiatric Association late last year said close to 70% of Americans are extremely or somewhat anxious about climate. People might still be a little bit hesitant to use the word climate grief or climate trauma, the two phrases preferred over climate anxiety. But we are talking about it. You can now look on CNN, Washington Post, Guardian...everyone is touching on it. And as Kristin and I were talking about, this interest comes from people genuinely feeling that brutality that Kristin was talking about, the repeated images of fires, drought, and flood impacting humanity. It's extremely hard.

You think about in dharma perspective, if we are all interconnected, as Buddhism says and is true in my experience, then how could you not feel the pain of beings all over the planet in pain. If a house plant dies under our care, we feel sadness. And now we have entire ecosystems collapsing, right? And people hurting, vulnerable people hurting. So all of this climate grief, once again, if you feel that, you are not alone. Now an interesting thing that starts happening when you start looking at grief is that a lot of people are also getting interested in how different bodies experience this same kind of climate grief differently. There has been a lot of discussion about this. Some people say people of color feel more climate grief than white people, because they have historical racial trauma and climate trauma, climate grief sits on top of racial trauma.



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Others say that climate anxiety, climate grief is something that privileged people experience. People of color have always had existential crises. Slavery was an existential crisis and continues to be for our black relatives. And so on, right? The place where I myself have landed in this discussion is captured by this quote by Sarah Ray in a Scientific American article. She says climate anxiety by itself seems more applicable to folks who haven't experienced other existential crisis threats. Communities--people of color communities she means here-- that have experienced colonialism, slavery, genocide, dispossession, medical injustice, food insecurity, pollution, exile, they tend to view climate change as just another layer of threat compounding these other longstanding forms of oppression.

So I guess the invitation that I have here for us, if you're listening to this, is please let's be aware of how we are situated. The way a female-bodied person experiences the world fundamentally at a neurobiological level, what's happening in my system, is going to be different from the way a male-bodied person does. The trauma loads are going to be different. It doesn't mean that if we are a white person, we won't have trauma. We might still have come from an alcoholic family where there have been multiple suicides or class-based trauma. It just means we are different. We are unique. As Buddhist practitioners, I think it's our responsibility not to get into comparisons all the time. But just be aware that, yes, there would be some generalized trauma that people like me haven't experienced at all.

And then there are other kinds of trauma that might immediately impact me, right? One more note, this comes from another climate scientist I respect a lot, Dr. Eric Holthaus. He's inviting especially white folks among us to see that climate grief or climate anxiety, without a deep sense of wanting justice, is a gateway to eco-fascism. He says our job is to repair that oppression, repair that marginalization, and make sure we are not offloading our climate grief and anxiety onto someone else in ways that will cause more harm. It's a crucial point. It might feel like this is a side thing, but I see a true warning here from my perspective. When we feel unsafe, this is a fundamental truth, we all become a little conservative. I feel my climate anxiety, my climate grief, I'm gonna create, build more walls. I don't want refugees in my country or my city. I've seen my very privileged city of Boulder, Colorado, go through this process. It's like, people are liberal here, educated here, want to become compassionate. And, when it feels like all people from different racial, economic backgrounds would come into the city, people want to build four walls.



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It's a very important point here. And having said all of this, what I want to come back to: the trauma-informed lens of this work invites us to see that people who seem apathetic or are privileged in our view, what they might actually need to do to begin to hear us, to come to the comfort zone. Right? Remember we talked about how being in panic or numbness zone takes away our ability to relate to each other, to hear each other, to see each other? What they might need to do is to grieve. It's not that they are not suffering. They have built walls around themselves, walls. They want to go numb. Or they want to act from their reactivity.

What we want to come back to is the comfort zone, and my experience is that grieving is essential. Grieving is the composting I'm talking about and we'll talk about some more. In Colorado, when you have to compost your kitchen waste, it doesn't get composted by itself. You have to air the stuff and you have to moisten it. One of our friends from the social permaculture realm says your tears are the moistening that your traumas need to get composted. Yeah? So our task is to create conditions where we can see each other's trauma without judgment. It's a hard one. The activist world in its righteousness sometimes, we get into "Oppression Olympics". We get into this comparison whose trauma is more versus less, and we don't stay open to hearing the other side. So a lot of this trauma-informed lens is dharma with a scientific exterior. It's saying same things. Be patient with each other, give yourself time to tap into your trauma and hear your community's trauma. And let's walk this path together.

Trauma-Informed Engagement

The last part of my slides here is just arguing in a big picture way why we absolutely must be trauma-informed. So I'll make a final argument, if you are not already convinced, why I see this as the most important thing we might be currently neglecting within our climate movement overall. First point, when you talk about climate, some people say, is it game over? Is it too late? And as a climate scientist, I always tell people, no. We have crossed some tipping points. No matter what we do today, we will lose all of ice on the Arctic Circle, that tipping point is tipped, right? It's sure to happen. But there are a lot more. We still have Amazon rainforest. That's like Gaia's lungs. We still have oceans that do their dance and circulate around the planet. They are hurting, but they are not lost. Those tipping points are not crossed. I have a quick map here that I'm not going to explain. This is just a way to show you how many tipping points and systems and processes we have on the planet that maintain our life on earth. So my point is it is not too late to act. However, we do have extremely steep challenges.



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The messaging that I've understood from people who've thought about our current challenges and upcoming challenges is that most important thing we can do to strengthen the climate movement, if you just are used to thinking from the climate perspective, is to fight racism against black and brown people. This quote is from Berkeley law professor Ian Haney Lopez. He didn't say this, these are my additions-- the racism "within and outside" of us. And the point here is that we can't solve for climate crisis now, and then come to racial healing or the other inequities I was talking about. To come back to the trauma lens, what am I trying to say here? What I'm saying is that the task ahead of us is not impossible. Game is not over. It's a steep curve and a curve that is naturally going to induce a sense of shame and guilt.

When you look at all of this, especially if you are someone who hasn't thought about racial injustices, class-based inequities, the first realizations, or even not the first ones, the ongoing realization of what has been happening to our world brings up shame and guilt. And you know what? That shame and guilt combined with our fear of future on the planet, it gives us exactly what created this condition, which is fight, flight and freeze mind. If we just kept operating from this place of guilt and shame, it's going to put us back into that red and blue zone of either panic or numbness. That kind of mindset makes us want to dominate people instead of connection. Instead of being able to hear and relate, see each other, be with each other's grief and connect to each other, this mindset asks us to dominate people.

It makes us want to somehow get attention by being higher in the hierarchy and just keep strengthening that hierarchy. That becomes, I have argued, an engine of oppression that actually further traumatizes all of us human beings, and that is an engine of climate crisis. You see what I'm doing here is very crucial, very important for me. Trauma, shame, guilt, right? These things, if we don't compost them, it's not just that they are burdening us now. If we don't pay attention to them and not bring loving community rituals to take care of our feelings-- our grief, our anger, our fear, our sense of inadequacy, uncertainty--those things are going to recreate the conditions which led to climate crisis, which led to white supremacy. We have to break the cycle, right? And that breaking of the cycle will begin when we slow down, sit with ourselves, sit with our communities and begin to get vulnerable.

The invitation overall is to begin to pay attention to trauma within our bodies and in our communities. And, the goal is that we come to attending to our climate crisis from a place



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of deep love, deep care, deep interconnection, and not reactivity, not the fight and flight and freeze mind, but the connected mind/heart, right? A heart/mind/body that can listen, that can hear each other, that can trust, that can form relationships. Without that ability to connect and form relationships, we are not going to calm down ourselves and we are going to keep perpetrating, as I was saying, the same neurobiological spiritual conditions that led to this crisis.

Kristin Barker:

Beautiful. Beautiful. Thank you. I want to affirm that last point that you just made here that is so consistent really with what we're doing here in the EcoSattva training and with this tradition overall. It is to say that these solutions begin with mind, you know, that these responses begin with the citta, with the heart/mind, with how it is that we are attuning to our world; the beginning of either a reactive, problematic and in Buddhist parlance unwholesome, unskillful response to our situation, or its wholesome opposite. It's connected with further access, not only to the other, as you were saying, but to ourselves, you know, being more thoroughly connected to ourselves and this earthly body, the reality of our mortality, the beauty of this life, you know? Those things are more available to us when we are psychologically safe, we can be more open to challenge, right? Like so many, so many possibilities we avail ourselves to, with that metabolized grief with the integrated being.

Kritee Kanko:

So crucial, Kristin, so crucial what you just said. One of my Zen teachers, Joan [inaudible], once said something, when I first heard it, I was shocked, but it's so true. She said a completely relaxed body is an enlightened body. And it's like when our nervous system is not in fight/flight/freeze kind of reactivity, when you are really settled and relaxed and not reacting. That's when we begin to tap into the mystery that we are, that the universe is. You know, we always talk about interconnection and interbeing as Buddhists, but you cannot access that sense, that embodied sense of interbeing when you are in fight flight or freeze. When we say we are all Buddhas, we are all Buddhas within some realm of that comfort zone, and I don't just mean the superficial comfort zone. The deepest level of neurobiological muscular relaxation is when deeper mystery can emerge, and we need that. We need that so badly. But it will not reveal itself, the Buddha nature will not reveal itself to an agitated, reactive mind. We've got to use our community practices, sangha practices, nature practices to compost this load we are carrying with us, the trauma load. So that's the invitation.



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Kristin Barker:

I want to point to one more dimension of the implications that I'm hearing of what you are sharing here, which is yes, this composting, this metabolization of that which we are carrying at all levels of our being, what you talk about, all the different zones, the widening circle of this self. That process is necessary. And every investment that we make there can change the way we conceive of, design, prioritize climate solutions, right? Who's included in our solutions? What beings, what species, what races, what cultures are part of our solutions, has everything to do with that mind that is conceiving what the problem is and what sufficient solutions look like. So I'm hearing that, and I'm also hearing another implication of what you're saying, that this gives us a lens on how we got here.

This gives us a sense of from where comes this hyper-consumerism, this hyper-individualism, this extreme extraction, this extreme inequality; from where that comes, we can start to see causes and conditions, baby, right? It's those layers of generational trauma. Like what it is that happened to white people in Europe? I do not know <laugh> but it was alienating, right? It was some sense of belonging has been fractured in my white heritage for us to undertake the projects that we have, the domination projects that my people have undertaken. And so I hear that in what you're saying, too, which is there must be accountability, but also a softening and less blame and shame, for how, how did this happen?

Kritee Kanko:

Absolutely. Absolutely. There is a chapter, if we want to keep this reference, in Resmaa Menakem's book, *My Grandmother's Hands*, that speaks exactly to that. How brutal was the European criminal justice system and how people were made criminal suddenly, how they were treated. That just makes me tear up every time I read it. It doesn't undo the fact that collectively people of European descent ended up brutalizing other cultures all over the world, but it does do that softening, which we so badly need. How did these people, this group of people, or their descendants in some cases, but not in others, continue to be so blind to what they are doing to other parts of their own larger body. Right?

So the trauma lens invites us to not put own selves in shame and blame. And also everyone around us is different. Their trauma loads might be different and unique, but you have to slow down for all of this to happen. This is one last thing I want to say here from my side. Bayo Akomolafe, I know you know his body of work, has a common phrase "times are urgent...let's slow down." And part of this slowing down is to tend to our own



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trauma loads. If we don't slow down, if we stay distracted, remain workaholics, we're not going to see our own deep griefs. It's like we muddy the waters. I'm not gonna see what boxes of trauma are hidden in my basement, you know, in this ocean, in this lake. So you have to slow down, wait for some settling to happen through meditation, through singing and chant, and see it for what it is, and bring it up and then compost that instead of putting it in an unconscious, subconscious landfill.

Kristin Barker:

Yes, yes. And you know, your permaculture background is so here, because in this whole piece, the earth is absolutely part of it, right? It's like the earth is calling us for balance, for wholeness, for this recognition of ourselves as interdependent. Not a kind of sacrifice, all the things I have to give up, but to see the truth of my situation, where happiness and wellbeing really comes from, what it is that we can give each other in this moment, how we understand ourselves; and that healthy ecosystems, healthy communities near and far, eco-justice, social justice, are all in self-interest, all in the interest of this self. Right?

Kritee Kanko:

Yeah.

Kristin Barker:

Beautiful. Well, thank you. Thank you, Kritee, for this, it's so, so important to bring this into the EcoSattva training, to see what it is, where we're actually working, internally and externally, and what you've played out here is just beautiful. So my friend, thank you so much.

Kritee Kanko:

Thank you, thank you. I know our interest in bringing up this conversation is mutual, you know, so thank you for this. This is great. Maybe, I don't know what to say, may it help all of us.

Kristin Barker:

Yes. Thank you. Wonderful.



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Dana

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