



One Earth Sangha

Session Five: Introduction

Transcript of EcoSattva Training 2022-23 Video

Agreement

First, a little business. By accepting this document, you agree not to share with anyone who is not registered for the EcoSattva Training. No one is turned away from the training due to lack of funds, so if you would like to share it with someone who cannot afford the registration, please let them know they can [request discounted or free registration](#).

Session Profile

Session Five: Making a Home in Uncertainty

[Session Resources](#)

Speakers in this video

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

Transcript

Welcome to Session Five

Kristin:

Welcome, friends, to Session Five. So it's been a while in coming and here we are. This is where it gets juicy. At this point in our journey, we will all have had hopefully some amount, with wide variation, an opening of our hearts, of the ways that we've been looking at this crisis, even our sense of who we are within it. And having supported yourselves and one another to arrive here, we can take the next step, which is to pause and to remain, to really take the preciousness that we've built up, and to learn to stay with this profound uncertainty, perhaps to metabolize this mind-boggling and heartbreaking situation, to the point of a compassionate clarity. This session takes on that



One Earth Sangha

spiritual task, attending to the openness that we've built up and to listen to it deeply. To attune ourselves to the wordless and to the unfamiliar.

This place in our journey is a place of cultivating transformational change. There's a teacher, Jim Marsden, who works with Otto Scharmer and the Theory U community and he talks about three kinds of change, transformational change being the third kind, and different, either from developmental change or transition state change. So this is what he says: "In developmental change, we grow by adding or developing new skills, or by learning new things which will take us where we want or need to be. With developmental change, we learn new things and grow, but our understanding of ourselves and the world that we are a part of hasn't necessarily changed. In transition state change, a framework commonly used in strategic planning, we assess where we are today, where we want to be in the future "with as much clarity and specificity as possible. And then we look for the gap between where we are now and where we'd like to be, and then we go about the business of closing that gap. Here too, our understanding of ourselves and our world doesn't change. In fact, transition state change is most successful when there are no surprises to how we see and understand ourselves and that world. And then there's transformational change, that occurs when our foundational understanding of ourselves and our world around us significantly shifts. A transformation occurs when we go beyond the bounds of our current understanding and awareness. We cannot think our way through this change, we have to experience our way into it."

So he says in a different part, "Transformational change is forged in the crucibles of doubt and the unknown." So we are making the space, clearing the space, and letting ourselves reside in this deep listening, the space for transformational change. And of course, it's not a one and done. And in fact, in the course of this practice, we hope that we can cultivate, get a knack for the returning, arriving here, and remaining perhaps in various forms, seasonally, monthly, to keep this way clear, as part of our practice. But make no mistake, we are in the realm of deep dharma. We are in the footsteps of the Buddha's journey to come to terms, to align himself in his journey with deep truths, and not just as individuals, but collectively with this world.

The Unknown as Teacher

In some ways, we can see ecological breakdown as a dharma teacher, on the nature of reality itself, and permanent, dependently arising, due to causes and conditions, and sometimes difficult to bear. So in that journey, we can take refuge in this form of dharma.



One Earth Sangha

Our situation, just as it is. Ourselves, just as we are. We can take our seat right in the center, right in the midst of this, as it is, we can admit it all. The stunning global situation, all that we understand, all that we still don't understand, our courage, our fear, echoes of personal dukkha that we might see in the collective situation, the losses already incurred, the predicted losses to come, the structural momentum that keeps it all going, the injustice of it all, the beautiful responses underway, the potential for more, the beauty that cannot be corrupted underneath it all, this exquisite earth, the endless cosmos, and the way it all lands in our hearts. We can admit it all.

We can experiment with being with this, as it is, at the same time, in a kind of paradoxical way, to try and not to know it. This is what we mean when we say we're wanting to make a home with uncertainty. Listening deeply, welcoming the heartbreak, for it is the open willingness, the not knowing heart is required. And that heartbreak is the breaking open, to avail itself for something new. So as you've heard us talk about this before, we're entering into the goo state, this place where the caterpillar gives themselves over to some really mysterious process, transforming from the inside and that is not a giving up but it's giving ourselves over to this process, not a submit but a surrender.

So this letting go is possible and it is promising, it holds promise. It's scary, non-habitual, unfamiliar, and we have to see the skillful means here, and one aspect of that skillful means is the importance of surrendering the critique and the solving. That is, we can, for this time, renounce the judge who sees mistakes, and the planner, who knows what next, and wants to prepare. We can even let go for just this time of what it means to be responding to this crisis. For now, just for now, renouncing fear of the future, hope for the future. Why? Because when we move away from the immediacy of our experience to what's happened or what's next, we're precluding ourselves from fresh understanding. Pema Chodron says in *The Wisdom of No Escape*: "The truth that you believe in and cling to makes you unavailable to hear anything new."

So we want to make ourselves available. We want to allow a different understanding of who we take ourselves to be, who we take the other to be, the universe, what's going on here. These complexes, these ways that we defend against that vulnerability, can be very robust, these complexes of thought and emotion can be very strong and for good reason. Remember, we were talking before with Kritee about how climate is in some ways traumatizing, so of course, we have, these familiar, and in some ways, helpful ways of holding it at bay, so we can bring mindfulness to that phenomenon, that ways in which we hold it back, so we can watch the mind as it moves to recrimination of self and others,



One Earth Sangha

and see that as some, as a kind of false refuge, blaming others, shaming ourselves, shaming my people, shaming my race, shaming all of humanity, a scourge upon the earth. Can we see how this functions to manage against vulnerability and uncertainty.

We can watch the rush to the known, just how the future will be, positive or negative visions. Perhaps the terrible outcome itself can be a false refuge—I know exactly where this is going, so let's get on with it. See how this too, functions to manage against vulnerability and uncertainty. So for now, in this time, supported so much by the work that you've done to get to this place by one another, can we give up all the strategies? Can we have this empty bowl that can receive? It is this disoriented state that is available to be reshaped. Truly responsive, aligned with deeper truths because it made itself available.

So what might that look like? Upaya, what are the skillful means? Opening with compassion, releasing, and soothing our way into this. Taking time, going slow, and friends, bring on the metta, bring on the loving kindness, the compassion for yourself, for everyone in the room, for everyone who's in this training, for everyone who's turning towards this, for everyone who's not turning towards this. This is so hard, for all the humans who are in one way or another, struggling with this, as it is. Bringing a big container, allowing the difficult experience as it arises. The fear, the grief, the anger. Bringing kindness, keeping the container wide, and widening it to contain whatever it is that's difficult, as big as that container needs to be.

One of my teachers, Catherine McGee, talks about the presence that can see fear as fear is itself not caught in fear, and can hold fear. The presence that can see grief, is not caught in grief and can hold grief. So with anger and despair, so in that relating, in the holding of the difficult emotion, we can ask what is needed, bringing so much kindness, keeping the mindfulness strong, as you listen to your inner wisdom, watching the movement, the mind's natural movement, to blame or wanting to know what will happen next. Perhaps releasing even the idea of what it means to be attuned and aligned. That's how available we want to make ourselves.

And there is so much support here, trusting your basic goodness, trusting what might be possible here, sitting right in the midst of all of this, as it is. And trusting all those who are in this place that we are in this together. We're allowing the difficulty of our situation to be exactly what it is, and can we see how that itself can lead to, and kind of make available for ourselves, this courage, as brutal as our situation might be. We can be motivated, perhaps more intensely than we were ever gonna be, to make ourselves



One Earth Sangha

available for the remaking, for this transformational change. That's not to put a good news, spiritual bypass on the whole calamity of it, but it is to say, can we see how this thing is motivating us to become transformed? We can be supported, trust and abide in this surrender and then listen deeply. So you might take some extra time in this period, before this session and the next, to really be with this, really support yourself in that contact.

Introducing Lama Willa

So we have with us a wonderful guest today. Lama Willa Baker, has been really one of the key teachers in the space of EcoDharma for quite some time now, in Natural Dharma Fellowship, in Cambridge Massachusetts, and her Wonderwell Center that she helped found in New Hampshire, in the Tibetan tradition, bringing all this beautiful, these practices, these ways of bringing in, such a mystical depth. She's really the perfect person in my view and in Lou's view, to help us hold this space. So we're so excited to go into that conversation and look forward to being in relationship with you as you respond to her teachings and what's on offer here. So, as always, I'm gonna invite you to check out the practices, to really lean into those three refuges. The RAIN acronym, that some of you may be familiar with, recognize, allow, investigate, and nurture, really really well-suited for where we are in this process, and the other practices that are listed there. So, thank you, friends, for coming this far with us in the journey, and really, really just so tenderly want to support you, in holding this for yourself, and for each other, as we invite this transformational change.

Dana

We hope you have found this transcript helpful. We invite you to help offset the cost to produce this transcript and the rest of the training by [making a donation to One Earth Sangha](#). Whatever you offer will be used wisely and is deeply appreciated.