



One Earth Sangha

Welcome - Session One

Lou Leonard, Kristin Barker

Transcript of EcoSattva Training 2023-24 Video

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Session Profile

Session One: Arriving and Setting a Course

[Session Resources](#)

Speakers in this video

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

Transcript

Welcome from Lou

Lou Leonard:

Hello everyone, and welcome to the EcoSattva Training. I'm Lou Leonard, and with Kristin Barker we're co-founders of One Earth Sangha. As we begin this journey together, I want to share some reflections on the why, the what and the how of this training.



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So I've spent my professional life working within the climate and environmental movements, working for the US government, serving as head of climate change for one of the largest civil society organizations in the world. And now, I lead a university school of sustainability training the next generation of environmental leaders. But these moments when I have the privilege to join you as we launch a new edition of the EcoSattva Training feels like one of the most important things any of us can do. So why does this work feel so important to me? Because I believe the climate crisis and the other social and ecological crises that we face today are at their root, emotional and spiritual crises. Of course, there are important scientific, economic, technological dimensions, cultural issues. But what stands in the way of a safer and more healthy future, as I see it more than anything else, is how our hearts and minds react to these crises. So the fact that you've chosen to participate in this training, to take on this root cause, is all too rare and so vital. So thank you for being here.

And what we will do as aspiring EcoSattvas is choose to face the enormously complex and overwhelming times in which we live. Times of fire throughout Eastern Canada, Southern Europe, South America. Times of flood in New York City and Libya. Times of fear in political systems struggling to hold a space for democratic decision-making and long delayed justice. And we will practice ways to respond skillfully to these challenges because hidden within the bigness of these crises are the keys to facing them. Because these challenges are so big, they can only be held within expanded hearts, open minds and caring community, in Sangha. And cultivating qualities of heart and mind are things we know how to do, something we will do together in this training.

One of the things that makes this work so hard is the way the ground seems to be shifting under our feet so constantly. It can be hard to even feel like we understand these crises, let alone be in a position to respond to them or respond skillfully. Just a couple of years ago when we updated this training, it seemed to me that we were in the midst of a major shift, perhaps a crossroads from a time of waiting for climate change to arrive, to beginning to feel its power on a regular basis. From a time of setting goals and trying to get climate on the global and national agendas, to a time of doing the hard part of implementing goals and seizing political moments. But as I reflect today here in 2023, it feels less like a crossroads and more like being on a long road across a broad, maybe desert plain, a road where we must move ahead without knowing where the next crossroads is, where the next turn or milestone may be.



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In fact, many of the milestones that I used to use to mark my way ahead, my sense of where we needed to get to, are somehow behind us. It's been eight years since the Paris Climate Change Agreement was reached, even that what sometimes felt like a mirage of meaningful climate legislation in the United States, we see that behind us, although there's always more work to do on the policy side. But this road seems so long ahead even with those key milestones behind us. And I find this new reality in some ways much more complex to hold than when reaching for clear milestones, because this moment, perhaps our greatest risk is that we move from a culture of denial to one of despair, or worse, resignation.

As we live the extreme reality of climate and ecological social crises every day, it can begin to feel commonplace. We become numb to the truth or our overly adaptive human selves, and we're so good at this, we reset our sense of what is normal. As anger and fear arise as they do for me, and they will, we risk falling into a mindset of blame, maybe even hatred of others, of ourselves, even of all of humanity. And as society attempts the largest intentional transformation in human history across all sectors of our economy at all scales, it can be hard to find those new meaningful milestones, reliable ways of feeling like we're making enough progress. So how we face these risks and prepare ourselves to stay engaged and respond appropriately in these times is so important. I think doing so requires four capacities which we will explore in this training.

First, the endurance to stay connected to the growing harm and suffering from these crises without getting stuck in despair or numbed resignation. Second, the steadiness to face the inherent uncertainty of this age, the complexity of the transformation without getting stuck in confusion. Third, the determination, some might call it faith, to let ourselves care so deeply and give ourselves as fully as possible to this work without getting caught up in needing to know whether we will succeed. In other words, without getting overly attached to outcomes, we can see or touch or directly associate with our efforts. And lastly, we need the buoyancy of heart to keep joy and awe accessible by truly accepting ourselves as a small but vital part of the living earth community. By feeling a sense of wonder and belonging that comes with being connected to a growing community of life, responding to these times, this joy can be within reach. You might notice that these capacities aren't ones you can develop in an engineering class or a courtroom, though that kind of work is needed too. These are capacities of the heart and mind. So cultivating them is not about reaching individual milestones, but layering on, strengthening, and nurturing ourselves and one another. And this training is a place



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designed to support that kind of transformation, a journey that can sometimes feel individual, but can only be truly done in community, in Sangha.

Okay, deep breath. Kristin will say more now about the specific elements of this new edition of the training, but spoiler alert, I'm really excited about some of the new teachers we have the joy of working with in this edition of the training. But most importantly, I'm so glad you are here to walk this path of discovery, this field of cultivation together with us. So I wish you all the things that your heart desires out of this experience to face this world that we live in, this time that we are given, and do so in a way that can be skillful and nourishing. Over to you. Kristin.

Welcome from Kristin

Kristin Barker:

Thank you, Lou. Thank you. It's so good to be doing the training again with you again this year. And I just want to start out by saying welcome, welcome to each and every one of you. Welcome all of you to the EcoSattva Training. I want to welcome every part of you, whether you're excited to be doing this, whether you're a bit hesitant or unsure, whether you're really enthusiastic, relieved, even. Finally, we're doing this, finally we're talking about this. Or maybe you're just feeling reserved. I want to welcome all parts of you, including, with respect to the larger situation we find ourselves in, the angry, the scared, the stuck in anxiousness, the grieving, definitely the scared, definitely the grieving, and also perhaps the guilt-ridden, the ambivalent, the numb. Let's recognize and welcome all of those parts. So very understandable, so very unattended to in the wider culture, unspoken, sent underground. Let us recognize and even honor all of these parts and be interested in them. Give them our attention even in this opening space. So let all those parts be welcomed here, those named and unnamed by me in this opening video. Let them all be welcomed. Even those that can't even be named—the hard to articulate, the hiding under the carpet. Can they be welcomed even if they are only vaguely sensed and included in this space? I want to welcome not just all parts of you, but all kinds of you. We aspire to welcome all gender identities and orientations, all racial and ethnic identities, whether predominant or part of the mix that is you. All abilities that are welcomed here. I want to welcome you whether you are new to Buddha Dharma, mindfulness practices, or maybe you've been doing this for a very long time. Whether you're new to one Earth Sangha, or maybe you've been with us in our community for some time. Whether this is your first encounter with the EcoSattva Training or whether you've done it before and are returning perhaps with new friends to take this journey



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again, or maybe you're actually facilitating a group in this. You are welcome. All of you are welcome. Whether the places in you and the identities that are part of you feel easy connection to these kinds of spaces or whether that's difficult. Yeah, I want to welcome all these identities, the parts of us that go underground and make sure that they at least have the invitation to belong.

I am so grateful for you taking this journey at such a time. We are bringing what we hope will be skillful means to support your experience and sufficient safety. And yet we will falter, we will falter in that aspiration, especially when it comes to the limited ways in which I and Lou and our team do not see and appreciate and understand. I invite you to share with us what needs to be changed here, both in form and content, that will support your sufficient safety, belonging, and the unfoldment of what is on offer here. So whether you are part of a group, a Sangha, a Dharma center, or taking this training as an individual, we are so grateful that you are here.

We come together here amidst a great acceleration in the manifestations of ecological crises. Just as Lou was saying, we're finding ourselves in a very unstable, uncertain moment. Life on earth has always been uncertain, but this uncertainty is now for life as a whole, and that is deep and difficult to be with—underway for decades, if not centuries, if not millennia. The reality of inescapable human caused changes in earth's life systems is, if you will, now undeniable.

So why are we doing this? Why Buddhism? Why mindfulness? Why this? It bears asking with all the work that needs to be done, why would we spend our time here on these kinds of questions, these kinds of cultivations. With your time and energy, you could be doing so much. Why spend it here? Well, because of the power of our minds, our perceptions, our conceptions about who and what we are and what we need about the outcomes of our pursuits, these, we submit, play an outsized role, enormous in what is happening right now with life on earth. The human mind and these aspects of mind, play an enormous but largely misunderstood role in our predicament. In dominant culture, these are my people, we are confused. We are confused about our very nature, about what we actually need to be well, what we need to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives. I'm using the word "we" here, but of course, I'm speaking only about those who are like me in these ways and that needs qualification, especially given the enormous unearned privileges that have supported me throughout my life. Including a stable climate, my race, my economic status, my abilities, my health, citizenship, cisgendered identity. As a queer woman, I have only a marginal sense of systemic marginalization. So I want to be careful



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in ways that I will inappropriately generalize, and worse normalize, my experience. Rather, I wish to speak to and about my people — those of us here who have been conditioned, not by choice, by the way, into this way of looking, that separates and objectifies self, other and world.

So we come together to investigate the role of heart-mind, in Pali, *citta*. These heart-minds so available, so responsive, so amazing, so subjected to conditioning. It is astounding to me, at least with all of our astounding capabilities, that even as we see the manifestations all around us of nature in trouble, of life on earth, in the midst of a big pinch, this culture, we just can't seem to extract ourselves from this extractive relationship with earth and her precious beings. And this to the detriment of all that truly sustains us, at core what we most deeply love.

So that situation might make us who can see it in these ways or choose to see it in these ways, it might make us angry, mystified, overwhelmed, terrified. Yes, yes. But with a certain kind of attending and even honoring of those responses, we can be interested in how this would become, what would give rise to such a situation, the enormous influence of human perception and response. So we situate ourselves in bringing together to this moment on earth, Buddhist wisdom and practices that have been, over the ages, adapted and interpreted and interact with the cultures as they move around the world and arrive here in what we might call “modernity” or “western culture” or the “dominant culture”. The Buddhist insights into ways that mind constructs our sense of ourselves and what we need, what we think we need, we suggest has enormous implications for this moment on planet earth. These teachings, again, we submit, are largely untapped for their potential to support us in understanding with compassion and accountability, three things: How did we get here? How can we possibly be with this? And what might truly helpful response look like for us, individually and collectively?

Those three questions, we suggest, are worthy of our time, attention, exploration, curiosity, investigation, including the mistakes we habitually make about self, other and world. Supporting ourselves in clear seeing and the compassion that can so easily arise with clear seeing. What I have noticed again and again in my life, the power of clear seeing. The power when we really understand what's happening in our own hearts and even the heart of another, we can quite naturally abandon that which perpetuates harm. I didn't even know that I was contributing to harm, and now I see it and ooh, I don't want to do that. No one had to convince me, no one had to judge me. Because it turns out people don't like to be judged. We kind of resist that in all kinds of ways. But with clear



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seeing, the veil falls and we see that which perpetuates harm and also naturally pursue that which truly helps. Priority shifts.

So in this space, we begin by turning towards what is so unwelcome in so many settings, which is the topic itself. This thing that goes unspoken, the silence, the unskillful silence that is so much a part of this. We begin by naming, speaking, moving into, bringing — yes, compassion to the difficult emotions, but also then curiosity. We look at the underlying causes as well as the complex interactions that make what we might call the polycrisis, as has been named, I think beautifully by so many others. We explore the ways of looking and the practices that can root us deeply amid shifting sands. Amid shifting sands, one's roots have to go deep to remain stable in this enormously uncertain time, being a human on planet earth right now.

These teachings and practices will be explored with the help of tremendously gifted and courageous teachers, as well as practices and inquiries, and you'll see all that in the next video, I'm going to talk about all of that as well, give you a sense of how this will unfold. But in the face of the forces that would have us shrink, and close, and attack, and defend, and protect me and mine and my own, we believe that it is essential to cultivate and nourish hearts and minds that are expansive, open, steady, generous, clear, and fiercely without bias, compassionate. These noble qualities need support to arise and develop and expand. We aspire to offer here just that, the support for your Bodhisattva, your wise heart-mind, that generous want for the wellbeing of self, other and world to arise and develop.

So thank you for undertaking this, for supporting yourself. And even if you're doing it as an individual, supporting one another. We are giving ourselves a language and a community around this. We don't do this alone. Okay, and let's just say it is a strange thing to be offering these teachings about connecting with earth over prerecorded time-delay digital media. Can we just embrace the irony of that? We do hope that you will join us in the real time monthly live gatherings that build community for all those who have taken the EcoSattva Training and are currently part of it. And that we hope that you who are in small groups really explore, and the next session, we'll talk a lot more about this, but really support yourselves and one another, and giving yourselves time to land, and situate, and get to know each other, and support that which is so underserved in my culture, in dominant culture, the development and support of rich and meaningful community.



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So on behalf of Lou, again, welcome from both of us and from the team at One Earth Sangha, like the amazing team at One Earth Sangha. We look forward to your participation and to your feedback, and we really mean that. We want to hear from you how it's going, how we can make what we're doing here supportive, such that you can participate fully. So in the next video, I'll give you a sense of the arc of the journey and what the sessions look like. But for now, welcome, welcome, welcome. Thank you.

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.