



One Earth Sangha

# Session Two: Introduction

Transcript of EcoSattva Training 2023-24 Video

## Agreement

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## Session Profile

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Session Two: Cultivating the Conditions for Transformation

[Session Resources](#)

## Speakers in this video

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

## Transcript

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### **Kristin:**

Hi everyone, and welcome to Session Two of the EcoSattva Training. It's good to be with you again. So in this second session, we're going to be exploring the territory that we're already in to some degree more deeply. And in these practices that are part of Session Two, we're going to be encouraging you to do two things, and this is really important. So first of all, it's to go about in a fairly purposeful way, identifying and nourishing those vital resources that can support you throughout this journey. Whether it's the classic framing of the refuges, the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, or whatever it is that gives you support. Because we're going to need it.

This is a difficult undertaking. And to have those resources at the ready, it's really important. So, for instance, we could take that Buddha, Dharma, Sangha outline and look



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at all the different ways we might interpret that. We could identify those resources maybe within each, if we see these as categories. So: Buddha as this fundamental potential for wisdom, for steadiness, for compassion. Maybe it's Kuan Yin, the bodhisattva with a thousand arms who can meet any moment of suffering, hearing the cries of the world and responding with all the tools at her disposal, at their disposal.

Maybe it's a particular historical figure who inspires you, who calls, wakes up something deep in you, your own sense of that kind of wisdom, that kind of capacity. Or maybe it's a teacher or a friend, or your own goodness. All of these are under that heading of a kind of Buddha as refuge. A place that we can go and turn to when the squeeze is on.

Or Dharma: we might take the heading of Dharma as truth or the wisdom itself. The insights, that wonderful capacity that we have to recognize truth and to find some relief in that, even when the truth itself is unwelcome, when it's bad news, something in us can be aligned when we recognize, ah, yeah, that's true, kind of been there all along. And something in us can kind of open up and flow more freely. We can have access, then, to deeper truths.

So there's something about aligning ourselves with what is wise and true that really is a capacity that we can turn towards and take refuge in. It could be the wisdom teachings themselves that call to you again, whether it's Buddhadharma or some other traditions or truthful body of work that is supportive to you. Perhaps a body of poetry or the writings or speeches of particular people who have named something that you want to turn to and say, yeah, that's what I'm going to rest on--that recognition. So that can all fall under the heading of Dharma.

And then there's Sangha, this community, perhaps a spiritual community in particular, really good friends or family connections. It's the other people who can resonate with you in your life or the more than human world, that can reflect and open up something in you. That's a sense of connection, of being met, of finding yourself not alone. This is where we must have the social fabric in our lives. Again, it can be the human or the more than human world that can support us in remaining, that can sustain us. The places perhaps that we love, whether near or far.

So it is to know these, to identify them, to contact them, to name them, and to sort of develop them, because as I said before, these are the places that we need to go when the squeeze is on, when things get difficult and can feel sometimes overwhelming, this



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emotional territory, this landscape that we're moving into. So we need to pack our bags and be ready with those, and be able to turn toward them when necessary.

And that takes us to the second piece that we're going to do here in terms of the practices, which is to begin, just begin to make space to open up to that which we have probably like, like me, like many of us been carrying at various levels of our psyche, like a kind of psychological tax or emotional weight, a bag of painful, difficult experiences and, and, and identify them to turn to just begin to turn to meet them. Oh, who's here, what's going on internally, whether those be fear grief, shame, anger, guilt. It's to open up to these experiences and to allow them to have their energetic expression to be met on their own terms and supported by our spiritual resources to be held, to be honored, even with compassion, as a kind of intelligence, as a reflection of our own good heart, of our love.

And so critical in that skill is to not follow the thoughts that come with them. We're not going to hate the thoughts, but it's really just to give the experience of the emotion as much space as possible. To note the thoughts: "Oh, there's the thought that goes with this experience," but to not chase that. It's important here that the mindfulness is strong, that is, you can really feel in your seat, in contact with that which grounds you, whether it's the breath or your pelvis or the awareness of the space around you, so that we can move in and out skillfully with these difficult territories. So we move in, we make contact, and then we sense, "Oh, I'm getting a little overwhelmed. Let me back up, let me call on those resources. Not going to do this alone."

Because what's possible for us is to make contact with these intense emotions and to be with them. It's a kind of razor-like experience at the beginning where we just fall off to this side or that side. But we find that if we can remain with that difficulty, it can sort of, almost like a weight is on it, and it can start to flatten out. And so the shape of it starts to collapse a little bit and we can remain there with practice more easily. So what was a razor's edge becomes somewhat flattened, easier to remain with, and then it can become almost concave, if you will. Even, we can find a bit of a home there with that difficulty, feeling really supported by those resources even held with that difficulty. And it's raw. What Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche called that quivering heart.

So the natural tendency is to slide off to one side or the other. So that is to say, some fear without that kind of emotional support can become deep anxiety or even terror. We might undermine our ability to connect with others, with the Earth, with our own good heart. And so that fear can also turn into a kind of activism that's unrooted, reactive, exclusively,



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exclusively an expression of that fear. Similarly, some amount of anger and aversion without sufficient support can slide off into deep rage, where we might turn into blaming the other or shaming ourselves. A kind of internal fracturing can happen. Or maybe that difficult experience is sadness. And without capacity to remain, it can be sliding off into overwhelming grief, which might turn to despair, a kind of resignation. "It's too late."

What distinguishes those offramps from the raw emotion is that those thought forms are really bound up in them. So that's why we want to note the thinking, the thought that goes with it, and just watch it go by, and stay with the raw energy to get to know it, to be interested in it, to actually inventory: what are the thoughts that are here? But not to follow them, so we can respect the kind of intelligence that's there. We can end up bowing to fear, to sadness, to anger. When we get to know it, we can give it space and have that kind of intimacy where we're not afraid of feeling. Perhaps we'll even contact some kind of love or connection, the goodness that often can lie below these difficult emotions. So it's possible to work with these challenges and transform them to really become adept at metabolizing them.

They will arise again and again and again for us, no matter how far along we are on this journey. And we just get more skillful with being reactive, not believing all the thoughts that come with them, discovering the wisdom that's there and letting that show us what is needed. So those are the kind of practices that we'll be inviting you into. And make no mistake, this is critical work, and itself a kind of positive contribution. A constructive response doesn't seem like it matters that much, but one way of seeing where we are collectively right now is this, that we're in kind of a meta feedback loop where we as a species have yet to fully face our collective impact on the planet. And that avoidance as a defense strategy against these very difficult emotions is itself significantly contributing to the crisis. So we have the geophysical phenomena, we have our avoidance as a defense strategy, collective humanity, not all individuals, but a lot of us. And that lack of coming to terms is now a significant driver contributing to the crisis. So this matters, these practices matter and they are at the root of skillful, constructive response.

So it's possible for us to face this reality. That's the first thing that I want to invite, is to allow for the possibility that we can face this, to embrace our individual and collective roles in a conscious, compassionate, and ethical response.



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