



One Earth Sangha

# Session Five: Introduction

Transcript of EcoSattva Training 2023-24 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

---

### Turning Towards

**Kristin:**

Greetings dear friends. Welcome to session five. Here we're making a home in uncertainty. Does that just sound impossible right there from the start? Maybe. Maybe. And I want to begin in my offering to appreciate that you are here. We have arrived at the deepest point, the nadir of our journey together, and you haven't given up. You're still present. You're already doing something so unusual, so radical, and what we at One Earth Sangha here believe is so necessary. So thank you. Thank you for your investment, your time, your attention, however it's gone. Just can we appreciate ourselves and one another for making it to this point.



## One Earth Sangha

And I also want to, as part of that return again to this, it can't be said enough, the dramatic implications of being willing to turn towards what has happened, what is happening, so unusual, so necessary, breaking this upward spiral of the ecological destruction that breeds the turning away, the denial, soft forms and hard forms of that, that very turning away causes us to make the decisions that further the destruction. And because it's even harder now, there's more denial and it just gets worse and worse. So what we are doing here is cutting that dynamic. You are part of that because of the acts that you do in the world that come from that and what those acts signal, what words come from you, what those words signal to the larger culture. Do not under appreciate that. We are living in a time when that turning away has immeasurable support. There are industries for distraction. There are cultures not just for denial, but cultures that send the signal *this is intolerable*.

That word intolerable. It's revealing of what's possible for us. Might we be confusing the moral call for meaningful and just response with a kind of demand for emotional battle? Intolerable. Wow. How disabling is that of this being? I cannot tolerate this. Wow. I get why you might want to say it that way, but think about the reverberations, the signals that sends internally and externally. What's the alternative? I go back again and again to how Thích Nhất Hạnh describes mindfulness as the miracle of mindfulness. The miracle of mindfulness just points to the potency of that, of all that mindfulness might yield for us, for this world. So yes, this is happening with climate change and other ecological crises and the social reverberations of those and the interaction with other social ills. There is and will be so much suffering.

### Clear Seeing as the Ground for Response

This is the situation I find myself in. Am I in a struggle with that very reality itself? What the Buddha revealed about the mind and heart, the Citta, is that as long as there is a tension with our conditions, with our reality, as long as there is a not wanting, what gets translated is aversion, we are likely to be reacting, acting from that struggle itself wherein we do not have access to our full capacity. If we want then to be useful to ourselves in this world, to respond with dedication, devotion, with a robust unshakeable, fierce, courageous response even, we need to act from a place of clear seeing. And that means recognizing and working with very understandable aversion. Of course, we want to fight with that reality, the temptation to do that. There's so much support for it and it would be very normal for us to do that. But what is possible when we can find another way of



## One Earth Sangha

relating to that reality? To our reality? So what happens for you when I say that? Do you have concerns? I know I do.

So here are a few. Does accepting what is happening condone it? Seems like maybe it does. Not necessarily. Here's my invitation. Give yourself a chance to discover the dynamics of aversion itself in this. Because like all suffering, ecological crises not only call for a dharma response, but they teach the dharma. So with reference to this reality, can I come to understand the dynamics of aversion itself? How it shrinks and hardens a self over here that is fighting with the reality over there, that the signals that it sends that I'm not okay until this is different. I can't be okay. I need to not be okay. But experiment my friends. Find out. You don't have to commit to it for a lifetime. Just take this opportunity. If that's a new way of framing for you, to discover what happens when we are not fighting with the reality of what's happening. We actually accept this is happening. Find out.

Another possibility, another concern that you might have, won't accepting that this is happening dissipate in some way the energy that I have to respond to change the course of events? Instead of a warrior for the Earth won't I become a lump on a log? It seems like maybe I might. Not necessarily. Again, just take an opportunity to work with your mind, even just sitting on your cushion, even just in a place of quietness, not in a moment where action is demanded. Experiment. What happens? Find out.

### An Invitation to Listen

And so necessary in this then is the practice of mindfulness itself. The cultivation, the invitation to and the cultivation of loving presence. A willingness to slow down and be with what is arising. To care for this that is in difficulty without believing the thoughts that come along, especially the judgmental ones or the narrative foreclosures or any kind of predictive ones about where this might go. Just to arrive, to be here as teacher Akincano who calls this, I love how he talks about Calm the baby. Calm the baby. Calm the baby. Calm the baby. Hello my dear, my love. Yes, this is hard to be with. I will stay here with you.

Let's remember our resources, our refuges. Remember to locate the suffering within the field of the body, to soothe this heart, to perhaps widen the container, the space, soften the edges, titrating. All these skillful practices that can help us to chill, to ground, to work through that reactivity as we work with it so that we may perhaps learn to come to terms.



## One Earth Sangha

And it's not just to be peaceful or chill at that point, there's so much more on offer here, in that place. We can avail ourselves to the wisdom that is beyond the reach of the reactive mind. We don't know what wisdom this body holds, what wisdom these practices can lead us toward, can reveal what is possible for this heart and mind when we're in that struggle with reality.

So I invite you to soothe that very understandable struggle to calm and ground this being and then to listen. Listen and perhaps discover something deeper. The paradox that we live with in our Buddhist practices that yes, there is so much that needs to be done. Yet how do we do the things that really matter, that really help? We can't just pay attention to the doing. We need to pay attention as Lama Willa will invite us to the being. We're living our way, stumbling, fumbling perhaps our way into a different way of being, doing, of living. A seed buried in the dark earth under the right conditions will break through its protective shell and send a sprout in the right direction, searching for the surface, and we'll find the warm sun so that it can become part of the forest and do its work of contributing to that forest, of producing and reproducing. What a miracle. For me, this is so inspiring because it points to something that we can really trust that's not really about what we do in this field, but it's what maybe wants to come through, given the right conditions. Trust that the discovery of doing will come.

That is the invitation for this session five here at this deepest point in the journey. Here we're nourishing the soil, raking up the rocks that are at and maybe below the surface so that the deep seeds of devoted response can sprout and find their way to the light. These are just some of the images and ways in. You may have your own. Lama Willa Blythe Baker is here for us to support us in this slowing down, grounding, this opportunity to discover, to listen for, listen deeply from this place. I wish you well my friends. Thank you for your practice.

## 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.