

The Mechanics of Peace Peace Within; Peace Without

by Stewart Blackbuirn

The very idea of peace is so delicious that we happily say that's what we want on all levels. We want world peace, peace of mind, peace in our families, and to rest in peace when we die. And while we make all the right noises about peace, most of us seem to do everything we can to avoid it.

When we look at what the experience of peace is, we find that it is more than the absence of conflict, it is the enjoyment of a deep relaxation that is not easily shattered. It is the acknowledgment that everything is just fine the way it is. It is allowing the moment, the day, the year to change and evolve without the need for criticism or disappointment. That is to say, it is growing and moving within our own natural rhythms, accepting and enjoying the life in front of us.

And why shouldn't we? If we are indeed creating our own reality, initiating the experiences we have with the thoughts and feelings we hold, then why wouldn't we be making life so delightful that we could enjoy peace whenever we wanted to?

For some people, this peace comes from the Divine, and only if certain thoughts and beliefs are firmly held. For others this peace is an ideal that we wish for in humanity, but that is out of reach for most of mankind. For others it is to be found by relinquishing all desires and motives that lead to disappointment and distress.

In terms of world peace, this longed-for experience is rare and generally unsustainable. In spite of all the peace treaties that have been made throughout the ages, world peace is no closer now than it ever was, perhaps even less so. Do we have human traits like greed, stupidity, psychological hurts, or even climate change to blame? Even peace within a family is challenging in the best of them. Why is this peace so hard to find and maintain?

I would like to suggest that all peace, of whatever kind and in whatever arena, has to begin in the heart of the individual. No one is going to be effective in being a peacemaker if they are themselves in turmoil. No one is going to accept peace if they are inwardly afraid. Okay then, afraid of what? The list of things to be afraid of is long and increases with the use of each person's imagination. We can find things to be afraid of as easily as pointing a finger.

What seems to be common amongst all of these fears is that we are worried that something might happen to us. That is, we don't trust that we will be okay given the apparent randomness and malevolence in our outside world. This is, of

course, a function of not really believing that we are creating our own reality. If we stop and look at these fears and say, “I am creating this reality with the fears I am holding,” then at least we are taking responsibility for the experiences we have as a result of feeding these fears. The stuff of peace comes from changing the beliefs we are holding that are making us afraid.

Our feelings come primarily from our thoughts. Thoughts that we hold onto are beliefs, and these generate consistent feelings in our lives. For instance, if we have a belief that we have to work hard in order to make the money we need for survival and enjoyment, then anything that threatens our ability to work hard generates fears about obtaining our money.

The irony is in the cause and effect assumptions we have about how the world works. If we assume that our happiness or peace is the result of the realities that we have created, then we are working from the outside in and we simply react to the circumstances we find ourselves in. But when we look at the outer experiences as a function of what we are creating within, from our thoughts and feelings, then we can see the correlation between the inner world and the outer one.

So, peace in our outer world depends on the inner peace we create. And we do that by letting go of the things that disrupt that peace. The first of these things is, of course, criticism. Criticism doesn't work to make us any better. In fact, its effect is just the opposite. It robs us of our self-esteem and self-confidence and makes something exterior more important than what we are feeling about ourselves. Any kind of criticism says that there is something wrong here. That declaration undermines any peace we may have achieved.

We also need appreciation, gratitude, and an unqualified acceptance of what is, in so far as we can tell. This includes all aspects of who we are. For inner peace we also need quiet alone time, the space to be with ourselves. Without the distractions of the world, we can get to know who we are and revel in the joys of self-discovery. Peace comes when we allow it to arise.

I wish you and the whole world peace in the greatest measure! May we all find our own peace in such abundance that we share it generously!

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