

The Inner Skills of Peace

by Stewart Blackburn

These days it's easy to see that the world needs much more peace and most of us want to see that come about quickly. So, let's remember how we go about bringing more peace into the world. From a shamanic perspective the basic process goes like this: we get ourselves into a focused state of peace, energize that state with our feelings, and then release that energy out into the world. If we do this with strong intention and often enough, we are bound to impact the world.

However, we must not overlook the energy we are putting out into the world when we're not thinking about it. That energy has an effect as well. If we are contributing chaotic, disruptive, and hostile energy over the course of our day, any consciously intended higher energy will only go toward counteracting our unconscious contributions.

To maintain a focus of peace in our energy field and to build a strong focus of peaceful energy to send out, we need to be mindful of what is making for peace within us and what is taking that peace away. Here are some things I think we need to remember:

Reducing Anger

With so much anger evident in our world everywhere, it might be hard to believe that anger is almost never justified, and it is always detrimental to all concerned. Anger is based on the idea that someone or something else has done something unwarranted to us. Something happens to us that we don't like, and we look around for the person, or thing, to blame. We feel righteous anger that we were wronged, and things won't be right until we get an apology or some form of restitution or retribution.

This is an approach to things we don't like that we learned at an early age. We either learned to let everyone know that we were wronged, or we suppressed that anger. At some point many people learn that other people have feelings too and that there are often very good reasons why

we didn't get what we wanted. At that point we can say, "Oh, I understand why you did that. I may not agree with it, but I get it."

But, many people don't seem to grow out of the child's temper tantrum stage, and they continue to get angry and blame others whenever they don't get what they want.

The skill of peace here is to investigate why things didn't go the way we wanted them to and to accept this. We can choose to be disappointed, but that's not much better than getting angry; we can choose to let it go as being of insufficient importance to disrupt our energy and happiness; or we can choose compassion for all concerned and allow our peace to be shared with everybody. There are many other choices that we can make, but the important piece here is to not ever allow anger to injure our peace. It's just not worth it.

Accept Change

Whether we like it or not, everything changes. If we allow ourselves to become unhappy with change, then we are fighting against the nature of life, a losing battle at best. The skill of peace demands that, first, we expect things to change. We know from the outset that happily-ever-after is a dangerous deception. *Everything* changes. All pleasures come to an end. Life is a stew of growth and decay leading to a final change of realities.

Grief, an intense emotion that often overwhelms us, is in fact a resistance to change. We recover from grief when we finally accept in our heart that things have changed. The fact that we didn't want things to change has very little to do with anything.

The second thing that the art of peace demands in this regard is that we accept change as it comes, and we adapt to it as quickly as we can. This is often expressed as the wisdom of not becoming attached to things. I think, however, that it's fine to become attached whenever we like; we just must realize that we will lose whatever we are attached to at some point. If we can accept that, then we are able to thoroughly enjoy people and things while we can.

Accept that we are perfectly fine human beings just as we are

We will always have a hard time accepting anybody else or be okay with what they do if we can't accept ourselves and be okay with what we do. We don't have to be perfect; in fact, there is no advantage to being perfect even if it were possible. We are unique individuals, and our individuality is what makes us valuable to the rest of the world. We do and see things differently and that allows for growth and creativity. We give the world new perspectives and ideas that help us all.

There is no virtue in conforming and doing things in ways that everyone else has been doing things. We are meant to explore life and to question everything. Squelching that impulse destroys our sense of peace and our natural freedom. We can't be at peace unless we feel free to be who we are. That may take some courage to go against other people's ideas about how we should live our lives, but this is an essential skill for our own peace and happiness.

The peace that we so urgently want for the world must start within us. And only by paying attention to what we are feeling and what things are influencing how we feel, can we take charge of the peace within us. We have the power to help bring peace to the world, but only if we start with our own internal peace.

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