

## COME DOWN FROM YOUR MOUNTAIN

I own the yoga mat and the Buddhist Shrine, I know how to recite various mantras, I can stand on my head and slow my pulse down to sleeping rate in a few beats yet - at times - I really would struggle to say I was an honest to goodness, through and through, chilled out individual.

Sometimes my kids drive me so crazy I lost my temper in remarkable fashion, not just a little stamp of the foot but a proper 'Here she goes again', full throttle, yell at the top of my voice, rant.

The repetitiveness of the day in, day out yoga classes I teach could leave me feeling a little jaded and sick of the sound of my own voice. The endless cycle of washing, ironing, cooking, cleaning and picking up after everyone can seem too much to bear, and then just a simple thing like being cut up in a traffic queue makes me want to scream 'Let me off I don't want to play this game anymore!' Does that sound familiar? I bet it does; most mums and dads I have met or worked with have moments like those.

So how do we battle through? Do we lurch from one drama to the next, waiting for the moment when they finally fall asleep and you can rest, or do you day-dream about when they grow up and realise they actually have it easy at home and show you some appreciation. Probably! ***But you could try this as a more immediate solution instead:***

### The Practice of Great Compassion

I recently was privileged to meet Ai Peng McBretney, a teacher who hales from the Kadampa Buddhist tradition. With her radiant smile, quick humour and sharp incisive commentary, she showed how an ancient Buddhist teaching had real relevance for us today.

Ai Peng explained that you may have the big house, nice car, perfect body and loving husband or wife. But if one day you lose your job or your health, or someone says something to you that makes you feel sad and attacked, then what? Do you still feel

happy, peaceful, safe and secure? Or does your happiness depend on outside factors such as wealth, stability, relationships and the approval of others?

Well, you may say, 'Of course that will affect my mood, they have taken away my livelihood.' Or, 'He said I was fat and now I feel bad about myself.'

And looking at that from our perspective, of course we will feel bad. We may feel hurt and fearful; we may spend all day turning the comment or the situation over and over in our minds, trying to work out a solution or a reason for the unkind comment. We may lose sleep or our appetite.

Ai Peng pointed out that the common denominator in this suffering was one thing. The one thing that could be changed so that no matter what occurred, we would still maintain a happy peaceful mind. And that one thing was ourselves!

Well, that's a bit of a radical thought to wrap our heads around isn't it?

But stay with this for a moment... you are never going to be able to change other people and their thoughts and behaviours. You can't stop your boss from sacking you or your friend from having a bad day and taking it out on you. This is the nature of life. Everyone experiences suffering and not everyone knows how to deal with it.

*So here is a gift and ancient teaching relevant to you and I, today, here and now.*

### It is called The Practice of Cherishing Others

This is a true story. I want you to *really* place yourself in this situation.

You are on a busy commuter train and a man gets on with his two children, they are really noisy and boisterous. You are feeling hot and tired and grumpy and the children really start to annoy you. What thoughts go through your mind? What might your reaction be to this father who is ignoring his naughty children? You may think he is a bad or lazy father, you may want to tell him to sort out his family. But how would you feel if you found out that an hour before this man had just heard his wife had died? Wouldn't that change the way you feel about that situation. You may

suddenly feel empathy and compassion for this man and his children and you may want to reach out to him and help him with his suffering. Suddenly, this situation does not feel so bad for you now, does it? Because you have seen it from his point of view, you have used compassion.

Take this lesson and apply it in all situations, the boss who has had to sack you is obviously in some trouble himself, the friend who snapped at you is having a bad day herself, your husband is grumpy, maybe he has had some bad news and is worried about something. By always putting yourself in the other person's shoes it is possible to see the other side of the situation.

Come down from the mountain of 'I' and come to the mountain of 'you' or 'others'.

She was not suggesting this is an easy thing to do. But if you do manage to take yourself out of the equation when you feel attacked or fearful then you stop the suffering you are experiencing. And therefore you find a peaceful state of mind.

'Don't take my word for it!' Ai Peng told us, 'Go out and test it out.'

So do that every time you feel anxious or annoyed. Take a breath step back and see the other point of view.

Take the 'I' out of the situation and stay peaceful.

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