

Trusting Our Hearts

~ a talk by Tara Brach given on April 4, 2016, Bethesda, MD

We'll be reflecting together on what I consider one of the core domains of spiritual living, which is trusting our hearts and trusting our lives. I would like to begin with perhaps one of the most evocative and provocative statements from Albert Einstein:

"I think the most important question facing humanity is: *Is the universe a friendly place?* This is the first and most basic question all people must answer for themselves."

So, is the universe a friendly place? If the word *friendly* throws you off, you might consider it more in terms of whether there is a quality of intrinsic benevolence or love or connectedness that, even in the midst of ignorance and violence and suffering, is it still there underneath? In a way, we're saying *is there a basic goodness to life?*

In this particular talk, I'd like to reframe that question just a bit in a way that makes it more immediate and less abstract: Is loving kindness - a basic goodness, a basic love - within you? Do you feel there's some basic goodness within you?

That's the inquiry - and, in my experience, our response to that goes hand in hand with our felt sense of trust. If we feel there's some basic, intrinsic love, then we trust our hearts and that extends to others. Even though we might not trust that another person won't kill us - because people do things - we still have some trust in life. There's a yearning that I find, when I work with people, to really trust who we are. It's a deep part of our personal healing and our spiritual awakening - some deep sense that "I'm okay." And it comes out of a sense of belonging...that we feel as if we belong to the life that's here. We belong to our universe.

Somebody very recently sent me a cartoon and, in it, a dog is lying down in a psychiatrist's office and he's saying, "Actually, I'm really okay. I just like to have a place where I'm allowed on the couch."

So, this is the inquiry: Do you feel at home in your being? In your body? In your heart? In your world? Another way to ask that is: *Is there something right now between you and feeling at home?*

By extension, this trust - if we have it or if we don't have it - entirely affects how we live our life.

It affects how we engage in relationships with each other. It affects our capacity to give ourselves to our work, to be creative and actually to be able to relax and enjoy our moments. What I'd like to do is return to Albert Einstein and describe how he puts it in terms of whether we have or don't have the sense that there's some basic goodness. And as you read, consider both for yourself individually, and also for humans as a species, what he says:

“If we decide that the universe is an unfriendly place...” - in other words if there's not basic goodness in us too - “then we will use our technology, our scientific discoveries, and our natural resources to achieve safety and power by creating bigger walls to keep out the unfriendliness and bigger weapons to destroy all that which is unfriendly.”

He says, “But if we decide that the universe is a friendly place,” - that there is some basic goodness within us - “then we will use our technology, our scientific discoveries, and our natural resources towards creating understanding that universe, because power and safety will come through understanding its workings and its motives.”

So if we have trust in basic goodness, rather than defending and aggressing, we'll seek to understand – to discover our connectedness - and, in so doing, really find refuge.

Let's look a little more at *unfriendly*, *can't trust*, and *trust*. I think of it often through an evolutionary lens or perspective, whereas unfriendliness or mistrust comes out of a perception of separation - that we feel we're apart from - and that the other out there either is threatening to us or is someone we need to, in some way, get something from. This is the domain where our primitive brain is dominating. It's part of our nervous system to perceive that, to have mistrust, and to have all our survival strategies of aggressing and defending.

Mistrust, in this case, would come from our limbic system and our reptilian brain; whereas, friendliness - meaning trusting basic goodness - comes from the more recently evolved part of our brain, the frontal cortex. This is the seat of empathy and mindfulness - of broader perspective. It's the part of our brain that, when

cultivated, actually can perceive past separation to a unitive experience. This way of looking at it says that the more we cultivate our frontal cortex, the more there is going to be a possibility of perceiving ourselves and our universe as friendly and good.

I read a little story about a kindly priest that sees a little boy who is stretching to reach up to be able to push a doorknob at somebody's house. So he walks over to him and presses it for him and says, "Now what?"

And the little boy says, "We run like hell!"

Sometimes it's a mix. Sometimes we're going at being compassionate and other times we're playing on another level. But I like the way, in terms of evolutionary psychology, Steven Pinker put it in his book, *The Better Angels of Our Nature*. He says we're on a vector towards being a friendlier world, even though we focus in our news, and so on, on where the violence is. He says, if you look at research over centuries and centuries, we're actually becoming less violent - in families, between neighborhoods, factions, and nations - and it's because of our increased capacity to empathize, which is really what makes humans as a species successful - that we can collaborate.¹

If you look at it from the perspective of the spiritual traditions - I can speak to Buddhism in particular - the whole intention, the heart of the path in spirituality, really is to evolve in a way that we recognize our interdependence - our belonging to each other and our world - and then we can live out of that. It's really the bodhisattva ideal that we can sense this awake heart-mind. And it doesn't mean that we then are naïve and turn a blind eye to where there's violence or suffering, racism, bigotry, greed; but, it means that we don't interpret that as the essence of who we are or who we can be.

Chogyam Trungpa, a Tibetan teacher, is one of the teachers that really brought the term *basic goodness* into spiritual domains. Again, basic goodness, is not in contrast to badness. It means that there's an intrinsic connectedness and an intrinsic capacity for loving. I'll read a little bit from him:

"Buddhist psychology is based on the notion that human beings are fundamentally good. Their most basic qualities are positive ones: openness,

¹ Pinker, S. (2011). *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined*. New York: Viking.

intelligence, and warmth. This goodness contains tremendous gentleness and appreciation. As human beings we can make love. We can stroke someone with a gentle touch. We can kiss someone with gentle understanding. We can appreciate beauty. We have an actual connection to reality - to the oneness of things that can wake us up.”²

Meditation is our evolutionary tool to wake up - if you're thinking of the brain - the frontal cortex of the brain, and, more spiritually, to wake up our capacity for loving and for wisdom. And what meditation enables us to do is, with mindfulness, look at the earlier evolutionary strategies that are running through every single one of us and, by bringing awareness to them, freeing up our identification with them. So there will still be aggression. There will still be greed. But as we wake up mindfulness, we realize, “Oh, that doesn't define me.” And that makes all the difference.

Yet, as we know, we have really strong conditioning to identify with our egoic tendencies. When we behave in ways or think in ways that have to do with “othering” - you know, trying to self-aggrandize or put down others or whatever it is - we end up not trusting ourselves. And that's really painful, because every one of us has those tendencies and it's very, very quick and easy, and deep in our psyches to think we're bad because of it.

Garrison Keillor puts it this way – he says, “my ancestors were Puritans from England. They arrived here in 1648 in the hope of finding greater restrictions that were permissible under English law at that time.”³

I think, for most of us, the starting place is just to acknowledge the strong competing forces that exist in our nervous system and our psyche. One of the terms I like is “the big squeeze” whereby, every day for most of us, if we're observing, we'll see ourselves playing out things we don't really admire. We'll see our thoughts circling around a sense of *Moi* - you know, what's going to make ME more comfortable? What am I afraid of? What do I need to prepare for? And we just keep on being very self-focused. We'll see our minds judging. We'll see our ways of misstating things in ways that are a little bit deceptive. We'll see things we don't like - so that's part of the big squeeze.

² Trungpa, C. (1984). *Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior* (C. R. Gimian, Ed.). Boulder, CO: Shambhala.

³ Shapiro, F. R. (Ed.). (2006). *The Yale Book of Quotations*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

The other side of it is how we see the beauty of Spring right now and something in us gets really touched as we see how life just wants to live. It's so beautiful. Or we'll see a child and see that vitality and glow in the eyes and it just touches us. Or the night sky. Or we'll hear a poem, or some music that transports us and we sense something in our being that it's hard to find a word for - but it's a sense of depth and tenderness and spirit that is not hitched to that conditioning. And when we're feeling it, it feels more the truth of what we are and the depth of what we are than any of those habit patterns. That's the big squeeze. They're both operative.

We wouldn't be drawn right now to be reflecting together in this way unless we felt, not only that we had touched that basic goodness, but that it means the world to us to really trust it and live from it. That's what draws us to spiritual life and we love it. The moments that we feel that goodness, the moments when there is a sense of forgiving and reconciliation - we love it. We get so touched. The moments when there is gratitude and we realize somebody is really on our team. Those moments of random acts of kindness...

There's one shared cultural story that came to mind, as I was reflecting, that really fits in this, and most of you are familiar with it. It's the 1914 Christmas Truce.

For those of you that might not remember, there was an agreement and, starting on Christmas Eve, the German and the British troops actually sang Christmas carols to each other across the lines. With the dawning of Christmas Day, some German soldiers emerged from their trenches and approached the Allied lines through the no-man's land calling out, "Merry Christmas." At first the Allied soldiers feared it was a trick but then, when they saw they were unarmed, they all starting shaking hands. They exchanged presents of cigarettes and plum puddings, and they sang carols and songs.

This, of course, is now at almost a mythological level because it speaks to something that transcends the conditioning and yet, it so much matters to us that there is a basic quality of heart in all of us. We love goodness - we do. So when we see it in ourselves and others - that deepens trust. And when we feel disconnection and we focus on violence, aggression, defendedness - that reduces trust.

Let's look a little bit at how, in our own lives, we have come to be at whatever level of trust or distrust we have. We know it begins with our caregivers - that the first 18 months of our life are our primary time for the cultivation of trust. So if our parents are dependable in meeting our needs, if they are attuned, if there's a resonance field, and they meet our needs in a way that is present so there is really good attachment bonding - that cultivates trust. That gives us a groundwork. If the world is undependable, we don't get responded to in a very basic way - it's not there.

I saw one little cartoon where a woman and her friend are having coffee. Her son is on a ladder, wearing goggles, with this blowtorch and he's writing on the wall, "I need love." And she's saying to her friend, "Oh, he's just doing that to get attention."

So this is the primary domain with our caregivers, but the messages that they give us all come through the culture. Basically, we're given these messages of how we should be. I just want to emphasize, a little bit, that our mistrust comes when we're given messages that we should be different – criticism. We're told that something is wrong with us, and it comes in all these different ways. Often it comes in the realm of how we should look... how our body should look...the cultural standards for attractiveness. And we're just given this message that we should be different in order to be appealing. It leaves huge numbers of people constantly feeling a sense of a clutch - that something is not okay - and with that, a mistrust of themselves. Then we're given these standards for how we should behave - very, very early - ways that we should either be more cooperative, or not too demanding, or not so sensitive, or not so emotional. We're just told that.

In one story a young girl notices that her mother has several strands of white hair that is in contrast to her normal brunette hair and, just curious, she says, "Mom, how come some of your hairs are turning white?"

The mother's response is this – she said, "Well, every time you do something wrong and you make me unhappy or cry, one of my hairs turns white."

The little girl thought about this for a while and then still puzzled she says, "Mom, how come ALL grandma's hairs are white?"

So, we get our behavioral messages and then, of course, there are messages about what it means to be intelligent - which is a really big deal. I often reflect on how most of our schools have a very narrow translation of intelligence - it's very much

a kind of left-brain analytic - and what a large percentage of humans don't fall into that category. Kids go through school and come out feeling stupid in some way. And what a tragedy that is. And our parents, just because they're worried we won't make it, reinforce it.

It's hard to underestimate the impact of criticism that comes either from our parents, or through the school system, or through religious communities, or through spiritual groups that would seem to be accepting but, actually, have all sorts of unwritten standards on how you should be.

I was thinking about one woman who shared the time she was with her mom toward the end of her mom's life. Her mom had been diagnosed with cancer, I think it was, and so she was spending a lot of time with her. Her mother had been a very controlling and judgmental woman, but was very much softening in these final months of her life - and doing it very intentionally. She really wanted to connect with relatives and friends, and come from a gentler place. So, after one group of relatives had left, she looked at her daughter and said, "So how was that?"

The daughter said, really reassuringly, "Mom, you did really good."

Her mother shook her head and said, "No, I did really well." Her mother then actually took a long nap; she was exhausted.

But for this woman it triggered off a lifetime of feeling *I can never get it right* – which, at first, led to anger. Underneath that, there was a real sense of pain or grief. But in the depth, it was a sense that she just couldn't trust herself - she just never could get it right. Very, very painful. For her, being able to recognize that and begin to work with that was part of the portal towards trusting herself.

These messages are painful. I'd say the most toxic of them are the ones in our culture, or any culture where the dominant population - in this case white population - sends the message that others are less than. It's the most toxic because it's sent through every institution and through every part of the culture and it's often unconscious. It's not conscious – this sense of others being inferior.

We talk a lot now about unconscious racism. It's very hard to see, and yet, it's deeply embedded in the culture. And when that's there, and that message comes through, it's so deep in the psyche that it leaves that sense of alienation - *I can't trust myself, I can't trust my world*. It's a vicious cycle because, when we can't

trust who we are and we can't trust the world, then we behave in ways that are defensive or aggressive, and then get more feedback from the system that something is wrong with us...and we get stuck in mistrust.

So the inquiry is, as you're listening or sensing, *Okay, so to some degree, because of my ego, I don't like myself or trust myself* - to whatever degree it is - how do we begin to recognize that and evolve ourselves in a way so we can feel at home? How do we evolve ourselves so that we can feel a sense of trusting the goodness of our own hearts and, by extension, sensing that same loving presence is in everyone -it may not be awake, it may not be manifesting, but it's there?

I want to, for the rest of the time of this talk, look at the strategies. This is more from a practice level now.

One of the strategies for evolving ourselves towards more trust is bringing mindfulness, starting right where we are, to the places where we feel separate - bringing a mindful, compassionate attention to any place we're feeling doubt, separation or mistrust, or any of the difficult emotions that come out of that. The second area of practice that we'll talk about - and we're going to practice together - is to actively cultivate seeing the good. Actively cultivate the heart to feel love. Because in any moment that, in a visceral way, your heart feels open and tender, you'll trust yourself more - and, by extension, you'll trust others.

So, looking at these two areas, I thought I'd share, from a time pretty early in my spiritual practice - early in my '20s when I was in the ashram, one of the big wakeups around trust that I had.

At this time, I was very new in an ashram community. I was going through a really hard time and I felt very disconnected from others and down on myself. I was living in a yoga ashram and the ideology, or philosophy, was one of climbing a ladder to perfection – that we were trying to purify ourselves so that our ego would fall away and we'd be just this glowing, pure light of wisdom and love.

So it had very much built in a kind of unconscious bias against ego, which by the way, is really what causes so much suffering. Because there's nothing wrong with ego. It's just being identified that “this is me” that causes the trouble.

So there I was, trying really hard to get rid of my ego and, the harder I tried, the more I became aware of just how big it was. I remember talking about the yoga

classes I was teaching and I could hear, in the tone, how I was trying to make them sound like these fabulous classes and how competitive I was in comparing with other people. And - just in doing the yoga - how, back then, I was flexible and I was showing off. It's been very humbling over the years that I actually have a disease that makes it so that stretching is not good for me. So now I'm NOT flexible. That's karma, you know.

So, I was watching my ego playing out and getting increasingly discouraged with the possibilities of ever being free. I remember being in a woman's group in our ashram community and basically saying, "Look, I know that I seem like I'm doing well in different ways," but then confessing that, because of my ego the way it was, I just didn't trust myself. It was a really big deal to confess that. It was like I was really naming my shadow and putting it out there and saying, "I just don't like myself and I don't trust myself."

I remember it really well because, I have no idea what anybody said. I just know that, in naming it, something cracked open. I remember going back to my little room - this tiny little room that I lived in - really just wide open in touch with all the pain of *something is wrong with me*. So, the practice is to start where you are, and it just came in waves, this sense of how imperfect I was.

After a while - after a lot of being with it and feeling kind of broken hearted at it, and making space for it - more and more, I was resting in a tender space and was watching what was almost like a cartoon of my "self" character doing all these different things. I realized as I was watching, *That's not me. That's my story of self. These are some behaviors that come and go. The depth of who I am is this presence, this openness, this tenderness that's just paying attention and that's getting kinder by the moment.*

That was a huge shift - because I went from being identified with this person who had a way too big ego, to being the awareness that was witnessing it, but not hooked or narrowed by it.

This is, for me, a key juncture. I've watched this with myself and many people that - with practice - more and more, there is this shift. The ego still does its thing, but there's less and less of a sense of being defined and more freedom to sense that who I am...who you are...who we are...is so much more mysterious and vast and deep and beautiful than any of these temporary patterns of thoughts and feelings and behaviors. It actually gives us the freedom to then respond to our

world - [a world] that changes those thoughts and feelings and behaviors - in a very natural way.

So, my aspiration became - whenever I'm caught in self-doubt and not trusting myself - to pause and deepen my attention in that way of being mindful and present. And my other intention was to actively look towards the goodness that's here in myself and others. That's the next piece I want to explore with you, because it needs to be on purpose...

We have a negativity bias, which means that our habit of mind is to fixate on what's wrong with us and what's wrong with others because, according to the survival brain, it will help us anticipate trouble and be okay. But it's a deep habit and it masks the goodness that's there. When we can't see our own goodness, we see others and we just see their ego mask too.

There's a story that I've always loved of a woman who is outside and then she comes into the building of her office and goes up to her office and they're having a big meeting. She said, "You know, I was just outside and I saw a clown."

Somebody looks at her and said, "Really? Was it a real clown or just a person dressed up as a clown?"

So we practice. First practice - start where you are. Whenever there is mistrust or self-doubt, pause and feel your commitment to really bringing mindfulness and presence so that a shift is possible from being identified with the self-character - the ego itself - to resting in something larger. The second is to purposefully look for goodness. This is, in Buddhist practices, under the umbrella of Metta, or lovingkindness practices - which, really, are any ways of paying attention that allow your heart to become more soft and open and warm...any way that works.

We're going to explore two of those ways that, I feel, deepen our sense of trust as part of the last piece of this reflection together - we'll do the first one right now...

Reflection:

If you will, just take a moment to set yourself so that you're sitting in a way that's comfortable and upright. So, taking a pause. This is our first meditation of cultivating trust...trusting our hearts.

You might feel a sense of your body sitting here and breathing. Let your attention come to rest in the area of the heart. Allow your own consciousness to bring to mind someone...some being that you love. It could be a being that's alive right now or not alive...a friend, a child, a parent. It could be a deity or a spiritual figure. It could be a dog or a cat. Often, it's helpful that this be someone who has been kind or loving to you - that you felt that person's or that being's love. You might visualize and sense that being right here close in, so you can imagine and visualize and sense those eyes looking at you with love, with affection, with fondness, with care. See if you can let that in - that these eyes and what they're expressing...you can feel it - and you can attune to this being's goodness, to the quality of innocence or purity or loving that's coming through. You might mentally whisper, "Thank You," and the person or being's name and sense how that is for your heart. Again, from the most sincere place, "Thank You."

Let the attention come fully to your heart. You can let go of the idea of the other person and just open to the experience of your loving - your own appreciation. Sense how intrinsically large it is...vast...how it includes the goodness that's everywhere. It includes beauty. It includes truthfulness. It includes the whole mystery we're part of. It takes some courage to just stay and really honor and feel the goodness of this loving. See if you can open to it and rest in it - sensing how this open-heartedness is an intrinsic ground of being...that there are waves on the ocean surface, but this is the depth, the stillness, the vastness that includes it all.

You might wonder: If you really trusted in this, who would you be? If you really trusted the basic goodness and love, the truthfulness, the tenderness that's intrinsic to you, who would you be? And how would your life transform if you really trusted this as the essence of being? What if you trusted that this same spirit or awareness...this loving presence...was the animating force - the essence of all humans, all beings? How would your relationships change?

It might be unfamiliar, mysterious, scary – yet, part of us knows that the fearful, insecure self is not who we are.

Here's how Rumi puts it:

“I must have been incredibly simple or drunk or insane to sneak into my own house and steal money - to climb over the fence and take my own vegetables. But no more. I've gotten free of that ignorant fist that was pinching and twisting my

secret self. The universe and the light of the stars come through me. I am the crescent moon put up over the gate to the festival.”⁴

The more we trust our own goodness, the more quickly we see others and see that same light of awareness looking through those eyes and that same warmth coming from those hearts. And probably the most profound, generous, and healing act towards another person is to see that and let them know - reflect back that goodness - because it brings it out of them. When we mirror goodness, it draws it out of them - especially when they're caught in doubt.

Chogyam Trungpa - the Tibetan teacher I mentioned...one of his teachings is: *Never give up on anybody*. I love that, because it doesn't mean that everybody is going to manifest in the way we wish they would, but there is, what Thomas Merton calls, the *secret beauty*. There is a deep goodness and love and potential that, if we don't give up on, we can help bring out to whatever degree is possible. Wes Angelozzi says, "Go and love someone exactly as they are and then watch how quickly they transform into the greatest, truest version of themselves. When one feels seen and appreciated in their own essence, one is instantly empowered.”

So, this is our evolutionary path - this path from the survival brain that is acting out of a sense of separateness and the ego that doesn't like or trust itself because of that, to waking up the parts of ourselves that are inherently loving, wise and good, and learning to trust from that. When we trust, our actions come out of it.

I'll share with you a story I've always loved told by Naomi Shihab Nye who is a fantastic poet and writer. She talks about an experience she had in the Albuquerque airport terminal:

She learned her flight had been delayed and then she heard a call over the loud speaker saying, “If anyone in the vicinity of Gate A-4 understands any Arabic please come to the gate immediately.”

She said, “Gate A-4 was my own gate. I went there. An older woman in full Palestinian embroidered dress, just like my grandma wore, was crumpled to the floor wailing loudly.”

⁴ Rūmī, Ḡ A. (2004). *The Essential Rumi: New Expanded Edition* (C. Barks, Ed.). New York: Harper Collins.

The flight service person said, ‘Help! Talk to her. What's her problem? We told her the flight was going to be late and she did this.’

I stooped to put my arm around the woman and spoke to her haltingly, ‘Shu-dow-a, Shu-bid-uck Habibti? Stani schway, Min fadlick, Shu-bit-se-wee?’ The minute she heard any word she knew, however poorly used, she stopped crying. She thought the flight had been cancelled entirely. She needed to be in El Paso for major medical treatment the next day.

I said, ‘You're fine. You'll get there. Who is picking you up? Let's call them.’

We called her son and I spoke with him in English. I told him I would stay with his mother until we got on the plane and would ride next to her - Southwest. She talked to him, then we called her other sons just for fun. Then we called my dad and he and she spoke for a while in Arabic and found out, of course, they had ten shared friends. Then I thought for the heck of it why not call some Palestinian poets I know and let them chat with her? This all took up to about two hours. She was laughing a lot by then telling about her life, patting my knee, answering questions.

She had pulled a sack of homemade mamool cookies - little powdered sugar, crumbly mounds stuffed with dates and nuts - out of her bag and was offering them to all of us at the gate. To my amazement, no one declined. It was like a sacrament. The traveler from Argentina, the one from California, the lovely one from Laredo – we were all covered with the same powdered sugar and smiling. There's no better cookie.

Then the airline broke out free beverages from huge coolers and two little girls from our flight ran around serving us all apple juice and they were covered with powdered sugar too. I noticed my new best friend – by now we were holding hands – had a potted plant poking out of her bag - some medicinal thing with green furry leaves. Such an old country traveling tradition – always carry a plant...always stay rooted to somewhere.

I looked around the gate of late and weary ones and thought, ‘This is the world I want to live in - the shared world.’ Not a single person in this gate - once the crying of confusion stopped - seem apprehensive about any other person. They

took the cookies. I wanted to hug all those others too. This can still happen anywhere. Not everything is lost.”⁵

Each day we get so much news about the world - and hear firsthand things too - that can discourage and alarm. It's scary. So there's that. And, as I described with the *the big squeeze*, no matter the state of the world, each of us can choose this moment, this day to turn to presence. We can choose love. It's a choice. We can decide that we want to deepen our attention. We can slow down and become intimate with the life within us when we're caught in mistrust. We can look at another and say, “Wait a minute, behind that mask who is there?” And we begin to get more and more capacity to see that, that being, just like us, longs to feel at home. That being, just like us, longs to love. We all long for it.

So, we'll practice our second heart reflection on how we can wake up and open up, and trust our being and each other...

Reflection:

Again, take some moments to consciously come into stillness...perhaps relax a little through your body. Feeling the movement of the breath...just feeling the state of your heart this moment – a very gentle, kind attention.

Bringing to mind someone in your life who is easy to love – where it's not a complex relationship. As you bring that being to mind and bring that being close in, sense what it is about them that touches your heart...it might be that being's humor, generosity, kindness, vitality, naturalness, honesty...and imagine letting that being know what you perceive about their goodness - in some way being a mirror of goodness - expressing your appreciation and noticing what happens when you do.

Then bringing to mind someone else in your circle of friends or relations that you care about. In the same way, bring that being close in and take some moments to look and see the goodness; the love, the sentience, the intelligence...the *beingness* that shines through. And, in a similar way, let that person know. In some way communicate your appreciation and notice what happens.

⁵ Nye, N. S. (2008). *Honeybee: Poems & Short Prose*. New York: Greenwillow Books.

One more person...someone else in your circle of beings that you'd like to explore seeing the goodness with. Bring that person close in, you might imagine that person when they're happy, loving, in a space of freedom. Just sense the goodness, letting them know, and noticing what happens when you do.

You might sense who you are when you're a mirror of goodness - your sense of your own being...

Can you imagine dedicating to seeing this light of spirit in yourself and others? Letting this be more at the center of your path? Can you imagine how this would deepen trust in yourself and others and ripple outward in a way that can truly serve the healing of our world?

I'll close with the words of Thomas Merton:

He says, "Then it was as if I suddenly saw the secret beauty of their heart. The depths of their hearts where neither sin nor knowledge could reach. The core of reality. The person that each one is in the eyes of the divine. If only they could see themselves as they really are. If only we could see each other that way all the time there would be no more need for war, for hatred, for greed, for cruelty. I suppose the big problem would be that we would fall down and worship each other."⁶

May we recognize and trust our inner beauty. May we live from this loving presence...

Namaste!

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⁶ Merton, T. (1992). Thomas Merton, Spiritual Master: The Essential Writings (L. Cunningham, Ed.). New York: Paulist Press.