

May 17, 2022 Tuesday Evening with Aaron

(This talk not yet reviewed by Barbara and Aaron)

Guided meditation offering energy and radiance to others; Angels in Earthsuits; Sacred Darkness; Q&A on taking on the karma of others, the power in knowing the non-separation of the three kayas, compassionate response by the US to the war in Ukraine, non-judgment of others, why leave the plane of bliss, working with compulsion or past-life trauma, saying no in relationship from the heart of compassion

Barbara: Good evening... Let me get official: this is our monthly "Evening With Aaron". Aaron was entertaining me with guided meditations and all kinds of thoughts about tonight. Then I got busy with my husband, Hal, taking care of his needs. You know how it is.

What I need right now is just two minutes to center myself. So, please sit with me, breathe with me... He gives me this very reassuring and beautiful, full of his energy, "I am here. Relax. I am here." And I know he is here.

There are a few more people popping in, so let's just sit for a minute or two... For thirty-three years, I've been welcoming you on a Wednesday night. We've been welcoming you into this home or wherever we're meeting to share the wonderful love from Aaron. I see at least one of you out there that was with us in 1989 and 1990, more than one. You are so much in my heart, all of you.

So, I've been looking with Aaron at the challenges of our present life—Covid, war, hatred that has people going into public places and killing people, the extreme negativity, the environmental decline and issues. It's stressful. I know it is for you, and it is for me.

I find myself asking, "What can I do? What can I do?" And Aaron simply says, "Love."

And it seems that love is not enough; it's not really changing things. And he replies, "Have faith and love."

Well, I asked him to speak a bit more about this tonight, to give us a bit more direction into how we can deal with our own fears and pain, and how we can help support a change toward positive polarity in the world.

He led me into some beautiful guided meditations this week, and I'm assuming he will share one of those with you...

Aaron: My blessings and love to you all. I am Aaron. It is a joy to see all of your faces here. I know that you can see each other, too.

Pause and look in each others' eyes. Open your screens so you can see each other. Think about the wonder—we have some forty-five people here, all deeply committed to the well-being of all beings, human and otherwise, everywhere. And you are all carrying that in your hearts. Isn't that amazing? How beautiful to have this group of such deeply loving and committed people.

Choose a set of eyes, one set and then another, and just look at each other for a minute. Look at the profound love that is here, the profound commitment to service to all beings and to non-harm. What a beautiful and extraordinary collection of people you are!

Just pause. I know you can see a name under the face. Just let your eyes rove randomly over the group and pause under one picture and say that person's name to yourself: "(Name), I love you. I cherish you."

Stay with that person for thirty seconds or a minute and then move on to the same with another person. Let's spend about five minutes just truly cherishing each other, and feeling the energy of that love. I'll be quiet for a few minutes.

(pause)

It's hard not to burst out laughing. There is so much joy in your presence.

Can you feel that energy? Hold it, as if it's a precious globe of light that you've been given. Hold it, radiating light and love. "I hold this energy and consecrate it to the highest healing and well-being of all sentient beings throughout the universe, this sacred radiance which has been entrusted to me. I offer it out to wherever it may serve—to the places of pain, of sorrow, of fear. This beautiful radiance of my heart, I offer it out. And I take it into me, because this radiance is a part of me and I may draw from it for my own strength and healing. This is our shared light, consecrated to all beings everywhere."

Add to it what you are able. Draw from it what you need, passing it around for the highest good of all beings.

(pause)

Breathe it deeply into the core of your being.

Now think of someone whom you love and to whom you wish to offer it. It can be someone on the screen here or someone else. Offer that light to them, that joy and awakened energy. Feel them receiving it and being blessed by it.

(pause)

Move on now to a more neutral person. Holding this globe of radiance and joy, of happiness and peace, offer it to them: "May this serve you. May this help you to awaken to your own true being."

(pause)

Feel them receiving it and it opening them to greater ease and release of suffering.

(pause)

Take this radiance now and turn it towards a difficult person in your life. You have nothing to do with whether they accept what you offer and everything to do with the simple offering to them. The acceptance or non-acceptance is that being's choice. Offer it.

(pause)

When I did this with Barbara this afternoon, the skunk smell still filled the air in her back yard, and she offered it to the skunk, whom she could see at the far edge of her yard into the woods. Offering...

(pause)

She said to me, "Aaron, what if he takes it and then comes up close to my house again?" The offering must be freely made, unconditional. Not, "Take it so you'll stay away from me," but just, "Here is the offer of love and of light. May you be well. May you be happy."

Well, it was interesting to watch the skunk. He came part way back across the yard toward Barbara. And, it's a big yard. He came part way from the woods toward the yard. And then there was almost a sense that that was as far as was appropriate to come. He just sat there, stared at her for a bit, and then turned around and went back into the woods. But instead of running into the woods, he just walked slowly, seeming to be at ease as he walked.

We have to offer it to the skunks in our lives or it's a fraudulent practice. You can't offer it with conditions. So try this, offering it now to the difficult person.

(pause)

Visualize them receiving this love, this radiance, perhaps being uncomfortable with it or perhaps being comforted by it. Nothing else must pass between you; only your willingness to offer this out, the radiance, the kindness of your heart, unconditionally. Try to see the radiance in that other person, to allow them to cease to be an "other" and be seen more clearly as love also, in whatever form that might come.

As you hold them in your heart, can you feel your own radiance grow? Can you feel the power of your loving heart and that it *does* have the power to transform this earth? No conditions asked, just unconditionally offered. "I love you. I may not *like* you at times. I may not like your choices or agree with them. But I love you. And I can see deeply into your suffering."

(pause)

Please now turn your attention to someone who at the moment may be extremely difficult for you. It may be someone you know, or I might offer the suggestion of the shooter who went into a grocery store yesterday and killed ten people out of hatred. What created such intense hatred in this man? What must he have experienced in this or past lives to bring forth such hatred? Do you imagine that degree of hatred caused suffering for him?

Is there any place where you can open your heart? This is not about condoning his choices. But can you let him back into your heart to the point where you can say, "I truly wish you well. I wish you an end to your suffering."?

Substitute some other figure if you wish. When I did this earlier with Barbara, she used Mr. Putin as the person with whom she was offering this radiance and light. You're not asking them to take it. That's their choice. You are simply offering.

(pause)

Feel the possibility of the flow of loving energy from your heart out into the universe.

Barbara watched earlier today as a bird pulled a worm out of a hole in the ground and ate it, because that's what a bird does, that's how it lives. I asked her if she could offer

equal loving kindness to the bird and the worm, seeing each trapped in its own expression of life and in its own karma.

(pause)

Is it wrong for the bird to eat the worm? Does something within you say, "No, she should not kill the worm. She should let her children die, not carry the worm off to the nest."

Here you are in this heavy density earth realm and it has certain rules, such as that sentient being—human, animal—needs food to survive. That need to eat does not imply hatred or disdain of any sort. I assume all of you eat. Steak, eggs, or carrots, whatever you have eaten, that life has given itself to feed you. Cherish it.

When we look at a person like Mr. Putin, running this war, taking so many lives, he is within his own mind doing what he feels is needed. It may be selfishly needed for his own power. We can't say that. He is following his own inner guidance.

As awakening humans, it becomes imperative to learn how to say no to what *you* see as unskillful choices made by others without hatred of them. Even without negating their choices, only saying, "Your choice and mine are in conflict."

What do we do with a shooter who goes off and kills innocent people, people who are beloved? It's almost impossible to say thank you to that person.

But there is a ground for that thank you. "Thank you for reminding me of the Light that I carry and will continue to offer out into the world for those who have not yet found the Light in themselves. Thank you for waking *me* up to the darkness in myself, so I may take care of that darkness in ways that do not do harm to others. You bring me this reflection (to this man), and I wish you well. I wish you awakening to your own radiance and love which no longer is able to hate."

So this, my friends, is a place where you can start to do this kind of reflection regularly, especially when something happens in the world that brings up reactivity in yourself, brings up fear, pain and anger, and you find yourself putting that person or group of people out of your heart.

What is a ground, then, for gratitude? Not gratitude for the harm they have done to others, but gratitude to them as reflection of your own darkness and the deeper intention not to manifest that darkness. Very few beings come into incarnation with the

pre-incarnation intention to do as much harm as possible, very few beings. A few, but very few.

Our brother, Ram Dass, said, "We're all just walking each other home." And I love that statement. Each being struggling, learning to open the heart, and walking each other home.

End of meditation. Let's move on.

Whatever love has been generated from this meditation, we offer it to all beings. Through our opening hearts, may all beings everywhere find release from suffering and find the ability to truly love and to allow themselves to be loved.

Part Two of my talk tonight.

When I suggested to Barbara that this was what I wished to talk about, she said, "Oh Aaron, you've talked about that so many times." And I said, "Yes, but not for ten years or more."

Are some of you familiar with my talk on "angels in earthsuits"? Most of you, but it bears repeating.

You are angels in earthsuits. You *are* the angel, the divine radiance. And you came into this incarnation with the willingness to carry this earthsuit, that is, the heavy aggregates of form, feelings, perceptions, emotions, mental body. To not just see them on the horizon, but to take them into yourself and know what it means to *be* this heavy density human, with a form and body, with a mental and emotional body.

These are your teachers. It's so easy to get caught up in trying to handle the teachers that you forget the essence that you are—the angel.

Most of you lived on other planes separate from the human in which you truly were awake. In which you knew your non-duality with everything. In which you did not have boundaries that closed you off. In which you did not experience heavy emotions. The name that comes to my mind is Eden. I don't want to call it Heaven; that has too many different connotations. Eden, that home of "Once upon a time," when everything existed in love and non-separation.

Since nothing was separate from you, there was no story of any sort of 'me versus that'. You did not feed off of anything; you did not need that kind of food.

You lived in spaciousness and light. Because you had not yet met the idea of darkness, there was not much opportunity for growth there. There was no catalyst that brought you into a sense of separation, of contraction. You lived in unlimited spaciousness.

You accepted the challenge. "I am willing to experience a different aspect of being in order to know the infinite nature of my heart, because I will see it in contrast with what seems to me to be the closed heart. I invite this. I open to this. I choose and allow this."

At that time you made the free will choice to move into a more limited expression, coming into some kind of more finite form as plant, as animal, as human, coming into expression on a heavy density planet, Earth. Some of you were, perhaps, on different heavy density planes before Earth.

There was a deep resonance within you. "If I come forth in this form I'm going to be faced with all the demons that I've been able to avoid by resting in this glorious spaciousness and love. I'm going to have to look at what some may call the darkness of fear, of separation, of negativity, of hatred, of greed. I cannot transcend these, as I do not experience them. It's been very safe and comfortable never to have to experience them. But there's no growth in that. I will allow the experience."

And so, you came into incarnation—right now, of course, as human, a being that can experience light and darkness and experiences these as dual with each other.

The whole intention before the experience was to transcend the duality. But first you had to experience it as duality in order to know that there was never duality.

Now let's step back into our meditation. Holding that ball of radiance. Look at yourself and turn to something within yourself that challenges you. Perhaps times of anger, of strong prejudice, of grasping, grasping that could harm others.

Hold yourself, offering yourself this globe of light and love. Look at some aspect of what you consider to be darkness in yourself. Offer yourself light and compassion to what might block the flow of that compassion, of that love. It asks you to look into the places of darkness in yourself, which are no different than the places of darkness anywhere in the universe.

This is how we heal the darkness in the universe—not so much offering it out there as offering it in here.

What place of darkness is therein where you could imagine yourself, in a different situation, to fire bombs upon a schoolhouse or hospital? To take a gun and shoot

innocent people in a store? You might say, "I could never do that." Ah, but I think you could, if you had experienced the conditions those people had experienced.

I'm going to ask you here to look into one place of darkness in yourself and to really see what it consists of: just old conditioning, old beliefs, old fears.

Offer yourself that love—you, angel in the earthsuit—holding this ball of love out to the suffering human. Offering it out.

Let's spend about five minutes here just doing this and see what allows you to accept that love and allow some of the separation, some of the negation of yourself, to release.

And then the next step is to expend that spaciousness and compassion out into the world. I'm going to be quiet now for about five minutes.

(pause)

When you first find that place of darkness in yourself, you may recoil from it. "No, I don't want to be that." But this is within you, whether you want it or not, because you are everything and everywhere. You are the joy and the sorrow, the love and the fear.

Being human gives you the power of free will choice. And this is a most powerful force, free will choice.

This is not just sliding this way because there's less resistance, not moving that way out of grasping, but coming into the true awakened heart and saying, "I choose. I choose love. I choose Light. I choose service to all beings. I choose kindness. I choose not to get caught in the old stories of condemnation and fear. And I extend this choice everywhere, to all beings. And I extend it to myself. I will cease to condemn myself. I will cease to guide my future movements by that condemnation but instead, will guide my future movements from the heart of love."

This is the power that can change your world. But in order to work with that power, you must be able and willing to look at the darkness. Unless you look at it, you cannot see that it has no ultimate reality.

It's very terrifying. You don't *want* to look at it. But, my dear ones, it has no ultimate reality. It is simply the outflow of conditions. And when it goes, all that remains is love, the love that *is* your true being.

You are angels in earthsuits. Cherish the earthsuit. You chose it. You allowed it because you came to move past the negativity, using the earthsuit, the emotions, the body, as teaching.

You did not come to fail. You came to *remember* the love that is your true being and to hold it out for all beings. And in this way, you *can* change the world.

Not, "I will change the world," but "I will open to the darkness in myself and transform it to discover the true Light and love that are my essence, and then offer them out where they are needed." It is not an ego, "I will save the world," but, "I am a part of the heart of love, and love, only love, can transform the world. And I am part of that love." Know it. Trust it.

I love you very much, and I thank you so much for being here with me tonight. I'm going to give you a moment to stretch and then open this to questions. I am Aaron.

(Break)

Aaron: I'm going to open the floor here to questions... I laugh at the Otter. Before, when I was saying, "For the good of all beings," and similar things, it kept giving me the word "beer". "For the good of all beer..."

Q: What is the fear within (that) comes from having taken on the karma or the limited belief of other people? How can we work with this kind of fear?

Aaron: I hear your question. You have free will. Why would you choose to take on the karma or limited beliefs of other people?

For some, taking on the karma of other people, well, it may seem to come from a place of love. But really, you have to trust others to carry their own karma.

Your work is to try to take care of them as best you can as they work with their karma, especially if it's unwholesome karma.

But unless you're a fully awakened being it's not appropriate to try to take on the karma of others.

If you take on the limiting beliefs of other people, why would you do that?

So, you have free will, and you can observe yourself doing that. Usually that's a move taken from a place of fear. You can make the decision, "I choose not to trap myself in my own and others' negativity. I choose to move toward awakening and knowing of the

light within us all. To hold space for them while they resolve their own karma and limiting beliefs. To love them. But not to take on their karma.”

Do you have further question about that? (Q: No.)

It’s so easy to get trapped in the fix-it mindset. “This is broken; I’ll fix it. That’s broken; I’ll fix it.”

Your work as human is not to fix anything. To fix it is one way of perpetuating the negativity of that cycle, *feeding fear back to fear*, rather than just holding loving space and trusting each being to do their own work. And also saying no appropriately, when what they are doing, caught in their own negativity, harms others. I pause.

Some of us were talking recently about the endless cycle of victim, victimizer, and fixer. One person seems to oppress another. The oppressed one seeing himself or herself as victim. And then the third one comes in and says, “Oh no, let’s fix all this.”

But the fix-it energy helps to hold in place those two roles of victim and victimizer. What if you step out of that idea, holding space for both of them, seeing how they’re constantly pushing at each other, and saying, “No. I will not play with this whole cycle anymore. I step back out of it. You are responsible for finding the power in yourself to cease being the victim or victimizing others. And I will support you doing that in wholesome ways.”

But as soon as I am the fixer, then I’m assuming there’s something broken to fix. And as long as there’s something broken to be fixed, there is an incessant cycle of broken/fix-it. It will break again; fix it again, and fix it again.

When we step back out of that cycle, compassion holds the wholeness and potential for expression of innate perfection of all beings in the heart. And just holds that up as the model.

It’s a bit like having children who are fighting. If you yell at them, it inspires them to yell more. But when you sit back still, “Ah, I love those children. I see the kindness in those children. I’m not going to let them hit each other. I’ll put them in separate rooms if necessary. But there’s nothing to be fixed. I trust the innate love in each of those children and that it can come forth.”

What inspires the coming forth of fixer in you? Usually fear.

I’ll pause and invite new questions.

Q: Aaron, you talk about how we are very powerful. I have been reading *Flight of the Garuda*, about the three kayas being non-separate in the primordial ground. I could see that once a person understands this, with their free will decisions this could be very powerful. Is this where the power comes from, that you talk about?

Aaron: We've been talking in class all year about the non-separation of the three kayas. The power comes not just from knowing the non-separation of the three kayas in an intellectual way but *living* the non-separation of the three kayas.

One must know the Dharmakaya, have direct experience of it, not just an intellectual knowledge. And this comes from your meditation practice. One must be willing to touch deep into the nirmanakaya, to live this form realm, with all its pain and confusion, its hatred and fear, all its beauty, also, but sometimes grasping at that beauty. One learns to balance on the sambhogakaya bridge, holding the Dharmakaya, living in the nirmanakaya and holding them together, inseparable. And that is the source of power, yes; the heart-mind that doesn't *think* about holding them together but simply holds them together. Because the one who is holding them together is not separate from anything.

This experience is challenging. Many of you are in The Eden Project class. Barbara and I this week have been working on the program (for fall). One of the things we're going to look at is the role of the experience of dissolution, breaking apart, nothing solid. The importance of that experience to resting on the bridge.

Some of you have had deeper experiences of dissolution than others— mind dissolving, body, ego, everything dissolving, no self, nothing remains but That, That Which Is. Some of you have had small experiences; some, deeper experiences.

Those experiences become the ground for resting on the bridge, resting in sambhogakaya, holding nirmanakaya without pushing it away or trying to fix it. Resting in the Dharmakaya and bringing it forth into this earth plane.

Thank you, Q. Does that answer your question? (Q: Yes, thank you, Aaron.)

Thank you. Let me go on.

Q: If we accept that difficult and destructive people are angels just the same as us, how do we view them without judgment, and how can we hold them in unconditional love?

Aaron: They are angels, but they are still trapped in the negativity of their own karma. And out of that negativity they may be exceedingly destructive.

You find the balance, how to say no but how to say no with love, not with hatred. You don't say, "Oh, you are angels, so anything you do is fine."

But how do you say no with love to another when you cannot say no to your own negative tendencies with love?

So you begin to work within yourself. How to say no to your own negative tendencies with compassion, not condemnation, but to see the roots of those negative tendencies and that they have no ultimate reality. As you become more adept at that, you can offer that to others.

(Reading question off Chat)

Q: Aaron, can you give us an example of a wise, compassionate response by the United States government to the war in Ukraine?

Aaron: I see there's a question in between (on Chat), and then I'm going back to the first question. "How can we hold them in unconditional love, seeing them as the same as us, just a product of different conditions?" I hope I have answered that.

"A wise compassionate response by the United States government to the war in Ukraine..."

That's a hard one. There are several parts to the response, different beings being capable of this kind of response, that kind of response.

Energy, especially love-based energy, is powerful. We've been talking in class about the imaginal cells, those cells that can truly imagine the metamorphosis of the caterpillar into the butterfly, for example.

What if billions of people throughout the world took one hour—even one minute—to imagine a world truly at peace, and where all beings who were caught in negativity would find healing from that negativity? Not punishment, healing. Would be released from the entrapment of their old karma. What if we truly could imagine a world at peace?

Now, the questioner is asking me for something more practical, perhaps—an example of a wise, compassionate response by the United States. I don't think we're going to get billions of people worldwide to do this. But don't underestimate the power of a few thousand people truly holding light and love and imagining a different world, and working in their own lives to help support the enactment of that world.

I don't know if it's practical; I'm not suggesting practical responses. In other words, I'm not sure how one would create this situation. This idea came from Barbara. She said,

early in the war, that if there were an invitation to a large group of elders to come in and surround places that were being bombed, to stand in front of armies, that she—approaching 80 years old—that she would say, “Okay, I’ve lived my life, pretty much. I am happy to live more, but I would also be willing to go and just hold this space and say no, you may not do this.” The non-violent sit-in, for example. Just to stand there. How many grandmothers and grandfathers can these people overrun and shoot down before finally they have to say, “No, I can’t do this anymore.”?

This is not a response from the United States; it would be a worldwide response from people all over the world. Going in and saying, “No, you may not bomb hospitals.”

Now, it’s harder, because you’re not facing an army, you’re facing a weapon that’s shot from twenty miles away. So, it’s not as easy as it would be person to person.

But there are probably ways to do that, to send people in and go, not to what they’re shooting at but to where they’re shooting. A thousand grandmothers and grandfathers with their walkers and wheelchairs, standing in front of those who are pulling the trigger or manning the tanks, and saying, “Do you want to stop and think about this for a minute? What are you doing?” Not with shame but with love. You have so much power if you would know that power.

One thing that is important: each being has in themselves the ability to choose. If you join any kind of movement, like the non-violent one I just suggested, you must be clear in yourself that you are not doing it to fix somebody, to condemn somebody, to shame somebody. You are simply doing it to say no, the way you would stand in front of somebody who was angry and say, “No, you may not hit the people behind me. Whatever they’ve done to hurt you, whatever anger you have at them, still, you may not kill them. And I will stand here and say no, you may not kill them.”

The power of this love, ahimsa, dynamic compassion, it is the most powerful force I know.

I’ll be happy to speak more about this, but let me go on to other questions. You can add your further questions in here.

Q: I hold all beings on earth in high regard, knowing that each of us are volunteers, knowing that we would fall into darkness and separation. None of us was required to come here, but we all made the unselfish choice to do so.

Aaron: Just a statement; thank you.

Q: Could you remind us why we chose to learn? Why we are motivated to leave the light realm of bliss and experience the difficulty of incarnation?

Aaron: Ahh... Because at some level, the heart knows that it is still living in a limited form denying the true divinity that it is, and only when it moves out of that limitation into an unlimited expression can it express that true divinity. And it aches for that divinity, for that light.

We could answer it as simply as to say, would you rather live in a world of light or of darkness? Knowing, of course, that there is no duality in the ultimate sense. But you're not living in the ultimate sense; you're living in the relative sense. And in this relative being that you are, do you choose to live within and express light, or to hide within and express darkness?

Because those here, at least, are highly positively polarized beings, the choice is always going to be to express light, even if that terrifies you. But you're willing to resolve the darkness, or the whole illusion of darkness, to bring forth light, in part because of the deep aspiration of service to all beings to end suffering.

That Bodhisattva ideal to end the suffering. "All beings everywhere opening into the light, and I am willing to do whatever it takes to help support that." But not from a place of, "I'm going to fix the darkness," only, "I help to support the opening into light."

And it brings you so much joy, doesn't it? Think about that. Do you want to bring forth light into the universe, ease, and an end to suffering for all beings? Does that bring you joy? Then we could perhaps say you do it for joy.

So, I've come to the end of this list of questions (in Chat)...

Q: I'm a fixer. If I go into a room, I'm one of those people who's rearranging the furniture to have it to my liking. So, I guess I'm wondering, when you have a tendency toward that way of looking at the world, a way in which you can start transforming that to more, I guess the way that I think about it right now is more acceptance of what is, recognizing the difficulties that you see around you. And we are having a world of problems right now.

I find myself, I go to the fixing part of me, which is, what can I do? I come up pretty short on that. I guess I'm just throwing this out there, just for you to sort of kick it around and tell me some ways to sort of grapple with this tendency that I have, that I want to line everything up so it's okay. <> and the world's very messy.

Aaron: Am I correct in my memory that many years ago you served on the Deep Spring Board of Directors? Yes. And I seem to remember a question coming up where there were challenges that the Board was facing, and I brought up the suggestion to look deeply at the distinction between fixing and attending to.

And you got it! I remember how deeply you got that. You watched yourself fixing. Mindfully, you watched the contracted energy of fixing and how it was based in fear. And your whole mind opened to, what are the possibilities as I attend to? It really is as simple as that.

We don't leave that which is hurtful unattended. We take care of it, but that comes from a place of love. And I'd ask you to go back into that memory, if there's a clear memory of that. There was a real obstacle coming up for the board, and you opened your heart and so many ideas began to come as to how we could attend to this in positive ways. It was a whole different energy than fix-it.

Is that sufficient?

Q: Well, yes and no. One barely (recalled) memory of that is <>. I just wanted to throw the question out there to you. I grapple with this. I do find moments when I can let it go. I think you're absolutely right about fear driving needing to fix. So, I have a dialogue with myself. It's one of the ways in which I deal with, I guess wrinkles in my practice, if I can put it that way. I have dialogues with myself, and I ask myself why. Just the question, Why? And I answer that question, which leads me to another why. I just keep looking and looking and looking at it. I'll leave it at that...

Aaron: I would invite you, when you feel the experience, remember the whole cycle of dependent arising. The object, contact, consciousness, the feeling of pleasant or unpleasant. Then the mental formations or stories that may come. The more you're able to stay with the direct object and know it as pleasant or unpleasant, the less you get entrenched into the stories.

But when you feel yourself getting pulled into the story, at that point with mindfulness and the intention not to get caught in negative patterns, you're able to see, "Being pulled. Being pulled. Ah, no thank you." Just a simple, "No, thank you. In this moment, I'm going to stay with the predominant object, even if it's unpleasant."

And this is why this whole practice we've been doing of path of sacred darkness is so helpful. Being able to touch the light without losing the light and touch the darkness, so that you do not fear becoming engulfed with the darkness but can see the darkness for what it is, arisen out of conditions, impermanent, not self. Can hold space for it and feel the terrible fear that comes up: "I must fix it! I must handle it!"

"Ah, is that so? Who must fix it? Who must handle it? Fear. Breathing in, I am aware of the fear. Breathing out, I hold space for the fear." Coming back into the spacious heart-mind. Able to just hold compassionate space for the human that's feeling trapped, rest

in that spaciousness, and watch the nature of compulsion itself—compelled to do this; compelled to speak or act.

What is this compulsion? Whose compulsion is it? With compassion for the human that's feeling it, can I really see that it's arisen out of conditions and impermanent? And without spiritual bypassing, here. Knowing the strength of that fear or pain or negativity, but still having trust in your spiritual practice and in your true being, knowing you have the capacity to hold this. That beautiful quote from the Buddha: "If it were not possible, I would not ask you to do it." To hold space for whatever has arisen, no matter how frightening or uncomfortable. Nobody holding space, though; not a self doing it, just love holding space.

And as you practice this way in your daily practice—repeatedly more with smaller things, to build up the spiritual muscles, so to speak—as you practice in this way, the experience of compulsion is seen for what it is and gives way to a deeper aspect of awareness.

Trust your practice. Trust the power of your own awakened heart to choose that which is for the highest good and is wholesome and not to need to follow the old patterns that are unwholesome. You can do it.

It really does come back to practice. But practice for wholesome reasons. Not practice to get rid of anything, but practice because there is such a deep commitment to living from a place of love and commitment to care for all beings.

Q: How can we deal with fears arisen from past life trauma? For example, I have fears of medical equipment and found out it was from a past life. So it's quite deep within. I keep having the difficulty to really reach deep to look within the fear.

Aaron: Past life trauma, present life trauma, any kind of trauma. It's helpful to note that trauma mindfully, and to note that one is entrapped presently by the trauma. And to begin to ask, what did this trauma come to teach me? If I am willing to stay present with it, what can it help me to open to?

We've often used the tarantula story for the creation of a bigger container. If you are in a 3x3 foot box and somebody came in with a large tarantula, you'd probably jump out of the box. Of course you would.

If you were in a 10x10 foot room and somebody put a tarantula across the room, you might be able to stay put for 10 seconds. As soon as it starts to crawl toward you, you'd jump out of the room.

But what if you're in a gymnasium-sized room and they put the tarantula in the far corner. You watch it wander around the room. You actually watch it crawl on the laps of some who are not afraid of a tarantula. When it comes toward you, you notice the arising of fear. You get up and walk around to the other side of the room, away from the creature. You sit and watch it again. Days go by. You keep letting it get a bit closer to you. You start to know the nature of the tarantula, until you begin to discover that the tarantula itself is not something out to destroy you. The stories of the danger of the tarantula are what are immense, not the tarantula. You create a bigger container.

Looking at the past life trauma or present life trauma, without any force but just gentle invitation, can I stay here with the image? For instance, with an image, perhaps a picture on your computer screen of medical equipment. Knowing, it's on the screen; you're safe from it right now. Watching the stories that arise. Breathing with the experience—not the stories, which have no ultimate reality; not even the tension, which has no ultimate reality; but just present with fear (also no ultimate reality). Right here with fear, where is spaciousness? Right here with fear, where is love?

This old experience, past life experience, present life, it arose out of conditions. I have no need to recreate those conditions. I have no need to suffer again from this experience. I let it go.

Again, coming back to, and we don't have time to talk about this tonight, but this path of sacred darkness. We've been working with this a lot this year, the people who have been in class. You cannot enter this path of sacred darkness from a place of force. There is a gentle, gradual willingness to be present with whatever seems to be the heart of that darkness. To get to know it and see that it is arisen from conditions and has no ultimate reality.

When you know something as having no ultimate reality, it takes a lot of the power away from it. But there's still fear. And we do guided meditations and other exercises to help hold more presence with that which is terrifying.

Each of you has something which terrifies you—everyone, every human does. The question is not whether there will be something terrifying, but whether it's going to continue to enslave you, number one. And number two, if it's not to continue to enslave you, whether you can find that freedom from a place of love, and not a place of fear and the power that, from illusion, seems to come from fear.

The short answer is love. Just presence and love, and going deeper into the essence of love that is the heart of your being.

Q: Hi Aaron, it's my first time here. I have a deeply personal question. I'm currently learning several different lessons, including the theme of balance between love and

wisdom, specifically expressed through self-sacrifice, through the suppression of myself—a pattern I am now letting go of.

However, the catalyst for my learning has been offered by my longterm partner, which I'm grateful for, but my path clearly calls me toward learning those deep lessons and the transformation. And that means that I will leave her, among other things.

She has a vulnerability in her personality, self-identified, related to intimate relationships, which includes myself. And now I'm faced with her spiraling out of touch with reality, her deep fear related to her attachment to me and to feelings of being secure or not secure in herself. She was committed to a psychiatric ward yesterday. It is that severe for her.

I feel extremely challenged in navigating this because I have experienced the truth. But it pains my heart that she might regress again back into psychosis, which is very difficult for her to experience and for me to witness. And there is great risk involved in that state of mind.

Is there an approach that I can take with her in the near future that serves us both, our highest good? I would appreciate any thoughts on this.

Aaron: I hear your pain, my friend. I am Aaron. I cannot tell you what to do. Your partner is here in part to serve as catalyst for your learning. Part of your learning is how to say no to that which is unwholesome for yourself and others. How to set boundaries, set with love rather than from fear.

It's a very hard task to say no to somebody who is pulling on you, saying, "I could kill myself if you don't do what I want." Ultimately, responding positively to that request, doing what the person asks you to do, will only create more harm for both of you.

I think it's important that you know your partner is in a safe place where it's unlikely that she would be able to harm herself. It's important that you find within yourself the place that can set boundaries and say no.

You *are* responsible, my friend, for having carried the scenario this far. You've been playing by her rules. You have to accept that responsibility. But to continue it only creates more harm.

At what point are you ready to pull back and say, "No, my highest intention is to do no harm. And I will listen to my heart."

Of course, you may want to talk to those who are caring for her, make sure she is safe. But setting appropriate boundaries with love always makes sense to me. And it's one of the most difficult things in human experience to do.

We don't have the time to go deeply into this now. But it's the whole heart of human incarnation, that there's this push/pull, "I want this; I want that", pushing at each other. And the ability to learn through your spiritual practice to come into the true awakened heart that is there and accessible, and from that awakened heart to ask, what is for the highest good, here? If I need to say no, I know it's going to cause the other not just pain, perhaps, but real anguish.

It's important to be able to forgive yourself for having gotten caught in the cycle in the first place; having perpetuated the cycle; and finally, at some point, being able to say, "That's enough, because this is just hurting both of us." But then to ask, how do I do this with the greatest degree of kindness?

It's one of the hardest questions there is. I think if you talk to many people here who have been practicing with me for 10, 20, 30 years, they're still learning how to do this. But it's the place where growth starts.

As long as you keep being pulled in to the horrors of the world, to the pain of others, and responding by trying to fix, you just are contributing to the pain. Only by coming back into the awakened heart, holding the intention not to do harm to myself or others, to act with as much kindness as I can but still to say no, it's the only solution.

I give a simple example, here. You have somebody who's holding a knife to themselves and says, "Unless you do this for me, I'm going to kill myself." So you do it, again and again and again. So you keep empowering their negativity. There's no guarantee they won't kill themselves.

And yes, you have some karmic responsibility to that because you've been going with this for so long. And yet, the only way to end that cycle is to begin, with as much love as you can bring up in your heart, to say no; with as much compassion, to say no.

I hope that answer is helpful to you. So, it's 9 o'clock. This friend is new to our sessions. We meet again next month, sometime in June. I'd be happy to hear further from you, if you want to come back. You might find it valuable in the fall to join our meditation program and learn some more of the meditation and spiritual tools that can help support you in making more heart-centered decisions, not so much based in fear and fixing. I'm not condemning you in any way. All humans make decisions based on fear and fixing. But practicing meditation helps you ease your way out of those patterns. So, I would be happy to be of any help that I can be.



That's it. My love to you all. Thank you for being with me tonight. I am Aaron. And I love you very much.