

January 4, 2022 Tuesday Evening, Eden Project Class

Group Sharing on What Grounds Us In the Light in the Darkness; Guided Meditation to Meet Higher Self/Guide

Barbara: Good evening to everybody. I hope you've had a lovely holiday. Hard to believe we're ready to start again! 2022—it feels surrealistic.

A few years ago, when Aaron dictated *Path of Clear Light*, his intention was to follow it up with *Path of Sacred Darkness*. It's never happened. Life got way too busy, at that point. So maybe a book, *Path of Sacred Darkness*, is going to grow out of the transcripts for this class; I don't know.

What do I mean by sacred darkness? There is no duality. Where there is light, there is darkness. We live in a world that's filled with light—sunlight, moonlight, electric lights on street posts. Most of us have probably never been in a place that was totally dark.

I had that experience once, I was with Hal on a guided tour in a cave in Mexico. The cave was lit up. The power went out. We were deep in the cave. Wow, was it dark! The guide had one flashlight; that was it. He had to walk out of the cave to tell them the power wasn't working. We all had to sit on a little boardwalk and wait.

It probably was only 15 minutes, but it seemed like hours, sitting there in that complete darkness. For me, of course, I could not hear anything that was being said. Just sitting in the darkness.

There is the metaphorical side of darkness—depression, sadness, grief, an emotional darkness. We've all experienced darkness. We don't like darkness; usually we want light. Without the darkness, light would not have much meaning.

Aaron has expressed to me the ways that the darkness can truly be sacred, that as we explore that darkness in ourselves, it's one of the ways we grow and learn. But we must do it very gently, in such a way that we can progress safely... (*pause for technical difficulties*)

We all want to be in the light. We talk about holding each other in the light, offering light. We don't offer darkness to people.

There's a subtle or not so subtle spiritual bypassing when we cling to the light to avoid the darkness. What do we learn in and from the darkness, and how do we learn it?

We've all had periods of darkness in our lives where we felt depression, experienced loss of loved ones, felt hopeless or helpless, lost. It was not a pleasant experience. If you're like me, you probably felt adrift in that darkness, nothing to anchor yourself to.

I think of the idea of leaping out of the spaceship with no tether; just drifting off in space. We can jump out of that spaceship, but we need a tether. The practices of the open heart, pure awareness practice, the Brahma Viharas, all of these offer tethers. They help to ground us into the light so that we're freer to explore the darkness, because we're connected in some level to the light, and we can trust being in the darkness.

I'm sure you've all had experiences of this, of being adrift in the darkness, feeling so helpless, just devastated, versus being in darkness with something to support you.

As a simple example for me, when Hal had his stroke four years ago, all of your love, all of the loving words that I heard, the friends that came and hugged, the friends that came to the hospital, these were an enormous tether in the darkness that connected me to love and made it possible to be there with this really devastating experience of his— at that point, it was almost certain death. They only gave him a 3% chance to live. It helped to tether me to my loving heart and be able to be in the darkness.

When we work through this semester— and I imagine, as with Dharma Path class, this class is probably going to expand into another year or more years. There's no way we're going to cover path of sacred darkness in one semester. But as we move into it, it will be vital for each of us to find ways to anchor ourselves. To find what holds me and reminds me of the light so that I feel safe to explore the darkness.

I want to emphasize this: I don't want anybody in this class to feel, "I should push myself into the darkness. Other people are doing it. What's wrong with me? Why can't I do it?" I don't want anybody to feel that. It's an exploration, and we do it gently and with love.

I've been working with Aaron a lot the past two weeks. I had the unhappy experience— one of my sons and his wife and two kids, were to come for a week. Two days before they were to come, he called me and said, "We're all sick." Did not have Covid results yet, but everyone was coughing and had fevers. Obviously, they did not come. Very sad. I had not seen them since summer. I was really looking forward to it.

But it gave me a quiet week! You can probably imagine what it's like when a family of four joins you in a small house and because it's winter there's not much place to go. It was a quiet week! I spent a lot of time meditating and with Aaron, just exploring.

In meditation, one thing that came up for me, as I asked for guidance on sacred darkness, was the memory of a past life, I'm guessing around the year 30 or 40 AD, after Yeshua's crucifixion.

I lived somewhere, I don't know where in the world; I'm not given that to see, or who my parents were; just that they were very loving and awake. I had deep spiritual training

from early childhood. As a young adolescent, I was sent to some kind of school in which there were various deepening initiations, and spent a number of years there.

There was some peer pressure. “What, you’re not getting it? Oh, I’m doing better than you.” That kind of thing. I guess I was about 13, 14, 15 years old. I had been raised with these trainings so it wasn’t new to me; it wasn’t like I was dumped into it. Others also had experience, and we were a small group.

One of the things that we were led to, the next initiation, everybody will do it—was to each be put into a coffin for three days. The lid closed. No space to move. Darkness. Obviously, no food or water. Very uncomfortable. No way of telling what time had gone. No electronics—you couldn’t push a button and see what the clock said.

I remember the horror of that, and feeling, “Others are doing this, and I should be able to do it. I will do it.” Pushing away any feelings of fear, anger, despair.

It taught me a lot, because by the end of those three days I learned that I could tolerate darkness. But there was nothing sacred about it. I didn’t find light in it. I just found that I had more capacity to tolerate something harsh than I thought I had.

When this initiation was finished, I was congratulated on it and told, “Vacation time, and you come back for the next year.” There was no way I was going back.

Well, Aaron and I do not want to put each of you into this figurative coffin, have you push your way through it, and say, “Okay, that’s it—I’m out of here!” That’s not what we’re after.

We’re going to take this slowly and gently. Did people have a chance to read the three pages from *Path of Clear Light*? You have access to it; I’m not going to read it aloud. I found this a beautiful story. They all are in a cave, lost, hungry, cold, feeling hopeless. The only way out is to find the true light within themselves. What is that light within?

We do have access to it. I know many of you have access to it. I’m going to take about ten minutes here to give whoever wants to share—free will, no push to share, but if you’ve experienced that inner light—and it doesn’t have to come as actual light; a feeling of love, of openheartedness, of spaciousness, chakras open, joy, at a time of darkness—how has that been for you? Will you share it with the class? I think it will help people get a better sense of it, people who are not sure they’ve had that experience. Because my feeling is that all of you have had that experience at some level. I’m just going to open this to sharing.

(silence)

Q: Barbara, would you please repeat what it is you're asking us to talk about? Thank you.

Barbara: I'm asking you to share a time when you found yourself in a very deep place of darkness—physical, emotional, mental—and were able to find something of light, of joy, of love, of companionship, of nature, of anything that helped anchor you, so you didn't drown in the darkness, but began to see the darkness as part of the light. So many of you have shared this kind of experience with me. I know you've had these experiences because you've told me about them.

Q: I happen to live in a county in a region in a spot hooked up to some kind of really vulnerable grid. I've lived here for a while. I'm ever always here. This place loses power and often loses internet. It just happened again in December. I have a wood stove, so I can stay warm. And I also have a supply of candles and batteries. And I have a little stream that runs alongside the house, if I have to have a bucket of water.

Every time it's happened, you know, it's that disappointment—like, oh, dang, here we go again. This last time in December, I think it was out for 2 1/2 days. Right about that time is when I usually start worrying about my (refrigerated) food. But in the winter it's a little bit easier.

And because I've had lots of practice, I just love it, I just absolutely love it. As soon as it goes out, I automatically feel a relief, a relief of just not being electrified. It's so quiet. All the appliances so quiet. It happens at different times of the day but quite often at night, and I'm all kind of prepared.

But I find that I set up all these ways to read, perhaps! It's so funny to me anymore because I don't go into so much elaboration to make that happen. Because I just love the quiet. And I'm really content just to be in the quiet. And turn off the lights and maybe enjoy a little candlelight and just enjoy—you know, I go to the bathroom outside. All those things become just a one-with experience. There's no separation. And it's quite lovely. That does not mean I want to <> tomorrow. Thank you, that's what comes to mind.

Reviewed to here

Barbara: Thank you, Q.

John: Hello to everyone, happy new year. Good to see so many old friends.

In 1972, I was traveling through East Africa. I was arrested at the border as I went from Tanzania into Uganda. I was arrested by the director of the criminal investigation department of Uganda. This was during Idi Amin's reign of terror there.

So, they sent me to three different prisons in Uganda. They accused me of being either a spy or a mercenary soldier. It was a very scary situation. It was probably the place of deepest darkness that I've ever experience, I've ever been to. These prisons where they torture, they kill people, and where they did the interrogations.

At one of these prisons, they went through all of my belongings, everything I had written in my diary. I had a picture in my wallet of my father, my brother, and myself. My brother and myself were quite small, maybe 4 years old, with a year's difference between my brother and myself. We had the same outfits on. My father was kneeling, and he had his arm around both of us. The man who had been interrogating me was very coarse and very harsh. I really felt like my life was in the balance, that I could very well have been killed.

But when he looked at that picture, he said, "Who's this?" And I said, "It's my father and my brother and myself." I could feel energetically his heart begin to soften. It was an energetic shift, as he looked at that picture of my father, my brother, and myself. In some way it felt like we had connected as human beings. That there was a ray of hope there that maybe I would get out of this somehow—alive, unhurt.

That was an experience of being deep in the darkness and seeing the light, having the light come through that darkness in a way that perhaps saved my life. Thank you.

Q: John, tell us how the story ended, please...

John: I got deported, eventually. They flew me from Uganda to Kenya. So, I was in this process for nine days, of going through these three different places. They realized I wasn't a spy or mercenary soldier and so they let me free. They put me on a plane and sent me to Kenya.

And I'm with you today! It easily that night could have been not the case. The one who arrested me was responsible for the death of many, many thousands of people. I'm very fortunate.

Q: I was small. My sister and my brother and I were all born one year after each other and I was the youngest. The house we lived in had a central staircase that went up. Under each staircase was a closet. They were older than me so they liked to go in, but it was dark in there and I was afraid. But I wanted to be able to do it.

So when I was able to, I went in once. They had gone in and climbed up—you could climb up somehow. I was there at the bottom in the dark. The door closes and it's totally dark. I didn't know if my eyes were open or not, therefore. So I was seeing the darkness and I was seeing my fear in the darkness.

But I was also experiencing the spaciousness around the fear. I think the fear dissolved. That time I can't remember if it dissolved or not. But I wasn't afraid of the darkness after that in those closets anymore.

About the same time there was a box turtle, somebody's pet who lived on the other end of the row homes on the corner, and it was in their backyard. I was afraid of that thing. But everybody was touching it and happy.

So again, I got myself ready. I went over to it, I think somebody was holding it out in front of me. In order for me to deal with my fear— I didn't do this consciously but I think I disassociated from my body. My awareness was watching my hand reaching out. But it wasn't my hand; it was just some hand reaching out. So I made the hand touch the turtle shell. And nothing happened—I didn't get bit; it didn't jump at me. And so I tried it again. And as nothing happened, I came into my body again and was able to touch it more. Maybe I even held it— I felt the little claws on the palm of my hand.

So I'm not sure this would be an example of sacred darkness, but it taught me that fear arose and dissolved again. That it was something that could be worked with. And at that age; I'm impressed by that little person. So, that's what I have to offer.

Barbara: I'll tell a story of being a little girl, also. We lived in a big old house made of fieldstones. It was on a hill, so there was a big porch that made a 90 degree angle. You could walk into this space under the porch. But as you got further back, the ceiling began to go down. Then you turned 90 degrees and it was pitch black.

My brother was three years older. I was one of the youngest kids in the neighborhood. Kids used to go under our porch and all the way back to the dark side and sit and tell ghost stories.

I was so scared! I don't understand how I did what I did, but I would sit there in the dark and literally feel a candle. There was no candle, but I'd feel a candle and begin to see the other children's faces around me. Feel it lit up. The shadows just touched with a little bit of light. I still don't really know what I was doing.

Every time we did this—we probably went back there a dozen times a year—I would be terrified until I would be seated and brought out that imaginary candle and allowed myself to see the faces of the people around me, that I couldn't really see; there was no actual light. But there was a sense of an experience of light, maybe partly because people were laughing. Because I loved and trusted my big brother, and I liked and trusted the neighbor kids. So, at some level I knew I was safe. But there was somehow an experience of light.

I'm just thinking about that now, with Q's story of the closet. I don't know what the light was. I'll have to think about it. That's all.

Q: Sometimes I awaken in the middle of the night and mind wants to spin stories and I just want to go back to sleep. Sometimes I'm aware of fear and maybe feeling a little small or alone. I have found that I am able to remember how I have felt when the Mother, Yeshua, Aaron, Love, has told all of us how much we are loved. More than once I've had that experience of really feeling that in my chest, in my body. And just remembering how loved I am helps me to quiet the mind and eventually go back to sleep. That's all.

Barbara: Thank you, Q. Let's share one or two more and then we'll move on. Let me phrase a different related question: What has sustained you in times of physical or emotional darkness?

Q: Earlier this summer, when my son was in the hospital, first week of the hospital it was certainly a period of darkness, of heartbreak, despair, helplessness. Much of that around the unknown, just not knowing: would he remain with us? And when we were assured that that was the case, then it was, what would he be like after this? So that was a period that was emotionally dark and a fair amount of fear. Hospital generates its own level of fear, and then family can contribute to that.

There was one evening in the hospital when he was awake, and we could look at each other. And even though he couldn't move and was largely unresponsive, just looking into each other's eyes was an amazing connection that was quite lucid.

And this overwhelming sense of peace came over me, with the understanding of just how temporal this experience is, and how eternal we actually are.

And that sense of eternity really just dispelled the fear around this situation. That this is just a moment in a very long, not lineal but long sense of eternity. So that was very comforting to know, that this is simply an experience, a catalyst. One part of the path, if you will. So I took a lot of comfort in that security of the Eternal, of the Boundless, of the Great Heart, I found that very comforting. And it was something I could recall each and every time in the hospital and had whatever thoughts that would arise. I could soften them by thinking about our eternal selves, the soul. I pause. Thank you.

Barbara: Thank you, Q. I find that very moving.

Q: I have had an experience of darkness recently, before the holiday. So usually what I've been able to do when— It was an emotional situation involving family that could impact me for the rest of my life. It was a financial situation too, so it was very scary. I felt hurt and frightened and betrayed and <?>.

Usually when I'm having these kinds of experiences I can sit with the feeling and just keep knowing it will shift. Sit with it, allow it, welcome the darkness, and it will shift. And that was not happening for me.

So, about the second day into this, I called my dear friend D—we've been very good friends since Venture Fourth. He's a social worker. He was a professor. And focus him about what was going on. He helped me to begin to think about it in a different way, this whole experience.

So, I started doing some journaling and thinking and continued to meditate. One of the images that I love is that Anthony de Mellow image, where he talks about going into the heart, in a cave in your heart that is suffused with light and allowing that light to pour in through every pore. So, as I sat with that image and started thinking and doing the practice that I had been doing, it all shifted and I was able to be with the situation in a much healthier and peaceful way. And I think part of what helped was that image: going into the cave in the darkness and letting the light suffuse my body and mind and come into every pore.

So, I'm grateful to D and our guides. I also connected to the Mother and sat with the Mother and Yeshua. And it just feels like just a tremendous transformation of feeling <happy?>, as a result of that <>.

Barbara: Thank you for sharing that very painful memory, Q. It's beautiful how you were able to let that light in your heart come through. This is part of what we're practicing, here, that we start to really be able to live the light and connection, and it has a substantial reality for us.

But we also need to be very careful not to cling or grasp at it, to try to push the darkness away. I think one of the tricky places is—and Q apparently you did this with real love—but we can turn toward the light as a way of avoiding the darkness rather than a way of trusting the darkness. It sounds like you were able to trust the darkness.

Okay, these are some wonderful examples, and I thank everybody. I'm going to open a new recording file here and have Aaron come in...

Aaron: My blessings and love to you. I am Aaron. Thank you all for what you shared.

If we all went up in a spaceship, far out into outer space, and I said, "Alright, we're opening the doors. You have a spacesuit on so you can breathe. Now, jump! And I'll find a way to collect you afterward. Just drift in space," there would be terror.

Can you feel how that experience would be different if you were connected to the ship with a tether? First, I asked you just to step into the doorway, and then move just so that you were a foot or two from the ship, a friend holding your tether. Then the friend gently pulled the tether and drew you back. And then a little further out, and a little further, then pulling you back. Eventually, you'd be able to do it without the tether, knowing that I had the power, that I had—Barbara's been watching Star Trek—I had one of these little flying machines in which I could zip around and collect you afterward. But first, you would need some reassurance.

Barbara's sons through the growing-up years, all went to a wilderness camp in Vermont. As year built upon year, they learned skills, how to survive in the wilderness: how to build a fire, how to find food and water, how to find shelter, to find their way in the wilderness. By the time they were 15 or 16 the campers would each be taken out into the wilderness with nothing but I believe a knife and perhaps some container in which to hold found water. That's all. They were left there to find their way back through the Vermont wilderness to camp, which was often a 3-day walk or so. Of course, a counselor watched from a discrete distance.

When Barbara heard of this, she said, "weren't you scared?" And each of them in turn, as it was their turn to experience this, said, "No. I know how to light a fire. I know how to find shelter. I know how to gather things around me to keep me warm. I feel perfectly safe. I know how to find my way in the woods without a compass."

They could not have done that without the skills. What are your survival skills?

Two predominant ones are your vipassana and pure awareness practices, and the open heart.

You know how not to get lost in terror by noting the terror arising. You know how to rest in spacious awareness and find a center. You know how to open your heart to yourself. And if there is fear, pain or discomfort, how to be openhearted and compassionate with those experiences.

There is more. The practices of joy, of gratitude, the practice of laughter. You know how to look in at the chakras, to see contraction, to see the energy stop moving and simply note, "This has arisen in me, this blockage of the energy flow. Ahhh, I choose to draw energy in. I choose to allow the energy to move again."

"Terror has arisen in me. Holding terror as an object. Breathing in, I am aware of the terror. Breathing out, I hold space for the terror. The terror is not me. The darkness is not me." The grief, anger, confusion, these are not self. You've been learning this for many years.



One of the most pivotal practices is opening to one's own highest intention. For John, in that very strong example of darkness, his intention was not only to survive but to survive without doing harm to others, to survive with love. I think all of you hold that kind of intention, not just to survive with love but to truly live your life with love.

So, if very challenging things come up and bring you into a place of despair, the grounding, "I choose love" becomes strong. It is strong and it provides a kind of light and spaciousness.

You've learned that when there's something strongly oppressive and you contract and close in and close your energy field, it just gets darker and darker. And if you stop and note it, "contracting, contracting; intention: I choose to move through this with love," and holding into that intention, opening your heart with compassion to yourself, the human that you are moving through a difficult experience, then sunlight begins to come in.

Many of you are also learning to open more fully to your guidance, to your higher selves. So there is some deeper assurance you are not alone in what you're experiencing and that there is guidance there. You are surrounded by love.

You cannot cling to that love. You cannot cling to anything. But you can discern: There is love. There is light. There is joy.

And the practice we've been doing, just, "Here is the darkness. Thank you, darkness. What have you come to teach me?" A willingness to open yourselves and be taught.

So all of you are very ready to take this a step further.

I was looking with Barbara at her story of those 3 days she spent literally bound into a coffin. Her memory of that experience and the terror and rage, and knowing she agreed to it. Others had survived it; she could survive it. And, "I choose to learn from this." Not to become lost in it. To learn from it, to grow. To increase in my ability to love.

Now, as she pointed out, she wasn't ready for it. She was young; she wasn't emotionally prepared. It felt too harsh because it felt more imposed from outside, with a kind of "You should do this now."

It's important as we work this semester that any areas of darkness that come up for you be naturally arisen out of conditions. And that you feel, "I choose to allow this experience of anger, grief, sadness, depression, confusion, pain. I choose to allow it and open my heart to it."

You all have tools to pull yourself out of an experience of darkness. It's very different to be drowning in darkness than to simply open into the darkness to see what's there. You have that tether.

With all of this in mind, I want to start to invite something to which you can tether yourself, to allow you to feel some sense of safety as you move further into the darkness.

Let's start with the simple experience—and not easy experience, for some of you—but not a complex experience of connecting with your guide or higher self.

I suggest starting with the higher self, so we're going to do a guided meditation, 10 or 15 minutes, of meeting the higher self.

I'm curious—tell me by a clear show of hands how many of you have experienced some direct connection with your higher self? About half. How many of you have experienced some connection with a guide? A few more with a guide.

So, what is the higher self? You can do this practice and meet a guide, that's fine, but the higher self is the essence of you, and it's with you all your lives.

An image that I have liked came from one of Barbara's sons at the camp that she mentioned. They were asked to do what they called a water walk, where they put on some kind of boots with weights. They had long snorkel tubes that went a foot or two above their heads. And they waded into the lake, goggles on, the snorkel tube up. Just walking. They had goggles so they could see where they were going.

Then a next step, perhaps a trust exercise: each boy had another boy on his shoulders. No mask. No goggles. Same snorkel. He was asked to walk around the bottom of the lake. And there were floats, little flags and an obstacle course, and they had to walk this way and that way. One boy sitting on the shoulders of the other.

The boy in the water could see nothing. The boy on his shoulders could see where the flags were and could turn his partner's head, steer him this way, steer him that way. It was dark down there. At this point the boy on the shoulders' head was above water, bottom boy was a few feet under the water. Fear might come up. "A weight on my shoulders. I can't see where I'm going. Just trust this person, this friend sitting on my shoulders and allow myself to be led."

Some of you have done this at retreats and workshops when we've blindfolded one person and had somebody else lead them. A sense of trust, "I am safe," develops, or you can't move.

Your higher self, who is the essence of you, who has been with you lifetime after lifetime, guiding the different incarnations that arise. Moving through the different karma of that lifetime and the lessons of that lifetime. And the higher self really has it all down. They know what's happening.

So, as you develop a connection with and trust of your higher self, you begin to feel more trustful with the obstacles that come up, and instead of these enclosing you in darkness it becomes easier to say, "Ah, thank you, darkness. What's up this time? Where am I going?"

Alright, we're going to a guided meditation to meeting your higher self. I'd like you to find a comfortable position. You're welcome to lean back and relax. You're welcome to close your eyes or keep your eyes open. For most of you, closing the eyes will probably be more helpful, but whatever feels best to you.

We have been walking many days through a dark woods. You have been told that eventually you will emerge from the woods and there will be a loving being to greet you, either your higher self or a guide. Whichever one you meet with is fine.

We have had challenges, days of rain, of cold. At one point, the trail through the woods seemed to disappear and everyone felt a bit lost.

You are tired, cold, and hungry, and beginning to despair that you will ever get out of these woods and back to a more comfortable place again.

There is no guide with you. There are a group of you together. You were set out on a trail and told, "Just follow this trail. It will take you several days. Just keep walking."

You have some water, some matches, a bit of food. Walking and walking. Tired, wet, hungry. You were asked not to talk to each other, to try to keep at least 10, 15 feet distance between you. That meant that sometimes there was nobody in sight, when others went past a thick grove of trees and you lost sight of everybody. Feeling alone.

You are not so much afraid, just uncomfortable, but occasionally with a thought that you have lost the way.

Now the group has become more spread out, in this third day of walking— some faster, some slower. There is still a safe path, but you feel totally alone. Cold, hungry, tired; perhaps some blisters on the feet.

Ahead of you, finally, looking through the trees you see what seems to be an opening, a bit more light shining, beyond this dismal, dark woods. Walking, walking. The trees are thinning.

Emerging into a meadow, you find yourself atop a high hill. None of your group are in sight, either behind you or ahead of you. Down at the bottom of the hill you see figures with cloaks of lovely colors in a grove of flowering trees by a river. Some of them are alone, some in groups of two or three. There is a feeling of deep peace and ease.

You have been promised that someone will greet you, be there to meet you, either your higher self or a guide, and that you will feel welcomed.

But among the 50 or 60 humans down there, how do you know which one is your connection? What if nobody greets you?

You find the courage to step over the edge of the hill and begin to walk down the path. As you appear there on the hillside, all eyes turn toward you. One being down there catches your eyes, and you feel a sense of love like you have never felt before. Even still quite a distance away you feel the energy come from that person, the connection with that person. His or her smile lights up the face, and there is such deep sense of being the beloved of another.

For you, everyone else has faded into the background now, as you begin to walk down the hill. Reaching out to each other, embracing each other. A sense that you have found some part of yourself that's forever been missing and now you are whole again. You are loved.

It doesn't really matter whether this being is your higher self or your guide; that will become clear as you get to know each other; don't try to figure that out right now. I just want you to allow yourself to open, heart to heart, and feel how beloved this being is to you and you are to this being. Feel how welcomed you are. Embrace. And then this friend leads you off to a place where there is a comfortable seating, food, water, some blankets and a fire. Does whatever is needed to help support your comfort and ease.

I ask you to allow yourself to feel safe and cherished. No need for conversation with this friend yet. Simply sit and feel the heart connection.

If and when you feel ready—but there's no rush, and it could wait for days or weeks, repeating this exercise until the time is ripened for it—when you feel ready, you can ask, “Who are you? Do you have a name? Are you my higher self, my guide? And do you have a name?”

But don't rush that introduction. Spend all the time you need feeling the loving presence of this person.

Now I'm going to be quiet for, let's say ten minutes. You can repeat this coming out of the woods and down the hill. Reach out and feel where your special friend is. Feel yourself welcomed. It may be male, it may be female. It may not present as either strongly masculine or feminine. Androgynous, that's fine.

Feel the welcome and the love. It may even present not as a human but as an animal—a doe, a rabbit, a dog, any kind of animal. Or it could even present itself as a tree. Something whose energy invites you to fully be embraced, and to embrace yourself, to connect. To know that this connection is forever. This is love.

I'll be quiet now for ten minutes...

(sitting)

By now you have perhaps made some connection with this beloved friend. You have much to learn about each other, but hopefully you can feel that there is a connection of eternity between you. Feel the loving energy that flows.

You may or may not have the name. You don't have to know if it's your higher self or guide. That will become clear as time passes. But I hope you can feel relaxed with this being and feel its love.

Those around you, each having connected with its own higher self or guide, they're all beginning to move in a direction toward an open meadow by the river. It's not a big river; really a wide stream that bubbles over the rocks.

There is an area that's circular, slightly a hill with an open lower space at the bottom. Beings are sitting on the hillside. Not all people—some animals, even a few ambulatory trees. Whatever form it takes. Go with your friend. Your friend will help you find a seat, as everyone forms into a big circle.

The leader of this gathering welcomes you. "Newly arrived humans, together with your guides or higher selves, welcome. We are so happy you are here."

Each in turn—and I'm not going to have you do this aloud, but do it within your imagination, imagining your turn coming up—will rise and say your name and what draws you here. "My highest intention here is..."

Perhaps to deepen in love, or to learn to trust that I am loved and safe.

To form deep connections that I have not previously allowed myself to know.

To learn how I can be of deeper service to all beings.

To better understand my purpose for existence.

To feel deeper joy.

To open my heart in gratitude.



To find peace.
To love.
To be loved.

Imagine everybody now gathered. At the bottom of the hillside there's a blazing bonfire. It's still light enough out that you can see the faces of everybody gathered around and feel the intensity of loving energy.

You will have the opportunity in your meditation here to share your name. It may be your actual physical name or it may be more a spiritual name that comes to you. To share your intention, just one or several. Not everything, though; just what comes to mind right now. And then to ask support from the gathering to actualize that intention. And feel the loving energy coming back to you, the whole group either verbally saying or just energetically saying, "Yes, we support you."

So again, perhaps ten minutes while you take it to this stage. Two parts of this are to feel the loving support of the group, and to find in your own heart, as you walk this spiritual path right now, at this phase of the path, what are one or several of your highest intentions? Not necessarily the highest intention but something that's important to you now. Just let your heart feel it, and envision yourself speaking it out when your turn comes, and feeling the support of the group saying, "Yes, we support you."

Ten minutes...

(sitting)

And now this gathering is drawing to a close. Everybody has spoken from their hearts. Everybody has felt supported. Beings with their own higher self or guide, sometimes with several other pairs, are moving off to a walk by the river or to sit and eat, to talk. There is a sense of ease and joy.

I know that a few of you are feeling that you have not connected as you hoped. Take your time with this. Come back into this meditation this week. See where it takes you.

Nobody on this earth is alone. But if you are feeling alone, just allow that experience. What is the direct experience of feeling alone? Are you in any way insulating yourself out of fear of not being lovable? What if you allow yourself to make that connection? Perhaps easier to start with something simple, like with a butterfly. Feeling the love of whatever comes to you.

You can sit yourself here by this lovely stream and just invite, "Whatever wants to come to me, I welcome it."

This is what I'd like you to do this week: to deepen the connection you have made. Or, if you have not made a connection, to further invite it and give a bit of reflection on to what may block your allowing that connection.

In doing these exercises we are creating the tether, so to speak; helping you to ground yourself in something that feels stable and supporting as you eventually move more out into the places of darkness.

You might also this week do some practice with loving kindness meditation or compassion. A meditation on joy. Some pure awareness looking out the window, looking up at the trees. If you're in a warm climate, go outside and sit under the trees. Feel your connection with the natural world.

What I am looking for, for you, is an experience of connection, wherever it may come, and release of contraction. Connection may be with the cat that's sitting on your lap, or even the plant that's on your windowsill. Connecting and knowing connection. You are loved. You are connected. And in that connection, you are deeply heard and understood.

Next week we'll move on with two things—some more specific vipassana, I think, path to seeing how resistance arises and dissolves. How it has no tangibility. We'll save this for next week. Deepening what we did today, and further anchoring yourself in light.

At this point we have ten minutes. I'm going to open the floor again. If we were here live, I would send you off into small groups. There's not enough time, even if we have the capacity for breakout rooms, so let's just open the whole floor to anybody who would like to share their experience, whether it was a positive experience of love and light, or whether it was an experience that felt uncomfortable. Whatever your experience, feel free to share it with us.

I'm going to give the body back to Barbara so she can hear some of your experiences also. I thank you, and I look forward to seeing you next week.

(checking calendar) Just checking, the first vipassana class is next week. We have this Eden Project class on Tuesday and John's vipassana class on Wednesday.

I'll return the body to Barbara...

Barbara: Thank you, Aaron... The floor is open to sharing.

John: ...I saw that my intention now— and this comes in part from what I've been working with in my meditation practice most recently but it was kind of reinforced in the meditation Aaron just led— is to be aware of contraction whenever it arises. And in

being aware of the contraction— which is a form of darkness, in a sense, that contracted energy, even when it's subtle— being aware of the contraction. Seeing it release. And seeing it release into spaciousness, into the open heart, into love. That this is my highest intention right now.

Barbara: Thank you, John. That really resonates for me.

Q: I relate to what John just shared, because in my meditation journey process that Aaron just led us through, where I interacted with my higher self and others, the teaching, the coaching for me at this time was what would best serve my path right now is to open to love, as John shared, and to experience that expression of love as delight, as though I have a wonderful companion that brings me delight and joy in the moment. Very simple, but to lift up my vibe. Thank you.

Q: I will share that I have often wished that I was connected and consciously connected to my higher self. And have practiced on a few occasions to meet that one. And tonight I did meet that piece of self or all—I'm not quite sure. It was very apparent from a distance; it was a red-cloaked person, male, who also had female energy around and coming out of him. But his eyes and the cloak, the red cloak, was an inviting heart. And we sat in a <teepee> around the fire to get acquainted, and then that open cloak and those eyes kept inviting me. It was just love. I mean, it's been about seven years of seeking this experience, so anyone who feels disappointed, just hang in there. So, I feel very loved and very supported. And it is clearly a tether that I cherish.

There's a lot of energy coming up through my throat. I don't exactly know what that was about or why that was happening. But I'm looking forward to having more communication with this higher self, who is inviting me to see and to come along and to feel the love. Thank you.

Barbara: Thank you, Q. I'm very happy for you. And I look forward to hearing how this friendship deepens.

Q: I want to appreciate a couple of things. One is, Aaron's invitation to look into his eyes, because I have found that that's where I connect with my deeper self. And when I don't have Aaron's eyes, the suggestion that Barbara or Aaron made to look into a mirror, to gaze into a mirror, into the eyes. That's where I find this deep connection with <>. So I want to thank you for that, Barbara and Aaron.

Barbara: Thank you, Q. Looking into a mirror can be a very powerful way of meeting your higher self. Not a fleeting glance in the mirror, but sit there for 10 or 15 minutes just looking into your eyes in the mirror. Watch how your face changes. And watch this energy that comes out, that is part of you and yet somewhat distinct. Your higher self.



It's 9 o'clock, so we'll end here. I will email this out to everybody, not immediately but in the next hour or so, and you can listen to it.

That's all. Have a beautiful week and I'll see you next week.