

Appreciation (1 of 5) Valuing Others

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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

compassion, appreciate, gratitude

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Hello everyone. I'm quite happy to be here with you all. This week I'd like to continue the intermittent series related to compassion. The premise of this series is that the desire to live with compassion, to be more compassionate, is supported by understanding the many things that come together to allow compassion to be strong, full, and complete.

A quick, headlong movement into compassion might be okay, but it might leave out too much of ourselves. It might leave out much of our potential – the full embodiment, the full quality of compassion that is nourishing and beneficial for ourselves and the people we have compassion for.

We don't leave ourselves out when being compassionate. One of the reasons for this is that the compassion we have, the way we care for others, is so much better and cleaner if we have cared for ourselves

properly – when we include ourselves as the foundation for a healthy form of compassion.

It is really important to understand the different elements and dynamics within ourselves that contribute to healthy compassion. Many weeks ago, I said that there are five elements that come together for healthy compassion. These are the five A's: awareness, attunement, appreciation, aspiration, and action. We take time to understand these different aspects of compassion and the things that contribute to and are the foundations for them, and then we bring them along with us when we are compassionate. This can be second nature after a while – we understand it, so it doesn't take that long. All these different foundations can be cultivated so that they are there for us more often.

I spent a week discussing awareness and a week on attunement. I want to spend this week on appreciation. Appreciation is a wonderful quality. I hope that each of you understands that when you feel appreciation for anything at all, there is a nice feeling. There's an inspiring feeling. There is a happy feeling in appreciating something – oneself, others, our experience, our good fortune, whatever is happening.

The ability to appreciate is an enriching experience in anybody's life. Spending more time appreciating, in a

realistic way, the goodness, the benefits, the well-being, and the good fortune we have is an antidote to spending too much time ruminating about our misfortune – whatever is not going right. Human beings often have a bias for tuning in to their misfortune and overlooking their good fortune – what there is to appreciate.

Some people live lives that are a dream for many people around the world who are poor, oppressed, and challenged in many different ways. Many of us who live in a modern, western society, where there's so much available for us, don't appreciate how much is available – how much support and goodness there is and how much benefit we get, because we focus more on the areas of our misfortune. Not to dismiss misfortune, but to put it in a larger and maybe more realistic context.

One way to do this is to appreciate more and take in the benefits of appreciation. For compassion, it is invaluable to appreciate the people we have compassion for – to appreciate them in deep, not superficial, ways, and not according to some policy of appreciation, but to really take people in.

One way to appreciate well is to not be distracted by our thoughts, our concerns, and our worries about people, about what we feel we need to do, or by our sense of responsibility. This sometimes can be activating, and oddly enough, distances us from others, if we inhabit

strong ideas and feelings of: "I should do something. I'm responsible. I have to do something. It's up to me." All of that puts the focus back on oneself. Instead, to take time to be in our direct experience and to appreciate others in deeper and deeper ways.

Appreciation is made up of several things. One is to value: whatever we appreciate, we give it value and importance. To appreciate other people is to see them as valuable, as important – to see that they are precious human beings, valuable human beings, and important human beings.

If we want to be compassionate towards people, we also need to consider what it is that supports people, what they benefit from, and how their situation can be improved. For not a few people, their situation is improved when they experience others appreciating them and treating them as important and valuable. It is invaluable just to stop and do that. If we get caught up immediately in feeling that we need to do something, we miss that opportunity.

There have been times when homeless people have asked me for something, and maybe my circumstances were such that I wasn't able to provide them with what they wanted. There have been times in my life when I kept walking and ignored them. But with the idea that it's a gift to appreciate people, I've turned towards them and

said, "Hello," or, "I'm sorry," or, "Not right now," or, "But I wish you well. Thank you."

You really stop and take them in, and at least look at them as if they are important people, rather than ignoring them. This can be done in all kinds of circumstances, with family, friends, and at work. We take the time to recognize them. They are important. Everyone is important. One of the great things is to see everyone as a valuable human being in some way or other, to see their potential by looking past what they do – to see something deeper in them than their actions.

We include people who are doing things that are harming others. Sometimes they do that because they have never been valued, they're hurt, and they are spreading their hurt around to others. Our ability to stop and see them on a deeper level than their actions can sometimes transform them. That might be the beginning of what stops them from behaving in a maladaptive way. So we see that everyone is important.

Many people feel that part of appreciation is gratitude. There is a feeling of gratitude that we are receiving something from others. We're receiving their goodness. We're receiving benefits from them. We benefit from the presence of others. What does it take to be grateful for a stranger? Grateful that they're alive. Grateful that they

connect us to life more fully. Here too is where we bring our practice, our love, and our care. Here. Thank you.

To value and to see the importance of people, and to be grateful that they exist. Whatever their circumstance, whatever their age is, we appreciate them. Whatever their nationality is, we appreciate them. Whatever their race is, we appreciate them. Whatever their gender is (and now we understand there are many variations of gender), to really allow people to inhabit who they are and appreciate them deeply.

It is a gift to appreciate their sexuality – who they are sexually, whatever partnerships they have with others, whatever their orientation is. There too, to appreciate the variety and the richness of sexual expression. It is kind of pointless to diminish people for their gender, their sexuality, their nationality, or their race. Instead, we step forward and say: "Yes, hi. You are important, valuable, and a dignified and equal member of the human race."

I appreciate so much that now we understand that there is such a wide range of ways that brains operate, and the range of abilities that people have. Each person is a full human being, just as they are, with their mental, emotional, and physical abilities. No matter who comes in front of us, let the first instinct, the first approach be to take the time to perceive them without distractions,

without judgments, and without commentary – with willingness, openness, and wisdom. See that this too is a full, (maybe) perfect human being that can be appreciated as they are.

There is a lack of this in our world. Probably everywhere we go, we find a lack of deep appreciation of people. For example, people, who are simply shopping in a supermarket, may feel that others don't appreciate them for whatever reason. People who are short feel that they're overlooked; people who are old experience feeling overlooked. People who are of some minority race feel that they're ignored. People who display certain characteristics or features are ignored or dismissed, or worse – that goes on.

It is a form of care and love, and a benefit for oneself and for others to appreciate them, to be grateful for them, to open and allow ourselves to see them as dignified and valuable human beings. Wouldn't this be a good foundation for compassion? Maybe less compassion would be needed in this world if we treated each other this way.

Appreciation will be the topic for this week. I appreciate the opportunity to spend this week on this topic. I appreciate all of you, not only for being present here today, but also that many of you have been present for so long at these 7 am YouTube sittings. I feel it has

been invaluable for me to be able to come in and offer these teachings and have these kinds of considerations. So I want to thank all of you. And may we continue.