

What is Love at the Deepest Level? ~ Shinzen Young

00:00:00 What should we do to make this world a better place?

00:00:20 People often ask me, there's this circumstance or that condition in the world.

00:00:33 I find myself saying, I can't help people with the specifics.

00:00:40 I don't know the specifics of politics or how things should work in the world, but I

00:00:48 do know some general principles that I think hold in all cases.

00:00:58 The way I sum it up is the phrase that I used at the end of the last talk, which is, love

00:01:06 deeply and act effectively.

00:01:11 Acting effectively is related to your mindfulness skills and strategies, but that's not the

00:01:26 whole picture of acting effectively.

00:01:29 Acting effectively involves a lot of things, but mindfulness skills and strategies do enter

00:01:37 in.

00:01:41 Loving deeply critically depends on mindfulness skills and techniques.

00:02:00 We always are asking, what is love?

00:02:12 We're always seeking something.

00:02:21 It's taken me decades to have a confident answer with regards to the question, what

00:02:30 is love at a very deep level.

00:02:35 I don't think I can confidently answer it at more superficial levels.

00:02:40 That would be other kinds of experts would talk about that.

00:02:45 But I do have a confident answer as to what it is at a very deep level, maybe the deepest

00:02:53 level.

00:02:57 We chant this mantra, Om Mani Padme Hum, hail to the jewel in the lotus.

00:03:07 If you think of love as this fragrant, colorful, attractive flower, is there in the center

00:03:23 of it something that is its essence that could be called the jewel that's hidden inside that

00:03:32 lotus?

00:03:33 I would say yes.

00:03:37 I would say that I can put it into words.

00:03:44 I am also tempted not to put it into words because the words are likely to be a letdown

00:03:54 until there's an experience that goes with those words.

00:04:03 The description is sort of not all that poetic.

00:04:22 How do we know that there's a world?

00:04:26 Well, we see it, we hear it, we touch it, and we think about it.

00:04:34 Of course, when we think about it, we see it, we hear comments about it, we have words

00:04:42 about it, we have emotional sensations.

00:04:46 So through inner and outer activity, we have the perception that there is a world.

00:04:57 And through those same sense gates, we have the perception that we have a self.

00:05:06 So as your mindfulness skills develop, it becomes possible to have a more and more complete

00:05:21 experience of inner and outer seer field.

00:05:27 That means an experience with progressively greater sensory richness, but also progressively
00:05:36 less moment-by-moment fixation.
00:05:39 That leads to a paradoxical experience, which is an experience of maximal richness, because
00:05:52 it's getting richer and richer and richer, but at the same time, minimal somethingness,
00:06:00 because the amount of time that you're fixating any particular part of it is getting shorter
00:06:05 and shorter and shorter.
00:06:08 So at the limit of clarity and equanimity is the experience that is optimally rich and
00:06:27 also utterly vacuous at the same time.
00:06:33 And can you put into words what that's like?
00:06:37 Sure, but as I say, it's likely to be a bit of a letdown.
00:06:43 What it's like is that there is an absolute rest, wherein time and space collapse to a
00:06:59 dimensionless point that has no position.
00:07:05 And then that breaks apart, and the positive spreads and the negative pulls in.
00:07:16 There's a simultaneous expansion and contraction like a space fountain that's spreading and
00:07:23 collapsing.
00:07:24 It's the fountain of youth.
00:07:27 It's the Ponce de Leon, it's gushing and gathering, and it's shimmering, vibrant space.
00:07:39 And if you stay with that, you have everything you ever wanted, and you have absolute safety.
00:07:56 You're being held by your cosmic parents.
00:08:01 Your physical parents would have been a representation of this cosmic parenting.
00:08:16 But most people don't notice that, even though it happens thousands of times a day.
00:08:24 Each time they see the world, or themselves, or hear, or touch, or think, or move, or speak,
00:08:38 just before this happens.
00:08:43 So people don't notice it, number one.
00:08:46 And number two, that scintillating mist coagulates into inner and outer seer field, and there's
00:09:00 a sense of an I that is vulnerable and disconsolate, not getting what it wants.
00:09:17 And there's a sense of an it that is fundamentally alien and threatening, called the world or
00:09:30 the other.
00:09:35 So the jewel in the lotus, when you unfold the petals and look at what's on the inside,
00:09:52 when we say we're experiencing human love, be it of the physical kind or any other kind,
00:10:02 but it's the human love.
00:10:03 Well, the human love is that flower, and certainly that has its place in the nature of things.
00:10:15 But it's also important to have a deeper context whereby you understand this non-human love
00:10:29 that is hidden within, always was, and is available all the time.
00:10:40 So to love deeply means that before that you are aware that love always comes first.
00:11:06 You can't have any reaction of any sort whatsoever without first having a perception of yourself
00:11:20 and the world, except at the origin of each perception of self and world is this, this
00:11:31 deep love.
00:11:33 So if you come in contact with this, that means that all of the decisions, the judgments,
00:11:44 the reactions, they're still going to happen like they always do.
00:11:50 But there is an inescapable context that proceeds.
00:11:57 So that then colors your responses.

00:12:05 It doesn't mean that you no longer judge or that you can't take action or that you can't
00:12:14 confront or oppose.

00:12:19 It doesn't militate against any of that, but it just puts it in a different context.

00:12:29 So let's say that there's something going on in the world that you think is bad and
00:12:38 action needs to be taken to change this, certainly legitimate.

00:12:52 If you're able to love deeply, that's going to have a huge effect on acting effectively.

00:13:03 Unfortunately, the bad news is most humans have not yet learned how to love deeply.

00:13:16 So because loving deeply means hundreds of times in the day, whenever you perceive the
00:13:24 other, the enemy, the source of the problem, them, it, whenever you perceive that, you
00:13:36 first perceive that being loved into existence by the source, whether you perceive it by
00:13:45 sight, sound, touch, or whether you perceive it by thinking about it.

00:13:50 I mentioned the Pratyahaparamita literature, Manjushri.

00:13:56 There's the wisdom function and then there's the wisdom writings.

00:14:01 So in the temples, at least in the temple where I lived in Japan, at Koyasan, there
00:14:08 was a custom of, they celebrate New Year's a little differently than here.

00:14:17 So what you do is you stay up all night, like here, on New Year's Eve, but you read the
00:14:26 entire 20,000 verses of the Pratyahaparamita, or at least as much of it as you can get through.

00:14:36 You chant it in Sino-Japanese.

00:14:40 So I think I mentioned that it's like an encyclopedia Britannica.

00:14:46 It's just got all this detail of information about the world of India 2,000 years ago approximately
00:14:58 translated into Chinese.

00:15:02 So it just lists all this stuff and then it says this is empty, that's empty.

00:15:09 It's got all the cultural information, the crazy ideas they had about geography, etc.,
00:15:19 etc.

00:15:22 And then it says this is empty, this is empty, this is empty.

00:15:27 And you might wonder, well, what's the point?

00:15:32 But one night on New Year's, when we were doing that, we were chanting all night.

00:15:42 You have to look at the book, right, because no one can memorize so much.

00:15:46 So you're actually reading it.

00:15:49 So you're seeing what the text says.

00:15:56 I realized that what this was all about, why we were doing that.

00:16:04 Because, well, let's see.

00:16:08 Do you know the, did you ever hear Allen Ginsberg's parody of the Pratyahaparamita?
00:16:20 I don't know if it was written down or if he just performed it, but it was something
00:16:28 to the effect of shit is empty, piss is empty, fuck is empty, screw is empty.

00:16:37 Something along those lines.

00:16:40 Yeah, really, you'll probably find it on the internet.

00:16:45 So I just said a bunch of four-letter words, but when you, if I say, you know, houses are
00:16:58 empty, apartments are empty, parks are empty, if you're really watching image space, you'll
00:17:07 see that you get what in Sanskrit is called spota, S-P-O-T-A, S-P-H-O-T-A, spota.

00:17:18 What a spota is, is a little flicker of an image that's very, very fleeting.

00:17:28 So when you're reading, you know, this is empty, this is empty, every one of those thises,

00:17:36 I started to notice created a momentary mental image.

00:17:40 How else would I know what it means, right?

00:17:44 And then I started to tune into that and I could see the images, each one of those images

00:17:51 born in between expansion and contraction, coming from and returning to empty.

00:17:57 It's a whole meditation.

00:18:02 You're thinking about the world, how do you think about the world?

00:18:06 Do you actually, are you actually aware that each one of those bursts of image and talk

00:18:15 come from and return to the source?

00:18:21 So once you sort of realize that, you'll be able to understand the early 21st century

00:18:37 North American Sutra, which goes like this, Trump is empty, Obama is empty, Trump is empty,

00:18:47 Obama is empty, as many times as you need to hear that.