

## Listening from the Heart

Yonatan Hoffman

Listening from The Heart is about presence. It is about being allowed. We don't have to approve to be present. We don't have to agree to be present. All we have to 'do' is experience. Be allowed to experience fully what is, and nothing more. Though there is really no doing in that at all.

Pause right here and right now and allow yourself to be present. Your body is sensing, your mind is cognizing and behind it all you are present. From this place, if you heard a disrespectful remark of a co-worker, if the person you love did that annoying thing, you would still love. For that matter, if one part of you felt or thought something that another part of you disapproved of, you would still be able to be still and love. You would be present even though your ego's automation reacted on its own. And it does. It does more than what we know. And yet behind it, we are present. We just don't always remember we are present.

Awakening to the wisdom of the heart is about remembering who you are. It is about continuously remembering we are present. It is also about facing the fundamental ways in which we experience the world and questioning those beliefs. This is why the path of awakening is called the path of the warrior by some traditions. We question the very premise of who we are and by doing so leave nothing for the ego to hold on to. Until finally the ego realizes it was made up of the things it held on to and by letting go one final time we find there is nobody left standing to hold on to anything.

And yet here we all are. All yearning for something; longing for something. And what is this place if not a place of peace? A place where the heart speaks to the heart and the heart sees the heart. Ironically, we are all chasing after a place of rest - a place where thoughts and emotions don't haunt us - a place that allows, a place of acceptance. What we find ourselves doing in effect is not-accepting where we are in order to find a place of acceptance.

The language of The Heart is the language of acceptance. Not an acceptance that is resigned to a life of unhappiness but a wise acceptance that knows that when something has happened, it has happened. It knows that there is no changing the past. Once an emotion is experienced in the conscious mind it has already happened, stopping its flow simply leads to congestion. It knows that once an event has happened it has happened but that what is important is who we are.

We are all seeking the wisdom of The Heart. This is the wisdom that tells us that it is not in our resistance to unpleasant emotions and situation that we find liberation it is in our acknowledging of them and allowing them that we find freedom. By shedding light on these places the tension and resistance dissipate and with it dissipates our anxiety and inability to be our selves in our purity. And by allowing ourselves to be, we find we are able to allow the same of others. And viola – peace.

Bur how do we get there?

The path is the path of the warrior. We have to have the courage, vision and long term willingness to proceed into the uncharted territory of our selves. We need to have the courage to understand and to experience. The courage to be in our bodies and the courage to listen. On this path we find the courage to follow our inner voice, our intuition - our connection to the One Spirit. Trust ourselves, trust our common sense and have the courage to leap into the unknown and invite the truth to enter into us and burn away all

the facades, the masks and the illusions. Above all, what it really takes is to find within ourselves the courage to be kind, tolerant and accepting to ourselves first and foremost. For without that, we could never extend it to others.

The language of the heart is the language of kindness. Kindness sees the person behind the problem. In our kindness we allow ourselves and each other space to experience those thoughts and emotions we have fear or disagreement around. In our kindness we allow ourselves as well as each other to experience those primitive thoughts that our conscious sensibilities have learned to resist as if they do not exist. When we choose kindness we begin to see how deeply our minds have been conditioned by the world around us. Conditioned by fear. We begin to see all the societal beliefs and conditioning that we are slaves to.

By acting in kindness within our own minds we are planting the seeds for this kindness to be reflected back to us and for future emotion and states of mind to be governed by love and peace. When we decide to act with kindness, patience and tolerance towards ourselves our conditioning slowly changes to reflect that attitude. Our minds learn by emulating. We have been emulating 'have-tos' all our lives. Have-tos and fear. But by treating ourselves kindly our unconscious begins to emulate kindness. Slowly but surely it begins to change.

We are often afraid of what we might do or say if we, in our kindness, allow total acceptance. We may fear acting out in rage so we deny our rage, we may judge weakness so we deny weakness. There is a difference between accepting our thoughts and emotions and believing in them or basing our actions on them. It is important to differentiate between accepting our inner world so that we might know and experience and therefore grow in wisdom and between allowing ourselves to act unkindly. Even anger can be expressed kindly if we pause to allow acceptance to rule.

We repress when we fear and judge. The key to disengaging judgment and fear is not in judging our judgments but rather in becoming aware of them, present with them and it is in experiencing them. When we experience, our bodies remember and learn. Counter intellectualizing of our thoughts only creates war inside of ourselves. Fully experiencing the consequences of this war, brings about learning and surrender.

Our minds are programmed with automatic responses. They've been programmed by our upbringing and our life experiences. Our minds are conditioned to respond certain ways under certain conditions and it is impossible to talk ourselves out of these reactions. These instincts to react happen before we can consciously think about them. Resisting our own mind creates conflict within ourselves and this conflict manifests in our external world as well.

We will not be free until we are 'free to...' rather than 'free from...'. We become slaves of the internal war that is waging against that which is not allowed. We may want to be free from addiction, or from anger. If we fight these experiences we create conflict within ourselves. If we create conflict we are not experiencing peace, and we are not carrying inner peace to be shared with the world.

Freedom is freedom. Freedom by any other descriptor is no longer free. To say, "I want to be free from anger" or for that matter, 'freedom is abundance', or 'freedom is to be allowed to be your self' takes away the freedom of experiencing the opposite of those things. Freedom is freedom! You are allowed to be free. Pause right now and give yourself permission to be free. As frightening as that may be you are being invited to remove the structures that bind you to follow one way or another. To remove the bindings

that tell you one way is better than the other and that your personal way of being, the way that is sourced in connection to Spirit, is somehow shameful.

When we are allowed to be, we are free. We are in a process of unraveling ourselves. So many layers we've piled on top of ourselves – layers of beliefs and 'I ams' that have completely blocked out the light. Imagine yourself in space receiving the light of the sun. Something comes floating by and you take it and bring it close to you. You come to rely on it and the joy it brings you. Then you see something new and you bring that to yourself too. Before you know it you are sitting as if at the center of an onion with layers of things and thoughts you have come to believe you are nothing without. They have completely blocked out the light of the sun.

Our world is built on the polarity between mercy and severity. Unbalanced mercy would allow evil and corruption to rule and unbalanced severity is oppression and cruelty. Balance is achieved not when we deny one or the other but when we are able to express each state in its moderated reflection. As we begin to break down the structures that limit us, the fear based morality we've learned kicks in. It is strong. But moreover, it is also important. So long as the conditioned mind has power over our actions it is important to have ethical and moral structures in place. This too is part of the balance.

When we are free to act from the heart and dwell in the compassionate loving-kindness of Spirit these structures will no longer be necessary. Balance is our natural instinct. Until such time though, it is the structures that keep us from harming others and ourselves. The difference is in that we learn to accept our anger rather than repress it, to experience our shame in a sane way rather than deny it, or rationalize and become defensive. We *accept* our anger and *act* lovingly because nobody deserves to be the victim of our cruelty and wrath. Rather, if we express our anger kindly we all can be the benefactors of it.

Any journey begins with an awareness of where you are. If we strive to be the loving kindness of Spirit we must find the place in us that shines in the same way, like the sun, on anger, love, jealousy and compassion alike; on loving thoughts and judgmental thoughts alike. The journey begins when we recognize that when we observe and experience our inner world the result is peace, and that when we resist the result is conflict and anxiety. With peace rooted inside of us we are able to make the change in the world around us we would like to see.