

START WITH SOFTNESS

by Denise Benitez

Consider this small piece of writing an homage to the quality of softness. Consider it an antidote to the worldwide power of aggression. Consider that when you step onto your yoga mat, you are experiencing all of humanity in the form of yourself, and that your time spent in self-investigation and self-development has important ramifications for you, your family, your community, and the world.

Imagine, as John Lennon so bravely and naively suggested, less attachment to being right. Imagine everyone in the world being a little softer. Imagine releasing our constant grasping for better, more. The Buddha said, “Life is suffering.” I have heard this phrase translated as “Life is disappointment”, and that seems to ring more true for me. I don’t suffer on a daily basis, I think few of us do. But we experience constant small disappointments that subtly and continuously harden us. The next time you’re too late for a movie or can’t get into a restaurant, become very aware of the aggression and hardness of your disappointment.

And in that moment is a great opportunity to practice softness. Softness means being willing to be uncertain, relaxing the part of your being that has to control things. Soften the natural human quality of greed and grasping because it is not serving you and is diminishing your creative response to life. Notice all that is already here.

As I write this, it is fall. Today I noticed the brilliant and many colored trees standing against the dark, bruised looking sky. The trees live in this glory for only a few weeks; then the leaves fall, and the branches create a different kind of beauty against an ever changing sky. The trees don’t wail about the loss of their beauty, the sky doesn’t try to hold onto sunshine or clouds.

You begin a yoga practice and dedicate yourself to softness, to the evolving capacity of human beings to understand each other and to be kind. You engage some fierceness in your practice, but only to keep your heart soft and open when it wants to harden. You practice for all beings, for the beauty of this planet, for love and for life. ♦