



WORKING WITH ANGER

Fall 2022

"If we don't wrestle with anger, we never get to the heartbreak. And if we don't get to the heartbreak, we don't get to the healing." –Lama Rod Owens

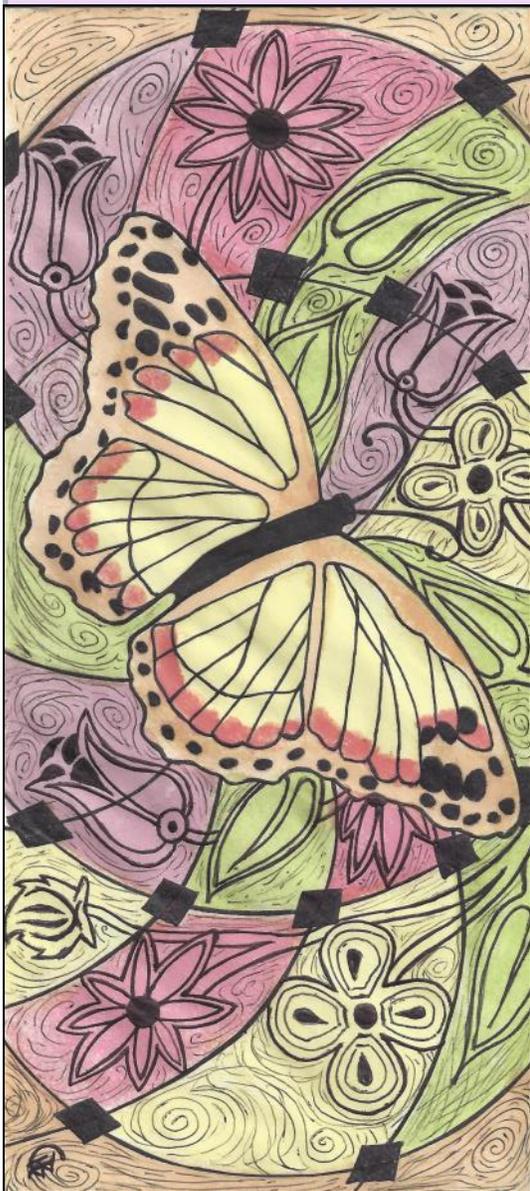
Anger is contagious. So is joy. Every day, we choose the energy we put in the world, but it's hard when there is so much anger, violence, and fear around us. It can feel like we are breathing in the world's anger and breathing it out through our words and actions. This anger takes many forms. In Uvalde, Texas and Buffalo, New York, the uncontrolled anger of two young men resulted in mass shootings, leaving families without sons and daughters, mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters.

Killing is the most extreme expression of anger, but there are many other ways to hurt people. From cruel words to silent judgment, we hurt ourselves and others through everyday acts of violence. Our actions and energy affect others. We might be the nudge that pushes someone over the edge—into anger or joy.

There are many reasons to be angry. For over two years, we've been anxious and alert with COVID. We've lost people. We've lost stability. Everything is shifting, which can be scary and sad. It's normal to want to protect ourselves. Anger can feel like it protects us from future hurt. Often, however, it prevents us from understanding past harm. What if we're trying to protect ourselves from a truth we need to hear or a lesson we need to learn? What happens when we get curious about our anger? Anger offers insight if we respect it enough to stop and listen instead of immediately reacting.

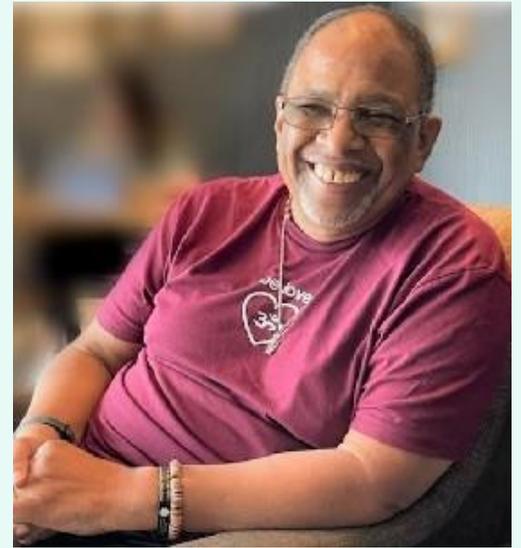
This issue features different ways people manage anger. We encourage you to find a path that works for you and those around you. The task is to not let anger turn into violence. Instead, see anger as a sign that you need care. Feel curious about what lies underneath. Beneath the hurt, fear and pain lie our connections to others, to the earth, to the ancestors and to holy and loving spirits. In the safety of these connections we can rest, mourn, grow, and heal.

We are all fragile right now, but fragility does not have to mean weakness. It can also mean opportunity. When we break, when our hearts break, when our worlds break, we are also breaking open. There is so much work to be done in this world. You are part of this work. So am I. So is every other living being. Our survival is connected. May you feel the peace of these loving connections today and every day.



André Smith: On Anger

André Smith radiates love, joy, and enthusiasm. It's been a long road for him to get to a place where he can live, practice, and embody the love he feels in his heart. He has been through a lot – drug addiction, homelessness, the murder of his 17-year-old son. He's taken these experiences and turned them into his life purpose – to be a powerful teacher with a loving and liberatory message. Since 2006, André has taught Buddhism and Anger Management at Nash Correctional Institution in Nashville, NC. We are so grateful to be able to share some of what he has learned about anger, love, and compassion.



How has anger affected your life?

I was so angry growing up. I was an angry kid. My father was an alcoholic and an abuser. I grew up witnessing him physically and verbally abusing my mother and us kids. Many of my relatives were angry. I grew up in the South in the fifties during segregation. I grew up angry at white people, just hating white people, and then I would express it. I wasn't physical with my anger; I would use my words to really hurt people and cut them down. I carried this anger for years. As a Christian, I was an angry Christian. You hear about love, but I was angry. I would go into prayer angry and come out of my prayer angry. No one in Christianity said anything was wrong with that or that I could change.

I was extremely unhappy with the results of my anger. It never made me happy or gave me what I wanted. I wanted to be understood, to be loved and it gave me just the opposite. I yelled at my wife because I wanted her to hear me. I could see I was hurting her, but I wanted her to hear me. Martin Luther King said riots are the voice of the unheard. I understand that completely because we want to be heard and seen. I thought my anger was justified which created more and more anger, but it wasn't getting me what I wanted. I wasn't getting anywhere with it. It was really explosive, exploding any hope of happiness for myself and my family.

How did your anger affect your family?

They didn't know what to do with it or how to be around me. My daughter would stay up in her room, unhappy and fearful. We don't know how anger affects other people, even if it isn't directed towards them. My anger was directed towards my wife and son. A lot of my anger was directed at my son. I wanted to help him, but instead I caused more damage and harm. Even my dogs didn't know how to be around me. I was losing my family. This is what drove me to Buddhism. I was looking for solutions. I could see anger was the problem, but I couldn't see the solution. Anger is almost a being onto itself. It takes a life of its own. It's a beast that comes and attacks and devours. It devours us and then others. You end up doing crazy things because your mind is totally irrational. It's a mental illness because you can't think rationally. You can't do the right thing even if you're trying to. It was destroying my life. I was totally unhappy and miserable. I was on the verge of being alone. My wife couldn't live with this. My kids couldn't relate to me. I felt totally alone. I wanted to be part of the connection with my family, but I pushed them further away.

How have you learned to manage your anger?

The Buddha says anger is not who we are. Because it's not who we are, it's not part of our mind, and so it can be eliminated. I wasn't even thinking about diminishing it; I wanted it eliminated. So, I had to test this out. My first two years of practice were getting rid of anger. Anger is an afflictive emotion. Looking at it medically, we have a sickness. What are the

antidotes? What can we do to alleviate this suffering and pain? So, I looked at the antidotes. The number one antidote is patience. I was an impatient person. I wanted everything right now. You can never get that because things don't work that fast. I began to practice patience.

The first three words that worked for me were "Let It Go." I hold on to stuff. Why do I need it right now? Instant gratification. If I want something right now and couldn't get it, I'd get angry, but what would happen if I didn't get it right now? I thought I couldn't live if I didn't get it right now, but I started to test it, let things go and see what happened. I put myself in uncomfortable places but nothing big happened when I didn't get what I wanted. I found that the world didn't end.

I looked at the results of my anger. It might feel good to get something off my chest, but I was hurting my wife and kids, which was the last thing I wanted to do. There was so much collateral damage. So, I started to do the opposite of everything I was doing before. Instead of yelling something, I said it. Then I thought, does it need to even be said? I started putting myself on pause. It was really hard to do. It was easier to quit smoking than quit anger. I smoked 3 packs a day and was on drugs. As I let all those things go—all the drugs—I was still left with anger. It was the one I couldn't eliminate.

Buddhism says to work with the most difficult emotion first, and then move on to the more subtle ones. Anger was the most obvious one for me. If we think something is working in our life, we'll keep doing it. With meditation, it's hard because we don't see the effects right away. The only reason we continue with anger is that we think it's working for us. We think anger is our friend, but it is our enemy.

How did you handle your anger when your son was killed?

I didn't have anger towards the man who killed my son. My teacher explained the only reason it was possible for me to forgive and not have anger is that I had practiced for many lifetimes. So, this lifetime, something happened, and I was already at a place where there was no anger. I didn't think about anger. Feelings of love, compassion, and forgiveness were just like breathing. I didn't have to think about doing it. I still have anger, a tinge of it, but it's not like I used to have. I used to have volatile anger. The way we become adept at anything is practice. To become Chopin, you have to practice. He wasn't born Chopin. He became that. Same with this - we practice compassion and love and eventually we become that. Gandhi taught that we are that which we seek. At the core of our being, we are love and compassion, we just have to allow it to emerge.

How did working on your anger change your life?

Man, it's so wonderful. I live in a place where I am constantly around people who are lovely to be with. I created a new environment. Before, I was around people who were like me—angry and didn't trust people. Now with a compassionate way of life, I changed my environment. When I first started working on my anger, I didn't realize I had changed. My wife noticed. She encouraged me to take classes because she knew it was working for me. She was the one who let me know it changed me. One day I thought, man she's gotten so much better. But it wasn't her, it was me! Because I've changed, people relate to me differently because I'm a different person. Sometimes my wife still sees me as an angry person because that's how deep the hurt is. Once you've broken trust, it's hard to get it back. Don't expect to be forgiven just because you ask for it. If you're not forgiven, it has to be ok.

I have a disability, I feel pain. My son was murdered. My parents died. My dogs have died. My teacher asks every time she sees me, André, how are you? I say, I've got stuff in my life, but I've never been happier. And she says, good for you. Happiness is in the mind. It's not things going your way, no death, no pain. Pain is inevitable, suffering is not. We choose to suffer. I feel pain but I don't dwell on it. I can't do the things I used to do that brought me joy like running, but I don't suffer as a result because I don't dwell on it. I let it go. I'm content. I'm happy. That's what happiness is. Being satisfied. Being content. So, I'm happy all the time, and this is a result of losing my anger.

Sunny Jacobs: Dealing with Anger

Sunny Jacobs has learned a lot about anger. In 1976, she was sentenced to death for two murders she did not commit. She left behind a nine-year-old son and a 10-month-old daughter. Sunny spent the next 17 years in prison, including almost five years in solitary confinement. We're so grateful to Sunny for sharing her thoughts and practices on dealing with anger.

What exactly is anger? It's a feeling. It's an emotion. Sometimes it's a problem. Sometimes it's a lifesaver. It's a source of energy. It's also a use of energy. Sometimes it's constructive. Sometimes it's destructive. One thing is unequivocal, anger must be respected and it must be given an outlet. If not, it will turn against you.

Each person has their own individual signs or cues. For me, it's when I start to feel my neck get hot and my teeth clench. If you feel anger coming up, try to go somewhere where you can deal with it privately. Then you can use the five-minute rule. This rule is what I used when I was in my death cell in solitary confinement. After a couple of years, I was allowed to have a watch. I would look at the watch, and I would say OK this is worth five minutes of my life. You see, you never know when it will be the last day of your life, so you don't want to let somebody ruin your whole day, but it is definitely worth five minutes. Sometimes it's worth more. So I would look at my watch and for five minutes I would do whatever I need to do, scream or shout or cry. I didn't break things because I don't like to clean up. Then when five minutes are up, that's it! I would go and sing a song or think of recipes I would cook for my children when I got home or remember some happy time. Now, I have the luxury of eating a piece of chocolate!

When you're in prison, and in lots of other situations in life, you feel powerless. They claim that they have taken your power, but it's not true. Yes, it is true that you can't go where you want or be with whom you want, but you are still in charge of what happens inside of you. No one can touch that unless you let them. No one can take that power away unless you give it away. This discovery saved me from believing that their way of seeing things was the only way.

We are all spirits on a journey. Our imperfections help us learn, and, through the energy that makes up all things, we are all connected. So I say to you, Namaste: the divinity within me salutes the divinity within you.

Jarvis J. Masters: Two Second Meditation on Anger

"Between stimulus and response, there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom."

-- Viktor E. Frankl

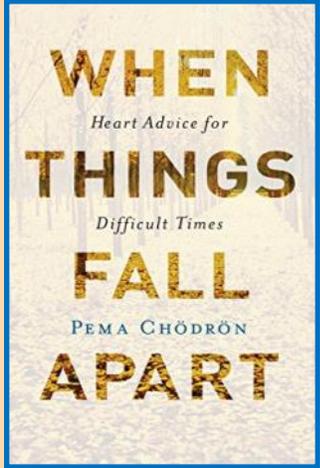
Jarvis J. Masters is an innocent man who has been on San Quentin's death row for more than 30 years and is the author of one of our favorite books, Finding Freedom. This practice is simple and yet profound. Try it!

Give yourself two seconds to consider everything you know before acting. Pause before causing harm to others or putting yourself in a situation where you ask, "not again... what have I gotten myself into?" Take a moment when the job is nagging at you or the parole officer is on your back, or something even greater, when there is a risk of being killed or killing someone. All of these experiences are just two seconds away from determining the outcome of your life. Give yourself two seconds to put yourself in check, to remember not to harm others or yourself. Take two seconds to consider what makes you go down one road and not the other and to ask: "what if?" Those two seconds can bring the peace we have been longing for or bring on situations we regret for the rest of our lives. Allow those two seconds to keep yourself true to your heart; the heart can give all of our lives a chance.

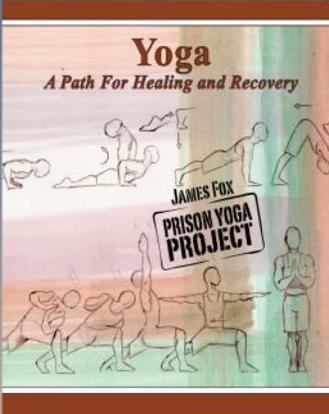
News, Notes, and Offerings

Dear friends, Pema Chodron, the beloved Buddhist teacher and longtime friend of HKF, has kindly offered this wonderful book to you all. You can write us to ask for a copy; please make sure you have approval to receive it. Below is a quote from the book.

"Things falling apart is a kind of testing and also a kind of healing. We think that the point is to pass the test or to overcome the problem, but the truth is that things don't really get solved. They come together and they fall apart. Then they come together again and fall apart again. It's just like that. The healing comes from letting there be room for all of this to happen: room for grief, for relief, for misery, for joy."



Yoga Practice Guide Available at No Cost



Write to:
Prison Yoga Project
P.O. Box 415, Bolinas, CA 94924

HKF offerings on the Edovo app

You can now access many of our books and newsletters through the free educational app, Edovo. This app is available on tablets in prisons and jails throughout the United States. The following books are currently on Edovo: *We're All Doing Time*, *Deep and Simple*, *Just Another Spiritual Book*, *Lineage and Other Stories*, *Nine Paths to Forgiveness*, *Todos estamos encarcelados*, and *Una vida sagrada*. Our newsletters are also available in English and Spanish. We will be working to add more content and will let you know when more is available. While Edovo is not currently on all tablets, it should be increasingly available in the months and years to come. If you have Edovo, please let us know what it's like to access our content.

Together-Apart

My dear friends, please continue to sit with us on Wednesday evenings from 7 to 8pm (or any time on Wednesdays that might be convenient for you) as we send love, prayers, and blessings to the many suffering beings in the world. Use whatever practice is meaningful to you, beloveds. "See" you all on Wednesdays!

Love, Sita



Many thanks to our artists: Page 1; Hector Cupich-Quinones/ Dallas, TX; Page 5; Joe Swainston/ Gatesville, TX; Page 6: Omar Franklin Barnes/ Raiford, FL; Page 7; Gerald Rodarmel/ PA; Page 8; Gregory Rodriguez/ San Antonio, TX

Letters

Dear Sita and the Human Kindness Foundation:

I am currently serving a LIFE sentence for murder, pleading to first degree to accept responsibility and spare the family further victimization and suffering. It has been 23 years inside these walls and razor-topped fences and each day has its challenges and struggles. Watching the news, it is clear that there are many more who are doing far worse than I am.

Society may think or believe that those in prison are callous and cold-hearted monsters, and yet while there are some with increased issues and concerns, there are those of us who join together and share in the hurt the world is feeling over the same issues that impact everyone with a heart. We come together in prayer for the lives of the innocent children and parents suffering right now.

Thank you in advance for reading my original poetry about the ongoing surge of violence in our communities. There may be little we can do from inside, so I thank you for allowing me to reach out to you and express feelings in regard to what is happening presently. Thank you all so much for your continued love and support.

Sincerely, -J

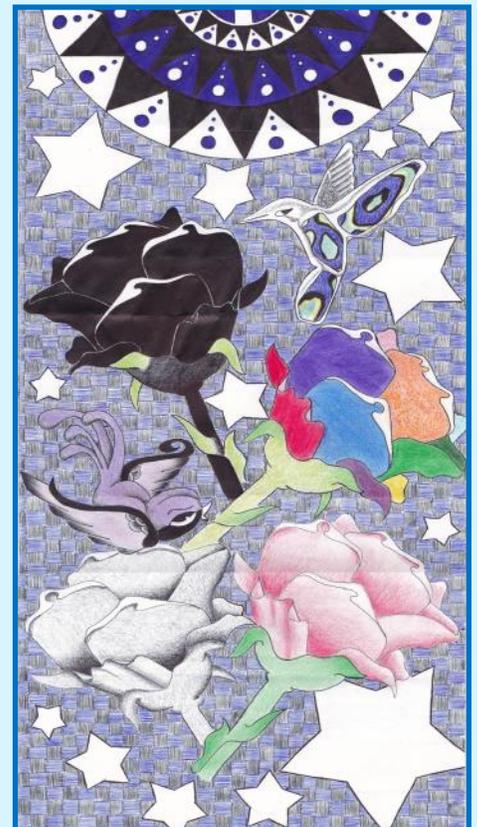
Don't Let Me Be Unnecessary" (original poetry by J)

As the news views more killings,
loss of innocent lives
that sparks a rift between
Constitutional Rights and common sense,
creating more non-sense.
We have but one life to give,
taking such promise to live
why must our children or anyone continue to die?
How can I give back to give honor for the lives lost,
the family's cost
and the pains that strain even the sincerest gesture of,
"I'm sorry."

Behind everything that society has been through,
carried our ancestors to,
still unsure of what promises
that might still someday come true,
we strive to survive,
keeping hope alive
and bide time by doing
the best we can.

Under uncontrollable surroundings
yet keep some abounding
with a chance to change the narrative of
what is, was, and even can be
cause Love can free
and remind us we are alive to help each other,
reach each other,
teach each other
and hold each other up
until differences matter no more
for there to be no more differences that divide us
as we cross such difficult times together,
one with another.
Please STOP the Violence...Now!

"If we could read the secret history of those we would like to punish, we would find in each life enough grief and suffering to make us stop wishing anything more on them."
-Adapted from Longfellow



Dear Erin,

I'm writing to say I enjoyed your newsletter and reading about other people's stories and seeing other people's artwork. As you can see, I enjoy drawing myself. I'm doing a 1-2 year sentence for armed robbery and will be released soon. Hearing how people cope with their stress and anger got myself thinking on how to deal with my temper.

I get angry real fast and let it get myself in trouble sometimes using my fists instead of walking away. I'm 53 years old and have been doing time on and off for 30 years now. I finally realized enough is enough—it's time to settle down and live a normal life peacefully instead of robbing and getting high all the time. I'm well educated and have many talents to rely on for jobs. Drugs are my downfall. Well, I'll sign off here—I just wanted to thank you for your newsletter and the inspiration I get from it. Take care, G

Dear G,

Thank you so much for writing and sending your beautiful artwork! I'm glad you're thinking about how anger works in your life. I get angry quickly too, and it's been a lifelong struggle not to say or do things that will hurt others.

Anger is a natural human emotion. Often, we have valid reasons for being angry, but we lash out at people who don't have anything to do with the causes of our anger. Taking time to identify what we are really angry about helps us control our anger and put it in its right place. The flip side is trying to dull our emotions and not feel them, which is where drugs and alcohol and other addictions come in. Ultimately, these things don't help because they dull our thinking or make the emotions we want to avoid even more intense.

So, what's left to do? We have to think about what anger does to us. It closes us off to people and experiences. Anger is like a fist. It's closed up, it's tight, and it doesn't let the light in. Using anger like a fist pushes people away and closes us up even more. When you feel anger, you don't need to deny it's there, but you do need to find a practice that helps you calm down and avoid acting out. I focus on where in my body I feel anger—and it usually feels like tight knots—like a fist. I think about how to open these knots, like opening a fist, and move that energy throughout my body so that it can flow instead of just feeling stuck and hurt.

Anger—like everything else in life—is energy. If you're a quick thinking and quick acting person, that's great. You have to figure out a way to channel that energy into something productive and constructive. You have to turn the fire inside you into something that warms instead of burns.

The fact that you have skills that can help you find work when you get out is amazing. Before getting out, take time to sharpen the skills and practices that help you stay grounded and calm even in difficult situations; these are the skills that will help you most. I have confidence in you! Peace and blessings, Erin



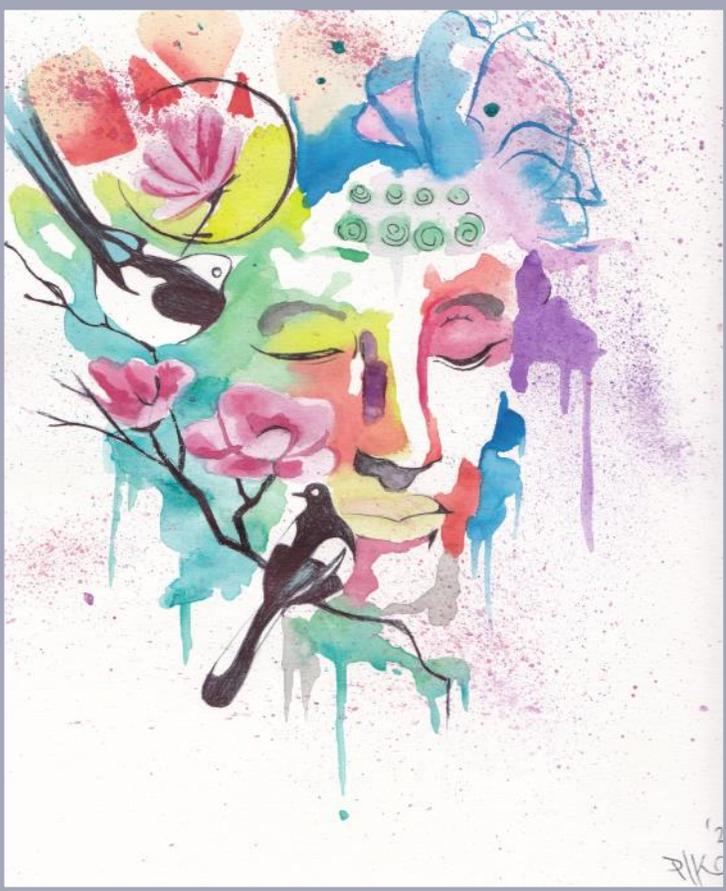
"A Little Good News" is a publication of Human Kindness Foundation, a non-profit 501(c)3 organization. Donations & bequests are welcomed and are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law. With your help, we send over 20,000 free books annually to people who request them while they are incarcerated. You can request books by writing to HKF, PO Box 61619, Durham NC 27715. www.humankindness.org ©2022 HKF



humankindness.org

PO Box 61619
Durham, NC 27715

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Durham, NC
Permit No. 205



***Lineage & Other Stories* by Bo & Sita Lozoff is now available.**

Gregory Rodriguez sent this art in honor of the first story in *Lineage*, "The Saddest Buddha."

**From "The Saddest Buddha":
"You cannot conquer your sadness by destroying it, but only by accepting it and allowing it to be as it is—unbearable sadness that also contains joy and even bliss."**