

Are You Ready For Life and Death?

Yesterday I was at a workshop called Conscious Living, Conscious Dying. It was given by [Dale Borglum, Ph.D.](#). Ram Dass, Stephen Levine and Dale established the first center to support conscious dying in the U.S. in 1976. Dale has continued to work with conscious living and conscious dying. He is as credentialed and experienced as anyone in the field of conscious living and conscious dying.

At the workshop I experienced abundant confirmation about the work that we're doing in the Thursday meetings. I'm passing along some of what came from the workshop. I'll separate Dale's comment and my comments throughout this paper.

Dale:

Dale began the workshop by saying that Eastern children, in general, who are brought up in Eastern meditative families are grounded, centered, they love their mother and father, and they're non-neurotic. (A neurotic person is one who feels there is something wrong with them.)

An American who begins Eastern meditation has not had this grounding and centering. Americans, in general, who begin Eastern meditation want to be relieved from the physical body, be relieved of their emotional pain and be relieved of their mental activity. They want to be relieved rather than be grounded and be with what is uncomfortable in them. So, in general, they use meditation as a way to escape what they're feeling.

Phil:

We covered this topic thoroughly as we explored Spiritual Bypassing by Robert Masters¹ earlier this year. We got to see and experience how we use our spiritual practice to bypass what needs help in us. We also acknowledged the many good aspects of our different spiritual practices.

Dale:

The Dalai Lama has commented about how Americans, in general, don't like themselves. The Dalai Lama was truly shocked by the amount that Americans, in general, didn't like themselves.

Eastern children are raised in knowing that they are already perfect inside. The Eastern child born into a meditative family walks around barefoot and sleeps with their mother for years. This helps the child to feel grounded, supported and safe within themselves, with their mother and with Mother Earth. This helps in developing a healthy psychology where the world is not a scary place to be in.

Phil:

Without this early life feeling of being safe, grounded, centered and supported, we're going to develop neurotic behaviors. Since none of us were raised in the ideal way, we do have neuroses. The Thursday group helps release these patterns so that we can live, more and more, in a feeling of safety while being grounded, centered and supported.

Dale:

Without being grounded and centered, we won't feel safe. When we're grounded and centered, we feel safe. If we feel unsafe, we'll build our lives in a dysfunctional way. When we feel safe, we don't live our lives cowering from life and wanting to escape life.

Phil:

How much do we feel safe? Life is only in the moment; moment by moment by moment. We can check in multiple times a day: Do we feel safe in this moment? In this moment? In this moment?

Each of us has made it through decades and decades of life. Isn't that some sign that there is safety? Many harsh events come during these decades, as do many joyful events. Because harsh events happen, do we have to feel unsafe a lot of the time?

Dale:

A person needs to be grounded and centered in their body for their heart to open.

Phil:

The people in the Thursday group breathe down into our bellies. We're going toward feeling the uncomfortable emotions and sensations in our body. In group, other people put hands on lightly and with pressure to help the stuck energy in the abdomen and in all places in the body to move and release. We use dialog, voice, movement and prayer to help this energy move and release. The body becomes more open, grounded and centered in the meetings.

Dale:

Dale read a quote from Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj: "The mind creates the abyss. The heart crosses the abyss."

Phil:

The work in the Thursday group is for us to live from our compassionate heart (which is different from our emotional heart). Infinite wisdom, infinite compassion, and the most wise guidance in how to live our lives is in our compassionate heart.

It's said that the greatest wisdom is within. Jesus said the kingdom of God is within. In the Thursday group we access this greatest wisdom by being helped and guided to go within. This happens both during the guided opening and during the time of each person sharing. The compassionate heart is the gateway to the kingdom within.

Dale:

When we're suffering, when we're very uncomfortable, then we have three possibilities. One possibility is that we can have very rigid boundaries and push away what is uncomfortable. A second possibility is that we can have over permeable boundaries and become lost in the uncomfortable feelings. The third possibility is that we can be with this uncomfortable energy; not push it away and not become lost in it.

Phil:

The work being done in the group has been to be with, to stay with, what is uncomfortable in us. The people coming to group know how we've been working with these uncomfortable energies; resulting in these energies lessening and actually showing us what we need to learn.

Dale:

Children learn from who the parents are; not from what they say.

The person who is most conscious has the most responsibility (the most ability to respond with compassion).

Phil:

We want our children, our families, our spouse and our friends to be more loving. We can talk to them for hours and hours about being more aware and being more compassionate; and that probably won't result in any change in the other person.

Be the change that you want to see. This will move people in your world more than any words you can say.

Dale:

"What you are looking for is what is looking."

Phil:

We want peace, love, joy, compassion, and understanding. These are all qualities of the soul, and these qualities are already present in us. We've covered over these qualities with our neuroses and by continuing to live in reaction to our neuroses. The saints have gone through their neuroses and live as peace, love, joy, compassion and understanding. This state is available to all. Jesus said in John 14:12: "I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works."

Dale:

Dale addressed conscious dying at the end of the workshop. He said that *the more we cultivate love, compassion, generosity and awareness when we're alive, the more we'll have a conscious death*. Dale revealed it's in conscious living, moment by moment, that we approach a conscious death. Near the time of death there is also great help in any spiritual practice that supports you and also help from your family, friends and care givers.

Phil:

The soul essence of the people in the Thursday group, with each of us supporting and helping each other, is coming out more and more; replacing the previously held neurotic patterns. Infinite compassion and infinite wisdom are already present in us. The more coverings that are removed, the more we become that which we seek.

The goodness of doing this work of conscious living is that we'll have both a more conscious life and a more conscious death.

Footnotes:

- 1 [Robert Masters](#) does an excellent job discussing ways in which people use their spiritual practice to bypass or evade avenues to heal. He's a psychologist. A note of caution is that the reader may find his work overly cerebral.