

Protocol for the Coronavirus Crisis

We all know what the outer practical precautions are during a pandemic like the coronavirus. There has been abundant information disseminated on what the correct protocols are to follow.

But no attention has been given to the inner protocols of how to deal with our fears. Our prescribed spiritual practice now is the same as it always has been; to pay very close attention to what is arising within and to accept and move into the pain of our past – with a very relaxed and loving attitude. We do not want the past to be re-enacted right now and have this intensify the stress of the situation. So, we can sum up the practice with the simple instruction:

Pay Attention and Relax.

Broken down a bit further, the process might look like this:

1.) PAY ATTENTION TO:

- Your current emotion – what fears is the corona virus triggering? What fears are arising? If they are not in proportion to the current threat, then our childhood experiences and emotional memory is informing the present, making it hard to find the middle way and the correct response.
- Your emotions are always the result of the unmet needs of our childhood. So if your needs for health, safety, security, fairness, connection or isolation, to name just few, were not adequately met, or were over-met by anxious parents, then the current situation will be a trigger into the feelings you had as a child.
- Notice what beliefs you developed about yourself, others, and the world as a result of your childhood experience. How did you start judging the world as an unsafe place, other people as untrustworthy, yourself as bad and wrong if your needs were not met? How did you develop beliefs around scarcity and abundance, for instance?
- How did you learn to protect yourself (your defenses) against your own emotional states through flight and avoidance, and/or through fight and grabbing?
- Our feelings, needs, beliefs and defenses are all related to childhood experience. To recognize this is to begin to discern how to respond to current threats (like a pandemic) and how to respond with love and attention to the inner states that are activated out of proportion to the current situation.

2.) RELAX

- Notice all the layers of your inner experience (feelings, needs, beliefs, and defenses) without judgment or comment, noticing your memory of suffering with compassion, and if necessary, meeting the falsehoods of belief with truth. The stress of past states further compromises our immune system and so our health. If you bear witness to memory states with love, your whole being will relax and you will be able to breathe. Tension will dissipate and you will optimize your immune system.

Here's our chance to be the change we wish to see in the world... to be the non-anxious presence... to be the aware and awake one... to ourselves and others, so that we do not contribute to the reactivity in the culture that is adding so much stress to our circumstances. Your own inner practice of *Pay Attention and Relax* becomes an offering to the world.