

What is Heart Opening about?

by Nicholas de Castella

Who you are, your true nature, is already peaceful, loving, happy and whole.

A bit fluffy? What does this mean? It means that when we journey inside in meditation and connect with our hearts, what we all discover, at the deepest level, is a vastness and openness that defies words. Qualities that accompany this state include peace, happiness, love and wholeness.

Why don't we feel this way?

So often we go looking for these things outside ourselves through material acquisitions, relationships or by trying to control the environment around us. We can never lose these qualities, though we can lose touch with them. We can not earn more worthiness and we can not lose worthiness. We are already perfect and whole at the core of your being.

Whilst there are many reasons for 'forgetting' our true nature the main one is that we shut down our hearts when the intensity of feeling was too great for us to integrate at the time. As a result we decreased feeling and increased thinking. Gradually our connection to essence faded and we took up residence in our heads. Believing the stories we were told (and now tell ourselves). Stories like "I'm a failure", "I'm unworthy", "I'm unlovable", "I'm stupid". All these stories are fantasies of our minds.

Goodness flows from our core.

Oneness, compassion, gratitude, gentleness, generosity and wisdom arise spontaneously when we open our hearts and connect with our true nature.

Heart opening Practices

Practices that encourage heart opening are: transcending judgement and validating what is, being mindful - living in the present moment, being fully present in our bodies, connected breathing, savouring the moment, staying open, welcoming 'in' all that is, surrendering to our heart, effortless being, allowing mystery, sharing kindness and compassion, being honest, merciful, forgiving, accountable and of service to others.

What is the goal of heart opening?

The object of Heart Opening work is to reconnect with the divine felt truth of who we are and to assist others to also experience this for themselves.

Heart opening has three stages.

Awakening. Firstly we are moved, usually by our suffering, to release the pain we are carrying and heal ourselves by reconnecting and feeling the feelings we have repressed. Our hearts and eyes are opened. We feel liberated!

As we open our hearts and connect with our true nature our outlook on life becomes more positive, we feel more peaceful, happy and capable. Pretty soon good things start happening in our lives as our outer world starts to reflect our inner shifts. We feel lighter inside, life flows more easily, people seem more open to us and good things come our way.

Consolidation Secondly, in the course of our healing process we usually get a glimpse that there is much more going on than we have been aware. This takes us out of the box and makes us curious to find out more of what is possible.

Challenges still happen. In this stage we get challenges arising and we get to lose the benefits we gained, re-find them, lose them again, re-find them and so on. Each time we make our way back home to the truth of who we are we deepen and strengthen the knowing of this truth. It also gets easier to find our way back because we become more familiar with what it is we are looking for and how to get there. This is a dangerous stage in our growth when many get discouraged and fall off the path. It helps to realise that this 'losing and re-finding' cycle is a normal and essential part of our growth. We develop wisdom (knowing in our hearts the truth of who we are) or denial (avoiding going inside).

Compassion The third stage is we develop compassion. We desire not only for our own health and well-being but we wish these things for others. At this point we consciously share the benefits that we have enjoyed from our own heart opening journey.

This desire to be of service is a natural outcome of transcending our ego identification. Our ego identification is the belief that all there is to me is my body, mind, emotions and achievements. It bases its sense of worthiness on external attributes: how clever I am, what I did well etc. Our ego believes that we are separate and is self serving, selfish, greedy, distrusting, controlling and fear based. Because our ego lacks inner connection to truth, it looks for happiness in external acquisitions and achievement which never brings lasting happiness. Once we glimpse the expanse that is our true nature and we feel our connection to all things our identification with our ego dissolves and instead of being 'me - me' focused, a desire to benefit others arises.

Caution! We must be careful how we assist others. Trying to save, fix, rescue and even protect others usually lands us fairly in the middle of a dis-empowered quicksand of egoic drama composed of a victim, persecutor and rescuer.

The desire to assist others should come as an overflow of our own well spring of inner peace, happiness and love. This is why we must do our own healing work before we can help anyone else. We assist others most through being fully present and honest and by validating and honouring their experience - feelings, thoughts and desires.

In my experience the desire to benefit others does not come at the expense of ourselves, but as a sharing of the benefits that we have enjoyed from our own heart openings. We wish to share peace, happiness and love with others, not just hold these in ourselves because the nature of an open heart is compassionate. This desire actually increases our own state of happiness and connection because it serves to lessen our preoccupation with our ego and opens us to more love, peace and happiness.

If we want to continue to grow we must direct our energy to being of service to others, otherwise our growth will only serve to reinforce our egoic isolation and eventually lead us back to misery and fear. The goal of personal development is the surrender of individual ego and the development of compassion. It is the key to our ongoing deepening happiness and realisation of the fullness of our true nature. Ultimately, nothing else has any meaning.

Our journey then becomes one of becoming more present with our open heart, anchoring our connection to inner peace, love, perfection and happiness so that we can be a more powerful force in assisting others to realise the truth of their own nature.