

Practicing Nonviolence With Gandhi

Created by Rev. Frank zumMallen for the Gandhi King Season for Nonviolence, 2013

The Gandhi-King Season for Nonviolence, Jan. 30 through April 4, is an international, educational, media and grassroots campaign dedicated to promoting nonviolence as a powerful way to heal, transform and empower our lives and our communities. The Season for Nonviolence began in 1998, inspired by the 50th and 30th memorial anniversaries of Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. This international movement strives to honor the vision of these great peacemakers through action and education.

This story is attributed to Ganhiji during his struggles in India. One Day a British clergyman, well-known for being an Imperialist, met Gandhi. Trying to paper over the gulf of disagreement between them, he said, "Well, we are both men of God, Mr. Gandhi, aren't we?" Gandhi replied, "You are a politician, disguised as a man of God. I am a man of God, disguised as a politician." (The Way to God, M. K. Gandhi, Intro., P.11)

Whether this story is true or merely apocryphal, it reveals the secret to the Mahatma: no matter how involved he became in nonviolence (*Ahimsa*) in politics, activism and working for change, he remained, first, last and always, a profoundly spiritual man. At his most secular, the reasons for everything he did and everything he accomplished had deep spiritual motivations and meanings. He believed that nonviolence was a "quality of the heart" and "man, as Spirit, is nonviolent. The moment he awakens to the Spirit within, he cannot remain violent".

Each day, during these 64 Days of the 2013 Gandhi King Season for Nonviolence, we practice a new principle of peace and nonviolence from Gandhi's spiritual legacy. Through his written reflections and his public pronouncements he teaches us to live a life of nonviolence, one choice at a time, one action at a time, one day at a time. This is how we learn to practice nonviolence. Whatever our spiritual paths may be, Gandhi's words can guide us to a more meaningful practice of *Ahimsa* (nonviolence). If we practice it for the full 64 Days, Gandhi's "quality of the heart" can become our quality of the heart and can change our lives and the world we are co-creating.

Namaste'

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Day 1

"Religions are different roads converging upon the same point. What difference does it make that we take different roads, so long as we reach the same goal."

M.K. Gandhi

No religion or spiritual path can ever completely embrace all the Divine is. The Divine is Infinite. No human religion can ever be anything but *"the finger pointing at the moon"*. Franciscan theologian Richard Rohr says, *"All religion is metaphor"*. Each of us has our own "soul metaphor" or cosmology, our way of understanding the universe and our place in it. We each have a soul metaphor, whether we know it or not. Gandhi's soul metaphor refers to the Divine as "God" and "He" and "Him". For many of us, the word "God", along with concepts like a male Deity, seem to create a violent dissonance within us. Dealing with our own feelings about a Male God can be a wonderful practice of nonviolence. Arun Gandhi, M.K. Gandhi's Grandson and co-founder of the "Season", reminds us that we should release all attachment to possessing the Truth and join his grandfather in pursuing it. Believing we possess the Truth is the path of *"himsa"*, violence. Believing we all, even Gandhi, pursue the Truth is the path of *"Ahimsa"*, *Ahimsa* is the Hindu/ Buddhist practice of reverence for and nonviolence toward all living beings.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on and remember each being has their own "soul metaphor". Today I will remember that every belief, even those that make me uncomfortable, are different roads taken in pursuit of the same goal, Truth. That is the path to nonviolence.

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Day 2,

"There is an undefinable mysterious Power that pervades everything. I feel it though I do not see it. It is this unseen Power which makes itself felt and yet defies all proof, because it is unlike all that I perceive through my senses."

M.K. Gandhi

We have all had moments of awe and wonder that filled us with some sense of the spiritual nature of everything. A beautiful sunset, an eagle crying out as it soared over head, the first smile of recognition from an infant... each of us has experienced that "undefinable mysterious Power". When we begin to understand that the undefinable nature of that Power forces each of us to interpret it in our own way, through our own "soul metaphor". The path to true nonviolence begins when we remember that this "Power... pervades everything" and be clear about our "soul metaphor" and its role in our work. Our work of nonviolence begins and ends with knowing that the person who gives nonviolence is that Power and the person who receives nonviolence is that Power and the nonviolence itself is that Power.

Affirmative Practice

Today I will meditate on and remember that undefinable, mysterious Power that fills all life including me and look for it in every being and situation. In finding that Power in every being and situation, I will find nonviolence.

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Day 3

"God is not some person outside ourselves or away from the universe.... God is then not a person. He is the all-pervading all-powerful Spirit. Anyone who hears Him in in his heart has accession of a marvelous force or energy, comparable in its results to physical forces like steam or electricity but much more subtle."

M.K. Gandhi

When we remember to think of the Divine as a Power, a Spirit, a subtle force within us, then something marvelous happens. How often have all of us set out on a task, a mission, only to become "burned out" before the job is complete? This Power we speak of is literally that, a Power. It will fill us as we listen for it, listen to it and open our hearts to it. Then, like electricity charging batteries, we are charged with that very Power that is Spirit. As Spirit is all powerful, we are filled with all power when we are truly listening and open. Our work then, should always begin with a conscious opening to the Divine, whatever that may be to us. With nonviolence as our polestar and a Higher Power filling the sails of our souls, the work of nonviolence becomes light and easy.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will open myself and allow the Power to fill me. Today, all my actions will begin with that conscious opening to the subtle force that pervades all things, including me and I will let that power carry me through my work of nonviolence.

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Day 4

"God alone knows the mind of a person; and the duty of a Man of God is to act as he is directed by his inner voice.... I ask nobody to follow me. Everyone should follow his own inner voice."

M.K. Gandhi

For many of us, the Power of the Divine comes as a *"still, small, voice"*, the voice of Spirit. Yet Gandhi says the *"still, small voice"* is our *"own, inner voice"*. Is this a contradiction? No, of course not. Our own inner voice, the voice of our intuition, the voice of Love, *IS* the voice of the Divine speaking through us, as us. For each of us that voice is different. If you are a member of a spiritual community of any kind, you know that every person, even in your own community, believes something different from everyone else. And yet we are all right, and all wrong, for the Divine can not be defined in human terms. We can never hear, nor act, perfectly, but we can endeavor to do so with authenticity and integrity. We do that when we listen to, and follow our own inner voice. The surest way to walk the path of nonviolence is to listen to our own inner voice knowing that it is THE path of nonviolence and allow all other beings to do the same.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate and listen for that still, small voice within me. I will follow that inner guidance and know that each person does the same. This is the path of spiritual nonviolence.

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Day 5

"Man as an animal is violent but as Spirit is nonviolent. The moment he awakes to the Spirit within he cannot remain violent. Either he progresses towards ahimsa (nonviolence) or rushes to his doom."

M.K. Gandhi

While the Mahatma and Dr. King lived and carried on the work from the high place of spirituality, their movements remained nonviolent. After their assassinations, anger, frustration, and pain drove major elements in both movements in the direction of violent confrontation.

Negative and violent emotions only gain dominance when we have lost our spiritual awareness and connection. Whatever we face, whatever forces we oppose, we have to first awaken to Spirit and then stay awake. That awakening is a daily part of nonviolence. As Gandhiji said, grounding ourselves in Spirit, holding to a spiritual practice of *Ahimsa*, are the only path to success.

Whenever we feel frustration, fear, anger, irritation, impatience or depression about the pace of the work we do, we are in the violent realm of "animal man". When we are able to hold to the Truth, walk the path and do the work from a place of peace, serenity and love, we are in the spiritual realm of *Ahimsa*.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on my motivations and emotions. Am I doing the work of nonviolence to "defeat" the forces of violence? Or am I doing the work of

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nonviolence to bring love and healing to those who fear, who are angry, in pain and frustrated. Today I will treat each person I meet with love. That is the path of nonviolence.

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Day 6

"To me God is truth and love. God is ethics and morality; God is fearlessness. God is the source of light and life, and yet He is above and beyond all these."

M.K. Gandhi

Many of us describe ourselves as "*spiritual, but not religious*". What we're really saying is that we do not accept the idea of a God that exists as a "Super Being", in the sense of "the Old White Man with white hair and beard on the Throne of Gold" or whatever our idea of "Not God" is. Each of us is entitled to our own soul metaphor, even the metaphor of "Not God" because none of us can ever know God except through ourselves.

Gandhiji is stating the Truth of the Divine, whatever soul metaphor you may apply to it. Those of us who reject the idea of God, but honor, respect and practice the highest ethical and moral qualities are worshiping the Divine in our way. All of the highest qualities, the "*soul*" qualities, that we possess are the Divine. And yet, even within us, God is above and beyond all those soul qualities. Our very life essence is Spirit expressing itself in a unique way through each of us.

Many of us, however "*Spiritual but not religious*" we may be, still feel a connection with all life, and a unity in all life. We feel that connection all life is

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the Divine expressing. Nonviolence is the outward expression of our conscious unity with Spirit, however we understand it. Violence is the separation that comes when we forget who we are.

Affirmative Practice

Today, my day will begin and end with consciously remembering that I am one with everyone and everything. Today I will see and bless Spirit expressing in all Life. Today, I will see and honor the Divine even in those with whom I most disagree. That is the path of nonviolence.

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Day 7

"We may not be God, but we are of God, even as a little drop of water is of the ocean. Imagine it torn away from the ocean and flung millions of miles away. It becomes helpless, torn from its surroundings, and cannot feel the might and majesty of the ocean.... But for my faith in God, I should have been a raving maniac."

M.K. Gandhi

Whenever we feel any negativity, any lack or limitation in our work of nonviolence, we are that drop of water, feeling torn from our immersion in and unity with the Ocean of the Divine and flung far from it, alone and helpless. Is it any wonder that when we give in to our frustration, irritation, anger, resentment at the slow pace of progress in our work, we sometimes feel, "Am I

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insane, or is it the world?" The answer, of course is "Yes"! Anytime we feel ourselves disconnected, separate and apart from all that is, we have forgotten who and what we are. We have simply forgotten our true nature. Worse, we believe our own delusion of ourselves, alone and separate from life, dependent on our own will, our own strength, our own power. Truly, we have become that "raving maniac" Gandhiji feared in himself.

Faith in something greater than we are is the only path to nonviolence that never disappears before us, but goes ever, ever on, stretching before us. When we remember our unity with the All, sanity returns, and there is always enough strength, enough power, for the work of nonviolence.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on my connection to the All. Today, I will make the conscious effort to remember my unity with all that is, especially those I feel most separated from. Today, I walk in my faith. That is the path to nonviolence

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Day 8

"My imperfections and failures are as much a blessing from God as my successes and my talents and I lay them both at his feet."

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M.K. Gandhi

As we move from considering our place in the universe to considering “our place” within our own consciousness, Gandhiji tells us to remember that ALL that we are is a blessing. Our path of nonviolence in the world must include accepting that our imperfections and failures are as much a blessing as our gifts and successes. Feeling guilt and shame about our imperfections and failures, lying about them or disguising them are violence committed against ourselves. In these behaviors, the message we are sending ourselves is *“you aren't worthy! If people knew who you really are....”* Were we to do this to another, we would recognize the violence in it, but when directed to ourselves, we often miss the self-inflicted injury we cause. Instead, let us focus on how each of our imperfections and failures can be gifts to the world.

Learning nonviolence toward ourselves, seeing all of our gifts and imperfections, all of our successes and failures as blessings is the work of nonviolence.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on my imperfections and failures, seeing how each of them have blessed me as a step along the path to who I am today. Today I observe how they can be used as gifts to myself and to others. This is the path to nonviolence.

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Day 9

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"I am but a poor struggling soul yearning to be wholly good, wholly truthful and wholly nonviolent in thought, word and deed, but ever failing to reach the ideal which I know to be true. It is a painful climb, but each step upwards makes me feel stronger and fit for the next. "

M.K. Gandhi

The path of nonviolence is the path of personal healing. Gandhi is reminding us that being wholly good, wholly truthful and wholly nonviolent is a goal and a path. It is not, however, our present reality. Whatever work done on the outside is always doomed to failure if we are not simultaneously doing the work on the inside. How often, in the past, have many of us become involved in movements dedicated to forms of peace, only to see it degenerate in spates of juvenile rage at stalled progress, resistance or disagreement? Such a consciousness not only destroys all the work done, it violates the original intention of peace..

Gandhi also reminds us not to despair, even when the climb up to that higher consciousness is painful. When we focus on doing both the inner and the outer work of nonviolence, we will always make progress toward the ideal which we have not yet achieved. Each step we take will allow us to feel more accepting, more loving and more able to think and act in a manner that is better, more truthful and more nonviolent.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on how my thoughts, words and deeds contradict my desire for nonviolence. Today, I will observe my thoughts, words and deeds, and where they are violent, I will find my place of fear that caused them, beginning the process of healing. This is the path to nonviolence.

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Day 10

"It is good to see ourselves as others see us. Try as we may, we are never able to know ourselves fully as we are, especially the evil side of us. This we can do only if we are not angry with our critics but will take in good heart whatever they might have to say."

M.K. Gandhi

It has been said that *"perfection lies at the crossroads of all our gifts and all our defects."* In knowing our defects, we open ourselves to the possibility of seeing how they serve us and learning how to use them positively, as the gifts they truly are. This is how we climb toward nonviolence.

The work of climbing up toward true nonviolence is not simply a matter of monitoring ourselves, it's also about being aware of how others see us. We can only become "wholly good" when we can tell the truth about all of ourselves. What others know about us, but we don't recognize in ourselves, is as important as what we know about ourselves but hide from others. When the truth about all of who we are is known, we have truly come to the "crossroads of perfection".

Being open to criticism, evaluating it honestly, accepting what is true with "a good heart" while letting go of what is not true without judgment... in this way, we can arrive at the crossroads. nonviolence toward ourselves means that we hear what we can, and where we are not yet ready to hear, we accept that without judgment too, as a truth about ourselves. Being "unready" is different from being "unwilling".

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Affirmative Practice

Today, I will be open to really hearing the criticism others have of me. I will do everything I am capable of today, to hear from a higher place of truly wanting to hear the truth about how others see me. I will do all I can to release ego and accept that truth, rejecting what is not truth. Where I cannot accept the criticism, I will accept that too. This is the path to nonviolence.

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Day 11

"As long as the secret of the soul is not known, all practices are useless. Thy life has passed away uselessly, like rains out of season."

M.K. Gandhi

Ralph Waldo Emerson, one of Gandhi's heroes, said, *"No man can violate his nature. All the sallies of his will are rounded by the law of his being...."* Each of us has a *soul secret*, a hidden truth of our nature waiting for us to awaken to it. It's buried beneath a lifetime of mistaken beliefs, negative experiences and limited thinking about who and what we think we are.

Until we come to truly know our inner nature, our soul secret, any practice, including nonviolence, will fail to produce the results we are looking for. Many of

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us have seen in the lives of others or in our own lives experiences that looked like and felt like they were natural, and yet fell far short of what was intended or desired. Then we discovered that, in the end, they were forced. These experiences, even when they do reflect some pale version of our soul secret, will always fall short of what we are born to do unless we uncover, discover and recover from the beliefs, memories and thoughts of a lifetime. When we have done the deep work of recovering from the violence done to our psyche by our past, then the secret of our soul can be revealed.

When that secret of our true nature is revealed, the work of nonviolence comes easily, without frustration, anger, resentment or anger. In that consciousness, the work is easy and success assured.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on the universe's highest vision for my life. Today, I will ask, "What's really going on here? Does my life truly reflect the "secret of my soul?" In everything I do today, I will listen for the negative voice of my old beliefs. When I hear it, I will ask, "What is it I need to recover from here?" This is the path of nonviolence.

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Day 12,

"It is better to be violent, if there is violence in our hearts, than to put on the cloak of nonviolence to cover impotence."

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M.K. Gandhi

Although this may seem a shocking statement, what Gandhi is saying is that nonviolence is not an outer action, it is an inner state of being. *Integrity*, alignment of mind, heart and soul, is the only path to nonviolence. When we act the way “we should”, for the sake of what we want to be true, or believe ought to be true, but isn't true within us, we can never be in integrity. Thinking and believing one way while trying to act another is an act of violence against our own nature and will ultimately, always result in failure.

When we try to cover the violence within us with a veneer of nonviolence, it is instantly obvious to all around us. *“Who you are speaks so loudly I can't hear what you're saying.”* That always makes the nonviolence we are trying to “think” impotent in the face of what we “feel”. In the conflict between violence and nonviolence, the force with the greatest belief in itself will always win. nonviolence can never succeed until we are in complete integrity.

It's better to tell the truth about the violence within you then to put on a false face of nonviolence. Better yet, walk away, get quiet, find the place of peace and nonviolence within you, and then return to do the work of nonviolence with integrity.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on my beliefs about nonviolence. Is nonviolence in my heart, the law of my being, or is it simply a wonderful idea that I aspire to. Today, in all my actions and interactions, I will observe whether my thoughts, emotions and actions are in alignment. If not, I will tell the truth or walk away until I can return with peace. This is the path of nonviolence.

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Day 13,

"Men often become what they believe themselves to be. If I believe I cannot do something, it makes me incapable of doing it. But when I believe I can, then I acquire the ability to do it even if I didn't have it in the beginning."

M.K. Gandhi

Often we hear people say, "I'd love to be _____ (whatever change they're describing) but I can't change who I am.." Both halves of this statement are false. Beliefs, actions and reactions can always be changed. Gandhi says, "Men often become...", the truth is that we only fail to become what we believe about ourselves when that belief is weaker than others we hold about ourselves.

St. Francis Xavier said, "Give me the child until he is seven and I'll give you the man". Each of us has been programmed by our life experiences, especially our early ones. In our early childhood, all of us learn cores beliefs "by those important adults in our lives, usually our parents. For most of us, that means that we've all been "really good students of some really bad teachers".

The fact is that, with rare exceptions, belief that has been learned can be unlearned. Belief is a choice. Some of us have been so damaged by the violence done to our small, frail child egos that we believe we have no choice. But it isn't true. Nearly all of us are at choice, even when the damage has been reinforced by years of experience.

When we make the decision to change our beliefs, and then act upon the work of changing them, we will! Believing we cannot change is the first belief that we

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must change. Once we do, we acquire the ability to change our beliefs. When we have acquired the ability and devoted the time and energy to doing so, we *will* change our belief. With the changed belief, our lives will change.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on the beliefs that limit my ability to be nonviolent. Today I will begin the work of changing the beliefs that keep me responding with violence, whether emotional, verbal or other, and keep me from responding from nonviolence in every experience. This is the path of nonviolence.

Let peace begin with you.

Day 14

"Love is the strongest force the world possesses, and yet it is the humblest imaginable"

M.K. Gandhi

Since Gandhi made this statement in 1927, science has discovered forces unimaginable at that time. Yet Gandhi's words are as true today as they were when he spoke them. True nonviolence is an act of love. It is the willingness to face the violence and hatred of another in love. nonviolent love... that sounds redundant, and in a way it is. There can be no true nonviolence without a deep love, not only for yourself and those you represent, but for those you oppose. Likewise, there can never be love when violence of thought, word or deed is present.

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Love is always an act of humility. It is literally impossible to face those who are violent toward you with pridefulness, arrogance or superiority and still be nonviolent, for there is no love in that attitude or behavior, only ego. When we are in our egos, we are always judging others against our standards. Judging others always comes with moral violence and superiority, never love.

Love with humility always demands that we see differences with others as "opinions", not as right or wrong or as "truths" vs. "untruths". This important distinction makes all the difference in the world to the one practicing nonviolence. The only right or wrong is whether we express our differences with nonviolence or violence. Love with humility also demands that the one practicing nonviolence see those who use violence against others as deeply wounded themselves and needing the healing only nonviolence can bring.

Affirmative Practice

*Today I will meditate on how love can be a more important force in my life.
Today, I will approach each interaction with love and the humility to know that
there is no right or wrong, only opinions expressed violently or nonviolently.
This is the path of nonviolence.*

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Day 15

"Nonviolence is a matter of the heart. It does not come to us through any intellectual feat." M.K. Gandhi

With the work of Gandhi and King and Cesar Chavez and the Occupy movement of today, many think nonviolence is a political position or a tool for political action. It is and it isn't. nonviolence is a way of life that embraces a change of

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heart, a change of beliefs and actions about all our relationships. Many who have been a part of movements where nonviolence training is routine. But training alone isn't enough. In fact, if nonviolence does not come from a deep heart place, no amount of training and intellectual understanding can ever produce nonviolence.

Many of us have discovered, as we did the work of self-growth, that interpersonal strategies for communications and building relationships were useless as long as they remained "in our heads". Only when we have embodied them and moved them that "terrible eighteen inches" from our heads to our hearts can they have any value. These strategies, of whatever kind, are techniques in one-to-one nonviolence. Like them, nonviolent strategies for group action can only work when they come from the heart.

Our job, then, is to embody love and nonviolence as the only tools necessary to the heart, whatever tools the intellect may embody.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on bringing nonviolence from my head into my heart, opening myself to feeling love and nonviolence, not as an idea, but an embodied reality. In all my interactions today, I will check first with my heart, before responding from my head. This is the path of nonviolence.

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"So long as we have not cultivated the strength to die with courage and love in our hearts, we cannot hope to develop the ahimsa (nonviolence) of the strong."

M.K. Gandhi

Gandhi's struggle, and Dr. King's struggle, of nonviolence was much more dramatic and dangerous than most of ours, so this language is also stronger than most of us would use. But the message is clear: if there is anything which we fear so deeply that we would lose our courage and abandon love in the moment, we have not yet embodied nonviolence in our hearts.

In everyday terms, this means that nothing said to us, no action taken against us or another, should be able to drive us from nonviolence. The founder of Christian Science, Mary Baker Eddy said, "*Stand porter at the door of thoughts*". Every thought is a choice. Once on the path of nonviolence, every interaction, every relationship, no matter how difficult, becomes an opportunity to be aware of the thoughts we allow ourselves to think.

Often we hear people say that they can't help reacting with anger when others attack them. Yet, in the split second between the perceived attack and our response, a whole thought process occurs. That process has been described like this: we are attacked, we judge what has occurred based on past experiences, a feeling arises based on that judgment, we react. It may only take a second (actually about 0.6 seconds), but that process always occurs when we are reacting to someone's attack upon us. Then we can choose love or fear and anger in response.

Being aware of this process and watching for it in every interaction is one way to cultivate the strength we need to hold to love no matter what. Responding to the love within us instead of reacting to the world outside us is the path of nonviolence.

Affirmative Practice

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Today, I will meditate on this question, "Are there any circumstances under which I would surrender my commitment to nonviolence?" Today, I will watch for opportunities to choose nonviolence over violence. Today I will choose cultivate the strength to love. This is the path to nonviolence.

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Day 17

"Where love is, there God is also. Where there is love there is life".

M.K. Gandhi

Love is a spiritual path. When we come to each interaction with unconditional love, we are practicing our Oneness with the Divine. Love is not an action, it is a consciousness of "unconditionally caring about the happiness of another". Approaching each relationship and each interaction from this consciousness, we guarantee that the Divine is also present.

"Where love is, there God is also." The reverse of this statement is equally true: where the consciousness of love is absent, the consciousness of God is absent. Where the practice of love is absent, the practice of God is absent. All of us have met those who have powerful religious beliefs or years, even decades of spiritual practice. Yet those same people can exhibit attributes which utterly lack the presence of love. How is this possible?

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It's possible because, even though they experience the Presence of the Divine in their spiritual practice, they lack it when it comes to practice in the world. Having a sense of spiritual superiority, there is a duality between their spiritual life and their physical, mental, and emotional lives.

"Where there is love there is life". At first glance, our ego minds rebel against this idea. Yet Gandhi's logic is inescapable. If love is not present, the Divine is not present. If the Divine is not present, life is impossible, for to be alive IS to be Divine. Metaphysically, this is obvious, but Gandhi is also making a statement about nonviolence. Rumi said, *"Out beyond ideas of right and wrong, there is a field. I'll meet you there."* Dr. Greg Baer, the author of *Real Love* and one of my teachers, says that there are two fields of consciousness. Ideas of right and wrong exist on their own field, what he calls the *Field of Death*. Judgment, self righteousness, and "right and wrong" always lead to violence, emotional or otherwise. Rumi's field beyond those ideas, Baer calls the *Field of Life*, because true nonviolence can only exist on this field, beyond ideas of right and wrong.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on love as the Divine, inviting Its full expression as my life. Today, in every action and interaction, my spiritual practice will be to ask "How can I be more loving here?" That is the path to nonviolence.

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Day 18

"Recall the face of the poorest and weakest man you have seen, and ask yourself if this step you contemplate is going to be any use to him."

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M.K. Gandhi

The Iroquois nation's constitution says *"Look and listen for the welfare of the whole people and have always in view not only the present but also the coming generations, even those whose faces are yet beneath the surface of the ground – the unborn of the future Nation."* Gandhi and the Iroquois people are bringing us the same message, whatever we contemplate, we should ask ourselves whether it is for the good of all: the weak, the poor, the powerful, the rich, the young the old, those who agree with us and even those who don't agree with us.

How often do we find ourselves thinking, "If only they'd do it my way, then everyone would be happy!" In fact, most of the time, this is simply our egos, justifying what we believe would make us happy. Although we try to deny it, pointing to our sacrifices for our "cause", this is a profoundly selfish way to approach change. Unless our actions serve all of life, we are acting from the purely human nature of our egos, not from love. All life means the weakest, the youngest, the yet unborn. nonviolence means taking off the "blindness" of our own egos and always coming to any action with the desire to serve ALL, including those who hate us, those who have hurt us and those who wish to hurt us. "All" includes all life. nonviolence always serves life and that means all life.

Spiritual Practice

Today I will meditate on this question, "Who do I serve?" One way to do this is to keep repeating the question each time an answer comes "bubbling up". Today, in every action and interaction, I will ask this question, "Who does this action serve? Does it serve all life?" This is the path of nonviolence.

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Day 19

"I have found through bitter experience the one supreme lesson to conserve my anger, and as heat conserved is transmuted into energy, even so our anger controlled can be transmuted into a power which can move the world."

M.K. Gandhi

Anger is the great enemy of nonviolence because anger is violence. Yet anger, rightly understood can be a source of great power. Anger is, in every case, our reaction to fear. It may be fear that we're not getting what we or others want or need. It may be fear that what we or others have will be taken. Whatever the fear may be, our anger is always rising out of it.

Anger expressed is always self-defeating. Anger creates a win or lose mentality in both parties to any interaction. No matter what the outcome of such an interaction may be, we have set the stage for the next round of conflict. Angry people always "keep score" and always look for evening it. In that mentality, there are NO winners, only losers. In other words, anger expressed is always self-defeating.

This does not mean we "stuff" our anger, to do so is simply to bottle it up inside of us until it becomes too large, too powerful and too painful to contain. Then it bursts forth uncontrollably as violence. When we understand this we can begin to explore the fear behind our anger. Knowing what we fear, our course of action becomes clear and the energy behind our anger and fear has a path, a direction and a power that far transcends anger. Once our course of action is clear, fear disappears and the power that was our anger becomes a force for nonviolence. Only in this way can we transmute anger into the power behind nonviolence.

Affirmative Practice

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Today, I will recognize anger as my fear disguised. I will find the cause of my fear and begin using the energy behind it as the power of peace. This is the path to nonviolence.

Let peace begin with you.

Day 20

"God alone knows the mind of a person, and the duty of a man of God is to act as he is directed by his inner voice. I claim that I act accordingly."

M.K. Gandhi

Whatever our personal beliefs about God or not-God, none of us deny the existence of a conscience. Whether we think of it as the voice of the Divine, the voice of our conscience or the voice of the collective consciousness, there is a still, small voice within. It is this voice that is the true voice of non-violence. Unless we are certain that we hear that voice, not the voice of our egos, we can never be certain that the path we follow is truly the path of nonviolence. The true path of nonviolence is the path that serves all.

Consider those in popular movements of change in our society today. Do their words and action serve all? Or do they serve the interests of themselves or some group by harming others? This is how we can tell whether people are truly following their "inner voice" or simply their ego voice.

Most of us are so busy in our ego minds that we fail to hear that inner voice. We simply fail to listen for it. Emerson said, "*Let us be silent that we may hear the*

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whispers of the gods." Only when we take time each day to still the "monkey mind", chattering away in our heads, can we listen for that voice. Only when we listen for it can we hope to hear it. Only when we hear it can we know that it is the true "inner voice", not the ego voice that directs us.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will take time to meditate, listening for that still small voice within me. Today, every word I speak, every action I take will be measured by this yardstick, "Does this serve all or does it serve only me?" This is the path to nonviolence."

Let peace begin with you.

Day 21

"Strength does not come from physical capacity. It comes from an indomitable will."

M.K. Gandhi

Gandhi didn't simply speak these words, he lived them and exemplified them. Edward R. Murrow, reporting on Gandhi's funeral, said, *"governments and dignitaries from all over the world have joined hands today to pay homage to this little brown man in the loincloth who led his country to freedom."* Gandhi was a man of small stature, with little physical strength. In fact, his public fasts in the name of nonviolence left him frail and weak for long periods of time.

His strength of will, his sense of right and wrong, not just for himself, or for Indians, but for all humanity, gave him a strength of spirit and will that were unconquerable. He

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sought to free all Indian people, Hindu and Muslim, Sikh and Jain, Christian and Buddhist. Even more, he sought to free the British from their actions and their Karma, the Cause and Effect consequences, of their enslavement of the Indian people had caused. His devotion to his beliefs and his cause made him willing to take any personal risk necessary to succeed in his goal.

His will was not "to do", or to force those around him to do. His will was "to be" the living embodiment of his beliefs in truth, love and nonviolence. As a result, Gandhi, this "little brown man", was one most of the famous and, in his own unique way, most powerful men of his generation. Yet he did it in a way that made Albert Einstein say of him, "*Generations to come will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth.*" That is the power of will, to hold and to be a Truth for all beings and to hold it so powerfully that it must manifest. Beyond that, to hold yourself and your expectations so lightly that right action must occur. In this way, nonviolent action can succeed against all odds.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on "*the will to be*". Today, I will use my will to hold to and be my truth, expecting nothing and accepting right action and the perfect outcome, however it may occur. This is the path to nonviolence.

Day 22

" If I had no sense of humor, I would long ago have committed suicide." M.K. Gandhi

There is an old saying, "Of course God has a sense of humor. It created us" Humans are a sadly comical race. We behave violently, like children, when we most need to act like adults. We act like serious, pompous adults when we most need to act like children and laugh at our silliness.

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Sometimes, we become so serious that we forget to see the humor in everything around us, especially in our own behavior. We only become serious when we have become attached to the outcome of our work. Attachment to outcome is a guarantee of "suicidal tendencies", because we can never control or predict all the outcomes of any actions dealing with human beings. All we can say for sure is that actions have consequences, including unintended ones. Under the circumstances, we have only two choices; take everything seriously and personally, forgetting that the Divine is always present or take nothing seriously and personally, remembering that the Divine is always present working perfectly through all experiences, all people and all relationships.

When we approach each and every interaction with no expectations, except that there is a Infinite Presence and Universal Law operating through all, attachments fall away and we see the quirky, and often sad, humor of human existence. Humans so often act as if the world will obey if only they use enough power, enough violence, and then they are victims when they world acts through perfect Cause and Effect. Until we come to recognize this truth, frustration, anger, disappointment and feelings of failure will haunt us. When we come to this realization, we can laugh at ourselves, instead of having others laugh at us.

Affirmative Practice

Today, in every interaction I have, I will look for the humor that lies beneath the apparent drama, not laughing at others, but at my own expectations that anyone will do it "my way". This is the path to nonviolence.

Day 23

"If one does not practice nonviolence in one's personal relations with others and hopes to use it in bigger affairs, one is vastly mistaken....You have to practice it towards

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those who act violently towards you; and the law must apply to nations as to individuals. If the conviction is there, the rest will follow.” M.K. Gandhi

nonviolence begins within. But even when we begin practicing it in the world, it must first begin “close to home”. There is an old saying that says, *“I love humanity, it's people I can't stand.”* Often we see people whose personal lives reflect emotional violence, yet claim for themselves the mantle of nonviolence in the larger world. Ultimately, they will always fail, because nonviolence must begin with those closest to us, our family and acquaintances. Ironically, it is these people who are the most difficult for most of us to be nonviolent with, because they are the ones who know us best. They are, therefore, our greatest teachers. Knowing us so well, they know our flaws. Knowing our flaws, they know all of our weakest places, the places that drive us to our own version of violence.

Nonviolence must “begin at home”. It isn't an altruistic, theoretical practice. If it is not practiced with those closest to us, it isn't being practiced at all all. Those we profess to love as family must come first. Love without nonviolence, in every sense, physical, emotional, and mental, is not love, and not nonviolence. It is violence wrapped in ego, covered by denial, shrouded by self-delusion... in short, it is a lie. One that is obvious to everyone but ourselves.

Affirmative Practice

“Today, I will meditate on my closest relationships, looking for those places where I have been violent to those I am closest to. Today, I will “How can I be more loving, less violent and more truthful in my relationships with family and friends. This is the path to nonviolence.

Day 24

“Don't listen to friends when the Friend inside you says “Do this!” M. K. Gandhi

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Those closest to us always have the most influence over us. Our parents, our spouses or partners, our friends, our children all influence us. For most of us, that influence limits us. Well meaning people often counsel us to take safe and easy paths. Caring about us, they fear we might fail if we take "the path less traveled by". All too often we take their counsel as our own because we fear their criticism and their judgment. When we do, we are permitting violence to be done to us.

There is a voice within us urging us to take our own path. That, Gandhi says, is the true "Friend", the still small voice within us that will always lead us to the thing we were born to do. When that Friend within us calls us to "Do this!", bowing to social pressures from any source is the coward's path. What we are called to do may not be grand and earth shaking, but it is ours. No one else is called to do whatever it we are called to do, not in the same way.

The work we are called to do begins with one small step on our path. Each step we take leads us closer to our calling and further from the limits our friends and family place upon us. There is no need for us to respond with violence to their restraints on us. Instead, we release them with love and we take the next step, the next and then the one after that. When we do this, we discover that one kind of courage is simply taking the next step in front of us on our path.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on how I have let others limit me. Today, I will release their expectations and opinions with love. Today I will listen for the voice of my "Friend" and begin to take action on the path it sets before me. This is the path of nonviolence.

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"The wife is not the husband's bonds slave but his companion and his help-mate and equal partner in all his joys and sorrows – as free as the husband to choose her own path." M.K. Gandhi

Coming from the Indian culture of the early 20th Century, Gandhi's marriage was arranged. They married when he was 13 and she was 14. In that system, women were seen as subservient to their husbands in all things. It was very rare for any man to grant equality to his wife in any way. Through long effort, Gandhi, in some ways led by his wife, Kasturba, came to recognize that she was his equal in every way.

This is an important lesson, not because of the implications for all marriages, but for all relationships. In the 21st Century, this should be obvious, given the status of the rights of women. But the lesson isn't really about women. It's about our partner. Who is our partner? Whoever I have any relationship with, no matter how causal or brief. In all our relationships, our partner is as free as we to choose their own path. Whether it is the most intimate of relationships, or the most casual, our partners are always at choice. If there were "Laws of nonviolence", this would be one of the most important: "In every situation and every interaction, our partner is always at choice." To deny this right, is to deny free will. To deny free will is to commit violence against our partner, for truly we are demanding they become our "bonds slave".

Often we assume that our partners believe all the same things and accept the same view of reality. The truth is never that simple. Each of us has different beliefs about and relationship with the Divine. In the same way, each of us has different beliefs and relationships with our relationship, and with the world in general.

Even worse, we assume that our partners know what we want and then become angry when they don't do what we expect. Anger is always a form of violence. *Even worse, it denies free will to our partner. Our anger says to them, "You have the right to do whatever you choose, as long as it's what I want."* Recognizing our partners' right of choice is an important step toward nonviolence.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on the Law of Choice, recognizing where I deny it to others and where I have allowed others to deny it to me. Today, in all my affairs, I will recognize that the Law of Choice is always in operation. This is the path of nonviolence.

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Day 26

"Freedom is not worth having if it does not connote freedom to err." M.K. Gandhi

In all our relationships, it's important to remember the Law of Choice. It's equally important to remember this corollary to the Law: "We are free to choose everything except the consequences of our choices." We get to choose everything except the natural Cause and Effect outcomes of those choices. Whatever our choices, they will always have consequences. In Gandhi's nonviolent struggles, he always accepted that there would be consequences for himself as well as those he opposed. He accepted those consequences with no sense of victimhood, only a recognition of the logical consequences of his actions.

For each of us, free will implies the ability to make mistakes. Whatever lofty purpose we believe our choices arise from, we must be prepared to accept ALL the consequences of those choices. Frequently our choices will manifest in results we never expected. This is another corollary to the Law of Choice, the Law of Unexpected Outcomes: "Every choice will result in outcomes we cannot anticipate." When they do, accepting them as part of the Cause and Effect of our actions with grace and equanimity is the nonviolent path.

It's especially important to remember this freedom to err with those we most care about. Just as it's important to lovingly allow them free choice, it's also important to allow them to experience the consequences of those choices. While it may sometimes feel cruel to allow them to suffer from their own choices, to rescue them from the consequences of those choices is the real cruelty. We prevent them from learning important life lessons about choices and consequences and encourage them to make the same erroneous choices in the future. In its way, this is the more violent path.

Affirmative Practice

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Today, I will meditate on free will, choices and their consequences. Today, I will recognize that every choice has consequences and make my choices with conscious thought. Today, I will love others in their choices and their consequences. This is the path of nonviolence.

Day 27

"Differences of opinion should never mean hostility. If they did, my wife and I should be sworn enemies of one another..." M. K. Gandhi

Disagreement is a daily fact of life for all of us. Each of us have different life experiences and different beliefs because of those experiences. Thus, each of us comes to any interaction with a different "reality" than anyone else. This is even true in the most intimate of family relationships. Sometimes we hear someone say of a sibling, *"I can't believe we grew up in the same family."* Well, of course, they didn't. Each of us, because of our placement in sibling order, the age of our parents when we're children, changing health, financial situations and other factors, grow up in unique circumstances. They may be similar to our siblings' experiences, but they are not the same. Because of that, even in these close family relationships, individual experience, belief and, therefore, reality is different.

It is out of these differences that individual "truths" arise. But these are not Truth in the absolute sense. They are, rather, opinion. Because they are based on unique individual experiences and beliefs, they are unique opinions. Each of us has our own unique opinion. This is very important to understand. Each of us has our own unique opinion, based on beliefs arising out of personal experience. They are NOT Universal Truth.

All this being true, hostility over differences of opinion is not only wrong, it defeats the very purpose of any conversation. When we are interacting with those we disagree with, our disagreement is based upon opinions formed by a lifetime's experience.

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There is no right or wrong, there is only different. nonviolence asks us to recognize that it's that, different, not right or wrong, and find common ground.

The problem is that so many of us have our personal identities, our egos, so invested in the "truth" of our opinions, that we are unable to acknowledge that "different" does not mean wrong. Unfortunately, it seems that the closer the relationship, the more we have invested in our "stories" and opinions. Thus, we see people treating their family members with more hostility and violence than they would ever dream of doing "out in the world". Nothing could be more destructive. Accepting "different, not wrong" and loving "because of", not "in spite of differences" is the key to nonviolence in all our relationships. Learning the lessons of nonviolence in family can prepare for the larger work of nonviolence in the world. It's one of the gifts family brings us.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will remember that my "truths" are merely opinions, and I will listen, with an open heart and mind, to the opinions of others, without hostility, but with a consciousness of "different, not wrong".

Day 28

"The real love is to love those who hate you, to love your neighbor even though you distrust him." M. K. Gandhi

How easy it is to love those who love us, who agree with us, who walk the same path we do. How much more difficult to love those who hate us, who disagree with us and whose paths are completely different from ours. Hating those who hate us may seem natural, but loving them is exactly what we are called to do. Doing so is the only path to nonviolent resolution of any disagreement. As the Buddha said, *"For hatred does not cease by hatred at any time: hatred ceases by love...."* Hatred, when allowed to

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continue, never resolves the disagreement and never heals. When we allow this to be our reality, nothing can ever change and both people in the disagreement lose.

Gandhi refers to "the real love". What is the real love? The real love is the love that recognizes that those who hate us are afraid. Hatred and anger are always the result of fear. When we recognize this, another's hatred ceases to be about us and becomes, rightly, about them. When we love another, despite their hatred of us, their hatred may continue, but we have eliminated the possibility of conflict. Even though we may not be able to trust that they will not continue to attack us, when we love them, the effect of their attacks withers away. This does not mean that we become "doormats" for their hatred. We take the necessary precautions to protect ourselves, but we do it with love and compassion, knowing that if they could do better, they would.

If we love only those who love us, does that prove that we are really able to love? No, it only proves that we can love when it's convenient. It proves nothing about our real capacity for love. If it proves nothing about our real capacity for love, it also proves nothing about our capacity for nonviolence. nonviolence can only come when we love. Like love, nonviolence only counts when we are faced with the violence of those who hate us.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on love. Today, I will practice loving those who hate me, with compassion for their fear and inability to love.

Day 29

"Whenever you are confronted with an opponent. Conquer him with love."

M.K. Gandhi

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There is a story about Abraham Lincoln that expresses this idea better than any other. A woman approached him one evening during a White House dinner party. She began talking about how much she hated the South and longed to destroy it. Lincoln expressed his disagreement with everything she said. She asked if he did not want to destroy his country's enemies. He replied, "Madame, if I make my enemy my friend, have I not destroyed my enemy?"

Unconditional love recognizes that our "enemy's" fear and pain is as great as ours. This kind of love has been defined as, "*unconditionally caring about the happiness of another.*" In this case, another includes those who consider themselves our enemies. In our weakest moments, we may consider them our enemies as well. It is in the very act of seeing them as enemies that we have lost, for we've have made it a war. No one wins a war. In the end, the winner is simply the one who has lost the least. When we find the strength to unconditionally love them and care about their happiness as much as our own, we can begin to see their suffering, as well as our own. In doing so, we can find solutions to conflicts previously unseen.

An aide to Eleanor Roosevelt once said of her, "*She got even with her enemies in the cruelest way possible. She forgave them.*" Are there those who who truly cannot respond to love? Yes, there will be those among our opponents who are truly incapable of responding to love. Most of us err, however, when we demonize our opponents and lump the pathologically unloving with the vast majority of those who act from fear. When we love that majority, even in the face of its violence and hatred, we force it to confront the truth that their actions make them everything they claim to hate, and violate the very values they claim to represent.

But neither Eleanor Roosevelt, nor Gandhi, loved as a means to "revenge". They loved as a path to nonviolence and the victory of healing that always comes from nonviolence, and from no other source.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on loving all my opponents. Today, I will see every conflict as an opportunity to conquer with love.

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Day 30

"It's the action, not the fruit of the action, that's important. You have to do the right thing. It may not be in your power, may not be in your time, that there'll be any fruit. But that doesn't mean you stop doing the right thing. You may never know what results come from your action. But if you do nothing, there will be no result."

M.K. Gandhi

The only guarantee of the right outcome ever occurring is taking the right action. We can never predict with any accuracy whether our actions will have the desired effect at the desired time. There are times, especially uncertain and violent times, when our actions may seem fruitless. But when we act from the principles of nonviolence, seeking a goal that will benefit all, our action will serve its own purpose. Doing the right thing is always the only choice.

We are always at choice. We can choose to do the right thing or do the wrong thing. We can even choose to do nothing, but even failure to act is a choice. What we cannot choose are the consequences of our choices. We can know, however, that knowing the right action to take, and not taking it, will always result in our failure. Knowing the right thing to do, and doing it, may not result in the instant demonstration of the desired outcome, but it is vitally important that we do it. It will, inevitably, occur in the perfect right outcome, if we take the right action and continue to take it.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on the next indicated action on my path. Today, I will take right action, whenever it presents itself to me, expecting no outcome except my completing the action.

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Day 31

"The moment there is suspicion about a person's motives, everything he does becomes tainted."

M. K. Gandhi

Tabloids, political campaigns and rumor mongers have made a living off of this simple fact, if anything we do is suspicious, everything we do is suspicious. It applies to anonymous people as well as to the famous. Whatever the work of nonviolence we may be doing, once we enter upon our path, remembering this lesson is vital. It doesn't matter how simple work may be, even simply in our daily life, whatever we are doing, in every moment, is seen by others.

How often do we hear of people being accused of some misbehavior whose response is, "But I didn't do anything!" They may not have, they may be "as pure as the driven snow" but they have forgotten this rule: *"The appearance of impropriety is as harmful as impropriety itself."* Even if the appearance of misbehavior has nothing to do with reality, people will nearly always view our actions in the worst possible light. This is especially true when they are threatened by us, disagree with us or have negative feelings about us for any reason.

In our personal lives, this perception of impropriety may have little impact, but if we have set our feet upon the path of nonviolence in any form of the "public arena", whether social, political, or spiritual, there will be those who will be threatened, who will disagree with us and will have negative feelings about us. In allowing any form of appearance of this type to exist, we invite exactly the kind of criticism that can impact negatively on our work and set back whatever progress we have made.

The human mind is extraordinarily complex. There are layers upon layers of thought process going on that we're not even aware of at a conscious level. They almost invariably are, however, obvious in our facial expressions, body language and even personal energy. All of these are constantly being "read" by those around us all the

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time. As some mothers have said to their children from time immemorial, "Don't you look at me in that tone of voice!"

As difficult as it may seem at first, each person committing themselves to the path of nonviolence should always maintain themselves above suspicion even in the things they think about, for even there, our lack of integrity betrays us. As we set out to make nonviolent changes in the world around us, the work must first occur within ourselves. Only when our thoughts and words have been made nonviolent can we become "above suspicion". Only when we are above suspicion can we truly do the work of nonviolence, otherwise, our thoughts, words and deeds taint not only us, but the work we've taken on.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on anything in my consciousness that keeps me from absolute integrity. Today, I practice vigilance in all I think, all I say and all I do. That is path of nonviolence.

Day 32

"But no one has a right to coerce others to act according to his own view of truth."

M.K. Gandhi

In today's world, it appears that opinions, screamed loudly enough, violently enough and often enough begin to pass for truth. A whole industry has grown up around this idea. It's called Talk Radio. Nothing we can do, no matter how loudly, how vehemently or how often we shout them can make them Truth, they will forever remain opinion. No matter how many may accept them as "truth", they are opinions.

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In every case, in all circumstances, everyone has the right to choice, including the right to what opinions are held. No matter how vehemently we try to coerce others to accept our version of "truth", it will ultimately be shown to be merely opinion. History is filled with this lesson. Asked what the Pope would think about a decision he had made, Stalin is said to have replied, "The Pope? How divisions does the Pope have?" Stalin and the system of government he helped create is gone, the Pope remains. The militant extremes of Nazi Germany, the the extremism of communism, racial extremism in the U.S. and other countries, all have fallen from public favor. They have done so because no matter how violent the coercion might have been, ultimately they will fail. They will fail because they were the opinions of a few, imposed upon the many. But they also fail because the actions taken to impose them upon the many ultimately turn people against them.

On a deeper, more fundamental plane, however, ultimately there is a Right Action that will always occur. That Right Action will ultimately enforce itself upon creation, no matter what temporary appearance may seem to prevail. When we attempt to impose our will, our opinions on others through coercion and the force of violence, we will fail. Right Action will always exert itself in the end. In all of our actions, seeking to know what right action is should always guide us, when viewed through the lens of nonviolence in everything we think, say and do, it will reveal itself and lead to that which serves all, harms none and heals the world.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on Right Action. Today, before I attempt to change the beliefs of another, I will ask: Am I attempting to force my beliefs onto another? Is this really Right Action? That is the path of nonviolence.

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"They say, 'means are, after all, means.' I would say, 'means are, after all, everything.' As the means, so the end. There is no wall of separation between means and end."

M.K. Gandhi

People, in their zealous desire to achieve a "right" end become willing to use means that are contrary to the end itself. During the protest movements of the 20th Century, we saw the Civil Rights Movement triumph legally while it adhered to the principles of nonviolence that Dr. King taught. After his assassination, the justifiable rage of young African Americans took the movement in a more violent direction and all progress toward further social and moral integration slowed. The same was seen in the Anti-war movement of the 1960's. While the movement remained nonviolent, progress was being made in the popular consciousness of the American people. After the upheaval of the 1968 Democratic convention and the movement toward more violent means, the means being used completely invalidated the professed end.

We have seen this most recently in the Occupy Movement. The Occupy Movement, by and large, followed the principles of nonviolence in their work. A small minority of its members, however, resorted to force and violence in seeking its goals. Regardless of the actions by authorities that prompted it, these Occupy members not only lost any moral authority in the struggle, they actually set the movement back, as all were tainted by their actions. You cannot profess to believe in Love and use force to implement it. You cannot use violence to enforce nonviolence. When you attempt to do so, any moral authority your intention and goal may have had is lost. Once that happens in a nonviolent struggle, all hope of success is gone and the violent means inevitably becomes the only end remaining. The Laws of Cause and Effect always apply, whatever we may claim our motive to be.

The ends can never justify the means we use, rather, the opposite is true. The means we use either justify the ends we seek, or they completely invalidate them. In the words of the ancient proverb, *"You cannot pick up one end of a stick without picking up the other."* In the end, the one that is the least violent is not the same as being nonviolent. Nonviolence, and nonviolence alone, must be both the means and the end. We cannot justify violence in the name of nonviolence.

Affirmative Practice

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Today, I will meditate on what it means to be truly nonviolent. Today I will ask, "How am I being nonviolent in the pursuit of what I believe? How am I being nonviolent in my life? Do my means truly match my ends?" That is the path of nonviolence.

Day 34

"Good travels at a snail's pace. Those who want to do good are not selfish, they are not in a hurry, they know that to impregnate people with good requires a long time."

M.K.Gandhi

It can be frustrating to see a goal that exists for the best interest of all and yet meet resistance in moving the world in that direction. There will always be those who hold a different view of the good of all. Even in today's emotionally charged political climate with a Grand Canyon of differences between the sides, there is always some good to be found at any extreme.

Change is always threatening to those who have embraced the old order of anything, whether it's the family "drama" or social/ economic/ political interests. Those who oppose "Good" never see themselves as "villains", rather, they see potential for loss of the relative good they have now and are unable to see the Greater Good offered by the new path.

Seeking to impose the Good upon those whose fear makes them oppose it is an act of selfishness and violates the very meaning of the word Good. It's the act of a self centered person saying, "The world would be so much better if only they'd do it my way." Ultimately, what they are saying is, "I'm right, they're wrong and I can't be happy until the world conforms to me. I don't care how it affects anyone else as long as they do it my way." Our belief about our own righteousness and our actions, speak

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louder about our selfishness than they do about the Good we seek. That selfishness is the very thing our opponents fear and it is that they oppose, more than the Good itself.

Good that is imposed violently on any, is violence imposed on all. Everyone grows at their own pace, and the change we seek can only occur at the pace of the "snails" who lag behind. Allowing them to become "impregnated with good" is always the act of love, for it accepts even the slowest where they are and heals their fear before the goal is pushed forward. Only in this way can the Good manifest.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on my ego's role in the Good I seek. Today, in every situation, I will ask myself, "Am I able to help others to grow at their own pace, or is my desire for change a selfish one to do it my way NOW?" This is the path of nonviolence.

Day 35

"Speak only if it improves upon the silence."

M. K. Gandhi

It's amazing how often we see disagreements arise, not because there are huge differences in opinion, but because our egos cause us to say things that are disagreeable. In other words, our egos' "Scorekeeping" make us need to win "points" and emotional and verbal violence are frequently the result. Our interactions, however, are not competitive games, but a chance to learn from one another and to advance the cause of nonviolence.

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In every interaction, our choice is always about speaking or keeping silent. When we are in disagreement with another, it is not a question of who is right or wrong. That is the field of ego and the "field of death" for any possibility of a loving outcome. When we speak, we should always ask ourselves, "Does it matter?" Is this individual disagreement SO important that we have to stand our ground, or is our ego magnifying our "rightness" (righteousness) out of proportion to the truth? We ask ourselves, "Can he/she really hear what I have to say." If I am comfortable that this issue is not an ego issue for me, what about them? Can they hear what we have to say, or is their investment in their position so entrenched that they can't possibly hear us. "Will it make a difference?" Will the words I speak serve to heal the disagreement, or will it simply be more fuel for the disagreement.

Frequently, the best words to speak are none. Silence, in place of the ego's need to fill the space, is often the most effective way to communicate and always the most effective way to think about what it is we're trying to achieve.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on the role of my ego in conflicts and disagreements in my life. Today, in every interaction, I will ask myself, "Does it matter?" , "Can he/she really hear what I have to say" , Will it make a difference?" The is the path of nonviolence.

Day 36

"Action expresses priorities." M.K. Gandhi

This quote is echoes one of Gandhi's heroes, Ralph Waldo Emerson, "What you are stands over you the while, and thunders so that I cannot hear what you say to the contrary." The words that we speak are merely words. Our actions, however, express what is true for us in the moment of that action. We cannot proclaim nonviolence and expect others to believe us unless our actions reflect nonviolence. The Roman

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historian, Tacitus, said, *"where they make a desert, they call it peace."* This is a wonderful description of those who proclaim nonviolence while using violence to achieve it.

Often in our zeal to achieve our goal, we commit violence upon those who oppose us. In doing so, we not only fail to achieve our goal, we actually set our cause back. Our actions, in every case, express our true priorities. We never get to say, *"But their actions made me..."* This statement is not only an echo of childish rationalization, it actually expresses our priority, winning.

When someone uses the principles of nonviolence as a tool to achieve their own agenda, they will always become violent when confronted with frustration and disappointment. The priority was, after all, not nonviolence, but achieving the goal. This is why nonviolent movements often fail. Only when our priority is nonviolence for nonviolence's sake can we succeed.

Remembering that our actions express our true priority are also a way for us to monitor who we really are. Humans are remarkably adept at self-delusion. But when we monitor our actions as a daily practice, we will always see the true priorities behind our illusion and denial. Seeing our illusions and self-denial, we can revisit our core beliefs and heal whatever it is that has caused us to lose sight of them in our actions and priorities.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on my true priorities. Today, I will be aware of my actions and what they proclaim about my priorities.

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"The first condition of nonviolence is justice all around in every department of life."

M.K. Gandhi

How often do we hear people complain, *"It's not fair!"* when what they really mean is, *"It's not just!"* Justice and fairness are two entirely different things. In fact, what people really mean when they use the word "fair" is usually the childish concept of *"I want it my way!"* "Fair" used in the context of justice frequently means *"I want my idea of justice given to me the way I want it, and I want it now."*

We are not talking here about the human justice or legal system. What passes for justice in the world is about manipulating the laws of man to give us the result we want. True Justice is just another name for the Law of Cause and Effect, or the Law of Natural Consequences. This Law of Higher Justice is sometimes difficult to live with, as it judges all equally, surely and dispassionately. True nonviolence requires that we allow this law to apply to every living being evenly and consistently. This means that our every action should be governed by this law, and applied in every area of life, professionally, personally, politically and philosophically. We do not get to apply them differently to one group over another, because we agree with one group and not the other or because one group supports us and the other opposes. The old political idea of *"He may be a scoundrel, but he's our scoundrel"* has no home in true justice.

nonviolence requires that we embrace this larger idea of Justice, where we allow the Laws of Natural Consequences to be applied evenly, consistently and equitably to all, and in every area of our lives. This means it starts in our families and our friendships and then expands out into all areas of human interaction. It means that we desire justice for everyone, including those who oppose us and use violence against us. Only in this way can nonviolence become a reality, in our lives and in our world.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on what justice is to me. Today, I will be an impartial observer of how justice is, or is not, applied in the world around me. Today, I will know for each person I interact with the Truth that the Divine Law of Justice is operation in his/her life, whether I agree with them or not. This is the path of nonviolence.

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Day 38

"Man and his deed are two distinct things. It is quite proper to resist and attack a system, but to resist and attack its author is tantamount to resisting and attacking oneself."

M.K. Gandhi

When we attack the character or personal life of the messenger of an opinion, we demonize everyone who holds that opinion. Demonization of those we disagree with is probably as old as humankind. It's possible to imagine the earliest of humans, demonizing those who encroached on their territory, characterizing them as devils, demonic spirits and so forth. But in today's world with mass communications and global access to the spoken and written word from everywhere, we are bombarded with it daily, as our recent election showed. Demonizing those people and causes we disagree with lowers the level of discourse to the point where we invite our opponent to demonize us. Such behavior never solves problems or settles conflicts, but increases tensions and the possibility of physical violence.

That is only half of the truth, however. Gandhi has a deeper message here. There is one Universal Source of all life. When we attack and demonize any part of that life, we attack it all. WE are part of that All and as such, the Divine Power within us, and as us is infinite. Each of us is using that Divine Power to the best of our ability to see and know Truth. Whether we see it clearly or "through a glass darkly" is the result of every experience we have ever had. We see only as much Truth as our beliefs allow. Attacking any other person or group is attacking the Divine Consciousness of which we are all a unique expression. When I, in my unique expression of the One, attack you, in your unique expression of the One, I am attacking the One. In attacking the One, I attack myself, because I am that, too.

Affirmative Practice

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Today, I will meditate on my oneness with those people and causes I oppose. Today, I will resist those opinions, beliefs and actions I disagree with, and NOT the messenger that delivers them. This is the path to nonviolence.

Day 39

"When nonviolence is accepted as the law of life, it must pervade the whole body and not be applied to isolated acts."

M.K. Gandhi

To be truly nonviolent, we must claim it in every part of our lives. As Gandhiji said, it must become the law of life. That means our whole life, not just our public life, nor our spiritual life, or our political life, not just our thoughts, or our words, or our actions. The law of life means every part of the life we are. The path of nonviolence, then, is the path of growing and evolving as an individual into the person who can live that law in all areas of life. We are NOT that now. That is why we talk about the path of nonviolence, it is our goal.

None of us has achieved that goal yet. Indeed, as long as we have physical bodies, we shall not have achieved it. Having physical bodies, we have needs and desires in all the various areas of our lives. Having needs and desires means the fear of loss, or of not getting what we desire will always drive us toward violence by our very nature. The evolution of humanity into a nonviolent species, then, begins with each of us in our personal evolution. Our personal evolution means we must become aware of the urges, desires and fears that drive us to violence in all the various parts of our lives. Only when we make a conscious effort to be truly aware of all our acts, in all the arenas of our lives, can we truly begin practicing the law of life in our lives.

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Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on nonviolence as the great law of life. Today, I will make my every action, in every part of my life a conscious opportunity to practice nonviolence. This is the path of nonviolence.

Day 40

"Moral support cannot really be given in the sense of giving. It automatically comes to the one who is qualified to take it. And such a one can take it in abundance."

M.K. Gandhi

Seeking moral support from others is something all of us do at times, especially when we believe we hold the "moral high ground". But Gandhiji's point here is that moral support is never given, it is earned. No one "owes" us the gift of support because of our position, our goals or our organization. Those who give us support for those reasons are not giving moral support, but ego support. Those who truly give us moral support do so, not as a gift, but as an automatic soul response to our consciousness. By consciousness, we do not mean the ordinary definition of "the normal state of conscious life ". We're talking about deep authentic spiritual consciousness.

Gandhi and King gained support and succeeded, not because of what they did, but because of who they were. The real work of nonviolence is always done within. Until that work is done, nothing that we do will bring us the support we seek. Once we have done that work, the rest, as Gandhi says, becomes automatic. When we have done the work in consciousness that makes us fit messengers of moral Truth, we become like spiritual magnets, attracting to us all those like-minded souls who resonate with both our message and our consciousness. In other words, once this interior work is complete, we become qualified, and the whole universe rushes in to support us by right of consciousness.

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Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on my consciousness. I will ask myself the question, "Have I done the work in consciousness that qualifies me to accept moral support." Today, in all my actions I will ask, "Does this action, and the consciousness behind qualify for support?" Today, I will remember that if I am not getting the support I need, it is about my consciousness and no one else's. This is the path of nonviolence.

Day 41

"It is unwise to be too sure of one's own wisdom. It is healthy to be reminded that the strongest might weaken and the wisest might err."

M.K. Gandhi

The road to success in any endeavor is always strewn with the potholes of ego. One of the biggest is this, that we begin to believe the high opinion others may have of our lofty wisdom. Even worse is to believe that success on our path equates to a validation of our intelligence, wisdom and consciousness. It may, but it is not for us to believe it or we have closed the doors to the infinite possibilities of the universe.

The most important factor in continued success on whatever path we walk is to remember that we are not "finished". Zen Master Roshi Shunryo Suzuki said, *"In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert's there are few."* When we begin to believe that we are the expert at whatever we do, we have closed the door on recognizing new possibilities and ideas. When that happens, our downfall is inevitable. Our job is always to remain in the consciousness of beginner's mind.

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What might beginner's mind look like to one who has walked far enough to become a leader in any movement? It would look like this, "We are on the same path together, I am only a few steps further along." This opens us to the conscious awareness that we can stumble, we can take the wrong path and we do NOT always have the perfect answer. In any arena, on any path, perfection is always a goal, not a destination.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on this question, "Am I in beginner's mind?" Today, in all my actions and interactions, I will ask myself, "Are there possibilities here I have missed? Is there a new lesson here for me to learn?" This is the path of nonviolence.

Day 42

*"I claim to be a simple individual liable to err like any other fellow mortal. I own, however, that I have humility enough to confess my errors and to retrace my steps."
M.K. Gandhi*

Once we have attained to "Beginner's Mind", Gandhi calls us to learn "humility enough". Perhaps one of the most nonviolent systems of thought to arise out of the American experience is that of the various Twelve Step Programs. They are programs of profound humility, honesty, self responsibility and acceptance. Step Ten of the Twelve Steps states "Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it." This step states precisely what Gandhi is claiming for himself. We may claim to be in Beginner's Mind, but unless we admit openly to our mistakes, we are deluding ourselves. It also requires that we acknowledge our mistakes to at least one other person and then correct the error we have made.

This doesn't mean we admit errors to ourselves and then take steps to correct them without anyone knowing. "Humility enough" means that we admit our mistake to at least one other person and then take the steps to correct it. One of the great dangers

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for those who are called to a path of change is that we begin to believe our own inerrancy and invincibility. This action of admitting it to one or more other people will continue reinforcing that Beginner's Mind and will always keep our feet on the path with "humility enough".

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on "humility enough". What does this mean to me? How does it help me in the work I do on the path of nonviolence? Today, I will review all my actions and when I have made a mistake, I will find someone I trust to admit it to. Then I will take whatever actions necessary to correct my error.

Day 43

"My imperfections and failures are as much a blessing from God as my successes and my talents and I lay them both at his feet."

M.K. Gandhi

Remaining in Beginner's Mind and confessing our errors brings us another gift. When we admit that we are not perfect, we open ourselves to the real work we are here to do. We are born into the world to complete a task. No one else has come into this world to complete this particular task because it is a task, first and foremost, that must be completed within us and *then* by us. Whether we call it a mission from God, or karma or destiny or the will of Allah is immaterial. We have it to do!

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The path of nonviolence we have set our feet upon begins and ends within ourselves. What occurs outside of us is merely an effect of the work we do within. As hard as it may sometimes seem, giving thanks for our imperfections and failures is as important as being grateful for our successes. Perhaps more so, because our successes can lull us into forgetting the work within.

Our imperfections and failures are blessings precisely because they remind us of our real work. They are beacons, pointing the way to the task we are here to do. Failures are simply external evidence of our imperfections. When we fail we are being given a gift, because it reminds us that we are not yet perfect. We will never finish the interior work, it is the job of a lifetime. The gift of failure is that it allows us to continue the path of our own personal spiritual evolution.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on my imperfections and failures, seeing them as gifts from God. Today, I will see every failure as a Divine opportunity to peel away one more petal from the lotus that hides the jewel of my Higher Self. This is path of nonviolence.

Day 44

"Interdependence is and ought to be as much the ideal of man as self-sufficiency."

M.K. Gandhi

All of Life is, by nature of its Oneness, truly interdependent. Physicist David Bohm refers to this as the "Implicate Order of the Universe". Because all energy and matter

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in the universe arose from one single action (the Big Bang), he says, there is an "unbroken wholeness of the totality of existence as an undivided flowing movement without borders." In other words, whatever value or moral test we may put it to, the underlying truth is that we are interdependent, whether we like it or not.

Chaos Theory is built upon this model. It simply says that because everything is interdependent, it makes the universe so complex we cannot fully understand anything nor the unintended consequences of any act. Thus, as the most famous example in Chaos Theory suggests, "A butterfly flapping its wings in Brazil can cause a Typhoon in China."

Each of us should be working toward the goal of self-sufficiency. Without self-sufficiency, we are always in lack and lack always creates the tendency to violence, for we seek to take what we do not have. But at the same time, our interdependence must not be forgotten. Seeking self-sufficiency without considering interdependence will always become selfish, for it ignores all needs but our own. Selfishness is always, by its nature, violence.

Thus, when we do whatever it is we are called to do, we must understand that no action ever occurs in a vacuum. Our actions have consequences far beyond those we expect or intend. They are affecting every other life on this planet, in ways we can't even anticipate. In addition, the acts of every other person affects us in some way. We are completely interdependent with and on one another.

The truest path to nonviolence in any society is the recognition and practice of seeking self-sufficiency *together* in our complete interdependence.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on my interdependence with all life. Today, as I seek all I need to sustain myself, I will watch for how my actions affect others and their ability to be self-sufficient. When I can see my actions affecting others, I will ask, "Is there another way, a more loving way to act?" Then I will follow that course. That is the path of nonviolence.

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Day 45

"As human beings, our greatness lies not so much in being able to remake the world - that is the myth of the atomic age - as in being able to remake ourselves."

M. K. Gandhi

Humanity has shown its ability to remake the world. It has also shown its inability to predict the results of the changes it makes. Few of the "improvements" man has made in the world have ultimately proven to be beneficial to the planet or, indeed, mankind itself. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers work on the Mississippi River is a perfect example of man making problems worse whenever he interferes with the orderly flow of nature. There is one area, however, where mankind has not only shown it can make changes, it has shown that it can make lasting beneficial changes. That area is in the remaking the human consciousness.

Humanity has spent so many centuries exploring its world, changing its world, and establishing mastery over its world that it has missed this most important area for exploration – the human mind. When, as individuals, we finally begin the exploration of our own "*terra incognita*", that unknown territory of our own psyche, we discover the most exciting, valuable and world changing territory of all.

Each of us are born into the world with unique abilities to love, to serve and to achieve in the world. But our lives have been filled with those telling us we are "less than - not smart enough", etc. Hearing this message time after time in our youth brings us to an adulthood based on beliefs in our "not enough-ness". The result is that we bring to the world limited gifts, fear, and all the violence that goes with lack and fear attempting to fill itself.

But when we explore our interior world, when we find and heal those places that have kept us from our personal greatness, we suddenly burst forth, remade and renewed, in all our true magnificence. Then peace and nonviolence are our natural states, for there is no fear and no lack, the *only* two causes of violence.

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Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on my magnificence and all the beliefs that keep me from manifesting it. Today, I will rededicate myself to exploring myself and heal all the beliefs keeping me from living the magnificent light of nonviolence I was born to be.

Day 46

"I am here to plead for the acceptance by the country of the programme of nonviolent, progressive non-cooperation. Now all the words I have used here are absolutely necessary and the two adjectives 'progressive' and 'nonviolent' are integral parts of the whole."

M.K. Gandhi

nonviolence as a tool of action, whether political, social or personal, is not a path that we attain to instantly. To believe we can do so is like believing that we can reach the top of Mount Everest from sea level in a single step. Gandhi's use of the word 'progressive' in this context isn't political, but rather descriptive of a process of moving toward a goal.

Gandhi is describing a process called '*successive or progressive approximations*'. Long-time activist, Grace Lee Boggs says that "*we need to grow our souls*" and emphasizes that the "*secret to visionary organizing*" is "*a combination of philosophy and activism.*" In her own way, Boggs is also describing this 'progressive' process. The process has us define for ourselves the limit of our ability to practice nonviolence, then stretch ourselves to that limit. Having reached it, we do the work of healing our hearts and souls to

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greater depths of love and nonviolence applying the deepest philosophical and spiritual beliefs of our souls. When we have done this, the process is repeated, redefining the limit of our ability based on our newly healed consciousness, stretching ourselves to that limit and then going back within to heal. This is the 'nonviolent, progressive programme' Gandhi refers to.

This kind of nonviolent action, combining philosophy, spirituality and the work of stepping boldly forth in the world, is truly the path Gandhi taught. It is the work the world is waiting for, and those who walk the path of true nonviolence are called to practice it now, for now is the 'fullness of time' for the movement. But now can only be the time, when we are the people.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on my internal progress towards nonviolence. Today, I will take conscious steps toward 'growing my soul', spiritually, philosophically and emotionally. This is the path of nonviolence.

Day 47

"With me nonviolence is part of my religion, a matter of creed. But with the great number of Mussalmans (Muslims) is a policy, with thousands if not millions of Hindus, it is equally a matter of policy. But whether it is a creed or a policy, it is utterly impossible for you to finish the programme of enfranchisement of the millions of India without recognising the value of nonviolence."

M. K. Gandhi

Gandhi wrote these words in describing the struggle for nonviolence in the freedom movement in India in the mid 20th Century. They ring equally true for

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us, here, today. Wherever we fall on the political spectrum, whatever may be our goal in seeking change, whether in a country, an organization, a family or ourselves, it is "utterly impossible" to complete that work without taking a nonviolent path. John Lennon's song, "*All you need is love*", is the perfect anthem for nonviolence. Love is not only all we need, but for lasting and permanent change to occur, it is absolutely necessary.

Never, in the entire history of the world has a violent path *ultimately* triumphed. It may, in the short run, like European style colonialism, Soviet style communism, corporate style capitalism, or abusive control in families or societies, appear to succeed, but it can never succeed permanently. History is filled with examples of those "conquered" by violence ultimately regaining their freedom. It may not have been quickly and it may not have been as anyone expected, but it always happens.

This lesson should never be forgotten. Any cause succeeds to the very extent that it is just for all. A cause can only be just to the extent that it is nonviolent. This is not a philosophical nicety that can be put aside at need. To do so is to make nonviolence a policy of convenience, to be cast off when it becomes uncomfortable or inconvenient. Thus the work of "*growing our souls*" becomes ever more important. As we grow into nonviolence we become more and more prepared to make the changes that can endure. Whether we consider ourselves religious, spiritual, or humanist, we all have a creed we live by. When we truly make nonviolence a part of that creed, we are ready for the task we have been called to perform.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on my belief in nonviolence. Is it a policy or is it my creed? Do I see it as a means to achieve what I believe, or is it an end in itself? Is it my belief? Today, in my work of nonviolence, I will watch for any conflicts in my feelings or thoughts that answer this question for me. This is the path of nonviolence.

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Day 48

"An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind."

M.K. Gandhi (This quote is commonly attributed to Gandhiji, and his family believes it is authentic, but no actual attribution to Gandhi himself has been found. It was used by Louis Fischer, one of Gandhi's major biographers, as a metaphor for Gandhi's core beliefs and it is certainly in complete agreement with everything he believed.)

This statement is a reference to the Biblical saying, *"An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth."* Jesus said about this quote, *"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also."* Jesus' response is exactly what Gandhi's statement is saying.

At the level of human interactions, we know that as we react to violence of any kind with violence of our own, we make any form of peaceful resolution impossible. Answering violence with violence simply escalates the next series of responses. Ahimsa is impossible under these circumstances.

At the deeper level of *"human as spiritual being"*, the true path of nonviolence means that we do not *react to* violence, but *respond from* the principle of *Ahimsa*, deep love and respect for all beings. Gandhiji's path was this path of responding from principle, NOT a belief in the principle of Ahimsa, but the faith OF Ahimsa. It is a faith so deep that the principles of nonviolence are no longer something we *believe* in, but something we know and embody in every part of ourselves. This faith, called *"radically embodied faith"* by American theologian Robin Meyers is really the opposite of belief. It is so embodied within us that it

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opens our eyes to the depths of spiritual Truth in Ahimsa and we see past mere belief to the perfect unfolding cause and effect it is.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on the difference between belief and faith. Today, I will ask myself, "Have I embodied the faith OF Ahimsa or do I simply believe IN Ahimsa?" In my actions, do I react to the world or do I respond from Ahimsa?

Day 49

"Non-cooperation ... will not succeed unless we create an atmosphere of perfect freedom, unless we prize our opponents liberty as much as our own. The liberty of faith, conscience, thought and action which we claim for ourselves must be conceded equally to others."

M.K. Gandhi

The closer we come to change, the more violent becomes the struggle. Whether we are talking about a war between nations or the kind of verbal warfare we see in the political arena, this fact stands out. In the USA today, political parties have become nearly irrelevant. The emotional and verbal violence between people has become so extreme, that no intelligent or reasonable discourse is possible. Whether it is the pronouncements of the extreme left or the extreme right, both sides have plenty of room to point the finger at the other. It serves no useful purpose and only drives them further apart. Indeed, if we could but

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look down from the “high ground” we would see that it appears like nothing so much a children's schoolyard game. Unfortunately it is a children's game that is affecting the very future path of our nation.

The “atmosphere of perfect freedom”, Gandhi refers to is the only path for the truly nonviolent. This can only occur when we stop pointing fingers at our opponents and point them only at ourselves. Granting them the right to the absolute freedom we demand for ourselves, creates that “atmosphere of perfect freedom.”

Will those opponents attempt to restrict our freedom? Possibly. That is where non-cooperation and nonviolence become our path. They may attempt to do so, that is the violent path. But let's be clear. Whether they play by the same rules we do is only important in games, and this is not a game. If we allow their anger, their fear and their actions to dictate ours, then we have already lost. They are always free to make their own choices, but we're allowing them to control ours.

If, instead, we step off of the playing field and embrace non-cooperation with their violent game, we will ultimately win. Quickly or slowly is not the issue. The issue is non-cooperation and nonviolence. Only through them can true freedom be established as the law of life.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on what freedom means to me. Today, in all my thoughts and actions, I will remember that even my most ardent opponents are entitled to all the freedom I demand for myself. This is the path of nonviolence.

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“Man becomes great exactly in the degree in which he works for the welfare of his fellow-men. The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.”

M. K. Gandhi

Most of us work for our own benefit. The result is always the same. We may become financially successful through that work, perhaps even gaining accolades and honors. Yet there is always a feeling of emptiness and longing behind it. We see this in those whose lives are driven by the quest for wealth and fame. It is never enough. We always seek the bigger house, the bigger auto, latest fashions, etc. Having served only ourselves, we have lost ourselves and thus seek to fill the hole left by it.

Yet those who are happiest are those who have given themselves to a cause which serves all of humanity, not simply themselves or even one group. They find fulfillment, recognition and a different kind of wealth. In serving others, they have found themselves, and the hole is once again filled. Think of those in history who have given themselves to service of humanity. Their legacy and greatness live on long after they have left this earth plane.

Does this mean that we sacrifice possessions and personal goals for the sake of a cause? No, it means that true greatness and personal joy comes when we serve. There is nothing so black and white in Gandhi's words. As many famous individuals have shown, it is possible to acquire wealth and possessions and also serve humanity. The service is in the quality of the gift, not in the quantity of the service. Our greatness, in the eyes of others as well as our own, comes through service to life, and through no other way. That is Gandhi's point. Whatever else we may do or be, if we truly seek that sense of self, the only way to find it is to reach out and serve.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on my service to the world. Is it for my gratification, or is it in service to life? Today I will seek one new way in which I can serve humanity and all life.

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Day 51

"All my actions have their source in my inalienable love of humankind." M. K. Gandhi

We think of the power of nonviolence as being the demonstration of non-cooperation with that which suppresses people or just causes. But the true power of nonviolence lies in this statement of Gandhi. Love is, in every case the power behind nonviolence. Gandhi was not talking about defeating or overthrowing anyone! He did not seek to injure the British authorities in his homeland to aid his cause. nonviolence was NOT a way for one group to seize what it wanted at the expense of any other cause or group. Gandhi saw no ethnic conflict, class war or any other us vs them conflict. What he saw was a nation divided by injustice. This is the lesson of Gandhi's struggle for all of us. When true nonviolence is successful, EVERYONE wins.

Gandhi saw that, if love is to triumph, we must serve all life through our every action. This can only occur when we begin where we are, in our own homes, and cultivate the unconditional love necessary to love every person in our lives, not despite their actions, but because of them. Having done so in our own homes, we reach out further and further, at each step finding love for all those around us. The key here, as it was for Gandhi, is that we love them because of all they do which we oppose, not in spite of those things.

Understanding, that when they act selfishly or harmfully, they act only out of their own fears and needs. The behavior we most oppose is the very best they can do. When we fully understand the limits of their ability to feel safe enough to care about all humankind, all of life, we are able to feel compassion for

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them. In that compassion we are able to love them because of their actions, not in spite of them. In loving them, we begin to see how to serve all life. Only in this way can everyone win. This should always be our goal if we truly seek to walk the path of nonviolence.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on the healing power of love in every action I take.

Today, I will look behind the actions of those I oppose to the reasons for them.

Today, I will begin the work of loving those I oppose because of their actions, not in spite of them. Today, I will do the work of healing them, as well as those I agree with. This is the path of nonviolence.

Day 52

"The golden way is to be friends with the world and to regard the whole human family as one. He who distinguishes between the votaries of one's own religion and those of another miseducates the members of his own and opens the way for discord and irrelegion." M. K. Gandhi

This message seems especially appropriate in today's world. We live in a time when religion has once again become the most divisive issue in our world. Otherwise intelligent, and even apparently spiritual, people demonize other religions. The tenor of the current religious discourse, like that of the political, makes it impossible for religion and spirituality to serve its true function, utilizing peace and love as path to Oneness. It can, and should be, a calming balm for an injured and heartsick world.

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Instead, those who serve fear, anger and violence seize upon the words of the Koran to prove malevolent intent on the part of, or to induce violence in, all Muslims, ignoring the love poems of the Sufi movement. In the same way, the words of the Old Testament of the Christian Bible are used to justify "an eye for an eye", ignoring the words of peace and forgiveness taught by the central figure in that religion, Jesus. At the same time, those who deny the validity of any spiritual path, point to all this as proof that religion is the problem, not the answer. The result is a religious environment that is truly the path to violence – not nonviolence.

Gandhi is urging us all, no matter where we fall on the religious spectrum, to accept that we are all on the same path. Only the love, compassion and tolerance inherent in any true connection with the Divine can bring the healing the world desperately needs. Once we see that we are all, in our way, on a spiritual path to our Oneness, only then can we truly walk the path of nonviolence. Whether we seek it through a connection with God, or a connection with life, is irrelevant, for this is the golden way to nonviolence.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on how I live the "golden way". Today, I will see how my spiritual path, whatever it may be, can contribute to love, peace and nonviolence in the world. This is the path to nonviolence.

Day 53

"One man cannot do right in one department of life whilst he is occupied in doing wrong in another department. Life is an indivisible whole." M. K. Gandhi

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If we are human, we fall far short of perfection, and we do wrong. True dishonesty is in our failure to admit it. Twelve Step Programs have an expression, *"cash register honesty"*. It refers to the our propensity for maintaining that we are honest because we've never stolen money or goods from someone else. Dishonesty, however, comes in many forms, both active and passive, or as Christian theology says, "sins of commission and omission." We all have areas of dishonesty in our lives, too numerous to mention.

"The way you do one thing is the way you do everything." We cannot claim to be engaged in a virtuous work of any kind as long as we are dishonest in any area of our lives. Seeking to change the world for the better, while continuing to be dishonest, no matter how slightly, in some other area, will ultimately corrupt the work we're doing. It's unavoidable. We try to compartmentalize our lives, personal relationships, careers, etc, pigeonholed, keeping each safe from connection to the other. The flaws in this approach to life are obvious, we may live many different lives, but it is "we" who live them. Whatever our values, ethics and morals may be in one area, will always be the same one ones that rule us in all areas, because they are our values, ethics and morals. It is where we live from.

As long as we have physical bodies, there will be some area of dishonesty in our lives and we will continue to do wrong. It is part of our humanness and part of our evolution. If we have truly committed ourselves to a worthy goal, the only way we can truly serve that goal is to become completely "honest about our dishonesty". It doesn't matter whether it's parenthood, career paths, loving partnerships, spiritual paths, a humanistic crusades in the world.... Nothing will have lasting value, or even succeed, if we have not admitted and begun dealing with our personal dishonesty in all areas of our lives and learned to do right, no matter what.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on "What is honesty to me?" Today, I will review my life and admit where I have been wrong, no matter what the reasons. Today, I will make amends for my dishonesty. This is the path to nonviolence.

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Day 54

"The method of passive resistance is the clearest and safest, because, if the cause is true, it is the resisters, and they alone who suffer."

M. K. Gandhi

Those of us who are truly introspective often ask ourselves, "How do I know if what I am doing is right? Is it really nonviolent, or does my non-cooperation hurt others?" Here, Gandhi gives us the measuring device for all work of changing the world. In a truly nonviolent struggle, waged through passive resistance and non-cooperation, no one but those passively resisting are hurt.

Why then, would we engage in such a nonviolent struggle? If we know in advance that we, and we alone, might suffer through this struggle, why engage in the first place? These questions only have meaning if our goal is self-serving. If our goal is serving everyone, and we are committed to the path of nonviolence, then we must be willing to suffer, if necessary for the good of all, without inflicting harm on anyone else.

Gandhi also give us a measurement for determining whether our goal is self-serving or unjust, or in any other way, "untrue". If in the course of our work, others are hurt, then our cause is NOT true. The true path of nonviolence always protects all who are unwilling or unable join in passive resistance to the apparent evil. In all cases, only those with the courage and commitment to passively resist, through non-cooperation, are put in harm's way.

None of us, if we are normal, welcomes pain. The knowledge, however, that we act for a worthy and true cause, idealistic as that may sound, is a goal we can

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all aspire to. With Gandhi's measuring device showing the way, we can hope to find such a nonviolent goal and non-resistant path.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on the cause I serve, measuring it for its justice and truth. Today, I will be aware of the effects of my resistance.

Day 55

"Self-respect and honor cannot be protected by others. They are for each individual himself or herself to guard."

M.K. Gandhi

We can never expect others to protect our self-respect or honor us, if we do not respect and honor ourselves. Regardless of the conditions under which we labor, we can find self-respect and honor only within ourselves. It is possible to do, even under the most trying circumstances. Certainly, we cannot expect others to guard self-respect and honor we have proven to the world we do not have. Once we have learned to respect and honor ourselves and guard it ourselves, the respect and honor that comes from others becomes less important. Ironically, they also come to us more easily.

When we continue to suffer injustice, we are not respecting or honoring ourselves. Passive acceptance of wrong can never be worthy of respect and honor, whether from the self or from outside. When we do not respect or honor ourselves enough to resist injustice, we cannot expect it others to do so. Thus,

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when we experience injustice, always the hallmark of violence, it is our responsibility to address it and resist it. It is not the job of the system that engages in injustice to self-correct. It is not the responsibility of any other individual or group to come to our aid. In an ideal world, those things might happen but this is not an ideal world. It is simply the world - where we have choices, and those choices bring consequences.

Thus when we experience injustice, it is our responsibility to take action, in whatever form we are able to act. The individual being harassed at work, for example, has choices. They can choose to be victims and continue the pattern of abuse, or they can choose to take some action. Choosing to take action, we are, again, at choice. Do we act violently, by attacking back, or do we do so nonviolently. nonviolence is always the first and best option and will look different in every case. Violence is always the action of one who lacks self-respect and honor, whatever he or she may say, because such action always arises out of fear, and always looks like attacking back.. So we first work within ourselves to overcome our fear, our feelings of impotence and smallness and we learn to respect and honor ourselves. As we respect and honor ourselves, we can stand in our truth and begin to see our choices more clearly. Then we can begin the work of non-co-operation and passive resistance against those who treat us with injustice.

Affirmative Practice

*Today, I will meditate on this question, "Do I respect and honor myself?"
Today, in everything I do, I will ask myself, "Do I respect this about myself?
Can I honor this in myself?" If the answer is "No", I will ask, "What action do I
need to take to respect and honor myself?" This is the path of nonviolence.*

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"Before embarking on the Civil Disobedience and taking the risk I have dreaded to take all these years, I would fain (gladly) approach you and find a way out."

M.K. Gandhi

When we think of men and women like Gandhi and King, we tend to see them at their most courageous, in the midst of their struggle. What we miss in this picture is all that went before. We miss the years of fear and turmoil, knowing the upheaval and distress it would cause themselves, their families and their countries. We miss the moments of doubt and indecision, the long prayerful hours and days, seeking some, any other way out. We miss the final, fateful moment of courage when, the decision clear, the steps toward confrontation with injustice began. Because we miss those moments, we put individuals like these on pedestals, missing the truth of who they were, ordinary men and women. WWII US Navy Admiral William F. Halsey said, *"There are no great men, only great challenges that ordinary men are forced by circumstances to meet."*

In our lives, we all face injustice, whether globally, nationally, locally or personally. Being ordinary men and women, we fear to take action. For the most part, we try to tolerate it, hoping that somehow it will go away, praying that someone else will be the brave one, or that some answer will be found to create an easy way out for everyone. Most of the time that will happen. Sometimes, though, we ARE the ones who must will finally be "tired of giving in" and take action.

Before we do, as Gandhi infers, we must spend the time necessary to do everything possible, including the deep soul searching and prayerful meditation that will lead us to the right decision. Even then, as Gandhi says, we have to sincerely and gladly approach those inflicting the injustice to seek one last opportunity to reach a peaceful resolution. Then, and only then, can we justify non-cooperation and nonviolent resistance. And justify it we must, to ourselves, to the world and to the Divine.

Affirmative Practice

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Today I will meditate on all those places in my life where I tolerate injustice, even in small personal matters. Today, I will ask, "Is this the injustice that needs addressing? Is now the time it needs to be addressed? Am I the one that is called to address it?"

Day 57

"The virtues of mercy, nonviolence, love and truth in any man can be truly tested only when they are pitted against ruthlessness, violence, hate and untruth."

M.K. Gandhi

It's easy for us to allow ourselves to take pride in our ability to feel and practice mercy, nonviolence, love and truth when we face no challenge. All of us are able to practice nonviolence with those who agree with us and who are "good" people. The true test of our commitment to a compassionate life, to nonviolence in all our relationships, is when we are challenged.

In the world, there will always be those who are ruthless and violent, whose inability to love creates hate in their hearts. These people think nothing of lying or injuring others in a variety of ways, if it suits their needs. These are exactly the kind of people who engage in violence and injustice toward those over whom they have some perceived authority or control. We may find ourselves in conflict with such individuals. Only then can we know whether we have truly learned the lessons of nonviolence.

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We may be shocked by our own reactions under the circumstances. We may find ourselves becoming angry and reacting with verbal and emotional violence. When this happens, our natural reaction may be self-recrimination and self-loathing. All we've proven, though, is that we are still on the path to nonviolence and haven't yet reached the goal. Instead of self-recrimination, we should simply recognize our humanity. We have proven what Gandhi knew, that the path of nonviolence is a lifetime journey.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on my ability to practice mercy, nonviolence, love and truth. Today, I will measure myself, not against ordinary interactions but against those which represent the opposite of mercy, nonviolence, love and truth and I will forgive myself when I fall short. This is the path of nonviolence.

Day 58

"Just as fundamentally man and woman are one, their problem must be one in essence. The soul in both is the same. The two live the same life, have the same feelings. Each is a complement of the other. The one cannot live without the other's active help."

M.K. Gandhi

Gandhi was specifically speaking about the roles of men and women in the traditional family setting of the Indian culture. This statement, though, has far wider applications in today's world. Our age is one in which differences seem far more set in stone than at any time in the past. With the advent of the internet and other means of mass communication, especially social media, the exploitation of differences between all kinds of groups, including political, racial, and gender, is creating an atmosphere of

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“black and white” extremism that endangers the very idea of a just, nonviolent society. Nowhere is this more evident than in the differences between men and women.

When we look at the differences between men and women, what do we see? No spiritual tradition worthy of the label would disagree that, at the level of the soul, there are no differences between men and women. While there are important differences in the types of issues endured by the two genders, they have far more injustices in common. Personality and emotional patterns in men and women do differ, but those very differences are what make a combined effort in any endeavor, more important not less.

Gandhi was absolutely clear about this. In any true nonviolent struggle for justice and equality, the roles of both men and women are vital. The strengths of the two complement one another. Only when spiritually conscious and self aware men and women come together with deliberation and intent to overcome the differences between the genders, can a nonviolent world be hoped for. This does not mean we must both be the same. There is a synergy that occurs when men and women come together in an environment of mutual affection and respect. It is this synergy of true respect for each other's role choices, differences, strengths, needs and goals, that makes an unstoppable nonviolent movement and successful attainment of true justice in society inevitable.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on my feelings about the opposite gender. Today, I will seek ways to cooperate and collaborate on solving some problem with a person of the opposite gender, from a position of trust and mutual respect.

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"Truth is within ourselves. There is an innermost center of us all, where truth abides in fullness. Every wrongdoer knows within himself that he is doing wrong, for untruth cannot be mistaken for truth. Truth and righteousness must forever remain the Law in God's world."

M.K. Gandhi

One of the great awakenings of this path is this: except in very rare cases, those who do wrong still hear the voice of truth somewhere within them that they are wrong. This may lead us to be harsher in our judgments of them than if we thought they had no such voice. But the reverse should be true in every case. Those who do wrong, even though they hear that still, small voice, are acting from a place of deep fear and a feeling of being alone in an unloving world.

Compassion and love call us to recognize the fear, pain, and soul poverty that drive humans to acts of injustice against others. Feeling this compassion and love, we can refrain from meeting violence with violence and hate with hate. In this compassion and love, we are able to see that they fear injustice as much as we. The only difference is that they fear our actions will cause injustice to them.

With this understanding, we can see how the path of non-resistance can, and should, serve all, including those participating in the injustice. Thus, our eyes are opened and we advance on our path.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on my path, "Is it true, is it just?" Today I will know that the wrong doers in my life know that they are doing wrong, but cannot help themselves. Today, I will love them with compassion in their fear.

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In a strictly scientific sense, God is at the bottom of both good and evil.... "Good" and "Evil" is our own imperfect language. God is above both good and evil. It is we who entertain thoughts, and it is we ourselves who repulse them. We have, thus, to strive against ourselves."

M. K. Gandhi

This is one of the most difficult truths we have to learn on this path. In the Divine consciousness which Gandhi refers to as God, there is no such thing as "Good" and "Evil". In the Divine Idea, a thing is just what it is. For example, a knife can be an instrument of life in the hands of a surgeon, or an instrument of death in the hands of a murderer. It is the human consciousness that determines its merit or lack of merit. A person's behavior may appear to meet our definition of "evil", but that is a value judgment and an opinion, not an absolute truth of the universe. It may be an opinion and judgment shared by the whole rest of the planet, but it is still human opinion. In the Divine Mind, it is simply an action, subject to the Law of Cause and Effect, like any other.

The very act of judging another, no matter what their actions may be, is a form of violence because we can never know the motivations that drive another. Instead of seeing the actions of others as good or evil, we should, rather, see them as actions that arise out of their life experience and which will have Cause and Effect, or karmic consequences in their lives. When we see them in this way, our nonviolent resistance to those actions becomes a gift to them, as well as to ourselves.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on the violence of my judgments and opinions. Today, I will offer my passive resistance and non-cooperation as a gift to those I oppose. This is the path of nonviolence.

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Day 61

"Goodness must be joined with knowledge. Mere goodness is not of much use, as I have found in life. One must cultivate the fine discriminating quality which goes with spiritual courage and character."

M.K. Gandhi

In this statement, Gandhi lays out the recipe for every successful nonviolent resister. It really doesn't matter whether resistance is in some small personal matter or in changing the consciousness and conditions of a whole nation, these elements apply. Goodness, knowledge, spiritual courage and character are the ingredients that go into the recipe for success.

"Goodness" is the recognition of "Good", the Divine. We need to recognize that God, by whatever name we call it, is always present in ourselves and our actions, and always in the condition we are attempting to change. "Knowledge" is the perception to see what must be done, but also whatever we need to know to do it. "Spiritual courage" is the fortitude to know that you are always Divinely guided and, even more, to know you have nothing to fear from any condition or experience of life. "Character" is the wisdom and inner guidance to do the right thing at the right time for the right reason and not take the easier softer path that leads to quick, but temporary victories.

Together, these traits will take us far down the road to peaceful, nonviolent changes of the conditions of our lives, our societies and our world. For each of us, these characteristics are possible. Indeed, they are inherent in us as the spiritual beings we are. They do not come easily to any of us. They are the result of practicing a spiritual and philosophical path that eventually leads us to this place. They may require us to look in many places before we find the one that leads us to our own "flavor" of the recipe. Gandhi, himself, this great Hindu saint, once considered converting to Christianity during his early work in South Africa.

This work is not only necessary, it is vital, to us, to our lives and to the work we have chosen to do, whatever that is. The interior work of cultivating these qualities within ourselves is as much a part of the nonviolent path as our work in the world. Indeed,

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without it, that work is impossible. If we would succeed, the interior work must be done.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on my character. Have I done the work to cultivate these characteristics? Am I truly ready for the work I have set for myself? Today, I will observe my every action, measuring it against Gandhi's recipe to see where I yet need growth. This is the path of nonviolence.

Day 62

"When we see that we have gone wrong, it is our duty to retrace our footsteps and proceed again by the right path." M. K. Gandhi

One of the painful realities of being human is that we make mistakes. It's really not a question of *whether* we make a mistake, it simply a question of *when* we make a mistake and *how* serious it will be. Then it's a question of what we do about it. If we are able to take responsibility for our mistakes and reverse course, no harm has been done. When we are unable to admit our mistake and take responsibility for it, that mistake can lead us down the wrong path in our work, in our lives, and in our relationships.

But Gandhi is telling us that taking responsibility for our error is not just a way to keep us "on the right path", it is also our duty. When he talks about "the right path", he is talking about the path of our lives, but he is also talking about the nonviolent path. When we make a mistake and admit it, we have returned to the nonviolent path. When we don't admit it, but continue on the path it takes us down, we have, for all practical purposes taken the path of violence. Making an error, and failing to admit it, amounts to a lie. Lying is always violence: violence to the truth, violence to those we lie to, and

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violence to the relationship. The worst violence, however, is the violence we do to ourselves.

When we lie to others about anything we are hiding the truth about ourselves from them. When people don't know the truth about us, we do not give them the opportunity to care about who we really are. When do that, we are doing violence to the very idea of the relationship that we think exists. This is true whether we are talking about personal relationships, social relationships, work relationships or any other. When we err and do not own our mistake, but hide it, we damage all the relationships involved.

The violence we do to ourselves in not retracing our steps and telling the truth about our error, always takes us even further off the right path. When this happens, whatever the goal we are seeking is further from our reach rather than closer. Only when we admit we have gotten off track, turn back and take the right path again, can we attain whatever goal we have been seeking.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on my mistakes and how I have handled them. Today, I will admit when I have been wrong and make the amends that put me back on "the right path". This is the path of nonviolence.

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Affirmative Practice

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Day 64

" My firm belief is that He (God) reveals himself daily to every human being, but we shut our ears to "the still small voice". We shut our eyes to the pillar of fire in front of us. I realize His omnipotence." M.K. Gandhi

We are each born into physical existence as a spark of the Divine. More than that, we are born with a something that we are called to do. When we respond to that call, whether we know it or not, we are responding to the "still small voice". We feel a profound sense of joy in the work, and that is our connection to the Divine. nonviolence is one of those "somethings" we are born to do. So we come to the work of nonviolence with a connection to the Divine, in each of us, as each of us, which daily reveals itself to us. In fact, it is not simply daily, but in every now moment of each day.

Unfortunately, most of us are sadly unaware of our connection. The "still, small voice" speaks, but we're so hypnotized by the world of experience that we lose the willingness to listen, in our quest for "busy-ness". This can be especially true for those of us with a gift and a cause. We bring our gift to the cause we have embraced, and in our passion for the the gift and the cause, we can forget the Source of both. This can take us into the ego, into the world of experience and draw us even further away from that Source. As our excitement grows for the successes we experience, our daily spiritual practices fade away, and with our practices, so does the "still, small voice".

The "still, small voice" can only reveal itself to us when we listen. Listening for it can only occur when we set aside the time daily to listen, consciously, for it. When we do, our attachment to the outside world recedes, and we are guided, as Gandhi was, to new achievements in the work we do. Taking the time, daily, to consciously contact that still small voice, will always bear fruit, the fruit of joy, peace and success in our endeavors.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will take the time to meditate, listening for the still, small voice within me. Today, I will follow its guidance in everything I do. This is the path of nonviolence.

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Day 64

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Affirmative Practice

*Today, I will take the time to meditate, listening for the still, small voice within me.
Today, I will follow its guidance in everything I do. This is the path of nonviolence.*

Day 65

"He Rama (Oh God)" M.K. Gandhi (Gandhi's last words)

Shot by an assassin, as he continued to find nonviolent means to end the conflict between Hindu and Muslim Indians, these were his last words. They were also his mantra, taught to him by his childhood nurse. Throughout his life, he repeated it to himself constantly. He had learned it originally to banish childhood fears. All his life he used it to banish the very real fears caused by his life's work. Fears, not just for himself, but for all those he served. It's been said that the difference between heroism and cowardice isn't the absence of fear. It is the brave one moving ahead in spite of fear. All his life, Gandhi proved that he was truly a hero.

In his dying breath, he uttered the heartfelt prayer that been in his consciousness all his life. These last words of Gandhi were a benediction, spoken for those around him, the assassin who still stood before him, his allies, those arrayed against him, and all humanity. In a larger way, however, it was his last blessing to the world, to the future, and to all who seek the spiritual path of nonviolence. It is his blessing to us.

His profound faith guided him throughout his life. Among other of Gandhi's amazing accomplishments was a book of his prayers he wrote later in his life. They, along with the Bhagavad Gita and the Ramayana, formed what Gandhi called, "These three shields to protect us...." He went on to say that he believed the reading of these to be more beneficial than letters from him, or even being in his presence.

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In a very real way, Gandhi was a sane man in an insane world. Gandhi's path was the way of *satyagraha*, a term he coined that means "the path of nonviolent action, but in a deeper linguistic and spiritual sense, has a root meaning of "holding on to Truth". This is what his final words call upon us to do. His message to us is clear, the path of nonviolence is mere "smoke and mirrors" unless, like Gandhi, we hold a profound faith in our own cosmology, our own belief in the Divine. If it does not guide us daily, through spiritual practices, prayer and turning for guidance daily, our nonviolence is an illusion. Gandhi tells us we should truly look at the challenges before us and say, "I don't know the answer here, but I know there is a Power and a Presence in the universe that does." Then, releasing fear, releasing ego, we turn to that Source for the answer.

He Rama!

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate with Gandhi's mantra, "He Rama", "Oh God." or "Oh Spirit" or whatever seems the best word to use. Today, I will remember this mantra, repeating it to myself as often as I can remember. Remembering that Power and Presence, I will turn to it today, for guidance in all my actions, great and small. This is the path of nonviolence.