Koshin Paley Ellison Online Practice Session March 24, 2020

Koshin Paley Ellison: How do we really show up for ourselves and each other? Today, I want us to consider how we reflect on giving and receiving equally. So let's just begin with just two minutes of quiet. What I ask you to do is, wherever you are, take a moment and find your body. In the time of this pandemic, it's been incredible for me to keep locating myself in my body.

First, find your head and then find your shoulders, maybe opening your shoulders a bit. Bring your breath down into your belly. Lately I've been helping myself and others by just putting my hand on my hara (lower abdomen). In Zen we talk about that being the place two inches below your belly button. Putting our hand there, and just feeling the breath entering and leaving your body as it is.

Each time we start following a thought, focus on returning to our hara, just feeling the breath, feeling the belly expand and contract, allowing it to be as soft as it can. I'll ring the bell, three times to begin and twice to end, and we'll just sit for two minutes.

It's so wonderful to be with you all in this very unusual time. Welcome to my home. Here we are practicing in each other's homes, because this is where we are. One of the teachings that keeps coming back to me is “how do we accommodate ourselves to the situation rather than the situation accommodating to us?” The teaching of really softening our preferences and opinions and learning how to be intimate with where we actually are. For me, this continues to be such a vital practice.

One of the great poems in the Zen tradition begins with, "The great way is not difficult for those who are not clinging to their preferences." For me, it's wild to look at my preferences. I was talking to Chodo [Sensei Robert Chodo Campbell] earlier today—it's just the two of us and our two cats here now—about looking forward to other things. How tempting it is to think, "Oh, I can't wait till we can sit in a restaurant again," or, "I look forward to having dinner with friends." I think for both of us, what we miss the most is dining with friends, being together, and also being with sangha. We miss being with our teacher and really having the time to sit together. What happens when I soften my desire to cling to my preferences is that what matters most shows up.

A lot of our work at the New York Zen Center is about becoming intimate with what it means to be alive by being of service in the hospitals. We have many folks who are now on the front lines as doctors, nurses, social workers, and chaplains who are at the bedside today in various hospitals and hospices, caring for people the best that they can.
The learning for me consistently is, “How do I show up?” Really looking at that. “How do I show up in this situation of quarantine, of extreme safety measures? How do I want to do that?”

There was a story many years ago about Confucius. He was standing by a river, watching the river and just seeing it, maybe physically distancing himself. Maybe that was a time of disease. As he watched the river, he realized that everything is in constant change. In Buddhism, we talk about impermanence a lot, but I feel that there's something very vital about this time. I've been experiencing it in my practice, really seeing how much I want what I want when I want it. How that comes up moment by moment, and how easy it is to be seduced by that. To wish that whatever was happening was happening on the way that I like it.

It's interesting having cats because they're always in the present. They need food, and they need you to scoop their litter. They're such wonderful teachers in this time about just being here. Our cats are beautiful. They're constantly teaching us about just showing up.

When the expression about Confucius standing by that river was translated into Japanese, the actual words mean "Hearing the cry of the river." That expression, "Hearing the cry," is like the vow of Avalokiteshvara, the bodhisattva of compassion, whose name also means "Hearing the cries of the world." One of the practices I've been taking on is hearing the cries. The cries of all the fire department workers who were diagnosed with the virus today, and all the people who are in the hospital and getting diagnosed. People who are meeting, and stocking shelves, and the people who are very sick. How do we hear all the cries? The people who have lost jobs, who have no idea if they're going to be able to maintain their homes? How do we hear the cry of that?

To me, hearing the cry of the river is also to hear the cries of joy as well. Chodo and I take daily a walk around the neighborhood and we've been watching spring come. Every day we go out and see this little tiny crocus outside of our building. In New York City, it's amazing to watch it begin to grow and come out of the earth. Two days ago, it was totally open on a beautiful day. Then yesterday, there was some snow and it started dying. At the same time, right next to it is this cherry tree that is about to burst into bloom. To feel the cry of that. The cry of sorrow and beauty.

For me, this time is about really learning to hear all the joys and all the sorrows, both of our own experience and also widening those circles of compassion. To me, this is a life-work that we will never be good at. But our willingness to keep participating opens up who we think we are, so that we can actually include everyone.
It's been really interesting to watch my mind when hearing different politicians talking—the ones that I agree with and the ones I don't agree with. A big part of my practice in the last couple of years has been looking at who I do not include in my circles of compassion and love. It does not mean that we have to agree with people. It doesn't mean that people shouldn't be held accountable. But how do we love and have compassion for all beings? The people who push our buttons are the greatest teachers. That's definitely true in this pandemic. I've been really noticing and watching my mind. It feels like incredible compassion training, even having compassion and tenderness for my preferences.

Like most groups, we have an online sangha now, and we were talking the other day about tenderizing. Part of the work these days is learning how we can get really tender so we don't have to be as reactive. We learn to root down into our experience so that we can be rooted in our values and our vows. That is the place where I can widen out and actually feel compassion and love. If I'm in my head and thinking about my opinions, it's almost impossible. So learning to soften and widen out is the big practice for me.

I'd like to offer a practice now that has been very important to me for about 20 years. I learned it from a wonderful Rinzai Zen teacher. In the Soto Zen lineage which I practice in, we have both Rinzai and Soto through Maezumi Roshi. I became more curious about other Rinzai teachers, and about this incredible yet eccentric monk, thinker, and artist named Hakuin. He had a time where he went into a deep, deep depression which he called "Zen sickness." It was definitely some kind of mental struggle. He did this practice that helped him and I want to share it with you because I've been working with it during this time and found it very helpful. If you need to, take a stretch for a minute before we begin our practice together. It'll be a guided practice and it will take about 15 minutes. My wish is that this is something that you can use in your practice, and if it's not ongoing, at least it may serve you today.

See again, if you can take care of your body in some way, open your shoulders, rock your head from side to side. It's so important to stretch and care for our bodies. What we're eating and how we're nourishing ourselves is so important.

Again, I'll ring the bell three times to begin, and then I'll ring it twice to end. It's a bit like a body scan, but a little different. We're going to be working on bringing some qualities in that we feel we really need. There's an intentionality around this meditation that I find really helpful.

Thinking about qualities—either from practice, or wherever those qualities come from—that are important to you. Thinking about the last week or two, what feels like it would be good medicine
for you? I've been really thinking about love, compassion, and tenderness. Let's see and explore together.

To begin this meditation, open your shoulders, allowing your body to be upright, whatever upright for your body means. Upright in your body and upright in your mind. Allowing the strength of your back, it's amazing that we have a spine that works as well as it does. For all of us that's different.

In allowing your back to be upright, feel your torso and allow that to be soft. Bring your attention down again into your hara and perhaps having your hand there. The hara is two inches below your belly button, so you can put both of your hands there and allow your belly to be soft with each breath, just allowing yourself to rest in the softness of your breath. In this preparation, allow your sit bones to seep into the floor a little bit to feel the earth, or whatever floor, cushion, or chair is meeting you. How amazing to be able to actually experience what we're experiencing.

I'd like you to imagine that there's a large pat of vegan butter shaped like an egg on top of your head. It's a golden color. Allow that to rest there. You feel your uprightness holding that golden egg of butter.

I invite you to infuse that butter with those qualities that you most need right now. Whether it's equanimity, patience, compassion, love, tenderness, or safety. Whatever it is that you need the most, what is most important to you for a medicine you need right now. To rest in your heart and mind, infusing that golden egg of butter on your head with those qualities.

Now as we sit, that butter begins to melt, and as it melts those qualities are infused in every cell it touches. From the outer cells, it goes into the inner cells. Just allowing that. As it begins to melt, imagining this butter coming over your forehead, in your face, the back of your head and ears. Allowing those qualities to go everywhere in your head. Allowing yourself to rest and experience those qualities. What did they do to your head? How does it change how you think if your thoughts are infused with these qualities?

The butter keeps melting and makes its way down your neck and over your shoulders. Just feeling those qualities working, massaging their way in. They come down, the butter keeps bringing those qualities, infusing them into your shoulders, down your arms, all the way to the tips of your fingers and palms. What does it feel like to have those qualities in your hands? Bringing that butter down over your torso, over your heart and all your organs, and down your lower back. Feel what it's like for your whole torso to be imbued with those qualities. Allowing
them to seep in and down, past your hips into your legs. Allowing the very ground of your body, your legs, your knees, shins, and calves. Coating your feet and every toe, even your little toe and the soles of your feet. Every inch is coated with this golden color, imbued with the qualities you most need. Enveloped. Just see what that feels like in your body and mind. Your body and heart and mind.

Consider someone you know or have read about or heard about today, who could really use this kind of support, this imbuing of qualities and of medicine. Dedicate this practice for them, extending it out to another. I'm extending this to the 55 firefighters who are sick with COVID-19. Take another minute to experience these qualities in yourself, and radiate them out for another. Feel what that feels like. Take a moment to come back and bring your awareness into the space that you're in, to the beings inside of your space, and imagine maybe a couple of beings outside your space. Thank you so much. My wish is that this serves you in some way, and maybe you can pass it along.

I think it's time for some question and answer. The first question is from Gretchin from VC.

Gretchin in VC: "What is the best way to be with things as they are in each passing moment? Or perhaps what is the best way to let go in each moment?"

Gretchin, thank you for your question. I'm sure that I don't know the best way and I feel delighted about that. But I could tell you what is helpful to me, which is what we were just doing, coming back to my hara, feeling our breath and soft belly. I find it really difficult to cling to anything while I'm in my hara, it may be impossible. One of the reasons I love it so much is it's just about this space of not knowing and it's really delightful to just return to my heart. I realized I have no idea. I don't know what the best way is, but I'm willing to be with it, whatever it is. So I hope that helps. Okay.

Dana: "Do you offer an online sangha?"
Yes, we do. We're about to open it up in a couple of days, we're just experimenting for the last couple of days and we're working on opening up to everyone. So please go to zencare.org and sign up on the mailing list and check the website and we're going to let everybody know very shortly. Yes, so we do offer online sangha. You're most welcome.

This is amazing. All these questions.

"How do we most effectively help others who may need to be given support from a distance? It's so helpful to know how to show up." From Lillian Ball.
Well for me, one of the things that I do is every day, is practicing extending my practice to others. I find that incredibly important. I never practice for myself, that is the practice. There's so many beautiful ways to show up. I know people who are anonymously dropping off food to elderly people or people they know are sick and just leaving it outside their door. I know people who are writing thank you letters to doctors and nurses and firefighters. It's also a beautiful practice if you're still going to the grocery stores to thank those grocery store people who are showing up. I know some people who are themselves delivering food. There are many ways. I know other people who are showing up by donating what they can. To me, it all begins with our practice and how we ripple it out. And so how you show up will be totally unique. And to me, the key is always honoring where you are, what limits you have, and where you want to stretch. And so I hope that's helpful Lillian. Thank you.

And Sema: "I'm a mindfulness teacher and need to have some guidance on alleviating the financial worries of my students."

I don't know how to alleviate the financial worries because the financial worries are so serious and heartbreaking. What I would recommend is just to be able to hear their worries. And sometimes, in my experience, in particular with people in incredible distress is that they need to not be alleviated, but heard. It's like hearing the cries of the river or Avalokiteshvara, the one who hears the cries of the world. Really just being able to hear how hard that is. And so that they feel that they are heard and seen and experienced, which I feel like is in this world is so rare. So Sema, if we could together learn to not have to try to make it better, but to be with people where they are, it's so precious. It's so precious to not have to fix it. Not have to change it. But to say "I'm with you and I don't have to leave." Thank you Sema.

I wish I could see your faces. I'm just going to imagine your faces.

Lisa: "What makes this crisis different from wars, where we knowingly send soldiers to die and kill innocent civilians? What about the transplant list whereby one person gets the liver and eight people die? What about not giving enough assistance to Flint, Michigan such that children will grow up with impaired brains due to the lead in the water? Are we now so uncomfortable with the possibility of suffering and death because it could affect us? Why is society now so focused on saving every life from coronavirus when we don't care about most people on a daily basis?"

Each of those questions are so powerful and important. And I don't have the answers to any of them. And I respect the questions. I feel like they're all of ours to reckon with. It reminds me of one of my teachers who is a man named James Hellman. He once said, you know, there's a story of Oedipus where he solved the riddle of the Sphinx that nobody could solve and then the snakes died. But Oedipus's life went to crap. You could say it did not go well after he solved the riddle.
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So for me, those riddles of cruelty and questions of compassion and who or what receives the care that is needed are heartbreaking decisions. I have a friend who is a physician in Italy and they have to make decisions every day now about who lives and who gets the treatment and who doesn't, because they don't have enough. I don't know, in that situation, what's the right decision or the wrong decision, but it's heartbreaking. So how do we, like the story of Oedipus, allow the story and allow the riddle to teach us, because we just don't know. And we know that many, many people will suffer. And also, we know that spring is here. I mean, how do we hold those two things all at the same time? Thank you.

Kathy: “My elderly 90 year old mom is two hundred miles away in social isolation. I am in social isolation. I can't relax as I'm so worried about her being alone. We speak five times a day but it's not enough. Can I dedicate my meditation to her to help?”
Thank you, Kathy. There's something about this word "social isolation" that I really have found heartbreaking. I feel like the correct word is, for me, physical isolation and we need more social connection. And so maybe physical distancing and social connecting is what we need. My mother is also elderly and lives about, you know, the same distance and is just recovering from surgery in her respiratory system. So there's no way to see her either. And so I feel you very personally, I feel a lot of resonance.

And the reality is, this is what we have. And so how do we just rest in our experience. That you call her five times a day is amazing. And yes, to dedicate your practice to her is a beautiful practice. How do you give yourself that compassion also, so that you can soften and realize that as much as you want this situation to be different, it's not. And to hear that cry of how much you want to see her. And to hear that too. All of it's true. Thank you, Kathy. This is just a heartbreaking time. This is like the most powerful training time. Thank you.

"So why is it difficult," Sara asked, "to keep meditating regularly? Why is meditation difficult? Is it related to our expectations of it?"
I can't say for sure. But I do know that there was a study done, I think in the 80s or 90s, where they interviewed people about why they stopped meditating. They stopped meditating because they didn't get better and they thought they would do meditation and feel better. Meditation is not even designed to make you feel better. And I think maybe why many people stop is because they think that they're not good at it.

Another reason I think people stop meditating is because most of us identify who we are with what we think. The brain creates so many thoughts per second, and we are aware of like one or two of them. And those tend to be very repetitive and also skew negative. So we're not usually
very good at doing new things, right? And we like to be comfortable, even if it feels terrible. At least it's familiar terrible. And so to me, what I encourage my students often to do is when they're talking about their thoughts is "Well, that's just what one organ is letting you know. What about your kidneys?" So I love wondering about what your kidneys are telling you? What's your heart telling you? What are your intestines telling? What are your bile ducts telling you? So to me, learning how to meditate is like learning to widen out our experience and realize we can just keep coming back.

It's like this freedom that is always available. We can "Leave the dungeon" as Dogen talks about, in every moment, and the freedom is when we don't follow those repetitive thoughts. So I'm totally willing to do it with you, Sarah. Let's just encourage and practice. Thank you. Oh, and the other thing, Sarah, is that most things that are really challenging are not easy. If we think about it, there's no amazing stories in history, including the Bible or the Quran or Upanishads—here's all these epic trials in the Iliad and the Odyssey, and all of these amazing, incredible stories of this world, and none of them are about someone who had an easy time and when it got hard they went home. No one would go to see the movie Iron Man if Iron Man encountered something that was hard, and then was like, "Oh, that's hard I'm going to go back home." Nobody would watch it. So I find it really helpful to remember that just because meditation's hard doesn't mean that we should stop. So thank you.

Cindy: "It's quite difficult to meditate with all that is happening. Your guided meditation was a lovely relief. Continue to center in the hara?"
I mean, for me, that's my big plan for at least this lifetime is to keep coming back to my hara. So you're welcome to join me and it's an adventure because it is difficult. I find it always challenging so meet the challenge, meet the challenge, meet the challenge. We can do it. That's why we need each other. It's why teachers are important. And it's why sangha is so important. So, thank you, Cindy.

Matcha is really important and delicious.

"Can you share a koan that we can reflect on over these unusual times?"
Lately there's a koan that Maezumi Roshi loved very much that has just kept coming to my mind. It's a koan where the teacher comes out and is beating a drum in front of the monastery and saying "Bodhisattvas come eat, Bodhisattvas come eat!" Bodhisattvas are those of us who make a vow to serve the world. What moved Maezumi about that koan is that people can eat and that there was food.
I loved the tears streaming down this monk's face, Maezumi imagining that as he's beating the drum and saying "Bodhisattvas come eat."

And so, for me, it's been really encouraging in these times to reflect on "Bodhisattvas come eat" like, "Oh, this morning, I have some food to eat. It's amazing. I have oat milk yogurt with some walnuts. Incredible." So the koan is can you actually allow yourself to be moved by each activity? Yesterday, you know, the water went out in our building. Everyone's quarantined in the building, and then there's no water for like 24 hours. And it was interesting. And then it seemed like maybe we weren't all gonna have toilets for who knows how long. So it's amazing to think that it's the same kind of koan like, "Bodhisattvas come eat," like "Wow, I can use a toilet, I have a toilet. How amazing is that?" The cats have kitty litter. How incredible. So much of our life is a miracle if we pay attention to it. It's amazing that this technology exists right now, who can wrap their mind around that? So to me, the koan is "Bodhisattvas, come eat, come eat." Thank you.

Kate: "I'm a new practitioner, how can you stay awake when in communication with another? Doesn't it require split attention? How can you be in yourself and with another in a deep way? Any techniques to help?"

That's such a great question. For me, you know, the heart of our contemplative care training is all about this question. There's a wonderful monk from Japan named Kobo Daishi who said, "You can tell the depth of someone's practice by how they serve others." And, to me, you could even say you can tell the depth of someone's practice by how they treat other people and whether they're actually interested in them. And very often, I ask my students, if they're having trouble in their practice, tell me about your relationships with your local people, the local barista, the local dry cleaner or supermarket person, like what are their names and what do you know about them? And so for me, it's like being awake.

Communication is everywhere. How many of your neighbors do you know? Do you know what's going on with them? And so for me, it's not a split attention, but it's saying, "Wow, you matter and I matter, we all matter." And so the beauty of practice to me is to realize it's so incredible that we can all matter and we can all be in this together. I don't have to split my attention myself, when I'm in my hara. I can be in my hara, noticing whatever feelings are arising in me at the moment. And I can be so curious and interested in what's happening with you. And it's so much fun and amazing to do that. And to me, one of the joys of life.

But your question is, can you be with yourself and another in a deep way? I think that when we're in our haras, yes. And so the technique is really the hara for me and lots of practice, you know, we're not going to be good at it. And, to me, also not hoping to be good at it. I often love
to tell the story of my dear brother Todd. He went to Japan to study in Aikido school where they train the riot police. And, you know, they learned to fall for six months, for eight hours a day. They said you have to be fearless about falling before you can be free. And so I think that's really, really important. It's like really learning the technique. Remember, you're going to make lots of mistakes. You're not going to be as deep or as connected as you want to be all the time. And that's okay. We're practicing. The beauty is that we can always begin again. Come back to your hara. I hope that helps.

David: "I've had the virus for about 11 days. In regards to buying into the illness, how can we find equanimity while doing the work of healing?"

First of all, thank you for sharing that. "Buying into the illness." To me, finding the equanimity while doing the work of healing is really about being with what is happening. Taking all the care that you can, so that you can heal. To me, that's not being so swept away by my feelings about something, but allowing the fever. The body is working to heal itself, the cough is working to heal itself, and to see where it's going and what healing is.

To me, healing is different than curing. Learning to relax and be with your mind and body together, to nourish yourself and receive the care that you need, that is the equanimity. Without buying into any idea about how it's supposed to go, because we just don't know. I for sure don't know how things are supposed to go. And I find incredible ease when I can touch that place of realizing I have no idea how this is supposed to go. But I do wish you ease, equanimity, and tenderness in your healing. Thank you, David.

"What did you do before you became a Zen master?" asks Jessica Jones. "How did you change your life to become more centered around this, what you love?"

What did I do before I became a Zen master? I don't think of myself as a Zen master. But thank you.

I did a lot of things. I actually was an intern at Tricycle. I was a waiter. I was a busboy. I worked in an avocado grove. There's so many things. I was also the primary caregiver for my grandmother for five years, and I was a poet-in-residence in the city schools working with emotionally disturbed kids, which was one of the great privileges of my life.

I changed my life because I realized for about ten years I had such a love-hate relationship with my practice. I couldn't stand it. And I kept doing it all the time. I realized after ten years that I was really stuck in that love-hate relationship with it, because I was so caught by my preferences. So I made a vow to decide to just practice and not make comments about it. Not air the
comments much about it, just do it. I just vowed to show up in the zendo all the time. I vowed to do every retreat, to work very closely with my teacher for ten years. And it was actually during that period where everything changed, because I suddenly had to burn through all of my preferences of "Oh, I don't feel like doing it today," or "I do feel like doing it today." All of the commentary. Over time, just staying close to my vow. So many things opened, and they continue to open, and to me it's a life practice. It's not like "Now I'm done." But ten years of that practice was very important to me and continues to inform everything I do. I do what I love and I feel so privileged to have this life. Now one of the things that some people are reflecting on in this time is what are they doing with their life?

I wondered that too, and I just feel delighted to find that I wouldn't change anything actually. Having loving relationships, a loving sangha, a loving husband, we have beautiful cats, shelter. I mean, I just feel so privileged. So, thank you for your question, Jessica, and may your path go well.

"Thank you for your guidance. Would you mind sharing how you experience impermanence and suffering?"

I experience impermanence now in a very real way, very differently. In the beginning of this talk, I felt like "Where is everybody?" and now I feel very connected through answering your questions. So the impermanence of that feeling, of "I don't know who's here," and now I feel like I know who's here. So on that very basic level. Suffering—earlier today I had a moment of suffering when I thought "Six more weeks, I don't want that." Allowing myself to feel that, I felt like a little baby which is so fun and cute. And yet there is suffering in that, I felt like a little baby but also that little baby was suffering. I want what I want when I want it. To just allow that and not to make such a big deal about it. We all have that little kind of baby person and how we take care of that baby is so important. So, thank you.

Beryl: "How do I as a parent help my 23-year-old who seems to be doing okay, maintain positivity and optimism in the midst of this, and process feelings of loss?"

I think about Dogen and Carl Jung. Carl Jung talked about how a parent's greatest gift is to have a lived inner life. And so I think the greatest gift that you could offer your child is to really work with your own processing of healing and feelings of loss. How we do that actually impacts everyone around us. So I think that is in many ways the best help we can offer another, is by really doing that work ourselves in an ongoing way. That's definitely been my experience too.

Dogen talks about how one of the qualities that we need to develop is this roshin or grandmotherly mind. So just a very loving kind of grandmother-like quality that we're not trying
to fix someone, we're just loving them for how they are. Who knows where they're going to go. But just loving them and all the parts of them without having to change them. So thank you, Beryl.

**Deb:** "**What practice would you recommend for acceptance and preparation of potential death of self, family, friends from COVID-19?**"

Thank you, Deb. What I recommend is having real conversations. We really encourage this. We have lots of friends who run organizations like Death Over Dinner, and different wonderful conversations. In our work, Chodo will actually be leading an online version of a training about this called Living Fearlessly, where you get your affairs in order, and look at your unfinished business. He's actually going to be running that next month. But I think that having open conversations about what your wishes are is a really important thing. Never mind just in this time, but in general. What could be amazing about this time is that we learn to do things differently, and we really learn how to have these kinds of conversations about what we don't want to talk about. Like, what do you want to do with your body? What's important to you? What about all your stuff? It's really important and it's amazing actually what you learn about people and ourselves. I've learnt about myself. I became very clear about places in my life that are important to me. And who I would want to say goodbye to. And who do I feel like I've already said goodbye to or all of those questions. In particular, it's so important now, because you're not going to have the same opportunities as this time, because no one else can be there very often. And so, how do we have those kinds of conversations about how you feel about being alone, and potentially being in the hospital with no visitors? Maybe only on an iPad. So it's a really powerful time and thank you for the question. So important.

Again, Chodo is going to be leading something about that. Don't turn away from it. Stay with your question. Ask your loved ones, what's most meaningful to them? Yeah, thank you.

**David:** "**What is the best way to meditate for someone who has a chronic severe back problem, spinal arthritis?**"

I have a friend who has a form of that, and they have to lay down and they can keep their knees up in the air and their feet flat. So you have to find a position that is okay enough, where you're being supported. That's why I was saying upright for your body. Upright for my friend's body is laying down, he feels upright in his body when he's laying down. So I think it's really important to appreciate that and find your uprightness. So experiment. Thank you.
Moderator: Koshin, I'll just make a time note for you that it's 2:07. So if you want to take a few questions more. As many as you like, but I just wanted to make sure you're aware of the time in case you have other appointments today.

Koshin: How about we take three more.

Moderator: That sounds wonderful.

Koshin: I wish I had time for all of your questions. So the next question is from Anonymous. "How do you let go of anger, against yourself, things, family, people, life itself?"

I don't know about letting go. But I do know that what I get concerned about in myself is places where I feel resentful. Anger I actually enjoy. If it's the feeling of anger about an injustice or something. It's also interesting when it flares up for me when I get triggered from an old thing. We all have that. But to me, like the flare up is okay, and the thought is okay, but how do we work with it in a live and dynamic way, and a loving way? And so I don't know about letting go, but how do you be curious about what it is that I'm so angry about? For me, working with these things with my teacher, working with other teachers that are my Dharma siblings, and working with my therapist, has been incredible. But to really have many spaces to be curious about my experience, in particular with anger, is such a place of incredible inquiry. So I hope that's helpful.

Alright. Matthew Krantz: "Can you share a story of something you found humorous that this situation has created?"

I find so many things funny. I guess the main thing that I keep finding funny is actually our cats. I find they are hilarious. They are over the moon that we're home all the time now. They're very social cats. They're not into social distancing, ever. And they love lots of attention and are constantly next to us. Right now, they're both right next to me. And so, for me, it's very funny to see this corona situation is actually really good for them. And it's funny. Maybe not the most funny, hilarious thing, but it's something important. I feel like actually, if we have a sense of humor about all these things, that we'll learn a lot. Because if we are serious on top of what's already serious, we don't learn as much. At least I don't, and that's for sure. So, thank you, Matthew, reminding us about humor, so important!

Last question, and I wish I had time to answer all of these, but so it goes. Jim from Johnstown, Pennsylvania: "I find that compassion is the field or river that I want to live in now. However, there are a couple of long standing resentments that I have difficulty clearing. They are like a taproot of an old tree. Any advice on becoming open and clear from these family based afflictions?"
Koshin Paley Ellison
Online Practice Session
March 24, 2020

Thank you, James. Swim in the river, hear the cries of that river. Now, to me that's like a lifelong project. We don't know. My teacher often says the whole thing is: there's no arrival. So how can you use this time to become open and clear? And what can it teach you? What is here? What is left?

The amazing thing about this life that I'm constantly reminded of is this is it. This is all we have. And how we are going to participate is everything. I say this all the time to my students, because really, this is it. And so, the taproot is what we have to work with. The heartwood of a tree comes from the tree actually being bantered about by weather and by hot and cold and all that stuff. So using the heartwood of your old tree to actually give yourself more heartfulness and being open and clear. And I feel like in many ways, that's what we all can do.

It's an honor and a privilege to be with you all. I wish I could see all of your questions and all of your comments. I appreciate Tricycle for hosting this incredibly generous activity, please support them. If you want to hang out with me and study with us, you're most welcome. Go to zencare.org. It's a privilege, it's an honor. Take care of yourself. Wash your hands. Physically distance yourself from others, but do not socially distance. We need each other. And don't just text and email. We need each other's voices in our ears, we need to actually see people. We matter. How we care for each other and ourselves is critical. So thank you so much.

Moderator: Thank you, so much for you Koshin. Thank you for this incredibly beautiful practice and the profound reminders you've shared with us today. Thank you to everyone who joined us and for sharing your incredibly rich questions. We also have some other online practices coming up. This Thursday evening at 7pm Eastern Time with Scott Tusa, a meditation teacher in the Tibetan tradition. Next week we also have calls scheduled with Sharon Salzberg and Lama Surya Das, and more sessions are being added each week with new teachers, so do keep checking tricycle.org/live for updates on those, and the recordings for the existing sessions. If you've already signed up for one session, you'll receive the reminders about each upcoming session as well, so you'll get those reminders. Again, please everyone, be happy, healthy, and stay safe in this time. Thank you to all of you and thank you so much to you Koshin.

Koshin: Thank you all.