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## Conversations with self-10

### Living with compassion for self

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It's only when we are treat ourselves with compassion that we will be able to empathise with the problems of others

A farmer once sowed seeds on his farm. Shortly after he had done so, weeds began to appear. This distressed him greatly, so he wrote to the department of agriculture asking for a remedy. The department wrote back suggesting that he use weedicides to de-weed his farm. This he did, yet, one week later, the weeds reappeared. He wrote again to the department and they suggested that he try a new variant. However, it did not help and the weeds continued to reappear. Finally, in exasperation, he wrote a mail asking for a long-term solution. The reply he received was terse and simple. It read 'before you want to remove the weeds first accept them as being part of your farm family. In denying them what is rightfully theirs and that of belonging to your farm, you disown them. Your shadow only leaves you when you learn to face it.'

Instead of despising and castigating yourself for the fears you carry, learn to be compassionate to yourself and remember that fear is a human characteristic. It is something that links us with other people. If we cannot accept the reality of our own terror, we are likely to dismiss and even ridicule the fears of others. If we treat ourselves harshly, this is the way we are likely to treat other people. If you cannot love yourself, you cannot love other people.

Look at yourself with 'even-mindedness'. You are not unique and your problems are not isolated. You have failings but so does everybody else. You also have talents and like every other being on the planet you deserve compassion, joy and friendship.

It is only in the context of a kinder attitude towards ourselves that we can consider the importance of transcending the ego. When masters of spiritual life ask us to transcend ego, they want us to get beyond the grasping, frightened, angry self that often seeks to destroy others in order to ensure its own survival, prosperity and success.

This does not mean that we should recoil from ourselves in disgust, put ourselves down at every turn, and become hyper-conscious of our faults. If we do this, there is a danger that we will simply become excessively self-conscious, mired in the insecure ego that we are trying to transcend. Compassion is the most reliable way of putting the self in its proper place, because it requires us to dethrone ourselves from the centre of our world and to put another there. In so doing we not only become compassionate to ourselves but also empathetic with the other.

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