

One Meditation #8, August 2025: “Meditation or Protest?” (Aug. 3, 2025, 599 w.)

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Thank you for being here, and welcome to this eighth meditation email. Please consider forwarding it. For previous months, see “Meditation” at richardjewell.org. Monthly subjects range from modern to ancient, Western to Eastern, and scientific to spiritual. For more info, see below. – Richard

WHICH TO CHOOSE: MEDITATION OR PROTEST?

“In the United States today, 750+ billionaires in the US have a combined wealth [that] could feed and house everyone in the US who is below the poverty line on just the earnings of their assets.” So says Daniel Wolpert in *Looking Inward Living Outward: The Spiritual Practice of Social Transformation* (138). What should we do? Will we become ostrich meditators, heads stuck in a hole? Or stop meditating and cause more change? Fortunately, we can accomplish both with greater calmness and no loss of time using the following three methods.

1. Choose radical acts of kindness. The author of the most letters in Christian scriptures, Paul of Tarsus, suggests that to “those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect” (I Cor. 12, *NRSVue*). He is speaking of his Christians, but this “body” just as well can mean our beloved democracy. Meditative kindness means not just respecting others, but thanking them for their positive or neutral acts, even if just for showing up and believing in democracy. A handshake, “How are you?” or even sharing food or water works. Patient, meditative listening also is radical. Studies repeatedly show when one person listens, the other often reports the first as a sympathetic conversationalist.

2. Practice mindfulness. Mindfulness is simply being aware of what is happening here and now. During protest, it often is more effective. Anger, fear, and desire for revenge are powerful motivators. But Wolpert suggests we transform such emotions (144).

Thich Nhat Hanh, a Zen priest known as the “father of modern mindfulness,” recommends, “In Buddhism we do not consider anger [and] hatred...as enemies. [W]e have to convert anger into some kind of energy that is more constructive....Forgiveness.... Understanding.... That is the work of meditation” (190-91, *Wisdom of Thich Nhat Hanh*).

Regarding those whom you are against, asks Wolpert, “Are there individuals or groups...you expend a lot of time and energy on who are just trampling your pearls” (43)? “Pearls” mean pure moments of inner love, calm, and strength. He suggests negative emotions like worry, anger, and hatred can color oneself, muddying a person’s judgement and wasting energy. And we pass these muddy waters, like waves spreading in a pool, to both friend and foe.

Combining mindfulness with exercise also works well. Exercise, say hundreds of scientific studies, enables our brains to make more effective, faster decisions. The results

are better thinking and acting in protest. Mindfulness adds to that formula, contributing many of the same scientific benefits and offering greater peace of mind and focus.

Nhat Hanh, who was thrown out of his native Vietnam for his political statements, says in his many books that we can practice mindfulness even during the simplest of exercises. The ancient Hindu *Yoga Sutras* also recommends “heating” exercise as one of about thirty ways to achieve the aware state of clarity called *samadhi*.

3. Glow with love. Wolpert says, “The beloved community...is something we must practice over and over” (20). Developing a feeling of love in the heart or chest is one of the most ancient and popular meditation traditions worldwide. In our community of democracy, it is sorely needed, especially when we differ. As a “glower,” you may find yourself offering frequent genuine smiles, becoming more comfortable with others, and exuding a positive energy to which others are drawn.

In my own meditations, I practice radical kindness, mindfulness, and love within. Then I bring them to conversations. I don’t always agree. But I listen. And others discover and share my openness and warmth.

Next Month: MEDITATION: “THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM”

Peace, Strength, Joy

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© 2025 by Richard Jewell. I encourage you to share this message with others. If you’re not yet a subscriber, email me to be added. You’re also welcome to send me a comment, ask to unsubscribe, or just say “hi!” The List is 370 strong, now. Most of you are here by individual invitation, some of you through public addresses. I’ve meditated and researched meditation for 60+ years and have graduate degrees in the field. I hope you enjoy being on the list!

Previous Issues

Jan.-May 2025, #1-5: See “Meditation” in richardjewell.org.

June ’25, #6: “**Buddha’s Five Waters—Which Are You?**” In Buddhism, the five Hindrances—five inner waters—are resolved in the Seven Factors of Awakening. **Recommended:** Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Samyutta Nikaya*.

July ’25, #7: “**Lone Rider or Wagon Train?**” Do you meditate alone, as part of a community, or both? **Recommended:** Riane Eisler, *The Chalice & the Blade*.
