

1 ● lessons of the ocean

Some people think of peace as being weak or passive. But that's not correct. Peace is strong. It is like the ocean which is able to remain calm at its depths even when there are storms on the surface. When a storm occurs, the ocean may be rough on the surface with waves that are 30-feet high, but if you go much farther below, it's calm and consistent and not impacted at all by what is happening above.

No matter what happens on the surface of your life, maintaining that deep calm is so important. If you have a shallow perspective when stressful situations occur, you will feel as if you're being tossed by the ocean's waves as your emotions go up and down. How many times do you try not to get upset? You think, "Don't do it, don't do it," but you still do. Or you might not even think about it and just automatically have a negative response. When you're stressed, you feel tense and tight and your breathing becomes faster. Stress blocks the flow of energy and can make you feel overwhelmed. If your mind is like the ocean's surface with 30-foot waves going all the time, you

can't see clearly. To avoid that, slow down your breathing and think of the calmness of the ocean's depths. This will help open your mind to new possibilities and ways of approaching your situation, when only a few minutes ago you felt out of control.

Peace is not only strong, it is big and expansive enough to accommodate all. That's the power it has. It's like the ocean. When we look at the ocean, it's so big that we can't even see how far it goes. It's vast and therefore able to provide a home for diverse sea life and is a destination for the many rivers that flow into it. Expansion of energy in our daily lives makes it easier to work with any type of person or situation. We are no longer disturbed by others even if their energy is rough. In time, we willingly accommodate others, creating a more peaceful environment for them and ourselves.

In order to bring about peace, you don't have to do anything extraordinary. You are a true peacemaker when you use your daily life to express harmony and love. Expanding your energy to make the best of each moment helps you to become more peaceful day by day. Other people start to naturally fit into your world. You have the capacity to create a smooth energy exchange, touching the hearts of others, and providing hope and encouragement. Without even realizing it, you have an influence on your family and friends, your workplace and your community, and ultimately the world. Like the ocean, your vast energy is strong, helping you create a calm and peaceful life that is truly enjoyable, and each new experience only adds to your fulfillment and growth.

2 ● good or bad

As a child growing up in Korea, I remember hearing a story that has always stuck with me. It was about a certain gentleman who lived in a village bordering two rival areas within old China. This particular man owned a horse, which was a valuable commodity in those days. One day his horse disappeared across the border. Neighbors came to him, saying how sorry they were about his loss, expecting to hear more about his troubles. But all the man had to say was, "We'll see." The neighbors thought this was odd. He didn't seem to be at all upset about losing his prized possession.

In time, the man's horse returned and brought with it a female companion. Neighbors came by to heartily congratulate the gentleman on his good fortune. Not only did he get his horse back, but he now had a female horse as well, so that he could breed the horses in the future. What great luck! They were completely surprised when the man, showing no excitement, calmly responded the same way, saying again, "We'll see."

Later, the man's only child was riding the new horse and fell, suffering a severe leg injury which caused him to be crippled for the rest of his life. When this happened, many people gathered at the father's home to express their great sorrow and anguish over his only son's misfortune. *How could such a terrible thing happen? If only that female horse had never come.* But with no sadness or worry on his face, his only response was still, "We'll see." The people of the village shook their heads, completely baffled by his calm reaction to this devastating accident.

Then war broke out across the border. All the young men of the village were called to war, and nearly every single one was killed in battle. The man's son, however, was not required to join the fighting because of his crippled leg. Thus, his life was spared. At that point the villagers began to understand the wisdom of the man's perspective. Instead of judging each circumstance as good or bad, he accepted each situation as it was. He maintained a calm and even temperament, trusting that there was a reason behind every event. The villagers gained new respect for his peacefulness, vision, openness and trust.

In our own day-to-day lives, we are often quick to make judgments: *That's great! Oh no, too bad! I love it! I hate it! What a good experience! What a terrible experience!* If we take some time to think about it more deeply, we can see that each and every experience has its own value. It all depends on how we utilize the many things that occur to us in a day, in a year, in a lifetime.

When a so-called bad experience happens, it often leads us to a new life direction. It can open our eyes to

something we had not considered. It can take us out of our daily routine and make us look at the bigger picture. It can help us to see someone in a different light. It can direct us to search for the meaning of our lives. So, in the end then, is it really a bad experience?

When a so-called good experience happens, we can re-create it in our minds over and over again, eventually living in the past instead of the present. We might continuously compare our daily life with the memory of the good experience. Our family and friends tire of hearing about it. We feel disappointed when other experiences are not as good as that particular one. Then, is this good experience really good for us?

From a lifetime perspective, there is no such thing as a good experience or a bad experience. It is only our small viewpoint at a given moment that makes the judgment of good or bad. If we open our minds and consider a wider perspective, we can accept each one as it is, just like the gentleman in old China. Instead of reacting to each moment, we can see every occurrence as part of our learning process and personal evolution. If we can be grateful for any experience and try to learn from it, no matter how it may seem in the moment, we will move through life smoothly, with more consistent energy, and find the place of real happiness within ourselves.

From this perspective, all experiences can be thought of as stepping stones which lead us toward a brighter future. This is because the universe is moving toward harmony and expansion. As our minds become steadier and more open, we naturally tap into the beautiful energy that is

always flowing around us and within us. We feel our connection with each other, with nature and with all of life. Most of all, it helps us to see ourselves more clearly, to realize that the bright, expansive harmony exists within our own hearts. By staying in tune with this harmony, we are not swayed by events or circumstances. Instead, we are able to get the most out of each moment of our lives.

3 ● sharpening your focus

A magnifying glass is great fun, especially when you're a child. You become a detective, examining tiny objects and fine print. It makes you laugh when you magnify your own finger or a friend's nose. But the greatest surprise comes when you take it outside in the sun and carefully hold it over a small piece of paper or dry leaf. Incredibly, it becomes hotter and hotter until the paper or leaf starts to burn. This works especially well when the magnifying glass has been cleaned beforehand.

As the sun's rays pass through the magnifying glass, they join together and become focused on a single point. It is this concentration of the sun's energy that makes the difference. More than just creating the visual effect of enlargement, an actual increase in power has taken place. This same principle can be helpful as we engage in our daily activities, conversations, tasks and studies.

When our lives are busy and our minds over-loaded, it's easy to give only fleeting attention to various things throughout the day. Add to it the tendency to get pulled