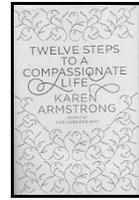


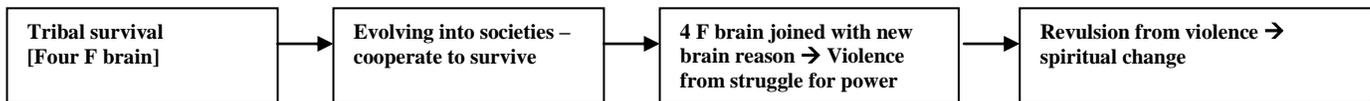
**Wish for a Better World**

- TED Prize [Technology/Entertainment/Design] \$100,000, a 20-minute speech, a wish for a better world
    - Compassion and Golden Rule - at the heart of all religions and secular ethics
    - Hard to imagine a time when the compassionate voice of religion is so sorely needed.
      - World polarized; Imbalance of power and wealth -> rage
      - Wars – endless, unable to win; secular issues have been ‘sacralized’, thus resistant to solution
      - Yet bound more closely by electronic media, domino effect of global interdependency
    - Her wish – **Charter for Compassion** <http://chraterforcompassion.org> Definition of compassion – not feeling sorry for people- pity, but to endure with another person – put yourself in their shoes
  - First Golden Rule – Confucius [551-479 BCE] – **Never do to others what you would not like them to do to you.** People should put themselves in privileged category, but relate their own experience to others ‘all day every day’. Practicing this creates a ‘mature human being’.
  - Buddha – way to Nirvana – meditation four immeasurables – *maitri, karuna, mudita, upeksha* – enables us to love all equally
  - Compassion alien to modern life – survival of the fittest, but species survived only if they could cooperate
  - “old brain” – four Fs – feeding, fighting, fleeing – and reproduction – very powerful
  - Evolution of “new brain” – reasoning, reflection, instinctual draw towards beauty
  - **“Many people today would rather be right than compassionate.”**
  - Semitic roots of the word for compassion related to the womb – mother/child icon of human love
- We have a **choice** – emphasize aspects of religious and secular traditions that speak of hatred, exclusion, suspicion or work with those that stress interdependence and equality for all.



**The First Step – Learn About Compassion**

- Education deeper than merely a list of directives, involves practice and reaching a level of the mind deeper than the purely rational. Explore your own religious or secular tradition, as it will resonate more easily.
- Myth – purpose was/is not to express factual/historic information, but to explain the deeper significance of an event – timeless, universal truth. Myth makes sense only if translated into action- ritually or behaviorally; only if imparted as part of a process of transformation. Myth of the hero told people how to unlock their heroic potential
- Ancient sages understood that it was possible to reorient the mind, put distance between their thinking selves and the potentially destructive instincts [four F brain] and therefore find peace. All were involved in intense political conflict/social change. In each case the catalyst for major spiritual change was revulsion from the violence that had reached unprecedented heights as a result of the upheaval.
- Pattern to civilization



- 900-200 BCE Axial Age – spiritual revolution – pivotal to spiritual development of humanity

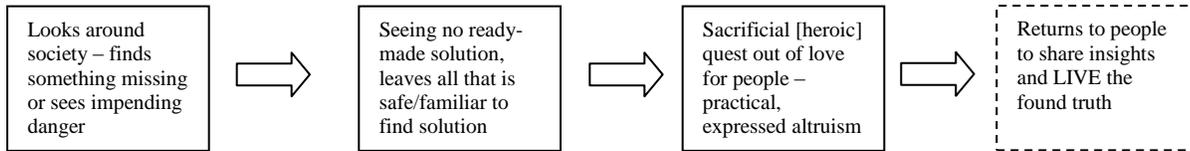
Greece	Middle East	Indian Subcontinent	China
Philosophical rationalism Socrates Aeschylus	Monotheism: Rabbinic Judaism Christianity Islam Destruction of Jerusalem had only 2 survivors – the Pharisees and the Jesus movement Rabbis transformed Judaism to religion of book. Hillel: “What is hateful to yourself; do not to your fellow man. That is the whole of the Torah and the remainder is but commentary. Go study it.” Jesus – man of ahimsa. ‘turn the other cheek’, ‘love your enemies’ Islam inspired attempt to counter violence of tribalism. Hadith – ‘Not one of you can be a believer, unless he desires for his neighbor what he desires for himself.’ Muslims asked to surrender entire being to Allah. Every recitation of the Qur’an begins with an invocation to the mercy and compassion of God.	Hinduism Buddhism Jainism Sacralized violence → <i>Ahimsa</i> Exterior to Interior, discovered unconscious long before Freud & Jung; find the true self and achieve unity with Brahman Buddha – renounced extreme sacrificial practice – emphasized compassion	Confucianism Daoism Confucius & followers– rituals <i>li</i> - control egotism and cultivate compassion; when 4 Fs reasserted themselves, he urged <i>shu</i> = consideration and respect for all, Golden Rule

Learn about your own tradition, but also about others. Helps you see your own tradition in a richer light.

Sages, prophets and mystics of these traditions did not regard compassion as an impractical dream. They worked hard to use whatever tools to reorient the human mind and pull their societies back from the brink. **We need their energy and conviction today.**

## The Second Step – Look at Your Own World

- Sages of the past were courageous enough to make fundamental changes in their traditions to address the problems of their communities.
- “As we seek to create a more compassionate world, we too must think outside the box, reconsider the major categories of our time, and find new ways of dealing with today’s challenges.” p. 66
- The modern West has had achievements in science and technology [external world]; we have had few spiritual geniuses [internal world]. We need to look to sages of the past and apply what we have learned to our circumstances in the society we live in.
- Hero Myth – according to Joseph Campbell, developed in every culture = universal insight



Examples of heroic quest – Buddha, Jesus, Muhammad, Gandhi

- Mentally go to the mountain and look at our community with compassion, estimate its strengths as well as its weaknesses, and assess potential for change
  - Start with family - Confucius believed in ritual of family –each member subordinates needs to another. West stresses individualism, independence of young, but do we care for the elders? How can each family member be valued?
  - Consider workplace – is it ‘dog eat dog’ or can it be compassionate?
  - Dispassionate view of nation. What would be the minimum requirements of a compassionate modern state?
  - Educate the young in a compassionate ethos.
  - Do not be discouraged by immensity of task – each person can become a force for good in the world [Xunzi 340-245 BCE]

## The Third Step – Compassion for Yourself

- Rabbi Albert Friedlander “Love your neighbor as yourself” – if you cannot love yourself, you cannot love other people either. Age 8 in Nazi Germany, made list of his good qualities and affirmed that he was *not* what Nazis said, he would use those good qualities to build a better world. Was kind and gentle – brought help and counsel to thousands.
- Ironic self-dissatisfaction in West and formerly colonized world. –eating disorders, insecurity
- Golden Rule requires self-knowledge. Take responsibility for misdeeds, but realize that rage, fear, hatred, greed [that make us behave badly] derive from the reptilian four F brain. **As sages of old did, we must free ourselves from fear by adopting a compassionate lifestyle and mind-training regimen.**
- Recognize our human nature; **take ownership of our shadow side.** “We often attack other people for precisely those qualities we most dislike in ourselves.” – this true at societal level also, hence discrimination of Jews, the Crusades are examples
- Suffering is universal. We may envy people we think are living charmed life – but they do/will suffer also. We need to acknowledge our own suffering in order to empathize with others.
- **“We are often the cause of our own misery.”** We pursue things and people that we know in our hearts will not make us happy. The moment we get something we start to worry about losing it.
- Pre-occupation with self – worry about our image/status/opinions that we are unable to apologize or ‘lose’ an argument.
- Before embracing the world, focus on self.
  - Be aware of your capacity and need for loving relationship [*maitri*]
  - Acknowledge your suffering and apply compassion [*karuna*]to your conflicted, struggling self
  - Bring your capacity for joy [*mudita*] to surface and take conscious pleasure in things you take for granted – health, friends, family
  - Look at yourself with balance [*upeksha*] – you have failings, just like everyone else, but you also have good qualities and deserve compassion, joy, and friendship.
- The Dalai Lama called for a spiritual revolution based on a “radical reorientation away from our habitual preoccupation with self”, a call to turn toward a wider community of beings with whom we are connected, and for conduct which recognizes others’ interests alongside our own.”
- When we consciously abandon the *me-first* mentality, we do not annihilate ourselves, but expand our horizons, evaporate our ego-driven fears, and experience a larger ‘immeasurable’ self = a fulfilled and mature human being. [Judaism = Beloved Companion, early Christians = *christoi*, Confucians/Xunzi = Great Man, the Buddha = one who is awake]
- Put it to the test. **“Once you have started to feel a genuine compassion for yourself, you will be able to extend it to others.”**

### The Fourth Step – Empathy

- Myth of the Buddha – as boy kept in palace away from reality [denial]; when 29, gods send 4 suffering creatures – a sick man, an old man, a corpse, and a monk. Buddha was so shocked he left home immediately in search of a way to help himself and others bear sorrow/suffering with serenity, creativity, and kindness
- Crucifix – icon of cruelty humans inflicted on another, but also a pain that redeems the world. Atonement doctrine of Western Christianity [but not Greek Orthodox] explained by Abelard [c. 1079-1142] when we look at the crucifix, our hearts break in sympathy and fellow feeling – it is this interior movement of compassion and instinctive empathy that saves us.
- Ancient Greeks, founders of Western rational thought, put on tragedies, plays that dramatized old myths of suffering which compelled the audience to empathize with humans struggling with impossible decisions and facing disastrous consequences of their actions. This communal weeping strengthened common bond and reminded each member of the audience that he/she was not alone in suffering.
- If it is not tempered by compassion and empathy, reason can lead men and women into a moral void. But, according to Aristotle, it is our rational powers that enable us to stand back from reptilian me-first thinking and appreciate the plight of another. Tragedy educated the emotions and taught people to experience them appropriately. Tragic drama taught empathy.
- **Art, drama, films can help us learn empathy.** Imagination is crucial to the compassionate life. Art helps us realize that we are not alone; everybody else is suffering too.
- Our own suffering can help us appreciate others' suffering [see step 3].
  - Albert Schweitzer was so saddened by the misery he saw around him that he devoted his life to alleviating such hardship.
  - In the Qur'an, Mohammad is asked to remember the sorrows of his childhood to make sure no one else in his community would endure the same deprivation.
  - Gandhi was thrown off a train in South Africa – this began his lifelong non-violent campaign against oppression.
  - Patty Anglin, children's Health Alliance of Wisconsin, from her own experience of a harsh boarding school, has taken on caring for abandoned children.
- When you find yourself wanting to avoid another person's sorrow, remember what it felt like to feel alone with sadness and do not turn away.
- Add to your Four Immeasurables meditation, after you have directed *maitri, karuna, mudita, upeksha* to yourself, turn attention to three specific persons known to you
  - A person for whom you have no particularly strong feelings one way or the other
  - A person you like, friend or family
  - A person you dislike
- Direct the four immeasurables towards each and also
  - In turn, think of their good points, their contributions to your life
  - Look deeply into their hearts, and as best as you can, see their pain – sufferings you know of and some that you do not know. This will enable you to desire them free of pain, to wish them joy. This is especially hard for the person you dislike. You are striving for *upeksha* – the equanimity that enables you to relate to people impartially.
  - Try to be aware of what gets in the way of your compassion for the disliked person. How much of it is one's own egocentric view?
- Be patient with yourself as you do this practice. It need not take hours, but try to make it a daily practice.
- As you conclude the meditation, resolve to translate your good thoughts into a small, concrete practical act of friendship towards one of the three persons. If you cannot do it to one of them, reach out to someone else who needs it.

### The Fifth Step – Mindfulness

- As we practice the Immeasurables, we are bound to become aware of selfishness that impedes our compassionate outreach, resists extending friendship to an enemy. It may help to read about the workings of the mind. But practice is better than theory.
- Mindfulness is a form of meditation designed to give us more control over our minds, help us to channel our negative emotions more creatively.
- Use analytical brain to step back and observe the processes of the old Four F brain – become aware of what triggers anger, hostility, greed, lust, fear. It is not to become over distressed by them, but to become more aloof and refuse to identify with them -This is not who I really am.
- It will not happen overnight. Be patient and understand that there is no quick fix.
- Take note of how unhappy the primitive emotions make us.
- Note how desire is an ever ending cycle – you are never satisfied. Note how changeable everything is – we are easily distracted. What is an obsession one moment easily gets replaced by another idea or thought.
- You will notice how easily and carelessly we inflict pain on others by impatience at minor inconveniences. But you will also notice how it makes us feel when someone does it to us. And also how much a small act of kindness can brighten the day
- Once we realize how much of our pain is within ourselves, it offers motivation to change. We can make an effort to cultivate the positive emotions and notice that performing an act of kindness can make us feel better.

- Mindfulness should make us less anxious, less worried about tomorrow. Living more fully in the present can help us refrain from allowing a memory of a wound color our present mood. It can help us more fully appreciate the simple pleasures – a sunset, an apple, a joke.
- Mindfulness should become habitual, but is not an end in itself. It should naturally lead to the next step – action.

### The Sixth Step – Action

- Karen relates story of the kindness of her superior when first a nun, a lady who was dying, yet took time to reassure her. One act of kindness can turn a life around.
- Wordsworth: “There are in our existence spots of time [...] our minds are nourished and invisibly repaired.”
- Try to think of “spots of time” in your own life, when someone went out of their way to help you. Also consider the corrosive effects of unkind remarks that you have given power to fester into an importance probably not intended by the speaker.
- **If you want to be a force for good in the world, apply insights from step 5 Mindfulness to shield others from your destructive tendencies and lighten their lives with acts of friendship.**
- **We are not doomed to a selfish existence; we have the ability with disciplined, repeated action to construct new habits of thought.** If every time we were tempted to say something vile about a colleague, ex-spouse, or country with whom we are at war, we asked, “how would I like that said about me and mine?” and refrain we would reach the state of *ekstasis* = momentary ‘stepping outside’ the egotistical self. If we did this, as Confucius advised, “all day and every day”, we would be in a state of continuous *ekstasis*, which is not a trance, but the permanent selflessness of a Buddha or sage.
- Skeptics say the Golden Rule does not work, but they have not tried to implement it whole-heartedly and consistently. It is not a doctrine to believe or not, it is a method. The only test of a method is to put it into practice. People have centuries found that behaving in accordance with the Golden Rule, brought a deeper, fuller level of existence.
- It will be a slow, incremental process. Resolve each day
  - To act in accordance with the positive Golden Rule – “Treat others as you wish to be treated yourself.” Not grandiose, but small act of kindness. Look for an opportunity to create a “spot in time” for someone.
  - To fulfill the negative version of the Golden Rule – “Do not do to others what you would not like them to do to you.” Try to stop yourself from making that brilliantly wounding remark. Each time you succeed will be an *ekstasis*.
  - To change your thought patterns. If you are feeling resentful, try to think of something for which you are grateful. If you are hurt by an unkind remark, try to remember that your own anger often issues from pain and that the person who spoke unkindly may also be suffering.
- As you get ready for bed, check to see that you have done your three actions. If you have not, be compassionate with yourself and resolve to do better tomorrow. When these three actions have become habitual, try to do each one twice, three times. The goal is to behave like this “all day and every day”. By then you will be a sage ...

## The Seventh Step – How Little We Know

- Religious historian must not substitute his/her own or the reader’s conventions for the original. Author must “broaden perspective so that it can make place for the other.” If Karen tried to project her 20<sup>th</sup> century assumptions on the spiritualities of the past, many seemed absurd. But when she broadened her perspective in a discipline, empathetic way, they gradually made sense. As she made this a practice, she realized how rarely we ‘make place for the other’ in social interaction. All too often people impose their own experiences and beliefs on acquaintance and events, making hurtful, inaccurate, and dismissive snap judgments about persons or whole cultures. It often becomes clear, when questioned closely, that their actual knowledge of the topic is small.
- Western society is very opinionated. Media is clogged with talk shows in which people are encouraged to express their views. “Freedom of speech is precious, of course, but do we always know what we are talking about?”
- Science is by nature progressive, but knowledge gained through the arts and humanities does not always advance this way. What is happiness? What is truth? How do we live with our mortality? These are questions with no definitive answers. Each generation must start over and find the solutions that speak directly to its unique experience. Philosophers today still discuss the issues that preoccupied Plato.
- Pursuit of knowledge is exhilarating, but **unknowing remains an essential part of the human condition. “Religion is at its best when it helps us to ask questions and holds us in a state of wonder—and arguably at its worst when it tries to answer them authoritatively and dogmatically.” We cannot understand the transcendence we call God/Nirvana/Brahman/Dao, precisely because it is transcendent – beyond the reach of the senses. If we say we know what God is, we may have created an idol in our own image.**
- Appreciating the limits of our own knowledge is a Western rational tradition. Socrates insisted that he was considered wise only because he knew nothing at all. You entered into a Socratic dialog in order to change; the idea was to create a new, more authentic self.
- Chinese philosopher Zhuangzi [c. 370-311 BCE] felt the only thing worth saying was a question that plunged listeners into doubt and numinous uncertainty. It is egotism that makes us identify with one opinion, become quarrelsome and unkind, and think we have a duty to change others to suit ourselves.
- Even the laws of physics have been upset by quantum mechanics which have exploded ancient certainties and revealed a universe that was indeterminate and unknowable. Albert Einstein experienced mystical wonder when he contemplated the universe. Albert Schweitzer saw that a guiding perception was that the world is ‘inexplicably mysterious’.
- Hindus acknowledge the marvel of human beings when they greet each other with a bow and joined hands to honor the sacred mystery they are encountering. Most of us fail to express reverence for others in daily life. We claim omniscience about others; our views are colored by our own needs, fears, ambitions and desires.
- Aim of this step is to
  - **Recognize and appreciate the unknown and unknowable**  
Think about experiences that touch you deeply and lift you temporarily beyond yourself to inhabit your humanity more fully than usual. [listening to certain music, reading a poem, looking at nature, sitting with someone you love] Note how difficult it is to express this experience to another, put it into words. Investigate the theme of unknowing in human experience.
  - **Become sensitive to overconfident assertions of certainty in ourselves and others**  
Consider the aggressive certainty that characterizes most of our daily conversation. In your own special field, don’t you feel that the more you know, the more you feel you have to learn? Do you find false claims over the radio about your field of interest painful? When you hear politicians or talk show callers arguing, do you ever hear a humble ‘I don’t know?’ What would Socrates think? As an exercise, take a deeply held opinion and make a list of everything you know that supports the opinion. Then make a list of arguments that contradict it. How is the experience? Did you learn anything? What do you think Socrates meant when he said, “The unexamined life is not worth living”?
  - **Make ourselves aware of the numinous mystery of each human being we encounter**  
Try to express exactly what differentiates you from everyone else. Do you find your true self, or is it elusive? Try to pin down exactly what it is you love about your partner or close friend. During mindfulness practice, examine your immediate circle – family, friends, colleagues. What do you *really* know about them, their intimate dreams? How well do they know you? Again in practice, notice how unthinkingly you try to manipulate, control, exploit others, or belittle them to make them fit your worldview. Notice how upsetting when someone tries to control you or officiously explains your thoughts to you.

## The Eighth Step - How Should We Speak to One Another

- Socratic dialog vs. Debate – Though dialog is a buzzword and is supposed to bring peace, no one really dialogs. Our discourse is aggressive, a tradition we inherited from the ancient Greeks. Debate to win, defeat the opponent. No one expected to change one’s mind. **Socratic dialog was a spiritual exercise designed to produce a profound psychological change in the participants.** Plato called dialog communal meditation that was hard work, must be conducted in kindly compassionate manner or it would not bring transcendent insight. Confucius and Buddha also conducted discussion this way. Confucius developed insights through friendly conversation; felt human interaction was needed to achieve maturity. The Buddha’s community was noted for its friendliness.
- Buddha Golden Rule – **“A person who loves the self should not harm the self of others.”** Buddha believed that knowledge was a process of self-discovery. **You did not gain insight by accepting the opinions of others, but by finding the truth within yourself.**
- We do not have dialogs like this in media, politics, academia, or law courts. No one is willing to admit they do not know. Admitting that your opponent might be right on some point is unthinkable.
- Karen has tried to challenge politicians or pundits who claim that Islam is violent by writing articles based on Islamic history. She has recently decided this is counter-productive – it simply brings on more virulent attacks. Instead of trying to bludgeon someone into

accepting our own view, we need to find a way to pose Socratic questions that lead to insight rather than a repetition of the facts as we see them.

- We need to ask ourselves if we want to win the argument or seek the truth, whether we are making a ‘place for the other’ in our minds. **Above all, we need to listen. True listening means more than hearing the words; we need to become alert to the underlying unspoken message, especially in angry speech. Hear the pain or fear that surfaces.**
- Every fundamentalist movement she has studied is rooted in the profound fear of annihilation and began with what was perceived as an assault by the liberal or secular establishment. To attack a fundamentalist position merely serves to validate the fear. We need to analyze the fundamentalist message as carefully as we interpret a poem - it often expresses anxieties that society cannot ignore. **Attacked fundamentalist fear turns to rage.**
- We need to look at the context of an expressed idea that is unfamiliar. We need to assume that the speaker shares the same human nature as yourself and that, even though your belief systems may be different, you both have the same idea of what constitutes truth. Charity is forced upon us, like it or not; if we want to understand others, we must count them right in most matters. [Davidson, professor of philosophy]. We have to see where people are coming from; see it in the context of their circumstances/situation.
- There are times we must be assertive. We cannot condone the action of a Terrorist, but we must broaden our horizons to empathize with the situation of others in that same set of circumstances that did not resort to violence.
- The principle of compassion ought not to make us passive in the face of injustice, cruelty. **Compassion makes us feel an increasing responsibility for the suffering of others. But responding to injustice with hatred and contempt will simply increase the antagonism.**
- How do we assert a strongly held conviction with compassion?
  - St. Paul – charity is patient and kind; it is never boastful, never conceited, never rude; never envious or quick to take offence; keeps no score of wrongs; takes no pleasure in the wrongdoings of others
  - Gandhi in advocating non-violence, used this test – are you fighting to change things or to punish. Nonviolence did not mean compliance with injustice: his opponent could have his dead body, but not his obedience.
- Be mindful of the way we speak with others. When you argue, do you get carried away with your own cleverness and deliberately inflict pain? Do you get personal? Will the points you make further understanding or exacerbate an already inflammatory situation? Are you really listening to your opponent? What would happen if you conceded a point? Did you really know what you were talking about, or were you depending on hearsay? Before embarking on an argument, ask yourself honestly if you are willing to change your mind.

### The Ninth Step – Concern for Everybody

- All religious traditions have at least one strand that insists that we apply compassion beyond our own group.
- In an early stage of development, the human race needed tribalism to survive harsh, inhospitable circumstances. Tribal chauvinism can be extremely dangerous. Qur’an “Behold, we have created you all out of a male and a female and have formed you into tribes and nations so that you may get to know one another.”
- Tribalism is still alive and well. We have a duty to get to know one another and cultivate concern for all our neighbors in a global village. Dalai Lama points out that when village/countries were socially and economically independent, destruction of an enemy could have been advantageous. Now that we are so interdependent, war is outdated, no longer relevant. Destruction of our neighbor ultimately leads to our own suffering.
- Often there is reluctance to engage in problems of others [federal wall to keep out Mexicans; upsurge of nationalism in UK; influx of foreigners in Europe might dilute culture]. The stranger fills us with alarm. Becoming more multicultural and living side by side with people at different stages of the modernization process brings tensions. Salman Rushdie affair was a clash between two different conceptions of what is sacred – free speech vs. sovereignty of God. Clash of orthodoxies – neither side could understand the opposite viewpoint. **Somehow we must find a more mature and compassionate way to deal with these conflicts.**
- Have a Socratic debate about just war – are any of our current conflicts in that category? Is there a tribal spirit in them? Given our deadly destructive weaponry, can warfare ever be just or beneficial? How would a non-violent campaign work – what adjustments to mind and heart would it require?
- Mindfulness practice,
  - Notice how you, your friends, colleagues speak of foreigners. Listen to voices in your own society that preach hatred or disdain of other national, religious, and cultural traditions. Do you detect traces of colonialism, dehumanizing discourse that seeks to control, bigoted fascism? In media, note how Four Fs, cloaked in high-minded patriotic or religious rhetoric, still dominate public affairs and human behavior – not just in fundamentalist/conservative speech, but also in liberal discourse. Do you sense yourself or others getting caught up in “My country right or wrong?”
  - Apply learnings from “How little we know” to what you hear and say when criticizing another country. Remember Jesus’s caution against plucking out the splinter in your brother’s eye while there is a plank in your own.
  - Do we have enough international news in our media? Do we hear objective reporting of conflicts? Those in media and education need to realize they have a responsibility to give balanced, accurate, and respectful information. Make a habit of looking beyond the headlines to the ordinary people affected by a crisis. Ask whether our nation has had a part the problems of another region. If we ignore the pain of others, it may have a rebound effect. Apply the Golden Rule to politics, as Confucius advised.
  - New Buddhist exercise: as you walk around home, bring to mind all who helped build it, spun the cotton of your sheets, grew the beans in your coffee, etc. We are what we are because of the hard work, insights, achievements of countless others.
- Letting go of tribalism can become a spiritual process, as illustrated by the *mythos* of the Prophet Muhammad’s Night Journey to Jerusalem and his Ascension into heaven. Usual Arabic odes end in a triumphal return to the tribe. Muhammad’s journey finishes in Jerusalem, holy city of the Jews and Christians. It is a story of harmony and transcendence of the tribal group. Muhammad, sleeping beside the Kabah, was awakened by Gabriel and taken to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. He was met by all the prophets of the past who invited him to preach to them before he began his ascent, like a Jewish mystic through the seven heavens to the throne of God. The story falls silent when Muhammad enters the Divine presence – but it is clear that it is a surrender [*islam*] of ego ‘in awe he lost his speech and lost himself’. **The story is an expression of the Prophet’s yearning to bring the Arabs**

into the heart of the Abrahamic family. Sufis especially appreciate this story and have developed an appreciation of other faiths. Sufi philosopher Muid ad-Din ibn al-Arabi [1165-1240] warned against religious exclusivity. God is not limited by any one creed.

### The Tenth Step – Knowledge

- Abandoning a tribal outlook in order to get to know one another is not easy. Time, honesty of ‘experts’ are issues.
- Begin with ourselves.
  - After 9/11, Karen was astonished by the violence and intolerance attributed to Islam, showing ignorance of Islamic history, but also of the crusades, inquisitions, wars of religion that scarred Christian history. Alongside programs called ‘Understanding Islam’ there ought to be parallel programs called ‘Understanding Christianity’.
  - Strive for a more balanced, ‘whole picture’ view.
  - Choose one nation, culture, religion that you will intentionally study. Read, view films, listen to music, learn some of the language, celebrate its holidays, attend a worship service. Search for Common Ground [www.sfcg.org](http://www.sfcg.org) may help.
  - Not easy, but even if you realize how much you still do not know, that is valuable. Stereotypes may fall away. We realize that everything is more complex.
  - Include the people you are studying in your Immeasurables meditation.
- When you have really progressed in your chosen study, advance to a second step. Check the reading suggestions for this chapter and delve into a study of current tensions between the West and Islamic World. Select a book that will reflect your current view and another that will challenge it. Apply compassion and charity to the reading. List ways in which both authors have altered your thinking.
- Do not leave the step until you are beginning to change your mind. You are engaging in Socratic dialog with yourself.
- She concludes with a Buddhist poem that you may wish to include in your daily routine.

### The Eleventh Step – Recognition

- Story of Christina Noble, who had been poor, abused child in Dublin, was moved to become a crusader for children in Viet Nam. Moment of recognition – she saw herself in a child’s face and realized there is no ‘us’ and ‘them’.
- We are bombarded by images of pain. See it as a spiritual opportunity. Allow the images to take up residence in your consciousness – “make place for the other” in your life. It is a powerful way to develop “concern for everybody”.
- Christina found that the way to transcend the overwhelming memories of her own childhood was to alleviate the pain of others.
- Look around at your world and find your mission – a need that only you can fill. Do not imagine that doing so will doom you to a grim life devoid of fun. Alleviating the pain of others may make you much happier. Reaching out to embrace the pain of another is *ekstasis* = a temporary leaving behind of the egotistical self.
- Three Biblical myths [myth = program for action, you only recognize its truth when you put it into practice in your own life].
  - Yahweh appears to Abraham as three strangers. Abraham offers them food, water and rest. In those days, and even today, strangers were dangerous. But Abraham shows no reluctance and in compassion leads to a divine encounter. Without a dramatic moment of revelation, one of the strangers predicts Sarah’s childbirth at a very advanced age. If we overcome our reluctance to do compassion, we will have intimations of the transcendent ‘Otherness’ that some call God.
  - Three days after the Crucifixion, disciples are walking on the road to Emmaus. A fellow traveler asks why they are troubled. The disciples took a risk of being ridiculed and shared the story of the execution of the one they believed to be the Messiah. The disciples listen as the stranger comforts them by saying that the Messiah was destined to suffer, which Karen calls “inventive rabbinic midrash”. Instead of rebuking the stranger’s interpretation, the disciples show hospitality and invite the stranger to pass the night with them. It is at dinner when the stranger breaks bread that they realize they have been in the presence of the Messiah. If, instead of avoiding the insights of a stranger, we allow him/her to change our perceptions and increase our understanding of our own traditions, we may also have moments of numinous insight.
  - Jacob is returning home twenty years after grievously wronging his brother Esau and is afraid of the reception he will receive. So he sends his family and servants ahead with gifts. Jacob, left alone, wrestles all night with a man and prevails. The man asks to be let go at dawn. Jacob says he will not release him until he gives a blessing. The man then renames him Yisrael = ‘God Fighter’, for you have fought with God and men and prevailed. Yisrael names the spot Peniel = ‘Face of God’. The wrestling sequence is like a dream and mirrors the struggles of the twins in the womb. In mythology twins are often represented as two halves of the whole. As he wrestles with the stranger, Jacob is fighting with his brother, his God and himself. The text makes it difficult to distinguish between Jacob and the stranger [Jacob is wrestling internally]. Enmity shapes our consciousness/identity – the enemy becomes our twin, a shadow self whom we come to resemble.

Nations also may feel a deep antagonism towards people they have wronged. If we want to achieve reconciliation, not only do we have to struggle with the enemy, but we also have to wrestle with ourselves. In the struggle, we may find ourselves blessed and embraced by something greater. Esau shows great magnanimity when the brothers meet. They weep as in Greek tragedies, bonded in their shared past sorrow. Jacob connects the reconciliation with the epiphany of Peniel, saying, “For I have, after all, seen your face, as one sees the face of God, and you have been gracious to me.” Jacob, though wounded in the encounter, has been blessed by his assailant and is walking towards his erstwhile enemy in the light of a new day.

### The Twelfth Step - Love Your Enemies

- Many of the prophets, mystics, sages lived in the time when the reptilian brain had been made more powerful by the new brain ability to reason, calculate, and invent technology that enhanced its powers – a time of war and violence.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Century BCE, Laozi, the Daodejing now read as a devotional text, was really a manual of statecraft for the leader of a small principality in danger of destruction by the warring state Qin. Laozi cautioned against war. He said tyrants caused their own downfall. A wise leader must use war as only a last resort and without arrogance, must not impose his own wishes, but take as his own mind the mind of the people. Qin emerged victorious, but Laozi was proved right when a popular rebellion brought Qin's cruel dynasty to a premature end.
- Jesus urged us to love our enemies and to offer the wicked man no resistance.
- Gandhi said that he hated no one. He hated the oppressive British system, but could not hate the British. ... "Love that is based on the goodness of those whom you love is a mercenary affair".
- The Dalai Lama, though he saw his monasteries destroyed and monks slain and was exiled refuses to condemn the Chinese.
- MLK, Jr. insisted "Only goodness can drive out evil and only love can overcome hate."
- Compassion involves risk and makes you vulnerable. Jesus was executed. King and Gandhi were assassinated. But their legacy lives on. "A life that consistently refuses to succumb to hatred has an enduring power of its own".
- What does 'love' entail? By now we know that compassion is not some sentimental tenderness. When Jesus tells us to love our enemies, he is referring to the commandment in Leviticus, a legal text, "You must love your neighbor as yourself. In the Middle East love was a legal term used in international treaties. When two kings pledged to 'love' each other, they were pledging help and loyalty, even if it went against short-term interest.
- In our global village, we must make allies of our enemies. This kind of love and concern for everybody will serve our best interest better than short-sighted, self-serving policies.
- In this step, add a final stage to your meditation on the Immeasurables. After directing friendship, compassion, unselfish joy, and *upeksha* to yourself, to someone neutral to you, to someone you dislike; direct them to an enemy with a capital E.
- Remember that our hatred may become our alter ego. Reflect on distinguishing individuals from leaders who preach hatred. Remember that individuals may not reflect these same values. Every adherent of a religious tradition has his own personal history of distress and may be suffering as much as you. Try to wish for your enemy's well-being and happiness – this is the supreme test of compassion. Thich Nhat Hanh performed the meditation on the Immeasurables for his soldiers, but also for the American troops as well. Once you realize that your enemy is also suffering, you realize that he too deserves compassion. For Thich Nhat Hanh he discovered that his only course of action was to work to end the war.
- Investigate your enemy in the same way that you studied your 'adopted' foreign nation or religion in step 10. Retaliation and humiliation are likely to exacerbate hatred and violence. How would it have been different if there had been a non-violent response to 9/11?
- Dialog is talked about as a way to improve international relations. Are we prepared to 'make place for the other'?
- Greek tragedies recognized the need to see the sorrow of the enemy.

### **A Last Word**

- We have moments when we rise above our self-absorption, but we too easily fall back into our old ways. This is not to end in despair, but a reminder that becoming a compassionate being is a lifelong project. You will fail, but must pick yourself up and keep trying. Never mind loving your enemies, sometimes loving your nearest and dearest selflessly and patiently is a struggle!
- Even in our torn and conflicted world, some people have achieved heroic levels of empathy and compassion. Any one of us can become a sage, an avatar of compassion. The mythos of compassion tells us what to do. Constant practice does make perfect. If we persevere, we too can become a force for good in the world.
- King Pasenadi, the Buddha's friend became deeply depressed when his wife died. He wandered aimlessly. One day he travelled through a park filled with large trees. These ancient trees, with their deep roots, inspired trust and confidence. They were quiet and reflected peace and refuge. The King was reminded of the Buddha, whose inner quiet raised him above the petty disturbances of egotism and made of him a shelter.
- A person who is impartial, fair, calm, gentle, serene, accepting and openhearted is a refuge. A truly compassionate person strikes a chord in us that resonates with our deepest yearnings. People flock to such a person. That is the ideal to which we aspire. Even if we achieve only a portion of this enlightenment, we will have lived a worthwhile life. We know what we have to do. The book has ended, but our work is just beginning.