

The Glass is Already Broken

..... Buddhist Parable (adapted and modified by Amy Fox)

A well-known Zen meditation master was once asked, "In this world where everything changes, where nothing remains the same, where loss and grief are inherent in our very existence, how can there be any happiness? How can we find security when we see that we can't count on anything being the way we want it to be?"

The teacher looked compassionately at his student and held up a drinking glass that had been given to him earlier in the morning and said, "You see this goblet? For me, this glass is already broken. I enjoy it. I drink out of it. It holds my water admirably, sometimes even reflecting the sun in beautiful patterns. If I should tap it, it has a lovely ring to it. But when I put this glass on a shelf and the wind knocks it over, or my elbow brushes it off the table and it falls to the ground and shatters, I say, 'Of course.' When I understand that this glass is already broken, every moment with it is precious. Every moment is just as it is, and nothing need be otherwise."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & PROMPTS

OPENING CLASS

Take a moment to land here, to really be where you are, as you are.

See if you can slip into this moment as it is, as you are.

No matter what you've arrived with today, no matter how you feel or where you've landed, what if in this moment you were exactly where you were meant to be?

DURING CLASS

After Telling the Story

If we can understand that the glass is already broken, we'll see that life is always in a constant state of change. Everything has a beginning and an end. Life, relationships and things all wear out, crumble and break.

When we recognize that, we can accept the moment as it is. It's not right or wrong. It's not good or bad. Where we are is simply a moment in time and where we are, is where we are meant to be.

Notice your body, your mind, your spirit in this moment. What are you pushing away? Where can you lean in and soften?

CLOSING CLASS

The path out of suffering requires our willing acceptance of it and when we accept that in every moment, we are exactly where we are meant to be, life unfolds effortlessly.

EXTRAS

The notion that we are always exactly where we are meant to be, is often a difficult concept for most of us to accept. We don't want to believe that our suffering or the painful moments in our life were "meant" to happen.

This teaching isn't justifying or trying to silver-line the adversity we've experienced. What it's meant to teach us is that no experience, no matter how difficult or painful or opposed to our view of how things are supposed to be, is unworthy of our attention and our willingness to relate to it. It's a tool for insight that enables us to say to life, "OK I am ready to grow from this. I'm not going to shut down here, but strive to relate fully and deeply to the present reality of my life."