

The Three Questions

..... source unknown (adapted and modified by Amy Fox)

There was once a king who decided that if he knew who the most important people to be with were, what the most important thing to do was and when the best time to do each thing was, that he would certainly be the finest king ever to rule the land.

The king had asked his advisers, but none had been able to give him a good answer to these questions and so he decided to seek out the advice of a wise hermit.

The king dressed in the clothes of a commoner and set out for the forest. When he neared the hermit's hut, he ordered his knights to stay back at a distance, and he rode the last section of trail alone.

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The king had three questions he wanted answered and he sought out the advice of a wise old hermit.

The king found the hermit digging in his garden. The old man greeted the king, but continued digging. The king told the hermit that he had come to find answers to his three questions: he wanted to know who the most important people to be with were, what the most important thing to do was and when was the most important time to do these things.

The hermit listened, but gave no answer and continued working. The king saw that the hermit was frail and elderly and that the work was very difficult for him. The king offered to take over the digging, and the hermit allowed it.

The king dug for one hour. Then he repeated his questions, but the hermit did not answer. He worked again for another hour, and then repeated his questions with the same result. This continued for a few more hours until the sun began to sink low in the sky. Finally the king became mad, "I came to you for answers wise man. If you have none, tell me and I will return home."

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As the king was about to leave, a man came running up the path holding his stomach, blood flowing through his hands. He dropped to the ground at the king's feet.

The king and the hermit knelt down and began tending to the man. The king washed and bandaged the man's wounds and took care of the man until he regained consciousness the next morning.

When the wounded man awoke he apologized to the king and asked for forgiveness.

The king said, "You have nothing to forgive me for."

"Oh, but I do," the man said, "You were my enemy, and I had sworn to take revenge on you for killing my brother and taking my land. I knew that you were coming here today and I decided to kill you on the trail. But when you did not return for many hours I left my hideout to find you. Your guards recognized me and wounded me. I escaped them but I would have bled to death if you had not cared for me. I meant to kill you, but now you have saved my life. If I live I shall gladly serve you for the rest of my days."

The king was deeply touched and happy to have been reconciled with an old enemy that he immediately forgave him and promised to return his land. He called for his knights to carry the man back to his castle to be cared for by his own doctor.

After the wounded man had gone, the king asked the hermit once more if he would not give him the answer to his three questions.

"Your questions have already been answered," the hermit replied.

"But how?" the king answered, perplexed.

"How?" repeated the hermit, "If you had not taken pity on my weakness yesterday and helped me instead of returning home, that man would have ambushed and killed you on the trail. **Therefore, the most important time was when you were digging my garden beds; I was the most important person; and the most important thing to do was to do good for me.**

Later, when the man came running to us, the most important thing to do was to care for him. If you had not bound up his wounds he would have died without making peace with

you. Therefore the most important person was that man, and what you did was the most important thing, and the right time was the time when you were doing it.

You see, the most important time is always the present moment. It is the only time that is important because it is the only time that we have control over. The past we can only look back on and wish that we had done differently. The future we can only imagine. **The most important person is always the one you are with in the present moment, and the only important deed is the deed that does what is best for others."**

At last the king understood and he returned to his kingdom to rule wisely.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & PROMPTS

OPENING CLASS

The three most powerful words we can say to ourselves is: "I don't know."

They're also the most terrifying. Those three simple words quickly conjure up helplessness, shame and worry but if leaned into, the words "I don't know", are a call to action— they are the beginning of a vital exercise in curiosity.

Begin to deepen your breath here...strong, full inhales...deep, resonant exhales...

Keep the breath strong and start to move into your physical body...a sway of your hips....a hug of your knees. See where this movement takes you...do you find hands and knees? Do you stay on your back to move and breathe?

You don't have to know where you'll go next. Simply breath and let the breath move you....

DURING CLASS

Before Telling the Story

Uncertainty brings opportunity because certainty is already defined.

Uncertainty brings options because certainty itself is already confirmation.

You see— certainty is limited in its potential because it is so clearly defined; but *anything* can come out of uncertainty because it is a boundless place of wonder.

After Telling the Story

Our mind has a tendency to want to fill in the blanks; it's more comfortable to have a highly toxic answer than to just be in the uncertainty and not know.

But, by embracing the unknown, we create freedom — we open up consciousness and are able to discover new things about ourselves — to be present with what *is*, rather than our idea of reality.

CLOSING CLASS

We don't have to have all the answers. We just need to get to our next step, trust where we are and know that we'll be guided from there.

This week, may you remember that you are guided, you are guarded, you are protected and you are directed.

EXTRAS

Uncertainty signals that there is potential for change, in ourselves and in our environment. Neuroscience shows that our brains are hardwired to notice change, which we first experience as uncertainty. Anything new or unexpected captures our attention. This can either leave us in fight or flight OR it can propel us forward to unseen opportunities.