



## **The Glass is Already Broken, by Stephen and Ondrea Levine**

Once someone asked a well-known Thai meditation master, "In this world where everything changes, where nothing remains the same, where loss and grief are inherent in our very coming into 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, looking compassionately at this fellow, 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."

When we recognize that, just like the glass, our body is already broken, that indeed we are already dead, then life becomes precious, and we open to it just as it is, in the moment it is occurring. When we understand that all our loved ones are already dead — our children, our mates, our friends — how precious they become. How little fear can interpose; how little doubt can estrange us. When you live your life as though you're already dead, life takes on new meaning. Each moment becomes a whole lifetime, a universe unto itself.

When we realize we are already dead, our priorities change, our heart opens, and our mind begins to clear of the fog of old holdings and pretendings. We watch all life in transit, and what matters becomes instantly apparent: the transmission of love; the letting go of obstacles to understanding; the relinquishment of our grasping, of our hiding from ourselves. Seeing the mercilessness of our self-strangulation, we begin to come gently into the light we share with all beings. If we take each teaching, each loss, each gain, each fear, each joy as it arises and experience it fully, life becomes workable. We are no longer a "victim of life." And then every experience, even the loss of our dearest one, becomes another opportunity for awakening.

If our only spiritual practice were to live as though we were already dead, relating to all we meet, to all we do, as though it were our final moments in the world, what time would there be for old games or falsehoods or posturing? If we lived our life as though we were already dead, as though our children were already dead, how much time would there be for self-protection and the re-creation of ancient

mirages? Only love would be appropriate, only the truth.

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*Published at [www.awakin.org](http://www.awakin.org) on Oct 31, 2016*