



Share Pain Not Suffering, by Shinzen Young

Just as insight has many facets, so also with service. I would like to talk about just one aspect -- compassion. Compassion is practiced in two ways: subtly and overtly. You can subtly serve any person with whom you interact by allowing their poison and pain to resonate deeply within you, and experiencing it completely so that it does not turn into suffering within you. This is the healthy alternative to both callous indifference and enervating enmeshment. This subtle service is a natural extension of the self-liberation process. You purified your own pain by willingly experiencing it with mindfulness and equanimity. Now, in daily interaction, you open yourself up to other people's pain. But you apply mindfulness and equanimity to it as it resonates within you. By experiencing another person's pain in this liberated way, you are subtly, subliminally helping them to do the same. People want to have you around, but they cannot say exactly why. The reason is that your body is constantly preaching a wordless sermon to everybody you interact with, even casually. It's deeply fulfilling to share (com) the pain (passion), but not share the suffering. Subtle is significant, but we must also serve in a more overt, tangible way. The form that this overt service takes depends on our personal interests and abilities and on the norms of the culture in which we live. For some, it's expressed in how they raise their families. For others, it will take the form of social action or helping professions. Some may express it through the use of special powers, such as the ability to heal. For many, overt service takes the form of teaching and supporting people's spiritual practice. -- Shinzen Young