



Rebel For A Good Cause, by Sharon Salzberg

A friend of mine, at the end of a retreat, offered a provocative reflection that intrigued and inspired me. After looking intensively at her inner experience for nine days of meditation and seeing many of her life choices in a brand new light, she commented, "If you really want to be a rebel, practice kindness." [...] I think she was absolutely right about kindness and rebellion. The world may tell us to grab as much as we want, and we might think that the audacity of rebelliousness is to grab even more with impunity, but how about being really radical and questioning how much we need? Conventional wisdom may be that retribution displays strength and can summarily bring an end to conflicts, but how about taking a leap and challenging ourselves to a whole new meaning of resolution based on mutuality and caring? The easy way may be to turn away and distract ourselves from the distress and suffering of others, but how about being daring enough to pay attention? Our conditioning may tell us we don't need anybody, but how about taking a real look at life and noticing that we are all entwined in a fabric of interdependence, then being willing to risk acting accordingly? Although in current times there are some common connotations of morality as expressing fear of life or prudishness, in fact a commitment to ethics is a commitment to living life in the most free, most loving, most expansive sense. As the philosopher George Santayana said, "Morality is the desire to lessen suffering in the world." Living in a way that doesn't perpetuate hurting ourselves or hurting another is considered to be an expression both of great power and great compassion.[...] There is no way to lash out at someone physically or verbally, to belittle their achievements, to exploit them in some way, to consider them unworthy of hearing the truth, and emerge undamaged ourselves. We are capable of so much more, and we dishonor that potential when we don't live with integrity.

--Sharon Salzberg