



Clear and Present Compassion, by Thich Nhat Hanh

Understanding and compassion are very powerful sources of energy. They are the opposite of stupidity and passivity. If you think that compassion is passive, weak, or cowardly, then you don't know what real understanding or compassion is. If you think you that compassionate people do not resist and challenge injustice, you are wrong. They are warriors, heroes, and heroines who have gained many victories. When you act with compassion, with nonviolence, when you act on the basis of nonduality, you have to be very strong. You no longer act out of anger. You do not punish or blame. Compassion grows constantly inside of you and you can succeed in your fight against injustice. Mahatma Gandhi was just one person. He did not have any bombs, any guns, or any political party. He acted on the insight of nonduality, the strength of compassion, not on the basis of anger. Other human beings are not our enemies. Our enemy is not the other person. Our enemy is the violence, ignorance, and injustice in us and in the other person. When we are armed with compassion and understanding, we fight not against other people, but against the tendency to invade, to dominate, and to exploit. We don't want to kill others, but we will not let them dominate and exploit us or other people. [â€¦] Being compassionate means being intelligent. [...] Suppose you are leading a group of people doing walking meditation, moving slowly [â€¦]. But suddenly, it begins to rain. Would you continue to walk slowly, letting yourself and everyone else get soaked? That's not intelligent. If you are a good leader of the walking meditation, you will break into a jogging meditation. You still maintain the joy of the walking meditation. You can laugh and smile and thus you prove that the practice is not stupid. You can also be mindful while running and avoid getting soaked. We have to practice in an intelligent way. --Thich Nhat Hanh