



Russell Delman and the Embodied Life School **Morning Meditation Practice :** **Cultivating 6 Essential Virtues in these Challenging Times**

January 1, 2018

6:00 am – 12:00 noon

Location: 2836 Bloomfield Rd, Sebastopol

In the previous newsletter , I introduced a new Embodied Life School practice for 2018 in which we will focus on 6 virtues or qualities that are essential for developing our humanity. My commitment and invitation is to practice for 6 uninterrupted hours of sitting and walking meditation, from 6:00 am to 12:00pm. As always, you are encouraged to set your own limits. Each hour will begin with a short reading on a particular virtue. The hope is to inspire our inner development through many people focusing on these qualities together. *{As in the past, each hour is 50 minutes of sitting meditation and 10 minutes of walking meditation. A soft bell rings after 25 minutes for people to stretch and/or stand, if desired. You are welcome to join for as little or as much as you choose, coming and going at any time is fine}*

Large View

I have a simple view of our journey in this lifetime – we are here to learn how to Love. By Love, I am meaning a warm-hearted caring for all life, beyond our self and group identity. In our genetic, cultural and evolutionary history, we carry tendencies toward unbridled self-interest – narcissism. This orientation can include family, tribe, gender, religious orientation, in addition to self, thus creating an “us and them” worldview. These narrow self-identities become the root of violence in the world.

Throughout history, various philosophical, religious and spiritual traditions have attempted to offer a framework of qualities or virtues that are intended to cultivate the “good” in human beings. These have diverse names and emphasis. Each states their intention differently. For me the question is, what are the combination of qualities, attitudes, guiding principles, in a word, virtues, that can encourage the unfolding of authentic Love as a natural expression? These all need to be practical, meaning practice-able, not simply abstract ideals. Virtues are not feelings or emotions, they are actions and attitudes that we can practice, embody and enact. We are exploring the energetic, “felt-sense” of each quality.

My choice of 6 virtues is somewhat random; we could just as easily choose another number. The 8 fold path of Buddhism, the 10 commandments in Christianity, the virtues attributed to the 12 Zodiacal signs, along with others, offer something similar. I choose 6 to align with the number of periods of meditation. When taken together, these collectively form an integrated picture for human development. As always, you are encouraged to uncover your own ways of approaching essential virtues, if they differ from mine. I suspect that our choices will significantly overlap. (over)

6 Essential Virtues/Qualities for Developing Our Humanity

One of the many lessons I learned from Gene Gendlin was the importance of using non-ordinary language when wanting to invite new meanings and encourage an alert presence in a reader/listener. He would encourage the pairing of unusual modifiers – adjectives and adverbs – to promote freshness. Some of my phrasing below expresses this impulse.

6:00 – 7:00 – **Ever-Present Gratitude** begins our day. Through practice, we can begin to perceive the gifts that are alive in any moment. When these perceptual patterns are cultivated, gratitude becomes available at almost any moment. This is heart opening.

“Gratitude is not only the greatest of all virtues, it is the mother of all others”. (Cicero)

7:00 – 8:00 – **Reflective Forgiveness** asks us to deeply observe the consequences of our actions and to notice the effects of holding on to resentment toward others. Forgiveness for ourselves and for others is a fundamentally liberating, life-giving force.

“Forgiveness is not only the hardest of all virtues, it is the father of all others” (Russell)

8:00 – 9:00 - **Potent Kindness** is an attitude that is essential for growing a caring relationship to all of life. It is the essence of “do unto others as you would have them do unto you” (Luke 6:31).

Kindness is often perceived as a gentle, soft quality, when in actuality it often requires great commitment and courage, hence we need **potent** forgiveness!

“My religion is very simple, Kindness is my religion” (Dalai Lama)

9:00 – 10:00 – **Courageous Perseverance** is needed to mobilize the energy for the task of awakening our humanity, which is incredibly hard work. Facing our inevitable challenges, often many, many times, is inherently demanding. We will all be pushed to an edge that requires deep, lion-like courage – the heart of a lion!

“Courage and Perseverance have a magical talisman, before which difficulties disappear and obstacles vanish into air” (John Quincy Adams)

10:00 – 11:00 - **Dignified Humility** is the vehicle that carries us through the waters of our habitual self-obsession. To humble ones self, without losing authentic dignity, requires great courage and usually forgiveness. It is essential to differentiate humbling from humiliating one’s self, as these are often confused. It takes great strength of character, to lower ones self – to bow - in a healthy manner.

“To Forget the Self is to be enlightened by all things” (Zen master Dogen)

11:00 – 12:00 – **Magnanimous Equanimity** – Perhaps I am cheating a bit here by combining two powerful qualities – magnanimity and equanimity. For me, they are intimately connected.

Magnanimity is an expression of noble altruism and generosity of spirit. It brings to the fore our willingness to share our gifts with others. The practice of radiating our blessings into the world can easily devolve into an ego-centered flamboyance if not grounded in equanimity.

“A mind filled with equanimity is abundant, exalted, immeasurable, without hostility or ill-will and truly free”. (Gautama Buddha)

Please plan to join us on January 1 for as long as you choose. Practice at home or come to 2836 Bloomfield Rd. For any questions contact office@russelldelman.com or call 707.827.3536

(for directions go to www.russelldelman.com)

