

compassionate activism

Sandra: Hi, everybody. This is the practice session for Compassionate Activism for July 7th. Today, I wanted to spend some time talking about the recent shootings that have been happening with Alton Sterling and Philando Castille, because I know that for a lot of folks in our community, it's been bringing up a lot of feelings. Just we've had almost 600 Black people killed by the police in just this year alone. Just this year alone, it's only July. It's only the beginning of July. We're like getting to the halfway mark. I want to hold some space to process that and offer some concrete ways that we can use compassionate activism to be able to sit with these feelings, process these feelings, and engage in conversations with other people around it, because this is really where the rubber hits the road.

Compassionate activism really is useful and it's really a life skill that you can use at any moment from anything that's just mildly emotional charge for you to really hugely charged for you. Now you think the bigger the struggle is, the bigger the emotional charge is, the harder it is to remember how to be able to be with it because it's so much. There's so much happening. It's not only that, but what we're seeing in the news including videos of people being killed, and we know that pretty much that's happening with impunity, with no consequences. Then we also have, on top of that, our own busy lives, trying to just ... the daily struggle of getting things done, basic needs being met, and trying to juggle all of that. How do we keep on moving while also holding space for the feelings that are coming out for us?

I asked folks to share a little bit in the group chat while waiting to get started, just how folks are doing. Josette, if you want to share just a little bit ... You don't have to read every single sentence, but just share a little bit.

Josette: People have stated that they feel disconnected and even a little bit guilty because of the disconnection. A lot is going on with people's insurance, basic needs, feeling numb, being mad and then tired of being mad regarding the trades that are happening in the communities. Some folks didn't know what had happened in terms of the shootings. Someone mentioned that they are feeling emotionally heavy and grieving. Death, loss and heartbreak, at their personal job as well in their town, a Black male was found hanging from a tree. Lots of betrayal and breakup from a long-term relationship. Family reunions coming up. Lots of contentious conversations most likely will occur and health issues have been coming up for folks and it's something of a larger magnitude at this moment.

Sandra: Yeah. There's a lot happening for folks. Like I said, just the daily struggle of living and moving forward in our lives and managing all that, and then on top of that, obviously, the reality of how frequent police shootings and murders of Black folks happens in this country. It's not just that, those incidents that happen, it's also the larger apparatus at hand of how does the media react that reflects at how does our criminal justice system or prosecutors that respond to it that reflects white supremacy. How does that show up in the denial and minimization that our friends and family do around what's happening saying it's not about race, that they somehow deserved it? Or people who do recognize it for what it is, but also feel really helpless and hopeless about doing anything.

It feels like it'll never change. It won't get better or folks who feel a lot of guilt, particularly white guilt and don't know what they can be doing, who they can talk to. Then for folks, particularly for Black folks and people of colors who are seeing this happen over and over again. It's vicarious trauma and also the knowledge that you're not that far away of it happening to you as well. You just go about your business, walking down the street and that could be it. That level of fear that can exist for a lot of folks.

There's so many different layers to this. How does compassionate activism come into play? Well, compassionate activism is most critical, I would say, at moments like this. This is when we are really in touch with the pain of our lives. We're really in touch with it. A lot of times, we want to just process, work through it and jump into action and move forward and get it done, get whatever needs to get done, done. The thing is when these repeated atrocities happen and we see the whole world react the way it does. Which only furthers that atrocity in many ways, it's not and it doesn't get resolved very quickly. Sometimes we can sit with feelings, and I do this in coaching. Sometimes I have a client sit with feelings for just like 90 seconds and they move on to the next one. Sometimes it can be that quick.

This is different. This is a bit different for a lot of folks, because we know not just this single incident that's so horrible but also the history behind it. Creating that space, creating that space is what we're talking about in compassionate activism, to be with that, to just be with it. To be with it in a certain way. A lot of folks, when they are feeling a lot of pain, they don't usually know how to sit with it in a way that's actually embracing it, that's embracing it. I want to just break down what's the different ways that we can sit with our feelings.

A lot of folks, when they have very strong emotions, they resist them. You remember when I talked about in the trainings about the toxic swirl of make-believe. It's when we try to resist what is actually happening in reality. What happened? We say ... This is a distinction from a preference, the desire for

something to not have happened, obviously, versus denying what happened happen. If we're like, "I can't believe this happened. It shouldn't happen. I should have known better." That's all very natural, of course. Of course, we want the police to never have done this. They should have known better. When we get fixated on that aspect it actually makes it difficult for us to deal with what's going on.

If we can, instead, make ... Instead we can say, "Of course, I wanted this never to have happened and it did happen." It did happen. There's a little bit more space to work with it. I think in situations like this, some people vacillate between being in these two different spaces or actually, a lot of folks, I think, have really come to grips with the fact that it is happening, it does happen. This is why we get very heavy with the feelings because we're actually more in touch with them than we are with most of our feelings because this is actually so big. That's actually not a bad thing. That's actually, I would say a move in the better direction than if we're in a toxic swirl of make believe or we're just resisting what's going on and we don't acknowledge that it did happen.

The other thing that we also often do is we focus on other people. We focus on other people in a way that's actually not useful for us. Compassionate activism I talked to you about is first and foremost about compassion toward ourselves. When we actually get really fixated on the other person, so say it's the police officers or say it's how the media is reacting, or say maybe other people and their responses. When we get fix- ... Obviously, we want them to be responding differently in a way that's recognizing what happened for what it was. When we get fixated on it and try to go to that first and foremost before we dealt with our pain, that means we have a really open gaping wound in our body and we're not attending to it. We're attending to everybody else first.

You can do that, it's just going to make this wound that you're carrying a lot harder. It's going to get bigger and bigger and bigger. I would really recommend for folks who are in this place, maybe not everybody is, but who are in a place of what I call the toxic swirl where you're really much more fixated on resisting that what happened, happened, and you are focused on other people first and foremost, that to shift to be with yourself, shift to be with it. I just sit, so sit in it and give yourself a space to just do that. I want to have people go through an exercise right now, so like sit with it a little bit. I want to take some questions for folks if they have any about what I just shared, to help clarify that. if you have a telephone, the unmute button is ... Josette, what is it?

Josette: It's star 6 on the phone. That's mute and unmute.

Sandra: If you have any questions, you can put it, type it in the chat box or you can unmute yourself if you're on the phone.

Josette: Any questions about what you were just speaking or about the exercise we're going to do?

Sandra: About just what I shared about the toxic swirl. Nope? Okay, yeah. All right. I'm going to start us doing an exercise. I would like folks to just get comfortable in their seat and close their eyes. I want you to take a couple of deep breaths. Just breathe in, breathe out. Breathe in, breathe out. Keep your eyes closed. Breathe in, breathe out. Breathe in, breathe out. I want you to bring your attention, just gently bring your attention to your feet and notice how they're feeling. Then move it up to your calves, and just notice how they're feeling. We're not trying to change anything. We're just noticing.

Then bring your attention just gently up into your thighs, and just notice. Does it feel tense? Does it feel relaxed? You can move up into your torso, just breathe in. Feel the breath filling up your torso, your lungs, and breathe out and feel the breath leaving your body. Just notice if there's any tightness, if there's any place that's relaxed, if there's any pain, any stillness, and move your attention to your shoulders. Breathe in. Feel your chest expand. Breathe out. Feel the breath leave your body. Just notice in your shoulders what it feels like. Is it tense? Is it relaxed? Then to your arms, your biceps, your forearms, just noticing, not trying to change it. Shift your focus to your neck. Sit tight. You just want to move. Move to your head. Is it scrunched up a little bit? Is it relaxed? Is it loose? Anything is okay.

Just take another deep breath in and out, in and out. Now, thinking about the recent police shootings and feelings that you have had related to the situation and the history of police shootings in this country, whether it's concern about upcoming conversations with family or fear for yourself or struggling with your own daily issues on top of unknowing what's going on in this country, just feel the reaction that you're having. Notice where it's in your body and put your hand wherever you notice the feeling was strongest. Maybe it's in your chest, in your throat, in your head. Just breathe in to that feeling. Breathe out. Breathe in. Breathe out.

I want you to cradle it, cradle it with your intention in your hands. Tell it, "I see you." Breathe in. I see you. Breathe out. I see you. Breathe in. I see you. Breathe out. I see you. Just notice what it's like right now, what's coming up for you. Whatever is arising is fine. There's no right or wrong thought. I want you to continue with your hand on where you feel it's strongest and breathe in, I see you; breathe out, I care. Breathe in, I see you. Breathe out, you matter. Breathe

in, I see you. Breathe out, you matter. Breathe in, I see you. Breathe out, you matter.

Continue to breathe in, breathe out. Just notice what's coming up for you. Maybe it's shifting. Maybe it's growing. Maybe it's lessening, whatever this is. I want you keeping your hand there, ask it, "Is there something I can do for you?" Maybe there's something was coming up, maybe not. Either one is okay. If nothing came up for you, just say, "When you're ready to tell me, I like to know." I want you to thank it now. Thank it for its time; that you'll be back later.

I want you to take a breath in. Breathe out. Breathe in. Breathe out. Breathe in. Breathe out. Wiggle your fingers and toes, and stretch and open your eyes. Move a little bit. Come back to here. Just take a moment to notice what's coming out for you now. Maybe something shifted for you, maybe nothing did. Either one's fine. I like folks, if they like to just share a little bit in the chat box what that was like for you if anything happened for you. It's okay. You can say nothing did. Either one is fine.

As people are typing, I just want to comment a little bit about what we're doing. This is what I mean by just sitting with it. It's actually not much more than breathing into it and caring about it. You can think about it almost as if you had a small child that was crying and you're just holding the small child, comforting them. You don't necessarily need to do anything more than that right then and there, just be with it. Give yourself a space to just sit with it. You notice how it was really an experiential thing, of being inside of our bodies. It wasn't really a mind racing, going, running around, focusing on "Oh, what are we going to do," blah, blah, blah. It wasn't that. It was like a really just being and things slow down for folks.

Josette: If folks on the phone want to jump into, and if you don't have chat, you're welcome to star 6 to unmute as well.

Sandra: Some of the things that people are sharing that happened for them, that came up for them in the exercise was it helped me to relax such heavy tension in my stomach area. Nothing came up for me; I did ask to let me know if it needed anything. Like I said, there's nothing right or wrong about if you weren't told. There's something for you to do. Sometimes we have a short period of time, maybe you can continue to do that exercise by yourself. When I asked what I wanted, the words "to live" came back immediately. Sometimes it could take a while for it to hear what is needed and sometimes it's immediate like that, and sometimes it's real basic, just to live. That probably means something to this person. Probably makes sense in their context. It helped me to recognize and accept the tension, to give it some loving attention.

Somebody also added that it echoed to live and it added to learn. Another person shared, "It felt like it had never been asked to me." What do we need? Especially as adults, we're not often asked what we need. Even as children, we weren't necessarily asked that. We're more told what we needed to do or what we needed to receive. We weren't necessarily asked for what we actually wanted to receive. That's going to be a very, very powerful thing to do with ourselves. "I was aware of a clutching sensation in my gut and chest since I sat. There is some tears leaking out of my eyes. When I asked, the immediate response was keep your heart open." That's beautiful. "Noticed my tendency to move away from the feeling as distractions came up, that's why it's helpful to follow your cues, Sandra, and stay with your voice." This is why it's easier when I guide you through the exercise.

I'm actually going to create a recording for you all to follow to help you do this when I'm not around because it's a lot easier. I hold the focus, I hold the space for you to do this; but you're just trying to do it on your own, which, again, it's very easy to get pulled left and right by "Let's check Facebook" or "Let me check my email. I have to make dinner," so. Somebody else shared that I asked for more time, affirming my need to give myself the permission to feel as long as I need to. This is what this work is about. It's about our feelings have a right to exist. They have a right to take up space.

It's like a passion is what it says that it doesn't have the right to exist, that our pain isn't real. Isn't that what's going on right now with so many people, particularly in positions of power? Or saying that the pain, the deaths of Black people in the hands of the police is not real, is not really that bad. Giving ourselves the space to actually have our feelings is actually a pretty radical act. Then some feelings are feeling kind of an aching in the chest of how long, how long, and how long. That's what this is for a lot of people, like how much more are we going to take, how much more is possible. This just keeps happening. Somebody else shared, "It's made me the most relaxed in weeks, so thank you."

People had a whole wide range of places, we're just sitting there with it, and I recommend, really, that you keep practicing doing this of giving yourself the space. Like I said, most people try to intellectually work things out or move very quickly into action, and that's all pretty understandable, of course, and that's not actually where you are. Anytime you feel like you have to force yourself to do anything and it's not flowing, that's because your body, your spirit is calling you to stay where you are. It's calling you just to be here with yourself and your feelings because they matter.

It was really, really, really poignant that Black Lives Matter chose that word matter, because how different would our lives be if we treated ourselves like we matter, like our feelings matter. We just have to realize how we don't treat ourselves because other people haven't. The other thing I want to share is that once you continue to sit with it, it does eventually get released and moved to something else, to shift into something else. It can take a while.

Some people were able to move into a more relaxed place, some people were able to move into a place where they knew what they wanted to do, they feel and called forth. Other people are still in that space, and that's fine, there's no right or wrong to it. What happens is that you keep sitting with it, then it will shift and you will get to the source of it. If you give it enough attention, enough acknowledgment, it will get released because it knows that you're there, you're handling it. It's like if you keep ignoring it by focusing on everything else, denying that it's there, then it becomes ... It's just like waving this huge red flag at you and trying to hit you over the head to get your attention. That's why when you start paying attention to it and you hold and you cradle, you embrace it, you're with it, that's when it feels comfortable being released because it knows that you're there, it knows that you get it. You truly, truly get it and you truly are holding it and you really want to do something about it and then it'll tell you. It'll tell you.

When you're called forth into action, that's what you can do, whatever you feel you're called forth into doing. It's not you pulling, forcing, dragging, making yourself. That's something a lot of people end up feeling. They have to do something. It's important to move into action, not just stay here swirling, of course, but those actions, one, are very different depending on the person. Really, really listen to yourself on what is important.

A lot of folks are feeling called to and participate in vigils, in protests which is really important to do. Other folks are feeling more called to talk with their friends and family. Other people feel the need to take care of themselves more, to live and to learn what somebody else heard. There's no right or wrong to whatever action you need to take. It's whatever you're feeling called for to do, but they continue that listening. What's really important as you act is be really mindful of the impact that you're having as you're acting. We don't live, obviously, in islands.

Sometimes the way we act might not be having the impact that we want. This is a kind of a side thing but one that I see happening a lot of times, particularly for folks who are on private communities that's being targeted by whatever the current events, whatever the situations that are happening. I often see folks who are learning about things for the first time, want to go to, so say, for instance, in this instance, I see a lot of white people who are very upset and don't know what

to do to and they'll go to the nearest Black person to them and ask them what they should do and ask them a lot of questions. It's very understandable. Right now you want to learn so you can better understand, so you want to do something about it and being mindful of the impact that you're having right now.

Right now, when people in your community perhaps you believe in that you know have been impacted, have been targeted, are being hurt and killed, you're grieving. You're grieving. There's a lot of pain, a lot of fears. It's not the right time for someone to come along and ask to be educated and to shift the focus on to them and their needs to learn. People aren't right or wrong for being curious and wanting to learn and wanting to do better. People also aren't wrong for not being in a place to give that to them and needing being in a place to take care of themselves and their own people. Just be really mindful of if you're being called forth to do something, what is the impact of that potential in folks. Make sure that your desires, your intentions are aligning up with your impact. Does that make sense for folks? Anybody have any questions around that? Nope? All right, I know, this is very somber, obvious topic, so fewer energies, like people are just kind of receiving and sitting, and there's no right or wrong with that either.

The other thing I also wanted to talk about is the importance of taking care of yourself. This is when the lessons that I've been really practicing. It's my growth edge. Then we'll say, "I'm good at taking care of my pain." I'm alumnus for a long time now. I've been taking care of my own pain for real pretty hardcore for the last decade after not having access to my pain and my feelings, so I really treasure, I really treasure them. It's harder for me to attend to my joy. That's not as natural for me. I don't have a well-developed habit around that and that's something that I've been focusing on much more for the past bit. That's incredibly important. That's incredibly important as we grieve. Because it's important to grieve and feel the rage and feel the anger and to sit with it; to sit with it, and that's not everything that's happening in the world.

Some people, we see some folks who are like going around their world, going on life like going du-du-du-du, oblivious, naïve, and not knowing what's happening, and we look and they were like, "How can you not be upset? How can you not be angry about what's going on?" Then sometimes we look at that and we swing to the other side and we're constantly immersed in all these injustices that are happening. We feel them so strongly because we understand the whole context, the history, the impact. That is also is not everything.

These are two extremes, and if anything we knew about binaries is that they're not real. They're not really so helpful. It's really about being able to hold both. If there's anything you learn from compassionate activism is that all these different truths are true. There is so much in this life, in this world, to be joyful about, to

make us smile and laugh, and there's so much in this world that causes pain and anger and rage and fear. They're both true. They're both true.

It's important as social justice warriors that as we do battle with patriarchy and white supremacy. We understand that we're going to take hits when we go out in the world and we do this work with ourselves and with others, because it's all toxicity. It all burns. At the same time, there is such wonder and so much to appreciate in this world. This is why the breath, the breath is really powerful. In Buddhism, we talk a lot about coming back to the breath, [inaudible 00:35:53] breath, just the marvel that is our body and get really re-grounded. A number of people expressed relaxation, release, and just opening that space up for ourselves.

I've done this exercise with folks after the Orlando shooting in another group session that we had. With them I had them do a bit of watering the seeds of joy, as I call it. I want to walk people through that a bit more because like I said, I think ... Because what happens is that when we are able to get in touch with things that make us smile and laugh, it increases the container for us, for our feelings, because feelings of joy, sadness, pain, happiness, anger, peace, it's all actually the same emotional container. When we increase the container through our experiences of joy, it also expands our capacity to experience sadness and anger and just be able to sit with it.

I'll quickly share a Buddhist story, a parable that I read somewhere once. Can't remember exactly where, unfortunately. The teacher told a student of theirs to take a spoon with salt in it and a little bit of water and to eat it. Not very pleasant, as you can imagine. Then the teacher put the same amount of salt and poured and dropped it into a lake, we're assuming a fresh water lake, and then have the student take a spoonful of that water. Very different experience. Maybe it was a little bit salty but because the container was so big, their ability to hold the salt and not be so wounded by it was that much greater.

This is why ... I mean, it's important for us to experience the vastness of the world because it's just what's true. We are here on this earth and this is what's available to us, so why not. It also helps us be able to have a larger container to process all the harm and injustice that's happening so that we can do something about it to change it, because we need this work to be sustainable. We need all of us involved in doing this because holding people accountable, holding systems accountable means that everybody needs to get involved, do what part we can, use what influence we can whether that's conversations with our friends and family, or for actually in positions of power to make some quality changes, to implement different programs, develop different services. We all have a role that we can play.

I want you to get settled again in your chair and just close your eyes and breathe. I want you to breathe in and out. Breathe in. Breathe out. Just feel the breath come in to your body. Feel it leave your body. Feel the breath expand your chest. Feel it leave your chest. Breathe in. Breathe out. Breathe in. Breathe out. I want you to remember the last time you really laughed. Maybe it was with your friends, your family, your children, something funny that just happened it made you smile. Maybe it's watching other people having fun. Maybe it's watching children play. Maybe it's going dancing. Maybe it was being hugged by a loved one. Maybe it was having sex, whatever it may have been.

I want you to remember the details of that event. What was it like to be a part of that? What were the sensations of that hug, of that laughter? How are other people reacting around you? Are they laughing, too? Are they smiling? Just notice where does it feel strongest in your body? Maybe it's in your heart, maybe your eyes. Put your hand there. I want you to breathe in to that sensation, that joy, that peace, that laughter, that calm. Just breathe in. Breathe out. Breathe in. Breathe out. Breathe in to that feeling. Breathe out. I want you to just imagine it's like a volume button that you can increase. Just turn it up a notch a couple more, move it up a little bit higher, a little louder, a little stronger. Have it spread a little bit more. Wiggle around your body a little bit. If you want to move with it, you want to smile, you want to laugh, do it. Remember what it's just like.

Feel it if your laughter is moving around your face, feel it in your eyeballs, I don't know. Maybe it's just sitting there not doing much. That's okay, too. Whatever it is, breathe in to it. Let it expand like a balloon if it wants to. Just notice what's coming up for you now. I want you to imagine somebody you care about in front of you. I want you to share it with them energetically, maybe through a hug or maybe just by holding hands, maybe a big, wet kiss. Just share it with somebody that you care about. See them light up with it, too. Then feel them reflected back to you, because energy is contagious.

Just breathe in to that feeling and breathe out. Breathe with that other person and then say, "Breathe in that feeling." Breathe it out. You're sharing it with each other. I want you to thank them. Thank yourself for giving yourself this little bit of joy and peace and calm. If you want, give yourself a nice little hug. I mean it's all right, too. I got physical one, not just a virtual one. Say thank you. You want to breathe in. Wiggle your toes and fingers. Breathe out. Open your eyes. Move around a little bit. Come back to here.

Just notice what's coming up for you now, and I guess how did that exercise went for you? If you didn't get much feelings happening, that's okay, too. If you got lost, that's great, too. It's a practice, which means that sometimes it doesn't go as well

as we want in the beginning. I want you to share in the chat box, share in the chat box what came up for you. What happened? What did you learn? If nothing happened, that's okay, too. You can share that as well. As I'm giving people time to type, somebody asked a question. If the ability to experience the vastness, and I'm assuming they're referencing the container I was talking about, experience the vastness also calls for ability to continue to connect with the pain our bodies first. I'm thinking about the rule of lament in the Jewish and Christian traditions and how these traditions provide a different type of insight into bodily practices that complement Buddhist teachings.

Yeah, I think that's very true. They're one and the same. If you want to imagine our feelings ... We like to separate feelings. They are good feelings and there are bad feelings. In the English language, we refer to feelings as feelings which are like the "bad feelings," feelings we don't want to have. Well, reality is the feeling is just feeling, just sensations with thoughts attached to it. Some of them we like and some of them we don't like, but there are all kind of feelings. We can actually separate the two. When we cut ourselves off from our pain, we also cut ourselves off from our joy. They are just one stick, so we want to drop one end, we end up dropping both ends of the stick and we don't have access to either one.

I very much believe that to be true that our ability to connect with the vastness and have a larger container is very strongly related to our ability to connect to the pain in our bodies and do that for us because the pain in our body is what we first want to disconnect from ourselves. It's not the happiness we normally try and disconnect though some people later on, because of their trauma, they may try to disconnect from joy as well. We often see that happening with people running away from relationships as well, for example. I've done that, too. Yeah, no, usually that's related to pain and fear, fear of losing something that we care about having.

I'm not very familiar with the rule of lamenting in the Jewish and Christian traditions, but that feels like a full bodied expression of sadness and grief, which I think is tremendously important and just letting that go. I think what I've been doing is a more quiet way of sitting with the feelings. Part of that is because we're in a group setting so I don't imagine people would feel comfortable wailing. I'm a big fan of really letting it loose, letting it out something about myself and I'm crying, there can be some wailing, there can be some keening. There can be a very vocal, loud way of expressing feelings. When I have a big stress ball in my body and anger, like what comes out, you'll notice, like I start cursing a lot more. It's unstoppable. Like you'll know how I'm feeling because like there's a lot more curse words are coming out.

I don't think that's a bad thing. I don't think it is ... It helps express, it helps align our feelings with our bodies, with our words and our thinking. The more unity we can bring that all together, I think the stronger we are in really experiencing it, acknowledging it, which then leads to releasing it as well. It's when our thoughts are disconnected from our bodies, and this is why the toxic swirl of make believe is not effective. You can do it; it's just not very effective because you're like being torn in different places. Like your body is trying to feel this pain, it's where it's at and your mind is doing this whole, all the other thing. That's why you don't get to move forward. This is why you get caught up in toxic swirls. What I've been teaching you is how to realign your mind with your body. That's really what this is about.

Joseette: Would you like me to read some of the answers?

Sandra: Yeah, please do.

Joseette: Mary [Helpman 00:50:30]] mentioned-

Sandra: You don't have to say the names.

Joseette: Okay, sorry. Someone mentioned very golden joy, almost the stereotypical type of joy like light like a sun. I kept laughing as I remembered the experience on the person I was sharing with was there at the time so it was really positive feedback loop. I don't think I ever witnessed myself enjoy. How miraculous. It took a while to remember the last time I had a good, genuine laugh. It felt like a while. Once I've found the happiness and laughter, it felt so good to laugh and smile. It felt like being tickled and it was very joyous. I feel good right now. It felt good and then sad and very emotional but because the joy was also there, it didn't feel bad about just feeling both one and then the other changing again.

Sandra: I just want to interrupt for one second. Yeah, this is what I'm talking about. This person went from feeling good to feeling sad and it was vacillating. Because this person was vacillating, it feels like is able to hold the space for the sadness a bit more and that's, like I said, that's what I'm talking about. When you build that container with joy, it also becomes easier to hold the pain and the sadness.

Joseette: I see so often I have to rush over the pain and fear to get to joy, which I think actually then makes joy more superficial. It was harder for me to engage this one. The part of me that is feeling the pain was not ready to move totally aside. The joy I could access at first was more a wry humor, though at the end I remember being connected with the pure delight of a young child.

Sandra: Right. Like I said, some folks may not have gotten to the point where other people have been sharing, and that's perfectly fine. We had a very short period of time to do this in. It was a group process and some folks got to a place where they had a joy they hadn't experienced before. They haven't witnessed their own joy in this way. Folks, it took a while to remember but then they remembered and they got to a place of pure delight of a young child.

This is always within you. You carry this with you, within yourself, and any moment, you can do this. You can call a pond of joy and water it with just your thoughts. The power of our mind is just incredible. Remember, our body follows where our mind leads to. We all can try to do this in reverse. We try to make our bodies feel something. We try to feel certain things and not feel certain things. We try to control our feelings. We can't control our feelings. They're like the weather. They come, they go. It rains; it's sunshine. It does what it does.

Now, what we can do is we can direct our focus with our minds, with our thinking, with our thoughts, our actions. If we put our attention, our focus to what is joyful, our body will oftentimes follow. Then to a degree that it doesn't, it just means that there's some more stuff that we need to focus on. If we feel stuck and we don't feel moved to acknowledge that joy, just means there's something else to acknowledge within ourselves first. Maybe some pain, maybe some fear. That's all that is. Know that you always carry it with you. We have this saying, "No coming, no going, for I am always with you. You are always a part of me." It means that things really do live in our minds; that we can bring them up as if it was happening right now.

It's just a couple of minutes until the end of the session and I want folks to think about their main takeaway. If you can only remember one thing from this session, what would it be? Then once you think of something, please share in the chat box, as well as write it down for yourself if you like in your own notebook so you can remember later. Make sure you remember later because this is your main takeaway. Some of the things that people are sharing is where I'm at is okay. Having a bigger container really resonated with me. Your body work with noticing where the tension is in our body and telling it, "I see you, I care about you, you matter," with a breath, that's great.

The one thing I would like for you to remember is I say we can really summarize compassionate activism into four words, or is it three? It's three words. I didn't think about that when I count. It's breathe, listen, invite. Breathe, just take that breath, take that pause, create that space for you to just be with yourself and realign your mind with your body and your energies. Just breathe. You deserve that space. Your feelings is there to take up space. Listen. I don't know what's

going on with you all, maybe you don't even know what's going on with you sometimes. Really, it's just listening. Listening to what's going on inside of yourself. Really, truly listen to deep in your heart. You know you're there because things will have slowed down. You notice how this listening you're doing is very different listening than when your mind is going in that toxic swirl?

Then inviting. Inviting yourself. Is there something I can do for you? Is there something I can give to you? Invite yourself. Some of the other stuff people are sharing that is important to remember the joy, that there's no right or wrong, whatever's happening is happening. Being able to relax and help our fellowmen as much as possible. It's good to ask myself what I need and the bigger container helps to make space to feel all of it, and so constricting it for myself.

Yes, yes to everything and I hope this session has given you a little more tools, a little more space, a little more support to be with all that's going on in the world today and inside your world. Thank you so much for showing up and being vulnerable and engaging this work. It is not easy and I hope that you share it with others. All right, I'll see you in a couple of weeks then. Take care. Bye everyone.

Josette: Bye everyone. Have a good rest of your week.