

Transforming Anger

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I have noticed over the past several years that anger always comes up for me when I work in my yard. I'll find myself in the middle of a dialogue with someone, in my mind, and I'm angry and defending either my position, lifestyle, or something I've said or done. These arguments are fantasies about what could have happened in my past or what might happen in my future.

I have felt shame over this, as I don't identify myself as an angry person. Realizing the drama I find myself in, I tell myself to just let the defensiveness go...that, in this moment, there is nothing to argue about or to defend. I am here in the garden, with the earth below me and the sky above me, doing what I love to do. Just stay with the present moment. Ten minutes later, I'm back to my imaginary arguing again! And so it went, 'round and 'round, every time I'm in the yard.

A few months ago, I visited Deer Park Monastery in southern California. It is run by the monks and nuns in the tradition of the Zen Buddhist Monk, Thich Nhat Hanh. During one of our meditations, we were to feel our childhood suffering, prostrate, then lie down, touching the Earth. We were to let the Earth absorb and transform our suffering and receive its energy of stability and compassion. With this practice, one can cultivate a relationship with the Earth and, in doing so, restore our own balance, wholeness, and peace. This meditation was very meaningful to me and I experienced a deep healing.

I attended a Reiki retreat with the International House of Reiki about a month after returning from Deer Park Monastery. During these four days, we practiced esoteric Japanese meditations and techniques—most of which manifested in profound healing for me...healing that can continue for several months afterward.

Shortly after returning from the Reiki retreat, I was, once again, doing yard work and catching myself in a heated argument in my mind. I happened to be down on my knees in my vegetable garden, smoothing out a newly spaded area, getting rid of rocks, and breaking up clumps of dirt with my gloved hands. When I got to the part where I told myself to just drop the anger, I heard another voice arise from a place deep within me. "This anger is not something to be ashamed of and pushed away...it needs to be recognized, loved, and healed," the voice said. "Mother Earth is wide and vast. She is pure and flowing. She can absorb your suffering. Put your anger in her soil and she will heal you." Hearing this, I scooped up the loose dirt with each hand and, with a huge sigh, pushed my hands back down into the soil as deep as they would go. Scooped up on the in-breath, pushed back down on the out-breath. Again and again and again, all the while releasing my anger with sobs and guttural sounds. When there was no more anger to give, I stretched my entire body out on the dirt, face up towards the sky, mounding a bit of the earth for my pillow. I let the Earth heal my body and my spirit. I layed there for over an hour, feeling the solidity and comfort of the Earth as she cradled and soothed me. When I arose, I felt grounded, resilient, present, joyful, and peaceful.

Since that experience, I have been much more present with my garden. Instead of disappearing into my world of anger, defensiveness, and drama, I find that I am feeling gratitude toward the sun, the Earth, and the plants. I feel joyful and free. I am grateful to the practice of Touching the Earth and for all the openings and healings at the Reiki retreat that guided me to transform my anger in this most sacred, primal manner. I never knew the Earth could be such a powerful healer and I won't hesitate to go to her again in times of need.