

Practice of Moving through Fear

Louise 4

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[**Note:** In this essay, the words *we*, *us*, and *our* refer to white Americans (U.S. residents) who benefit from colonial privileges derived from the enslavement of Africans, the theft of land from Native peoples, and our ongoing discrimination of them. Imperium denotes the global corporate-state empire of Western Europe and North America and its continuing colonialism.]

When I considered writing for Meat, Complicity, and Thou, I nearly rejected the idea because I feared how others would react to me proposing the spiritual path as the means to overcome the Imperium. I saw you rolling your eyes for my foolishness, pitying my deluded state. Others would surely dismiss me as a serious social change agent for I obviously have stumbled off the edge. Some might get angry with me for disrespecting their beliefs or criticizing their strategies to reform the Imperium. However, I decided to share my beliefs. While I do not expect everyone to share my worldview, I cannot let my fear of others rejecting me keep me from doing what I need to do.

In truth, I had no option. My fear for the Earth Interbeing trivialized my fear of abandonment. To not do MCT would have only deepened my complicity in conforming to the expectations of the Imperial culture. We have no control over what arises in our experience, but we have complete responsibility for how we respond.

Fear comes in many forms, some which save our lives. However, knowing the Imperium's endangerment of the Earth Interbeing stands front and center of my fears. The Imperium manipulates and controls us by playing our fears like a virtuoso. We have internalized the myth of our exceptionalism and the denial of the sacred Earth Interbeing to the degree that we consider it not only normal but the truth. Each of us have our own root fears that the Imperial culture stimulates if we think about tampering with its roots. I have the primal fear of abandonment. Can you name yours?

The fears we have for the survival of the precious Earth and life come from the depths of Earth Interbeing and energize us to respond to the sacred call to act to get out of the real and present danger. This experience of calling inspires a fearful awe for the sacred, the power of the cosmos, as we contemplate what we verge on losing. The spirit has only one command for all life – to care for the Earth Interbeing, our common home and family.

If we remain mired in our exceptionalism and deny the spirit moving within our lives, we cannot respond wisely and energetically to the planetary crisis. When shaken and frightened, people like this cannot rouse themselves and act vigorously on their own. They remain stuck and lose the opportunity to shape the dawning time.

Fear causes resolve to fade, and we sink back into entangled complicity with what harms. We may fear what might happen to us if we do nothing, or we may fear the consequences of our actions should we act. If fear overwhelms us, then we cannot do what the creative calls us to do. If we only fear, we then fully expose ourselves to the brute forces of cause and effect.

The survival of the Earth Interbeing hinges upon how we, the collective cause of this peril, choose to respond to our spiritual obligation to care for the Earth Interbeing. We need to move

through our fears and change ourselves to know how to act in the world. Our inner state determines our actions. To respond to the danger in wise and loving ways, we need to have lovingly and wisely discerned the path through the danger. Action tests our practice.

Adapting to changing conditions requires balance, which depends upon an inner discipline of self-control and a firm will to adhere to the ways of the spirit to avoid fear causing our resolve to fade. We overcome our fears and anxiety by recognizing how they stop us from acting when we should act, keeping us entangled in what harms. When fear does not cause our resolve to waver, a joyful decisiveness replaces fear.

As always, we first act to master the harms within ourselves that we see in the world before we act in the world, healing ourselves before we can presume to heal others. We may never get rid of our fears, but we no longer let them stop us. We move through our fears by focusing on caring for the Earth Interbeing with the ways of the spirit. Seeking spiritual wisdom to strengthen our resolve encourages us to do what we dared not do before.

The choice between hiding within the Imperium or moving toward caring for the Earth Interbeing has enormous consequences. When we fulfill our purpose to actively care for the Earth Interbeing, we fully experience the spirit alive within us.

We discern the path to transform what harms with wise partners, those whom the action would affect. With a great vision and through conscientious work unobtrusively carried out step by step, we dissolve the hindrances to solving great problem, going for the roots rather than their symptoms.

All spiritual growth occurs in activity. We consider no effort too small, knowing that change occurs in the smallest parts. If we respect the fearful spiritual call to act and move with creative inspiration, we will have the courage to explore where our actions carry us.

When we care for the Earth Interbeing, the spiritual wisdom guides us. While we always remain subject to the material realm of cause and effect, the spiritual path gives us the freedom to embrace and move beyond forces of cause and effect by responding in the ways of the spirit to whatever arises, transforming what harms into what benefits all.