

*"Realization, neither
general nor specific, is
effort without desire.*

*Clear water, all the way to
the bottom; a fish swims
like a fish.*

*Vast sky transparent
throughout; a bird flies like
a bird."*

-Dogen-zenji

A Bigger Sky

For over a decade, I've been using this metaphor to describe the dilemma of being human: it is as if we are all walking around looking at the sky through a straw. Is that the sky we see? Sure it is. Is it the whole sky? Absolutely not.

Inside our circle of sky is everything we know; everything we've gathered over a lifetime of learning; everything we've assimilated into our opinions and points of view. Knowing is good. The problem is that we *cling* to what we know, holding onto our opinions and perspectives as the singular, capital "T" truth.

We are often unaware of our limited slice of sky...until we bump into against someone with a different point of view. Then our understanding easily slides from "this is so," to "I'm right and you're wrong." And escalates from there.

This is not a small point. When we look under the surface of the suffering and violence enveloping our world, we discover that clinging to views and opinions is frequently at the root: tightly held opinions become judgments, become "isms," become policies, become wars.

Even if we are able to skillfully navigate the friction of colliding with views and opinions different from our own, at some point the comfort of our habitual circle of sky stops feeling cozy and safe, and starts feeling tight and constricted. All of us long for a bigger sky. But we may not know how to find it.

The key to discovering a wider sky is less about doing or undoing (though that may also be necessary,) and more about nurturing the capacity to step into the unknown with curiosity and with kindness. For the past few months, I've been describing this as the cultivation of "Beginner's Mind," and "Grandmotherly Heart."

Beginner's Mind is a phrase popularized by Shunryu Suzuki Roshi, the founder of San Francisco Zen Center and author of Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind. It describes an open, flexible, innocent mind; a mind of child-like wonder, able to meet each moment with curiosity and "oh wow!" Beginner's Mind brings a steady flow of fluidity, possibility, and the ability to respond to life with ingenuity and innovation.

As we accumulate knowledge over time, the grip around our sky-circle tends to tighten, and we become more rigid and dogmatic. The more we know, the more it feels we have to lose by letting go and stepping into the unfamiliar. But no matter how smart we are, our knowledge is limited, incomplete. There is always a wider sky, beckoning.

The ability to risk stepping into the mysterious unknown is buoyed by the cultivation of "Grandmotherly Heart." This term,

*Featured Dharma
Talks by Pamela
Weiss*

At SF Insight:

* [Love and Fearlessness in
Charleston](#)

At the Brooklyn Zen
Center:

* [Big Mind, Joyful Mind,
Grandmotherly Mind](#)

* [Love is the Fabric of
Reality](#)

At the Gay Buddhist
Fellowship:

* [Being Human](#)

Be sure to check out:
[Personal Excellence
Program \(PEP\) Website](#)

robai-shin, is from Dogen-zenji, the 13th century Zen monk-scholar-poet. Grandmotherly Heart includes the qualities of love, devotion, and wholehearted attention and attunement. It is the warmth and penetrating gaze of my grandmother, Helen, who would hold my face in her soft, wrinkled hands and ask: "Nu bubula? How are you? Tell me everything!" Cultivating Grandmotherly Heart is about learning to attend (to ourselves and to others) with this kind of deep, loving listening.

When our vulnerability and innocence are met with tenderness and attention, we are able venture out of our small circle of views and opinions and stretch into a bigger sky. Cultivating Beginner's Mind and Grandmotherly Heart helps us meet suffering-the suffering of racism, of violence, of climate change--with a fierce, loving appropriate response.

Announcements:

I am delighted to announce the launch of our beautiful new "PEP-site," a website dedicated to the Personal Excellence Program (PEP). Many thanks for Robin Rorex, Renee Bastet and our fabulous designer Gregoire Vion for their dedicated efforts in bringing it to life. Please take a look: www.pepgrows.com.

I am also delighted to be on the faculty of 1440 Foundation "Multiversity," a new residential retreat facility scheduled to open in the Fall of 2016. [Click for more information](#).

Coming Events:

Fall Seminar

Beginning in October, I will be teaching a five-session dharma seminar, "Big Mind, Kind Mind, Joyful Mind: Cultivating Practice in Daily Life" for San Francisco Insight. The seminar will meet every other Tuesday evening from 7-9pm at the Unitarian Church in San Francisco from October 13- December 8. It is intended for experienced dharma students (or OK by the teacher.) For more information go to [SF Insight](#).

[Click here for the application](#).

October Conference

I will be offering meditation sessions at the "Emerging Women Live" conference for women leaders in San Francisco, November 9 & 10.

[Click here for more information](#).

November Workshop

I will be a speaker and workshop leader at "Mindfulness and Well-Being at Work," co-sponsored by the Greater Good Science Center, the 1440 Foundation and Mindful Magazine. This event is for anyone interested in learning more about the benefits of mindfulness in the workplace, and will be held on the UC Berkeley campus, November 13 & 14.

[Click here for more information or to register](#).

December Retreat

I will be co-teaching the Spirit Rock New Year's retreat again this year with Eugene Cash, Alexis Santos, Nikki Mirgaforri and Sebene Selassie. This is a traditional ten-day silent meditation



retreat from December 27, 2015 - January 3, 2016. The retreat is by lottery and will fill quickly. Registration opens on July 28th. [Click here for registration information.](#)

As always, my dharma talks from the Wednesday evening sitting group in San Francisco are recorded and available. [Click here to listen.](#)

With love and appreciation,
Pam

www.appropriateresponse.com

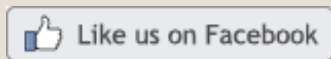
Pamela Weiss is the founder of Appropriate Response. She is a coach, meditation teacher and recognized pioneer in integrating the principles and practices of mindfulness into leadership development and organizational transformation

Featured Links

[Recorded talks](#)

[Mindfulness](#)

[Programs](#)



awakening **Wisdom** in leadership and life.