

# Meditate & Mediate

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[00:00:00]

Thomas: Hello, everybody. Yes, this is our third session. Again, at the beginning, I would love to recap a little bit, and to refresh our memories, what we did last time and the time before.

### Recap of the Previous Session

There are a few—since we, as William said last time, we divided a little bit the course sessions—centers of gravity. Right now, we are in the deeper understanding of our own inner world, self-contact, and the capacity to be at home in myself.

As you remember last time, we said, inherently important, I believe, is that we are living in a time where the rational mental capacities—like evolution invests a lot of energy into the scientific development, the technological development. That sphere of the planet—we could also call it the noosphere—is developing very fast, very quickly. It's expanding. And in that kind of sphere where the very technology that we're using right now plays an important role, it's actually revolutionizing our world.

I mean, just the fact that we can meet here and study deeply, that we can fill the internet with what I call... to create an intimate internet, that there is transmission, there is felt sense, there is... many of the capacities that, basically, the wisdom traditions talked about since thousands of years are actually being actualized in us, human beings, through technology. Technology gives us an excuse to learn that we can be a global third side, as William says. That we can feel each other even if we sit thousands of miles apart. That the virtual space is not just a cold mental space, but the virtual space can be filled with transmission, with physical presence, with emotional presence, with spiritual presence. It can be literally an inhabited, but also grounded externalized brain.

The shadow side of our time, though, is if we don't practice the embodiment of all our advancements, if we don't practice the embodiment of all our developments and innovations that we currently see in the world, so we actually become more and more disembodied. There's a mental polarization that we might know, if we don't take care of our inner energetic equilibrium—when you sit few hours in front of your computer, or you do strong mental work, that charges that battery in us, our nervous system is like a human battery. It follows the laws of physics. When I overcharge one part of myself, I'm actually pulling out energy from other parts of myself.

I think, as a responsible citizen of 2017, I need to learn how to participate in that amazing development, but also learn to balance myself inside. One of the pathologies of our time, and I think it's a major pathology, is that we are actually not anymore inhabiting fully our bodies, grounding our emotions through the bodies, grounding our mental capacity through the bodies, and grounding our spiritual capacities through the bodies.

The embodiment, it sounds simple, but we all know that at least many people currently alive carry some kind of transgenerational or biographical trauma. Trauma is always an entry gate into disembodiment. Together, like the spirit of our time, plus the amazing amount of trauma that we see in the world, are a potential breaking point in our current time. I think we will talk about this a little bit more later.

[00:05:00]

Last time we said that it's so important that we train a healthy self-contact, that I know when I become become hyper-activated, I know when I become dissociated, at least, sooner and sooner, I know when I lose my inner state of presence, I know when I don't find the balcony anymore, so that I more and more remember the possibility of going to the balcony, as William says, so that this kind of inner functions, I believe, are also training. There's something that we can train in order to be more at home in ourselves.

Last time we talked about the coherence. I hope I invited you to pay attention, throughout the week, how that coherence between a physical body... This is humanity's archaeology—the physical body, the emotional development, that my emotional experience and the mental—that they are all interlink, and they create a line. When I want to communicate, one of the highest participation in communication is to send out one message, and to be aware of what message we are sending out. Because, like last time we talked about, the human being or our nervous system is like a radio station. We are sending out lots of information.

That's why in our courses we train, also, really to pay attention to that subtle information that we send out every moment because—especially when we work with people teams on a global level with mediation, but also with clients in therapeutic settings—that information is crucial.

So we talked about the coherence between mind, emotions, and body. And then, we talked last time about the three principles of space—like having an inner witnessing capacity, having the capacity to rest in a more timeless inner spaciousness, which equals not forgetting the balcony, in a way; and that I have a process awareness of my own process.

Then, we talked about energy. Energy is everything. It's information in movement. When I look at my emotions, my body sensations, my mental processes, everything is moving. When I listen to the room that I'm sitting in, or when I feel the atmosphere in the room, when I go into another room, the atmosphere of my surrounding is changing, my internal atmosphere is changing. There is a constant movement. To have a precise awareness of that interior movement or internal movement is key for a high level of process awareness in the interpersonal dimension, or also on the global or collective dimension. These are, basically, some of the basic key competencies, I believe, that we need.

Then, of course, we talked about structure, like the pipe that channels the water, the structure of our life that grows through our attachment processes and the way of how we felt safe, and being cared for, and loved. All of this creates a base in us that is coherent, so that relation is coherent. For many people, relation is not coherent. Relation is not safe. But for some people, relation is safe. That relation is safe is not a question. That we have a home in ourselves is not a question. For other people, the home is a constant question. If my intimate relationship is safe and coherent, if my working relations are safe and coherent, there might be a constant doubt.

That's something, of course, that we need to know or get to know in ourselves. Also, within people that we interact with in our daily life, that's very important information. The belonging, we talked about the belonging, how coherent is my feeling of relatedness, and how coherent is my feeling of becoming, being supported in my original voice, being supported in my original intelligence, or in my inner potential.

**[00:10:00]**

If I got the gift of life through my parents, my social environments, that I feel supported in both, so I grow up with a vulnerability in my heart. I walk around, and I can walk around more undefendedly because the belonging is safe, and the becoming is supported, so my heart can stay open. And if I feel I needed to protect myself, I didn't feel seen in what I bring into this life, or if relation is not safe, so my belonging is constantly threatened, or my becoming is constantly threatened, or I sacrifice one for the other.

These are basic and, most probably, many of us know these basic principles that I'm talking about, but just in order to get somehow onto the same page of basic knowledge, because I think these are very important terms when we clarify our own inner process, but also when we work with people, we work with clients, we work in mediation, we work as teachers, as team leaders, this is a very important information. This was, basically, what we talked about last time.

Maybe, one more thing to remind us of—relation; being in the same room doesn't mean that we are related, I believe. Same as the marriage is not what's written on the marriage certificate, but that the marriage is only how we really re-relate—moment to moment, to moment. The data that is being exchanged through the relation, that's the actual marriage. Marriage is actually relating. It's a moment to moment, to moment, until the end of all days, relationship with the world. Specifically, if it's about marriage, so then with our partners. As long as we decide to be together, the marriage is not an idea, but the marriage is how we literally re-relate, moment to moment.

Relating is actually a high-level skill. It's an art. It's an art form, like a martial art. It's an art form to grow into, like art as music or sculpture. We grow and refine, and refine, and refine. We said in the first session, just to remember again, that to listen to your own song, like the song that you radiate, and to listen to my song, the song that I radiate, means attunement. When it's like listening to music, we attune. Especially with the people that we see often—people like our intimate partners, our children, our working colleagues—we might not really re-relate, but actually relate to the image that we hold of that person within ourselves.

Then the person becomes a habit, but who wants to be the habit of the partner? First of all, it's not sexy. Secondly, it becomes old. We miss, and the partner becomes an internalized habit. We said in the first session that relating means like two trains synchronizing their speed, because they might drive at different speeds until we meet at the speed so that I can really see who is sitting in the other train, and I can actually talk to the person.

Communication means attunement—and then relation is the data cable that transfers information. When information flows inbetween two people, so there's a resonance phenomenon that needs the relation as a data cable. Relation is attunement, and then communication. Attunement—two trains at the same speed—and then communication. Then, the data packages can be exchanged.

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I just wanted to bring this back into our awareness: what does it mean that I practice in my life, especially—of course, with people that I meet that are new for me, chances are higher that I really want to find out who they are—but especially, also, with people that I might meet every day. Like when we worked with intimate relationships, that factor of really looking, really feeling who is the person that I live my life with, that I work with very often, the real re-attunement is a deep, deep spiritual practice.

Well, I think, these are a few of the building blocks that we had so far. Maybe, I will hand it over now to William, and see what William has for you. Please go ahead, William.

### **Being a Global Social Witness, or a Third-Sider**

William: It's a pleasure to join everyone, again, on this day. It's a beautiful day where I am. The sky is blue. I'm sitting with—and I'm touched by what Thomas just said—I'm sitting with, again, the purpose of this course, of what's drawing us all together at this particular moment in our own inner evolution and in the evolution of humanity.

The purpose, as you recall, is to develop, to hone our ability, both inner and outer, to be what Thomas calls global social witnesses, what I call third-siders. As a community, what's the third-siders? In every conflict, we always see there are two sides. The third side is the surrounding community. It's us. That's the third side. There's an inner third side, and it's us in all the different situations that we face in the course of our day—with our loved ones, in our communities, in our workplaces, and in the larger world.

I also want to thank those of you who asked questions, which Thomas and I had a chance to read, which really informed the way that this course is emerging. One of the themes that came, of course, was around the theme that I've been bringing in these courses, which is something that's present for me. This is the ongoing conflict around North Korea.

I just want to say that that's very present for me, this week in particular. I just got back from a trip to Washington DC where I met with high level experts and former officials and so on—people who are just really keen students of the situation. And I just want to... remembering that North Korea is not something out there. It's not even something huge. It's something right in here. That's how I see it. It's a wound in our body, on our collective body.

Again, listening to the voices, very deep, knowledgeable, sensitive, caring voices that I heard, I realized, again, that humanity is... I'm struck by how we're on the brink. We're on the brink. There's a choice point. We're on the brink of what could be a catastrophe beyond anything that we've seen since, perhaps, the end of the Second World War. It's a possibility.

What I came back with was that it's a very real possibility. Yet, it's very real, but people can sense it, can sense how... It's almost impossible for us to digest this possibility. This is why it comes back to the importance of the work that we're doing now because I sense a collective disassociation around this issue. We're at a point where we're watching kind of like a boxing match between the leader of the United States, the leader of North Korea, and we're watching it as if we're in the audience. But in fact, we're in the ring.

Just to give you a sense, I'm meeting with one individual, a very knowledgeable person who's dealt over 20-30 years with this issue. I was asking him, "What is the risk of war here?" The thing is, no one knows. We're in the uncertainty of it all. I've heard people, very knowledgeable people, say it's a quarter. It's 20%. It's 25%. I've heard very knowledgeable people say it's 50%. I have very knowledgeable people say it's 1%. The question is, we don't know.

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What he said to me was, he'd flipped it and he said, "Tell me how we're *not* going to get into war here knowing what you know about each side here, what they're aiming for. They're playing the classic game of chicken, of two cars racing towards each other on a single lane. The question is, who's going to veer off. Except they're playing a game of nuclear chicken for all of us." He challenged me. He said, "Tell me, if this were to happen, if a war were to happen, could any of us honestly say that we were surprised afterwards? Really, could any of us say that we were surprised?"

I'm saying all of this not to create fear, or not to create fear or anxiety in us. It's really to use as a case in point for our course, for what we're learning here, what we're learning as human beings individually about our own processes, and about our collective process as humanity. What is it that makes us go numb here? What is it that makes us dissociate? The purpose, to me, is to call us into presence. I see it in myself. I watch the dissociation. It's almost inconceivable to me that we could go to war, a war of this kind where millions of people could die, where a nuclear bomb can go off for the first time since Hiroshima. I mean, it's almost inconceivable. I see we're all walking around, but it's like we're sleepwalking.



What I'm inviting us to do is—we all have our own individual conflicts, and our things, conflicts. This is a collective conflict. It affects all of us. Everyone, every human being on the planet is affected by this one, or would be affected by this one if it went in the wrong direction. It's a matter of, how can we do this work that we're talking about in this course, really be present to it in our bodies? Where is North Korea in our bodies? Where is it in our emotions? Where is it in our thoughts? How do we get to that coherence that Thomas is talking about?

The reason why I say that is we're in a moment of enormous opportunity. Enormous opportunity because history could inflect one way or could inflect the other. What does that depend on? What does that depend on? We may think, we may imagine that we're powerless, but the whole secret, to me, of the third side is that the third side is the most powerful latent force in the world. It's the community.

No conflict... any conflict there is, there are the parties, but any conflict that you're involved in—it may be a conflict in the family, an work, in the community—the parties may be strong, but it's the surrounding community, the families, the friends, the onlookers, the neighbors. Together, if there's a coherence there, it's much stronger than the conflict. It's much stronger than any particular two individuals or two sides or three sides involved in the conflict, if we can come into coherence.

And I've seen that. I've seen that so often. I saw that happen like, for example, in the situation in South Africa where people thought this is just going to go on forever, this fight between blacks and whites, the different races in South Africa. And in fact, what happened was a community came together. The women, the business leaders, the labor leaders, the students, the leaders on the top. Nelson Mandela, it was a community response. Frederik de Klerk. I mean, there was a way in which the world itself embraced that conflict. Then, within that container—because that's what the third side is, we are a container—we create a container within which the conflict can transform, can change form.

Because the purpose of all of this, to me, is not ending conflict. Conflict can be creative. It's how do we change the form from destruction, which in one case could be war, even nuclear war, to construction, to the intimacy that Thomas is talking about, that intimate relatedness, that dialogue. That's the challenge. It's facing all of us in our individual lives and, right now, in our collective lives.

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I just wanted to take a moment here, as we begin this third session in our course, to remember this particular moment on the planet right now, and say there's an enormous opportunity right now for us to go in a constructive direction in terms of dealing with this wound on our body that we call North Korea—which is us. This is a moment when it hasn't happened. It hasn't happened. The war hasn't happened. It doesn't need to happen. But the first thing that we have to do is, if we say, "Well, what can I do?", the first thing, I think, we can do is be present to it. Just be present to it. Feel it. See if we can break through the collective sleepwalking, the collective dissociation, the collective numbness and feel it for a moment.

### **Being Aware of Which Tendencies We Nourish**

Thomas: I find it fascinating what you described. It's such a beautiful description of how I see collective trauma and transgenerational trauma operate. And we will come to this more, I thought we're going to talk about this later in the course, but, since now that's very up for you and very present, so maybe we'll just say a little bit. I believe that we are, most probably, all in a certain way affected by an invisible trauma field that is a collective trauma field that is like driving one's car in a foggy night, and our headlights are shining, and we see only 10 meters. Everything, when it appears out of the fog, is already very close.

There is the ten plagues in the Bible, in Egypt. They start from very far out. That's basically, I believe, how our life looks like. There are signs already that happen much earlier than when they are very manifest in our life. We call it, maybe, tendencies. There are tendencies in life. When I don't listen to the tendencies or I don't see those tendencies—diabetes, for example, is a tendency. Why don't we treat diabetes when it's a tendency? Why do we treat it when somebody turns up in the doctor's clinic or office? We are supposed to feel tendencies 20 years before we deal with it as a manifest health issue, psychological issue.

Also, collective cultural issues. Many of them start as tendencies. Then, they are looking for a social environment to either collaborate with that tendency and strengthen it or to counterbalance those tendencies. A healthy environment would somehow help a person to rewrite those tendencies, maybe, and not activate it, and another environment might activate it. There's always a correlation between the tendency and the we-space. But we are that we-space right now, for the current conflict. How do we nourish tendencies? Are we at all aware of which tendencies we nourish—just in our best friends? You know, somebody with a prediabetes tendency might love getting cakes when he or she is sad. They might even like us for supporting that tendency.

I think, that's something very important to know. When we walk through life, process awareness means that I'm very highly aware of which tendencies, which unconscious patterns I'm supporting moment to moment, to moment, to moment in my life. I actually cannot afford that sleepwalking. I actually cannot be in a state where I'm half unconscious, and I'm not interested in what process tendencies I'm supporting with my life that I'm not even aware of, but I actually invest my life energy into unconscious processes.

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I believe, all of us, if you take this course seriously, and if we see ourselves as serious practitioners, we *have* to explore it. It's a must. Otherwise, I'm caressing my conscience but I'm not really awakening to the world's process. If I really take it seriously, I will study it. I will deepen my studies, and I will deepen my inner clarification and outer expertise in order to reveal more and more what I participate in, so that I don't invest my *chi money*, my life energy into tendencies that, actually, if I had been aware of, I would never do it.

I think, the same thing is about collective trauma. The collective trauma is a collective fog that creates an indifference, often. If somebody screams, but it's a kind of a wall of cotton. There's a cotton wall. We don't hear. We don't see what comes closer in the fog. We just see it when it appears in front of us, so then we might be shocked. Then we say, "How come that we didn't do something earlier?" How come that we are not acting earlier with climate change—but it's coming closer, and closer, and closer. Only when it's very close, when it affects our bodies, when it affects our innermost circle of intimacy—wow, then it's there.

And I'm seeing what you're saying, William. It's an opportunity. Because I believe we are living in this time where the world gave us, or we gave ourselves an externalized brain. We participate in such a refined technology that information is much faster spinning around the planet, which also leads to the fact that many more trauma or traumatizing impulses are circulating through that brain, all around the world, with a high speed.

So our nervous systems are continuously being exposed to that, which creates many more trauma triggers than before. I think, also, I agree very much with what you said before, William. I think a very good practice—before we jump into solutions—is... The global social witness is somebody that explores the landing of certain news or events that happened in our neighborhood or on the other side of the planet. I carefully look in my own internal awareness if what I hear about or what I read about lands. And not to forget what we talked about last time, there's a physical dimension—so does the current conflict that we see land in my physical body? How does this land in my physical body?

Then, we might say, "Oh, but what does it have to do with my body?" My body is hundreds of thousands of years of archeological data of humanity. The conflict of North Korea, the war, the North Korean War, last century, is stored in our bodies, all of our bodies, I believe. There is a huge archive of data, archeological layers from the first cells up to today, the development of AI is stored in our bodies. These are not just our bodies. This is an anthropology VR game that we are sitting in. We are sitting in all of that information.

I think our bodies are much more sacred than we often think. It's not just 'me'—it's a miracle. My body is actually extremely wise. Not just mine, everybody's body is extremely wise. When we say, "Can it land in me?", then it means, can it land in my body? Can I feel it? Do I have an emotional response to it? Can I name that emotional response, or is it too overwhelming for me—or do I represent in myself a trauma dissociation on the collective level, which means I won't feel anything? So then I feel numb, and I cannot really say what I feel.

[00:35:00]

Of course, we often mentally digest news. If I become aware of the fact that when I read about news, situations in the world, and I feel I cannot digest it fully—that's great, but that's where, I think, our collective work starts, as global social witnesses. It's actually impossible to host everything inside. The goal is also not to do that but, I believe, the hosting, the landing, the digesting is—what we are able to digest inside is transforming our world outside. Inner architecture is the basis for the external architecture. If there's something that is unthinkable, there's no correlate in us that can think it, we will not see it. In the moment we can perceive and somehow intuit it, it starts to become real.

I believe, that's the same here. I want to very much underline when you said, William, that just presencing—and presencing means, really, to be very precise. When I feel into, when I think of and feel into the current conflict that is being displayed in so many newsfeeds, how am I a participant? How much of me is participating? Not—and I think that's very important—not with the inner demand that I should be fully participating in it. The fact that the external situation looks like as it looks like means that billions of people carry an equivalent inside that fits to it, so the inner world and outer world are inherently interwoven.

Starting with my authentic inner response and being able to track my authentic response in the body, in the emotions, in the mental, and in the bridge between inside and outside, as we talked about in the first session, I think is a very good step. Maybe, we can do this even afterwards when we do a guided meditation. Maybe, we can take this even as a study case into our meditation.

William: I would like that very much, really. I come back to it because, to me, it's a case in point right now, this very moment in the world, I just sense there's this opportunity. We have this opportunity to go one way or another. I have colleagues here going over this weekend to meet with high level officials in the North Korea and South Korea. It's a moment of opportunity for us to wake up—because you're right, I like the metaphor of the fog because it feels to me like we are in this fog, humanity, we're in the fog, and we know that somewhere, just close to us, is a cliff edge. We don't know where it is. The two sides don't know where it is in this particular conflict we're talking about, but it could be one step ahead. It could be two steps ahead. One more step, and life could just shift.

We were reflecting earlier about how life shifted from just 9/11, which was an event that shook the world. There is before and after. Before, it was so normal. I mean, it was just a normal day, people were going to work and whatever, and then, after, it seemed different. There were enormous consequences. I feel like we're in a moment like that. We have this ability, this contingency, this agency. Where does it come from? It comes from being able—I like the metaphor of the body because, to me, what the third side is, it's like an immune system. It's like a social immune system. Each one of our bodies and the wisdom of our body... you know, we have lots of viruses that are in our body, but they're not active. Why? Because our immune system, which consists of millions of cells that wake up, that activate, and that keep those viruses in check. It's about health. Health is having a strong immune system.

**[00:40:00]**

The question I sit with in conflicts at whatever magnitude is, what's the health of our social immune system? What's the health of our families, to be able to contain and transform the difficult conflicts, the intense times that we're now living with? What's the health of our communities, our societies? Now, what's our global social immune system? How do we activate it right now to be able to veer, to turn that arrow in a positive direction, in a constructive direction?

It doesn't mean suppressing conflict. It doesn't mean eliminating conflict. It doesn't even mean necessarily resolving conflict. It means learning to live with it, but to deal with it, to face it with all of our beings, our hearts, our minds, our spirits, our bodies. To learn to face it together. Then, somehow, to link up. To me, that's the promise of this course is, can we hone? Can we learn to collectively hone our inner and outer skills, so that we can serve ourselves, our families, our communities, and our planet at this moment of need, whether it's climate change, whether it's North Korea, whether it's a conflict in the neighborhood and in the family? It's all those levels. It's all the same.

So what I'd like to do, if I may, is share with you a little bit of just a couple of ways in which I've learned, over the years, of the importance of the inner and the outer. Because my work, as you know, has been mostly in the outer world, you know, with conflicts—whether it's conflicts at work, whether it's labor strikes in coal mines, whether it's organizational disputes, whether it's family feuds, or whether it's ethnic wars, wars in the Middle East.

## The Lessons in Dealing with Our Differences Constructively

I'm an anthropologist, and I've wandered the world asking myself this question of how we, human beings, can learn to deal with our differences in more constructive, and positive, and even joyful ways. How can we do that? As I read your questions, I can see, many of you are sitting with that same question. You've got very difficult conflicts—at whatever scale they are—and you're watching yourself. You're watching our own tendencies, our own tendencies to react.

For me, I'd like to just share, see if I can use screen share and share a couple of slides, and just talk you through a few of the lessons I've learned, and then pause to let Thomas comment on it.

What I have learned in all these years of negotiation is that our biggest opponent is not the person on the other side of the table in a difficult situation. It's the person we look at in the mirror every single morning. That's us.



Slide 1

It also could be our biggest ally. Our biggest ally could be ourselves. We could be our own best friends. That process of turning ourselves from our own worst enemies, our own biggest opponents, the person who gets in the way of us getting what we need in this world, turning that person from an opponent into an ally is key.



### Slide 2

How do we do that? That's where I keep coming back to this metaphor of going to the balcony, which is what Thomas is talking about. It's a place of spaciousness. It's a place of perspective. It's a place of calm and self-control.

And in this world right now, where so much is happening, as Thomas was saying, there's so much trauma being shared that wasn't previously shared, so that we're able to pay attention to places that are seemingly far off, like North Korea—and they are in our living rooms, they are here. How do we relate to them in a nonreactive way? That, to me, is key.



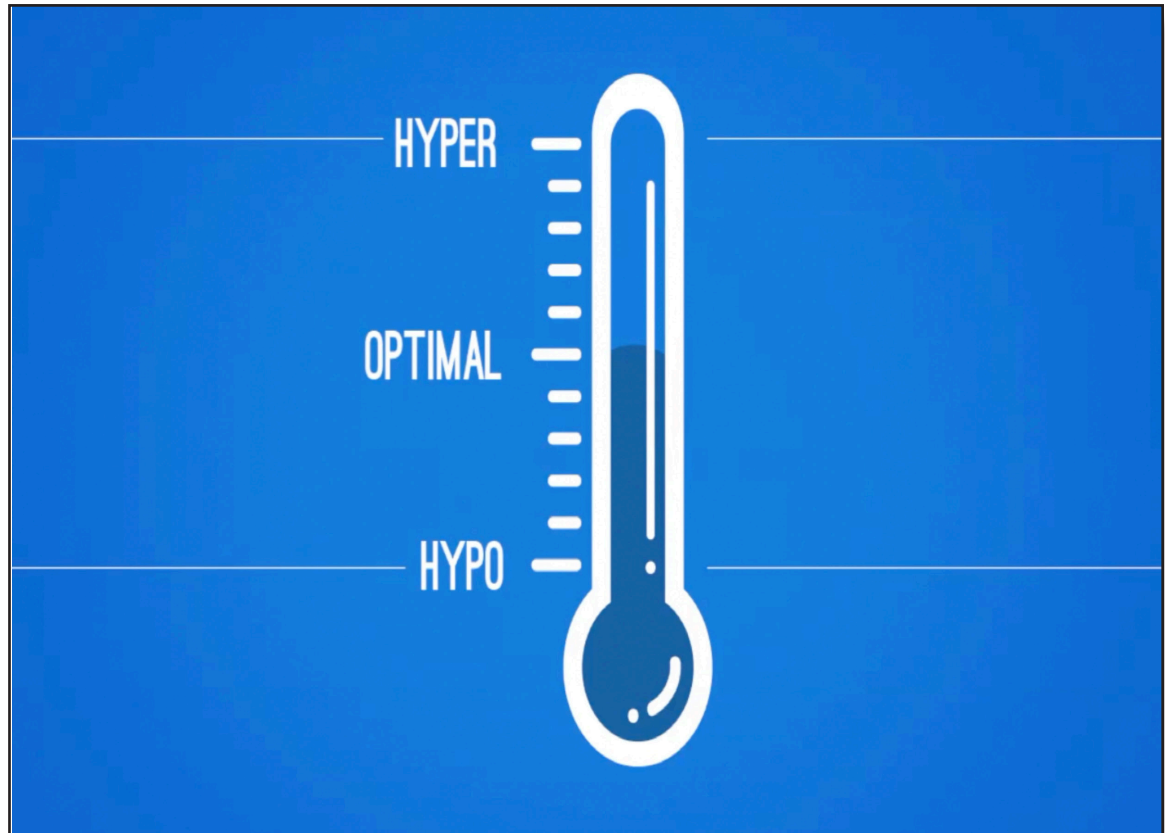


## Slide 3

One way of thinking about the place of the balcony is if you think of... This is what Thomas was referring to, if you think of a thermometer, there is a way in which, right now, we are hyper-activated, our systems are hyper-activated in fight or flight, or anxiety. If we allow ourselves to think about a situation like North Korea, we can go into fear, and panic, and whatever, which is where we're not most effective. Or we are in hypo-activation, which is what I think that dissociation, that numbness, the depression.

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And the question is, the balcony is, how do we arrive at that optimal state, somewhere between the hyper and hypo? We go up and down. In conflict situations, how we can help because a lot of us are mediators? In fact, all of us are mediators. Whether we think of ourselves as mediators or not, we are all mediators. We're all third-siders. Whether it's dealing with issues, with the people around us, our children, our friends, and so on, we're always in that role, potentially. How do we help everyone get to that optimal state of regulation between hypo and hyper? That's being on the balcony.

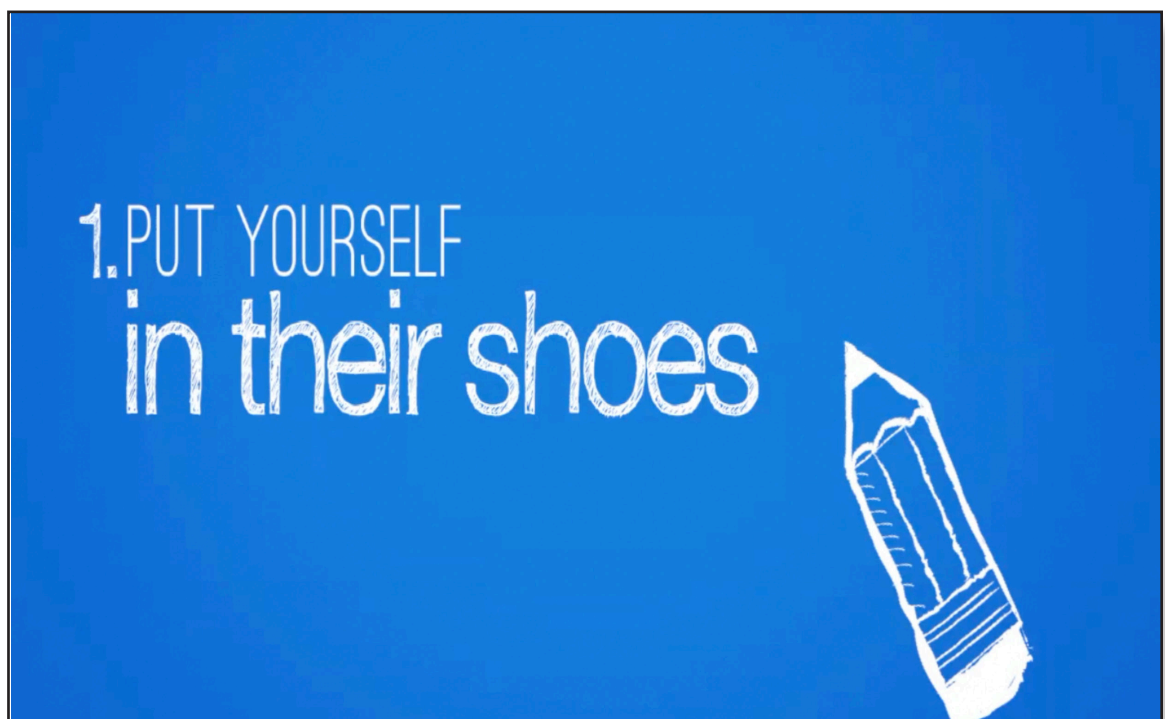


Slide 4

To me, interestingly, as I look at the questions that came across, people would ask me, what's the most important skill you need as a negotiator? Over the years, to me, if I have to say one thing that I say most commonly—because there are many skills that we need as mediators, as negotiators, and I'm talking about that in everyone as a negotiator, everyone as a mediator, is the simple ability to put ourselves in the shoes of the other. To be able to imagine ourselves—the active empathy—to put ourselves in their shoes. How does the world look like in their shoes? How does it feel like? That, the behavior, of course, associated with that is the behavior of listening.

I see in all these conflicts I've been, I see a lot of talking. I see a lot of shouting. I see a lot of arguing. I see a lot of this... I don't see so much listening. And by listening, I mean true listening. Listening not just to the words, not just listening to defend yourself, and to make your point or your counterpoint, but listening to truly understand. Listening for what's beneath those words. As Thomas was saying in the previous session, listening body to body, heart to heart, emotions to emotions, head to head—that congruency, that relatedness.

Yet, what I found is that it's so difficult for us to do that. It's not easy. Particularly difficult to do in the challenges, the daily challenges that we face every day with the ones who are closest to us. In fact, it's often hardest for us to practice these skills with the people who are closest to us. It may be easier, I mean, I find it may be easier for me to practice my listening skills in the world, dealing with North Korea, than it is in my own home sometimes. That's the paradox, that the most difficult conflicts that we face often are the internal ones. The closer they are to us, the more intimate they are, the more difficult—maybe because they touch into our childhoods and our trauma reactions, and so on, as Thomas will explain.



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But one thing I found is that, actually, if we want to be able to put ourselves in the other side's shoes, what's the secret to doing that? If we want to truly listen to the other, than the secret, paradoxically, is to be able to put ourselves in our own shoes, it's to be able to listen to ourselves. If we want to listen to others, we first need to learn to listen to ourselves because the truth is, there's so much going on in our minds and our emotions that there's no space in there for us to be able to take in the other side's experience. Unless we listen to ourselves first, and really listen to what we're feeling, we're not going to be able to really listen to the other.

That goes across the board here. It's that if we want to respect the other, which is key, we have to first learn to respect ourselves. If we want to be compassionate with the other, compassion begins with self-compassion. There's a quote I've always loved from Lao Tzu, which says, "Compassionate with yourself, you help reconcile all beings." "Compassionate with yourself, you help reconcile all beings." So it starts with self-compassion.

All of this work, this external work, these great conflicts that we're dealing with at all levels, it all begins with applying the same principles that we're asked to apply to outside, the principles of *Getting to Yes*. Getting to yes with others starts with getting to yes with ourselves. Negotiation starts inside.

[00:50:00]

I'll just give you, if I may, just an example from... I've been talking about North Korea. Let me take a very personal example. My wife and I have our youngest daughter. Her name is Gabi. When she was born 19 years ago, the day she was born, the doctors recognized there were a lot of problems—structural problems, physical problems, problems with organs, they weren't even sure if she was going to live from that very moment as we rushed down to the children's hospital and she was diagnosed with a very rare syndrome that required her to go through over 15 major surgeries; many of them in the first years of her life. Thankfully, she's now well, she's happy, but it was a long painful journey for my wife and myself.

I remember one moment when she was about, maybe, not even six months old, and we were contemplating or planning a major operation on her spine, her spinal cord. We were in the hospital, and a doctor came by. It was a teaching hospital, and the doctor came by with the students. He asked what her diagnosis was. I mentioned that she's going for the surgery. He was an accomplished surgeon. He was talking to his students right in front of my wife, who's cradling our daughter. He said, "I've seen a lot of those surgeries where the patient ends up paralyzed." He was just in his rational brain explaining to his students, but unaware, numb to the effect that might have on parents whose daughter is about to have this surgery the following week.

That's the kind of thing where our tendency was to, you know, it was easy in those moments to feel those emotions, but our tendency was to—you could blame him as insensitive, and just really, “How could he? How could he possibly be that insensitive?” But what we learned over time was we learned to try to put ourselves in our own shoes, listen to our own feelings, and ask ourselves—to me, the key in this is uncover what your needs are. What do you really want here? This is what I learned. What I really wanted, what we really wanted was the best for our daughter.

A few months later, after the surgery, which went well as far as surgeries as concerned, but was very... Gabi had to have another surgery. The person who was indicated to us as the best surgeon for that kind of surgery, which was another major surgery, was the very doctor who had been seemingly so insensitive to us. Somehow, by doing this inner work on ourselves, and by being able to put ourselves in our own shoes, listen to our own feelings, and not just go into the blame mode of blaming him and blaming the system—because there was every temptation in that moment to blame the insensitive doctors and insensitive... incredible number of negotiations, but what we were able to do was to ask what is best for our daughter, and we ended up deciding to talk to the surgeon and understand that insensitive moment.

That surgeon later turned out to be a very... we spent time with him, he gave us a lot of time. Over the years, he became one of our closest medical friends, closest allies of our daughter, and in fact, we learned early on that he himself had a son, a young son, who had gone through a lot of trouble and in fact ended up dying of brain cancer.

**[00:55:00]**

The reason I'm telling the story is, for us, it was a lesson in being able to, first, pay attention to our own emotions and uncover our needs. And our needs, in the end, was to really keep our eyes on the prize, which was finding the best medical care daughter for our daughter, which allowed us not to just blame this person, but to also, ultimately, put ourselves in his shoes, because we were able to put ourselves in our shoes, and then, ultimately, be open to that friendship and alliance, that he turned to be an enormous ally to her.



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To me, what happens is, once we uncover our needs, that leads to—see if I can... We ask ourselves these questions of—let me just, so I can see the slide here—of what do I most want or need? What is truly important here? That's the key. What I would, actually, ask you as I talk about this is take a situation that you're currently facing—and a lot of you are currently facing situations, as I can see from your questions—it might be a conflict at home, or with a loved one, or whatever the situation is. See if you can put yourself in your shoes, your own shoes, for a moment. Listen to yourself. Listen to your body. Ask yourself this core question of, *what do I most want or need? What is truly important here for me?*

It's not always simple. What's the real prize here? In that particular case I was just mentioning with my wife and daughter, the real prize was really safeguarding the health, the life of our six-month old daughter. What is it for you? What is the prize? What is the prize? What's behind? What is it really that's so important for you in this situation? To really unpeel the layers there, ask yourself, what's the prize? What is truly most important to you right now in that situation?



That's what we do on the balcony because the whole purpose of negotiation mediation is to find a way if we can meet your needs while the other side's needs, while other parties' needs are met as well—or both parties' needs, if you're the third party. What are those needs? Do we really know what our needs are? Do we truly know what our needs are? That's the question.



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Let me pause for a moment and just see, before I proceed, and see if Thomas wants to add something at this moment.

Thomas: First of all, I was so very touched by your own experience that you shared. I think, maybe even sitting with listening to your own family experience, and practicing how does what you share land in me, and how can I become a partner in what you are sharing here with us, so that it's not just something that happened in your life. "Oh, that happened to William," but to really feel how it affects my emotions, and my body, and how I'm a partner in what was truly important for you. I'm still touched by what I heard you saying.



Then, also the way how you described it. I think that's an opportunity, also, for us to somehow—because I believe that time... or let's say it a bit differently. In the mystical understanding of time, the past is not just the past because it happened yesterday. The past is the past because usually the past leaves traces. And so, when I listen to you sharing about your daughter and your wife, I believe what arises in me is also part of being a partner, your partner in that situation in the past.

[01:00:00]

I believe when we listen to people's life experiences, especially, when they seem important and impactful in their own life's path, I believe the landing of what you said—so while you talked, I allowed this to land in my... of course, I understand cognitively what you're saying, I feel the emotional response in me, and I feel the physical response in me, and I feel your transmission as you speak, so my inner world, in a way, becomes a host of William and your family at that time. But for me, that time is not fully gone, that time is still present as you speak, because it was a very meaningful and also impactful time in your life, it seems.

I think that's exactly already one of the moments where we can practice a true partnership, or compassion, or love, or, in a way, being a resource. Ideally, I see us, all the participants that right now listen to you while you shared your life experience, ideally, when the trains are driving at the same speed, so if we all tune in with you sharing, I believe we are a resource in that very moment that was difficult to go through, or many of those moments, as it seems, that you went through.

I believe that's already the practice of the global social witness. I just wanted to share this because it struck me, while I listen to you, what I've felt in myself. I believe that that's already where a community of people, that we are all like that resource field. I have seen this in many, many workshops all around the world, when the coherence of the we-space, when a group of people is really listening to one person sharing, these are magic moments, sacred moments, beautiful moments of healing, integration, resource. We really feel that presence is an amazing gift that we can give each other.

Not to forget that I believe in true presence, true presence is not this point in time. True presence is that we are partners in the past, present, and the future. In true presence, the past, the lovemaking of the future with the past, happens in our heart. Like that the human being comes in through a soul that brings some future into the past of humanity, and there's a lovemaking that I believe is going on, not just in the moment before our conception, but basically any moment of our life.

By listening to you, I believe we can become partners in the past, in the present, and in the future of the event that you shared. I believe that's true for what I heard now from you, but that's equally true for the bigger picture that you shared—that we literally become time travelers. True listening is partnership also in the past events that are not yet fully... that are still present in our current conversation. That touched me. Maybe because it seems that you are right now in a good flow with the needs, and how you want to progress, maybe I will add a few more things once you end your presentation. Thank you for that sharing.

William: Thank you. Thank you, Thomas. It touches me, actually. And you're right.

### **Gabi's Story: Choosing to See the Universe as Friendly**

For me, it's all about presence, and somehow, if I'm talking about North Korea, and I'm talking about something very personal to me, and I see—it's really all one and the same. It really comes down to what you're saying about presence. For me, it was a very, very powerful lesson that this whole story of my daughter turned out to be one of my greatest teachers, really.

**[01:05:00]**

She is... I'll just tell you one little story just to illustrate. Here's a little human being with whom my wife and I learned so much, our whole family learned so much from what seemed like excruciating pain, often. There's some presence or love around her that allowed her to develop such self-confidence that, when she was 15, one of the things she always insisted on was she wanted to be treated the same as everyone else. She wanted... She didn't want to be... She certainly didn't want any pity. She didn't have that victim inside of her.

She tried out for the volleyball team in her school, the intramural volleyball team. Here, she was, maybe, much shorter because of her condition, her spinal condition, and so on. She couldn't really run very well at all. They were training and training, and the coach asked the girls to go for a run. Since Gabi couldn't really do that, she said, "Why don't you do the plank." The plank, this exercise where you lie on the ground, and you plank your elbows, and you try to hold your body. In yoga, it's like an abdominal training exercise. Gabi did the plank. When the team came back, Gabi was still doing the plank. It had been nine minutes or so.

Gabi had always had this dream, ever since she was a little girl, of going for the Guinness World Record, being in the book of *Guinness World Records*. She tried putting on most socks on one foot. She tried the longest hopscotch course. When she heard that from the coach, she said, “Well, maybe I could try the plank.” She wrote away to the *Guinness Book of World Records* and found out that the plank, the world record at that moment—I don’t know if you’ve ever done the plank, I can hold it for about, maybe, a minute or so before you start to strain—anyway, the world record at that time was 40 minutes for women.

Gabi started training. You can’t actually get into Guinness World Record until you’re 16. So on her 16th birthday, she decided, okay, that’s what she was going to do, try to go for this Guinness World Record. Everyone was there at her birthday party, we’re all circulating to watch her—you have to have some observers, you have to have cameras, and so on, you have to have evidence—and she held the plank for an hour and 20 minutes. She doubled the world record. The next week, she was on *Good Morning America*, and being presented with the Guinness World Record.

That kind of, that’s the being she developed into is someone who... To me, so much of this inner work, so much conflict in the world is around, you know, we think there’s not enough. It comes from ‘not enoughness’. It’s a zero-sum game. It’s either I win, you lose; you lose, I win. There’s not enough. And so much of the conflict is around ‘not enoughness’—not enough security, not enough power, not enough resources. Not enoughness—where does it come from? It comes from within. I mean, obviously there is material scarcity, but in the end, it comes from within. Somehow, Gabi learned there was enough, enough in her. She learned to see the world.

I think, it was Albert Einstein who once said—in the wake of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and he was worried for the fate of our planet, the fate of humanity—he said, “The most important decision that any human being has to make is to decide whether or not the universe is friendly or not.” What he meant by that is that it’s a choice we make. If we decide whether the universe is friendly or not—we don’t know, but if we decide the universe is unfriendly, then everyone we’ll see as a possible adversary or as an adversary. If nations do it as a whole, given the technological genius we developed, we will destroy this planet.

But if we can learn to see the universe as basically friendly, life as basically friendly, despite whatever challenges show up—and Gabi had every reason to think life was unfriendly, but she somehow chose to believe that life was friendly, that's why she was able to do something incredible like set the world record, double the world record for the plank.

To me, again, the outer exercise and negotiation is not just to divide up a fixed pie. It's to expand the pie. It's to make it more for everyone. To me, again, it has this inner correlate, which is—before we can do that, we have to expand our own inner pie. So much of this work here is looking inside and finding that source of inner abundance that, then, allows us to come to the situations, the outer situations around us, not from a place of scarcity but from a place of *there's enough*. That actually allows us, then, to go through the difficult conflicts.

Again, that's the key. It's that ability—in almost every principle that I can think of in negotiation, it's like an iceberg. There's what you can see on the outside, but it all starts with... the majority of the iceberg is underneath it. It's inside of us. If we want to be able to, in negotiation, to listen to the others, I said we have to listen to ourselves. If we want to put ourselves in their shoes, we have to start by putting ourselves in our shoes. If we want to expand that outer pie, you need to just begin by expanding the inner pie. Every key principle I can think of has that inner correlate, which is why the first and most important negotiation that we all conduct, the first and most important mediation that we all conduct, is the one that starts within us.

There's much more to say, but I think I'm going to pause there because, this time, I really want to allow not only a time for Thomas to say something, but also allow time for questions and answers. We can pick these strands up in our next session.

Thomas: Wow. It's so beautiful what you're sharing. It's so rich. I really, I'm very touched by the depth of your sharing, also how it's connected to your personal experience. And I believe, one other thought that came up for me listening to you is, also—I believe, one reason why Gabi, your daughter, also feels that the universe is a friendly universe is, also, because of the parents that went through a very challenging time, and took on the challenge. You know that this is a very important quality in us, if we, in very challenging environments, to say, "Yes, I'm here. I'm here, and I'm available. I'm going to go through this."

I believe, in your own life's journey, I think you were a big holding in the difficulty. That big holding creates *enough*. I think that, if we want to invest some energy into the wellbeing of the world and the immune system of the world, it starts there. It starts in our own family life where we have a crucial investment of our abilities in the future of humanity is when we...

These years of our life, being parents that are really there, and create a secure and safe environment as far as it's possible—I think, that's a very, very important part of creating a bigger pie. Because the love, and the attention, and the warmth, and the listening, and the support, and the coherence, and the belonging that creates a base that we later on call healthy self-confidence, a purpose in life, and safe belonging, and many, many of the qualities—I think, the best prevention of conflicts in the future, because once that grounding and openness is there, I think many, many things become possible.

[01:15:00]

When I listen to your own life story, I hear the willingness to take on challenges, and face life, and stay related to it. That's one thing that I take away from your sharing, is that the courage and the ability to face what comes along our way, and to say, "Yes, I'm here. I'm here." And then, I believe, the light, the intelligence that runs through us is being channeled into the seeming difficulty, the difficulty that we experience. I think that, also—given to take this, again, onto the bigger stage—I think, if we know that we, as humanity, can basically take on any issue in the world, because the mystical knowledge holds a very lovely wisdom. It says that we are born with the potential answer, but in order to actualize its potentiality, we have to be willing to face what seems to be difficult in order to turn it into an answer.

If what we see right now, the global conflict around the US and North Korea, and maybe other parties in the world, is—we, as the ones that are living right now, we have come into life with the potential answer for that issue and for climate change. We are the collective intelligence that is able to resolve the collective challenges. If we are going to do it or not is being decided by the willingness to participate.

I find this beautiful to see how you brought in a very collective topic and something very personal, and both are very interconnected in its life teaching or wisdom teaching that you conveyed, so thank you. Thank you for that.

William: Thank you. Thank you, Thomas. I just want to add that I give most of the credit, actually, to my wife and our family, which was a context within which this very difficult issue could be transformed.

## Personal and Collective Yes to Life

I think you're right, that there's something about "yes". It starts with a "yes" to ourselves. When we put ourselves in our own shoes, we're saying yes to ourselves. We're saying yes to our own feelings, to our own bodies, to our own thoughts, to our own life.

Then, that allows us, then, to say yes to larger life, to what's life bringing us in that moment—even though it may not seem like it's what we want. Which then, to me, prepares the way for us to say "yes" to the other, which is the key to me to dealing with conflict—and we'll talk about that in the future sessions. To be able to say yes to the other person in a conflictual situation, to me, demands that we first say yes to ourselves, and say yes to life in some broader sense, to draw on that resource, so that we can then perform, often, an extremely difficult task, in a difficult situation, of saying yes to the other. What does it take for United States to say yes to North Korea, for North Korea to say yes to the United States? It all starts inside of us.

Thomas: Maybe, one more thing that comes to me right now when you speak is—and not to forget that we are not alone, and that we are not separate. I think this is very important. That yes, I believe—we said we wanted to include in this course a very personal, collective, and transpersonal dimension, but agreement, I believe, to be connected to the original creativity of the universe, to creation itself, *creation is yes*. I think, we all feel it—in the most creative moments, we feel like a yes. We feel excited. We feel there's no doubt in the moment of creativity.

[01:20:00]

Maybe, afterwards we develop doubts and fears, and all kinds of stuff, but in the moment when there is an insight, when there is a revelation, when there's a very creative phase, when there's a flow state—we all know, I believe, how that yes feels. That yes is an absolute agreement to life, which means to be alive. I think, that's also very important, that in the yes to a challenging situation, we have the creativity of life as our partner. Why? Because we say yes to the partnership in us, which means we are bringing in a bigger intelligence.

And that's what I experience in you, William, strongly even, when I hear you talk about your life experiences. Also in the mediation world, for me, it always feels that you're bringing in a yes, but also a yes as a connection to a bigger intelligence than a personal intelligence. I think, that's also what makes it powerful because there's a deeper intelligence present when you speak about it. I believe that's here for all of us. That yes is a cosmic internet connection. We will talk about it more on this course, during this course.

I think it's important that, in those moments, we are not separate. We are interconnected, interrelated, and we are part of a bigger network of intelligence that stands in our back, in a way, and transmits itself, through this yes, into a situation, into an environment, into our own thoughts, feelings, sensations, intuitions.

William: That's it. That's really it, Thomas. That's the key word of the third side, really. It's a collective yes. That's what's needed right now—in this situation, for example, in North Korea—is a collective yes. A yes to life. A yes to constructiveness. A yes to a better way for human beings to live together.

### Q&A: Connection to the Cosmic Heart: Many Forms of Prayer

Host: *Yeah, wonderful. I feel very tender coming into this tremendously poignant exchange between you both. People were writing in throughout—very, very moved, William, by your story, and also by the beautiful way, Thomas, that you were responding to what William shared. I think I'm going to pick up on this strand that you were just discussing, about the collective intelligence that's available in mediation by offering this extremely powerful question someone asked us. I think they're touching also, William, on what you said about the stance of the universe as a foundationally safe and friendly place.*

*They asked if each of you could speak to how our relationship to God and prayer can help us stay engaged in the world affairs, and present on the balcony, or holding a balcony perspective. Maybe, you could widen that to include any way in which your faith, practice, and forms, how you look at suffering, or relate to suffering, or engage in conflict mediation. I think it would be wonderful if both of you took that question. There's many, many more. We'll keep going after you have a chance to respond.*



Thomas: Yes. Maybe, I will start. First of all, it's a very beautiful question. I mean, when I speak now, for myself, I think there's no other way. Ultimately, there's no other way. In a way, on the one hand, it's that in our deepest humanity, we become our highest possibility. This means, when we really learn to walk our talk, and we really look at our shadows, our own traumatization, our inner self-contact, our vulnerability to be in life with an open membrane of the heart, so that we really can resonate like an open-tuned instrument, we can let the world play on us—then we, I believe, we take on our life's calling. Our purpose needs us to be a tuned instrument, to be really fully expressed in the world, and grounded it in the world, and manifest in the world.

[01:25:00]

But that in the spiritual traditions, there's a very clear hierarchy that God is first. We could fill a whole course just with this—what does it mean to make the Divine, God, the awakening, the higher consciousness, however we call it, our first priority.

I think, also, when we just... William's project, the Abraham Path, if you just take Abraham, or the big saints of different traditions—Buddha, Jesus, Lao Tzu, Muhammad—when we take the big saints that had a revelation, there's a download of light and higher intelligence, and I believe that's what actually helps us to rewrite humanity's history.

Of course, we have seen, also, lots of trauma that happened, that came out of identities that have been formed through interpretations of these original messages. But in the deepest mystical sense, I believe, there's no other way, that out of this inner connection, being aligned with the essence of life is actually what helps us to support life, to create life, to illuminate life. I believe, every one of us will find their own way—through a spiritual practice, or contemplation, meditation, prayer, or any kinds of other practices—how we open that inner channel, that our heart is not just an open membrane to the outer world, but that our heart becomes an open membrane to the cosmic heart, to the depth of consciousness.

I believe, if we practice this, and we will talk much more about it, but I think that that's a key question that, I believe, our highest resource in any kind of process work in the world is *that*.

So, but maybe I will...

William: Yeah. Very, very beautiful. I'm touched by your words, Thomas, and by the question. I think it's true. It's in this world right now. Going back to Einstein's question of, "Is the world friendly?", no one knows whether the world is friendly, at least in an objective sense. It's an inner choice to open yourself to a friendly universe—and through whatever modality, whether it's prayer, or meditation, I love to go for walks in nature, it's praying with your feet. To resource yourself by connecting to what Thomas is calling *the cosmic heart* because, in the end, what's the key to transformation of conflict? Actually, it's through the heart.

I don't know why, but I'm just remembering a moment many years ago, 20 years ago. I was mediating, facilitating a conversation, a confidential conversation between leaders—Turkish leaders and Kurdish leaders—at a time when the two, as they are engaged now, the two, there was a lot of violent conflict. Villages being ransacked. Thousands of people dying. We were meeting in Europe, in a chateau somewhere, because even to be known that these leaders were talking with each other would expose them to the risk of being called traitors or even being killed when they're back in their country.

[01:30:00]

One of the participants was a retired Turkish general. At one point in the conversations, he got up to say, "I just want to say one thing here." He said, "As a retired member, as a member of the Turkish armed forces, I want to apologize for all the suffering inflicted on thousands of villagers, and so on, in the course of this war, by our armed forces. I just want to acknowledge and apologize for that." You could have heard a pin drop in that room when he said that. It was so surprising. It was a moment of prayer. There was a silence.

Just that simple act of human apology, of just saying, "I'm sorry," it just shifted the atmosphere. In the midst of rather difficult conversations, the atmosphere shifted. By the end of the next day, which was the end of our meeting, this group had decided to work together. If there was any single moment that I can attribute it to, it's that moment. So, prayer takes many forms. A prayer is access to that universal heart that exists in each one of us, that I think is the key to the transformation of any conflict.

Right now, as I think about, for example, contemplate North Korea, and how we're on the precipice there, that's what I invite. I invite us all to join together in whatever modality, spiritual modality, prayer, meditation, to hold this situation in our being, in our consciousness, without going numb. To really hold the possibility that we can transform this in a positive way—rather than the destructive course.

### Q&A: An Apology Is a Consequence of Restored Energy

*Host: Yes, so beautiful. Beautiful. Thomas, did you want to say anything about the mystical understanding of an apology, and what happens from a mystical perspective in a moment like that?*

*Thomas: Yeah. I believe that forgiveness or saying sorry is actually a consequence of an energetic process that needs to happen, that culminates in that act. I believe, actually, as human beings, we cannot forgive, but forgiving is a natural consequence of really doing what William said before, like doing this inner work to come to a deep place of restoration, and that one effect of restoration is that we want to say sorry.*

I believe, ultimately, if we do our collective trauma work properly, actually, all the nations will have, sooner or later, to apologize. All the atrocities, all the big cuts and wounds that this planet has—because, I believe, from a certain stage, “I’m sorry” is a consequence of a restored energy. It’s the last movement to restore a wound. That’s why it’s also—so for somebody, somebody did some inner work, has an internal transformation, and that’s what is the consequence, then it has this amazing, sacred, in a way, sacred transmission that you feel as kind of the presence; presence is in the room.

If it’s a politically correct “sorry”, so everybody, I think, many people feel it anyway—it’s an act, it’s a gesture, but it’s not yet really coming as a consequence of a restored... of the healing of the tissue of the world, or the tissue inside of us, or in an intimate relationship, or in a work relationship where something is healing, like the tissue of our skin is healing. And “sorry” is the last step in the process. It’s the restoration of intimacy, basically.

**Q&A: Showing Up as Witnesses, Embracing Our Reaction to Trauma**

*Host: You were talking earlier, William, about walking your own shoes, and being able to find your feelings as a pathway to really getting embodied and managing dissociation, so you bring more presence, and availability, and empathy to the other side. I thought this was a lovely refining question of that concept. It comes from Yetak, and he said, “In my tradition, we relate to structure as a container for the third, to contain all the fears and trauma that are present in a relationship, and activate it in intimate relationships.*

*Can you relate to the distinction”, I think, this is a question for both of you, “between not allowing fear and trauma to be present versus letting these unavoidable experiences and emotions be present, but at the same time be managed, directed, and redirected in transformative manners?” I guess, maybe, a question between what does it mean to be numb and disassociated versus able to contain and host that kind of reactivity in the course of a conflict—for yourself and for the other person.*

*William: I see that. Thank you. It’s like I see that as really the... In some ways, it’s the formulation of the core question that Thomas and I began this course with, which is: in this world, with all the trauma in the world—individual, collective—with all the intensity of this moment, can we train ourselves, can we tune our instruments, our own individual instruments, so that we can show up in situations that we’re collectively facing? North Korea is just an example—it happens to be a very pressing example right now that has an existential risk for the planet.*

*Can we show up? Can we contain? Can we be that third, what I call the third side? Can we be that container? Are we capable of getting close enough to it that we can pierce our own disassociation, our own numbness, so that we can really make available our fullness, our hearts, our awareness, our presence? And not to rush into action, but to let action naturally emerge from presence? Can we hone that? That’s, really, to me, the purpose of *Meditate and Mediate*, it’s to hone our abilities, to tune our own instrument, so that we can join this global symphony, this global orchestra that is the collective third side, that is the collective global social witness. Can we witness this?*

I feel like this is the field that's waiting to be born. Drawing on meditation, drawing on mediation, drawing on systems understandings, drawing on many fields, to allow us to show up as witnesses. As witnesses that, in a way, that leads to right action. That, then, allows humanity to move in its evolution in a positive direction. That's the key question we're sitting with, how we can do that? It is not easy, of course, but I profoundly believe it's possible.

Thomas: Maybe, to make it shorter, that we can bring in more questions, just a few thoughts. One is, we will look in one of the next sessions at the intelligence of trauma. The trauma is actually a very intelligent process. Trauma, for many of us, is basically our childhood hero. Not what happened to us, but the way how our nervous system learned to respond. I find it interesting to look at trauma as something that has been developed over thousands of years.

I mean, there was so much trauma happening, and so much manmade trauma happening, that we actually trained, evolutionary wise, we trained our nervous system to develop the process that we see now when we research trauma. But this process has been learned, our nervous system learned ways how to protect itself, how to protect us, in a way. When we are now in a disassociated moment, when we are now in difficult moments, when we now have challenges and real problems in our life, our childhood hero is, in a way, again, activated.

[01:40:00]

I believe that our nervous system is a messenger of the higher law or higher ethics, and that our nervous system knows exactly when it's safe to relax, when it's safe to let go, when it's safe to deregulate and let emotions and content, and the past emerge. I think we are called, especially in our time, we are called to learn to understand and listen to what are the needs, as William said, of our nervous system, and our bodies, and our biology to let go of the hurt, to let go of the emotions—because when I'm now afraid, most probably, my fear right now has not so much to do with the current situation, but that the current situation pushes a button in me where fear is stored.

When we make decisions, or take decisions, so often the fears, the doubts, they come up—but they have been there already, most probably, for decades. So when we learn to work with it, then, I think, step by step, we're doing exactly the work that you asked in this question, that we will more and more listen to integrate and transcend, to include and transcend information into our current stream of energy. That's, I think, a lifelong practice, but it's such a beautiful practice, because every bit of past that we integrate enriches life, it makes the world bigger. I think, that's a great exploration of life or great endeavor for us.

### **Q&A: Yes to Life and Yes in Relation**

Participant: This follows on what you were saying, Thomas, and maybe you actually answered the question, but I'm interested in "yes" that's got a force of momentum behind it. In a sense, it's carried on from habit. Like you talked about yes, William, finding the yes in a situation. I work with men in prison who had a strong yes, and it got them in prison. We can see there are strong yeses in the world that are not always aligned with what Thomas was talking about, from an integrated place of when we're aligned with the deepest meridian that's connected to life.

So the feeling tone of that yes, I know for myself, is often... has a stridency in it or something. I just would wonder, as we're getting more back in line with our central meridian, doing our work, the different qualities of yes, there might be less of an intensity of the yeses where we are really coming back into our core central place. The ones that are a habit are like a strong yes. Donald Trump has a lot of yeses. I know I stepped into the shoes of the people who are involved in mass shootings, and they have also like a strong yes. It's just completely in a wrong direction of where life would invite them towards healing and a greater integration of their past into a full creative presence. Yeah, what's the difference between a habitual yes and a creative yes, I guess?

William: Thank you, Renee. That's really a deep question. There may be many yeses, many voices. Which voice do you say yes to? I guess, to me, it's that yes to life, which, if you're involved in a mass shooting, that's not a yes to life. It is going back to that core yes to the heart, yes to our core, yes to our essence—because there are a lot of impulses that go through us, it's not about saying yes to those.

In fact, I believe, one of the most important words in our vocabulary, perhaps the most important word, after “yes”, is “no”. When do we say “yes” and when do we say “no” is one of the core discernments. The word ‘no’ has been stigmatized for us, often. Even as babies, as children’ parents don’t like to hear the word “no”. Teachers don’t like to hear the word “no”. Bosses don’t like to hear the word “no”. It’s like we have these two muscles. We have a “yes” muscle and a “no” muscle. The “yes” muscle is pretty well-developed, but the “no” muscle isn’t, often, it’s hard for many of us to say “no”, actually, to say “no” particularly to people who are important to us or to people who may seem more powerful.

[01:45:00]

For me, I’ve made a study in my life, also, of the word “no”, because “yes” or “no”, it’s life as a dance. Negotiation mediation is a dance of these two words, “yes” and “no”. And what’s the proper relationship? To me, one of the key things that we need to restore in this world is the word ‘no’—but in a positive sense, what I would call positive “no”. One of the things I’m going to talk about in one of our sessions is the art of saying “no”.

I just say, Renee, that it’s about “yes”, and it’s also about “no”, and when to say “yes”, and when to say “no”, and how to say “no” in a positive way. It’s all about “yes” to what? Yes to our deepest, our highest wisdom, our deepest sense, because that’s the yes that’s needed. It’s a yes to Source, that’s really what needs to drive this. In order to listen to all those cacophony of voices, it really takes that profound listening to ourselves to find that voice to say “yes” to, because there are many other impulses that we could say “yes” to that would not lead to productive outcomes for us and others around us.

Thomas: I wanted to add that, I think, the yes means also yes in relation. I think that, when we look at other forms of yeses, I think what we mainly look at, how related is that form of yes?

Also, what you, William, said afterwards, how related is saying “no”. I can say “no” and close off my energy, and saying, “Cut!”, and hope that reverberations won’t be too strong—or I stay related, and “no” and “yes” is part of a relational context, whatever the person, the situation, the environment, the culture, the system that I’m living in. I think that the maturity is defined by the high capacity to stay related to the given circumstances, also in challenging moments.



**Q&A: Being Present with Feeling Tired**

*Host: Just one more question. It comes from Tara. She was building, William, on your notion around North Korea, that we experience ourselves as outside the ring, but actually we're inside the ring. She asked this, whether the two of you could speak to more insight on numbness, or William talking about feeling like we are standing outside the ring when we are in the ring, and we need to change that.*

*She mentioned that she was at Thomas' Celebrate Life Festival this summer when North Korea was constellated—I guess, that means they did a constellation around it—she describes that she found herself incredibly sleepy, and could not change that, even with her own effort and concentration. She said this reminds her of the notion that she felt standing outside the ring.*

*This is the question, I think, she's posing, "How do we presence that we are in the ring when we feel ourselves to be outside and can't seem to change it?" She imagined, Thomas, that you would say, "You have to feel the outsideness." She wondered what other guidance either of you might offer to how to really get more alert, more embodied, and more aware of where we're actually standing, and then offer to the world whatever that attunement or presence might then produce in us as right action.*

**Thomas:** When you speak about the constellation at the Celebrate Life Festival, and tiredness, I believe that, for a good process facilitation, nothing is ever wrong. To explain what I'm saying is, whatever comes up in us—when we listen to a person, when we watch a constellation, when we are in the room in a team meeting—if I'm very precise and present with whatever surfaces in me according to a process, I'm listening, always, to communication.

This is exactly what we said before, when William said, "Okay, what is actually, then, the collective numbness?" What is the tiredness and the collective numbness is a... expresses itself as a tiredness. Collective disassociation expresses itself as a disconnect. Often, then, with disconnect, we feel tired. Why? Because life energy drops.

**[01:50:00]**

For us in the process facilitation, our life energy measurement is a key indicator for what's happening in the current process. When there's a lot of tiredness—I have seen many Holocaust processes where the collective shadow of the Second World War and the Holocaust were in the room, and what kind of paralyzing, tiring effect the collective denial has when we allow it back into our conscious awareness.

Whenever collective trauma surfaces and comes closer to the surface of our—like what William said before, there's an iceberg, but it's underneath the water, it's in the ocean of our collective subconscious or unconscious underground world. In the moment it comes closer to the surface, our nervous systems, our bodies, our emotions start to become a mirror of that unintegrated past.

That's why I think if in a process, if I watch a constellation, whatever, if I sit with a group in a room, whatever surfaces is highly interesting. Getting tired is highly interesting. We don't need to interpret now what it says to fully define it, but to know that that's what we need to work with—that's, for sure, true. The encouragement is to, especially when I notice that I'm getting tired, to see, "Okay, what is the process?" Then I check immediately my physical, emotional, and mental state to find out what is, actually, right now that I'm not feeling, or which kind of transference in my mirroring in myself, so that I can see, "Oh, there's a transference of energy," and I become, in a way, the resonance body of that collective transference. Yeah, maybe, William, do you want to add something?

William: No. I think, I echo, I resonate with everything that you're saying, Thomas. I think that's just it. Again, I would say, that question... this course, I hope, will be an answer to that question, a sitting with that question of how can we sit with these profoundly traumatic situations in a way that opens up possibility.

So I'll just close by just reminding us right now, at this precise moment in time and space, that we're sitting with this question of—I'm just taking North Korea as—again, it's just one part of our body, but it's one part of our body that's, right now, calling out to us.

What is wanting to happen here? Just, maybe, invite us, this next week, or on to our next session, to hold that as an experiment and to look. As Thomas says, there's nothing wrong with feeling tired. There's nothing wrong with feeling numb. It's just to observe that, to listen to it, and to see what emerges as we listen, and pay attention. I invite that as an exercise for all of us collectively right now on the planet at this particular moment, and to invite your prayers as well.