

KUNDALINI RISING

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The Art of Communicating by Thich Nhat Hanh

I recently read a beautiful book by Thich Nhat Hanh called the Art of Communicating. In it, the Zen master offers some wisdom that I would like to share with you.

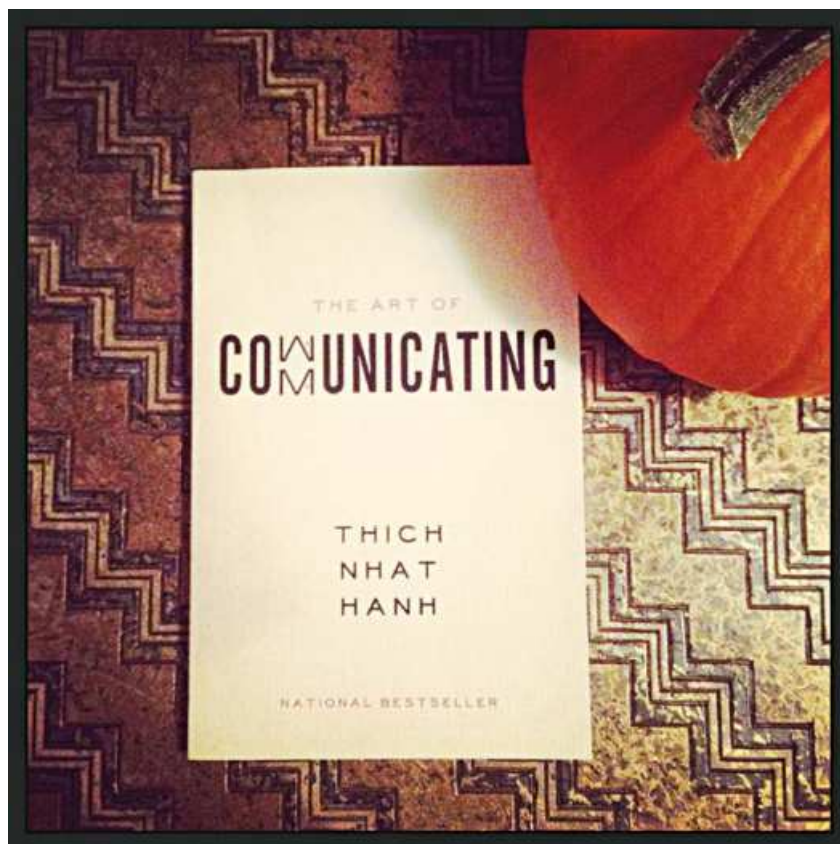
We all carry habit energy, learned behaviours, picked up from our parents. We carry the wounded inner children of our parents and ancestors within us. The past is not gone if the suffering is still there. We must recognise the presence of the suffering, listen to our inner child, and tenderly embrace the child to heal the suffering.

"Loneliness is the suffering of our time. Even if we're surrounded by others, we can feel very alone. We are lonely together. There's a vacuum inside us. It makes us feel uncomfortable, so we try to fill it up by connecting with other people. We believe that if we're able to connect, the feeling of loneliness will disappear" — Thich Nhat Hanh.



We hunger for love, but don't know how to generate love in order to nourish ourselves with it. To do so, we have to sit down and connect with ourselves. This is called mindful awareness. This is coming home to yourself.

Home is where loneliness disappears, where we feel warm, comfortable, safe, fulfilled. Home is inside you. The path to home begins with the breath. It takes only a few seconds of mindful breathing to set you free from the suffering of the past.



A lot of our thinking is caught up in dwelling on the past, trying to control the future, generating misperceptions, and worrying about what others are thinking. Stop thinking and listen to the pain, sorrow, fear, inside of you. Come back home and listen deeply. Listen to the suffering in your body and mind. Learn how to embrace your inner child to bring relief. Every step home to the here and now, connect with yourself.

Embracing your feelings without judging or pushing them aside is a homecoming. Come home to understand your suffering and its roots. When you see suffering or pain coming up within you, don't run away from it. Face it mindfully, tenderly, with quiet breathing.

We should talk to our child several times a day for healing to take place. The little child has been left alone for a long time, so we need to begin this practice right away. Go back to your inner child every day and listen for five or ten minutes, and healing will take place.

If you need to forgive others, do so. If you need to ask others for forgiveness, do so. Even if they have passed away, they are still a part of every cell of your body, so you can ask for forgiveness, and express your love to them. You can sit with yourself and speak to your grandmother who has passed away and tell her you love her and see her smiling down on you. You can write a love letter. As you finish writing the letter, you are also transformed by the peace, understanding and compassion you express. You can write a peace treaty between you and the other person.

Try not to judge others for their actions. See the Buddha in others, look upon them with compassion. They are carrying the heavy weight of their own wounds. Practice deep listening and loving speech.

Thich Nhat Hanh outlines four bodhisattva guidelines for gentle, loving speech —

Tell the truth. Don't lie or turn the truth upside down.

Don't exaggerate.

Be consistent. This means no double-talk.

Use peaceful language. Don't use insulting or violent words, cruel speech, verbal abuse, or condemnation.

Understanding oneself takes time spent sitting alone in reflection. This is crucial also to understand others. When you understand your suffering, you suffer less, and you can understand another person's suffering. When you can recognise the suffering in the other person and see how that suffering came about, compassion arises. Only when you love yourself can you love others. Compassionate communication is to help others suffer less.

"Compassion is born from understanding suffering. We all should learn to embrace our own suffering, to listen to it deeply, and to have a deep look into its nature" — **Thich Nhat Hanh.**

With each breath, you can begin anew.

Photo: Collected

Shazia Omar is an activist, a yogi and a writer. You can check out her videos on pranayama and meditation at YouTube.com/ShazzyOm.

THOUGHT CRAFT

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The joy of December

People born during years of British rule or the troubled year of the Partition of 1947, have suffered various kinds of trauma, lost land, family and friends, and have had three nationalities in the course of one lifetime.

Our young children have grown up in relative peace, and have been spared all those sad experiences. They have little memory of anything before Bangladesh. For them, unlike our parents' generation and ours, British rule and Partition are just part of their education and history, taught in the classroom.

They were fortunate enough not to experience the carnage of our own War of Liberation, and were born into an independent happy country.

For those of us who live in our own country, there is linguistic, racial and religious homogeneity, a clear sense of identity and the pride of being rooted in an ancient culture. Those who go abroad by choice, or for other reasons, always have a home and family to return to, when they are ready.

There comes a time in life when it is comforting to step out of the door and hear a familiar language in the streets, see faces that resemble our own, understand the comfortable nuances of the social behaviour that is unique to us, and who dress ourselves in the same clothes that our people have worn for generations.

Being at home is rather like living in the family compound of old. The feeling of warmth and security is similar to the experience we had as children at home with our parents and other family members. There are familiar faces at social events, the warmth of old retainers in the house, and the traditional norms of behaviour in the shops and bazaars.

While most of our traditional ways of life have survived, we have successfully adapted ourselves to the modern world. We have created NGOs that are a model for other developing nations, made giant strides in most areas of development, and have an enviable growth rate.

The idea of home and motherland can mean many things. Apart from the larger aspects, there are the little pleasures of home. COVID-19 has brought a new way of life to us all. There is still much comfort to be had just staying at home.

Now that the temperatures have fallen, we can look forward to wearing cosy warm slippers, drink hot cocoa brought in by loving hands, and use a hot water bottle in bed when it is especially cold.

We can look forward now to cooking *nehari*, *paya*, *halim* and other winter delights, and watch a good film on the TV after the day is done.

Truly there is nothing like Home.