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Chris, Sanjiv, & Cherie  
Stillness Speaks

# **Seeds of Awakening**

**Peter Russell**

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## Kindness

After 45 years of research & study, the best advice I can give is to be a little kinder.

~ Aldous Huxley

The word "kind" stems from "kin"—those of the same family or tribe, those we are close to, those of the same kind.

Deep down we are all of the same kind. We all want to feel at ease, to be treated with respect, to feel cared for and appreciated. None of us want to feel criticized, rejected, humiliated, ignored or manipulated. To reduce it to its simplest terms, we each want to feel loved. I do not mean love in a romantic sense, or some outpouring of emotion, but simple caring. This is the universal bottom line of every human relationship. We all want to feel cared for. We want to be treated kindly.

If each of us would like to be treated with kindness, then it should be our intent to give this to others. But often we do the exact opposite. Instead of trying to ensure that the other person feels cared for and appreciated, we can end up in a vicious circle of recrimination and attack.

It usually starts with feeling hurt over something that someone said or did. Whether they intended to hurt us, or whether it is only in our imagination, doesn't matter. The fact is we feel hurt. Then, if we are not fully conscious of our own inner processes, we are likely to defend ourselves by attacking back in some way. It's not the noblest or wisest response, nevertheless that is the way we less-than-enlightened folk tend to react.

It may be a cutting remark or criticism, a resentful tone of voice, a shift in body language, or simply a prolonged silence. Whatever form it may take, the underlying intention is that the other person should feel just a little hurt—not much, not enough to disrupt the relationship, but sufficient that the other person should not feel totally loved.

But if the other person is also less than enlightened, their response to a perceived attack will likely be similar to ours. They will tend to attack back, doing or saying something intended to make us feel just a little hurt and not totally loved.

Soon a vicious circle gets set up. It may not always be that obvious. On the surface it often looks as if the relationship is going well; both people appear friendly with no open hostility. But underneath a sad game is being played out. Each person, in their attempts to have the other person

behave in a more loving manner, is actually withholding love. They're effectively saying to each other: "You're not respecting me, therefore I'm going to be unkind to you so that you realize the error of your ways and treat me better."

It's a lose-lose game. Little wonder then that many relationships—personal, social, or work—find themselves on rocky ground

The vicious circle can be broken if we start from recognizing that just as we want to feel loved and at ease, so do they. Our intention then becomes: How can I communicate so that the other person does not feel attacked or rejected, but cared for and respected?

We can start by becoming vigilant against attacking attitudes. Filtering out our less-than-noble thoughts can remove much of the problem at source.

This does not mean we should not speak our truth. Instead, explore how to do so in a way that the other person feels appreciated rather than attacked. When you have something difficult to say, you might preface it with the reason why you want to say it, letting the person know it comes from an attitude of caring rather than attack. For example, you might start by saying: "I value our relationship, and want to see it grow, but for that to happen, I need to discuss an issue that is difficult for me." This sets a very different tone than simply blurting it out.

Or it may help to express your own fears—they are also part of the truth. Revealing your fear of rejection or of being misunderstood, can help others appreciate your concerns and put them more at ease—which, remember, is the goal of this exercise.

And when this practice slips, as it surely will from time to time, and the attacking mode creeps back in, there is nothing like a genuine apology to set things back on track. Own up to your mistake (we are all human after all), and try to express yourself again with a more caring intention.

This practice of kindness is essentially *The Golden Rule* found at the heart of the world's spiritual traditions. In the Bible it is said: "All things whatsoever that ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." Similarly, in the Koran we find, "No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself."

If we all applied this to everyone we met or spoke to, the world would be a very different place.