

Reflection #28
By Eugene Dufour

When Dealing with Pain – Become A Lake

Physical, emotional or spiritual pain is difficult to cope with. Many therapists suggest that we “lean into the pain”. The author Mark Nepo in his book, *The Book of Awakening*, tells a story on just how to do this.

“An aging Hindu master grew tired of his apprentice complaining, and so, one morning, sent him for some salt. When the apprentice returned, the master instructed the unhappy young man to put a handful of salt in a glass of water and then to drink it. “How does it taste?” the master asked. “Bitter,” spit the apprentice.

The master chuckled and then asked the young man to take the same handful of salt and put it in the lake. The two walked in silence to the nearby lake, and once the apprentice swirled his handful of salt in the water, the old man said, “Now drink from the lake.” As the water dripped down the young man's chin, the master asked, “How does it taste?”

“Fresh,” remarked the apprentice. “Do you taste the salt?” asked the master. “No,” said the young man.

At this, the master sat beside this serious young man who so reminded him of himself and took his hands, offering, “The pain of life is pure salt; no more, no less. The amount of pain in life remains the same, exactly the same. But the amount of bitterness we taste depends on the container we put the pain in. So, when you are in pain, the only thing you can do is to enlarge your sense of things... Stop being a glass. Become a lake.”

As we struggle with the fear of this pandemic and the pain of suffering reflect on how you can become a larger container and live a deeper life.