



GRIEF BRIEF

Continued

Gollum might be the posterchild of why attachment is not healthy. There is no doubt that his attachment to the ring caused him great suffering. He teetered between his love for the ring and his desperate desire to be free of it. Ultimately, his fixation saw the demise of both him and the ring.

Buddhist Zen master, Thich Nhat Hanh, says that in order to truly let go, we must learn to love more completely. Only when our love for another extends beyond our anticipation of a specific, desired outcome or beyond our expectations of personal gain can we become detached. This may be another familiar concept, as we explored non-striving last week.

Hanh delineates four forms of detachment which don't require perfect Zen monk status while being secluded up on a mountain. For love to be true love, it must have elements of "the love you do not know," joy/gratitude, compassion, and equanimity. Some might mistake what this looks like as an attitude of aloof, emotional distance and a lack of empathy, but that just leaves us absent from our own lives. Living free of attachments requires diving in the deep end of our lives!

So to delve into a little more about these elements, "the love you do not know" refers to loving from a place of friendship and offering to

the other what they truly need, not what you think they need. Instead of a need to please and force a behavior on another, which happens sometimes, detach from that need to truly see what makes them feel happy, safe, and comfortable.

Compassion is the next form of detachment which requires holding a space of non-striving while simultaneously allowing for connection and empathy. Compassion entails deep concern and support but knowing that we cannot take someone else's suffering away from them. Compassion is something we can cultivate toward ourselves and our own suffering as well.

When practicing gratitude we make room for joy, which is another component of detachment. This joy is also referred to as unselfish joy, as this means being happy for others and not just when something good happens to us.

Finally, when there is no clinging, we may come to experience equanimity or a calm, evenness of temper. When we try to put our beloved jewel in our pockets--my precious--to keep forever, it can turn into despair and destruction. Without equanimity, our attached love can become possessive. In closing, practicing these elements of non-attachment can help us to better cope with existential grief and become more free from suffering.

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