

How to create change in the world

How do we create change in the world? Yoga wisdom tells us that we need to start at the most basic level. To create change, begin with an individual. What is even more basic than a single human being? The stuff we are all made of: atoms and subatomic particles. “You are what you eat” as the saying goes. But what about our mind? Is the mind also made of atoms? Not exactly...

Physically, we may consist of atoms, but mentally we are made out of stories. Thus, to create change, we need to change the stories that our minds are made of.

What is an atom, by the way? An atom is the most basic unit of every living and non-living thing. But isn't that just another story? ...Everything is a story.

When you were born, your parents told you the story that they were told by their parents, who, in turn, were told by their own parents. This re-telling has been going on since the very beginning of humankind. Yet, who was the original storyteller?

Our teachers, parents, friends, and peers contribute to that on-going story. They give us only the description of the world they know - their perception of the world. It may not be how the world really is. We ourselves contribute to the story of the world every moment of our existence by thinking and believing in what we have been told.

The stories we tell ourselves form our social and cultural values. This means that our stories, tales, fables, anecdotes, parables, proverbs, and colloquial expressions are the backbone, the building blocks, of our society as a whole, and our modern culture on the planet Earth.

For the last few thousand years, the stories that have dominated our consciousness, in most modern cultures, are the stories of mankind's rule over the natural world, of the sense of separateness from nature and from each other, and of our self-gratifying pre-occupation with our ego-mind.

No matter how simple and seemingly insignificant, our stories are the real cause of many global social and cultural problems such as war and violence; fear of the natural world and separation from nature; pollution, environmental destruction, and the loss of wildlife habitats; over-consumption and materialism.

Imagine if most of our stories were teaching us some virtuous value, or encouraging us toward a positive action.

“Kill two birds with one stone” would be “Feed two birds with one seed.”

“It's a dog-eat-dog world” would be “It's a happy-dog-splashing-in-the-pool world.”

“Take as much as you can, before someone else will” would become “Take only what you need, leave the rest for others”.

If our description of the world as we know it was always based on universal love, compassion, and interconnectedness, what would the world be like?

Nonetheless, our world is the way it is for a reason. We've all done our part in creating it. What matters now are the stories we tell. If we want to continue seeing abundance on this beautiful planet, some of our stories have to change.

Although it would take some time and effort, we can focus on making this process a journey filled with fun, exploration, learning, and love. We need to become more aware of the existing stories and re-tell them in a more positive light. We need to learn from the older cultures that have survived modernization and from their stories, as well as from countless teachers and seekers who have taken this path of wisdom in the past. We must take time to witness life and nature, and notice the innumerable lessons all around us. We must listen closely to our own hearts as they are, too, our teachers and tell their own unique story.

It is, in fact, very real and possible to create change in the world that is full of love and happiness. It may be our next evolutionary step, to transform to a more spiritual way of living, with stories as the vehicle.

Let's begin today. Create change within you. What positive story did you hear today?

The disappearing ant and small acts of compassion

One morning, I was practicing yoga outside, as usual, going through my routine, which varies once in a while, but I always keep a few favorite poses.

I was in Down Dog when I saw a black ant crawling right in the middle of my mat. I noticed it and kept going through my routine. Then in a few moments, I was in Down Dog again, looking down, and there it was – that ant. Now I thought 'Maybe I should help the ant'. But I really don't like to interrupt my flow, even for something important. And then a thought came:

'I don't have to interrupt any flow – picking up that ant and saving its life is just another posture – it is part of the flow. In fact, everything always is and should be included as part of the flow'.

Very mindfully, still breathing and aligned, I paused, gently took the ant between my fingers, and was about to set it on the grass. Out of nowhere, a gust of wind came and lifted the front edge of my mat. I looked down and realized that suddenly the mat was hovering above the ground! ... Just kidding, I only wanted to get your attention. So, I was about to set the ant on the ground, but the ant was gone. I looked everywhere, on my hand, on the mat, in the grass, and it was nowhere to be found.

I thought the wind must have taken it. Or maybe, the Universe wanted to teach me a lesson: to take the time to perform an act of compassion no matter how small, even if it 'interrupted my flow', and to include every compassionate act into my flow, always. That is Yoga.

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