

Arriving and Setting a Course - Session 1 - Kaira Jewel Lingo

Transcript of EcoSattva Training 2025-26 Video

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Session Profile

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Speakers in this video

- Kaira Jewel Lingo

Transcript

So I really want to begin by celebrating each of us for being here, for taking the time and also for the courage that it takes to be part of this epha training. What we're undertaking here together is not easy. We are living through one of the most disrupted and chaotic times in human history. The past years have brought a crescendo of wars and genocide, climate chaos, polarization, economic uncertainty, authoritarianism, and the unraveling of laws and agreements meant to protect fundamental rights and international cooperation. No generation before us has faced what we're facing now, and so we really need spaces like this where we can come together and be supported in our depths, where we can



connect intimately, be vulnerable, tell the truth, and hold one another in love and courage.

So stepping into the stream of this training is an act of strength and beauty, and I really want to affirm the goodness of your commitment, the energy open-heartedness and wisdom that you bring, knowing. Yes, some of us may be still on the journey of accessing this training, perhaps not yet engaged with it, but however it unfolds, your presence and your effort are beneficial and admirable. And so I just want to deeply bow to each of you for your commitment to be on this journey.

I invite us to begin by calling in support from an ancestor, an animal guide, an element or a place on the planet that gives you strength. So you might bring to mind someone or something that you take refuge in a being or place that inspires you and nurtures your care for this world. As you sense this presence, this supportive presence you've chosen, feel how connecting with courage and wisdom outside of yourself can awaken the same within you, a trust and equanimity, a capacity to move forward even in uncertainty. Humans, as a species, have known how to move forward in difficulty. For millennia we have been doing it. And that knowledge exists in each of us right in this moment, and we can draw upon that and not only humans, but the more than human world and the earth.

So you might just take a moment to name who or what you're calling on for support, and you could put it in the chat just so we can be collectively nourished by that.

I'll read some of the supports: the great whale migrations, the old growth trees of the Pacific Northwest, a red tail hawk, the grandma maple tree in my yard, my grandmother parents, a beloved lake White Tara and Vini, the Pacific Ocean, my groundhog friend, the native plants that endure and return cranes with their ancient wisdom, grace, and long migrations. The sun, the Cindy Mountains of Northern New Mexico, my blood ancestors, one of them an abolitionist dog, ancestors of great wisdom and kindness, the Al Columbia River, my dad Ed, his energy and strength, the majestic white pine. So those are just some of these beautiful sources of support. Thank you for sharing them. I notice when we do this collectively, I feel like I can draw on those things for support too. Did that happen a bit for you? As you heard some of the other ones? Yeah. Beautiful.

So yeah, thank you. One being I would like to invite us to be in touch with as we begin is a Bodhisattva, a great being called the Earth Holder, Bodhisattva. Or we could say an earth holder is basically like an EcoSattva. And in an ancient text in Buddhism, there's a



Bodhisattva named Dharanimdhara, which is the earth holder, Bodhisattva. I'll put the name in the chat so you can see it. And in the texts, this Bodhisattva is a protector of the earth and they help deepen communication between humans and other species. And they help preserve the planet. They help protect the planet and all living beings by taking care of the air, the water, and the soil. So we are all earth holder Bodhisattva. We are all EcoSattvas. Each of us is here because we're called to make protecting and honoring the earth a top priority. And we see that mindful awareness of what is happening is what is needed in this moment to wake us up from this path of certain disaster that we are on.

So I invite you now to also take a moment to connect with your deepest motivation for being here. So what do you care about so that it brought you to this course? What are you hoping to learn, strengthen, or cultivate by joining?

As Frederick Buchner asks, where does your deep gladness meet the deep hunger of the world? And we want to hold our intentions gently as beautiful, wholesome possibilities rather than fixed goals. And we'll have a moment to share about these in the breakout groups later. But for right now, I want to invite you to let your body, once you've connected to what this intention is for being here today, let your body express the intention. So maybe with your hand or with your whole body, you might make a shape that represents this intention. So wonderful to see these shapes moving across the screen. So just breathe with the shape that you have found and feel your intention flowing through your body. You can anchor it in your body. Just really honor your intention and know that you can return to this shape whenever you need to reconnect with what called you here to be on this journey. Yeah, thank you. Thank you for these beautiful shapes. So we really want to bring our body along on this journey. We are animal bodies, right? We are wise organisms that have evolved in relationship to the earth for millions of years. And so tending to our nervous system is a way of reconnecting with life itself.

Because the climate emergency and all of its interrelated realities, they have a real impact on our nervous system. Some of us will experience our grief and anxiety and climate stress as numbness. Others will experience it as strong emotions and still others will experience alternating numbness and strong emotion at different times. So it's important to have practices that allow us to metabolize our grief, our anxiety, our stress in our daily life so that they don't build up in our body. And when we engage with these very natural responses to a world in crisis, when we engage with these emotions and hold them regularly, we grow familiar with them. And then the practices that we use can really be trusted companions that we can turn to whenever we encounter suffering in the world,



they can be steady friends that help us to stay connected to our bodies and allow our emotions even numbness to move through us with greater ease.

So I found this, I call it the six-part vagal nurturing sequence. I found this a very helpful practice, so I want to offer it to you. And there are many, many other practices that you may find helpful in grounding, and I encourage you to definitely make use of them. The vagal nerve, as many of you know, is the longest nerve in the body and it touches all the major organs. And so when we tone that nerve, we are building our own resilience. We're strengthening the capacity in us to bounce back from difficult experiences and stronger and more resourced. So this set of six basically holds or movements with our hand self touch. They support the vagus nerve. So invite you to do this with me. We're going to begin with the ears. I'm turning my head. So you can see we're going to massage the edge of the ear from the top all the way down to the lobe. And we'll do that two more times. So it should feel good, this gentle, this little massage of the outer ear, because we first listen to know if we're safe. So just rolling the outside of the ear between the fingers.

Good. And if you have glasses, you can remove them. We'll bring this fleshy part of our palm to cover the bones of the eyes. So we're not putting pressure on the eyeball, we're just closing the eyes and letting our eyes get bathed in restful darkness. You can rest your head and your hands if you want. And just feel the pressure of the hands on the eye bones and cupping your forehead and your fingers. You could take a breath or two here, just letting your eyes rest. We spend so much time in the visual field now we can just rest the eyes after we listen to know if we're safe. We look to see if we're safe. So this just communicates. We're okay. We can close our eyes.

Good. And then the next one is to just cup your face, cup your cheeks in your palm. Just feel the touch of your hand on your chin and cheeks. Just bringing a kindness to yourself, maybe visualizing someone that cares about you very much, holding your face with great tenderness and affection, letting yourself be as you are. Nothing to change or fix, just being and resting. And then we'll take one hand and place it over the center of the chest and one hand over that hand, breathing here into the chest and feeling just a kind of friendly, supportive blessing of the hands on your chest. And research has shown that this posture communicates directly to the amygdala. This center of fight, flight, freeze in the brain that we are safe. It calms the reptilian brain so you could whisper silently to yourself. I am safe. I am safe. And then allow your hands just to same position, but just to move down to a spot, just an inch below your belly button, one hand over the other. Just giving yourself support in your belly, feeling your hands, feeling your breathing and



resting comforting, being present for yourself. And then to close, we'll just turn our palms up. I'm just showing you here in the camera. And rest them on our thighs. Just like in yoga, we finish with a corpse pose. So now we're just resting and noticing what's the effect of this sequence? Is there a shift in the body, in the mind, in the heart, just breathing and feeling and opening to what's here.

Thank you. Thank you for trying out this six part vagal sequence. And if something shifted positively for you, just send up a reaction so we know something changed. Yeah, great. So this is always available to us and many other practices as well, being in our breath and holding ourselves.

So we are here because we sense there's value in a spiritual response, a spiritual practice in this moment of global transformation, of worldwide upheaval and Buddhist wisdom, especially the teachings on not self and inter being, they offer us a way to realign our perception with reality. So the delusion of separation between self and other humans, and the more than human world, this is at the root of our collective suffering and our planetary crisis. When we truly see our interconnection, we naturally respond with care, respect, and love. If we want safety for ourselves, we have to ensure safety for others, including the water and the soil. And safety can mean health. If we want health, we have to ensure the health of all that supports us. That is us. So if we want to thrive, we must help all beings thrive. We don't live on the earth, we live within the earth. We are embedded within this natural world.

And seeing this clearly allows us to act skillfully because this isn't an abstract insight. It's very practical. So we begin this process of turning to respond skillfully with accepting that we are in a free fall, right? Our societies, our systems are collapsing. And if we don't turn towards that and honor the reality of that, we cannot move somewhere else. So in a sense, we've all been given a terminal diagnosis, and if we open to that, we can decide how we want to move forward. If we are stuck in denial, then there's no generative way to move toward healing, to move towards something.

But what might really be possible if we face the reality that what we have built is is not at all guaranteed, and in fact what we have built contains within it, and it has since the beginning. The seeds of its inevitable crumbling, right? The way we have structured society is fundamentally unsustainable. So accepting that is not despair, right? It's clarity. When we are at peace with the truth of it, we can learn to live well within the limits of the earth. But in our global capitalist society and even nations that don't consider



themselves capitalists, we all remain rooted in the exploitation of the planet and other species through this pursuit of endless growth. But these two realities cannot exist. Endless growth and the health of the earth are fundamentally incompatible. If everyone on the planet were to live at the standard of wealthier countries, we would need nine earths to sustain us.

There's no planet B. So this is the first noble truth, right? Recognizing suffering, collective suffering exists, and it opens the way to the second, third, and fourth noble truths that real life is possible, a real way out of suffering is possible, but we only can find it if we turn to the reality of suffering, of the path of demise that we have put ourselves on. So if we don't face our pain, it will continue to haunt us. So you could say that we are now living through a global dark night, a dark night of the soul, right? This teaching in Christianity, so not an individual one, but a collective dark night that invites us to surrender our sense of control and our attachment to outcomes, allowing something larger and wiser and more attuned to move through us. Such surrender also protects us from burnout and compassion fatigue. It cultivates equanimity, the capacity to meet things as they are without turning away or collapsing into helplessness. So EcoSattva and earth holders are part of this really important work of recognizing, Hey, the plane is not going to stay in the air. And the sooner we wake up to that, the more chances we have for a gradual descent versus a nose dive burst into flames.

We can guide our plane to a softer, more deliberate descent, but we first have to accept that the plane's not going to be able to make it to its destination. But because of our awareness and our compassion and our care for all beings, we can make this landing no matter how difficult as life affirming as it can be. In the parable of the sower, Octavia Butler describes a dystopian future where the world is ravaged everywhere by climate, catastrophe and societal breakdown. The protagonist is a teenage girl, Lauren Mina, who is the only one willing to see what is actually happening while the adults clinging to a crumbling world, hoping things will somehow return to normal. She looks directly at collapse and prepares to live within it. She studies gathers tools and trains her body and mind for the inevitable unraveling. When the walls finally fall, she survives. And out of the ashes, she begins to imagine something radically new. A community guided by the living truth that God has changed. Lauren's capacity to imagine a new future arises precisely because she stops denying the end of the old one. So this is a quote from her new religion that she begins to create called Earth seed Books of the living. It says all that you touch, you change all that you change changes you. The only lasting truth is change. God is change.



Vanessa Machado de Oliveira in hospice, modernity invites us into a similar response. She says, our task is not to save modernity, which is this belief system and global social and economic structure that has brought us to collapse, that's built on colonialism and othering separation from the earth. So our task isn't to save this modernity, but rather to accompany it as it dies with dignity. This doesn't mean giving up or turning away, it means tending the endings with presence, humility, and care. Just as in the practice of mindfulness, we learned to sit with what is dissolving, how the breath leaves the body, or how the body changes, how it ages, or how the world transforms without grasping for permanence. In this way, mindfulness becomes not a technique for calming, but a way of holding the familiar stories, habits, and identities that no longer serve life. We need to sit with modernity in palliative care because if we don't, we won't learn its lessons which are needed in order not to make the same mistakes.

So both Octavia Butler and Vanessa Machado de Oliveira remind us that acceptance is not passivity. It's a fierce and tender act of liberation. When we stop clinging to the world as we think it should be, we free up the imagination, creativity, and compassion needed to meet the world as it is. This is the heart of mindful response to climate chaos, to look clearly at impermanence and suffering, not to collapse into despair, but to awaken into deeper inter being. To become as Butler's character does a seed of what might yet be possible. So as Wanda Isha reminds us, all organizing is science fiction. And I would say maybe the work of the EcoSattva is science fiction. To imagine a world beyond oppression and extraction is one of the most radical acts we can do. So imagination is not escape, it's the doorway to transformation.

So one of the deep practices of Buddhism that I think is so crucial to meet this time is both reverence and belonging. Our healing as a species begins with reverence, with remembering that we belong to the earth. My beloved teacher Han, has a calligraphy that says, reverence is the nature of my love. Reverence is the nature of my love. So when we love the earth, we want to see her clearly not our idea of her but her living truth. So it's both our motivation and our refuge, and it nourishes us to act with clarity and courage.

So last summer, I attended a two week silent retreat. It was a camping retreat at this big ranch in Oregon. And we had the opportunity to do a three day solo practice in nature, which was profoundly impactful. It required very careful preparation by the teachers, and we each had to find our spot where no one could see us. And so I felt drawn to a spot in an oak grove that was on a ridge overlooking this canyon, and we brought all of our food



and water with us two gallons of water per person for three days, which was more than enough. And we just had dried food. And I found it quite refreshing to see how happy I could be just on a very simple diet of fruit, raw vegetables, crackers, seeds, nut butters, bars.

And I had never until then been that many days alone in the woods. And on the first night, there were definitely moments of fear. I knew bears were in the area, but we had secured our food. We learned how to secure our food in a bear hang. So second night I slept more easily already attuned to the rhythm of the animals and the usual sounds of day and night. And over time, I just felt increasingly at home on that ridge learning that I could be there just like all the other species around me. And on the final morning, I wanted to just connect with this one pine tree that was sort of in the center of my little area that I had designated as my altar. And I realized I hadn't really interacted much with the tree. So I hugged the tree and then I leaned with my back on the tree, and I was just gazing out over the mountains and the canyon in front of me.

And I looked up and I noticed it was the only kind of tree in that area. It was the only pine tree. So I just decided to ask it, are you lonely? And the tree said, look out at the canyon and the mountains beyond. It's all pine forest. And then it said, look behind you. It's also all pine. There was a mountain behind me. All pine said, I'm happy for this oak grove to be here when the little oak trees surrounding me grow big enough. I will happily seed my place in the sun to them. And there was this circle of little baby oak trees around it. So I was very moved by the generosity of this tree. So then I asked the tree, what's it like to be a tree with roots steep in the earth and branches reaching toward the sky? And it said it was hard on the outside, but inside it was soft and juicy. And while it used most of its juice to nourish itself, it didn't mind sharing some with others as resin.

Then it asked me, what's it like to be a human? What's it like to walk on two legs across the earth? And I wasn't expecting that question. And so I just replied that it was wonderful to see the different kinds of landscapes and many different kinds of trees, and I just wanted to kind of help it see the different kinds of places where other trees lived. But the tree persisted and said, what's it like to be you, a human? So I paused and I had to connect more deeply. And I said, well, it's difficult. I said, most humans live at odds with beings like you. And with the whole living world. We act in ways that make life hard for many species, including ourselves. Some humans are always producing, consuming, tearing up the earth for profit. And in doing so, we lose touch with your wisdom and your beauty.



Yet a small group of humans is capable of slowing down, reconnecting with the wonder of the earth. These humans live in harmony with other species and know that caring for the earth is caring for ourselves. And I added sometimes I'm able to be a part of that group and sometimes I'm not this kind of apology and confession. And so the tree simply said, please continue to care for us and all living beings and help others do the same. I said, I will. So I think that's all of our tasks as Ecosattva on this journey to listen to what it is that we are each called to do and to do it. So I want to really wish us all well on this journey, this eco journey. May we practice for the benefit of all, and may we come home to our deepest belonging with the earth, offering ourselves a wholeheartedly in the service of all beings. Thank you.

Dana

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