

STRONG SOLAR FLARE ALERT  
TAKING IT TO THE PATH  
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Solar flares continue to erupt from the Sun and a strong solar flare alert has been issued by astronomers. Before we talk about that, a few words about these days. It continues to be hot here in Michigan, reaching almost 100 degrees each day, and holding. We hunker down.

My newest granddaughter Emma is here with us, so that is a great blessing and passing Emma around or entertaining her is great fun. She is newly into the 'grabby stage', having just learned how to use her hands.

Her mom, my daughter Anne, made dolmades (stuffed-grape leaves) today, as only she can make them, along with the most delicious humus, made with no garlic. I can't think of a better meal for a day that is so hot. Another of my daughters, May, came out of a short retreat and was here for dinner, and to see her namesake Emma May. The food, the heat, and good company make for a special time. They all went swimming. I went to bed because I have not had enough sleep lately. Anyway, that is some personal news.

It occurs to me that I might say a few more words about taking situations to the path. In meditation and dharma practice this is a big deal, learning to include what is worrying you into the equation. Here is a common example:

Let's say I am meditating, or trying to. Actually I am officially "practicing meditation," which has got to be an oxymoron of some kind. Note the emphasis on the word "practice," since that is what we do until we learn to meditate. I could go on....

If I have a good day with meditation, one with some little epiphany or breakthrough, then what do I expect the next day? You got it; I want to repeat the experience. We tend to compare our 'good' moments with every moment thereafter, and if they don't measure up, we are disappointed. And to put the icing on the cake, if we enhance or exaggerate our 'epiphany' moment in our mind beyond what it actually was, we will perhaps never find it again. You see the problem.

Our own insidious expectations pollute our experience to the point of degrading it. And even if we have a good meditation session, if we don't reach that same level the following day or days, we are let down. The let down further inhibits us from moving on.

This is one example of what I am trying to point out. Now, how does this relate to the solar flares and the changes they bring about in our mind? It seems we always have some idea (our own imagination, mind you) of who we are and what we imagine is supposed to be coming our way –

expectations.

These expectations then cloud our experience like dirty glasses until we are lucky if we can see at all. This is why (at least in the beginning) meditation is a lot about cleaning your spectacles -- purification of one kind of another. Even 20/20 eyesight can't see far through dirty lenses.

To continue with my meditation example. Getting beyond our own experiences of 'grace' requires letting go of whatever we expect (or want) to happen again or any peak experiences we are clinging to. We are busy comparing the present moment against something we are attached to that happened in the past.

"I just don't feel like meditating today," is a common refrain. "I will wait and try again tomorrow"....and tomorrow. The conditions of the present moment are somehow not right for meditating, and so on. To this way of thinking, we do not bring our actual conditions to the path, but instead insist that the conditions are not right somehow. Instead of accepting the conditions that "are," we wait for what we consider are ideal conditions. We are focusing on the results we imagine we want rather than the process of getting those results.

Bringing the present conditions to the path would require being crystal clear about however we feel -- good, bad, or indifferent. You can be clear about feeling bad just as you can about feeling good.

In other words, being aware of what actually is, and accepting it just-as-it-is, is the key not only to meditating, but also to handling the incoming change of solar flux. Of course this is easier said than done.

How many times when trying to meditate have I struggled against whatever was bumming me out at the time, so it would not stain the meditation, when what I needed to do was be fully aware of however I felt and incorporate it, take that feeling just-as-it-happens as a given, as the path for that day. Being inclusive of what bugs us as the means to change how we feel it is what I am pointing at. If we turn it into an axiom, it might be something like "You can't change what you refuse to accept." We have to actually accept our exact current conditions in order to change them. Is this understood?

In times of solar flux, our inner changes are sometimes like a kaleidoscope. A lot is going on. If you pay close attention, you will not find something 'new' happening, so don't look for that. Instead, the earmark of solar influx is having parts of you being activated by the solar energy. For example, if you are an artist, you might finally feel like finishing that painting. If a poet, you write. If a musician, you play or compose, and so on. In other words, you find the space and time to be creative. That is one sign of solar energy.

Another sign, one that is more troubling (and difficult to define), are changes in how we feel about and in the structure of our self, the particular matrix or world we find our self embedded or involved in. I have mentioned this quite a lot in early blogs, but to remind us of what I am

referring to, I will recap.

The advent of real (or new) change in our life (like that from solar influx) often causes our current life path to run aground or come up empty. The life direction we thought we were on may suddenly run dry or peter out. We are left high and dry in that regard. If, when that happens, we freak out and madly try to scramble back to where we came from or fill up our emptiness with meaningless panic, we are fighting the change that is (ready or not) coming.

I have found in my life that in every case where my current direction or “me” ran aground or bottomed-out that, that if I did not panic (and madly try to cling to my attachments), but instead allowed these changes to take place, I grew from the experience. In the end, I came out a “bigger” person, more inclusive, and better able to handle the challenges in my life. Most important, I never was short-changed or feel I lost anything important in the transaction, and here is why.

We tend to think of these deep changes as something new coming into us that is added on to who we already are. This is incorrect. As they say, there is nothing new under the Sun. What does change, however, is our attitude, the way we take the winds of change. It is exactly like setting the sails on a boat, resetting them to better take the wind.

However, we have to let go of our current attitude at least enough to take up a more relaxed or “better” attitude, and our current attitude may be in a death-grip. That is what happens in times of solar influx; we have to accept change. All deep change happens not on the periphery of the self, but in or toward the center. And any change at the center affects the entire periphery. Real change is one of attitude.

So the change I am suggesting here is in how we handle what we already have rather than always looking for a new or better situation. It is easier to make our current situation better by changing our attitude than by (always) changing our situation, as in: finding a new and different situation. Linear thinking always has an end, and often a dead end.

I realize my words may be too didactic and lack juice or enough poetry to properly float them. I am doing the best I can to communicate how we might look at bringing our current situation to the path by not preferring, not dictating, not hoping for a particular outcome, but learning to better work with what we have in taking our present situation to the path. As the Buddhists say, “Hope and Fear are not our friends.”