

Believe Me it's True!

by John C. Gifford, CBPM, NCTMB - Owner, Motionwise®

One of my dearest friends in Massachusetts is a devout vegetarian. She has lived this way for over forty-five years, working diligently to lead a life without harming any beings, a practice known as ahimsa. A month or two into our friendship she invited me to dinner. "Would you like me to prepare a particular piece of steak for you?" I thought she was joking. "Why would you prepare a steak for me given your lifestyle and belief system?" I asked. "Because it's my lifestyle and my belief system, and I know it's not yours. It's a belief and lifestyle that works for me and gives my life deeper meaning. And how can leaving only enough space for my beliefs be considered non-harming? I can't prove I'm killing any less beings than you; blood drips from every stalk of celery. *Let's just connect where we can.*"

Looking deeper into non-harming I see she makes an interesting point. Every day, phagocytes in your blood are killing millions of dangerous intrusive spirilla, bacteria and germs (forms of life) so the "you" remains alive. It's the cell death or apoptosis of tissue, for example, that sculpts your toes and fingers in the womb. Buddha, too, warned that being a vegetarian did not relieve you of the truth which science confirms

today: to live is to kill and to kill is to birth new life whether you are a cow, human, or amoeba (of course even this idea requires you *believe* in the concept of a "beginning" and an "end" of life). I read that Buddha asked monks never to refuse meat that was offered as this could create disconnection between human beings and would dishonor the lives of the creatures both, whom directly and indirectly were consumed for the meal. The Zen saying, "Every time I sit down to eat, I am the meal," reflects the knowledge that no one escapes their part in giving and taking life.

My friend could have used her lifestyle as a way to separate and judge others. Instead, by being mindful that her views were *beliefs* that gave her life a sense of purpose and meaning, *and not facts*, she was able to remain connected to others with different perspectives.

It can be so tempting to take a belief just deep enough to make others wrong. How can a life be based on compassion and openness towards others if I have room only for my views?

Till next time,

"It can be so tempting to take a belief just deep enough to make others wrong."

-John C. Gifford, CBPM, NCTMB
Owner, Motionwise®



Photo by Darlene Czech

John Gifford has performed over 30,000 sessions as an approved provider of sports massage and a unique style of bodywork called Bonnie Prudden Myotherapy® and Exercise Therapy. His mission as a clinician, lecturer, consultant, and author is to empower people to lead more active, successful, and fulfilling lives through the reduction and prevention of their muscular pain and tension.

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