

Contemplative traditions throughout history have reminded us that our inward journey to the core of who we are must accompany the outward voyage. Our path moves outward into our lives, as it travels inward toward our hearts. As we practice listening ever more deeply to what it is to be human, we sharpen our tools and build the skills we need to create a life of peace, love and connection, as well as the capacity to be of service and attend to the suffering we encounter in ourselves and others. Coming to know our innermost sensations, thoughts and feelings is a step toward self-compassion.

Speaking and listening from the heart, expressing ourselves authentically and listening attentively to others, without judgment, creates the foundation for compassionate action towards others. Listening from the heart represents a critical building block in constructing a life that is meaningful and beneficial. Practicing and embodying mindfulness and council fosters the insight, compassion and skillfulness that is so critically needed in the world right now. As one of the participants in the council program at Mule Creek State Prison wrote recently: "Being 'together' is the heart of our journey, whether with oneself or with others, it builds our soul through time. It is how we find inner peace, together."