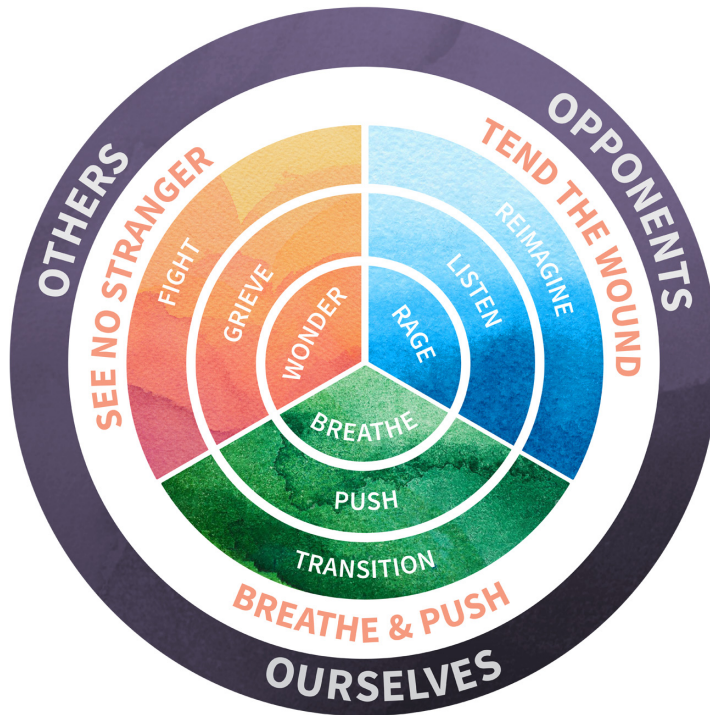


The Revolutionary Love Learning Hub

Introduction to the Compass Audio Recording Transcript Recording by Valarie Kaur, 2021



Welcome to the Revolutionary Love Compass. Revolutionary love is the choice to labor for others, our opponents, and ourselves. You can point this compass toward whomever you wish to practice loving and there are actions that will support you.

When an “other” is in front of you, this practice is called “See No Stranger.” It begins with wonder. You can look upon anyone and say “you are a part of me I do not yet know. I will let your story into my heart, I will let your grief into my heart.” And so the next practice is how to grieve. We don’t grieve with others in order to fix it, there is no fixing it, there is only bearing it. But when we grieve with others, we gain information for how to care for them, how to fight for them. You don’t have to know people in order to grieve with them, you grieve with them in order to know them. So that final practice is about how to fight, how to discern your role in the fight to protect others when they are in harm’s way. Wondering and grieving and fighting, these are the elements for what I call deep solidarity. Shallow solidarity is rooted in the logic of exchange: I show up for you so you will show up for me. But deep solidarity is rooted in the ethic of love. I show up for you because I choose to love you. We belong to one another. Our liberation is

bound up together. Now these practices of wondering and grieving and fighting, they're also practices you can use in your own personal, intimate life. We often have to wonder about our children, our partners, our friends, everyday in order to figure out how to care for them, how to love them well. We have to be able to grieve with them when they go through life's losses, and fight for them when they need us. This is the practice for how to see no stranger.

Now we turn the compass to opponents. What happens when the other in front of you is an opponent? This practice I call "Tend the Wound." Now notice I don't use the word "enemy." An enemy is a fixed and permanent identity. "Opponent" is a fluid category. To love one's opponents begins with tending to our own wounds. It begins with the practice of rage. Your rage is loaded with information and energy. Honor your rage. The solution is not to suppress your rage, or to let it explode, but to be able to process your rage in safe containers that do not harm others or ourselves. In this way, by tending to our trauma and our rage, we ensure that we are not blinded by our own wounds. Now only when and if you are safe, the next practice is to listen to our opponents. We do not listen to them to change them or persuade them. No. We listen to them in order to understand them. You see, there are no such thing as monsters in this world. Only human beings who are wounded. Who act out of their own insecurity or blindness or greed. That doesn't make them any less dangerous. But tending to their wounds gives us information for how to change the cultures, the contexts, the institutions that allow their behavior. And so with all of that information we move on to the next practice: to reimagine. We need to do more than resist our opponents. We need to reimagine the context, the culture that might set all of us free. This practice centers on reimagining the beloved community and holding up a vision of the world that leaves no one behind. Raging and listening and reimagining are the core practices for how to approach our opponents with the ethic of love. It's also a practice that we can use in our own personal lives when those who are closest to us become our opponents: our children, our spouses, our teammates. It begins with processing our own rage, figuring out ways to be in relationship with our own rage, asking ourselves "what information does this rage carry about what's important to me? And how do I want to harness this energy for what I do next?" Then it becomes important to listen to those opponents, and to reimagine solutions that might free all of us. Now I have an important note here. If you are someone who has a knee on your neck right now, it is not necessarily your role to look up at your opponent and try to wonder about them, or listen to them. No, your role is to stay alive. To take the next breath. That is your revolutionary act. Revolutionary love is not the sacrifice of an individual, but the practice of a community. We all have different roles at any given time. And so if you are someone who is in a position to listen to those kinds of opponents, we need you now. The labor to transition all of our institutions of power so that they free all of us, our opponents too, that is long labor. That is hard labor. And so we turn the compass once more. To ourselves.

Now, social reformers through history have taught us a lot about how to love others and how to love opponents. They may not have taught us at length about how to love ourselves. This is the feminist intervention. This is the work led by so many Black women, who teach us that movements for justice can no longer be fought on our backs or over our dead bodies. No, we deserve to pour into our own selves the care and the love that we pour out into the world. And so this practice is called “Breathe and Push.” The midwife has wisdom for how to sustain longevity in any long labor. She doesn’t say breathe once and push the rest of the way. She says breathe, my love, and then push and then breathe again. There is a kind of rhythm to sustain resilience in any creative labor: the labor of raising a family, or building a movement, or rebirthing a nation. And so that first practice is called breathe. Letting breath into your body as a way to care for yourself. How are you breathing each day? Who are you breathing with? Are you breathing with music or movement or the Earth itself? What do you need to be able to weave breath between your labors? And when you are ready, what push are you ready for? We often have to enter discomfort in order to do the work of healing, forgiveness, apology, reconciliation. It requires us to enter that discomfort as a way of loving ourselves. Sometimes the pain is so bright a voice in us might say “I can’t. I can’t go on. It’s too hard. It’s too painful.” This is usually a sign that we are in transition. That we are about to break through. We are about to birth a new version of ourselves or new possibilities into the world. In transition, we invite you to draw upon sources of bravery to stay in the fire. You see, no one can sustain the fire of transition alone. But when we call our ancestors to our backs, and our midwives to our side, and our own sources of wisdom within us, then we can find the bravery to keep breathing, keep pushing, and transitioning ourselves onto the other side. We transition ourselves as we transition the world.

Revolutionary love: to labor for others, opponents, and ourselves. When we labor with love our labors become porous enough to let joy in. And so joy is the tenth practice of revolutionary love. Joy gives us energy for that long labor. Joy returns us to everything that is good, and beautiful, and worth fighting for. Joy is the gift of love.

Revolutionary love is not only how we create the shift in culture and consciousness to birth a new world. It is also how we find meaning here and now. You see, laboring for a more just and beautiful world with love and with joy can be the meaning of life.