

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Summary of day 5 session: What To Say



Interview with Leo Kapembe

Opening practice

- Take three deep breaths and feel a real sense of gratitude for the ability to breathe
- Feel yourself present in this moment. This is a safe space.
- Reflect on how people around you support you. Do they know what to say to you or how to help you in your time of need?

Today's top takeaways

- We can find the courage to say that "I am hurting." Sometimes the bravest thing to do is to ask for help.
- There is help available to all of us. You are important and you deserve help and support.
- Sometimes those around us simply don't know what to say when we are grieving and they may end up saying something unhelpful or even harmful.
- If we don't receive the help and words of support from others, perhaps we can say these things for ourselves. Are you the person you have been waiting for, all along?

Namibian actor and comedian, Leo Kapembe

Have you experienced loss in your life?

"Yes, I lost my dad whilst I was studying at university in Cape Town. At the time, I was paying my own university tuition and I wasn't even able to come back home to bury him. It was a very difficult time"

Did you find that people didn't really know what to say or how to help you at that sad time?

"Absolutely, people don't want to talk about emotional things so they either avoid the whole subject or they end up saying something that's really not helpful at all. This made grieving my dad's loss a very lonely process for me."

Did you experience a disturbance in your mental state during this time or were you able to maintain some equanimity during your grief?

"Yes, in hindsight I definitely suffered, but wasn't aware of it at the time. Comedians and actors are often the most depressed people in our society. In time and with some maturity, I realized that I had been through 10 years of grieving. If only I had have spoken to someone earlier on, it could have been a shorter journey."

Why do you think it is that comedians and actors seem to have more mental health issues than the average population?

"I believe that as comedians and actors, we take all the pain and we absorb it. Then we don't let it out. Perhaps the stage is the place where we express some of what is inside but we don't actually go through the proper grieving process. Because we are comedians, people don't believe us when we say we are feeling sad or depressed. I felt oppressed and unable to really feel the grief that I was experiencing at the time."

Was there a turning point for you?

The turning point for me, was realizing how much I needed a family around me. I had ex-communicated myself from my friends and family, in Namibia and I didn't want to come home. I realized I needed this support for my healing. It wasn't easy admitting that I was the problem."

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Leo's parting words

When you are asking for help you are becoming mindful of your mental health and your situation. You are revolutionizing your life. I realized that I am beautiful, I deserve love, I deserve to be recognized and I needed to be part of the diverse community of Namibia in order to heal and grieve.

Closing mindfulness practice:

- Sit comfortably, disconnect and just STOP for a moment.
- Breathe nice and slow for a few moments...in through the nose and out through the mouth.
- Let's think about what the words are, that you would love someone to say to you?
- How would you like them to approach you, love you and speak to you?
- Imagine a wise grandmother or grandfather figure. Imagine what they would say to you now.
- Imagine them asking you what is on your heart and how can they best support you.
- Turn your awareness to that voice inside your own mind.
- Sometimes this voice can be really critical too. Let's replace some of the harsh words this voice may say with the voice of someone who loves us unconditionally.
- If you aren't receiving the help and unconditional love you wish to receive, from others. You can gift yourself these things.
- Say to yourself, "I love you...I am here for you...You are safe"
- We can all be here together, in our own pain and realize that we are enough.
- This may give us the courage we need to stop pretending and reach out, like Leo did to our loved ones in times of need.

Homework

- Become aware of that inner voice. Allow the critical inner voice to be replaced with a kind and compassionate one instead.
- Journal about the things that you would like to hear from others.
- Sit with your loved ones and explain to them how you would like to be heard, helped and loved.

