

Opening Words:

Our opening words today are from American Buddhist Nun, Pema Chodron from her book, *Practicing Peace in Times of War*:

When let go of our repetitive stories and fixed ideas about ourselves--particularly deep-seated feelings of "I'm not okay"--the armor starts to fall apart, and we open into the spaciousness of our true nature, into who we really are beyond the transitory thoughts and emotions. We see that our armor is made up of nothing more than habits and fears, and we begin to feel that we can let those go.

When you open yourself to the continually changing, impermanent, dynamic nature of your own being and of reality, you increase your capacity to love and care about other people and your capacity to not be afraid. You're able to keep your eyes open, your heart open, and your mind open. And you notice when you get caught up in prejudice, bias, and aggression. You develop an enthusiasm for no longer watering those negative seeds, from now until the day you die. And, you begin to think of your life as offering endless opportunities to start to do things differently.

