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# MoyoMaya

Sacred Space Between Us and  
the Power to Change the World



Tanja Kisslinger

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Power to Change the World**

by  
Tanja Kisslinger

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## **Sacred Space Between Us and the Power to Change the World**

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# Table of Contents

1. Small book, big word.....	6
2. Defining “MoyoMaya” .....	7
- Moyo + Maya	
- The promise of sacred space	
- From individual to global	
3. Principles of MoyoMaya.....	12
4. The power to heal the world.....	17
- A new “international development”	
- Where do we begin?	
5. Practicing MoyoMaya.....	22
- Service is the key	

**This book is dedicated to anyone who ever wanted to “make a difference” and to those who know the time has truly come...**

*With gratitude, I offer “MoyoMaya” to you and to this wonderful planet, as we move ever-closer to a conscious, compassionate, light-filled wakefulness.*

*It is my deepest wish that you will embrace MoyoMaya’s powerful spiritual potential - to heal your heart, to heal your life, and to heal this beautiful world. An understanding of MoyoMaya can enrich your life by opening your eyes and heart to the simple daily gestures that will connect you to the purpose and meaning for which you have searched.*

*For every one of us, true fulfillment lies in that sacred space between us; a space that is instantaneously bridged by the reaching out of a compassionate heart.*

# 1. Small book, big word

**MoyoMaya.** In this one simple word, I capture and convey a decade of heartfelt experience and spiritual wonder. This word has taken shape in my own life through ten years, five countries and countless hearts, hands and minds. Born simply, as my own personal calling to international volunteering, it has taken root and flourished into something much greater. MoyoMaya is a “spiritual principle” that I use to heal myself, to heal others, to make choices, to determine my path, to maintain respect for the natural world, and to interact with those around me. In my own life, MoyoMaya has become a means to heart-centered living and compassion-based consciousness, unfailingly connecting me to this beautiful world and everyone in it. Indeed, MoyoMaya embodies the beauty and responsibility inherent in the perfect ideas of “unity” and “oneness,” and it does so in a way that is hopeful, positive, dynamic, and so timely.

## 2. Defining “MoyoMaya”

For the past 10 years I have followed my heart to distant countries, with the single goal of “volunteering” my time and energy. This has felt to me like a calling, with the same undeniable pull as any other. From Romania, Costa Rica, Tanzania, India to Mongolia, I have participated as an orphanage caregiver, a community development worker, a journalist and a child sponsor advocate. Through these experiences, and without my knowledge, the meaning of MoyoMaya slowly evolved, enriched in a new way by each individual journey. However, it was the experiences of Tanzania and India, in particular, which formed the two essential, complementary parts of the idea itself: the “**moyo**” and the “**maya**”.

### **Moyo + Maya**

“Moyo” is the Swahili word for “heart.”  
“Maya” is the Sanskrit word for “illusion.”  
To me, the words “MoyoMaya” together

represent an intention to use the heart to heal the “space between us.” After all, the space between us (between people, between cultures, between countries, between you and me) is an illusion. Separateness is not our true nature.

The space between us is actually a **sacred** illusion. It is the unseen spirit by which we are bound and across which we can instantly connect, to understand and assist any person or situation we choose.

Thus, MoyoMaya is a spark of awareness, providing opportunities for more “heart-focused” interaction with the world around you at all times and in all situations. It is a perspective that you choose. It reminds you, from moment to moment, that your true nature is spiritual, divine and connected, and that the space between us, which is often perceived as division and difference, holds the keys to individual and global healing.



## **The promise of “sacred space”**

Sacred space is the unseen river of consciousness and energy that is our true home and heritage. It swims in and around us in every moment, between people, between countries, between worlds, and is governed by universal, spiritual law and character. This means that: (1) the purity of the intent with which we reach into this space will be reflected and echoed back to us within our own lives; (2) we are powerful, creative beings whose thoughts, words and deeds continually create our experience, individually and collectively.

Sacred space is at all times ripe with unity, connectedness, oneness, harmony, compassion and peace. However, these fruits are not simply given, but must be consciously chosen. MoyoMaya is the “bridge” on which we can choose to walk at any moment, out of our perceived separation and into sacred space. It reminds us that when we reach out with a compassionate heart, with

the intent to give comfort and healing, our impact is inevitable and guaranteed. This is true whether we reach into sacred space and move our hand just enough to create a ripple or whether we wade in and take wide steps forward.

## **From individual to global**

Once we understand that the space between ourselves and everything else is a viable force that can be used to connect, heal and empower, then it is also clear that MoyoMaya links **individual** consciousness to **collective** power (as groups, communities, countries). Inevitably, as you open your awareness and soften your consciousness, you begin to deeply understand and appreciate that your own life is as deeply connected to immediate family as it is to people in foreign lands, and that you are not powerless or irrelevant to the experiences of poverty, disease, joy and triumph anywhere on the planet.

In fact, MoyoMaya suggests that the solutions to all so-called world “issues” or global “problems” must begin at the level of the individual. There is no other way to truly heal these things called poverty, hunger or homelessness, other than through a simple, spiritual and compassionate reverence for human life by all people everywhere.

Global change is first and foremost about healing, and that healing must begin within. Whether our work begins as healing past trauma and emotional pain, or healing thoughts of our unimportance and irrelevance, or healing ourselves of assumed superiority or inferiority – all these healings are essential groundwork in order for global healing to begin.

It is with this new sense of self-awareness that we begin to understand and accept that our simplest daily decisions and actions are inextricably bound to, and in fact impact, people in distant lands. Eventually, we are open and aware enough

to bring a new consciousness to each moment – a consciousness that happily and compassionately makes new choices while celebrating, respecting and revering our human unity and connectedness across borders, boundaries, cultures and oceans.

### **3. Principles of MoyoMaya**

I have come to deeply appreciate the power of volunteerism to open one's heart, mind and self-awareness, and to transform one's perspective of his or her role and relationship to the world at large. My volunteer experiences have each provided a unique gift of insight, presented here as "principles" of MoyoMaya.

**♥ No act is too small and none occur in isolation.**

*(Romania, 2001, Orphanage Caregiver)*

No act of kindness, selflessness or giving is too small or too brief. All actions occur

in context and – in the life of a Romanian orphan – such actions are woven into the fabric of a lifetime. Very often we stand back and ask, “What difference can I make? What can I really offer that will change anything?” MoyoMaya suggests that the simple act of stepping forward with intent to give or to heal invokes the unseen spiritual network of thoughts, ideas and people to which we are endlessly bound. There is no act too small; there are only those that never happen at all.

**♥ People need hope, respect and support - not solutions.**

*(Costa Rica, 2002, Women’s Rights and Community Development Worker)*

“Expertise” and “solutions” are not to be *delivered*; they must be encouraged and harvested within the heart and minds of those with whom we live and work. As a volunteer (or, as a friend, family member or colleague), our role is not to provide answers; we need only to remain graciously open to

the lessons we are learning ourselves. In this way, we “hold space” for the growth and empowerment of another, and we become an essential channel of hope. MoyoMaya reminds us that our greatest role – in all contexts – is to be friend and facilitator of the divine spark and innate wisdom that already lies within.

**♥ The heart knows we hold more in common than we do in difference.**

*(Tanzania, 2005-06, Communications Specialist and Journalist)*

Participating in the world at the level of your own heart requires a willingness to abandon preconceived notions and constructions of reality that stem from the culture and country into which you happen to have been born and are living. We must be willing to step away from the idea that we hold ideals to which another part of the world should be striving to meet. MoyoMaya invites us to connect to and reach toward others because we are the same as them, not because we are different

– because we can understand their basic emotions, struggles, joys and longings, and we recognize these things within ourselves.

**♥ Joy depends upon the presence of community, not the absence of problems.**

*(India, 2008, Communications Specialist and Journalist)*

Many volunteers in the developing world make the same observation: “They have nothing, but they are so happy. We have everything, and we are so miserable.” Indeed, when we perceive ourselves as separate (which is the bedrock of culture and consciousness in most affluent nations today), we construct artificial and unnatural definitions and standards of “success” and “happiness.” Very often these supposed achievements include the addition of material goods, and the elimination of any form of discomfort or inconvenience.

MoyoMaya reminds us that our truest heritage is spiritual unity; i.e., connection and relationship and the feeling of being understood. MoyoMaya suggests that true joy and happiness is a natural expression of the contented spirit – a spirit contented by its connection to a “community” with whom it can laugh, cry, celebrate and struggle.

**♥ Compassion is the celebration of spirit, not the pity of circumstance.**

*(Mongolia, 2009, Child Sponsor Advocate)*

Compassion is commonly defined as “sympathy, sorrow and pity at the suffering of another and the wish to relieve this suffering.” However, to see the circumstances of another through eyes of pity is to pass judgment on that person by perceiving them, their situation and yourself through a lens of preconceived and subjective ideals. MoyoMaya reminds us that compassion is actually a simple, heart-felt perspective that chooses to embrace every person on their own terms and in their own context. It sees



similarity, power and potential in all places, and it understands the role that it can play in harvesting these things in cooperation.

MoyoMaya encourages our compassion-based consciousness to look deeper than material circumstance, and chooses to recognize, encourage and celebrate the resilience and perseverance of the human spirit.

## **4. The power to change (heal) the world**

From Romania to Mongolia, each of my volunteer experiences offered a reminder of life on a grander scale. They showed me that the so-called “developing world” (also referred to as the “third world” and “the south”) is about the universal strength of the human spirit, more than it is about human struggle. It is about that which we hold in common more than it is about what makes us different. It is overflowing with people

(individually and in groups) who face and overcome situations of disadvantage and distress, and live peaceful, fulfilled lives on their own terms. Whether in the wasteland-turned-orchard of rural India, or the street-child-turned-independent-artist of urban Tanzania, these individual stories need our attention, intention and celebration.

## **A “new” international development**

Thus, in its grandest vision, MoyoMaya encourages a new approach to “international development” (i.e., the multi-disciplinary approach to human and global development that includes foreign aid, governance, healthcare, education, gender equality, disaster preparedness, infrastructure, economics, human rights, environment and issues associated with these). Currently, international development programs are conceived and applied with the objective of raising “quality of life” in “third world” nations, and they emphasize the sustainability of the program. MoyoMaya recommends, however,

that we step back and observe the bigger picture (the thoughts, assumptions and beliefs) behind such so-called advancement in quality of life. Are our current definitions of “quality of life” *spiritually* relevant?

MoyoMaya proposes human and global development that is based upon, and emerges from, individual and collective compassion-consciousness rather than external measures of “productivity” and “success.” The “development” of any country would be about harmony, spirit and community rather than economic ideals, and this would be the constant goal and individual responsibility of each nation, rather than the objective of any one country to exert or propose upon another. The divisions of “north” and “south,” “first world” and “third world,” would be entirely unnecessary, since every country and culture would be seen to have as much to offer as it has to achieve.

In this new international development, there would be a deeper understanding and

appreciation for the unique wisdom and contribution of every country, each within its own distinctive context of history, personality and geography. From the starting point of compassion-consciousness, nations would learn from each other, respectfully receiving new ideas and experiences like seeds that can be planted and harvested within their own context to develop ever more harmonious cultural awareness and reality. Nations would support each other without agenda, celebrating the goals and skills of the other without imposing their own standards and solutions.

Ultimately, as each country develops and expands its own consciousness of compassion, it simultaneously contributes to and expands a global consciousness, a global sense of community, and a heart-based way of living – and it does so in a *cooperative* way.

## **Where do we begin?**

MoyoMaya suggests we are bound to each other across oceans and continents by the sacred space of spirit. In turn, this means that a “new international development” can be accomplished by every one of us – it does not require specialized training, education or international travel. It begins with individual consciousness, and where we choose to focus our attention and energy in everyday life. With every choice and action, you can ask yourself: “Who will it affect? What do I intend? If I send this intention into sacred space, how will it be perceived, received, and returned to me?”

Whether a given moment finds us buying vegetables from a roadside vendor in Tanzania or from a cashier in a Western superstore, by simply making time and space for the simplest acts of kindness and consideration, we unleash oceanic waves of compassionate action as a result. The specific links in each energetic chain of

action do not even need to be known or understood; they simply begin their certain journey from our heart and into the lives of people living in distant lands. As such, the power to change the world (“first” world or “third” world, “developed” or “developing”), really does lie *within*.

## **5. Practicing MoyoMaya**

MoyoMaya is already here and it is already within you – the only requirement is that you must *choose* it. You need first to truly embrace the idea that you are not separate; you are spiritually connected to everyone else (regardless of geography) by thought, intention and action. Indeed, you are capable of healing, heart-focused living, and humanitarian action right *now* – you do not require more time, money, resources or a single change in lifestyle. These things simply require your attention, your intention, and your willingness to apply them, one moment at a time.

Practicing MoyoMaya, in other words, is to *choose consciousness* from moment to moment, day to day. Choosing consciousness is to welcome, rather than resist or deny, the ideas that:

♥ **You are connected and relevant** to all people and all human situations – from the most beautiful and profound, to those which you find difficult to acknowledge or think about (e.g. poverty, disease).

♥ **You are a powerful creator and healer** of all aspects of the human, natural and spiritual world – again, including everything from individual triumph to global suffering.

♥ **You are a messenger and a magnet** in the sacred space that surrounds you. The “vibration” (signal or frequency) of your soul is all-present and all-powerful, and is not fooled or masked by your active ego-mind. This is why it is fruitless to begin with a desire to change anyone else or any one external circumstance or situation without

first addressing your own relationship to yourself and the vibration that you are sending into the world around you. You may “desire” and “want” from an intellectual, material and physical level, but this is not the *vibration of your soul*. Your soul, if it is sending its messages and intentions from a seat of hurt, fear, uncertainty or a feeling of “lack”, must first return to its natural state of connectedness, harmony, safety, abundance and certainty about its own divinity. This is the seat from which we can invoke our incredible healing and creative powers – for ourselves, for each other, and for this planet.

♥ **You begin your highest spiritual practice and your greatest contribution to this world simply by opening your eyes, heart and mind to *your own heart* in this very moment.** Indeed, to change the world, we turn *within* – we remember our spiritual heritage, we heal our wounds, and we seek opportunities to cultivate kindness towards ourselves and others. When you send this intention into the sacred space that



surrounds you, it is the law of this beautiful, energetic universe that all the rest (the “next steps,” the “how” and the “when”) will take care of itself.

## **Service is the key**

MoyoMaya suggests we can “turn within” by “turning without”. In other words, the key to practicing MoyoMaya authentically lies in recognizing it as more than a simple reflection of the idea that “we are one.” Indeed, we are “one,” but in this realization the challenge of MoyoMaya is delivered as a “call to service.” You are called to remember your deepest truth: that it is in *service to others* that you become whole, that you are healed, that you are home. This life was never intended for your solitary participation or singular fulfillment; your mission is to be in relationship and to venture into the sacred space between us. This is how the spirit grows, experiences and evolves. This is how we change ourselves and change the world. As Mother Teresa once said, “The fruit of love is service; the fruit of service is peace.”

Although “service” often conjures religious connotation and imagery, in its most essential form it simply refers to one’s own awareness of and respect for the life that is within them and which surrounds them. Service is the spiritual impulse to comfort and uplift the circumstances and experience of another. True, open-hearted service is actually a mutual gift; i.e., even as we give to the world around us, we are given exactly what we most deeply require.

In my own life service has often taken the form of volunteerism, and, indeed, I have witnessed the incredible and life-changing effects that this path bestows on both giver and receiver. Ultimately, however, it is not important that you serve in any particular way, but that you simply allow yourself to serve in the way that brings you the greatest joy and deepest satisfaction. When you are deeply passionate about the way you serve others, and when your service reflects your unique self and soul, then MoyoMaya becomes love in action. And, as each of us steps forward

to put love into action, we then truly begin to harness the greater power for which we endlessly yearn: to change the world.

Thus, if there is a simple, yet worthy message contained in this small book, it is this: as each of us consciously chooses to open our hands and hearts to the world around us in a sincere spirit of service, then we have finally found and embarked upon the path to prioritizing humanity over economy, spirit over material, and compassion over pity. We will have truly engaged, for the first time, the potential for healing the world situations that cause us distress and suffering. *It is possible* to end all kinds of famine, feud, war and inequality. *It is possible* to embrace our differences, and to discover freedom in all the ways we are the same.

The time is now. The power is within. Sacred space supports and awaits us.

Your task, in this moment, is *to begin...*

*“Miss no single opportunity of making some small sacrifice, here by a smiling look, there by a kindly word; always doing the smaller right and doing it all for love.” ~ St. Thérèse of Lisieux*

*“Our task must be to free ourselves by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature and its beauty.”  
~ Albert Einstein*

*“It is not the magnitude of our actions but the amount of love that is put into them that matters... Do not wait for leaders. Do it alone, person to person.” ~ Mother Teresa*

*“Teach the triple truth to all: A generous heart, kind speech, and a life of service and compassion are the things which renew humanity.” ~ Buddha*

♥ [www.moyomaya.com](http://www.moyomaya.com)

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## MOYOMAYA IS A JOURNEY, A PERSPECTIVE, A PURPOSE...

*“Moyo” is the Swahili word for “heart”. “Maya” is the Sanskrit word for “illusion”. Together, the words MoyoMaya reveal how the space between us – often perceived as division and difference – is an unseen river of consciousness and energy that connects countries and cultures, and holds keys to individual and global healing. As you embrace MoyoMaya, you discover that you are not powerless or irrelevant to the experiences of poverty, disease, joy and triumph anywhere on the planet. By consciously choosing to open your hands and heart in a sincere spirit of service, then together we can finally embark upon the path to prioritizing humanity over economy, spirit over material, and compassion over pity.*

### THE PRINCIPLES OF MOYOMAYA:

- ♥ No act is too small and none occur in isolation.
- ♥ People need hope, respect and support - not solutions.
- ♥ The heart knows we hold more in common than we do in difference.
- ♥ Joy depends upon the presence of community, not the absence of problems.
- ♥ Compassion is the celebration of spirit, not the pity of circumstance.

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Tanja Kisslinger is a visual communicator and social entrepreneur. Since 2001, she has followed her passions for international volunteerism and cross-cultural storytelling to Romania, Costa Rica, Tanzania, India and Mongolia. Through “MoyoMaya”, Tanja uses media, volunteerism and healing therapies to continue her work with non-profits and like-spirits around the world. See [www.moyomaya.com](http://www.moyomaya.com)



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