As I sit here writing this, we are one day away from a major election that has everyone stressed. By the time this is read, we will all have a pretty good idea who won. It may be good news for some and not so good news for others. Over the past three or four months, since the real competition began against Harris and Trump, I have had many discussions with my husband and my kids about taking sides. I imagine many of you reading this will cast a similar vote to me, but maybe not. One of the lessons my husband keeps reminding me of, especially as we get closer to election day, is that people are people and how they vote isn’t a reflection of who they are as a person.

In these times of intense hatred and rhetoric it is hard for me to feel love for those who are voting different from me. This is especially hard when the other side is so intense and mean. It seems like the differences between candidates is so extreme that there is only one answer if you are a good person. It’s not that easy though. There are many reasons why people vote the way they do. Sometimes out of fear, anger, worry, uncertainty, ignorance. We are all impacted by our life experiences which can cause hatred to win out.

This internal struggle provides a good opportunity to look at the four immeasurables as taught by the Buddha:

May all sentient Beings have happiness, Never be separated from Bliss without suffering, Be free of suffering, Be in equanimity free of bias, attachment and anger.

Perhaps the most poignant one is equanimity:

Equanimity in Buddhism means to have a clear-minded tranquil state of mind - not being overpowered by delusions, mental dullness or agitation. For example, with equanimity we do not distinguish between friend, enemy or stranger, but regard every sentient being as equal.
The near enemy is indifference. It is tempting to think that just 'not caring' is equanimity, but that is just a form of egotism, where we only care about ourselves.
The opposite of equanimity is anxiety, worry, stress and paranoia caused by dividing people into 'good' and 'bad'; one can worry forever if a good friend may not be a bad person after all, and thus spoiling trust and friendship.
A result which one needs to avoid is apathy as a result of 'not caring'.
Equanimity is the basis for unconditional, altruistic love, compassion and joy for other's happiness and Bodhicitta.
When we discriminate between friends and enemies, how can we ever want to help all sentient beings?
Equanimity is an unselfish, de-tached state of mind which also prevents one from doing negative actions. (from A View On Buddhism website).

It/s so easy to get wrapped up in our differences and to not see what it is to be human. We all struggle with the same feelings: fear, love, anger, jealousy and many more. We are all born into this world innocent and in love and what happens next is out of our control. Sometimes humans struggle to see humanity in others. We find it too hard to see others as ourselves and see them only as “other.” The Buddha, although I am certainly no scholar, would want everyone to see one another as they are at their very soul level. I once I heard something about it being easy to love and feel kindness to those who are loving and kind while it is much more difficult to feel those things for those who has done us wrong or who has betrayed us or committed harm against us or someone else. Personally, I struggle with doing just this. It’s hard to see past the things on the outside of someone, the walls they put up, the external self and to see the equanimity in others.

This is what is so powerful about yoga therapy and meditation. It gives us a moment to see this part of ourselves and sometimes even opens the gate to see that in others. As we learn to see our own walls and to get to know ourselves, we can better understand and see others for their true selves. We are really not as different from one another as we think. We are all mothers, daughters, sisters, sons, fathers, husbands, wives, children, lovers, friends. We all have a need for love, security, faith and basic needs. So the next time you find yourself looking at someone and thinking something unkind or without compassion, take a pause and see them as your family member, your friend, or yourself. Notice if this causes any shift in you, your mind, your body, or perhaps changes you in some other way. It doesn’t take much to shift your perspective.