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Shaping a Future of Peace for all Beings

An interview with Will and Madeleine Tuttle

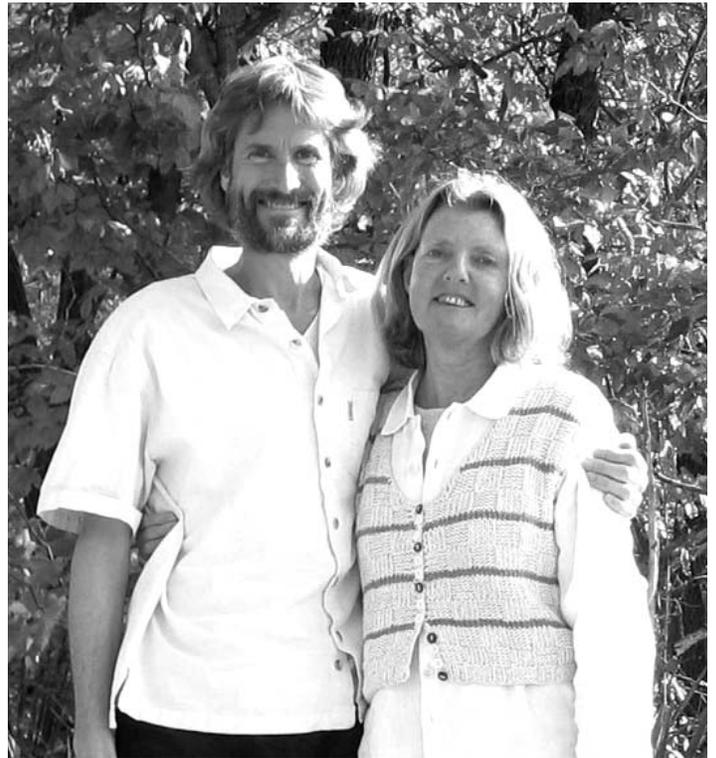
Will and Madeleine Tuttle have been traveling the United States and Europe for the last fifteen years inspiring audiences with Will's music and talks, Madeleine's art, and their workshops and individual healing sessions. They have shared their wisdom at progressive churches, human potential conferences, intentional communities, and many other venues. They have devoted their lives to teaching ways to transform the current worldview from one of dominance and exploitation to one of communion, cooperation, and peace.

They live what they believe and are among the key cultural creatives who are shaping the future. But there is something even more special and unique about the Tuttles. Many of the great movers and shakers of our time are guiding humanity toward inner peace, international peace, an end to human hunger and poverty, an end to violence toward each other, and a reduction in our destructiveness to the earth. Yet curiously, within these discussions, we rarely hear reference to the pain of animals at the hands of human beings.

Thankfully, the Tuttles are working to raise awareness about the predicament of animals and to help us all incorporate this expanded sense of peace and compassion into our own spiritual journeys and visions. Will's newly released book *The World Peace Diet: Eating for Spiritual Health and Social Harmony*, published by Lantern Books, is an essential tool for all those creating the new culture.

JC: Will and Madeleine, I understand that you travel full time offering inspirational music, art, and workshops. Tell us about these and how you see your work fitting into the creation of a new, peaceful, and compassionate culture.

W & M: Every weekend we're in a different city, presenting a concert of original uplifting piano music together with an exhibit of Madeleine's visionary watercolor paintings. We've found that music and art, as non-verbal expressions, can communicate directly and deeply to the hearts of those attending. In the ancient sacred and shamanic traditions, music and art are seen as vehicles of consciousness, and are used to build an energy field of healing and to extend blessings. It's great to be able to continue this tradition in new ways.



We also offer workshops on developing spiritual intuition where we share techniques of meditation and imagery along with art and music to help participants experience their intuition in action, and to discover their unique way of accessing their intuitive wisdom.

JC: Why do you feel it is important to include the discussion of the rights of animals and the vegan lifestyle in your teachings?

W & M: To push people's buttons! Just kidding. Actually, the wisdom traditions of the world all agree that practicing loving-kindness to others is essential to spiritual growth and happiness. All life is interconnected. They also teach that as we sow, we inevitably reap. We are all born into a culture that teaches us as children to see non-human animals as mere commodities to be used, bought, sold, and eaten.

Our culture's underlying mentality of commodification, exclusion, and misuse is the root of our unyielding dilemmas, and its opposite is a mentality that sees beings-all beings-as sacred and worthy of kindness and respect. This mentality of non-violence toward others is the essence of veganism, which is simply living a life where we strive to bless others, rather than harm them. It's quite simple, really, but revolutionary! This mentality is the foundation of all human happiness because as we bless others, we are blessed. As we encourage others, we are encouraged, and as we are loving to others, we find that we feel loved!

JC: The many people working to create a new culture of harmony are often involved in peace and justice work, women's rights, environmental protection, and many other forms of activism. All these subjects find a wide and interested audience. Yet the subject of the vegan lifestyle often seems to be almost a taboo topic even among some of



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the most forward thinking among us. Why do you think this is so and why do you believe that veganism is an intrinsic and essential part of shaping a more positive, peace-filled future?

W & M: In *The World Peace Diet*, it's called "the taboo against knowing who you eat." It's taboo to discuss the pain we routinely perpetrate on animals for food because it offends our natural sense of compassion. It's taboo also because nobody wants to hear about it. It is like being in Alabama in 1820 and trying to talk about the suffering of slaves. The main way it continues is by being covered up.

It's also a taboo because it's so much easier to blame others for our problems than it is to take responsibility for them ourselves. I remember watching a mother duck teaching her ducklings how to feed, and realizing that the most important teaching given in any species by a parent to its young is what to eat. That is why we resist questioning our culture's food teachings at a deep, unconscious level. There are many other factors as well, which are discussed in *The World Peace Diet*.

The upshot of all this is that we are taught to ignore the distress of animals at our hands. The more forcefully we ignore something, the more it controls us. The only way to heal our culture and our world is by practicing a mentality of inclusiveness, kindness, and respect toward others. Being a vegan is nothing to be proud of. It's simply the inevitable result of our true nature functioning naturally and seeing beings rather than things when we look at others.

JC: What occurred in your lives that led you to become vegan and adopt a non-violent life-style?

Madeleine: When I was five years old in Switzerland, I saw a dead bird which struck me to tears. I ran home and told my mother not to give me anything to eat that looked like that little bird. Meat was expensive, and from that time on, I was spared having to eat animal flesh, though I didn't make the strict decision to go vegetarian until about 30 years ago, and went vegan when I moved to the States about 13 years ago.

Will: I was raised in a typically heavy meat and dairy eating household, though when I participated in slaughtering cows on an idyllic organic Vermont dairy farm in my early teens, I came face to face with the unavoidable fear and violence of our food production system. It was shocking, to say the least! Right after college in 1975, I went on a spiritual pilgrimage and landed at The Farm in Tennessee, a vegan community of nearly a thousand people, and became vegetarian. In 1984, while living in another vegan community, a Zen monastery in South Korea, I realized directly the interconnectedness of all life, and have been vegan ever since.

JC: Will, what is your book's main message?

W: The main purpose of *The World Peace Diet* is to make new connections. We have been taught to disconnect during our culturally mandated food practices. I address this nearly invisible mentality of exclusion and its effects

from many perspectives—the historic, psychological, sociological, spiritual, and ecological. Pythagoras, Buddha, Da Vinci, Tolstoy, Einstein, Schweitzer, Gandhi, and many others have all said the same things, but more as aphorisms. This goes into the connections in depth and shows the big picture of our culture. To grow spiritually, we must understand our cultural programming!

Until we become aware, it's difficult to change. But we can grow in wisdom and contribute to a healthier and more harmonious world. *The World Peace Diet* points out the roots of our dilemmas and suffering. Its main message is that our cultural conditioning has deceived us into seeing ourselves as essentially predatory, and by relentlessly eating like predators, we have created predatory economic and social institutions that create enormous suffering. When we awaken to our true nature, we see clearly that our greatest joy and satisfaction come in blessing, cooperating, creating, giving, encouraging, loving, protecting, and caring. We see the interconnectedness of all living beings, and can awaken to the deep spiritual truths that bring authentic freedom.

The book calls for a benevolent revolution in the daily actions that condition our thinking. Through showing mercy to those who are vulnerable in our hands, we will find mercy, love, creativity, and joy spreading through our human world. Allowing animals, who cannot retaliate, to live their lives freely, we will mature spiritually to the point that we will be worthy of living peacefully together. In the end, what we would most want for ourselves, we must first give to others.

Dr. Will Tuttle is an acclaimed pianist, composer, and author of The World Peace Diet. His Ph.D. from U.C. Berkeley focused on educating intuition in adults. A former Zen monk, he has presented lectures, concerts, and workshops for hundreds of gatherings. Will's wife, Madeleine, is a visionary artist and Waldorf educator from Switzerland. See www.willtuttle.com for more information.

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