

The Empty Rowboat

Excerpted from [Everyday Zen](#) by Charlotte Joko Beck

Suppose we are out on a lake and it's a bit foggy - not too foggy, but a bit foggy - and we're rowing along in our little boat having a good time. And then, all of a sudden, coming out of the fog, there's this other rowboat and it's heading right at us. And... *Crash!*

Well, for a second we're really angry - what is that fool doing? I just painted my boat! And here he comes - *crash!* - right into it.

And then suddenly we notice that the rowboat is empty.

What happens to our anger? Well, the anger collapses... I'll just have to paint my boat again, that's all.

But if that rowboat that hit ours had another person in it, how would we react? You know what would happen!

Now, our encounters with life, with other people, with events, are like being bumped by an empty rowboat. But we don't experience it that way. We experience it as though there are people in that other rowboat and we're really getting clobbered by them...