

# 2002-03-17 Retreat Preparation

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## SPEAKERS

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What it's like to be on retreat. Very important part of our insight meditation tradition is this thing of retreats and they're gonna talk about, you know, especially for people who've never been on retreat, but even for people who have little bit to hear what happens in a retreat and format, the experience of retreats, the interview process on retreats and they don't at all. And so today what I want to talk about is a very traditional discussion about the preparation necessary for going on retreat. Now, I want to tell a story, a story. And the story is comes from the time of the Buddha and the Buddha was off. Living someplace in the woods in the forest, you're often lives out in the woods Wandering around India. And he had an attendant within a young new monk by the name of Mike McGee. And again was the Buddhist attendant. So, to help to know, I don't know what how old the Buddha was at this point in his in lived until he was at 81. But he was responsible probably for bringing the Buddha his food and taking care of his very nice Junior monk sometimes does for senior monk. And so one day Miguel went out for alms food, which is a custom of the monks has to go out for alms and he received some food, and he sat by the edge of a river and ate his food. And then it said he was walking up and down on the side of the river exercising his legs after having the meal. Imagine maybe so you wouldn't be sleeping for his meditation. He did some walking first. Since he only had one meal a day. It's probably Big Neil he wants to exercise before sitting down. And as he was walking back and forth on the riverbank, it came across a grove of mango trees that he looked at at Grove and this is a perfect Grove for meditating. It's really serene and peaceful and just all the all the conditions you just right for me to go off and sit on retreat by myself. So he went back to the Buddha and asked the Buddha permission to go on a retreat. Now going on retreat is a very important part of the Buddhist tradition. It's kind of like, you know, the equip maybe the equivalent 40 days in the desert for days and 40 nights or going off on a vision quest into the wilderness. To go spend some time we step out of our normal occurrence of our life, out of the normal activities we do, the normal associations we have, and also the normal preoccupations of our mind, and to be able to let those things settle away out of our kind of surface consciousness to let them which is deeper to begin showing So, and also to allow the concentration to develop in a very strong way, when we're not kind of discombobulated from all the

different inputs of our regular life. And so many traditions have it, the Buddhist tradition has it also. And maybe Yeah, being a young monk, probably never done this before, was really eager to get on with this practice. And so we went to the Buddha and said, may I go off and do a solitary retreat in this beautiful mango grove? And the Buddha said, No, please don't do that. is not the time for that. So migh being perhaps maybe very enthusiastic and maybe stubborn, or I don't know what said, Well, you know, you've already done what has to be done, you're already enlightened. And you've already done your spiritual work for yourself and you have nothing left to do you just enjoying your enlightened state. And, but me I have a lot to do still, I'm far from enlightened and I really need to get on with it. And so the Buddha said, no money You're not right now. That's a wait until some other monks come to who can attend to me, this is not a time for you to do this. So Maggie asked the third time, if you could go off. And the rule is that if you ask a Buddha three times, the Buddha will acquiesce, forgive me within reason, right? But there's a lot of stories where he doesn't want to say, say something like comment comes with a question. And the Buddha says, I don't want to answer that now. Later, please. And person asked three times, then the Buddha is obligated to give an answer to something. So we said sure, you do as you wish. And so McGee went off on retreat, and also the mango grove and Sam set himself down with great spiritualist sincerity and intention, and faith and all that. And he sat down to meditate. And while he was meditating there, his mind was filled with lustful thoughts.

His mind was filled with hateful thoughts, and his mind was filled with confusion. So these are some of the options that occasionally happens to a few people on retreat. The mind has these things come to come to them sexual fantasies, great vendettas irritations. And another common experience on retreat is when these kinds of things visit people is especially among Westerners, they often get despairing or upset or angry or annoyed. And you know, sometimes self deprecating, Oh, I'm so terrible as a meditator, a terrible person I am I had lustful thoughts. This is bad. And I just can't admit this anyone, let alone myself and I better do something, you know, and it can often put off like, you know, Westerners sometimes when they go on retreat, it's kind of like they think Buddhism is like a, you know, ascetic practice, you're supposed to flail yourself. And nothing we ever say that to them. We tell them the opposite. But occasionally he's people that are so quickly self critical, and a very important part of the retreat process for such people to see coming to terms with that very strong disposition, a tendency to be self critical in unhelpful ways. And to find maybe rather differently different attitude one of love or kindness towards oneself in the world. And for some people, that's a very important development that comes through the practice. So what, but in Miguel's situation, what he said was, he noticed these thoughts which came in a sale them and he couldn't get concentrated. And so he said to the Buddha, especially said to himself, this is amazing. This is awesome. In one English translation, that's how they translated it. Awesome. And the one it's remarkable Another translation and the flavor of the way is translated to English. I don't know the Pali was currently he was amazed. Wow, look at this. I have all sincerity and dedication I found just the right Grove to be on retreated. And I was, you know completely set on this practice and I sit down and I have these bizarre thoughts that nothing to do with my spiritual life. Isn't this amazing? The mind works this way. Wow. I wish more people had that kind of amazement when they come on retreat. Wow, isn't that something like you had a tremendous spiritual intention to sit down and do your morning meditation. And you've got a little

spiritual reading first and you really check in with your attention. You sit down with great resolve. And you do maybe have you have a ritual that gets you into the mood you sit down, you're finally settled there and you're really going to get into your meditation practice. And you start thinking about what you can have for dinner. You know, and this and that and this and that. And you know, somehow the juxtaposition between your great spiritual intention in the mind insisting or thinking about dinner seems amazing. How can this happen? How can such a superficial thing like dinner, you know, supersede my intention to really develop my concentration and presence? So he was amazed. So he was amazed. He went to the Buddha went back to the Buddha and said, it's amazing. I went on retreat, and this thing happened. I was visited by lustful thoughts. And by it starts Seville will revenge or anger, irritation, and thoughts of confusion and doubt. So the Buddha said, yes, it is amazing. He didn't say I told you so. But he said, there, let me tell you he said let me tell you to tell you something. There are five conditions that support a person going on retreat, and having Good experience, five conditions that are good to have kind of under your belt to have as a foundation for ongoing spiritual practice. So the Buddha said, the first thing is, it's really helpful to have good spiritual friends. And one translation they call it admirable friends. But to have people around you, both maybe teachers, but also peers, people around you, who you admire, you look to as kind of companions in us in a good life, virtuous life, your spiritual life, people for whom they can reflect the good qualities you want to develop in yourself. People who can inspire you with the possibility of practice because their practice is quite inspiring. people for whom that can be mirrors for yourself, so that, you know, maybe their goodness or their wisdom or their understanding, help you see yourself in a deeper and more realistic way.

All things that were very important for me in my my life. I don't think I could have done my spiritual practice without having having a lot of spiritual friends around me. And people for whom I was inspired by I saw their dedication to practice. Number one person at some point just came to mind right now. I guess he was here yesterday, less Kay. I hope we went well. But when I was living at Greenville Gen center many years ago, I invited les Katie come up and give a Dharma talk there. And he gave a wonderful Dharma talk. And but the thing that inspired me the most about les was that point he'd been practicing for, I think, 20 years. And I felt like I could feel in his body and his being. This is a 20 years of spiritual intention to practice. And I was inspired by that sense, it was 20 years of practice. Now it's been 35 years. So even more so. And, but I was inspired by the people around me who were practice. Seeing involved and dedicated and I was inspired by the qualities I saw in them another little story that just came into my mind. I was working as late 70s at anybody who knows sohara Bakery so I worked as Tassajara Bakery when I was a newspaper more or less news n student and, and I was just gonna fresh out of college and I was up in a little office upstairs and with the bakery manager one day, and he opened the mail. And there was a mail letter from some little neighbor association or something, maybe like a neighborhood association, asking for a donation for some good cause in the neighborhood. And he showed it to me. I read it, I handed it back to him. And he immediately took out his checkbook and wrote a check for \$50 checkbook from for the bakery bakery money and sent it off. And I was kind of amazed by this. Why would anybody do that? Why would anybody send their children donation? Why would they want to support Anything like that in the neighborhood. So it's a little embarrassing for me to admit that that's what I thought. But it hadn't occurred to me that, you

know, we'd be good civic minded people and help in that kind of way. But I was kind of just amazed by his act of generosity. And it was one of the little kind of personal thing, but it was this little kind of turning point for me, to begin appreciating the value and power of generosity is quickly when I started questioning, why do you do that? So here was someone who did something good spiritual friend around me, that had big impact on me and set in motion, a change and then a lot of my spiritual friendships around me, both friends with people I practice with, and also my teachers, reflected back to me on my own understanding, I'm able to talk to them about my understanding and, and hear about their understanding of Give, give and take kind of thing. Sometimes, my behavior was not always exemplary and so sometimes it was very helpful to have someone say, oh, by the way, Gil, what you just said what you did wasn't really, you know, in, you know, in your best interest in other people's best interest, sometimes they were a little more direct about it. But it was very helpful to get that kind of feedback. And when a spiritual life is done in isolation, without that kind of feedback, it's very dangerous, especially a person is very intensely involved in the practice, because a person can go down all kinds of dead ends and dangerous routes in their practice that that they can get into a lot of trouble. So I had the you know, so having good spiritual friends friends around is very helpful as a condition. Oh, this is something my impression is that for people like in monasteries, who are living in monastic settings, and there's a lot of peers, other monks and nuns are the practitioners practicing together, and I think probably my hope is the same thing. fear that whatever wisdom that comes from the teacher, and whatever people learn from the teacher is really insignificant compared to what people learn from each other, that somehow, you know, people, they're all everybody's kind of engaged and practicing and reflecting and thinking, and, and people get together and have peers in the practice and talk about what they learned here what that teacher said, or that teacher said here without, you know, this is my, my experiences. And we learn a lot from each other. And I think that's a very, very important avenue for learning in the spiritual life. And it's very helpful as a foundation to have that. So the first condition is having good spiritual friends. The second is to live a virtuous life, to live a life that's ethical. And it's a basic tenant axiom basic kind of

truth in Buddhist spirituality, that if you really want to develop your spiritual life to any important degree, it's important to have an to be an ethical person to be a virtuous person. It doesn't mean that you necessarily have to have always virtuous thoughts. We're very understanding that people's minds have a mind of their own and do all kinds of unusual things. awesome things. But, but one of the one of the one of the things, the human psyche, who we are, we always have the veto power. The Tanja Oh, next week we have a guest speaker. Angie Brisbane is coming in the following week. Tanisha because going to come and speak. So But anyway, so just reminder that initial to distribute Kotaku describes the mind as being a it's like a board meeting of a corporate Corporation. And is it you know, you're the chair of the board. And all these board members have a lot of things they can say. And they want a lot of things. They go to all kinds of ways and sometimes it's outrageous what the board members want, like in Hewlett Packard seems like it's you know, But, but on your particular board you're serving, you're the chair of you have veto power. And so it doesn't really matter what you know, oh, you know, you never know any controller with all the board members say, but you have you have the veto power what the corporation decides. So in the same way you don't charge of all the voices

inside of you what comes up, but you have your responsibility, at least to have the veto power, it's okay that I'm not going to do when you decide that you want to kill your neighbor. That thought comes up because the dog barks too much. You have the veto power. So that's not a good idea. I'm not going to do that. So to live an ethical life involves in part having some ability of restraint, some building to believe in you mindful of what one's tendencies are, and then hold back and say this is not useful to do. And one of the reasons we practice mindfulness is to have that ability of restraint to hold back from doing things which are unethical. Part of the reason why ethics is so important is that in Buddhist spirituality and mindfulness, we're trying to develop sensitivity. Mindfulness is another word for sensitivity. And if you want to be sensitive kind of person, you can't do insensitive things. To do to just don't work together. And the argument is that to kill, steal, lie, involve sexual misconduct, and to be involved in intoxicating our mind, body are all in order to do that, we have to be insensitive to do it. And they cultivate greater insights in sensitivity in us when we. So one of the reasons for developing ethical foundation in Buddhism is not because of some moral judgment that you're good or bad person, but rather you're setting the conditions for developing the deeper mindfulness concentration. And if the mind is agitated because of being unethical, then it's very hard to develop the concentration the third person addition is

Oh, yeah, this is kind of unusual. I thought a little bit. The wording of it, the wording of it is to have easy access to Dharma talks. Easy access to Dharma talks. Well, you know, we have pretty easy access here in the Bay Area's. You know, there's all these Dharma talks happening all the time in the Bay Area, if useful, and you probably just kind of cruise the Bay Area on, you know, every evening of the week and every you know, you could have Dharma talks, probably different, different Dharma talk or different teacher every day of the year for the whole year. So many different teachers here and talks. People look towards the Bay Area and they live someplace like in the Midwest and they sell that sell salivate because, you know, wow, I have to drive 400 miles to closest Dharma teacher in the Bay Area is like a diamond doesn't

So,

but easy access to Dharma talks, but this is in this discourse gives a list for the kind of darker. And this is an interesting list of the kinds of talks you should listen to the kind of Dharma talks you should listen to. And it's interesting because this is this is what the Buddha talks about a lot since the Buddha put high value in these kinds of talks in this what the Buddha talked about a lot so I know I don't talk about this a lot, but maybe I should, but you can. You can do this as you wish but I thought was interesting the list. Actually Wait, wait said here. Furthermore, the person gets to hear at will easily without difficult talk that is truly sobering and conducive to the opening of awareness. That is, talk on having few wants, and a few wishes. On contentment on solitude, Non entanglement and arousing efforts on virtue on concentration on discernment or wisdom on release and on the knowledge of vision and release. So a talk on having so you should have easy access to talks on having few wishes. It's not a very popular thing you know, that few wishes in America were supposed to have a lot of

wishes because they were good consumers. And it talks on being content is also a medium. That's not a very high priority for Americans to be content. And you know, a few here is a big kind of advertisement in the paper saying, you know, this major world's bigger is going to come and give a talk on contentment with, you know, a lot of extra baggage you know, if it was emptiness or wisdom or enlightenment people people will go with contentment. I was told I gave a talk on contentment. Once here and someone afterwards came up and said, this is a message which is not going to go over very well in corporate America, because corporations don't want contented workers. And they want people who are ambitious out to get more, you know, and competitive. And the idea being if you're content, you're not going to be competitive and kind of pushing to really, you know, go, you know, go as far as you can with the company. I don't know if that's true. But the Buddha put a lot of value in contentment, the value of contentment is so toxic contentment to help cultivate a sense of contentment in their life, few wishes, so we're not agitated the mind that spinning out looking and looking and looking for other things and being miserable because that because minds not happy with what's already here. And then on solitude, solitude is a word of the dharma is a very important word in the Buddhist tradition. I think maybe a few weeks we'll give a talk on it. It's very difficult to translate sometimes seclusion, some some solitude, sometimes detachment, it's the ability to, in short, to let the mind turn away or separate itself from all its obsessive mental preoccupations. And many of us find out if we sit down to meditate, it's very hard to do that. That's a tremendously valuable thing to be able to turn the mind away from all its preoccupations. It's kind of solitude, kind of solitude or seclusion away from those all those people pickpocket preoccupations. So we can get down to the root of who we actually are, rather than kind of surface chatter of the mind. or non entanglement on effort and virtue and concentration. So I like this little passage for various reasons, but we don't have to it doesn't have to be taught in the ancient world. They didn't have books. But nowadays, it can be tricky to read occasionally to have access to books that inspire us a little bit and help us along the way. Or now we can actually, you know, get Dharma tapes, you know, Dharma z tape libraries, a whole culture of people listening to Dharma talks in their cars, put a tape in, or now we have Glenn, who has this wonderful website. We're all on all the talks given here, put in the website. And I hear from people all over the country. Now listen to, you know, to the website. People in Mongolia are listening to our Dharma talks here. So I think I told you that I've mentioned this a few weeks ago, but there was a period of my practice a few years where I read Dharma books almost every day, but only only read a page a day. And I found it very valuable to read a page just to have some kind of inspiration, some kind of food for thought, some kind of kind of little focus my reflection, will helping me understand my life and be encouraged as a win. Win a Long, long. Then the fourth

condition is

to

abandon unwholesome mental qualities and mental states are activities and take on or engage in wholesome mental qualities, develop wholesome mental qualities. This is a very classic Buddhist



practice in Buddhist spirituality is to have some sense of the mental quality of your mind. And then to kind of move back and forth, or look at it and begin cultivating it like you're cultivating a garden. So, if you have a lot of anger, or hatred in your mind, to see what you can do to abandon that, to look at the value of love and generosity and see what you can do to develop those qualities, nothing to kind of pollyannish way, but in a way that I think, you know, has sincere and, and really allows for some deep shift in the valence or in their center of gravity where our mind is. So I know for myself, for example, that if I do certain activities, that they actually tend to predispose my mind to be agitated, and to be more unwholesome in the future. If I look at a certain movies, for example, if I see certain movies, certain kinds of movies, like a very violent movies, I'll have for a while afterwards I will usually have tendencies towards violence, thoughts. When I was quite a bit younger, sometimes I would look at pornography. And I noticed that the effect of pornography in my mind was that then I have these very unsavory kind of lustful kind of thoughts. That kind of kind of in the way, momentum was said Emotion with that kind of activity. If you're involved with greed, you know always wanting, wanting, wanting money and constantly involved in the stock market. So I think about day and night, then it predisposes the mind to the unwholesome development of greed. And that tendency it takes, if you're around certain friends who are always I wasn't, you know, when I was when I was my 20s, I remember I chose not to be around certain friends. It was very sad for me to do this. But I found that when I was with those friends, they were always very angry and swearing and criticizing and kind of bigoted, and it had an effect on me. I didn't become as bigoted as they were, but but, you know, I could feel that I you know, my tendency to swear and do things was affected by being around them. So what does it take to shift a little bit, take some responsibility, so that for our mental state, so that we do those activities that cultivate more wholesome mental states and avoid the more unwholesome ones that level of responsible is considered very important in Buddhist spirituality. And there's levels and degrees in which a person can do this, who choosing the activities we do to also choosing the thoughts that we follow. I, when I was growing up, I didn't realize that I could choose which thoughts I follow. But as I've been doing my mind my practice, I feel I have a lot of choice now about Oh, there's a thought that's interesting. Isn't that remarkable? Wow, awesome. Not now. No, thank you. I don't have to I don't have to be involved in that I better things to do with my time and think about that. And the our mind is really a precious resource. How do you use it? And to be just simply like your mind, thoughts kind of barrel along whichever way they want to go, is to live a kind of, I think probably a little bit of a shallow life, but be able to in a very healthy way, choose the avenues in which our mind takes the thoughts that it takes is beginning take responsibility at the more subtle level and just what our activities are, and can we choose that which is conducive To wholesomeness rather than unwholesomeness. The danger in choosing a wholesome or unwholesome is that sometimes it becomes a form of positive thinking. We kind of overlay kind of kind of positive thoughts or idealism on top of what's really going on in us. And that's why very, it's very important to have something like a meditation practice and mindfulness practice that helps us to get underneath to what's really going on for us, so that we're not just simply overlaying good thoughts on top of some deeper motivations, and feelings.

So then, the fifth one, the last one is, and this has to do, I think, mostly do with meditation practice, but here are read it to you.

Furthermore, that person discerning or why wise are mindful, endowed with the discernment of arising and passing away. Noble penetrating leading to the right ending of suffering, the arising and passing away, the ability to perceive impermanence is considered to be one of the goals of meditation practice. And in fact, sometimes in Asia, in the past, the teachers will direct the students at some point when their meditation is quite concentrated, to begin noticing that which is impermanent, their experience and the tradition that I practiced in, they never suggested what you should look for. Rather they just tell you keeping mindful keeping mindful in whatever you need to know will be revealed by itself. But one of the hallmarks of getting into really deep because in the states is beginning to get a very intimate moment moment. sense of how things are experiences arising and passing moment by moment and this ability to see How mind states and thoughts and feelings and perceptions arise moment by moment that they're not locked in in the way that they are, if we just relate to concepts, concepts of the world tend to be fairly fixed. If we can drop below the conceptual level of reality and see the arising and passing phenomena, this is one of the most useful ways of beginning to help the mind. Be willing to let go of it's clinging to concepts, and mostly it's all we cling to anyway. So, to be able to see impermanence is one of the important foundations for deep spiritual work. Or at least appreciate the value of it. One of the reasons why in Asia at least, impermanence is very highly valued and a lot of Dharma talks and impermanence is, the emphasis is you don't have a lot of time. Life is really short and precious, and you better get on with it. And you better than you really want to your spiritual practice, get on with it. Even the Zen tradition which tends to like the Soto Zen tradition has a very strong emphasis on this very moment is awakening or enlightenment or is perfect just the way it is. And practice is realizing the perfection of the present moment. They'll also say, but get on with it. The present moment is perfect, but you get on with it. And they have this image. Practice as if your hair's on fire. That series should be that serious as if you don't. And you probably be pretty agitated if your hair's on fire. The image is one of you know, just get on with it.

So

so these are the five conditions that if you'd like you can look at as the foundation of good spiritual practice or at least foundation for going on retreats as magga was going to go on retreat. This little story is in a classic Have discourses of the Buddha called the Udāna, which is called the inspires translates into English as the inspired utterances. It's not known that the Buddha was a poet. And he wrote, he wrote, he composed a lot of poetry. And some of it was considered inspired poetry just kind of inspired at the moment, just kind of inspired utterances. And this whole story is the background for the Buddha's inspired poem. After giving us a little talk to McGee and I don't know if this English translation does justice, to the Pali but it goes like this.

Subtle thoughts and trivial thoughts, when followed, stare up the heart, not comprehending the thoughts of the heart, when runs here and there, the mind out of control, but comprehending the thoughts of the heart, one who is ardent mindful, we Strange them. When followed, they stare up the



heart. One who is awakened, lets them go without trace. So Miguel was visited by lustful thoughts, hateful thoughts, and thoughts of confusion. And one who is awake and lets them go without trace is not influenced by them or affected by them or agitated by them. Just let them self liberate that self liberating function of thoughts. May all your thoughts be self liberated and no longer bother you. So what are your thoughts? In reply to all that? Yes.

But there really are certain things

to get into situations or relationships where you feel resentful.

You know, angry or cheated or something like that. It's just you're here, you know, you maybe get over it and get over one but you find yourself slipping into another. And it's just so repetitive and you think, Oh, this is impermanent, but it seems it's almost as though that's, that's the permanent thing.

And I just, you know, it's like, I don't understand,

you know, the sniffles, and they, they don't unravel, meditation,

intention, good intentions and everything. You can't unravel them. I mean, they just kind of go.

Yeah, so you're saying you're presupposing then that this person is a good meditator knows how to bring mindfulness really to bear in a useful way on these things. They don't everybody knows that not everyone knows how to investigate and explore resentment or anger as they arise and the causes and conditions for it. That's a whole thing to learn. So People don't avail themselves of good spiritual friends. And having a spiritual friend so you can call you on these things or to help you reflect them is very helpful. And one of the really good spiritual friends or spirit or the good friends that a lot of people in America pay for is a therapist. And if there's a really repetitive pattern, and you feel like you've spiritual practices engaged with it for a long time, it doesn't seem to help, then therapy is definitely should be considered. And 90% of 99% of good therapy is finding the right therapist.

Meditation. So

is it possible to deal with this kind of thing in meditation?

It's a very good question. Sure. A lot of people are interested in that and the answer at least And what I can only do is to tell you, I can't I don't have, you know, the empirical evidence to know what you say here. But I can tell you that there's different points of view in the American Buddhist tradition about this. There are some people, Buddhists who insist that they can only they can do it by themselves, you know that through practice. And I've known people who have had, you know, very serious problems, and then gone off into one guy went off to Tibet to be, you know, long retreat and said, I'm not going to

therapy, I'm going to do this on my own through the practice. And, and some people who say, like Jack Kornfield, who said, you know, you can't expect meditation to do at all, and they even even the people who go to the first stage of awakening, they really have very deep transformative experience in meditation, are still sometimes left with some of the neurotic pattern patterning. And sometimes you need to combine it with therapy. So Jack Kornfield is a great exponent of the balanced approach of therapy and Meditation. And that he says, for example, that when he was teaching the three month retreats in three months of intensive sounds retreat, said something like, you know, half of the people there at least, we're not really ready even to meditate. They were kind of it was kind of like a form of meditative therapy for them to be there. And the teachers have to then to accommodate that and meet that kind of concern. The

but the question is, can meditation be transformative? How depends a lot on how deeply person goes into the meditative path. And if person, for example, has a very good daily sitting practice, and maybe once a year goes into retreat, so that might be very significant, very transformative for them, but it might not really be enough to let meditation do all that again for you. And it might mean that you have to go. You know, basically, maybe, for some people like meditation, do all it can do for you maybe requires maybe a year or two, a very intensive engagement, maybe letting go of work and going living in the monastery for a while and just really kind of being full time engaged in this path, to really let it go down to the very roots of where resentment anger are born. So to say that meditation is not enough. It might imply Well, these people aren't really taking the path seriously they can. But you know, for most laypeople who have a jobs and family and all these things in Canada, do that kind of intensive practice, which can do some practice, daily practice and all that and if they keep being plagued by certain things that occur, then probably one of the best routes to begin, what do I want to do Ross explores therapy. But I think you've done that probably. So if you've done that to your you know, as early as you can, and Then perhaps you find a Dharma teacher. I don't know if you've ever talked to a teacher Dharma teacher, specifically about how you been engaged in your things. How you how you're taking your practice and engaged your practice in those particular issues. It might be that, could you mention in your beginning that you talked about a lot of machines. So she has a Zen practice in Zen practice is a very powerful practice, which I love. But one of the weak links of the Zen tradition is they tend to have very little psychological understanding. And so if a person has anger, for example, it mostly will tell you just let go ahead and follow your breath. You know, and that's very powerful on some time for some people, but it doesn't really help them sometimes get into the roots of their anger, which sometimes they need to do.

Don't let go of it. Bring your attention to it, and learn how to learn how to hold it near attention, and explore it and then begin to explore and explore explore If they begin understanding various things about it, one of things you might understand is that, how they develop the skills that when anger arises, you know, there's no hooks for it in your mind. So that anger can arise, but you don't do anything with it. Wow, that's amazing, awesome anger. And, and, you know, it's, you could continue with your life without, you know, buying into it. That's very, very powerful. And it's one of the things mindfulness is trying to cultivate is that ability of having nonreactive awareness to what's happening.

So that we have another option besides being swept away by something like anger. The other option is to leave it alone, and then choose wisely what to do. The other thing is, within this once we once we have that ability to really look at the anger much more carefully and deeply. And sometimes you can begin seeing the roots for what triggers it. Sometimes it's a matter of developing enough mindfulness to strengthen mindfulness. You have a strong level of mindfulness in daily life. So you can begin taking responsibility in daily life, were noticing what triggers it to begin with, because some people actually don't catch it until many, many generations away. Another thing to do is to do loving kindness meditation practice. Buddhism offers the antidote to certain things. There's a whole bunch of antidote anecdotal practices in Buddhism. And, and I don't teach them very often, but tradition, you know, puts emphasis on them. In fact, this passage here I didn't read talks about that. There's a, if you're plagued by lust, then the Buddha recommends that you meditate on the, the, here the word the word in Pali, is a soba. Here, the translators, it's unattractive. Sometimes it's translated to the foul the repulsive, I translated as the unpleasant the unbeautiful. So beautiful. But what it specifically means is you meditate on on the body for example your body or the persons who you're lustful for and you met you visualize you imagine their digestive tract and there may not be renal cavity and their mucous membranes and things which generally don't produce a lot of uplifting feelings and that's the helps come so you know, as an entity if you really if you really think the antidote for less than you kind of can do that the next helpful another and the antidote for ill will is loving kindness. And some people are one of the reasons why some people are triggered to anger aversion, ill will irritation, judgment to kind of negative angry judgment of others, is sometimes because they lack a sense of sense of self love or self compassion or sense of being settled on themselves. And sometimes Developing loving kindness as a way of having loving kindness which oneself feels that place within us that's empty or wounded. And once this loop begins to be filled with some kindness and friendship, then a tendency to be that reactive, settles down for some people. Now I can't imagine any anyone here needs to know the antidote for destructive thinking, like interest anyone here. Know, the antidote for destructive thinking is mindfulness of breathing. just concentrating on the breath, just forget the thought. Just stay with the breath. And the Zen approach is to be with the breath. And the antidote for conceit is seeing impermanence. Seeing impermanence

sorry I think that usually they say concentration is good for the concentration like on the breath, for example for confusion.

No, there's different words for them. I think I don't really know the difference. So technically but the best of my understanding of the tradition is that confusion is simply not understanding kind of what's really there kind of having, having illusion, delusion about what what's really happening. So some of you aren't really sure what's happening. Whereas doubt is much more unsure what to do. unsure what the truth is. having doubts about it is just the right practices to the right teaching is just you know, it might be just the right time, doubt about oneself like a confidence, things a little bit different quality, a sense. Steven, do you have a better, better just distinction

If you want to say something,

I was just actually thinking about what you were saying and how the fourth utterance does relate to metta in my experience. And yet what you were saying about that is the abandonment of mental states. I guess the answer of thinking the answer for me is to know whether I'm actually I'm trying to cover up my negative thoughts or negative or ill thinking with metta or whether it's the wholesome thing to do and I guess personal call,

great. That's a very good so with Jennifer's pointing to is is very important issue in mindfulness practice. We're always interested in the intention behind the choices we make. So the choices are to take on an antidote practice like loving kindness for ill will is for Reason for what was the motivation for it. And if the motivation is a version to your ill will, that maybe not so useful. But if it's not a wisdom, then it's useful to do. So what's the what's the motivation for why you're doing this particular practice you're doing is very, very important to ask regularly. So I like the approach of you know, I'm going to be really accepting of the present moment. So that shoulder pain goes away. really accepting so

it's kind of counterproductive.

So

I hope that these ideas of this idea, hope this talk gives you the idea that spiritual life in Buddhist spiritual life can be thought of as, as as is building on a foundation and getting a good foundation in place is very important part of the process and you might have your own ideas of what that foundation should be for you. But this list of five is one list of five foundation pieces. So thank you for listening