

# 2002-10-13: Views of Practice

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people, develop, cultivate, pain, enlightenment, view, japanese, epidural, life, understanding, cultivation, mindfulness, innate, birth, passive, world, practice, buddhism, posture, approach

## SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

So what's a little bit of my mind to talk about is the last Monday I mentioned the word progress in the expression progress in meditation in the talk and someone at promptly at nine o'clock when Rob was to go home he said, What do you mean by progress? and progress is kind of like you know, p word you know supposed to. Yes, it's not like it's one of those words that you don't use too much. And so I'm planning tomorrow to give that talk that he's talking about prog progress, but it's on my mind, and, and I'll probably say a lot of things today, as I'll say tomorrow, but today, the angle I want to go a little bit different. And that is, I don't want to answer the question particularly what is progress, but I want to try to provide a little bit the various Buddhist views or worldviews context for Buddhist practice. And then depending on the context, you hold the practice, you can have different ideas about what progress is. And it's kind of like mindfulness practice is a tool. And it's a neutral tool. And depending how you, you can use a tool in many different ways. A knife is a tool in the hands of a surgeon, it's one thing hands of a murderer. It's something else in the hands of a, of a parent who's preparing a meal for family, it's, you know, opening up the package of food with a knife or something. You know, the knife itself is kind of a neutral in a sense, but then you can use it many different understandings, contexts and tensions. So same thing with mindfulness. And in fact, Buddhists down through the ages, and even today, in America and across the world, will understand the context for mindfulness very differently lends itself to many different containers and And you can listen to different teachers and they have a different container. But the practice itself is very neutral. And that's part of its beauty. So I thought of kind of trying to say something kind of as a preparation for what I'm going to say, by what a little bit I've learned about childbirth, my wife is about to give are anxiously, anxiously are eagerly waiting for her to start labor. And so it's very much on my mind. And so we've been preparing ourselves a little bit with reading and various things. And we're kind of late comers to the whole idea of natural birth because doctors had always insisted that she's supposed to have she had to have a C section to plan C section and, in fact she had one date scheduled for October 17. But the Three weeks ago, the doctor said Oh no, you can try to have a naturally because somehow he had a different opinion. And so that's all new suddenly we have to you know, we hadn't been thinking about this as a possibility. And so I'm

learning more about this particular human phenomena event. And, and I kind of had this kind of very, very amateurish or uninformed kind of view of the history of in the west of child birthing. And there was a time seemingly that in western medicine that woman giving birth was considered to be very supposed to be very passive. And the doctor knew everything and you know, you put yourself up on this table with stirrups, which turns out to be one of the worst positions for giving birth. But that's kind of you know, you know, very passive kind of situation and, and, and then they love the idea of the all these medicines that can give you epidurals and numb you out and various weighs in. And that was considered great progress to be able to have the birth be pain free, and the woman not feel much below the waist. And most of us it was just a passive event you showed up and the doctor took over. And then probably in the 70s or so and as a kind of movement in the West in America was a whole thing of Lamaze training classes and preparation for birth and learning how to breathe and all that. And so women kind of, you know, took, you know, got more empowered in learning how to cultivate themselves, develop themselves, prepare themselves for this event and take more responsibility and be more involved in the whole process. And not to be passive in the hole in it. And maybe some of you have gone through that those kinds of classes and stuff. And I don't know if this is true or not, but the book that is currently quite popular among the midwives that are selling should be this book

is claimed That, that a lot of women would learn the moss breeding techniques, breeding techniques, and they show up to give birth and they just go out the window. Or you know, and then they would come, you know, forget about that. And it didn't somehow fit in to what was going on. And, and then some of the people who were burdened because they had all these techniques from the 60s and 70s, that kind of championed the idea of having a pain free birth, like if you did a really well, you breathe really well and deeply you relax then just like

and, and this, this book talks about women who'd be there giving birth and then feel like their personal failures that failing because they were, you know, had these white knuckles and they were just really kind of screaming and it was really painful and difficult and Gee, you know, this was, you know, it wasn't like, you know, they were, you know, they don't have good work preparing themselves for months. And it wasn't like the image of what they prepare themselves for. So they felt like they failed in giving childbirth and, and the since it's so central to women's identity, the idea being, you know, birthing mother did not have a go right can be very painful, very difficult. And so this book we're reading now, talks about it's really fascinating for me because it says things like, the pain is really important. And you don't want to numb yourself from the pain, because there's a lot of internal, you know, feedback systems between the baby and the mother that rely on that pain for information and feedback for getting the hormones going certain ways. And I don't know, you know, the vocabulary is accurate or not, but you know that the book says that, that the mother starts going into labor starts creating these hormones to cause the contractions when the baby's brain creates stress hormones the poor baby is getting stressed and baby has to be stressed out in order to produce these hormones so the mom knows to produce her things to stress out the baby even more. And this is a wonderful system you know where this kind of thing whole thing begins happening. And so and we had in the pain is supposed to consider be very useful to help the mother know what, how to respond, who's

what posture to be in, and I get this benefit I don't think I've ever been to was a cow. And it was pretty amazing, but the cut offs, you know, have only one posture as far as I can tell. And, and it seems that the pain of child birthing is a feedback for the mother to be encouraged to know how to get into the right posture for her. And we had one dog one friend of ours who gave birth to slide Last year, and she was very, she was very fortunate to have a doctor to help deliver this doctor he had studied with midwives. So he knew a lot of the midwife lore and understanding how this gets done. And he encouraged her, she isn't wrong with the way the baby was coming out was breech or backwards or something backwards. And, and some years ago, he would have done the C section, but he'd studied with the midwives. And he said to her, just listen to the pain and put yourself your body in the posture your pain seems to tell you to be and to relieve the pain or do something respond to the pain. And so she did this, you know, all these strange positions. I don't know, I haven't seen it yet. But these positions, they're capable, and squatting and whatever. And, and the baby turned himself around and came out just fine. And the pain was important feedback, the system to work. So here we have a system that's evolved over, you know, centuries, millennia of pain. essential element helpful element in the whole process. If we feel the pain is wrong and bad and somehow we should stop having a pain, we short circuit the whole way the system's been organized to make the process work. So we have a passive approach. We have prepare preparation approach no and then we have the system the body knows what's best. And trust it just go along with what's already there. apart. One of the one of the things this book says is that it's healthy to worry that a mother's not worried is in trouble. It can be excessive worrying, you can worry too much. But worries they take this book considers a very healthy part of the whole system because it kind of helps you get kind of concerned and involved and, and kind of really present for the event. Hopefully in a healthy way. So here's this book that kind of says everything. You normally would do worry and feel pain and it's all kind of healthy part of the system, trust it, trust your body, trust your reactions and your instincts and be supported in that and go along with it. And then that support you, the thing will happen, something will be born. So what does this have to do with mindfulness?

With Buddhist practice, I think kind of similar approaches can be seen towards a human life. Some people take human life as being a passive event. You go along, you go along and you know, the experts will tell you what to do. Your parents, your school, teachers, your bosses, whatever and you kind of follow along. And the more passive you can be the, you know, who are you to make any decisions ultimately, you come in here, great spiritual teachers, you know, who have the great answers what you should do, and you're just great, you know, someone knows and I'm just gonna go along with what someone else says. And so various passive approaches is one strategy people take If you read the early discourses of the Buddha, the whole early tradition of Buddhism continuing down into the Theravada tradition today of Southeast Asia is kind of tradition do we come out of our center?

It's almost entirely about cultivating yourself developing yourself. Personal personal image, right word expression, maybe. But because associations with the West now personal development, but the word the word for practice for metta, there's no word for meditation in particular, the word is bhava. and above, and it means cultivation. Like you've cultivated field, you're cultivating, develop something. And

the understanding is that there's this potential that you have, like, and you can develop that potential. So you can develop your potential to get concentrated, potential to develop equanimity. You have a potential to develop yourself. Passing for joy, you have a potential to develop your capacity for mindfulness. And it's all like kind of like muscles. And you're all born with this muscle. And if you want that muscle to become strong and support you, you have to develop you have to go to the gym and workout. And, and there's a tremendous capacity to develop that we all have to develop these muscles. Most of us never develop them to a great degree. Some people do certain professions, musicians, perhaps develop concentration. You know, different professions, you develop different kinds of skills, different these muscles get developed. People who devote themselves to Buddhist practice, like monks and nuns who do kind of full time, have often opportunity not always but occasionally take they take the opportunity to use that lifestyle to develop these muscles to a great potential great degree. We go on retreat, redeveloping these muscles and there's a whole range of them. Patience is one. And so in the Vipassana tradition for example, retreats is one of the ways we develop our potential, be mindful he worked, continuously developing and applying ourselves. And whether you're know it or not, you're kind of developing this muscle, developing a civility and becomes a strength you can carry with you into your life. And in different situations, you find yourself now your mindfulness situation worse before before, you are not. There are people who I meet, maybe you're some of them. It's not a moral flaw, but just people I meet, who seem to not be aware of their thinking that they're thinking while they're thinking. They're aware after the fact. They kind of remember I was thinking about something, but they're kind of not so aware of the thinking process while they're involved. If you cultivate your mindfulness and develop that capacity, you'll start becoming muscle strong enough you start noticing that you're thinking while you're thinking That gives you tremendous freedom of choice and, and wisdom in relationship to what your thoughts are. So it's a cult, it's only you can cultivate and develop. The early tradition focused on this early Buddhist tradition almost entirely. It was understood that the ultimate experience of freedom was not something you could cultivate. You can make it happen. It was uncultivated. However, it was something that you prepared for. And so you so you kind of did all this work to prepare yourself, develop a great capacity to help your capacity to a great degree. And when your equanimity your concentration, your joy, your well being was very well established your inner life, then the mind would be relaxed enough. would be at home enough comfortable enough to do the ultimate letting go. There's necessary for liberation. Then as Buddhist Buddhism developed in India, in China, in India, especially in the Mahayana tradition, to develop the idea of a Buddha nature and it's a whole topic in itself and there's many different ideas of Buddha nature. But part of the idea of Buddha nature is that it's not all about what you have to do your cultivation, your preparation, but there is an innate capacity of the system to self organize itself to self heal itself to self liberate itself, the psyche, the inner life, the spiritual life, whatever given half a chance will organize itself will in the direction of liberation. So,

so it kind of kind of more they do almost have to get out of the way some some some Buddha nature philosophy, you have to get out of the way too. Let this kind of come forth come through. Some philosophies of Buddha nature says you still have to cultivate that potential. But there's some innate goodness in there. That is innate in who you are. That is self organizing. In very simplistically, you

know, if you cut your finger, you can focus on all the things you have to do to heal it, keep it clean, and put a bandage on it and put antibiotics on it and keep it elevated. There's always things you could do it, you know, good food or whatever you do rest. But there's, you know, if you do that, if you do your work of covering of the bandage and keeping it clean, there's a self healing aspect of the body will it'll heal that cut. It's phenomenal. You can't the will the healing to happen. You can't make it happen. You can't orchestrate it. You can't design it. It's like this amazing thing that happens. There's a self healing aspect of you know the body with a cut. There's also self healing aspects of the psyche when we have emotional wound. We often don't allow that to happen because we often, you know, keep it very, you know, we keep kind of putting salt in the wound or we keep, you know, we steeply being concerned about it or we're afraid of it or we re traumatize ourselves by keeping me angry or various things that we do that sometimes doesn't allow us to relax and let the psyche self heal, that sometimes it can do. And then there's a self liberating movement of the spiritual life also, it's that the Buddha nature kind of philosophy, champions, that it's an innate desire to innate movement is the innate way what wants to be expressed within us is for psyche to find itself liberated, to become free. And the one of the ways I understand it is this is that this example that I've given often won't make you go through it. Those of you who've gone through so many times with me But you know, if you hold your fist really, really tight and try to hold it really tight for five minutes, and as hard as hard as you can you find the fist. In order to keep it that tight, you have to keep reapplying, we make making new effort to hold it really tight. Because the natural thing that the fist tight fist wants to do is to be released is to look relax. holding this spiritual holding that Buddhism is supposed to free ourselves from waves which are our heart This is held tight or restricted or contracted. Naturally itself it wants to release just like the fist does it what is the self liberating movement towards any ways in which we hold ourselves enslaved or are not free. So the Buddha nature approach is that there's an innate movement towards these things, in a movement towards compassion, towards love. It's the tendency of the system it's not something you have to cultivate at all. Are you doing orchestrating, but there's some kind of way in which you have to allow it is a natural process within you that wants to give birth to something. Now, these two approaches don't, or don't have to be held separate from each other. You can and that's part of the beauty is that you can cultivate yourself and develop yourself and have the understanding that something's being born through you. There's not exactly if you're doing you have to get out of the way, you have to listen very carefully. Be very sensitive to what what is it wants to come through you and get in the right posture, you know, the, whatever that is, and so my wife is getting, getting ready to give birth. We'll see but she's she puts a lot of confidence or faith or trust in all her years of meditation practice, what she's learned both in terms of in yoga practice in terms of breathing and meditation, being with physical Pain. And, you know, she's you know, that in her life, she feels he's really easy. She has a really strong foundation there and I'm pretty confident she just does too. She's so she wants to call call on that my job is to be there and support her and be there with her with that. And so she was just relying on a cultivation, but she doesn't know what she's going to do nothing. She's going to try some special kind of breathing technique, particularly she's going to be really present. So she feels she's preparing herself for something when she can't know what's gonna happen to make sense. So this thing's gonna you know. So those two things both apply. So, what is your relationship to your capacities that you have to develop? What is your capacity to potentials?



Some people are traumatized by any idea that you have to develop yourself. You can develop yourself because it's a setup for failure all kinds of notions that you know I can't do it come into play the comparative thoughts that come into play well I'm trying to do it I'm doing a little bit but this guy next to me he's doing really well and therefore I'm a failure. And someone had yesterday at the one day sitting has great t shirt or sweatshirt or something in the back it said it was some kind of fitness center I think. I thought it was great. And it said personal best fitness center, something like that marksman. And the Buddha personal best I loved it because you're not comparing yourself to anybody else. What's your personal bests, kind of like this joyful approach? You try to get to my personal best. So what's your What's your relationship to your capacity to develop yourself? Traditionally, in Buddhism in early Buddhist tradition, you're one of the things you're tracking. You're tracking? Are you developing your concentration or your living a lifestyle that supports the development of that capacity? Are you developing your capacity for loving kindness? Are you developed developing that capacity for becoming more mindful? And you kind of track and follow notice? You know how, you know, you develop it over, over, over the days and weeks and years, you can kind of sometimes get a sense of momentum going, Oh, yeah, this is happening. And you kind of it's very interesting to track it and very inspiring sometimes to track it, and be involved in it.

But is it also then valuable to have some sense of some unknown process, some innate process that's happening is not of your doing, that you have to get out of the way of and allow it to happen? Sooner or later, in the traditional view of the path of cultivation, you have to get out of the way because the Nirvana, Nirvana is uncultivated. You can't do anything to make it happen. So you have to give up sooner or later to give up any attempt to kind of cultivate yourself or do make something happen. Some Buddhist traditions want you to stop doing, you know, give up any attempt to try to make something happen earlier rather than later. And some later rather than earlier, it depends on the whole view and understanding. And they're all right. And that's what the beauty of it all. So my approach kind of my kind of stemming, studied all this is that there's a way in which we understand all of them as being right and skillful and useful. They're all have some some angle on what is actually true for the human being human psyche. There are times when you want to be passive, giving birth. If you have a medical emergency, you're going to be passive. They put you under and that's appropriate. That's what's going to happen. It's appropriate to cultivate and develop yourself some way I think, and it's appropriate to understand that there's something new expression of liberation inside of you, that wants to come forth and wants to become to come out. Are you still following me? Okay. So, I want to give a last. So I'm kind of kind of complicated here, but I'm giving kind of a, there's an Buddhist approach of being totally passive. That's what people were like before they came to spiritual practice, you know, in theory, then there's a path of cultivation. Then there's a path of the Buddha nature, something innate within us, which can be brought forth, which wants to come forth which is coming forth. But it's still something which may be dormant within us. It's a potential innate potential, but it's a seed within us that something beautiful, something innate. The early tradition had no sense of something innate within us. That you know, wanted to come, be born come for self healing, self organizing. So, path of cultivation of Buddha nature idea. And then when you come to Japan you had a very different kind of

development in Buddhism. It's very uniquely Japanese perhaps. And here you have something called Han Gaku. She's she saw in Japanese which is the thought of philosophy of original enlightenment. And this is the idea that it isn't a matter of that you have an original enlightenment within you which is there to be revealed, you know, but rather that the whole expression of the phenomenal world the trees, the carpet here, the lights which are off the lights which are on out there, the wind, particular thought you're having right now listening to this sensations of your body right now as they are your impatience. You're excited. What is gonna say now? You know, everything in the phenomenal world is the expression of original enlightenment is itself to say it in some way is expression of perfection is the way the whole that the way Japanese wanted to say original The world is itself is as it is enlightened. Original Lightman is already here in every single phenomenal expression. It's happening right now. So there's no idea of cultivating no idea of giving birth to something inside of you. It's there right way to be birth. You're born. It's already been born. It's already here. As it is, and practice then 100 understanding your practice in this in this original Lightman kind of philosophy is that you don't practice in order to do anything. You practice, because practice is what wants to happen. Practice is the natural expression of the perfection of this very moment.

It's like sometimes if you, I don't know if this is a good example, but

I can't think of a good example. But it's, it's for some people see this Japanese approach to Buddhism as being very world affirming. Because this world itself, you're not trying to escape the world, which the Indian idea is you're cultivating yourself in order to, it's not exactly a certain way you can see as escaping the world, to no longer to be in the world but not of the world, to experience the unconditioned at first Which is beyond conditions. Japanese so that the conditions of the world is itself is itself enlightenment. The danger of this Japanese approach is it lends itself to what's called antinomianism. It lends itself that anything goes. And I saw this in Japan among monks there who had this philosophy who had this idea of you know, everything I do is enlightenment everything's expression of original enlightenment. And they did very rather unusual things. And we're not unusual but unusual for Buddhist monks. And maybe it's great that they do this this stuff but the number one guy who was really into this at all I don't sit at all I don't meditate at all because everything's I did that. I did that when I was young training monk. But I understand now that everything's enlightenment. And so I I stay home my temper I drink a lot of whiskey and beer and, and when I'm free I had a big Harley Davidson in his garage I go driving on my Harley Davidson around, but unusual for a monk to have Harley Davidson drive around. But, you know, it seems, you know, it's maybe maybe some wisdom behind his understanding, but it seems it seemed a little odd to me. And, and also, when I was in Japan, the monastery there, they were just struggling a little bit with legacy of this kind of teaching because it was used in Japan to support racial discrimination. Everything's everything's expression of, you know, innate enlightenment. Therefore, the social system as a set up is also an expression of it. Therefore, it's fine to have these untouchables Japanese buck Bakugan Barak region and, and in fact, when there was a soul searching going on in Soto Zen system in Japan when I was there, because Soto's and monasteries and religious organizations institutions, had for centuries been supporting that whole view that, you know that it was they giving the religious justification for having this kind of racial

discrimination that they have had traditional in Japan. So they were good, they'd realize this and when I was in the monasteries, in the mid 80s, they were doing all this education. And I was would come, people would come, professors would come to the monastery and educate us about the history of it and, and the bad consequences in trying to change the understanding of you know, this period of Japanese Buddhist history which was rather rather unfortunate.

So in my view, these different stages are different contexts for mindfulness practice. This Buddhist practice are responding to very, very deep questions about what it means to be human being. And you might ask yourself, you know, deeply, you know, what is it to be a human being? Why are you here? What is human life about? What's the most important thing to do as a human being? Are you passive who's going to go along with that every thinking about those things go along with what you do, then you're just going to be kind of follow just the social conditioning that you've gotten. Or are you going to, you know, if you don't get nervous, just just passively really ask yourself these kinds of deep questions, then, are there different approaches to spiritual life that is suitable for you, for your understanding is the path of cultivation something really inspires you? for some people to really inspiring is the path of innate Buddha nature, path for you the path to your sense of real deep sense of inner potential sense of divinity within or something Buddha nature within? Or is it that you have some view about not just yourself, human being what is to be a human being, but a view of what the cosmos is like the whole universe, that you that, that maybe fits into some view of anything, but it could, for example, fit into the very world affirming approach as a Japanese, Hong Kong cushy so the original life meant view is there's a lot of different understandings. And when people sit to practice mindfulness to sit and just be attentive in the moment what's happening. Some people do it passively because they've been told to do that. You should do that. My mother said you should be mindful. Some but consciously or unconsciously, we bring with us view of what we're doing. When we sit down to be mindful of what's happening in the present moment. What's your view? What's your understanding of what you're doing? And don't just don't just look at it caught the conscious view you have, but it is some kind of subconscious or kind of unexamined, kind of unreflective view that you bring with you about your approach what you're doing. So that's probably a good place to end, giving you turning it over to you. Now, I see someone's head

often because there's seven minutes to fill up.

Because you're taking the tape taping,

noticing speakers, some used every minute go over some stuff.

I say what profound understanding of human life

But anyway, we were we did if you'd like to ask a question or comment or Yes.



Everything is enlightenment.

That seems that makes me a little nervous.

Because it seems to me that

there has to be a contrast for it have any meaning. You could equally say everything is an enlightenment. If everything is a everything is also a B. Is that

clear? Yeah, yeah. So it loses all of its meaning there's there's no inherent meaning in life.

Unless there's something somewhere,

right, so what you find is in certain strands of Soto's end, is that faith becomes very important. It's a standard part a very much a faith tradition, where you have faith in this. And so it's a real question is whether you have faith deep faith in this or not. And so if you have faith in it, then you relax into this possibility. And it's you know, and your life is transformed in some way. The sentiment master Dogon said, foolish people, ordinary, ordinary people are deluded about enlightenment. enlightened people are enlightened about the illusion. So there's a difference there. And but the difference is, someone who, who sees it this way really sees everything as being perfect. So the question is, do you see it that way? Or you don't use either see that way to say it, and some people, some teachers will say, it's that way, whether you know it or not. But it's helpful to know it. It's, you know, it's a whole. Yes.

I guess what I'm saying is similar to the saying is

Japanese

war and hatred and violence.

Well, I don't want to speak so much for this tradition. Right? I don't know. I can't say I know that much. Man. I tell you, a little son told you a little bit about this, you know, this discrimination aspect that existed there, and how the and also that there's a book called Zen at war, that talks a little bit about how the Zen tradition use some of the religious philosophy to support the war effort. So there's so you know, there's ways that that yes she also in Thailand, you know and Burma and different people have used Buddhism to support different war efforts. It's not unique to Japanese. And

I think people have the people I know who have most respect for who are deeply meshed in this kind of worldview of practice, have very deep faith in the goodness of the human human heart. And if there is a radical acceptance of the perfection of this life itself, that rarely, that itself will ensure that you will respond to the world in the appropriate way. So the, the understanding and most of the ways in which

we act and appropriate from the world come from not understanding the innate perfection and come from understand understanding, not accepting life very deeply as it is And so if you do this very deep acceptance that this particular view has, then there's real deep faith and trust that this is, you know, you'll, you'll respond and act in the appropriate way. That's part of it. But the I was trained for a long time in the Soto Zen tradition, I feel very home and this actually assist you to Hong Kong because she's the original like mint view. And there's a bit hard for me to articulate exactly how, you know, maybe someday I'll be able to articulate exactly how it is for me, but it has to do with a certain understanding of, of what it is to be human being in this in this universe in this cosmos. You know, and is there some other you know, if you don't if you don't have a focus on Heaven, some world beyond if this is the only world we have Is this world we live in this cosmos, this universe we're in? What is our what is our relationship to this world? Who are we in this world? And I think of all the different Buddhist schools, it's the Japanese of Japanese come across schools of Buddhism, that somehow have the most to teach us or most inspire us and most to somehow challenge us in, in a very, very modern view of what it's like to be human being in the world right now. So I know I didn't say anything much right now, but but I wanted to someday I'll be able to articulate it.

Yes. It seems to me that even in that, in that view, you're still cultivating faith. I mean, as you practice within that, that framework, you're still cultivating faith, right?

So it still seems like a path of cultivation.

Maybe yes, it can be passed. cultivations just kind of faith, faith, the self reinforcing, perhaps just arises, comes along as you go, it comes along with you as you go along. And but, you know, the, in the Soto Zen tradition which I've been part of for many years, I feel it really comes down in the end to, to faith. Faith, faith is a very important part of it. And we don't usually think of Zen as faith being very important part of Zen. But I think that it's very, very much faith tradition in a very different way that faith is present for the early Buddhist tradition to be possible the Theravada tradition, where faith is much more has to do with confidence. And certain trust and confidence in potential and possibility and, and it's more much more kind of enough to use maybe a little poor word. It's much more rational

A couple of years ago, you were talking about

belief in Buddhism. And you talked about the belief in karma. And I discovered that I learned a lot more from my mistakes than I do from the things that I do. Right. So I feel like even unskillful actions leading to suffering are retort alignment for me, so I can kind of recast the others in perspective like that. I'm gonna learn more by doing stupid stuff.

Right. Maybe you're in the same school as Master Dogen. He said, he said, a Zen masters life is one continual mistake.

I appreciate your comments about her and

has been

probably the most important spiritual teacher.

And

I would just like to reaffirm what you said about self organizing, self directing,

because often doesn't go over to well my partner is sitting back

and

and the woman is wanting medication.

So it has to come. It has to come from that organizing.

Yeah, I'm nervous. I was just gonna go Yes.

I guess I

come from a doctor in training, right? And

it's been interesting for me because I feel like we really have to satisfy my first practice.

Opening to our discovery

treats we encourage more and more to not to not move away from that change position right away and to work with the pain and

open to it

and use that to grow and strengthen muscles. But sometimes, I also wonder if there's a danger in that take into a string extreme you can punish yourself or judge yourself for when you do move with nothing. And it's come up for me in my training, because I've often had allies come from whatever alternative medicine or natural point of view net First, the first flavor for the very attended was something refused to happen the way through without any education so tonight's fine so this was my my liberal bias but I also have more and more realized that that I can't and I'm sure a lot of women in

this room have to convert I'm sure a number of us and the more I work with women that process more realize that there's there's no wrong way and there's no way there's no way in hell especially being a man also through wanting some relief. payments can be so intense at times. And, and yet I do realize that in some circles, there's almost a sense of avoiding the self judgment for actually going where realized they were really in some circumstances and might be the most skillful choice I made. You just relax into deep into the process. So anyways, those are some thoughts about that. And

I think it's good. Yeah. So, you know, the that's why I think there's always different approaches, I think they're all there. I like to think I like to be very inclusive, you know, all different cultures actually have a place. So rather than having, you know, one view, one, one shoe fits all and be very accepting of, you know, in certain context and context, different ways of us, there's wisdom, there's wise ways of using anything. There's wise ways of using epidural wise ways of dealing with pain, and there's unwise ways of using it. And hopefully we have the wisdom to separate When, when, so like with my wife, I've talked to her a little bit about you know, how, you know, when she, you know, went when should I listen to when should I, when should I listen to her request for epidural and when should I not

you know, no and

no

You know, and, you know, it's a little very hard, you know, how do you sort that one out? You know, she's yelling at you, you know, give me that epidural, like you said. So, you know, but you know, they don't last five minutes or five minutes, we evaluate or something. And, and, but you know, my wife is you know, she definitely doesn't want to use epidural but she's kind of okay with using it. It's you know, she, the important thing is to have the baby born. That's, that's important to me. She's more, more and more interested in the healthy baby being born than she is and the particular way she baby the baby's born. And so to tie it back to practice, like you did two retreats. I think some, I think there's healthy ways of being present for pain and unhealthy ways on retreat during meditation. And you have to have the mindfulness and the good sense to kind of work your way through that. And some of it is trial and error. You kind of sometimes Learn from your mistakes, it'll make me but it's very powerful in Very helpful sometimes to sit with physical pain and meditation. And it shouldn't be pain shouldn't be seen as being a hindrance or a problem. It's really the door into deeper spiritual life. And, and sometimes it's actually counterproductive to sit with pain. And it's just the absolutely wrong thing to do and it's wrong spiritually. It's wrong physically, it's wrong, you know. And so what I like to encourage people to do is if you're in doubt, whether it's useful or not, err on the side of being careful. But if you have a good sense that you're not damaging yourself that this is actually good part of the process for you and you really into it, and then go in it and it can be a very intensive meditation. Part of the reason my wife is you know, part of part of a resource which is calling on now giving birth is she said, Oh, it would be like tongue guard do it on guard. Oh, is this and practice we sit? I think she'd prefer Five days, where you kind of supposed to sit for five days and not move. You know, and you're allowed to go to the

bathroom. And after each meal, you get three meals a day, and then you're allowed to kind of have a half an hour break after the meal. But otherwise between meals, usually like three to four hours, I think he's supposed to sit and not move. And it's a kind of Zen thing. It's the people who believe in the innate perfection of everything. You sit there with perfect pain. And, and I've done that too. I've gone through twice as few times actually. And, and she, she she called for these tremendous resources inside herself to sit through those five days. And, and she feels that that becomes a resource. You know, she'd been through that. At least, she's gonna be the same. I don't know. Yes. So psycho

Pregnancy What am I first I can't have an epidural because of spinal surgery. So

my choices were to either

they can give you like demo which kind of

blows your put you under. And the idea of getting put under for birth is so horrible to me I, I have to tolerate the pain and so I have to find a way

to tolerate the pain and sometimes having the choice of you know, coming up with this easy solution to make it go away.

prevents you from making the effort.

Very good. So in the personal practice where we err on the side of things, you know, in taking care of ourselves, you always have the, you know, going to be passing the retreat, there's always an easy option out, you can go take a bath could take a nap, you know, or whatever. And in zen, there's no ops no no way out. You know, once you're sitting there Be there, you're committed, you can't, you know, unless you leave the whole thing and you know, just terrible You know, you're supposed to leave. But you're just, you know, there's no so I'm very grateful for my Zen training because I was when I was young, I was trained in a situation there's no out. And, and for me, I think it's, I preferred right the safer way because people can get damaged when there's no way out. But it is a problem sometimes in the passionate world, that people take the easy way out too quickly. And don't really hang in there when actually it would be serving in the best to hang in there and really face what's going on really sit still and be present. I wish you well. With that excited for you when is it? December 8 is the Japanese Buddhist tradition, the date of the Buddha's enlightenment and all across the world. students stay up all night hoping to give birth to something

Okay, well, I hope this has been useful now. Yeah, sure. Last one, oh, I just want

to add one thing which actually affects both men and women in terms of pain, which is when people go to the dentist, and it's very common just you're going to get drilling into, they just shoot you up with



something even though we can have gas or something. Sometime in the 70s. I just decided that I didn't want to do that anymore. And so it's a continual practice. Every time you go to your dentist, it's a continual practice to explain to the dentist.

It's a foreign thing, but actually, it's very simple to sit there and get most drilling done. It's very quick and it's very intensive in a way it's a microcosm of childbirth because the pain comes and then it goes it's not

really an interesting show.

Have a root canal or something, but you know it is it's very much being present with some Yes.

That I think what you were saying it's it's the notion of having a fixed view of how it should or would go is important. Just the way you're saying, well, you you have no choice but sometimes I've talked to women who are going to have a baby and they've not had a moment's experience of childbirth and they say no, I'm gonna have an epidural and that seems to me as as difficult as saying I couldn't possibly have enough Yeah, but I joined what you're saying is I'm someone who my feeling about the dentist was obvious immediately gas just all I want and I have a son who goes and doesn't get notice A game or anything he experimented with different things and found that he's most comfortable getting neither now i i could see the idea of childbirth without pain people were like good because we know that natural childbirth is this wonderful experience and I've experienced that too but but the idea that the dentist without

for some people it turns out for my son, it's just it's more comfortable for him then the other medical things he does so I really respect that. Not being passive and finding out for yourself what it's like to be president I had experiences with well now I haven't done what he's done yet. And I respect him for being open to trying it and then finding out that in fact, the thing we fear so much, this dentist drill for some people may not be all that bad

beautiful outcomes.

symbolically made none of us ever drool. Thank you