

2004-05-26 Foundations of the Buddhist Spiritual Life: Letting Go (Week 5 Part 2)

Thu, 7/23 10:25PM • 56:52

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, letting, clinging, practice, buddhism, buddhist path, happen, life, develop, hold, deep, release, fruit, confidence, buddhist, plant, happiness, imc, person, sense

SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

So in the first four days of this five week class, I talked to use the analogy of a pyramid to describe the Buddhist path in the Buddhist life. That in the teachings of the Buddha, the Buddhist life is one that is developmental follows kind of developmental model, much in the way that a child develops developmentally would expect the child to develop over time. And just because become an adult, doesn't mean you just need to stop developing, but there can be further development and that your spiritual life is an aesthetic and a kind of way of kind of continuation of our maturation. Sometimes I think of it just kind of, you know, further maturation of human being is eagerly Buddhist or religious it just deepening gear further in the process of maturation. So We talked about the pyramid and the pyramid needs to have a good foundation. And with a good foundation, you can get pretty high the pyramid, if you don't have that foundation, the pyramid kind of gorgeous, you know, just a pole standing up we can take over pretty easily. Today I'd like to offer you a different analogy for the Buddhist path of the Buddhist life. And that is of a, of a growth of a flower because of a plant. You know, you forget to plant the seed and then you tend to that seed you nourish it, you water it and give it nutriment and protect it from bugs, gophers or whatever. And then the seeds sprouts and it grows and you also protect it from yourself because if you come and pull it out of the ground to look how well it's growing. It probably you probably can't get it back in again to grow. And she's going to leave it there be very patient very nurtured along you support it to grow. You can't be greedy about the growth of plants. You can't be laksa days ago, you have to kind of offer them some care. But you can't just let their own kind of let them grow in their own time. And then as the plant grows, it gets taller and bigger. And at some point, there's a flower bud that appears on the, on the plant. And if you pick that bud off, that that bud will never become a flower. So you need to be easy no to leave that bud alone and let it kind of blossom into a beautiful flower. You could pick the flower then. But if you pick the flower then the flower will never have a chance to become a fruit. And so you leave the flower there. Flower can continue fighting could continue to continue to develop and fruit or seed or something to create fruit

grows then that plant say it's an Apple, Apple flower and then the apple begins growing and at the apple is really green and small. And you pick it and try to eat it you get something that's coming

What's the word for unripe apples tart sour tart and so you leave the apple there and one way to know when Apple is really arrived is you come gently take your hand and eat the apple and very gently kind of lift it up and if it just comes off in your hand you know what's right for if you pull out the toilet it's not quite right yet. And so, at some point, the apple just you know comes freeze quite easily and naturally by itself when the wind blows or something happens just falls at some point it just falls by itself gets released from the plant. The goal of the Buddhist life is sometimes called the fruit. We actually use the word fruit follow in Pali and, and so after the F After building the pyramid after building the plant and letting it grow, following organic process, at some point, there's a maturation process that occurs that is not exactly in your control. I can't control my six year old son's maturation process. So well, if I try to hurry it up like I do, sometimes it just a disaster. But if I just be patient, the nurse should along. It seems to come along just fine on its own. You know, I'm just impatient as a father, right? So but our own spiritual development is the same way that we have to do something to support and nurture it and guide it. But also, there's a way of kind of just being patient and allowing some development to happen on its own. And the ultimate to the highest schools of Buddhism are like the fruit that you don't want to pick the flower. But you want to encourage the plant to keep growing. You don't want to pick the fruit too early. You want to wait until a point where the fruit of the apple is ready to fall off by itself or falls off by itself, releases itself but that experience of relief Have letting go is the ultimate kind of point or step in Buddhist practice to have a very profound and full experience of release or letting go, relinquishment and, and the apple just dropped. So we just dropped all the things that are, you know, when really right, then we can let go. And the most common way that the Buddha talks about the ultimate kind of goal of a spiritual life is in language. It's akin to language of letting go of the word for the word Nibbana, which is this Pali word for Nirvana is probably best translated into English as release. It's an experience of release. The Apple releases itself from the tree, the fruit releases itself. There's a release within us to kind of release when we're mature when the good things are right And, and I say this I use this analogy of the plant, because it implies that the release happens should have only happened when things are really mature and ready for it. The letting go is meant to be happen when you're ready to let go. People hear that letting go is a very important part of Buddhist practice sometimes are troubled by that supposed to let go and let go of all these things in my job or my family and all these things, you know, what does that mean? Like go and or, or people do not go and they like, let go of things too early. The idea I think is really like go or let allow release to happen. When the maturity is there, the right this is there. That is the appropriate thing to happen on its own. You don't have to rush it and force it. Some things we learned to let go over briefly earlier than other things. Something's only let go of with practice is quite deep and strong. So the, the path of cultivation, which we talked about last week, is perfect. With allows that plant to grow and strengthen, you need to first have a strong stock, or a strong trunk or a branch of the plant is so that it can hold the flower and the fruit. And so you need to have that in place so that it supports the growth of that, that fruit and if it's a stock where the branch is not strong enough, then it's not going to carry the weight of the fruit as it

matures, and then the branch will break. So we need to have the cultivation part developing ourselves as an important part of Buddhist practice.

But from the point of view of the ultimate goal of Buddhism, it's all dimensionally to support our capacity to let go to release. Now imagine yourself waking up from a wonderful nap, you had a nice meal. wonderful things have happened to you for the last week. You feel contented satisfied with the many things and you go out into your streets where your car's parked and, and you look at the sky feel so wonderful. It's like a perfect moment and everything just nice and wonderful and calm. And then you look down and you're tired so you have a flat tire. How do you respond? You probably respond differently. At that time when you feel quite relaxed and open and confident in yourself, then if you feel insecure lack of confidence frazzled, harried, late for appointments and you rush out and everything's going wrong, and you look at a flat tire and oh, you know, you feel really good about stuff and you live a life that's wise and not late for everything. You see that flat tire you go, Oh, that's too bad. You know, you know, you know, you know, I think both. I think today I can take the bus. Just like always so you know, it's easier to let go. When we get when we have a certain state of mind or state of being the point I'm trying to make here, and certain things that are quite reasonable to let go of, or hard to let go of, when we're in difficult states of mind, our ability to let go is dependent on a lot of different conditions, our own sense of inner well being, and inner strength, circumstances around us what's going on. It has a lot to do with our ability, how we see the world, our perspective or understanding of what the world is about. So for example, if someone doesn't show up for an appointment that you promised that you're up for, you could of course, get very angry. How could that person be such a jerk? And, and you could spend a lot of time holding on to your anger to that person. And you're planning what you're going to tell that person whatever right. But do you hear you can get a phone call and find out the person was going to be there on time, but had an accident now in the house. But in that perspective, suddenly, you know, you'd like you can at that moment you can let go of your holding. And because you have a new perspective What's going on? Some people when they get offended by someone who's still being kind of obnoxious, have the capacity to look at that innocuous person, a difficult person and see the suffering in that person's heart that's stimulating their noxious behavior. And seeing that suffering changes the perspective that you can let go of taking offense or wanting revenge or something changes kind of the way we hold that situation. A Monday I heard a story of a I guess, senior high school student, girl who was went to the prom with a guy and the guy went home at the end of the prom with a different girl, different woman. So that's pretty bad, isn't it? I think it's bad. It's not polite. And so she went home and she was miserable and which may be to expect expected. And she was miserable for two weeks, pouting and miserable feeling really terrible but being jilted at the prom and then her grandmother came up to her and said, what would it take for you to let go of your pain? What would it cost for not to pay you? And she said \$50 a new pair of shoes. So the grandmother gave us \$50 and took her off and bought a nice pair of shoes. And that was it. And then, but then the grandmother, this is the wise part of the story. The grandmother turned to the to the granddaughter and said, You did that. You were the one who let go. You chose to let go when you made this question. In your mind, if this was you were holding on it was your choice to hold on to that pain. And it was your choice to let go. I bribed you, but you still your choice. The possibility of letting go

is something that's inherent in a lot of life whenever there's holding on to the possibility of letting go. And live lot of Buddha spirituality emphasizes letting go, letting go. The great Thai meditation teacher named Ajahn Chah, said if you let go a little, you'll have a little happiness. If you let go a lot, you'll have a lot of happiness, a great

happiness. And if you're new, so if you'd like a little you have a little happiness, like a lot, you have a lot of happiness. Like oh completely, you'll have a great happiness. So the idea of letting go, what do people hold on to and hold on to a lot doesn't take a lot of analysis or figuring a reflection to realize we hold on to things if we are living with a lot of regret. Holding on to the past and suddenly we're spending a lot of time planning, holding on to the future. If we're living our life through fear, you know of all kinds of things that fear they're kind of holding on to certain ideas or anticipations or imaginations of what might happen. We hold on to our sense of self, our sense of dignity or a sense of you know worth or who we need to be or our identity. You know, as a story I like to tell stories and calling elegy silly little analogy. If you go up into the Sierras to go backpacking, after a few days, you forget everything about a lot of things about your regular life and things in your regular life that we really have bugged you. This doesn't really affect you so much. Everything's get left behind. And you have your you know, you you're up there camping and you spell catch up on your shirt. You know, it's not a big deal. But you come back here and you still catch up on your, your nice shirt that you're you know before your business needs. You know, you're horrified or you business lunch with someone, it's like this is you know, it's it is bad, bad but like impacts and how they see you and how you think you are and how you're seeing all this it is a self in relation to other people. And we can get hold on to that. It could grip us really strongly. Why in some situations we let go and other situations we hold on to, what are we holding on to in certain situations. Part of the reason to cultivate mindfulness and concentration is so that we can actually begin penetrating under the surface of what we're holding on to. It could be to make up a scenario that we're holding on to having a clean shirt because we're afraid of losing our job. And we're afraid of losing our job because we're afraid of being homeless. And we're afraid of being homeless because we're afraid to die. But if a person has no fear of death, maybe there's no fear of homelessness. So here fearfulness There's no fear of losing a job. There's no fear of losing a job. There's no fear of catching the shirt. And you can go into the board meeting, relax. I mean, that's a bet that's a silly, that exact analogy. But you have to fill in the blanks for yourself. The way in which sometimes was very deep seated, waiting to be holding on to, which is the foundation for something we're doing kind of three or 410 generations away from that deep holding. Holding on to a sense of self in Buddhism is considered one of the more pernicious and deepest kind of holdings we have. And we can let go of that, too. It's possible, Michael, that you'll forgive me if I tell you a joke. It's kind of points to this. of the man who worked for a company and met the director of the board or something. And he had to make a lot of very quickly had to make presentations to the board and it was very nervous. about this, and when everybody positions boring, he pissed in his pants, which was not a good things worse in ketchup. And so the CEO of the company and went to Vinci said, You know, I think you need to work on this, we're gonna send you to the psychotherapists, company therapists work on this. And so, a few weeks later he comes back and says, I'm cured. She said, Oh, great, you no longer fish in your pants. And he said, Oh, no, no, I still pissed my pants. I no longer care.

I don't know if that's why it's letting go. But

someone once said forgiveness is giving up all hope for a better past. So the pointy nose idea of letting go. What do we hold on to now the whole idea of the developmental model the pyramid and the plant is suggesting that letting go is not easy, though some things might be quite easy. But you know, it's not also easy. And so it's best done when it's really clear that this is a useful thing to let go. If you just have a blanket policy like go Let go, let go. It might not be so wise for you might be much wiser to kind of live your life practices as deeply sincerely as you can. And when it becomes really clear, this is not serving me anymore. This is causing me harm. I'm holding, holding on to this grudge. And the person I have a grudge against as long since we've gotten even who I am. Let alone the incident. And I'm still being harmed or what that person did. Why you know what, why am I hold on to this is harming me more than them. Wanting revenge in furious film revenge causes harm to ourselves. We realize the harm we're causing ourselves in being filled with angry anger, angry desires. Revenge to what easier to let go of the anger than it is if you don't see the harm is causing for yourself to hold on to all kinds of things. If you really see once you see the cost that has on you, it's easy to let go of the dividends first when the fruit is ripe and Okay, you'd like to just fall off easily. Part of the function of mindfulness and concentration, seeing deeply is to develop the kind of sensitivity that allows us to see the cost that how the cost that costs on us the fact that has an awesome environment, to be holding on to things to be attached to be clean. And I think it becomes a whole different sort of moralistic thing you should let go of your clinging your attachments, but rather, when you have the sensitivity to see Oh, yeah. This is a drag. clinging to this, isn't there a better way to live, there's no wiser way to live. Also, because it's letting go can be very challenging. They can get really deep, letting go, the deep spiritual life can often arise around a certain level of fear. Because we're so used to orienting ourselves and seeing ourselves understanding ourselves in particular ways. And we have to let go of that it's kind of cool, that I'm not, you know, safe. That's, you know, some people, you know, just they always see themselves in certain ways, hold themselves certain ways. And not to be tougher to be smart or have to be kind of be wounded or have to be subservient or have to be a follower, be a leader, you know, all these things we think we have to be, we hold on to it. And sometimes we get quite brittle because you're holding on to it. And it doesn't have to be that way at all. We don't have to, we don't have to be anything, hold on to any kind of being as we just be who we are, without needing to become something hold on to them or defend anything for who we are. But it can be quite frightening to do that. And for Part of the reason to have this pyramid approach to spiritual practice, is it's a lot easier to let go Go when there's a sense of well being inside. So if you know through the earlier parts of the path, how to cultivate a sense of well being kind of happiness, to learn how to be happy with your ethical life actually makes you happy. It was really strange when I went to Thailand, that people were happy that they were ethical. That was a foreign idea growing up in America for me. I mean, that don't kinds of people are Goody goodies, you know, that was kind of like not so desirable to be that kind of person. You know, even though I was kind of ethical person, I never thought it was a virtue or whatever. But there used to be happy because of it. But in traditional Buddhism, people actually feel happy, they avail themselves, they allow themselves to feel happy, because they know

that they are living a blameless life with that part of their life which is blameless, living ethical virtue alone long enough to have the happiness of knowing that you're generous, that you do good things in your community. That's considered a really healthy thing and Buddhist to avail yourself to allow yourself to feel happiness, and to cultivate that kind of happiness feeling good. And then my wife has today, left. Some friends of ours don't have a lot of money, but they like coffee, and they go to Costco for coffee. But then later on that they really like Pete's coffee. So she was near pizza place. And she was near their house. Also, she bought a pound of Pete's coffee and left it on their doorstep. Later in the day, she got a phone call thanking them. And she said, or just this morning, my wife said, I'm so tired of Costco coffee. And you know, and then my wife said something like,

Yeah, I just want to express how much I love you. The two of you, which I appreciate the two of you, and they said, yeah, we really love you. Appreciate you. So that made or have made me happy. Just hearing your story. And so there wasn't a difficult way of getting a little teeny bit of happiness in your life, you know. But Buddhism encourages you to do those kinds of things, for the hope you know, for that happiness that comes a sense of well being that come from that. It can be long lasting, that kind of happiness. And then the happiness of developing healthy relationships, healthy loving relationship, developing loving kindness or kindness. It's the kind of the happiness to know that you're that on basically, in most situations that come into, and basically can meet that situation with some level of kindness. That could make a person happy to know that they have that ability. I can't do it all the time. But, you know, that's so happy about that, even though the rest of your life is miserable. You know, to feel happy, start cultivating happiness. Happiness is not left to chance in Buddhism, but it's something that we can actually develop and work on it. Have some say in it. Buy someone Pete's coffee and leave it endorsed. See what happens if you do that. And, and then there's the well being that comes from meditation practice, cultivating mindfulness concentration, meditation. seeing if you can use meditation to cultivate a sense of well being, sense of being at home in yourself, calm, collected, letting go, you know some of those some of the things that keep you from kind of being settled. And so you developing a sense of well being as a resource within you, so that when you come up the edge of practice, you have to let go something really scary. You have this support behind you the strength within you that maybe you're willing to take a chance. I can let go of needing to be anybody in this situation. I don't have to prove myself. I don't have to defend myself. I can just be here, transparent and open. It's okay for people to see who I am. Amazing. So letting go is the word as I said, In Buddhism is release and releases a beautiful word, I've been told that a, they also use the word release, and their release is understood to be a gift. It's not something that you can do yourself. It's something it's a kind of feeling of something it's done for you. And some of the deepest forms of release in Buddhism is not something that you have control over. But rather you have to set the conditions up. So that something else releases something else does the releasing. And, but some of that is see clearly, truth will set you free using common expression. They worked really well for Buddhism also, that if you really see very honestly and fully what's here, that often that's when the release Can, can happen. So release is a very important part of Buddhism. And it's a it's a description of absence of description. That is, it's a description of the absence of clinging and holding. But that doesn't mean that it's kind of dull or empty or Boring when all the ways in which we are uptight,

holding on frayed, resistant, all the ways we cling to things or you know, all these ways fall apart and the heart is no longer busy the mind busy doing all these things. What happens to the heart and the mind is that it becomes luminous and radiant. There's a kind of a beauty, luminosity, a, a level of peace and happiness, as if there is as if it's inherent in the heart itself. And it's almost like covered over by all these things. And as we let go, this phenomenal sense of peace and happiness, that's there is possible into surfaces or shows itself. The question the challenge for people interested in the Buddhist path, is how seriously we can take that possibility. If you take it 20% seriously, then you can take the path and be 20% of the way and get all the benefits. Remember, the first class I said, the Buddhist path is good in the beginning, but in the middle and good in the end, even one moment of mindfulness is good. So you know, you don't have to kind of be goal oriented, some distant goal. In some way, the goal is fulfilled in each moment you practice. But if you're 20%, motivated by that goal,

the ultimate goal, then 20%, you'll get there 20% of the way, if you really understand it, really inspired by this possibility, and you see that the possibility of letting go of every single little clinging, resistant, holding on in your psyche is a worthwhile thing to do. Then some people get deeply, deeply motivated to do the work it takes to have released to let that happen. It takes a fair amount of endeavouring. And engagement takes a certain amount of seriousness of purpose of intent. This is really important, it's more important for me to experience release to discover this possibility, then it is to watch Buffy the Vampire sure I've never watched or whatever you know. So release is the combination of the Buddhist path. The one of the one of the profound expressions of it, which is very confusing for a lot of people in the West, is the idea of not self, of kind of letting go of clinging to self realizing the aspect of not self missing. And because we hold on to the self so much, it's very frightening. So you have to have a self and I can't let go of my sense of self and who I think I am and all these things. But the suggestion in Buddhism is that you actually be a lot better off. If you let go. You believe it. If you don't believe that, that's good. If you don't believe it, that's the place where we don't believe that where your struggle where you have doubts is actually a very, very good place for practice to occur. To explore the deep into question, to practice in that area of discomfort. The more uncomfortable you are, the more there's probably something there to be seen. No Buddhists, no one's asking you to let go before the fruit is ready. So if that's okay, you're just wasting your own time, your fruits will be ready. And the final thing I'll say before I take questions is as a kind of, you know, when if when the apple drops from the tree by itself At some point, the heart releases itself. At some point the mind consciousness releases itself. It's almost as if consciousness consciousness itself is a kind of a holding, kind of clinging. And when the consciousness lets go of itself, that's touching what the Buddhists talk about this being the unconditioned, the bone out there ultimate release. So now it's your turn. First, I'd like to hear from you. If we ask questions. What was that meditation like? Every day it was basically meditation of letting go. Some of it if you're familiar with mother time, just let go of tension in your shoulders. That's pretty innocent, right? Like all of your attention, your stomach. Like all of your thinking. There was a lot just to focus on for 20 minutes we just did basically letting go letting go ahead and go What was that like? Yes. That's one way of letting go. Or hypnotize you. That's one of the dangers of guided meditations. There's all kinds of dangers in doing guided meditations. One is that people get lulled into into it and get pulled away and fall asleep. And that's why it's very important to Buddhism Buddhist

practice, to not just cultivate calm, but also cultivate energy. So you'd have both. In other days, you're doing guided meditations, as people are irritated by the voice. They get they get calm, you know, and suddenly his voice goes, you know, leave me alone. But anyway, yes.

Education. Physical.

Yes, it's always valuable to notice these Since

when I first started I thought about the shoulders, shoulders and so that's where I thought

this I mean, you feel like you realize you're miserable by the end. But certainly, one of the things that happens in meditation practice, for example, is that we go deeper and deeper. And we realize or more broadly or fill in pictures more and realize areas we haven't been paying attention to. So one thing that happens sometimes, is people will discover, for example, the surface muscles or the shoulders might relax, and that feels good. But after a little while, they realize it deep inside underneath the surface is really tightened. tense. And people say, Oh, I'm going back wasn't getting more tense to meditating. They're not getting more tense, it's just that they've unraveled enough to see what they normally can't see, because the surface muscles are hiding it. The same thing exists psychologically, if the mind is always busy and scattered, thinking about planning, you know, the shopping lists. You know, it's quite lovely to plan shopping lists, you know, certainly your health, you know, worst things you can do with your mind. But, but you're stuck making a shopping list for some people might go, Oh, I'm doing that because I'm so afraid. I'm nervous and distracting myself. So there's layers that we discover in Buddhism, the Buddhist teaching is that if you are in some ways, uncomfortable or stressed or agitated, you're better off knowing it. Then not knowing if you're tense, you're better off knowing that you're tense then The intention of knowing the bad news about that is, then you're aware if you're uncomfortable. So it's a little bit bad news, but it's actually good news. It's that's, that's, it's better to stay aware of these things. Otherwise they kind of work behind behind offstage and affect us in ways that sometimes we wish we wish they wouldn't affect us. Yes. In the back there.

Great. Well, you know, that's to be expected. You know, go get them. This is what I was talking about this relaxing and finally see something deep down inside. So then we need to meet that for some wisdom and understanding. And that's where you've cultivated some ability to be an accepting awareness. Why is attention Some stability of mine. So abilities Be kind to yourself and forgiving, then it makes it easier to confront that kind of fear. Or if you have other tools you realize, wait a minute, I don't think I should look at this fear for a while. I think I'll pull back from it. It's too much right now. What I need to do is really develop some sense of well being something and once I have that well being, then maybe I can go back and face it. Did you have something for someone else? Yes.

Was really short time.

The rest of it was just trying to go back to that feeling

It's very beneficial to have that experience. And just I would encourage you to be content for the five seconds you had it. It's a very common hindrance for meditators to try to recreate or make something happen again they've had in the past, it's, it's, it's fine to kind of keep doing the practice and kind of hope that it might happen again. But it's really common to get attached to it, and push forward and expected and be disappointed if it's not happening. So be very careful any kind of experience you might have to not set it up in such a way that it's going to cause you to suffer. There's something one very wise approach to think to kind of Buddhist life Buddhist practice is to have the assumption that whatever is happening, is appropriate. Is that is happening is the phase I need to be in right now. And so you might go very deep, and then you come out. coming out is the appropriate To be in, and that's where you have to practice. And you practice with whatever is given you. And then over time the practice deepens in its own way. But you don't need you don't need to be in charge of, you know, how deep or how shallow you are. Just meet this moment here as it is.

Yes, yes.

variety of things to say, such a few now, and maybe some other time, we could talk about some others. But one is a change of understanding. And that is to not think of the sounds as obstructions anymore, but actually invite them and include them as part of the meditation so that they're not outside coming in and bothering you, but they're actually just part of the field. You let them be there. And now you might even actually matter on them just due to hearing hearing whatever. And, and that's also sometimes the wisest way. So you're not bothered by them. More often than not being bothered by sounds is a symptom of some kind of attachment. It's like we're attached to our, my meditation, it needs to be really deep and I'm getting calm and you know, and so some sound come off, you know, but if you're not attached to anything, the sound just goes right through to experiment with that and see if that helps. If not, we'll talk some more.

Listen. So now we can have questions or what I've said today Yes.

No, you know you're clinging to it. No, you're no longer using it as a way of defining who you are. So that you can get like, more liked by people, for example, or feel safe. Or there's a kind of movement of the mind that we're kind of fixates on something and locks in somehow. So, some people, for example, choose their clothes more carefully to choose their words, they choose their clothes very carefully, because what they wear says something about who they are. And if they're seeing the wrong clothes, they're mortified. You know, and it just, you know, because, because somehow the mind is wrapped up around this issue of how they're seen. They want to be seen in a good way. They don't want to be rejected. They want to appear a certain way they want to, you know, So let it letting go of being concerned about how other people think about you. is a part of it. Like Okay, so people can think what they think about me, I'm gonna let go of it. I think I'm gonna let go thinking that I need to appear any

particular way to show off you know who I am in some way. They stop showing off a lot of people show off.

No, no the point the point is that clinging to so. So you're welcome to be a woman. I think you are. You're welcome to be a woman no one's gonna take identity away from you, you know about your choice at least. And, but you don't have to cling to being a woman. And all the things it means to be a woman you know, to hold on to and cling to and try to defend it at every possible juncture. And this is what it means to be a woman in your culture or this culture, that culture and you know, and Short smile enough. And so people cling to all kinds of things. They don't need to cling to including who they are, who they actually are. And sometimes they cling to who they're not that they want to be or think they are. Does confidence because it seems like when you have

I guess, like dealing with others in a situation

doesn't make sense. This is the right way. So seems like

Yes, yes, I agree. So that's why they do this pyramid pyramid approach to practice is very important. Because you need to develop the kind of strength sometimes that allows you to have let go of doubt gives you confidence gives you understanding. And there's a lot of things that provide confidence and there's certainly confidence in our ability, there's confidence that we're gonna be okay. If we know we know how to take care of ourselves. If we do X, there's confidence in our values is called confidence and, you know, if I live an ethical life, if I follow the ethical thing here, I think then I really know that I'm safe. But if I start, you know, lying here, you know, I don't have much confidence in the power of lying, but I don't know what to do here, but at least stay honest. And have confidence in that. There's a lot of things we can have confidence in. And it's an important quality to develop in any kind of material life, I think. And in taking this small and big steps to start developing confidence, I think it's really worthwhile. The nice thing is that confidence comes from practice itself. Even if you're not explicitly developing confidence, just simply do that all the different different things you can do in practice, you're simply developing meditation practice, as it develops little bit to develop a little bit more confidence as you go along.

Sometimes it works that way. Sometimes it's it sneaks up on us to change in ways that we didn't see how it happened. And sometimes we see Oh, this is what I have to do and we do it. We're changed. You know, there's a whole range in between. Sometimes the fruits of practice happens when Are Watching. Sometimes Apple drops, you know, at night without looking in the orchard. It does. You know, I've seen many times, you know, Where, where, you know, I've been trying to focus on some issue in my life and working on and working on it, dealing with it. And then I wake up one day has gone and happened or come back I'm doing a retreat, I do sittings and focusing on something. And you know, working with it, and then I come back for the next sittings gone, where'd it go? just gone. And whatever, but I needed I needed to do the work ahead of time and you need to kind of be

practicing with it. That that set the conditions for letting go. But I didn't actually see the moment of letting go. And I wasn't responsible for it. In a sense, it just something came to maturity.

That's one way to do it. No, there's no struggle. It's good. I mean, that's one way No, you're successful. Like one of the signs I had. My practice was working for me was when I Go through a residential retreat like a 10 seven day retreat and in the seven days not get angry Wow. Wow. I used to get so angry we just always sitting there you're sitting there doing nothing you're closing your eyes. Nothing's happening nobody's being nice to you and defeating you and everything no one's asking you to work and I'd be steamed up Why would I be angry? And but I can get through a seven day retreat without getting angry. That was quite something that's accomplishment. You're supposed to talk about your accomplishments too much. But anyway, I felt I felt that, you know, that really made me happy. This is working.

difficult and I tell myself You know, become aware of that.

But so in those times when I noticed, I am claiming or something, I've experienced some value. I'm still interested in hearing about the experience. Yes. So that. So that can be question is about letting go too quickly, you're in the wrong way, trying to force it maybe, instead of letting go is there value in embracing the experience going into it. And I completely think that's just the case. That's mindfulness in some senses of mindfulness itself as a practice of being of embracing being fully present for what's actually going on. So if you're angry, rather than letting go of your anger might be more useful to be in complete presence to it, and really see it and deal with it and feel it. Give it permission to permission to be there. And in the safe environment if you're sitting and then see what happens. You know, understand it because letting go is a big part of Buddhist practice I've been practicing it a lot I was pretty good at certain aspects of it in certain areas of my life and I was relatively good at some points actually let go of anger when it rose and then a person told me that maybe it was too good and that I should not let go of my anger the first chance I had, but rather to hover with it was the word that this person used during a linker would let it stay there for a while it was a bit hard for me to do I think I will learn the art of when to know there was there and not let it go right away just let it be there. And the advantage of doing that was I got to learn to see it more clearly. Because of the conditions of it you know what what what prompted it with the sense of self identity that was related to it? The whole ecology of it for let go too quickly, you don't understand. So I'm not I'm not there's there's wise and unwise ways of letting go. If something's it's easy to let go of you just do it. If someone cuts in front of you on the freeway, just let go and nothing have it. Don't, don't, don't, don't, don't fight about it. Not worth it. But if someone you know, but some things you want to not let go of, but what you might want to let go of is acting on it. What kind of a variety of letting go it's very important in Buddhist practice is the practice of restraint. That restraint is very unpopular word in the West, probably ever since the 1960s. And so we you know, we don't use it too much with people run away screaming. But restraint is a very important word in Buddhism. And it's letting go of, for example, of acting on things, impulses that we might have, that would get us in trouble. So there's all kinds of things that we get in trouble

with, you know, that they're not healthy, not good to do. And so we can't let go of it. But we can restrain ourselves so we're angry with someone and we want to say, you know, you jerk. You don't give him maybe can't get let go of your anger. But you can restrain yourself from saying, you jerk. And then you let the easy lead just be fully, honestly present what's happening inside of you and find a more useful way to hold that anger. So the idea of restraint is a form of letting go and not to be undervalued the importance of it. Yes.

So the question is, what's the relationship between hope and hopelessness? And is hope a kind of a clinging clinging and when you let go, you're supposed to also let go of hope is right. Right. I think the answer is both. Yes. Both, I think rather than having either or kind of answer to your question, I think in some situations, it's completely reasonable to have hope. It will let people kind of colloquially mean hope. You know, no one's going to sit down to meditate unless there's some hope that's going to make a difference in their life. Some people do, but generally, you said it's reasonable to have some hope. Some expect some very light expectation, you know, you know, but hope and also really dangerous, because it'd be a lot of clinging and expectation as part of it. And so, they are just to learn how to have some healthy sense of possibility and potential and that maybe we can fulfill that potential and what is some kind of hope that is fear based or neurotically based. And so there are people who will say that, you know, the way to liberation is to give up on hope. And it's a very profound statement. But they don't really mean you know, you have to, you know, in context, you know, you know, it's it's the right thing to say But I hope that if you let go of a hope that you become free when I teach children about this kind of principles of clinging and non clinging, I'll have a little bell dismissed was too big. But to do it, well, we have a little bell. And I say, you know, if you hold the bell like this with an open hand, likely, it makes a nice sound. But if you with your fingers, grips the bell really firmly. So in letting go, it doesn't mean necessarily have to let go of the things of the world or let go of certain things. We have to learn to hold them to make music out of them. And so clinging is the problem, not what we're, you know, the thing is saralee itself. And so we're Buddhists, so sometimes there's a confusion in Buddhism between letting go of things and letting go of the clinging If we can, if we can have an open hand, an open mind and open heart No problem. So, maybe the last one and then I'll stay afterwards if people want to talk to me afterwards. We should end now. So maybe the last one

scientists

study

Yeah, I probably read a little bit when he studies also in the baseline for you know, people have a baseline ability potential to be happy. And we've been kind of born with that can be adjusted with practice. So you might, you might be still swings up and down, but the baseline is changed. More likely to be happy. Anyway, so I hope you all can be happier. I hope that this little introductory course, you know, gives you some idea. My hope is that it's maybe giving you some two things, you know many things but giving you some sense of how to work the spiritual life might be about a spirit Buddhist life

might be about and then inspire some of you whether you want to be Buddhist or not. There may be to undertake some of these and find some value in some of these ideas and concepts. We haven't talked a lot of practices. But this was more of an overview of the basic ideas, fundamentals of Buddhist practice. There's other approaches to Buddhist practices, other ideas of what the Buddhist path are, and some of them are quite profound. And I love them. They're great suit more students for some personalities and others. The one I've offered you this course, is the earliest path as offered by the Buddha and along his lines, I think it's also this one the safest ones. Because it you know, it's so systematic and the creating the right pyramid, the right foundation, the right strengths, so that the deepest work can be done in a healthy way. So, you know, I think one of the safest more safer ways of doing all this. I don't know how many of you are new to IMC came through this course. But if you are, You're quite welcome to come back here and practice with sa p time or company or activities. We have organized somewhat informally in the sense that the doors are just open for people to come in as they see fit. You know, we don't ask anything of anybody and we don't, you know, come and you can go as low as you want to come for years, come for a day or whatever. And, and we have a newsletter off in the desk there, table there and you're welcome to come in a lot of different activities, a lot of different things. Some are more introductory in scope and some hopefully will take For much further than just industry level, and, and so hopefully the range of where people are in their spiritual maturity can be met here at EMC. So you might explore that or talk to people about what might be suited for your different times. My hope also is that those of you who come here, also when we make it makes you happy to support the IMC. That IMC is completely supported by the donations of people who come and use the place. And it's part of our dedication to the spirit of generosity, to hold the teachings and hold offerings of practice here. In that spirit of generosity, nothing's asked but that we offer. We just kind of use offer generously, freely here. Take if you like, and make me very happy to be able to teach in this kind of mode. It also means that there's support for the center and for me, my likelihood is completely comes from the donations that people make that box by the door. So if it makes you happy, that's something to remember. And if it doesn't make you happy, then just walk right by. Yes.

I guess there's some confusion about that. The Sati center for Buddhist studies is a kind of a little more studies focused, scholarly kind of focused, maybe approach to studying Buddhism, Buddhist texts, Buddhist teachings and all that it's not so practice focused. IMC is more practice focused. And there's a place for both and they're two different organizations and would have been closely connected to IMC because I'm on the board of both. And that sense in it, I'm usually southcenter does all its activities at IMC. And so because that there's a strong association, sometimes people confuse the two. But they're actually two different groups. We yes, we do have a Sunday service, though we prefer not to use the word service because we're, you know, we i a little bit allergic to the church language. And for better or worse, you know, and so in service kind of implies that but guess what we do is we have a meditation Sunday morning. And that's followed by a talk with students, two periods of meditation Sunday morning, and then we have a talk and all those things. Information is in our newsletter. It's all listed there. So many thanks. And I enjoyed myself. And I think that we probably do this again in a year this class. Thank you.