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## **SPEAKERS**

Gil Fronsdal

Today I went to a meeting of kind of gathering informal gathering of some of the Spirit rock teachers about six or seven spirit rock teachers, together with Joseph Goldstein, just to hang out with him and have kind of Dharma discussion. And it was quite lovely just to meet with people, you know, have Dharma discussion in the kind. And one of the many topics we covered. But one of the one of the first topic that we addressed was the topic of joy. And we were prompted to talk about it because we were asked by Jane Perez, because he's writing a book about joy. This he was kind of mining us he thought this is a good, you know, group of friends. I could ask my friends you know, they don't they don't get they won't get annoyed. And so what do you what do you what do you know about Joy, joy in the practice joy in Buddhism and it was very interesting that we went around the men around the circle and everyone had something to say about joy. One person said that, that in the early years of her practice Vipassana practice, Joy had not been emphasized in the practice. And so she had, she had the sense that everybody here Okay, the speaker is working. Oh, no, oh, it's too soft. I'm sorry. Speak up earlier. Anybody can interrupt anytime. This is an informal place. Anytime you don't think it's loud enough. So there's a little bit too hard for the person that the commands because you know, you know, they said it at one point and then I talk softer for the day. So one person talked about how in the early years of her practice, she didn't, people, teachers didn't emphasize the importance of joy or the role of joy in practice. And more she got the message of the Dharma practices kind of grim, you know, serious, really serious stuff. And you have to bear down and face your suffering and deal with your suffering and look at your suffering and, and work with your suffering and, and, you know, it's all about suffering and being present suffering was kind of what he heard. And it took took many years for him to realize the whole other side of practice. And other teachers that were going around the circle talked about how important what a warden role joy had had, in their practice and, and talks about the different flavors of joy, different aspects of joy. And it was kind of it's very inspiring, for me to sit there and be a part of that discussion about joy. And so I don't want to I don't want to summarize what was talked about that The meeting. But I do want to spend some time talking about joy for you. And its importance and maybe it'd be useful for you to look at it.

You don't have to read very far in the discourses of the Buddha to come across a lot of times where the Buddha talked about the importance of having, developing a sense of well being in practice, and he didn't use the word well being but he used a whole series of words, joy and happiness and delight and gladness and contentment, and a lot of different words that kind of belong to that family, that maybe we call a family of joy and family of happiness. There is a great quote where the Buddha said, The Buddha just quoted in the early discourses of people who are enlightened or said to drink, the joy of the Dharma, Frank Dharma joy. And drinking is pretty kind of, you know, physical kind of sense of drinking in imbuing yourself with this kind of joy, delight, and, and over and over again in the practice instruction of the Buddha, this family of emotions or feelings or states related to joy, play a very important part. One of the very powerful roles is for me as I read the texts in my practice is that concentration is supported by happiness, that if you want to get concentrated, perhaps you first get happy. And now that's a very difficult paradox for many people who come to meditation because Many people come to meditation because there's some form of unhappiness. And then you told me you can meditate until you get happy. You know, that doesn't work. And a very important part of mindfulness practice. And this was made very, very clear and this discussion had about joy is that a very important part of mindfulness practice is a very honest, addressing of suffering, and distress and all the kind of grief and sorrow that we might feel. And some people feel a kind of joy and delight I've had people come and told me today for come to a Dharma talk. And the Dharma talk was about the four noble truths about suffering the cause of suffering and freedom from suffering, and suffering and suffering. And, and, and feeling, joy and delight, because in there, they felt that there was an aspect of human life that was unsatisfactory that was That was stressful was kind of something something inherent about life that was unsatisfactory or there was the popular society their families never addressed, never talked about. And they had this hunch something a little bit off in this world, a little bit out of kilter. And they go around to different places. And they say, you know, they people just want to make a positive message and say, everything's great and wonderful. And these are the people I've talked to. They didn't go around so far. But But and then they come in to hear a Dharma talk, and they say, the Buddhists seem to talk very honestly about what I intuited for a long time. Finally, I'm meeting someone who actually talks about suffering, looks at it right in the face, and makes them happy. That honesty really looking at it. So a very important part of Dhamma practice is honest addressing and looking and being present for life as it is. And often that involves a degree of suffering. But there's another aspect demo practice and that is not just simply what we face when we kind of wake up to what we look at. But also, reality or life involves what happens to us, and what we do in response to life, what we act, how we act, what we do. And we we play a role in our experience of the world. And so, the Buddha said is you should take some responsibility for how you what your role is, in your experience of this life. And if it's just a matter of just being present and being present, being present, being mindful of what's happening was being mindful with what's happening. That's a powerful practice. But it's not the same thing as actually taking responsibility for what you're contributing to the world and actually kind of changing yourself in some way, adjusting yourself. So your mental states your attitude, your disposition, is a little more helpful for Democrats. itself helpful for this process of waking up.

And one of the various, one of the ways of taking responsibility is to have some sense of the possibilities that are inherent within us like joy and happiness or concentration or calm or contentment, tranguility, some of the things that are helpful for dental practice, and then be open to as possibility allow for the make space for its possibility. And I say that to a culture, which often is going at 100 miles an hour going very fast. And in a culture where people are often trying to fill their time to the maximum the maximum efficiency in recreational opportunities or whatever, you know, we're pursuing, we're always pursuing something, you know, and, and multitasking and, you know, doing a lot of different things. Some people don't do it that way. So people have very different lives, but as a culture as a whole There's often a tremendous drive and push from the culture itself almost to doo doo doo. And that kind of life sometimes doesn't leave room for the allowing of a possibility to bubble up inside of us. And I suggest to you that the spiritual life in Buddhism has a lot to do with making space for something, it's actually quite shy, deep inside of us to surface and bubble up and appear and show itself. And if we're always busy and always engaged, then it can't bubble up. and engage doesn't only mean engaged in activities, but it also can mean engaged in our thinking. And some people crowd their lives with their thinking they're kind of claustrophobic, or that sounds the right word. I guess we just kind of, they just kind of feel they're kind of always engaged in something they're thinking about. And the idea that there's life outside of thinking is a foreign idea just like and I know it was foreign. idea to me until I until I started Dharma practice and meditation practice. And isn't that we have to stop thinking. But there's a way in which the mind is always kind of grabbing on or engaged in or obsessed in or thinking about something. And as if life depends on it, there was very important or that's where life is found just by reviewing the conversation we had yesterday and improving what we said, or planning what's going to happen tomorrow. Or, you know, thinking about something this or that. And it's quite humbling for me to sit down to meditate, and to realize how often My mind has a mind of its own in this regard. And my mind is thinking and wants to think, and I can tell, don't think and doesn't listen. It's like a two year old. And, and so it's a part of the target practice is also to learn how to make space in the mind, so that the mind is not always engaged or obsessing or caught up in what he wants to Think about. And when we start engaging little bit from our thinking world, we start making some space in the heart or in the mind for some new possibility to arise. And in that space of possibility, one of the things that we can also do is then try to lean in the direction or try to encourage or nourish certain states of mind, are dispositions, which are helpful for the development of meditation. And one of those things is happiness, or joy or delight, gladness. To begin seeing, can we cultivate neck space for happiness? I suspect that all of you have some occasion, or reason to feel some degree of joy, or delight, or contentment or something, it could be very, very minor. It could be so minor, it just simply you're happy. It's not raining today, you know, this certain kind of happiness. Maybe it hadn't occurred to you or maybe you You'd be happier if it rained. I don't know. But maybe it's a silly example. But I apologize for but the idea is that it's possible to rely to stop a little bit and look around and what is happening right now, that can give us some joy and satisfaction. And to let that joy and satisfaction, feed us drink it in and let it nourish who we are, and make space for it. If we're always kind of going around and not making space for it, then it's not going to nourish us, it's not going to create, it's not going to tenderize the mind it's not going to help the mind relax. Happiness is one of the ways to help

the mind relax. Joy is one of the ways to get the mind to relax. And when the mind begins to relax, that's when kind of the meditation path begins to open up. So, you find a lot of emphasis on joy in the teachings of the Buddha. You find different lists where joy appears or happiness appears or different kind of parts of that family.

And there's different there's different kinds of Then different kinds of happiness, there's a kind of joy, which was taking joy and other people's joy. And that's a very important part of traditional Buddhist practice, is when you encounter someone who's happy for some good reason, sharing their happiness, as opposed to being envious of them, you know, how could they be, you know, they shouldn't be happy. And, but to be to begin tuning in, in that space of the mind that quiets down, actually being interested in other people who are happy and their happiness and kind of ride piggyback on it. You know, it's fine to do that, beyond a few instead of borrowing it because you have to pay it back but, but you can kind of share in their joy. It's kind of form of empathy. And that empathy is considered very important part of Buddhist practice, the empathy that we share and other people's joy. Wow, that person's happier person succeed in something that's really great. I'm happy in it. Wow, that's great. And if you've ever been told that's a useful principle to do, maybe maybe it wouldn't occur. To do that, but as part of the teachings of the Buddha, in other kind of joy is kind of joy or delight or gladness, in, in ethical behavior in the world. So it's also kind of looking around in the world and seeing other heart some good people out there. And there might be people who are not so good, and so quite easy to read the newspaper. And, and, you know, it's interesting to be a newspaper, but the newspaper doesn't often champion or delight in a lot of the virtue virtues that people do. So to go around and tune into the virtue, the delight the ethics that exists in our society and culture. I feel I find tremendous delight when I meet someone who I feel is quite ethical. The people who I've known people who have done the slightest little mistake He said something was a little bit off, you know, that kind of that kind of talking maybe a little bit too fast and said something that wasn't quite, you know, strictly honest, though it was fine, you know, basically there, and they come back the next day and they said, You know, I need to ask for forgiveness, I need to confess, you know, I wasn't quite right, you know, and I said yesterday that, that, you know, had a great meal. You know, I was living exaggerating a bit, that was a good meal.

I haven't done that example never happened with where I've had people, you know, came to make very small, small kind of confessions. And it seemed unnecessary to me when they made them, but it made me very happy that someone in the world wanted to do that. They were motivated enough had that sense of ethics, so they want to do that. And then there's a kind of happiness that comes with our own ethics, being ethical ourselves and in Buddhism We're encouraged, certainly to be ethical to live an ethical life. But almost more important is than being ethical is to avail yourself of a certain kind of joy or delight that comes from and relaxation that comes from being ethical. So it isn't ethical to for the sake of just being ethical. It's ethical, because you're ethical, it's easier to be relaxed. Someone said, you should be honest, because when you lie, when you should be honest, because then you have less to remember. You know, as you tell a lie, and I've known people who've talked about the need to tell a lie. And then they have to make another lie to cover that lie. And they have to remember the lies

they made, it gets quite guite complicated the web of lies. But if you're honest, you have to remember the more relaxed so and also certain happiness. And this was one of the big surprises for me when I went to Southeast Asia. Buddhist Asia was to encounter people who felt joy in their own effort. Non because there was it was not a message I'd learned in America at all. In the circles I traveled in, in fact, the sense I got was that if you were ethical, you're kind of a goody goody, you don't want to be a goody goody person. Kind of just someone who wasn't something was wrong with some was too good. But, so but the idea of delighting in your own goodness, you know unethical behavior was something that surprised me and delighted me when I realized that it was possible. And then we're thought there have been times when that's been a source of delight for me a very palpable kind of delight. And there are times when my ethics have been the opposite. And one of the amazing things to do is to do something unethical and then, go try to sit or retreat or meditate mean. I mean, you really know before I shouldn't have done that, because it kind of comes with follows you along in your mind of assessing and concern. You're heartbroken and you feel that yuckiness of it, and sometimes very difficult to let go of it. And to go and retreat, you know, daily illogically distract yourself from it. But you go on retreat after doing something. And then having done that, and then going into heat some other time, and realizing I didn't do anything bad, and being unethical, and then showing up if this is really good, you know, nothing, nothing burdened by all this remorse and regret the notice that I have. So then, you know, to take the like to take time to feel some happiness in one's own ethics, good behavior, it's sometimes hard in a culture where people feel there's something inherently wrong with them to begin with, you know, original sin or something. But Buddhism has more than notion of original. If anything, It's like, can't quite make the parallel statement in Buddhism. But if anything, in contrast, Original Sin Buddhism would argue that there's original luminosity within us original purity within us. So that's the starting point for Buddhists is more a sense of some innate goodness that we have rather than some innate inadequacy.

One of the forms of joy in Buddhism, that's very important for meditation is called is sometimes translated in English as rapture. And rapture is connected to the word wrapped with like, wrapped interest. You know that word. And so, rapture in Buddhism, like meditation is a kind of joy that comes when there's a wrapped interest in what you're doing, or when you're engaged in something, and you're so wholeheartedly engaged in something that the wholeheartedness itself brings a kind of joy and delight, bubbling up. And this is one of the keys to meditation practice is if we can get so interested in the process of meditation itself, that we're so involved in it, that rapture begins bubbling up, this engages, we lose ourselves, forget ourselves in the process of meditation, so that his joy can arise. That's not so far different than perhaps the joy of maybe reading a really good book. And we get absorbed in delight or satisfaction or joy that can sometimes arise, or some hobbies or playing a musical instrument, you get really absorbed in it, this kind of joy irag can arise on its own. Same thing in meditation. And this is very important to realize because sometimes we sit down to meditate. The mind thinks that thinks it's something else is much more important than meditation itself and thinks that you know, reviewing the past or planning the future or whatever some fantasy is much more Important. And so it's kind of training meditation is partly a training of the mind. So the mind begins to learn that it's actually not that interesting to review conversations or plan the future. It's not, it doesn't really do

you much good. And there's actually much, much more fascinating and wonderful and precious things to do with human life. When you sit down to meditate, then obsessing your thoughts. Now, so begin having some inkling that that's true. And then having an inkling grow and grow and become kind of a really clear understanding or conviction, or I think is part of what happens in meditation practice. So it becomes easier and easier to not be fooled by the obsessive thinking before, but attempts to fix our life by thinking about things over and over again. Maybe that I can let go of this. Or I can be I think I could do something much more important with me with my life right now. Then, engaged in my thinking. I can kind of Get engaged in this process of meditation, following the breath because of vigorous absorbing what's going on, and the more absorbed we get, then at some point is wrapped joy can arise sometimes. And that wrapped kind of joy can become can be subtle, and it can be extremely intense. I have one teacher, because the teacher in Thailand, who was kind of an odd teacher, I thought, and I came to him as a Zen priest and monk. And maybe he had kind of high expectations are concentrated I could get. And so I would do these interviews. I was doing solitary practice in a cabin by myself and but every day I'd interview with him. And and, after a few days of doing interviews with him, he started asking me these questions. And, and then they say, Are you are you shaking it You're trembling it are you bouncing yet? What's going on here? And then after some more days, he said, Oh, I just you know, a few weeks ago, we had this we had this Brazilian woman practicing here. And she had this tremendous you know, just concentration that built up this rap kind of joy. And she was literally bouncing off the walls in her hut cuz shaking and bouncing. And because sometimes when joy is this joy is wrapped interest is very, very intense. It can feel like or feel apparently, I've never seen anybody jumping around bouncing around. But you can feel that way. You can. It's tremendous. You know, sometimes, it can feel like this way. It feels like this, like you're the ocean and these huge waves are rising and union breaking over you and just Washington's joy. Imagine joy. You ever had that change? Maybe like an orgasm. And I tried to eat lunch once when this was happening and every time I picked up The spoon yet, you know, just picking up the spoon, you had to be a little bit concentrated to pick up the spoon right and be focused on something. And so I picked up the spoon and all that concentration would somehow get triggered. And this was kind of this kind of joy. And I'd be so overwhelmed by this cascading of joy a bit spooned out who's too much. And you know, try again. And it took, took forever to get lunch a long time.

And so it can be quite intense. The Times, doesn't have to be but it can be.

There's a joy of having a practice. I find a lot of joy and satisfaction with having a Dharma practice. There are many, many things in life that are comparable, but for me, this is what I found. That helps Gives me kind of a sense of, of having a path in this life, a path in the life of suffering a path out of suffering, a path to freedom, a path to joy, a path to love and compassion. And so, I've been involved in this Buddhist practice path for so long, but I have tremendous confidence in it. And it gives me a sense of joy and delight to have found something like this. And to have found a path that I feel is or I know is so effective and so helpful, leading to a freedom which is, as far as I know, incomparable and it's incomparable. So that brings a sense of joy and delight. There's also a kind of joy that also one of the part one of the discussions we had today was difference between enjoyment and joy. Now, this is

all a matter of definition. And you might use these words differently than how I'm going to use it now. So please You know, think about the definition of using enough the word. So enjoyment is defined as any involvement with what is joyful with what is pleasant or enjoyable. So, a sunset might be bring joy enjoy might be enjoyable. And then there's the active involvement with that pleasure of watching a sunset. The mind might think this is the best sunset ever seen. This is wonderful. Let me just linger here with it. Let me just kind of, you know, just kind of lay here in the sand of the beach and just kind of really soak in the last of the rays and just kind of, you know, when we get involved, it's kind of like maybe maybe some kind of clinging or attachment to that kind of joy that's happening. There's some involvement engagement with it. And one of the forms of engagement with Joy is to think about it. This is a great, I'm having a great time. One of the very interesting things about thinking about what brings us joy. Thinking about that sunset, how wonderful it is, is more often than not, I believe. When we think about it, it actually separates us a little bit from that joy. And that when we start thinking about what's making us happy, we're actually get a chance to sink deeper into the happiness or let experience more fully let it blossom. There's a separation from the enjoyable thing. When we think too much about what's enjoyable even while we're experiencing it. Is it making sense to you? And so part of the training in practice is to learn how to let go of the thinking or the engagement with or the clinging to, or trying to hold on to the joy we have and just let it be there kind of Really, without any concern, but how long it stays where their leaves in a minute or leaves in an hour or leaves in a day or any concern with you know, you know, making it mine or thinking about it, just let it be, let the joy be very free and independent of yourself concept of trying to make yourself you know, do something with it, just let the joy be by itself. Now, this is very important training. Because in Dharma practice, one of the deepest forms of joy is a joy that arises, we can say, for no reason at all. And most people have a sense that joy arises before a reason you win the lottery and maybe feel joyful or maybe not. Or, you know, you get some wonderful compliment from someone or you have some success in life or something happens. But there's also kind of joy that can happen when we relax enough. And are relaxed enough in our mind relax enough in our concepts in our thoughts, that nothing stands in the way of innate sense of well being innate sense of delight or love or joy. That kind of almost cannot be seen as, right by repeating myself, I'm sorry as in eight, as you know who we are a kind of a joy that is not dependent on anything. I kind of enjoy kind of state of mind, a kind of happiness, that it can arise that exists when our minds when our consciousness when our awareness

is not relating to anything. And that and usually our thinking is relating to something. Now, right now, most of you are relating to this talk unless you're getting bored and thinking about something else. You're relating to something else, but you're relating to something. And the mind is directed as that something when the mind is no longer directed anything. So it's kind of like a you know, like a lighthouse, you know, the way lighthouse works, the light is directed, you know, in the beam of light is directed in some directions. As the lighthouse goes around, usually is directed and goes around. And at some point, perhaps light housekeeper maybe removes all the shutters from the light, and then the light just radiates off in all directions, doesn't have a direction anymore. At some point, the mind doesn't it's not directed towards anything. It's not concerned about anything. It's not really that not trying to make anything happen not trying to understand itself in relationship to anything else. But the

mind is just stands free and independent of all things, thinking process is not engaged in anything in particular Maybe nothing at all, the mind is a kind of becomes some people's or the mind rests in itself. And this is considered to be the incomparable happiness or freedom. There's a possibility the mind, not not being not relating to anything at all. And that's a very, I think that's a very foreign idea to most people. Because most people don't even know that their mind is always relating to something. And then even though there's, there's an alternative to that, for the mind is a radical shift in understanding what's possible in human mind. And so this the deepest form of happiness, the deepest joy, and I would say the most, the most satisfying form of happiness is a happiness that has no reason but rather, is that happiness is there when the mind rest in itself, when the heart rests in itself, and in doing so, includes everything within it. So in giving this talk about joy, my hope has been that I can encourage you to appreciate joy, who have more than its value, that you could try to make more space for it in your life and in healthy ways in appropriate ways. See if you can let your happiness a sense of well being, be a guide for you for finding greater and greater freedom in your life. If you're finding yourself less and less happy, you're probably moving away from freedom. And stop and look at that and can you adjust for that? Can you change for that? I think all too many people are willing to suffer. Ultimately, people are willing to go along with discomfort or with becoming contracted or feeling stress. You feel a certain stress we feel it's really important to do XY and Z. And so we know we're going to be stressful doing that, but getting those done and more important than avoiding the stress and how many times we sacrifice our well being and isn't really necessary. And I think part of the challenge of Buddhist practice is to look honestly at all the circum situations in your life, where you sacrifice your sense of well being for some cause, whatever it might be in the smallest one possible. And question that. And the suggestion tonight is that maybe you shouldn't choose to sacrifice your well being. Maybe you should choose to go when you have a choice to come back to your sense of well being and not go with a stress not go with the distress not go with the anxiety or the tightness, the constriction if you can. Because in that space of happiness or well being that is where The Secret food exists for a deepening of meditative life.

So what do you think? you have any questions or comments about this?

Do we just wait for the microphone? No if we if we kept the mic right up here. Then when I asked for question something I'm just kind of ready to in your description of joy, being the mind resting in itself, joy in itself. metta was brought to mind. Can you contrast is there are many contrasts between joy and better in that, in that sense, meta meta loving kindness meditation Usually in relationship to something. So we have this feeling of kindness or good intentions towards you, or towards myself or towards a whole room of people, usually in relationships into the mind is in relationship then it's a very important form of practice, and a lot of joy and delight or concentration that can arise from doing loving kindness practice. Usually people don't associated with the kind of joy that comes from just the mind rest in your heart resting itself. So sometimes it feels that way. It feels that sometimes loving kindness is a state or a comparison people say compassion is a state that seems to bubble out or radiate out from a heart which is resting in itself. And it has no object. It's just a kind of a there's always love but it's not love. Just undirected loves of love towards anybody in particular.

## One of the.

one of the things, one of the things about the discussion today about joy is distinction between you know the different elements, different members of that joy family or happiness family. And in the in the way that Buddhist Buddhism defines joy, happiness is more sublime. So it's more sublime state or experience, and an even more sublime or more, the kind of paradoxical way happier than happiness, more sublime or more satisfying or more deepening or more peaceful than happiness is equanimity. So there's often in this movement in Buddhism, from joy to happiness, equanimity, and sometimes, you know, I've talked a lot about you these We're joy a lot today. But we want to be very careful in Buddhist practice not to overvalue joy either. Joy has a very important role in practice. But also there's a time when we want to move to something that's better than joy. Or more or deeper than joy, when with the practice go deeper. And so it's very important to know when to let go of joy. So that we can kind of move into this deeper, deeper levels of peace. So the mind can find that place where it rests in itself. And it's considered the tradition that where it is, I believe, very transformative for people to discover, the heart that rests in itself or the mind the rest of itself with a mind which relates to nothing. Can stands independent, free. Because then, it's kind of like knowing there's a home inside of us. That's or some place of refuge that we have or some place of peace or that isn't not dependent on what happens in the world around us. And so we don't have to kind of neurotically always be looking for the world to provide us or the situations in the world provide us with our happiness, who we know that exists inside of us. And so the kind of drive then to, for greed or for hate, the energy for the fuel for it begins to abate. Because we realize we have something that's more precious or more lasting or more enduring or more valuable than the kind of happiness and joy we're gonna get from real estate or bank accounts or relationships or many of the things that people often invest everything in. And so our relationship to the world begins to shift in a very well in Buddhism is considered a very healthy way.

Anything else say that he feels dissatisfied with this talk or unhappy by

when you said equanimity as it were, a stage above How would you define equanimity. equanimity is a mind which is so balanced in itself, so at ease with itself, so settled on itself, that, that there's no tendency in the mind to react for and against anything. So the mind stays balanced takes equanimty, it doesn't. It's not ruffled by what goes on some forms of it, it's so deep in a piece of itself, that things aren't experienced as painful anymore or either pleasure and pain is not experienced anymore. There's no pleasure and pain in that experience because the mind is so even unsettled. And it turns out that experience with no pleasure and pain as a is a very happy one. very peaceful, nice, very satisfying. I think you have so much experience it to understand is it clear enough? Probably inadequate to answer the best I could

it makes me happy to know that these cell phones great, you know they saw these people who you know, talk to the mothers or you know they wouldn't otherwise because it's so convenient to call up and say hello. It's really great to know. You know, it's this all these benefits that society has from them.
It's your choice, isn't it? Whether you mitt something makes you happy or something makes you distressed or upset? You take responsibility for that. take some responsibility and lighten up. Anyway, thank you so much for tonight.