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SPEAKERS

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I haven't given a talk now for over three weeks, which is a long time for me. And I wonder if I have anything to say. But the stronger feeling I have about that is that I'm talking about practice doesn't seem very interesting. It seems like there's something should be something much more immediate than talking about something. And so the question is, what is it it's more immediate? And what is it that's here for all of us? That's not someplace else. That's something good to think about. But what is it that's available right here now? That is liberating. It's freeing. That's intimate, this deeply satisfying. What is it that's here? We find here and if you listen to my words, as if the words about something. Then you might miss the opportunity of what's here. Here are some wonderful ideas. Take ideas home and ponder them and think about them. So that was really intellectually stimulating and challenging and interesting, and that's great. If you did that, then today I feel kind of bad. Because it's not about ideas. When I think about mindfulness practice, I think that there are two major aspects to mindfulness in and of itself. And one is the quality of presence and the other is the aspect of recognition. So presence and risk ignition, and there has to be presence. And we have his presence in the present moment here and now. And then when that presence is here now then there's the recognition of what this is. And some features are sometimes we emphasize one, sometimes the other sometimes both of them presence and recognition. And but today I did the idea of the presence seems very important to me. And, and I keep finding in my mouth, but I want to say that we, we bring presence to the present moments and we bring presence, but that's not really there can be right, we do that. But presence isn't something we bring. presence is something that's already here. And in fact, the sense of presence can be so strong for some people that they We'll enter more precise presence. Sometimes they'll I know in some traditions like in Sufi ism, they might have people have called it the beloved, integrate powerful. Some people might call it the presence of God, but the sense of of vitality or a lightness or presence, that can kind of emanate not through our thoughts, not through our ideas about things, but rather kind of from our being the kind of almost like, for me, I feel almost like a rising out of torso of the body. And sometimes it's so palpable, so powerful, and so important. And I know it's also easy to feel that because human beings are often creatures of thoughts of thinking. And it's easy to get pulled into the

world of thoughts when we're thinking about how we feel about things when we want or we're afraid of how to fix things, how to have a conversation how to what to say what I was supposed to have said, you know, kind of get pulled into this world of thinking. And it can be very rich world, the world of thinking. And it can be very compelling. One of the compelling qualities of thinking is that it has the promise or the hope. It seems to offer the problems hope that you can think your way out of your problems. Or you can think your way into solutions for huddled either deeply happy and satisfying life. So if you just kind of think about it enough. And that's why sometimes listening to Dharma talks or the words of talks or reading Dharma books is such a terrible thing to do. Because it's a it's the end of the talk, please. The because you know, it just more words and it Just kind of feeds into that part of the mind, which already is thinking about words and working things out. Thinking about things. And oh, she didn't waste any time. Oh, sorry. And so, but the sense of presence. And sometimes one of the key things that can be done is to stop thinking and to give up or attempt to think things through or think of solutions or answers, and even sometimes even the most difficult circumstances we might find ourselves in. Sometimes stopping to think is sometimes a really wise thing to do. And stopping to think stuff on the start and stopping to think stopping. Stop thinking. Stop thinking can be The wise thing to do not because we then become a zombie or interested or uninvolved what's going on, but rather when, when there's, when we stop thinking in that kind of surface chatter of the mind and are very present for what's happening. Then there can be other forms of intelligences, other ways of understanding, that have a chance to show themselves and reveal themselves. And ability to respond, can come, for example, from the heart, can come from the belly, can come from the body can come from some deep place in the psyche. We never know what's going to come. And sometimes there are corners of our psyche, which are much wiser than that part of the psyche that will corner the psyche, which tends to dominate, thinking about things, analyzing and thinking about the future planning. So sometimes in the greatest challenges and it's sometimes very interesting practice to stop thinking about it and see what happens, see what goes on. See what arises. And I've known plenty of people who have when they've had a huge life, issue to address and to answer, what to do with their life or whether to make some big choices in their life. have chosen to go off, for example, on a meditation retreat and not thought about it for a week, but rather sit in silence. Let go of their thinking, be with their breath, be with their body. And then the end of the week, something else can bubble up some other perspective can arise that can't arise when we're always seeing things in the filter or what we're thinking about what we're talking The I think it's interesting to use the analogy of being in the ocean. That if you're swimming on the surface of the ocean, and say there's a big storm and waves and wind currents, it can be quite tumultuous. And you might think that you know, in order to have some peace, you have to kind of try to stop the waves, which sometimes doesn't work right. And sometimes if you're in a boat and a big storm, you just kind of pull down your sails and just kind of wait it out. A little bit noisy and you're walked around a little bit, but it usually often that can work. But if you're always in the surface, it's always going to feel the storm of it all. But if you know if you go under the surface of the ocean, if you're scuba diving, For example, and you sink underneath, you don't have to go many feet underneath the surface of the ocean, where starts becoming very peaceful, very quiet, very calm. And you can actually do something you've got a few hundred feet or 10 feet underneath, and look up and you can see the waves up there and you see the churning going on up there. But you feel like you

somehow there's this great presence is great spaciousness, great, calm or peacefulness that offers a perspective to very different perspective to what is happening at the surface. If we're living on the surface of our lives, then we might think we have to stop the waves or wait or fix things or engage in what's going on there in the surface. But if we can sink down into a sense of presence, or into a sense of deep calm or openness or kind of a wider sensitivity presence as a kind of sensitivity, that for me, at least kind of seems to be Lose flow out of the body. But then it's not limited to the body. I think it's maybe an optical illusion of sorts, or sensory illusion of sorts. But when I'm most settled into present presence, that presence seems to expand extend beyond the confines of my body. And it can feel quite large I can feel quite large. As if everything that's I'm aware of, in consciousness is being held within a bubble of consciousness bubble of awareness bubble of sensitivity, a bubble of presence. And so when something happens, it's there's all this space within which for it to happen. But if I'm only thinking about things, then often I find my world is really narrow and tight. And I see this very dramatically with times when my children are quite challenging is that if I'm writing my thoughts, closely and they are being difficult, then it's a difficult situation. But when they're being difficult and I'm there in a very open spacious way, then it's not difficult situation. There's something has to be dealt with as a difficulty if it's situation not difficult situation is actually quite peaceful, quite expansive, quite big. The China's shatters on the kitchen floor. Wow. Why'd you push it off the table? You know, I think we need to talk about this or do something. As opposed to, you know, that's the center of the universe, this moment, that particular point, and the anger and the concerns and the you know, there's a huge world of difference between writing something really close and then writing something that receives it in a great wide ocean of presence. So how do we do that? How do we make a switch from being narrow, being tight, being confined in our thoughts to being open and spacious in this wide presence that exists in the body? I think that's one of the key keys least for me is it exists in the body, it doesn't limit it to the body, but for me is one of the primary kind of ways of understanding or accessing accessing it is the felt sense of the body or the sense of perception or the sense of awareness that seems to reside in the body. Because once I kind of settle into that, read the thinking my way or seeing my way into what's going on, into the sense of the body, how it feels or senses or is aware of what's happening, then there seems to be a much greater spacious quality to the situation and Maybe it's a bit of paradox, you know, you go in, in a sense, only to go out into something really large. Sometimes I think that it's very easy to have life upside down. And what I have in mind here is that if we take the human being to be kind of like a pyramid or a triangle, and say we put thinking at the top of it, because it's so wonderful and great and all these great things can happen all the great things in life and conventions and creativity and so much as Genesis in thought, be the papers and most everything happens in papers except for natural disasters. Some human thought began there. The pinnacle of great inventions, the pinnacle human life is messy to think creatively, maybe, maybe you could say that. So it's put at the top of the pyramid, you know, and sometimes when something is insecure, it's good to put it on top of this pyramid. So we'll put it give it a high status, our thinking mind. But then if, if the, if the pyramid is upside down, and the point is facing down, it's gonna be really wobbly. And what presence can provide is to kind of turn it up, put it right side up. So certainly the top of the pyramid can be our thinking world. But it's supported by this great breath and strength foundation of our body or being our awareness or presence, our feelings, our heart, so much more of

who we are. And then it's safe to think. And maybe it's actually much more clear and cleaner to think thinking can be much more Creative one has that kind of foundation. But when we have it upside down, and we think of things, where it's all that, you know, then we have it upside down, we're very, actually much more fragile, much more easy to topple over. And sometimes I have a sense that there's almost like a switch or a very simple choice to be made between getting lost in thought, to letting go that lostness getting low gain well, letting go of that kind of preoccupation with thinking and relaxing into something with a bigger, bigger sense of awareness and presence. And it's interesting to kind of watch the course of the day in the course of an hour, of course, a minute, how the mind kind of sways back and forth between those. I haven't figured out any way to stay in one mode all the time. You know, just presence is really great, you know, just kind of just rest there and be happy, happy ever after. I haven't figured that out yet. But what I'm what I'm very aware of is that there's kind of, you know that it goes back and forth, I get really interested in something. And sometimes my thought gets really involved in that. And then I have to notice that at some point is Who do I want to stay there? Where do I want to kind of let the pendulum swing and kind of open up again? And so I'm kind of watch I try to track you know, that sense of where my presence is where my attention is, where my involvement with life is? Is my involvement with life? Caught up in thoughts, or through the vehicle thoughts? Or is it much more broad and spacious? And then where do I want it to be? And what's the choices I can make going back and forth. I think meditation is very helpful. Regular meditation practice. I think of it like brushing your teeth or you know, good dental hygiene is brushing your teeth every day. Good Mental Hygiene, is meditating every day. And if you don't meditate, every day You'll get cavities, metal cavities. And, and one of the one of the aspects of meditating every day is that it can if you practice the regular way, and maybe a little bit luck, they can give you a strong sense of presence, strong sense of silence of stillness, that's very close to presence. And then that kind of carries over into their daily life. So it's more available in daily life is more ready to show itself ready to be there. A daily meditation practice is similar to having a time every day for stillness and silence. Some people have said that spiritual life grows out of stillness and silence. And I don't know if it's always the case, but I think it's often points to something very important. And that and that's can be external, we can go into a situation Still in silent. I have very powerful visceral memories of sitting in Zen monasteries in Japan, and the stillness and the silence of this kind of pristine, kind of early morning, quiet, very still rooms and, and having an experience of this kind of great stillness of the place, and then at some point, discover that stillness inside of us. And then if we don't need it externally anymore, and so when the situation is chaotic, to that you realize the stillness is here. You're carrying it with you. Sometimes when I have the kids are just completely batty at home. Sometimes I feel really lucky to be able to have it know this place of stillness, that there all the time. And sometimes I wish I had it because it's just not so easy. Sometimes it doesn't seem to come so easily. So sometimes when people point to this idea of presence, living in kind of presence. Sometimes you have all kinds of expressions like listening with your eyes or listening with your chest or they'll say, look with your ears rather than with your eyes. Kind of like your perception of what's happening. Open up, so that it's not through the use of usual vehicle usual channels by which you're aware of what's happening. So if you're looking person that's kind of primary way in which you engage in the world is by seeing, then relax a sense of that what you're seeing through the eyes. Imagine you're seeing through your ears. And the employer

might find that there's a whole different way you take in the situation, or if your primary way of being in the world by hearing, then here with your body, with your chest rather than with your ears. Or if your primary way of being in the world is thinking, then some people will say, think with your belly. You do that? You're thinking down here rather than up here. It's shift shift the mode, how you think you perceive the world. And when you shift the mode, then you might have a sense of, of container a whole door still This or a piece that kind of goes together with the act of perception, the awareness of the unconscious. When we're engaged in thinking in the normal way about life, thinking about things. That thinking is often what precludes the possibility of feeling the stillness, the silence, the spaciousness, the peace that maybe is here. Right now. Outside of the boundaries of your concerns, your worries, your feelings, your sadnesses your angers, to kind of shift the perception outside of the boundaries of your preoccupations, what's there I think of presence as kind of like a pearl sometimes It feels like pearls are beautiful, shiny, precious. And pearls are created by sand that irritates the oyster. And sometimes the sense of presence, precious presence that I can feel is highlighted by the difficulties or the irritations, the challenges of life. So, rather than thinking that it's one or the other, that don't have any kind of sense of presence, then that's really great. I can just relax, it's peaceful and wonderful. They won't have any problems. Sometimes actually, the very problems or difficulties, the places where we're we suffer, if we bring presence to that, they become the sand that makes the presence grow and become stronger, more palpable, more available. And rather than making some kind of hard distinction that should be one or the other. It's actually quite precious to allow these things to coexist together to really recognize what our suffering is difficulties. And then to hold it in this bigger container of our presence within this great presence of great presence that has no boundaries, has no limits. And it's not always comfortable then, because you feel that interface between the suffering and the presence. But that interface of the suffering can make you actually feel the presence more acutely, the piece that's much bigger and holds it all. And I find it very interesting. The interface hanging out there, rather than thinking, Oh, this problem shouldn't be here. The suffering shouldn't be here. Open up to something bigger that holds it and then every once in a while A very powerful sense of presence happens seemingly by accident. Something will happen in life, where the normal thinking mode by which we're always engaged in the world and seeing the world drops away. And the thinking mode often is kind of like a can be like kind of like a armor that keeps so much of them alive in this presence within us at a distance or shut off in thinking mode somehow shuts off or quiets down in some powerful way. A powerful rush of presence can arise in people and some people are just blown away by what is available, what happens to them. When that thinking mind relaxes stops, and the sense of perception becomes very full and peaceful and still bubbles up from inside of them. And so we have, you know, expressions like presence of God, experiencing God or the beloved or you know, great peace, great sense of being connected to some spiritual reality. So the last thing I'll say is that, that, you know, repeat yourself. There's two aspects of mindfulness practice, there's presence, and then there's recognition. And today's talk is really talking much more about the presence and the value of it. And that this presence is available. It's not something dif different from who you are. It is who you are. presence is one of the key aspects of where human being is a sense of presence of lightness, vitality, consciousness, awareness. And there's not something to create and make sure it's rather something to allow. It's rather something to relax into. Rather than something to make happen. So sense of

allowing What can you What can you allow it to happen rather than to make it happen? So I hope that as you leave today go out into your day that you might experiment with allowing something that's different than your thinking. Be who you are. So we have a few minutes if anyone would like to ask any questions, you're welcome to do that. Yes.

Although I'm a little nervous about this, I think this question is related. what you're talking about, it has to do with loving kindness, and presence or stillness.

After many years in a tradition prior to coming here,

were in a tradition

in a tradition prior to coming here. We're in when one affirms or visualizes, there's a sense of Divine Mother or Heavenly Father or God to whom one is addressing the affirmation or the request. When I practice loving kindness, and I ask that I be free of suffering, the root of suffering and the people I love, be free in that people I hate, the free of suffering, the root of suffering. I feel something but it dawned on me a few days that I don't actually know who or what in Buddhism. It is that I'm asking yourself is if this generalized sense of presence, you're talking About or, or stillness or is there even an answer?

Do you need to ask anybody? Is it a petition? Does it need to be petition? Is it enough that it's just your heartfelt wish?

The more I practice it, the more it becomes a heartfelt wish. I suppose I'd answer that by saying that my assumption would be that it's not within my power to except in requesting that it be the case that it's within my power to free anybody else from suffering or the root of suffering. So I'm I guess I'm attached to the structure of the model in which that kind of request is, is being addressed to

Divine be or oppresses?

Yeah. So I mean, so maybe that's something for you to explore a little bit whether that's it serves you as appropriate or something you really believe in. You know, you know, I can help you with a exploration but I can't give you an answer.

Am I supposed to say something? No,

no, no. But if you want to explore it supports in some other time talk about some more happy to

At the moment you realize that you're thinking, and you're caught up in your thinking, what are the options for you to think about some more than you're thinking? So

when you're caught up in your thinking, you notice it, what are the options you have? And thinking some more just, you know, this is great. Punch back in is one option, right? It depends what you're thinking about, right?

Or is that a big game?

I know, I've known people who are on retreat, for example, who have had a hard time in the retreat during their life or whatever. And finally, they had this really juicy fantasy, these wonderful sexual fantasy or something just like this is the best and they kind of pop out. They realize what's going on to come out of this fantasizing. But you know, it's been hard. I think I'll just go back This is much better than what was going on. That's one option. The sometimes, there's so much you can do around thoughts. I mean, it's a huge practice practicing the thinking I think of as a universe in itself. And so I would, wouldn't want to say it's, it's one thing to do. But I think, you know, exploring and being curious about the phenomena of thinking is very useful practice. What is it rather than being caught up in what we're thinking about? Step back and what are what is thinking? What's going on here with a thought, thinking mind and why do humans think and what's the nature of this thinking? Is it is it words is it images is it where is it happening? You know, how fast is it happening or what's up what is it like to be involved in my thinking as Can I watch Can I bring have enough credit To watch my thinking, and see what it's like to be thinking, am I really tight with it? Is there Velcro? Is my writing close to my attached there is? Do I have emotions and feelings around my thinking? Do I have beliefs connected to both particular thoughts, I'm having to have beliefs about thinking itself. Some people have very deep but unexamined beliefs about the nature of thinking. Everything you think is true, you know, or it's, you know, or that's the belief that this is the way that we have to engage in the world is by thinking our way through the world. And so take a step back enough and be curious for this phenomena of thinking. And the more we can learn about it, learning about it is one of the ways of becoming free of something. So rather than pushing it away, or letting go of it too quickly, study and get to know it really well. And then when you know, well, then you might find you have the ability to let go But letting go sometimes naively, some people let go too easily. So that's why it's really good to study something for a long time for a while, get to know it well, and then you know, when it's wise to let go. And when it's not even worth thinking, even though today's talk was about presidents and the problems of thinking, we don't want to, we don't want to have an antagonistic relationship to thinking as if we're never supposed to think and you're not supposed to think if your spiritual thinking is great, it's very important part of life. And so you have to be wise about when it's appropriate, to let go of thinking and let somebody else just dominate and when to let something else dominate but then also engage in thinking about what's going on to engage in a lot of thoughts. consideration. So there's so much to thinking is, I think thinking is so fascinating. It's such a great thing. As a lot of other things are, as I said at all address your question Apparently,

this is just a comment, but

it's always really embarrassing when you're thinking so much that
you've already thought through sort of like a thought process that someone proposes. Or let's say you
have a situation you're in a situation someone's like, Well how do we do this and you're sitting like
this in this in this. And
that's when it's always embarrassing because you, you, you sort of feel like
off the plan with the person you're dealing with. And so that's kind of like an area where thinking is you
can catch yourself bhava
So, thank you. I hope that makes sense to talk today. And that was the whole point is that some sense