

2005-10-25 Learning Meditation Never Ends

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SPEAKERS

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This morning I'm thinking a little bit about the analogy of a bicycle, learning to ride a bicycle, for learning to meditate. And I think everybody who meditates is learning to meditate. So, you know, maybe there are times when people feel like they've got it. But I think it's temporary. And I think people meditate are always learning to meditate. So, but if you use the analogy of the bike, say you don't know how to ride a bike, and so someone puts you in a bike. And then you're about to take off, push down, the pedals seem to take off, but the first thing it had before you notice the pedal before you push down the pedal Notice this amazingly attractive, interesting billboard on the side of the road. And you might just right there, you know, and you can get off your bike and go study the Billboard. And you can forget that you were trying to be on the bike because this billboard is so fascinating. And then you remember, I have to go back and twist to almost learn how to ride a bike. And so then we go back onto the bike we get on we get ready to push down the pedal again. And then on the other side, there's a billboard fascinating Billboard with some amazing important news. Something really grabs you, it seems really important, more important than billboard is certainly more important than, than the bike. And after all, it's announcing the new iPod or something, you know, some major important thing and some people's experience of meditation is that's as far as they get, because there's all these billboards that pop up, they get ready to put themselves on the breath. They're ready to kind of push on the pedal of the breath or stay attentive to the breath and thought arises that is so compelling, so interesting. And, and the mind gets carried away into that thought and stays there for a long time perhaps. And then maybe Finally, there's enough resolve or enough letting go to not look at billboards anymore and you actually able to push down that pedal and stay with that breath. And you push on the next pedal, you stay with the next breath, and kind of wobbling down the road. But, you know, 10 feet down the road. There's another Billboard. And so Oh, look at that. We've crashed the bike. So 10 you know, 10 seconds down the road down your meditative road. There's another thought that arises and it grabs us and, but sooner or later as we learning to ride the bike, we learn not to be caught by the distractions on the road, not the billboards, the people, the cars, the other things that might pull us off center, we learn to keep the focus on what we're doing enough so that we can stay but stay present

and keep going. So at some point in meditation practice, we have to learn to be able to maintain a focus so that we don't get pulled off so easily by our thoughts or concerns or preoccupations, things that bubble up. And a big part of that is learning to develop developing wisdom or understanding around our thinking and our thoughts to meditation. And that's kind of an understanding of how to relate to thoughts, and how the role of thoughts and meditation is not something that comes automatically, but it's something you we learned as part of the learning process as we engage in the practice and learn from what happens. And I remember one of my teachers saying, in meditation, there's nothing whatsoever you need to think about. And I thought that was pretty good advice. But there's one thing to kind of hear that as a piece of advice. It's another thing for the psyche to believe that into the psyche has a mind of its own. So I might know it's kind of intellectually that's the case I don't need to think when I'm meditating. But But you know, the here comes this juicy thought this wonderful thought important thought, or, you know, some scary thoughts on fear arise on something in mind, psyche think I'll have to go there and engage in that and try to fix it. I think some people after a few years or decades or centuries of watching their mind golf and thought golf and I thought, develop some wisdom, relax. This is a waste of time. This is not really worth it. You know, I try I've solved this problem 92 times, and I'm still trying to solve it. And the amazing repetitive nature of our thinking is, you know, quite humbling, I think. And the number of times we can repeat the same memory the same. We had this conversation, repeat the conversation, wondering, could I have done a better rejoinder, you know, dealt with it differently. So eventually, we get tired, we realize it's a dead end. And that's very valuable to realize a dead end and then we begin to lessen the grip of it. But to really be convinced in some deep way, that in the period of time that we're meditating, that we don't need to solve anything where they're thinking we don't have to fix anything with our thoughts, is a really important kind of rooted conviction that sooner or later needs to be established. Without that I've kind of conviction that's the case, I think it's really easy for the mind to kind of pick up the thoughts pick up the prospect of the past because, you know, that's what most people negotiate their life is in the world or their thinking. So then a willingness to let go, a willingness to look at something else, besides the weather thinking. And the analogy of the bicycle is kind of nice, because if you're going, you're still wobbly, kind of biking down the road. If you get pulled, your mind gets pulled into the world of a billboard, or pulled into the world of something happening out there, and you lose your focus on the road, you're going to crash. And so there has to be some learning some capacity to keep the attention focused continuously in the direction we're going and kind of forward in that kind of focus. And we all do that. I think all of us here probably do that with driving cars. If we can have the kind of focus, we have driving our cars or meditate, we probably, that's probably all you need. I mean, you probably thinking also when you're when you're driving your car, but you maintain that focus, you're staying steady, you don't lose track of the road, you know, you stay there, you stay there, you stay there. And, you know, you can if you're going to take in a billboard, and most people know they're going like that, you know, it's very brief. And, and there's a kind of steadiness to that focus steadiness, you know, on the bicycle in the car steady to stay in there, keeping you there. So the same thing with a breath, keeping a steadiness on the breath, staying there staying there, so that we don't crash, we don't fall off, keeping the steadiness. And I think that most of you who drive probably don't find it. It's now that you're driving for a while and you'll find it exceedingly stressful to drive. Probably, you know, you've

kind of learned the skill of how to do that and keep that focus. So the same thing with meditation, you can learn a skill and maintaining a focus, and so that it's not stressful initially, it might be. To acquire work and effort, but after a while, something you relax into and becomes more steadiness you can maintain. One of the very important ways that some people, it doesn't work for everybody. But one very useful way of working with a thinking mind is not by engaging the thoughts or disbelieving the thoughts or not by kind of understanding the thoughts necessarily, you're not limited to that. But it's to relax. Some part of the psychophysical being that is pumping up the thoughts, some tension or pressure in the system that's connected to thinking. And for some people, maybe people have strong kinesthetic sense maybe. For some people, it can be it can be very physical. Felt sense in the body of tension or pressure connected to thinking. And the more relaxed person is the more that tends to become clear. But sometimes tension, even even subtle thoughts can have yours. If the person is sensitive enough, they might be able to see that as you take up that activity of thinking as you get engaged in it. There is a kind of a little tightening of the jaw, a little tightening of the eyes or the cheeks or little tightening the forehead or the shoulders, perhaps in the chest or in the belly, or there's a little tightening going on a little contraction that happens somewhere in the body. Sometimes it can feel like pressure inside the head that somehow gets created. Or sometimes I've had the experience of sitting quietly, very peaceful, staying concentrated, like practice being very grounded and centered. And then some really great billboard comes along and my mind just goes There's a feeling inside of me that energetically, my sense of presence, my sense of energy is lifted up, kind of goes from being grounded down here in my belly, I feel kind of lifting up, my chest even sometimes gets lifted up by it all, if it's really arousing kind of thought, you know, you can kind of feel it, but the body straighten up. But just feeling energetically because the center of gravity kind of gets lifted. It's very interesting to see that lifting that happens in the energy field, energy level. So to kind of be start becoming sensitive to physically what's happening as you think what's a physical manifestation of thinking, for some people can be very, very helpful. Because then you can feel that tension, that contraction, then you can relax it. And you can let go of it. Relax around the eyes, or the face of the cheeks or the neck or the shoulders or in the skull, you know, somewhere, wherever it might be, and relax itself in it. The advantage of doing that is that if we give We let go of thinking and attention of thinking is still there, that tension is likely to it kind of creates the conditions where you're more likely to think again. But if you're if you can relax that the bodily formation, the bodily tension, then you're relaxing the conditions for further thinking. So if you're tense, you're more likely to think if you're relaxed, you're less likely to think. So that tension, you know, as long as attention and not dealt with. So, some people find it very helpful to a lot of thinking going on. And the thinking is out of control, to look, scan through the body and see Where's their attention. Occasionally, you can find it in the thinking organ, the thinking brain, the mind that thinks, the mind itself seems like it's somehow not spatial is just not open, it's not soft, it's not light, it's not transparent. The mind itself that mind thinks feels like a muscle that's gotten heavy or dark or under pressure or narrowed or contracted, or, or somehow. And so, sometimes it's a matter you can relax the thinking mind as if the thinking mind is a muscle. Another approach to thinking is to understand not the physical correlate to thinking, but to understand the emotional correlate to thinking emotional connection that's going on. And sometimes if there's a lot of thinking going on, there's probably some inner emotion that's fueling it or been stimulated by it, or somehow exists in relationship to that kind of thinking. And

sometimes, if you let go of your thoughts, but the emotion is still there, the emotion is like a factory that then produces more thinking is right there ready to pump out more. And sometimes you need to kind of look, look, look around inside your being. And see, I realize I'm thinking I'm thinking a lot, see what is going on here emotionally, and then drop down into the body and feel it emotionally what's happening here in the present moment feel the fear or the excitement or the, or the desire or the confusion or whatever it might be, feel it in the body, feel it emotionally. And the longer we can feel and be present for an arousal emotional state, the more likely it is that it's going to settle, the more likely it is it's going to relax. And the less we attend to the emotional state, some emotional states will just keep chugging away, we'll just kind of keep kind of hijacking the whole scene. So sometimes with a lot of thinking you want to look at the physical phenomena. Sometimes you want to look at the emotional phenomenon and settle that and relax that is instruction on breathing. Meditation. The Buddha said, When, when a person breathes in long breath, breathing in a long breath, they calm the bodily bodily formations. When they breathe in a short, when they breathe out the long breath, they calm the bodily formations. When you breathe in a short breath, you calm the bodily formations, without a short breath, you calm the bodily formations, there just can be this calming effect of the breath. Sometimes as you breathe, to have each breath, be a calming way that goes through your body, calming wave that goes through some of these places of tension or holding, or emotional arousal that exists. So to use your breath as a aid as a health as a tool. You don't have to turn away from the breath. Sometimes you can identify the physical or emotional aspect of a lot of thinking, and then connect to your breathing. But then it hasn't had the breath kind of wave of the breath, experience of breath. The sensations of breath kind of move through that part of your body as a calming way of calming like a massage, something can kind of calm this down. And then eventually when things are calmed down enough, then maybe no matter what the billboards are, you're not going to go look at them you can stay, keep your steady focus on the road ahead and not get distracted. So I hope all of you will keep learning meditation because it's a never ending process of learning how