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SPEAKERS

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One of the simplest instructions for meditation and Buddhist life goes like this. Set yourself. Set yourself at ease whatever ease you can set yourself up. So it's a matter of degree, right? If you're agitated, maybe you'll just be easy about being agitated. Or if you're, you know, all kinds of, you know, small, do what you can to set yourself at ease. And then notice what takes you away from that. That's it. Not set yourself up. Notice what takes you away from that. And notice what takes you away from that implies, study it, look into it, get to know who you are the forces where the tendency is in your mind to get agitated to get contracted to get afraid to get to sucker around what's going on. And there's a wonderful aspect of this kind of instructions that it's gonna find so many different places in your life. Set yourself at ease when you get in your car to drive someplace. And then notice when you lose that take take a moment to sit there turn the engine on and then and then notice at what point in your driving you lose Eddie's and why do you lose what supports us or is it because of all those other drivers out there? Or is it because you're in a hurry to get someone you're pushing or because you're, you're you know, judging other cars or you know what, what is it that that comes into play for you? It causes you to lose it. And then when something maybe it's as simple as driving when you have a question, you start realizing what it is that cause you to lose your ease, then you can question you start questioning, is it worth it? Is it appropriate? Do you really want to do that? The activity of your mind activity that you'd have to do to lose your ease? Is that something that you want to do? Are you willing to do it? Are you willing to sacrifice your ease for getting someplace 30 seconds faster or for, you know, for successfully judging other drivers, you know, is it really worth the cost of sacrificing you ease the sense of lack of ease that comes. So when you set yourself down to meditation practice, set yourself at ease, and then notice what takes you away from that ease? What are the thoughts, the beliefs were the feelings were their reactions? What arises that happens? Then question, question, get to know it question it. Is it necessary? Can you sometimes you'll have some ability to make a choice. You can say, well, it's not worth it, I don't think I have to go that route. I don't have to do that. Sometimes you won't have a choice. Sometimes something will take over. You sitting there quietly minding your business and some kind of tension or agitation or strong emotion will arise by itself. But

then you can't let go of it easily, then it's really important to study and get to know it. And it might take minutes, hours, days, weeks, to really understand some of the things that sort of forces inside of us that are arising that cause us to be agitated or to suffer in some way. But to have that as a reference point, ease and philosophies is a one A reference point for Dharma practice I think it's in some ways a simple kind of application of the Four Noble Truths. There's suffering is a cause of suffering, and there's the freedom from suffering. And, and the responding to each of those, each of the Four Noble Truths has a responsibility or has a practice in relationship to it. And the first noble truth of suffering is to know it. The second noble truth is to understand and the third, understand, understood understanding the forces of suffering, craving, the claim, and the third noble truth, the practice or knowledge to realize it. So it is there's a loss of the sense of suffering. There's understanding that suffering, understanding what's going on there. What are we clinging to them holding on to what are we resisting what's happening in that situation? Then, if it's possible to have the letting go the release the release of that, and perhaps going back to the place of ease. I think that many people are all too willing to sacrifice their well being or sacrifice to ease. There's all these things that seems so compellingly important that we don't stay at ease because we are, you know, stomach contracts, shoulders get tight, neck gets tight, you know, the mind starts racing and gets caught up, feelings get to talk or the feelings about things which, you know, maybe, you know, are they really that important? I think many people who are not practicing mindfulness will go through their life. I'm not examining this small choices they make that cause them to sacrifice their well being. So I like the example of driving a car. Because it's so, to me, it's so there's so much choice. Obviously choice in relationship to how we choose to drive our car, the speed limit, Rico's our choice, you know, you don't say, you know, the devil made me do it, you know or officer I'm sorry but the devil made me do it. You know, it's just that's your choice. I've known another two stories of people coming to IMC in the morning driving upon hell, this kind of a speed trap, they're gonna come down upon him. And he stopped going too fast and officer asked him where you going? And, and they said they were going to various things at IMC and they said, Well, okay. What one of those coming to a chaplaincy training program. And the guy said, Well, I can't give a ticket to a chaplain, who just read more carefully please. And the other one said I was like, by medical class. He said, Oh, well, you know, we'll give you take this time, but just please drive mindfully. But you know, so we have, you know, driving as a place we have, I would say, obviously a lot of choice, our relationship to driving, how we feel, the sacrifices we make, in our state of mind that come into play because of how we choose to try. And then the question is, look at that in the question of, is this something you really want to do? Is it worth it? And now, if you're going to the emergency for some reason, maybe it's worth it. But most of us are not driving to the emergency. So what is it that's going on, in, you know, something as simple as drunk as driving? And now if we can take something as simple as that, and exercise our power of choice, exercise, our ability to come back to the place of ease, reinforcing the place of ease, then that's, I think it's really helpful. But if you start doing More and more of those in small areas of your life that you really do have a choice. The cumulative effect has a big impact. And there are huge things huge forces within us of clinging and attachment of all kinds of things that are hard to address directly. ways in which we lose our ease. We sacrifice it. But if we start creating a background or a foundation of ease, whatever we can, then we slowly slowly start getting closer and closer into the core of some of the things that are really hard to

do, or creates the conditions and makes it easier to go into the things that are hard to look at and deal with. So, for some people it means calm. For some people ease means being relaxed. Some people ease means a sense of well being. For some people ease might mean having a sense of joy. For some people, you can take many different shapes and forms at ease. But it seems to me it seems to be such a very simple guideline. And my impression is that all of Buddhism can be discovered through that simple little study, ease and the loss of ease, ease and loss of ease. And when you find that the ease becomes more pervasive, more regular part of your life, then I think that that gives you access to going deeper with ease. So say that there's a scale of one to 10, right? And 10 is really good, really, really great ease. And one is kind of like you know, where most people are when they're rushing around and say you can get to two. If you can get stabilized in two, then you might be able to peek into three sometimes. And then that becomes a new reference point. So like so meditation practice, I think is a way of peeking over the edge into a new possibility of ease or well being or calm or being at peace. And so they have something like that. In practice, it allows you to drop below the usual level that you have, and discover a new degree of quality, better quality of ease. And then to use that as a reference point to understand what's going on. So as you drop into a deeper sense of peace, or sense, a deeper sense of well being, maybe through meditation practice, then it gives you a new vantage point to understand how you lead that you might sacrifice that you maybe you never saw, the sacrifice or the choices you make, because you're always living in it, maybe you're always living with a certain level of tension or holding or attitudes. And, and, but if you can drop below that little bit, then you can see how it gets constructed, how it happens. And also, I'm very fond of the idea of ease, because he is to me, the word ease is something very simple. It doesn't have a lot of metaphysics to it that doesn't have a lot of grandiosity to it. It doesn't have a lot of you know, You know, hollywood lights around it, you know, some great spiritual goal, you know, it's just you know, it's pretty ordinary simple. And so I think it lends itself to kind of simplicity of being, which for me, is what the unknown was for you, maybe it's different for you. But for me, the simplicity of being is one of the real treasures of what the Buddha was pointing towards. simplicity of being, not to be you know, to be anybody for anybody. You know, identity, you have to prove yourself, you don't have to disprove yourself, define yourself or defend yourself. You don't have to do anything except just be alive and nothing's happened. So simplicity of being so much comes out of simplicity. And simplicity of being I think, is very close to being which is free to freedom of being is simplicity and the freedom of being to me are very closely connected to each other. I had a Zen teacher who when he was about I know how old he was, but when he was about, he was the abbot of the monastery. He'd been spent much of his life living in around the monastery, training there a new student and kind of going up through the ranks many years of practice there. And then he became Abbot and he was avid for a good number of years. I don't know how old he was. Maybe you have 6870 And they haven't had all these rules. But how are you supposed to be scheduled to follow rules of behavior? And after you've been average for a number of years, and he was, you know, he reached the age of 68 kind of realized one day he'd have to follow any of the rules. They're just man made human made. And, and he was the habit. So, you know, he has to be anxious about the schedule and be anxious about anything other than the spot time you figured that you took that long so anyways, I was very happy for him, you know, so great, but, you know, it took a long time to realize that the You know, you didn't have to be burdened or be

anxious about you know the rules and regulations of the monastery. So he is in studying what causes us to lose these. And I'm not suggesting this is easy, though there are times when it is easy, because I think, you know, if you really can use this as a real guideline, it will take you to some of the most difficult places in your psyche, some of the greatest attachments, greatest places of clinging of holding, confusion, identity. And so it might, it might take some real ability to persevere. Hold him there to look carefully and hang in there for a long time before you can really penetrate to really see deeply what, what's going on maybe because I'm thinking about the Zen teacher, and I'm sitting now thinking of another story of when I was at a Zen student at Green Gulch, the zendo. In the zendo, there's a doctor with a Big Buddha statue. And the altar is, as you come in, you come in from the back, kind of imagine you come into the back door. And so you face the back of the altar, and you come to the back of the altar, then you go either side, go down, either side, the rooms divided in half by the altar. And so the altars here, you come into the back and you go like this. The Buddha face is facing that way. And the rule was that you weren't supposed to cross in front of the Buddha. Because that's, you know, disrespectful to come. So if you want to get from one side of the meditation hall to the other, you have to go all the way around the back of it, because I was more polite, right? And so there was this imaginary line right down the middle of the meditation hall. And it was like kind of like electricity. Because, you know, if you kind of knew when you're getting close to that line, and the closer you got to that line, the more like, you know, felt kind of like an easy Oh, you know, got to be careful with that. And then, you know, that famous line, remember feeling having a relationship with that line. And then one day I was somehow in that meditation hall, off on the side doing something cleaning or do something on off hours, and some tourists came in To the green goaltender, just to kind of you know, check out what Zen center looks like. And they didn't know anything about the rules of Zen monastery, they know anything about that line. So they just walked in, like OC like they're walking through Judo square, who's walking in, and they just walked right past that line right across the front of the altar. So you know, and at that moment, it was like, this bubble popped in my mind. Oh, doesn't exist. It's a it's a convention. It's an idea that we've created. And it may be useful, certainly, you know, has its place, but it's a social convention that we've kind of constructed. And when I saw that as a social convention, I was I was actually liberated from it. And so I never long I tried I was still to try not to cross it, you know, try to respect the rule and all that. But I no longer felt anxious about that line. I didn't think like lightning was gonna strike or I don't know was supposed to happen. You know, he's a social convention. And so, you know, what I could have done, which I didn't do was I could have felt the anxiety that arose the tension that arose as I got closer to that line. And then I could have questioned that. What's that about? Why do I feel that why would I feel? You know, I know there's a rule, but why should I feel tension or anxiety but getting close to that? What does that represent crossing it? I probably would have noticed a lot of things. And I don't think it was a fear of lightning. I think it was a fear it probably would have been fear of disapproval, fear of being seen as being a bad student or a wrong good student or disrespectful student or mindless and then student or you know, all kinds of things you know, it has to do with self image and self identity, you know, and the anxiety that got close the roses I got close to that line has to do with all these other things that were rising in me. So if I studied that, you know, what is it Why am I getting anxious, I would have probably would have seen all those things. And then I could question that, and then I might have even come back to the teacher and

question the lines. What is the nature of this line? How am I supposed to be holding it? Am I supposed to be holding it this as something I feel anxious about? And I don't think they would have said yes, with that, put that line in the horse that you'd be anxious we get close to it. So at some point later, some years later, I was made kind of the head of the meditation hall of Greenville. what's called the De nada, know what to call the director of the meditation hall. And so I had to instruct a lot of people about how to be in the zendo, how to be in the meditation. And so I would tell people, there's a lot of ways in which we do things here. And I will say this, I say, I'd say, once you enter into the meditation hall, you can't do anything wrong. However, there are these ways as we remember. I suggested you are right tell you to behave. But you can't do it wrong. Because people will go into the mutation of their office. And so many people especially immediately be so nervous, but there's a right and a wrong way, and they're going to get it wrong. And they're going to be, you know, people to see that and it's terrible. And I felt the Buddhist meditation hall should be a place that doesn't add a kind of suffering to people. You know, it's kind of like, the point is to free people from the suffering. So tell people you can't when you come in here, you can't do it wrong. However, we might tell you, we might remind you again, actually, you do it this way. It's not because you're doing it wrong. It's just that we have this way of doing it. And so to be at ease with how things are what does it take to be at ease with how things are What does it take not to worry about how things are? What does it take not to live with a world of shoulds? concerning what is, what is it to live just to be at ease with how things are? And why not? Why not? And if you ask that question, why not? And you start getting answers. Well, these are reasons why I shouldn't be at ease. I have these important things to do. You don't have to understand. The whole rest of my life is at stake here. I talked to someone recently who was tormented, seemingly tormented between having to make two big decisions that he couldn't decide between one decision was to go and become a Buddhist monk. And the other was to go and get a PhD in Buddhist studies. There was those two choices you want to use looking into. And there's something really ridiculous about being tormented about how you're going to engage in a spiritual practice. With the whole purpose of the practice is a free from tournament. You know, it's something that there's something is there quite something. And I know it's really easy for people to suffer because of the Buddhist practice, but it's kind of silly, like, you know, the whole point is to, you know, to help you the last thing you should do is to have a Buddhist answer. In our Buddhist tradition, we are somehow it adds suffering to your life. Now, of course, we go into a Buddhist practice situation, we bring our, our tendencies with us. So we create suffering all the time. But I think because the Buddhist institution, I think it's like the reference point of ease, the reference point of not suffering should always be really close at hand. So we're always ready to start questioning why what's going on here? Why am I doing this? What's happening? Those questions What's here? What's going on? And you know, what, what authority what beliefs am I doing? Am I losing my yeas? Why question. Asked the teachers there. So when I when I was part of Zen center, I wrote a document about kind of, I don't know what to call it. With ethical guidelines for living and sensor ethical guidelines, people living at Zen center. And one of the things I said in the document is that if there's a tension between institutional needs and personal needs, that is an occasion to stop and investigate. And look what's going on. Because what I saw too many times in Buddhist institutions, is people would be attention in British institutions sometimes have a way of, of always wanting to do more activities and do mortgages, all these people suffering, right? You want to

serve everybody, right? There's no end to the number of people suffering. And you're supposed to be bodhisatta was supposed to sacrifice yourself and just help other people all the time. And and, you know, institutions like Sam Cisco Zen Center, the institute institution doesn't have the capacity to say no, don't have the capacity to ask. And so he was asking and asking Asking asking if people and are expecting people to kind of keep offering more and more of their work in labor. And people are really being snowed under kind of being exhausted from all the demands of the situation. And then there was this feeling well, the institution is so important. This is great Buddhist organization, and we're doing most great good in the world. And, and you know, you should just sacrifice your sense of self, your sense of well being for the greater good. And I think that was very healthy. So I said that, if there's a tension, you feel a tension between the personal need and there's institutional need. That's an occasion to stop and investigate and discuss it, discuss discuss what's going on. It might be appropriate to sacrifice one's own self concern way or other might be very beautiful at times. But if there's a tension connected to that, it was really important to stop and look at ease and visit investigating what it is that caused us to lose at ease. So, I hope that provocative are useful for you to think about. And to help your study of ease and capacities well and a few minutes early, you know, give you a little head start. See if less reason to rush out of here and rush onto the road. What's next? So, thank you