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SPEAKERS

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expression I think I remember what Hilda said, just now be centered and have an intention. Is that what you said? That's the summary of the talk. To be centered and have an intention, as I wanted to talk this morning about aspiration, and there's a collection of words that are related, almost in synonyms, like aspiration or intention, motivation, for having a sense of purpose, a sense of meaning make, perhaps, that all can be seen as very important, certainly to Buddhist spirituality, I would say probably to human life. But I like the word aspiration a lot to two words I like the most is aspiration and the word resolve Those who are focused on aspiration. The reason I like aspiration is that the etymology of the word comes from the word breath, like to aspire. And so it comes from breath. To have our aspiration for our life, our sense of purpose or direction, to come from our breath, or to be centered in our breath first, not to be ahead of our breath, but to be with our breath. When we give birth to or we give expression to our aspirations and intentions. Human beings could probably just as well be called human desire links. Because desire, desire is such a huge part of what we do, desiring. We're not expected to stop desiring, but it's possible to transform my desires into something that can be quite ennobling, quite powerful, quite significant for certainly a spiritual life. And I think it's easy in that would be human desire to be filled or sometimes filled with desires, wants, and then to hear about meditation or hear about Buddhist practice, and just becomes one more want. Just add it. So we're already some people are already quite busy doing a lot of different things and running around. And then that you're already should meditate too. So I'll run run, put that in, just squeeze that into the schedule. One more thing to want and desire. supposed to read those books and go those talks. And don't you know, just because more and more stuff to do. expiration is very important for Buddhist spiritual life, but I'd like to suggest that It should come after, to quote Hilda after we're centered, that it should come after we've done some work on ourselves, to somehow prepare ourselves to be a person who has this this kind of desire and aspiration, I wish. So don't have the breath in front ahead of ourselves, but to be with our breath, the breath in the forefront in a sense. I certainly noticed myself sometimes when I sit down to meditate, that part of the process of meditation is catching up to myself. I'm kind of ahead of myself with thoughts and desires and concerns and everything. And think certain

level of my concerns and thoughts and direction, I'm going to settle down. So I can really be here in some quality way, be here, here, really here and not thinking ahead or into the future. So how we are is important, and I'd like to suggest that two different modes of how people can be curious, curious and use of how to engage in this life. And one of them I call the utilitarian mode, and the other I called the appreciative mode. And the utilitarian mode is the mode of efficiency of getting things, wanting things becoming things, manipulating things. The utilitarian mode is more about nurturing things or tending things or appreciating things, appreciating what's there. So rather than the focus being, oh, what can I do with this stuff? When there was a gift, something? The focus is more How can I appreciate what's here? appreciate what's happening here. Whereas the utilitarian mode is all about knowledge and understanding so you can change something. I'd like to suggest that the appreciative mode is more about wisdom, wisdom that kind of sees deeply so we can appreciate and understand what's there in its own value, rather than seeing its value in terms of what you can do for us or where can get us In some ways, if the difference between the two from in my mind is a little bit encapsulated in the difference between getting congratulations versus getting admiration, you could kind of manipulate situation to get congratulated. But admiration is something you know that deep down inside something coming out from inside of a person, something maybe you don't even see the person has ever admiration for you. And so admiration comes out of this appreciative mode. And congratulations might or might not, but I think it's something that are the difference between you know, you can in a very utilitarian way, get yourself ready to sleep and go to bed. But the utilitarian was not going to get you to sleep. How do you get to sleep? It's kind of you know, they have to kind of like go something else happens I think rather than just kind of make you late. Okay, turn off now. close his eyes and shut off. Or the difference between pleasure and joy. And that you can you can manipulate the world so you can get pleasure. Lots of people do it all the time. Some people are experts at it to me drink or you know all kinds of activities we do to get pleasure, you can get a massage and get pleasure. But joy is a whole different phenomena that you can't really manipulate the world so easily to get joy or deep, deep, deep abiding sense of well being. So the suggestion here is that there's these two different modes of being one utilitarian and one appreciative and that the aspiration in Buddhist practice I think, arises in a much more effective way, much more utilitarian way if it arises out of the appreciative mode. So just settle back and find some nice settled back little bit to center yourself or find some kind of ability to be be here to be relaxed here to be willing to be here some some willingness to, not to know, the utilitarian mode is all about knowing you have to know. The appreciated mode allows lots of space for not knowing. Knowing, is it okay not to know enough not knowing allow something to be born something to happen. So, aspiration is very important. Also, the other word I like is resolve. And the reason I like the word resolve is that, again has to do that the knowledge of the word, and it comes from the word solve, which is like, comes from the word like solution. It's kind of nice. To solve, untie resolve has a magical meeting of two, two, untie something to return it to solution. Make a solution out of something. So did you untie? And I think that works really well for Buddhist spirituality because part of the vision in Buddhist spirituality is the possibility of untied or nuts or entanglements the way they were. Our minds, our thoughts, our hearts, our feelings, our emotions are entangled with all kinds of different things in that entanglement. You know, it sacrifices our well being and our happiness. So to have a resolve that the word implies, to dissolve, dissolve the entanglements because words there are

other words, their aspiration, they're connected to aspiration, like strive, or even struggle that lends itself to get tight. It actually makes more knots ties us up even more. But when I hear the word resolve, some people like means grit your teeth, you know, but for me, it means Oh, yeah. Let's dissolve. Let's relax. Let's go. Recently, I came across across this quote by Mr. eckhardt, the Christian mystic from long ago and he wrote, I have read many writings, both by the pagan teachers and by the prophets were pagans, by the pagan teachers and by the prophets define which is the greatest and best virtue with which a person can most completely and closely conform him or herself to God. And as I scrutinize all these writings, so far as my reason can lead and instruct me, I find no other virtue, better than pure detachment from all things. Like going to Stanford, getting PhD in religious studies and find out that the best thing you could do is just let go. Like, so we don't use the word detachment. I don't know what the German was about in German, I think. But we don't use the word detachment so much in our circles, but non attachment for us or letting go we use. So aspiration, what's the aspiration that gets born from us, when we relax a little bit to get centered and settled. I've known people who've gone on vacation or gone on retreats, you know, really get away from the normal life as usually lived. So they can really delve into the depths of their heart after their being to really know what they want. But when they have to make a big decision, perhaps or think of a future for the direction for their life, to really step out of the normal hustle and bustle of things, to really find out when it's really listened deeply inside. What is it really that deep down inside needs to happen or whether the inner voices they're often obscured? So there's this kind of preparation that happens respiration, how you prefer to prepare yourself in order to have an aspiration, have a deep intention for your life to do the work of preparing. And then after that preparation, then it's involves in part to having a vision. We put a lot of emphasis on being here now in our tradition, and some people feel well, then I can't think about there and then, you know, into the future. But I think having a vision, having the capacity to visualize or imagine a future is really important for probably a spiritual life or certainly a Buddhist one. So just to envision what is possible for us, for you. And the smaller that vision is, the smaller the aspirational, the, the bigger division is, the bigger the aspiration. The trick is to make it realistic. But still, if you don't spend much time envisioning what's possible, then It's not possible and I think that part of the function of a center like IMC or others centers like this is that people come here sometimes kind of present some intuition or some vague sense or some that something here is useful or something helpful or that you know, maybe even a friend kind of drag them here and then actually come into center. So, they kind of discover possibility Well, I had no idea this was possible, I have no idea it was possible to get so settled or to have like a certain kind of peace or to see myself so deeply or be so had that level of self acceptance or discover that capacity for capet compassion. And then, so it shows a possibility. And that possibility then becomes kind of a vision to I see a possibility. And I think that that possibility is something I'd like to grow into. I'd like to move towards incline myself towards so too Spend time imagining using your imagination what is possible for me? What can I do for myself? What can I do for others? How can imagine what I could be? Now for me, you know this thing about preparing yourself and letting go to some degree in settling yourself here centering yourself hear that that itself shows a possibility, oh, it's possible to be centered as possible, be subtle as possible, be at peace at ease here now. And you know, something, I'm not this way 95% of the time. So my vision is to do it, or at least 25% of the time, or 30% of the time or, you know, expand the range in which we feel we feel this kind

of freedom or this kind of intimacy or this kind of subtleness sort of sense of well being that might exist. Oh, I have a vision to expand this. So for me in my in my early years of practice, probably still too many degrees. I found that a huge thing in motivate me was that vision of expanding the sense of well being, I had meditation out into the rest of my life. And so it was like, I would expand it a little bit into, you know, into it a little bit wider circle in my life. And then, once I had a sense of that, that I had a vision that was possible, even more than I had a vision that was impossible to do even more. And it was always this kind of sense of vision or a sense of imagination or a sense of seeing the possibility. Like I do more of this, I could do more of this. Now, it wasn't, it wasn't completely imagination, because it was also based on feeling a sense of feeling directly what it was like not to do that. You know, if you're, if you're standing on a nail, you know, it's good to have a vision that it's possible to lift your foot up and not down that right. So when you're suffering, it's good to have some vision of it's possible not to suffer as possible not to be stressed as possible. Not to be contracted, it's possible not to be afraid. It's possible not to have fear, penetrate our life all the time. It's possible it's to do the work, the work it takes to relax the muscles, relax the nerves, relax the bones, even to relax really deep inside the term narrow. So that the fear that might be there all the time. It doesn't have to be there all the time. So it have vision that's possible. So that vision is born from many things. It's born from our own internal sense, but also it's born in seeing it and other people. Sometimes we see that someone else or that person doesn't seem to be motivated by fear all the time, by desire all the time is more settled. And so you'd meet other people who kind of show you that possibility. And, oh, maybe that's possible for me. I was when I was a student. There was little expression that was meaningful and meaningful for me, can be from the Chinese and masters when something like this, that Don't think that the great masters of old were any different than you. They also struggled tremendously with great obstacles in order to become masters. But they started off just like you. So that was actually quite encouraging because it was really difficult for me to practice and what they've said, Oh, it's difficult for them to, you know, why should it not be difficult? That was actually very encouraging, rather than discouraging. So they became kind of a model that inspired my vision. So there's a vision. And then there's a aspiration and motivation, we're motivated actually to somehow grow into that vision. Then there's following through on it, acting on it. So vision, intention, and action. And some people shortchange themselves on the vision side. Some people shortchange themselves on the desperation side, and some people shortchange themselves on the action side. And they don't they have great vision, great aspiration, but no follow through. There's no action in the world. So what does it take to have all those three aligned, so they become mutually supportive? So they work on each other. One of the things I would there's many things to be said in that each of you have your own answers. I don't have an answer for you exactly. But one of the things I'd like to recommend is that it begins with being centered. It begins with just kind of settling back a little bit and making space for making space for something unknown, almost, to bubble up inside of you to relax a little bit, to be centered to be not to have the breath ahead of yourself, but to have the breath be in the forefront, aspire to breathe, breathe and then out of that being center in your breath being relaxed in your breath, what is it that can be born, what can arise out of that? What what I think out of that I think will come can come vision, aspiration and action. So I would like to do a meditation with you guided reflection. So if you could take a meditative posture Gently Close your eyes. First I'll read a quote by George Washington Carver. How far you go in life

depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving and tolerant of the weak and the strong because someday in life, you will have been all of these. So take a couple of relaxed, deep, long breaths. Settling And then let your breath return to normal. And over the next few exhales. As you exhale, relax your body. Relax your shoulders, your belly, your face. Relax your heart. And if aspirated And it's gonna come from breathing. Can you do best of your ability, center yourself a little bit on the breathing so who's sitting here now in this room, this time with your capacity for imagination, imagine into the future, some timeframe that you can imagine like five years, 10 years 20 years. If you think back 510 20 years you realize how quickly it goes. to think ahead 510 20 years maybe even just some sense of infinite time. Great boundless time, no beginning no end infinite time. In the context of a long timeframe, how would you answer the following questions? What is really important in your life over 510 20 years over a lifetime over infinity uptime What really matters for you? What would you be better off doing more of what activities would things be better off doing more given this what's most important What would you be better off doing less of Of all the things you've done, what makes you most satisfied? What are your most satisfying relationships? Your setup what's what are you most satisfying relationships like And finally, and maybe given all this what aspiration do you have for yourself? Or what aspiration do you have? What is your deepest aspiration? So now I was hoping that you'd be willing to turn to someone next to you and hear you and share something about what came out of that reflection. Doesn't have to be something really personal. If you feel like it was too personal, it's too much. But there's something in the what came out of that. And if you don't want to do that share, you can just quietly and wait to just be a few minutes for this bending be nice if person sharing happened. And so why don't you do that please and then I'll ring a bell in a few minutes and just take five minutes. So the two of you somehow share back and forth settlement. Thank you The one of the words that can be translated as aspiration resolve resolve or determination to the Polly's Adi Tana and one of the ways that he kind of sometimes translated is sustaining power. That's also aspiration is also one of the things that helps sustain our, our efforts, our power energy here, what we do and there are many things a person can aspire to. And a lot of beautiful things. There's aspiration for truth, aspiration for just this aspiration for wisdom. aspiration for peace. For Love for compassion. I think that aspiration is, can be one of the very beautiful qualities so the human heart and then to encounter people with a strong aspiration can be quite beautiful to see that the meet that but please with the aspiration, never sacrifice the present moment, never sacrifice your breath. Your breath be first, let your breath take the lead and what aspiration follow. If your aspiration leads and your breath promise then you're in trouble. So, thank you very much. A few minutes we'll have a potluck. I hope many of you stay and those of you who have been coming for a long time, if you kind of would introduce yourself to people who might be new You want to be met? It'd be nice to nice to kind of reach out to people who might be new. Thank you.