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You got energy for a little more. Okay, good, good.

As Gil mentioned, one of the amazing things to me about the all the discoveries, all the treasures in our tradition of Buddhism is that whatever level of compassion or love you came into adulthood with, there are ways to make it grow. There are ways to make it bigger if you'd like to become a more loving and more compassionate person, there are tools to develop those specific qualities. If you'd like to be a more joyful person, there are ways to develop that specific quality. So what I thought I just do for a few minutes, us all together is a few minutes of the compassion practice. And I imagine most of you have done loving kindness practice. How many of you have done formal compassion practice before? Okay, so probably feeling So, as Gil explained, the practice of loving kindness is the foundation for these qualities that are called the Brahma viharas. Which translates to something like heavenly abodes, or sometimes called our best home. loving kindness is the foundation of caring, it's just an open caring. When that heart looks on suffering, the flavor that comes through that is evoked is compassion. When it looks on happiness, the flavor that comes through is sympathetic joy. And then the quality of equanimity is the strength of mind or balance of mind that holds the purity of these states of love, compassion and joy without them slipping into their enemies. They're said to have both near and far enemies states that obstruct their development. So as an example, someone mentioned what compassion is not it's not pity. Pity is considered the near enemy of Compassion because it kind of masquerades like compassion. But it's got this superior attitude as part of it. The near enemy of loving kindness is love that clings. So you know, the pop songs, I want you I need you, I'll kill you if I can't have you.

That's the

that's the love that the love that clings. The far enemy of loving kindness is hatred, or ill will, the exact opposite. The far enemy of compassion is cruelty. So this is a way to practice non cruelty and metta way to practice non ill will. If our if our mind isn't strong enough, and we expose ourselves to suffering, we're liable to slip into pity or another kind of form which is grief or overwhelm. When we open to the suffering of the world, it can seem like too much and when we start feeling grieved are despairing because of the suffering of the world. That's the near enemy of compassion. We're to weighted down with the experience of the suffering, in order for our hearts to remain stable. So equanimity is the is the balancing factor in the realm of viharas. That gives the mind the strength, and the balance, to hold all the suffering in the world or all the happiness of the world. So all four of them can be practiced independently. And as a whole, they make up what I call the enlightened response to the world. It shows us how the awakened heart can respond in the wisest possible way to the joys and sorrows of life. So it's a beautiful and complete system. Compassion is a really important piece because there's so much suffering that we see in the world around us. So we'll begin we'll do probably about 10 minute meditation on compassion, we'll begin by looking directly at suffering. I'm going to suggest a few different people and groups to practice this with, because different people evoke different feelings for us. And you might find one person is a really easy way into compassion for you and others are not so

easy. So the instruction generally is to stay with the person who's easiest or the group who's easiest, because it's really about the development of compassion. So we'll offer a few possibilities. See what see what works for you. The phrase I'm going to suggest like in loving kindness, we do this through repetition of phrases. In loving kindness, we usually use four phrases traditionally, in compassion, we just use one. So the simplest form of the compassion phrase is something like May you be free from your suffering. So that means you hold someone in your in your mind, and you connect with what's suffering in their life. What's difficult, and then you just state your wish for them to be free of that. So that's the basic phrase try that when some people like to vary it a little bit. You might say, may you be free from your suffering of mind and body. Sometimes that makes it more clear what we're talking about. My teacher when I first practice, it gave me the phrase, may you be free from your pain and sorrow. And that had a very kind of big impact on me because it was also very broad, but it made it very personal, free from your pain and sorrow. And another one that a lot of people like I tend to use a lot these days is May you hold your sorrow with compassion, or your pain with compassion? So it kind of brings explicitly out that quality and wishes for the other person to see it in that way. Okay, so I'll suggest these as we go a question.

Will be Do will do us to us is one of those people will do. So, please sit comfortably be relaxed, not so easy to feel compassion if you're in a lot of struggle. So let your body be at ease. have the sense that you can just let your weight settle into your sitting base of the sense of being sort of upright and alert, that basically you can just relax into your

legs and feet.

Christian

and then perhaps bring the attention into the center of your chest area that we call the heart center. This is the part of the body where emotions are very often felt. Coming into the center of your chest and first just feeling any sensations that are there.

You may notice the breath

you may notice a heartbeat.

You may notice contraction or ease.

Notice any feelings of warmth that you find there.

So as you rest the attention in the heart center, I'd like to invite you to bring into your thoughts. Someone who you know who's going through some difficulty in their life right now. Someone you feel somewhat close to that you you view in a friendly way where it's quite easy to recognize the suffering that's in their current situation.

Could be problems of health,

could be in relationships,

could be financial difficulty, could be emotional upset or turmoil.

This is that contact with suffering that Gil talked about is evoking the sense of compassion. And let yourself just hold this person

aware of the difficulty

and don't try to force yourself to feel any particular way about it.

Just receive them in the situation.

And as you connect with them out of the care that you have for them out of your basic liking of them, let yourself just open to the wish that they're paying the ease recognize that this is something you can think of for for them to wish for them

and having connected with that wish, then express it to them with the phrase of compassion.

May you be free from your suffering.

Or May you be free from your suffering in mind and body.

Are you may you be free from your pain and sorrow?

Or may you hold your sorrow with compassion?

Why don't you pick one of these kinds of phrases that connects best to you seems mostly Sincere to you. Hold the person in your mind and just gently repeat this phrase toward them.

And now I'd like to invite you to bring yourself into the compassion meditation.

So letting go of your friend

and connecting with your sense of yourself.

You might like to see, remember an image of yourself like from a photograph. Or you might just feel yourself as you're sitting here and now your body and mood. And as you connect with a sense of yourself, remember what's difficult in your own life right now.

present circumstances

can bring to mind any worries, conflicts, fears, unhappy happiness, struggle.

I can simply letting your heart contact that suffering, not to do anything with it. Just to acknowledge it and feel it

and then recognize in your own life The deep wish that this form of difficulty be lifted,

be eased,

be freed.

And so expressing to yourself the same phrase that you used before this time for you.

May I be free from my suffering?

May I be free from this pain and sorrow?

May I hold this pain and sorrow with compassion

And then letting go of yourself as the focus

and bring in another friend. bring in somebody that you care for a lot, but not necessarily where the difficulties are the strongest element in their life Just a good friend, somebody when you think of them, you just have a sense of feeling a lot of affection.

So, as you connect with that person,

let yourself also turn your attention to whatever may be difficult in their life

may not be strong

may just be the normal stresses and strains of being a human in this time

and because they are a good friend, you know you wish for their life to be free of this kind of pain. So, then expressing that to them with same phrase just gently repeating the phrase Are you using for compassion

Now opening the circle of compassion taking in everyone who's in the room. You may know Well, some people who are here, you may not really know anyone. But having sat through the day together, we've absorbed a little bit of a sense of one another. Just opening to the range of human experience that most likely is in the room.

The mixture of joys and sorrows in our lives.

Recognizing that everyone here came out of a sincere wish for understanding for happiness

and so thinking How delightful it would be

for all of us To be free from our suffering.

So sending that wish and having the sense that it can radiate out from your heart center and touch everyone in the room, those behind you and in front, to your left and your right.

May you all be free from your pain and sorrow.

You hold your sorrow with compassion

and then opening an unlimited way to all beings everywhere.

Recognizing that all beings

Subject to illness, to aging,

to death, to loss,

to sorrow and despair.

wishing that all beings find happiness.

May all beings be free from suffering.

May all beings hold their sorrow with compassion.

So that is the formal practice. I'm curious, anybody have any experiences

that he willing to share? What What was that? Like? Yes.

That is

if I every leap of my suffering, and I'm also relieved of my chance to I can't put it into words exactly. But to transform that suffering into higher awareness or something like that. Just like on my job that I was explaining before, I was telling somebody that I was the eighth grade special ed teacher, the eighth grade math, eighth grade, reading an eighth grade counselors, all left, mid year. I was the one who stayed. I mean, if I hadn't had a kid at home, I would have left and I would have been relieved my suffering. But I also would have missed the opportunity to experience what I experienced, and possibly even touch another person's heart in such a way that they could see a way to heal themselves.

So suffering does play this ennobling role. As Gil mentioned, the practice of his meditation for years had a compassionate effect on him. So it's not about wanting people to avoid any situation that creates difficulty, but more the understanding of really being free is that we develop the wisdom to work with it in a way that the situation may stay the same, but we don't suffer with it anymore. So it's kind of a recognition that we we grow in wisdom, to be able to be free in that circumstance, if that's what's needed. Other times being free from suffering means suffering gets cured of their cancer, for example, and they may have learned a lot from it, but it's not something we would wish on them. Thank you. Any other comments? Did any of the people work better for you than others?

Yes.

It's a little complicated because when I'm picking people I'm close to, I noticed that it's not clean, you know, I want their suffering to stop because it will.

Me and so I had

I just noticed that that was observation. Good

comment was in working with people close to her.

Notice some self interest coming in. So this is where in doing these practices, we just want to notice that one of the near or far enemies is there at the same time, not that we have to make it go away, but we just take it within the field of mindfulness, continue to do the practice and see if the mindfulness of it alone does the purification. So to keep coming back to, oh, it's your suffering that I really care about, say the phrase again and see if it changes. One of the things about all these brahma vihara practices, metta, compassion, and the others, the words are not like a mantra. You know, with a mantra, it's just enough to say it, and it does the magic. It concentrates the mind brings the vibration or whatever. But in this, the realm of vihara practices only work to the extent that you mean it. So it's when you say the words sincerely that the feeling of compassion is being brought in. So it's that shift of mine that really does care about the person. And that's what starts to wake up the compassion. So essentially, the way we develop it is we just put them there moment after moment after moment. That's what strengthens the quality in us. It's native in us. And we just need to bring it out. So basically all we're doing is practicing something we already know how to do, which is to care about another person. And then as Phil said, the more we do that, we find that just becomes a part of us. That's just where we come from. When you notice a stickiness and one of the near enemies is present, you just notice that it's there. You don't try to make it go away. You don't judge yourself for having it. You don't rationalize it or excuse it, you just says Oh, clinging is also there, or self interest is also there. And you just return to that primary intention which cares about the other person's well being. Yes.

One of the experiences that I've had here, and I haven't been to spirit rock, but is the power of the group meditating at the same time or doing this kind of practice at the same time. And so I really appreciate that effort that is in a community. So I think maybe that's what happens is spirit rock that everyone's talking about. But it also reminds me that when I'm alone, that I can also somehow connect my meditation and my efforts to everyone in the world that may be meditating at the same time. And that is very powerful.

Yeah, that's lovely.

You in a way you take the group home with you, don't you? I think that's part of the experience of Sangha is we feel how supportive it is to practice together with other people who are doing the same. And then some of that carries home with us when we go home. And for instance, I don't know, I didn't suggest this, you may not have turned to it. But at some point, people in the room were wishing you free of your suffering. So not only are you wishing it for them, but they're also wishing it for you. I think that's one of the bonds of, of Sangha.

There is a

such a strong tradition of metta and compassion in Theravada countries, that I would almost guarantee that at any moment you care to choose someone in the world is making aspirations for your happiness. That there's one nun in Burma who became known as the metta nun. Because all she did was practice metta all day long. So 18 hours a day, she was looking after you. And then that leaves six for somebody else. But hopefully, somebody in Europe has picked it up by then. So that's lovely to think about that. We're being held in that way or that we can hold others in that way. Yeah, one more comment.

Seems the connection and I don't know if this is a mirror apart

from stops learning

and also doing compassion practices.

And accompanying is, is a sense of joy. And that seems paradoxical, contrary to being sucked into the screen, which I can easily do. But there's this kind of expansive joy.

Surprising. Yeah, thank you.

As Gil mentioned, there is not in the Buddhist tradition, this clear dividing line between that which benefits other as antithetical to that which benefits us. And I think one of the beautiful understandings is that as we awaken this caring heart, it is a great source of of happiness, and joy in our own life. shantideva had a line shantideva was the eighth century Indian Author of bodhisatta Guide to the Bodhisattvas Way of Life, who sort of wrote the handbook on becoming an bodhisatta. He said, All sorrow in this world comes from wanting only myself to be happy. And all joy in this world comes from wanting others to be happy. So it is a beautiful thing as we develop these qualities, out of true caring, you know, the caring for the other has to be sincere, but we find when we develop that it really picks up our heart. So a nice thing to notice is compassion is not a state of suffering. Even though we're in contact with suffering, the Compassionate experience is not one of suffering. In fact, it's one of these sublime states of the vowel viharas. So if you look at the face of the Buddha, or Kuan Yin in a statue, the manifestation the very embodiment of compassion has a half smile.

Or Kuan Yin is in the pose of royal ease.

You know, the equanimity is is the balancing of mind so that that sublimity can be there even looking on suffering. Yeah, it's one of the riches of this exploration. Good. Thank you. So I want to come back a little bit to this theme of connectedness, which you mentioned and Gil mentioned this morning and talk about compassion practice and the other brahma vihara is in relation to it. And maybe I'll just pick up and introduce it from the emptiness themes of this morning. So, if you can cast your mind back before lunch, which I know was like a long time ago, what we are basically is body and senses, mind states and consciousness. Okay. This very analysis, if you start to look at it deeply makes us all alike. We fixate most of the time in our life in society on what makes it different. What makes us different. You know, I'm older than you or I live in Marin and you live on the peninsula are we distinguished by gender, race, so we distinguished by income, or IQ, all this stuff. So mostly we go through our social world kind of, I'm separate from them. You know, I'm different in some way. And we forget how many ways we're similar. So when you think about it, our bodies are not very different. We all have two eyes and nose, a mouth, two ears, digestive system, hands and feet, etc. So differences in body, small mind states, we all know love and joy, and happiness we all know, fear and sadness and anger. So the same factors just put together a little differently. And then there's this consciousness, which,

as far as I can tell is the same in all of us.

So when we look on this level, you could say it's like we're really the same organism. That's just important to different vessels. And it's starting to understand this deep level of sameness, that starts to cut through the sense of separation, which is the prison of the separate existence, that nisargadatta was talking about the calamity of believing in this separate existence. Research scientific researchers are finding out that isolation is one of the most pervasive and debilitating forms of unhappiness. Connection then is what undoes isolation And it puts us kind of back into the human family. So it's one of the direct outgrowth of emptiness. And it's also direct outgrowth from the Brahma viharas. As we connect with our own difficulties, and the difficulties of others, we start to see we're all in the same boat. All of us alive are subject to illness, aging and death. All beings on this planet are and so we're all

vulnerable in this way. So this, this practice brings us back again and again the compassion practice to what we share, rather than what makes us separate. It's not to say we, you know, if we were to say we're all the same, that's not right either. Because we obviously have different physical appearances and different conditioning, different backgrounds, different personalities. So to say we're all the same isn't right. But to say we're totally different isn't right either. Neither of those quite applies. And then we find ourselves in this position where we're individuals, but with this deep, underlying connection to each other. So it's very interesting. Very interesting to explore. So this kind of connectedness, sometimes it really comes to the forefront in surprising ways. And I want to tell you one story, I'll read a part of it. That was in the San Francisco Chronicle. A couple of years ago. Do you remember a story about a whale that came down through the fair lines? So I'll read a little bit of that story that the story is that it was a humpback whale migrating from the cold waters of Alaska moving down. This is in December to the warmer waters of Mexico or Hawaii. And she got tangled up in crab rope lines around the Fairlawn islands. So the crab traps are these weighted steel traps that are strung along ropes and hung off and I guess they're kept up by some boys and the crab traps are supposed to swim into them and not be able to get out. And there are a lot of these traps set near the feral lawns. So this female whale who was about 45 to 50 feet long, and weighed about 50 tons got caught in these trap lines. And the fisherman noticed her went to one afternoon and saw that the some of the ropes had gone around her body four times and we're starting to cut into the flesh because of the weight of the traps. And because of the weight of the traps, she was having a hard time coming back up to the surface to inhale as whales have to do so she was losing energy and sort of going going down and possibly being drowned. So what does one do? So the fisherman called the marine Rescue Center, who sent out a boat with a group of divers. So the boat got there a few hours later. And the divers looked at the situation and said, what, what can we do? They were a little reluctant to jump in the water, because if the whale just slaps her tail on a diver gone, it's such a big tail, they'd be killed and drowned. But the diver saw there was no other way to rescue the whale. So they jumped in the water with their dive suits and curves, special curve knives, and they started to swim all around the whale and cut through the ropes where she was entangled. So this is one of the divers and account of one of the divers who was up near the front He said the whale floated passively in the water the whole time, giving off a strange kind of vibration.

He was working around the whales face. When I was cutting the line going through the mouth her I was there winking at me, watching me. It was an epic moment of my life. When the whale realized she was free, she began swimming around in circles in apparent joy according to the rescuers. She then swam up to each diver, nuzzled him and then swam to the next one. It felt to me like she was thanking us knowing that she was free and that we had helped her. One of the rescue divers said she stopped about a foot away from me, pushed me around a little bit and had some fun. She seemed kind of affectionate, like a dog that's happy to see you. I never felt threatened. It was an amazing, unbelievable experience. I think The reason that stories like this touches so deeply is that they break through that sense of isolation and connection. You know, you can just imagine the diver who's working around the whales I, and thinking, I kind of recognize that intelligence. You know, that's the kind of intelligence I have also. And the reciprocity of feeling that that story brings out reminds us we're not separate from creatures or from each other. But so often we just kind of forget that we can connect on that level. But when it when we're reminded of it, we remember how beautiful it is. So I want to talk a little bit about how we maintain that connection in everyday life. There is this series in the texts that you've probably heard about generosity, ethical conduct and meditation. The traditional name for it is dāna, sila, bhavana. It's often positioned as the foundation of practice. But reading the Buddha's exact words it's more like these are the bases for merit, or you could say happiness in our everyday life. So the main practice the Buddha encouraged was the Eightfold Path. That's the path to liberation. But there's another set of practices about worldly happiness that he talked about in terms of how to make merit.

And these these this he described as generosity, ethical conduct, and mind training. And here the mind training is mostly the value of viharas or loving kindness. So what's interesting if you look at dāna, sila, and brahma-viharas, they have a common thread and that is their relational they are the ways that we connect to each other in Our outside life in our day, normal daily life. So I mean, it's fine to, you know, the essential to go inside become quiet practice mindfulness be in touch with our direct human experience. When we're back in the world and relating, then we have the field to play in, of dāna, sila, bhavana. So generosity, ethical conduct, training the mind in the direction of compassion and love. generosity, there are so many ways that we can offer when we start to tune into the amount of suffering in the world. Then we see everyone as an opportunity for generosity. How can I give to improve that situation? I was quite amazed somebody gave me this this book recently. It's called blessing unrest. It's Paul Hawkins latest book. And I didn't know at all what it was about. I'll read you the subtitle how the largest movement in the world came in. Being in why no one saw it coming. And what he says is that this dramatic movement that's happening under the radar of the media is a huge explosion in nonprofits, and non governmental organizations NGOs, that are dedicated to relieving suffering on one level or another. Basically, environmental sustainability, taking care of the earth and its creatures and working for social justice. He says these things are springing up around the world, on a scale that has never happened before in human history, and he sees the potential for them to make a huge impact in the world. I mean, I think of a center like this, which, you know, nothing like this existed here 30 years ago. And now there's this whole pool of

you know, attentive,

compassionate, caring people who wants Make a difference in the world. And I know you all are in many different ways. So this, to me is a very, very positive and inspiring sign. And I think about all the different times during the day that I hear stories of this kind of generosity, we hear lots of stories of the suffering. But these days, I'm also hearing as many stories of generosity. headline on the front page of the New York Times Online today with something like Burmese monks succeed in rescue effort where hunter fails. And basically the villagers have figured out that if they want to get fed and sheltered they go to the monasteries, and the monks are taking them in. And because the laypeople know the monks and nuns are taking them in, lay people are going and making huge donation stacks of cash to the monastery so that they can buy food and supplies for these people. Gil and I have a friend who's the president of the Spirit rock board, Who years ago started a foundation to help in Burma. Some of you may have gotten the email, tell nation, how Nathan and the foundation for the people of Burma in the first I think 10 days after the cyclone hit, they raised \$300,000, which they were able to channel two people because they had 70 people on the ground who could deliver the aid and make a difference to the Burmese people. I think of you know, the Gates Foundation, which is now has an endowment of something like \$60 billion. And out of that they have to give away by law 5% a year, and that's 3 billion. So mostly going to help in third world countries and education around the world. So everywhere I turn, I see all these organizations, foundations and individuals, just seeing a problem in the world and jumping in to do something about it. So it seems to me like there's generosity going on on a scale that has not happened before. For around the world, and I think it's tremendously moving and inspiring. So I think this is the this is the area for us to look at in terms of the ethical conduct. I love this story of the Dalai Lama. He was being interviewed by Oprah Winfrey. I don't know if you knew that. But Oprah interviewed the Dalai Lama a few years ago and the interview came out in the magazine. Oh. And so she asked him in the middle of the interview, have you ever had to forgive yourself for anything? And she's, she's big on forgiveness. And he replied, small incidents like accidentally killing an insect. killing an insect. Oprah said, Wow, okay. The Dalai Lama continued. My attitude toward mosquitoes is not very favorable. Not very peaceful. bedbugs also. And that's it. Oprah couldn't quite believe what she was hearing in your lifetime. That's what you have to forgive yourself for small mistakes every day.

Maybe the Dalai Lama said evenly, but major mistakes, it seems no. So on the level of conduct and taking care with our conduct, this leads to something that the Buddha called the bliss of blame lessness out of our compassion for others, we take care in our actions. And then that gives us a great source of happiness, a lack of remorse, leaves the heart free and, and easy with itself. And then the practices of Bhavana of developing this heart of loving kindness and compassion gives his skillset, a kind of protection in the world. The brahma vihara 's were originally taught as a protection from fear, and we find is we generate that attitude. We go through the world without that sense of fear.

In the sense of deep connectedness.

So I just want to end this by

one other piece of the interview between Oprah and the Dalai Lama. At the very end, she said, in my magazine, I do a column called what I know for sure. Your Holiness, what do you know for sure? The one thing about which you have no doubt, the Dalai Lama did not hesitate. Compassion is the best source of happiness for happy life and happy world. There is no doubt. So that's a wonderful for me a wonderful message to take away. Compassion makes others happy, and in making others happy, we bring great happiness into our own lives. Empty is a maybe

So we are just about at our closing time today, I want to thank you all for coming. And say I've really enjoyed being here with you. I feel a little bit at home. Here, even though it's my first visit, I've really enjoyed hanging out with you. Today, Gil enjoyed your teaching a lot. And I feel very comfortable in the Tsongas, I'm really happy to have to have met you all. And I really thank you for your support of the day. The scholarship fund makes a real difference in lots of people's lives. Those of you who have been on a Silent Retreat, know how transformative it can be. And this makes that experience possible for people who might not otherwise have the opportunity. So I thank you very much for your presence today, your support of the scholarship fund and your practice of the Dharma. So I hope we meet again and may compassion and emptiness Make your life very full.

Yeah. Just it's officially over. But I want to thank you as well. And also to say that those of you who haven't been here before everything that happens here at IMC is done by volunteers and including the cleaning of the place.

And it's our custom

that whenever we have a day long like this, that something like seven or eight people will stay behind and help tidy up the place. That takes about 10 minutes, cleaning the bathrooms, the kitchen, you know, vacuuming in here, and other maybe seven eight people who are willing to stay and help so
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