

2008-10-27 The Five Hindrances III Will

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SPEAKERS

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So this evening I'm going to give a talk on hindrance of ill will, and as part of a series of talks on the five hindrances, and began a couple of weeks ago. And this is the second, the first hindrances, such sense desire sensual desire. Second, ill will, the third is sloth and torpor. The fourth is restlessness and anxiety. And the fifth is doubt. So these are common visitors to people doing meditation. And it's important to address it and look at this, these well. So today's ill will, whether you like it or not. And we're going to so imagine that you're walking down the street wide streets. And there's a really strong wind. I don't know what a strong wind is, but maybe 80 miles an hour wind. And that's pretty strong, right? But can you walk in 80 miles? No, not really. Okay, 50 miles an hour wind. And 50 is better. So you're walking down the width. And how you can you know what happens as you walk depends on a number of factors. One one depends certainly how strong the wind is. If it is maybe a certain strength. If you're walking kind of casually, it might push you two or three feet downwind and you catch yourself and you strong enough, easy enough, you can push yourself back into the middle of the road and then your casual wind catches you and you can kind of correct yourself as you go along. But at some point, if the wind is too strong, the miles an hour, it blows you off the road. Another factor that plays into this is that Maybe you're not so casual, but you're quite intense. And so you're really intense and resolved and kind of centered in yourself as you walk. And then the 50 mile an hour wind perhaps doesn't really push you over, because you're really there for each step. Whereas if you're not quite there, it pushes you more easily. Then imagine, you make it to a sidewalk, that's maybe three or four feet wide. And now the wind is only 40 miles an hour. And same thing if you walk too casually, it can push you but a little bit, maybe not two or three feet, but it could push you maybe a foot and you can easily write yourself and go along. But if it's a little bit stronger, it might blow you off, but doesn't have to be as strong as in the on the road just a little bit because it only has a couple of feet to push you in and then imagine that after a while you think well this is kind of fun, but let's walk right on the curb. You know, four inch curb. And now you could never walk on the curb and an 80 mile an hour wind you can't do 4050 mile an hour wind, you wouldn't be able to stay on there with even a 30 mile an hour wind perhaps. But maybe with 20 mile an hour wind, you can kind of you can do it you can it pushes you a little bit, but you can have your body kind of gets pushed a little bit. And you kind of step in instead of straight and you push against the van lean against it and you can kind of walk that, that four inches if the wind is 20 miles an hour now 20 miles an hour on the big Boulevard, no problem. But for walking to the curb, you got to have a lot slower when to succeed. how intense you are in walking her casual comes into play here as well. If you're too if you're too casual as you're walking, maybe 15 miles an hour is enough to push you off. But if you're really intent and centered, maybe 25 is okay. So then this is fun. So you decide that Not just occurred, but you're going to walk along high wire, maybe it's only two inches above the ground, but you can enjoy walking alongside where you wire you, then you went to circus camp as a kid and you've learned a few things. So you're going to try this high wire. And now on the high wire, two inches above the ground, the, you know, a 10 mile per hour wind is too much. And, you know, five miles is too much,

but maybe four miles an hour, we could just you could kind of just manage that there. Unless you're really intent, then maybe six is okay. But if you're too casual, complacent, then even one miles too much. Get the idea. So the hindrances are like that. You've set yourself a course where you're going to take a walk, if you're going to go a certain direction in your life, and it can be almost anything in anything you do at all. You want to do something, you set yourself a course.

And then at some point there can be wins in the mind forces in the mind that come along that can have an impact on your ability to follow through on what you want to do. So there might be so they might arise, it will. If you have a wide Boulevard, wide wide, wide path and an easy destination to go to. Then you could have a raging rage and, and you can manage to find your way down the boulevard, no problem. But that raging rage is not going to you're not going to manage that if you if you're on that sidewalk. If you're just irritated, you might not even make it on the curb. If you're slightly annoyed, you might Don't even make it on the high wire, but slightly annoyed on the boulevard. That's no no issue at all. So, depending on what you want to do, depending how easy it is to do it, the impact on these forces in your mind varies by the intensity of it and varies by how intense you are for the purpose that you have in mind, and various about the conditions you're in. So with ill will, anger hostility, aversion, iron, rage, quotation, annoyance is another good words like that. The more I have a list

ill will aversion anger fury, rage, wrath, resentment, indignation, irritation, vexation, discontent, loading, abhorrence, Rudge annoyance spate higher resistance avoidance, denial, boredom, critical illness, fearfulness, complaining. To list just a few, the possibilities. So some of these can arise in our mind. And, and they can derail us, they can push us off our path where we want to go. As people do meditation practice, and then and their meditation practice gets more quiet, more centered, more focused. It becomes more and more like you're working on a smaller and smaller walkway and a milder wind can blow you off. So if you're very peaceful, mine is very still and quiet content. And so this is good, I'm centered. I'm here I'm not anywhere else. And then someone walks in to IMC with a high heeled shoes hear the clicking on the floor. And you remind you of how in high school prom No, I didn't know I didn't go to high school prom. I didn't. I don't know what happens there. But I guess Yes, you don't wear high heeled shoes, high heeled shoes, choose to the you do wear high heeled shoes to the prom, you do that. You can't dance, right? Doesn't matter. You can do Si, si I don't know. There's so much I don't know. And so you remember how someone stepped on your foot with those heels. And you know, normally it's not a big deal but somehow you could kind of irritated you know, 30 years ago memory and you find yourself kind of mind drifting off and those irritated thoughts to you. And now if you go you've lost your path you're being pushed off Your path, you literally driving your car down the freeway. And you think about the same incident, chances of you being blown off the road, there will be somehow crashing your car are pretty small in that circumstance. But if you're on your cell phone and someone says something phenomenally offensive to you, that is so deeply kind of consequential for you and your life and your family and everyone and you're just filled with fury, then, you know, you might have an accident, you might get pushed over. So what I'm trying to say here is that in meditation practice, things which in normal life, maybe you can manage quite easily, for the purpose of meditation practice, become a bigger deal. Something that's milder in daily life becomes a bigger deal in meditation practice. So this is true with the hindrances. So in the case of ill will As we sit and meditate as possible be pushed off by being caught up but get preoccupied by thoughts of aversion, feelings of ill will, that come along. So part of what Ill will is a hindrance, it's either a movement, you want to strike out at something, push something, strike out, or push something away, or push yourself away from something, kind of aversion from it. Usually with a sense of little bit of sense of hostility, but not always, it could just be kind of strong aversion. And, and it can happen, it could happen very subtly in the body. In the mind, it can happen very powerfully. And it's fascinating. It's really fascinating to admit to take the opportunity in meditation. When you sit down. Close your eyes, in a meditative postures, sit down and

close your eyes. And then Let It Rip and really feel like you've never felt before. Would a good bout of anger, irritation, ill will hostility might be like, just really feel it. Give yourself permission, because it's safe, right? You're not going to hit anyone you know you're safe you've committed to not moving and then just let it course through you and then become a naturalist of those things becomes like I become fascinated

energetically, temperature wise. Notice where the constriction, tightness is over the impulses are sometimes with a version that translates a certain kind of impulse to act to move in the body. Sometimes it can be impulse to do something with your arms and hands and fists. You can feel that energy going surging down there, or there might be the energy to your legs are sometimes in the middle of the chest and upwelling kind of pushing out In a pushing kind of feeling might be there, there might be a lot of energy in the brain or the head is spinning around, or contraction, tightness there. There's a variety of sensations ways you can feel the experience of it. And then according to this long list that I read, the each one of those has their own characteristic manifestation in the body. So you're encouraged in this practice here, to spend some time becoming a kind of sewer of ill will, not because it's just a good thing to do, you know, for its own right to have a good time and sit with your will. But rather, it's so that you can get to know it really well. And one of the ways very important ways that wisdom is acquired, is through familiar familiarity. Getting to know something really well. It's rather unfortunate that's the case. Because it's hard to become familiar with something unless you experience it again. And again and again. So in that sense, it's kind of unfortunate if it's a painful thing you have to, but often that a lot of the wisdom can come from that deep familiarity that comes from repeated contact. So with it with sitting in meditation, you probably get a very interesting laboratory for this work of familiarity. Partly because the more subtle movements of aversion will irritation that normally wouldn't maybe you wouldn't even notice in your daily life are much more consequential and noticeable in meditation. And some people are quite surprised to realize through the practice of meditation, how pervasive certain attitudes are, that seem to almost underlie the very kind of basic very underlie the very orientation or approach with which they go through life. In daily life, you didn't we don't notice so much. When the common things people can notice is some people will notice is how pervasive fear is, anxiety seems to be under everything. Some people will notice how pervasive desire is wanting. And some people will notice how pervasive ill will resentment. Anger. aversion is some people, it's their default. They've kind of predisposed or they're prepared or ever prepared. Some people enter into an environment and already assume a brand new place never been before, that there is something wrong here. That there's something off, people are not going to like them people are irritating people are difficult to do this and that. And then they look in their environment for that, because select out of the environment. And part of the danger of any of these hindrances is when it has the upper hand that it's influences how we see the world around us. With a version it's very dangerous because version can have such negative consequences if we act on our version or hostility, no will we act on it we can cause harm to ourselves to others to our relationships. And if we predisposed or default is to see is to kind of be on the attack or the aversion and find what's wrong is it can be a self fulfilling prophecy. So if we want to see someone we've never seen before and assume that they're going to be irritating. And they say, how are you? And they've already lost? Like, you know, the tone of your voice, how could you say it that way. And number one, I was tell Sahara, the Zen monastery and the Zen monastery during the formal periods of meditation retreats, all the meals have been formally formally in the meditation hall. And we sit in platforms, a little bit higher than this. But with a strip of wood in front, like I have in front of my platform here, and we put out our bowls. And we chant. And except for the chanting, it's all done in silence. And servers will come in with pots of food, and stand in front of us, and ladle up the rice and things into our bowls, and then leave. And

it's all choreographed. It's all these kind of ritual. And so as they come in the servers, they have to bow to you. And you have to bow to them. So it's very nice, right? So it's gonna serve you food, you bow and silence, you can't talk. So you just bow and they're holding the pot and they bow to you. And we did this, you know, for months for years, you know? And it wasn't much else to do and more things that didn't come out right. The so the so how deeply the servers bound court from when I was a server how deeply the people sitting on the platform felt to me communicated something or that person's deep enough they're about one right, but then bowed even a few still, you know, they'll nod you know and then I would be a little bit irritated you know and who knows why maybe they had a bad back and they couldn't go any further. But you know, what's this person have against me So, you know if I worked walked in, you know already was in a kind of an angry state of mind. You know, I'm already kind of like oh, you know, look at that. That person barely budged in that bow. How disrespectful and then of course, then I hardly read but you bow when you start serving you finished your bow again and then go to the next person. So then walk barely bow back then myself. I'll show them and then they see this little and then you know ci you know what's with Gil and pretty soon we have a war self fulfilling prophecy sometimes that was the best example but once just to show you the other side of it once I was serving, it was the end of a seven day retreat intensive concentrated meditation silent for the whole week. And I was serving on the last days and the customers actually you don't bow in front of you don't serve one person at a time you serve two people at once. And so you stand between them you about to them they bow to you. And when you enter the server my take your bowl and a ladle The food into the bowl. And then when you hold your hands up in like this gotcha. Like you're bowing to them straight up. And then when while they're serving, and then if they have enough, you have enough food, you drop your hand like this, hold it flat pointed up to the ceiling. So they'd know and lift your hand slightly towards the ceiling. And that's means you have enough right? And so I was serving someone you know, and his partner who was being served to say more or less same time. He they're supposed to keep their hands up waiting for their turn like this. And so the partner dropped his hand down. That's enough for the guy next door, right.

I'm glad you left. Because I started laughing and it's another seven days of intense silence. Like the pressure suddenly gone right with pop pop the lid on me as I started laughing I kind of staggered doctors and then no one else in the room knew what except those two and me knew what had happened. But the people next to them and the platform then the wall they started laughing because we were laughing and then the people down there was like laughing liver ripple down the hall and I started laughing so much I had to put the pot in the floor and I rolled fell on the ground is holding my stomach. So anyway, so things can get out of hand.

So the ill will back to well. So anyway, so if you want to meditate successfully you need To become familiar with this ill will, because a very simple will even if you're not in reverse, it's kind of person, even small bouts of will will can pull you off, because it tends to be involved with preoccupation, we get preoccupied in something, and you can't do meditation if you're preoccupied. If your mind is occupied with something else, rather than being intense here, then you know, you can't really do the mindfulness stuff. And what's interesting about this preoccupation with a will is that your mind is occupied with some objects of some concern. And it can be very captivating. That concern for part two, because the story around that concern is so captivating, and also because there's so much energy in us towards it, we're so motivated or juiced around it. Again, if you're sitting in deep meditation, you don't have to be that used to not choose to kind of derail you. So one of the interesting things to do, so there's variety of things to do. We've been studying practicing with a will. And first there's one that is seldom mentioned, but I want to read it. It's from ancient texts, Buddhist texts from the first century BC and it's the only for the oldest record we have of a Buddhist monk teaching someone from outside of India. In this case, it was a Greek, a Greek King. And the Greek king asked all these questions and this mug Nika Sandown

answers and this was these were recorded, and the monk said to the king, by water by water, we should understand the mind by mud, the hindrances. So the most like water, if it's muddy, it's not going to be clear. So if you can get rid of the mud, the mind the water becomes clear the mind becomes clear. And by magic stone, magic stone is a stone you drop in the water and it settles the mud and the magic stone that you should understand to be confidence. As soon as confidence arises, it makes the hindrances disappear. The mind without hindrances is clear, pure and unsettling. So the role of confidence Do you have confidence in the practice, you have confidence in yourself you have confidence that the course you're setting yourself on is more important, more worthwhile than the course you're going out with. On your with your preoccupation. As I stated, here's our thinking about those high heeled shoes. prom. What's more important to spin out obsessing about my version about high heeled shoes and that person stepped on me to sit here and be intent and present and clear, here and now. If I have confidence that that's important lighters important, then I'm less likely to go off in the high heeled shoes direction. But if I have no confidence, and I don't even know what's important in some people, the confidence in the practice. Now it's worse than that because some people, their confidence goes into their aversion. That's where they have confidence. Somehow they have, you know, what needs to be looked at them or see how they act. That's where they put their faith. That's what they believe in. That's what they almost kind of get their identity from. That's where they get their juice to energy from. So people get energized by being different Some people's sense of identity gets reinforced or strengthened by having a version, some forms of aversion because those people out there, they're the ones who are bad. And therefore, I'm one of the good ones. And so people play the whole version game sometimes. Sometimes it's a way of kind of building themselves up. Not a few people I know and on retreat, have discovered that their critical judgmental mind where they're judging other people. And on retreat in daily life, you might not see how painful it is. But if you go on retreat, Silent Retreat, and you have to live with yourself for hours in silence, and you see the judgmental mind operating.

Seeing the cost of it are painful it is and that's good. Because then you're willing to look deeper and see you know, the roots of it and try to kind of clarify it. And people come back to me and clarified it and some people have said Wow, that critical judgmental of other people was really a way that I was trying to protect myself. And underneath my my protectiveness was I was afraid. I felt very vulnerable. So it's not just simply a matter of creating an identity, but sometimes aversion is also a form of self protection. I know some people who, when they feel pain or discomfort, what they what they do is they lash out ill will aversion that's what they have. That's what goes on. And it's not necessarily only to the world outside, it can be within oneself to there's can be tremendous aversion to ill will towards oneself. You feel some discomfort, some some some pain and emotional pain, and then we get angry with ourselves for having that. So to have confidence in the past confidence in the practice. So and give up our confidence in your will is a very important step. It's important to spend time reflecting or contemplating or considering the topic of the topic of your will. I recommend everyone spend time reflecting on it. Those of you who for whom ill will is a regular dance partner, regular visitor for you, you might want to spend more time reflecting on it, thinking about it, talking to friends about it. Because reflecting through a process of contemplation, reflection, can give you a deeper understanding and wisdom about what's going on in the whole experience of aversion, your will. And as you understand it better and think better about a wider understanding of it. Then we sit down to meditate, that understanding and forms your meditation almost naturally not that think about it anymore, but just right there to support you. So what are some of the things you can contemplate? You can contemplate the cost, the personal cost of ill will aversion anger, think about that. Talk to people about it, explore what the cost might be. Because to yourself personally, I've known people who started noticing how uncomfortable or painful it was to be angry. And they said, you know, whatever the benefits are of being angry.

They don't justify the cost. It's I feel so much pain, wishing that person pain. What's the cost for our relationships with other people? What's the cost towards others? I've said saying I've said things out of aversion that I've regretted ever since. I wish you know the cost? Because not only for the cost for me, but the cost for that person? How could I said that cause that kind of harm for someone else, the moment of mindlessness, somebody comes up so to have a good sense of the cost the realistic sense. And now just kind of brush off or ignore our history around ill will anger aversion, but learn from it. So we think we can be wiser in the future.

What might be the root of your ill will? What's the underlying condition that prompts it that the catalyst for it the Buddhist word that the Pali word, the Indian word for hindrance actually literally means to cover over? So what's it covering over what's the stew underneath? What's prompting you with ill will version sometimes what's its frustrated desire? We really want something and we're being somehow snuck we're not getting it and that frustrated desire in some people Case takes the form of anger. We all know for some people what's underneath it might be some kind of personal pain that we're unwilling to stay present for. They're recoiling from our own pain for some people can take the form of lashing out of critical Miss. So perhaps what's needed then is to have a much improved capacity to be a quantum is a quantum economist Li present for our pain or inner pain. And actually why one of the great gifts of this practice is the ability to be comfortable with discomfort. We think of that why would you want to do that? Well so you can be comfortable. You, if you're only comfortable when you're comfortable then your life is pretty limited. But if you can be comfortable when you're uncomfortable Then all kinds of things are possible. So, sort of learn to be present. And one of the things when you learn to be present for discomfort is we can understand it and see it and resolve it and deal with it in a much more realistic way. They're related to these things is, how is it what how does ill will anger aversion skew your perceptions? How does it know? You see really what's happening? There's a very strong tendency for ill will be involved preoccupation in some things, some story some person and for us then to be blinded and not notice what's happening inside of us, our own suffering. So our perception is directed towards something, rather than really taking into account the full picture. It's also selective, we select out of a situation that which recruits Have, we tend not to notice what's nice and helpful? In a situation?

You might spend some time reflecting. contemplating How might, how might it be a good idea? In what way my way, say this way? I say it this way, for a number of reasons. Once a you do the work, and two, so you can't get out of it by saying I don't like that idea. So they say it this way. In what way? Would it be helpful for you to consider your enemy as your teacher. The people for whom you have a steady ill will towards her how what would it What would it what enter kind of consideration before flexion understanding Do you need to bring forth so that that person can be a teacher for you? You might never tell them that. But so you can learn something. So you can be transformed and changed for the better in that contact and that reflection. So these are all contemplations you might do in your tummy, walking around, drinking tea, talking to friends, and become wiser about this area. Another thing you might do, it has to do with more spiritual practice is, is to cultivate good qualities within us cultivate ourselves. And the primary thing you're encouraged to cultivate in Buddhism, as an antidote to ill will, is goodwill is friendliness is loving kindness. And this is a very important virtue. It's a very important Practice is a very important quality of heart, that you're encouraged to learn, develop and express when you do Buddhist practice. So that is a wonderful kind of balance or antidote. It's like being a really strong wind. And I guess it's not the right best analogy but a really strong wind and having really heavy shoes, so you can't be blown around. Another thing to cultivate when there's ill will, is to cultivate and strengthen our capacity to be relaxed and come to learn how to relax. One of the ways to one of the relax before you act. One of the great guidelines around ill will. Anger is don't ever make a decision when you're angry. If

you can avoid it, try to avoid Making decisions, you'll probably regret it later. So, rather spend some time relaxing. And then when you're relaxed, perhaps you can kind of see clear what needs to be done.

Cultivate friendship with people who are not angry. spending a lot of time on other angry people, hostile people can reinforce our own hostility or ill will. Spending time with people have goodwill can be enforced that. So cultivate friendship with people who have goodwill, but that kind of, you know, inform you support you. The other next thing is the mindfulness practice itself. And here is to learn, to be present to bring mindfulness to it. And there's a whole there's a whole area. And maybe for some of you, I don't want to say much about it. One of the great possibilities of mindfulness is to learn how to be present for something. And while you're present for it, not caught by it. And it's a training we do in this practice to learn how to be present, be mindful, attentive to something. And while we're attentive, not be pulled around by the nose, by the thing that we're paying attention to. So we can be present for anger. And anger doesn't have to apprehend. I remember once one magical moment, on a retreat many years ago, where I was doing walking meditation, back and forth, and I had a walkway that's about 30 feet long, 25 feet long, and I was walking back and forth. And on retreats, we, you know, there's no, you're not assigned a walking path. But you know, if you have your walking path, you know, that's your path for that time. And it was in a hallway, Angela center. And this person got into my lane. And I thought, oh surely that person is just walking down the hallway to get someplace else. But when I turned around to, you know, to the back, the first thing wasn't good but wasn't budging. It was a game of chicken, you know, meditation What is this person doing in my walking back? So I, so I got angry. But the wonderful thing was that the mindfulness was so strong that I had what, at that time I called Teflon mind where the anger just came up, I could watch it come up, it didn't stick anywhere. With came up. But you know, kind of, surged up and vanished within a second or two seconds was gone, just so to have that ability to have mindfulness at present They can watch and see present for something. And the mind doesn't latch on can get caught. Mindfulness also allows us to see more deeply what's happening. The layers and layers of what might be the catalyst in the conditions that allows the hindrance, the ill will to be there. So you have to be present to see that. Mindfulness also has a strong healing quality, because when you're mindful in a nonreactive way, which means you don't need to fear what's there, you allow the LL to be there. Sometimes just allowing it to be there in the field of awareness in the field of presence. It allows some inner healing or movement or relaxing to happen. And it's quite profound to see what inner healing capacity our psyche or heart or body has, if it's given chance. And mindfulness is a very powerful way to let the innate inner wisdom of healing to work through us at times. So that's the mindfulness is kind of core what we do here. And then it's time to stop. But I want to mention one more practice to do with, ill will anger, hostility rage. When nothing else works. You can do it before this do you have to wait until then, but nothing else works. And if you're, you know, if you've been on this path, you really committed to this Buddhist thing. Then one thing you could do is you could go for refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and the Sangha. Maybe even put your hands together in front of your heart and kind of in this kind of God, show this kind of and

maybe even chant it out loud. If you're alone or silence your mind. I take refuge in the Buddha I take refuge in the Dharma. And I take refuge in the Sangha. And that can remind you of the values of what you have confidence in the values you want to live by. It can help kind of evoke the support of the Buddha Dharma and your community. So you don't feel like you're doing it alone. There's something bigger that's holding you. So it's not just up to you to struggle with this, but you're actually supported by something much larger and bigger as well. So the hindrance of ill will. So now, for this next week, do not look for opportunities to have your will. Don't care if you don't go out of your way, please, to have ill will or anger any of these good things. However, if it happen during this week that you feel some anger, irritation, or will annoyance in the whole gamut of these things. If it should happen, make it a week where you're going to study it. You're going to learn from it, you can explore it, you can reflect on it. So

look for opportunities to study your ill will. This is the week for it. Isn't that good? Finally winning all your life. Now you can do it. And, and I'd encourage you in this script is exploration to this, that you find someone, friends or strangers. Some of you will prefer strangers where perhaps you have a chance to, you know, you sit down at someone in the bus and say, Hey, I was given this homework. I wonder if you know what What do you what wisdom do you have about ill will and then you might get some unless the person gets irritated. So enjoy your co wellness week. Thank you