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SPEAKERS

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So, sensuality, sense pleasure is a huge topic. Desire is a huge topic. Sensual desires a huge topic. And sensual desire as in relationship to Buddhist practice, meditation practice is a huge topic. So, you know, we could have gone on for a few weeks, just on this topic, I think it's very important. And what I've tried, I hope to hope we've done a little bit here today is to kind of open up the territory for you some, to look at people to become more familiar with some of the aspects of it. I hope that you have a hope if you have an appreciation for the value of sense pleasure, there's a place for it in life a healthy place useful place for it. I hope that you see that Start beginning now to see a difference between sensual pleasure and the desire for it. I hope that you see that the desire for it sometimes comes with consequences. Sometimes the consequences are immediate, where it just feels uncomfortable to have the desire. Sometimes it doesn't have disk uncomfortable feelings, sometimes it feels quite good to have it. Sometimes the acting on those desires have bad consequences. Sometimes it doesn't. A wise person is able to distinguish between, you know when something is healthy and useful and when it's not. Without that ability to distinguish. I think there's not not a possibility of a wise life. And then I hope that you begin being able to discern the impact that desire for sense pleasure has when you meditate. There are ways that desire for sexual pleasure in it I'll just the right way can actually support meditation practice. Because if you tune in to some of the pleasure that can come from meditation itself, then tune into it and kind of allow it to kind of grow, they can keep you very present, and help you with being present and help the mind becomes still, but also the desire for sensual pleasure and that that isn't, you know, if you do what you decide the sensual pleasure, desire has nothing to do with meditation itself, but has to do with the person sitting next to you or what's for lunch or anything else. Then, obviously, without it the moralistic, obviously, it taking you away from what you're set, you set what you set, set yourself to do, you know which American be present. So if what you want to do is meditate, you have to everyone's going to have to deal with the hindrances have to somehow become wise about them, and skillful at letting go of them of not letting them to get the upper hand. And so the last little piece of this afternoon I want to talk a little bit about how to work with it. hindrance of sexual desire. How not to have it be a hindrance, how not to have it get in the way of your purpose. And some of this, you know, we've talked about many times and talked about some of this last time as well. But there's, so some of this is going to be repeat. But there's one thing that does not repeat from us the Dharma practice day, one thing which is

maybe not mentioned often enough discussions about the hindrances and that is one of the very useful or very important supports for not getting swept away in sensual desire is confidence to have confidence In the meditation practice, the purpose of the meditation practice, perhaps where you're going with meditation practice, and confidence in yourself and doing a meditation practice. Because if you have a lot of confidence, inspiration, this is really important and useful, then you're less likely to be

pulled away by other things by distractions. it much. I mean, you can't underestimate the power of distracting mind in these things. It's still happened. But if you're not confident, not inspired during all meditations, okay, you know, I like to meditate sometimes I like to collect stamps, you know, it's, you know, it's, it's all good. Then, you know, you sit down to meditate, and it's gonna be very different. If you say what this is, you know, really what's I feel, you know, the most important a lot of the things I do in my life don't make much so much sense. So this was, this is what makes sense. But my overall life, this has really has a high priority for me. The stamp collecting can wait, then, I think so confidence. So, when you're struggling with the hindrances, especially with any of them, but then enough essential desire, you might step back for a moment and not address essential desire directly to address the issue of confidence. Kind of study your confidence or do you have confidence? Or do you have confidence in your confidence invested in the practice you're doing is you have confidence in yourself doing it. If you don't have confidence in yourself, then there's going to be hesitation in doing the practice. Are you gonna stumble over yourself as you do it? And, and once you start stumbling or hesitating, other things can sneak in and off you go. Confidence is no guarantee that you can avoid. I remember sitting the three months retreated IMS. And I had tremendous confidence not only about myself the practice what I was doing, and I had my practice is going really, really well. So the confidence was verified, verifiable confidence. It was going great. And I was, but I was also very concentrated. And at some point, my concentration was hijacked by for three days by a particular kind of desire, fantasy thing to happen. And, and I tried really hard for three days to get my mind to stop thinking about these things. I just wouldn't, because it was kind of like the concentration just chosen that as the object, you know, one pointed focus. And so after about three or three days to work through it, and somebody by confidence, I think it's a great, great support. I think it's great support to not be moralistic about Central desire rising, not the uptight about nothing like it's a failure, you're bad because of it, it's just part of being a human being comes with a human body to have it, it's normal to have. And in some situations, it's healthy to have it in some places maybe not way expressed. But to kind of get some that sense to be relaxed about it. And not know that it can if you make a bigger deal of it than it actually is. Sometimes it can sometimes feed it even more, or it can have other kind of deleterious effects. So to kind of be a little bit relaxed about a little bit. A classic instruction around sexual desire is to reflect on the dangers of the such essential desire. So what are the dangers if you follow through on that particular sexual desire? Now, if there are no dangers in that particular one that you can see even acting on it? One of the dangers is simply it takes you away from your meditation. Maybe that's enough. It must be really what you set us up. Do but some of them you know are dangerous. You know, I've been on retreat, meditating quietly by myself. And you know, the color of her socks gets me going and, and then you know, what am I doing? You know, you know, this is dangerous I follow through and this desire, you know, they're gonna kick me

out of the meditation center. You know, so I can see the danger of you know, seeing a danger. Sometimes it's enough to soberness if it's really going down in a bad direction. One of the very powerful things to do with any of the hindrances but I think really interesting with it with central desire. And also the next hindrance of ill will, is to desire hasn't usually has an object thing that we want it When we're involved in sexual desire, more often than not, we're focused on an object or living objectified world, the person, the food thing, something. And it's very interesting to us Let it be the way it is. let yourself have all the desire you want to go ahead, but then turn your attention 180 degrees around and stop having your focus be on what you're desiring, but rather feel the subjective experience of what it's like to be desiring. So turn it turn your attention around from the object of desire to what it's like to desire. So I might really desire coffee ice cream. I can spend all day here thinking about how wonderful it'd be I can't wait is over and why. Maybe I get in the class early. You know, and it's a plan and you know, I can make it straight to the door and maybe use a side door and coffee Gotta get that coffee ice cream. And, or I can turn my attention all the way around and feel, Wow, my mind is really tight. There's this kind of

impulse that's pushing up to my chest into my throat. And I can feel this kind of nervous energy in my arms. And there's also this kind of very smooth fantasy about you know that how smooth that coffee or feel like it's my time. And all these things are present. And as I feel it subjectively feel those things. My relationship to the desire I think will naturally change more often that will change. When I feel the contraction of the mind achieve. This is painful. I feel this upwelling energy I feel how unstable it might feel, I feel the agitation in my arms. Gee, what's going on here? You know, and so when I when you feel that subjectively what's actually going on it does A few different things, one of the things it does, it takes you out of the orbit of the object, the story, that's going to get to it. And that can be very helpful. It can also take you out of it takes you into what the consequences right here and now. And if the consequences have something to they're a little bit painful, then if you feel that, then you kind of want to make amends, you want change that when sexual desire is very strong. One of the costs of it is a kind of alienation from ourselves, we lose touch with ourselves, because we're so focused on the object. And it's possible to feel that it's more satisfying to be in touch with oneself than to lose touch with oneself, even though the desire we're fantasizing about, you know, seems so nice. So this idea of turning the attention 180 degrees around and feeling what's going on here is a very useful thing to do. And probably your relationship to it all will change if you do that. The other thing to do is to Develop the muscle of letting go. It's kind of like a it's like a muscle that lets go. Often, letting go clinging and holding on is a multi faceted phenomenon happens many different ways for different people at different times. But it's somewhat one way or the other. Sometimes it feels like suketu holding onto something you're clinging to something or contracting on something tightening up on something, there's a pressure or a parade of resistance or something that's going on. And if you feel the physicality of that clinging, if you can find not just the idea of it, but if you can identify some physical manifestation of the holding in the brain in the head and the forehead and the arms in the stomach and the chest, you know, anywhere. It's a lot easier to let go. If you can feel the holding in a physical way. So you're going to look around the body, look for Where's a holding be felt. If you don't feel that anywhere in your body at all, and if it's still not easy to let go of what's going on? Where's where is the compulsion? Where does it reside? That powerful interest desire wish for something. Really, where's the reside, if it has no physical corollary? This you know insubstantial, ephemeral, weightless, colorless, odorless, you know,

thing that's so solid, you know what's kind of kind of explore it and feel it and see if you can kind of become a expert at letting go. And in this regard, it's helpful to to practice the muscle of letting go. Now that letting go do the things that you There are plenty of things maybe you don't have to let go of. There's nothing no moral obligation to let go of a lot of things. But it's really good to practice that muscle. So if you're interested in developing that muscle, you might just kind of choose a few ordinary simple things that you do in daily life. And, and experiment with letting go of it and see what that's like. You know, just, I don't know what it would be, but you could be incoming very simple and innocent. Something you're used to every day. Something that's harmless let go of, but just let go and see what's up, like, let go of it. The next day, you don't like the following day, let go of it. Experiment with different ways. My experience of monastic life was one where there was those of you have been in retreats very much the same. There's a very high degree of letting go that's asked or if you're a parent of a young children, tremendous amount of letting go that's called on hold for there. And so some so that just sometimes comes with life situations, but also to take it on voluntarily, as an exercise in exploration, and develop that muscle because once that muscle of familiarity with that territory of letting go becomes stronger for you, it'll be easier to let go when you really need to. So when you have some very strong desire, the central desire to come up comes up in meditation, because oh, you know, I just let go of that. And then the final thing I want to say here is that the desire for sensual pleasure, sometimes is biological, physiological, you know, it's nothing more than that kind of basic animal kind of thing to one pleasure and certain kinds. But also, it can be deeply tied to a lot of other issues in our lives. It can represent other things. It can be tied to other desires that we have. So for example, my desire for coffee

ice cream, might not be the coffee ice cream, it might be that it's just so stressful to sit here talking about sexual desire all day you know and all this and you sitting here and you know and and I really need to comfort myself and reassure me reassure myself that life is good you know because you know you know that's what coffee ice cream does shows me life is basically good and wholesome so it's not just the sense desire I'm looking for it's the some message that somehow it comes with that sense desire you know, in sexuality some people is the sex part of sexuality is a minor issue for some people. It could be for example, they used to use when be assurance the person still loves you. And this is a powerful way of getting it right the person still there for you or something. And so you do looking for reassurance. That's what's that's part of it, or there's power issues sometimes even sexuality Who has the power? And so that's playing out the duty on the desire. There is you know, some desires, bright if kinds of desires. It's not the central desire, that's interesting, but sometimes it's the danger connected to it. That's what's interesting. That's what makes it fun, you know, So let's just go do it in dangerous place. And so somehow that brings energy and something, sometimes desire without the sensual desire that's interesting. But as the energetics Wow, I feel alive and present. And you know, it's, you know, I feel kind of normally I feel kind of empty. I feel kind of purposeless in my life. I don't know what my life is about. But give me a good sexual desire to kind of get excited about I feel alive and present. I know what my life is about. And I better keep it going because I don't like the alternative. I feel deflated if I don't have something good going. Going. So what I'm trying to do is lay out that. So sometimes it's loneliness that's behind, we're trying to feel loneliness. Sometimes it's insecurity, sometimes a lot of other things going on, connected to

what seems like innocent, sensual desire. And so sometimes what's needed in coming to terms with sexual desire as a hindrance is to understand or explore what's underneath it. Is there a deeper desire that represents is a deeper need, that it's trying to fill? does it represent something beyond just pleasure itself. And until you understand the bigger picture of it, it's going to be very hard to let go of because the bigger picture is really where the force is coming coming from to keep it going and active. So that's a range of things you could do. Now, some of these things are two aspects of them are there in the practices for the next A month, that's really I think we have five, five or six weeks until the next Dharma practice day. I think we're meeting on December 20. So it's quite a quite a ways. So there's 123 there's, yeah, six different weeks. You know, and for those of you interested, I encourage you to take these exercises quite seriously, for the week, each week, take it on for a week. If you have other people in the class, you can talk to about it during that week. Even better, I think you can journal about it, talk to friends about it, talk to strangers about it. You know, or you know, call up that absolutely the wisest person you know, and say, you know, I was told to find the wisest person I know and you qualify. And, and I would like to kind of explore this with you in as one of these wise people. So you could say see makes it easy, you can sign up for an interview. With her to explore some of it and then there's also a whole series of reflections and reflections are best done by repeated reflection. Don't just look at them once and take about five minutes and then put it away. It's really best to reread the reflection the questions in different days, different hours repeated, let it percolate and move through you and let it surprise you as you keep kind of revisiting and revisiting and kind of living with it. Okay, so we have a couple of minutes left for some questions or comments anybody like to? Yes.

In terms of the sixth sense as mental pleasures, is there anything you can say about the relationship of that whole category of desires, all the rest of them that we've been talking about, and I'm curious as to Why we haven't really talked about them a lot today? Yes, mental desire, the mental pleasures, well set one relationship is sometimes people are more attached to the mental pleasure that comes from sensual pleasure than the other sensual pleasure itself that connected right. And so sometimes it's the mental pleasure. And some people are more oriented towards mental pleasure than they are physical pleasure. Some people love to solve puzzles. Some scientists just love the beauty and the pleasure

that comes from solving the difficult problem and making it really elegant and, and yet I'm thinking also, for instance, that desire for Oh, to look good in somebody's eyes, or, or to Oh, that's more complicated. Yeah. Yeah, that's that sensual desire. sensual desire is desire for sense pleasure. And generally wanting to look good for someone else to make yourself pleasant. Look at giving you making yourself such a person that you give pleasure to someone else. Where do we get one? Yeah, I you know, as I said last night, like I said last month, not all hindrances to meditation are not all these issues fit neatly into the five hindrances. So you can always add sixth and seventh and eighth hindrances if you like. And now some teachers will will expand the first sentence endurance to include all desires, not just sense desires. And so it's very neat that you any desire at all, that's it that pulls you away from meditation is a hindrance for the meditation. So you can do that if you want and so any kind of desire that way, but I kind of kept it to the way the Buddha talked about it, I thought of this has some value to keep it narrowly focused on sense desires here. And but yeah, but some people to prejudice the kind of the immediate pleasure of what goes on in the mind. Sometimes creative thinking is so pleasant, that there's not really you know, it Writing a great American novel. And it's so pleasure so pleasant to go and thinking about it in the chapters and the plot and all that it's just so pleasant. And we're so filled and so delighted with the rapture of the pleasure that comes from being engaged in it. And then we write down our notes and come back a week later and say, What was I thinking? And anybody else?

Okay, so I think, you know, basically enjoyable to talk about pleasure. And so that was, you know, enjoyed myself. I hope it was nice and meaningful for you. And next month may come back, maybe perhaps we'll do maybe a little bit checking in about this last week's about desire and then We'll switch gears and focus on the ill will which doesn't have the same you know, desirable qualities to certain qualities and you will spend 10 to two months on the issue of ill will and and, you know, it's a very powerful force for many people. And some people that's really much more of a significant force hindrance than sensual desire. And then of course, it's very interesting how central desire will relate to each other. Yeah, sometimes are two sizes. They influence each other. Yes.

In the discussion of food, drugs, and alcohol is the aversion I have. And I'm not even sure aversion is the right word, but the set I have around other people's addictions, to food and alcohol, people I'm close to. Yeah, so aversion is a great topic covers a lot of different territory. And that would fit nicely in it, you know, in this topic, so Chris, come next month. Yeah. Well, that'd be one of the wonderful talk specifically about that particular version, but we're going to cover a lot of emergency. So thank you, and I hope that any reflections and understandings and wisdom and pry and practice you're done here today and will translate directly so that your life as you leave here is beneficial helpful for other people. That somehow is just looking at desire itself sensual desire itself. There's a lot of ways in which we hurt each other and cause harm in the world around us. So there's a lot of harms people feel very unsafe around this whole issue because of the harm caused to them. And so as we leave today, I hope that we reflect a little bit of how we can take what we've learned today and consider how we could become safer people for the world and support this world so it becomes a safer place for everyone to live and practice. The then finally, two more things finally, finally, finally, I was asked to mention talking about dāna, but donation. It's very rare that I talk about it here at IMC but someone said there's a number of people who are new time see through this Dharma practice days. So they don't know how it works here. So then that purpose I've mentioned it, everything at IMC is offered for free. And so freely given that's kind of the inspiration we have is meant to be an act of generosity. We have this idea that the Dharma practice unfolds most healthily. In a situation that's a field of generosity and goodwill and gratitude. And then a way that couldn't really have didn't really happen as cleanly or as easily if we try to charge for something. So how were you offered freely? And everything that was done here at IMC pretty much except for the renovation work is done by volunteers. And we have a big pool of volunteers as part of the field generosity and goodwill that's really beautiful that goes on here. And for those

people who would like to financially support what we do here, there is a donation box by the door. And that donation box has two slots. One says I think it's operations and one says teacher. And so it's your choice you need to put in both put in one or the other. And if you put in the operations, it goes to the upkeep of our center everything we need to run it the building and our expenses and different things. It's kind of basic expenses of running a center like this. And then the other for teacher goes directly to the teacher who's teaching that particular event. So when I'm teaching goes directly to me. And so, in my situation here in IMC, this is really my livelihood. This is my work is kind of where i, where i where I work, in a sense. So my pretty much my you know, I don't know what to 90 95% of my livelihood comes from people's done out their donation in this kind of, you know, I teach freely and people who want to support me and support me. So that's how it works and there's nothing expected or nothing obligated. But if you feel moved and inspired and makes you happy, to be part of this thing, We're doing here and supporting it and supporting the whole thing. Then those that's what those two slots by the door about many, many thanks, everyone.