

2009-01-23 The Five Hindrances Aversion 5 of 8

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SPEAKERS

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Good morning, and welcome to our Dharma practice day. And those of you who might not know we're doing a series this year on the five hindrances. And the five hindrances are five qualities of mind activities of mind that make it difficult to be mindful, make it difficult to be to see clearly make it difficult to become concentrated. And part of the task of anybody who does Vipassana or mindfulness practice is to become an expert on the hindrances to get to know them really well. So rather than they're in some ways, that's unfortunate when they appear, but rather than being discouraged when they appear or consider them, I'm desirable guests. Since we're supposed to get to know them well, when they do appear. It's an opportunity to reframe our relationships. To them, understand them in a different way. And then try to try to look more deeply What are these things? In particular, today, we're going to continue with the hindrance of aversion. And mostly by looking at the topic of anger. And it's often been said that one of the most useful things you can do around anger is to reframe it, to look at it from a different perspective, than maybe the one that was, you know, triggered automatically when you get pulled into your anger. And investigating it is a way of reframing. It's looking at it from a different angle than being caught by it. So today's topic is the second hindrance of aversion. And we'll we did one day on it already a month ago. And today we're going to look at a particular variety or form of aversion, anger and before we kind of go on To that I'd like to, for us to do another sitting. But as an introduction to the sitting both the first hindrance of desire and the second of aversion, often enough can come with energy. We're motivated somehow or some something something is aroused in us, churning or moving in us. And people can do tremendous things. When there's desire. They want something. It's very motivating. And also with a version, especially with anger, anger tends to be a motivating. There's low energy, sometimes it's, it's the motivation, the energy goes towards freezing up. But sometimes it's directed outwards, sometimes anywhere to do something. And that energy sometimes translates to heat. And people talk about when they're angry, they feel hot, or I'll heat it up. There can be a lot of energy, but a different word, than energy is also the word strength. power. And it's been pointed out sometimes that anger and a sense of power, inner strength are sometimes closely connected. There's some people who have argued that, that that their the way that strength is felt in the body or personal has a power, spelt overlaps quite a bit with a sense of being angry sometimes. And that sometimes there's a confusion between the two of them. Some people love their anger because it gives them strength, it gives them power, gives them energy, and some people actually default to defend anger, because it gives them the energy and the motivation to do something to get something done to fight for justice, for example, or, or something. So there's a kind of a close connection between the two of them, but it's possible to set certainly so possible to separate out strength or energy or power from Anger itself, you don't need anger to feel strength or power power. But there is an overlap. There's a kind of a, sometimes a connection between the two of them. So, what I thought we would do first here is a way of

setting up the day is to a little bit explore in the next sitting, the issue of your strength or your power. So, if you would, please take a meditative posture

and as you take a posture for meditation, can you change your posture a little bit so Your posture somehow expresses manifests some sense of strength or power. inner sanctum. Sitting up straighter is often a way.

straining or puffing up. Sometimes sitting up straighter with a spine having the chest a little bit more upright, the shoulders more relaxing backwards. A strong sense of presence.

And is there a place in your body that you associate with inner strength, personal strength or sense of power? efficacy. A classic place for some people is in the belly, to have a strong sense of being grounded and centered in your belly. The horror is sometimes said to be a place of strength. Replace from with strength from where strength can radiate from. Or for some people, it's their hands or their feet on the ground or something in their chest.

We are in your body sitting here now, can you tap into or evoke or feel a kind of energy or energize quality activated quality that might be Identify this power or strength doesn't have to be very powerful or very strong but whatever degree it's available to you.

In particular, is there some way of relaxing settling, focusing in on your area kind of just below your belly button?

Perhaps and relaxing there feeling also some solidity solidness or strength

And perhaps the sense of strength translates into the mind is determination not to be tense but a greater sense of purpose, engagement.

So here in the present moment feeling, some sense of strength, power,

a fuller presence, unapologetic presence,

relaxing your thinking. good with that sense of being maybe strong or powerful. Engage in the meditation practice. Enter into being mindful of your breath.

Having that strength support the continuity of being present for one breath after another

People feel some people feel powerless in different circumstances or life has a big impact on them. Some people think feel powerful when people feel like there are times when they have a lot of strength determination that has a lot of energy behind it. What is substantial kind of feeling of engaging engagement presence? So I'm curious for some of you in the beginning, in, in the evoking this idea of strength or power, beginning of this sitting, how did that affect your sitting? make any difference for you like to hear a little bit

it felt really good.

Really good.

It brought a

whole it was it was warm, but not like anger hot. But

it was very good.

I enjoyed it very much.

Was it easier to stay present or less more difficult?

It was easier, I think.

Did you get calmer than usual? Do you think?

He felt it was really clear that it was almost surprising that I could feel this. It was in here coming in it came up.

That's coming up. Great. Thank you.

For me it I couldn't really get in touch with it. So much in the belly is in the chest. That's where I really felt it. And I really had a sense of confidence in you know, it's like, wow, I can do this. I can do anything. You know, like I don't have to have any thoughts. You know, there's almost like paragraphs or what any thoughts any You don't have to think about anything. No, it's like Bring it on. That kind of

really did help you become stay more present when you meditated or did you drift more away more often? Or?

I don't I didn't notice any difference between the first sitting and this sitting as far as present. I think it was mostly just the same, but I just had more of a sense that even when I was drifting off when I came back, yeah.

It felt you know, I felt powerful, or connected or connected. Yeah. Okay. Thank you.

I think it just put me really grounded. I really feel when you said that. It really comes back when I'm feeling confident and to me, confidence and power kind of go together. Just that really stable feeling. It's very much right in the bowl of my pelvis, just here. Very stable and it the second set in the first city and I was still kind of settling in from the drive over. And it just, I felt like it was on the second or third day of a retreat just built right in there. And you could just stay very focused and just very stable through the whole city and just a really peaceful but really solid city. Great, thank you.

Well, I first felt

kind of solidity at the base of my spine and then top my head. And then it went, I went to, after a little while that feeling really weak and really powerless. And then it started that meditation was more like a reflection and it felt like flexibility was where the strength was, and just, you know, I could even feel my body just sway a little bit and it felt like being ready for anything in a much quieter way not having to steel myself to be strong.

Anybody have difficulty with this, this meditation

I didn't have so much difficulty is

kind of more of a jarring realization at first when you vote

power within myself and then sat with it. It felt real armoring, real isolating, disconnected. And I realized I had to evoke a different kind of strength. So I focused on opening my heart and reciting metta and it just it just really made for more powerful suiting for me.

So I can imagine that some people have backgrounds where requires a certain kind of way of being in the world. certain kind of strength that maybe is shutting down or distancing. And so maybe finding a different way. And if there is more energy connectivity kind of engagement available for two person, what do you think is a relationship between that and anger might be,

say, say some of those years, either found or either half health more strong and more connected in the sitting, or imagine yourself in that kind of situation? How would that happen if you were angry?

I don't know if this directly answers that question. But I had an image of confrontation with my father, who's been dead for 20 years. It was like, both of us were right in front of each other and it was like very

it wasn't tense, but it was like,

again, this confidence this, this power that I felt, you know, I could withstand anything, you know, I had this picture of Hurricane winds blowing through my hair and I was just standing here straight Adam, you know, and, and not flinching at all it was it was it was a good feeling, you know, and it was yet and you know, I was aware, you know, the anger was present, but it was like not

bullying me over

me. Thank you. People have people have Sutherland said you know, people have a lot of problems most of which never occur because of that power of the imagination right behind you

I was listening to you, I thought, you know, when you said a hurricane winds, it's like anger. It's like an assault when it's coming at you. And if I, if I could feel that grounded like I just did in the last sitting it, I think I would, I would just be able to move with it and not react with it or react to it. But I would be able to be present more, it would be great.

I think that

for me, you know, the angry, the energy that I feel, gets contracts

as opposed to stay open.

There's a quality there's a different quality to that.

So for you, when you get angry, there's a contraction around the anger and the energy. And great, it's nice to know some people. Sometimes I've wished they will be more contracted around it. And some of the people, one of the one of the reasons some people get afraid of their own strength is because it's been manifested through their anger, through their hostility, and it's caused problems in some social relation in their relationship with people and so then they get afraid of being strong. Some people love being angry, not because it's contracted because it's a way of tapping into feeling strong. When people don't feel strong. Maybe people feel kind of powerless, but when they have this energy, overcomes whatever sense of powerless they might have. And so they love it, they really value that sense of power. Power and energy and anger are many different things. It's not a single thing. One person can, can stand in the presence of can receive anger from someone, because they feel really strong and stable and like solid and just doesn't it bounces off them in a sense, and somewhere else can feel very, like this was talking about very soft, flexible kind of sense of power and strength, where they don't feel like a strong, you know, rooted presence. They just feel great, right kind of empty and just kind of like oh just kind of flows through them in a way. Both can be manifested, manifested manifestations of power, strength. Maybe what they have in common, is maybe some kind of confidence that a person has anger is many different things. We'll go into that later today. And many people have simple definitions or understanding what anger is and then people have different opinions about anger and opinions get in conflict because of what their understanding of anger is. But I think before we go any further in defining anger, each of you has your own understanding that of what anger means for you. And for the time being, that's good enough. That's fine. And what I'd like us to do is to, for you to break up into pairs and for and do these reflective exercises where out loud, you reflect, take turn, you you're turning, being the person who reflects and then the other person listens, and then you change roles and reflect about you history with anger. So in your lifetime, what are some of the things you've how you've how you've encountered anger? What's been your, like your biography through the lens of anger? How did you What did you learn from your, you know, from your family experiences about anger? What did you learn from your personal experiences and societal experiences and relationships with anger? Oh, and my family was never okay to express anger, or my Fang family, the way you got anything. Anything if you had food at the table was by being angry, it was really a lifesaver. And that's how it was for us. Or I've been around Buddhism for a long time. And these Buddhists seem to be down in anger and I've been kind of struggling, you know, for the last five years about you know, why do I fit in here? And, or, you know, so what has been your history with, with around anger, having anger of your own being in the receiving end and Anger. So what you know what what has shaped your views your relationship to anger over the lifetime that you've had? What are the things that are things that have shaped you and created you. So some of this might be very personal. So you don't have to this is not, you don't have to reveal things you don't want to reveal to someone. You're welcome to just keep some things private and don't say it. You can replace it with silence for a while until you find something else to say or some other way of saying it. So hopefully that makes it feel safe and to share with someone who's listening. And the idea is for you, in this kind of exploration

is hopefully to find a place where you're kind of in the growing edge of your reflection, your understanding of something. If you find yourself telling a story, telling something to your partner, that you know the story really well. And it goes on and on and on and on to the story about you know what happened to you in 10th grade and you know, and this and that You know, you're not you're not, this is not telling someone else's story, you know, it's not for their sick you're doing that. It's for your sake that you're reflecting out loud. So if you know the story, you know, the end result get to the end quickly. So that you can kind of kind of, if you're reflecting on a story kind of, in a fresh way, a new way to understand it, it's fine to go on. But if it if you kind of like saying something you've said many times before, try to kind of get to the point quicker or do something. So you can kind of come to some place where you're wondering, Wonder wondering or questioning or exploring or and also, it's fine in this kind

of reflection to also try things out. You don't necessarily it doesn't necessarily have to be you have to be a completely hundred percent sure what you're saying is true. You know, you're sincere about it, but you kind of try something explore what is it like, you know, if I take this route, And see, you know, get feedback Oh my that didn't quite work or that didn't really wasn't quite the way it is now I learned something about myself and the process. That understandable.

So

so each person will have about 10 or 12 minutes to talk. And, and hopefully that's long enough so that you kind of start you've kind of factor while you've kind of said some of the things that are more obvious and then you find yourself kind of maybe, you know, stretching to understand or explore some new aspect of it. And it's also meant to be very open ended. So there's not like, has to be any particular way this exploration of your relationship to anger unfolds. If you if you're the listener and you listen to someone else first. And when is your turn to share. It doesn't have to look anything Like what that person said, it's your own way especially can we clear out and let it be your own kind of thing? So yes, please the listeners role is just to listen and listen attentively. caringly You know, you really are present, but it's not your role to to ask questions it's not your role to approve or disapprove. Did you really mostly just kind of a silent caring attentive listener who's kind of helping create the space of openness curiosity of interest to let this things come out and then after about 10 or 12 minutes Oh, ring a bell. And then when I mean the bell, be nice to go back to silence and just be quiet for a minute. And kind of clear out the best you can. Perhaps before you close your eyes and clarity might be nice if listener said thank you. There's a thank you to each other and appreciation. And then I'll ring a bell and then you can start, reverse start again. Okay, so why don't we first kind of pair up and I'll ring a bell so to start so I can time it well

it's a you can welcome to spread out into the other room and conference room and so you don't feel like you're you're hearing other people so much

are we

Okay, so be sure to spread out. You feel crowded when other people talking you sure to spread out a little bit.

Ring the bell restart.

Okay, I guess some of you who started but now you can start. Just choose to someone to start and begin

So you can thank your partner and so Would anybody like to report little bit what that was like for you? Ignore them. Okay.

My first reaction is I always get angry when I have to do those kinds of extras. But, but I like the exercise. And the one thing that came to me that I hadn't really focused on before and thinking about anger is how much anger has to do with taking care of yourself. And how not expressing anger is. Maybe you think you're taking care of yourself but you end up not taking care of yourself and you particularly don't take care of relationships. That was

so so for you, there's this side of anger where it's taking care of yourself. There's sometimes it's it's a, it's sometimes it's a, it's a, say, inefficient way of taking care of oneself. When we forget

not being aware of anger, and trying to protect your partner from your anger ends up not taking care of yourself or your partner or your relationship. You know, this is how you express the part of it that is looking for the positive aspects of anger really struck me that has a lot to do with your willingness to take care of yourself. Great.

Nice, thank you.

Somebody else? How was that most I'd like to do that exercise.

Yeah. When you said that you wanted us to talk for 12 minutes. No. And then even when I was talking to my partner, I don't even want to talk about this anymore. But I and then I just did take care of myself I realized I needed just some quiet because I arrived late and I hadn't had a chance to meditate sizes feed myself that space to settle and then more things bubbled up. And I discovered what you did to that I have anger because I don't see the seeds of it forming. So I realize I want to have that intention of being more mindful of seeing the beginning roots of anger so that I don't get into this full blown wanting to as you said, I think it was on Wednesday night having murderous rage.

Silent murderous rage.

Okay, thank you.

Hi, I'm what came up for me is That I feel like I've done a fairly decent job of being able to come up of dealing with anger. In my kind of life, when it comes up, I'm able to recognize it. But the anger that drives me is the anger at my parents. And I don't know what to do with it. And for me, just kind of like my parents were not very expressive about anything. So I've been walking around with all this anger, most of my life. And

I hope that I can find a way

to I think that that anger is the most like the most inherent anger that I'm walking around with and figuring out like, well, not figuring out but just accepting it. And because of the anger that I don't feel like I can do anything about and I have to continue this religion With my parents,

regardless

with that anger, their

existing so in doing this reflection here today that this is what you realize you realize this more,

yeah that I realized that that when I was talking to that, that that that anger is just kind of like this big shadow over my life that it somehow needs to

be acknowledged. Great,

thank you do one more.

What really came up for me is that I remembered that my first awareness of anger or of yelling was between my parents as a young child, and how afraid I was and how I just wanted to run and hide. That I didn't have any tools or didn't really know what to do with this and that it wasn't even directed at me, but it made me feel completely full of fear. And I because I'm so aversive to anger. I really think that that has a lot to do with you really what a versiv to fear. I mean, I'm so fearful of anger, to the point where it wasn't until about six months ago, while I was meditating and running through my physical sensations that I said, I'm angry. I didn't realize that I ever got angry. Congratulations.

So

I think it's a really rich area to explore because it's part of everyone's lives. And when some people haven't had the time to kind of really kind of reflect. Then put the pieces together. The challenge with reflecting on anything, including anger, is that some reflections in real life and biography aren't necessarily unbiased. And what we select out of it today might be very different what you select out of your biography next year. You know, and we think oh, unbiased is how it actually was. But then a whole different angle understanding comes along and, and you open up to new understanding. And this is very relevant in relationship to anger because the anger has a fair amount to do with the stories we tell ourselves about what's going on. And so when we start questioning the stories or that questioning and looking at the stories and how we hold the stories around the incident, and because angry is a very important part of the whole process of working with anger and Sometimes it's some people find it's very helpful to reframe the understanding the perspective in which we look at a particular situation. It doesn't deny or repress the anger. But it but it's, you know, there's many, many, many, many different points of view to understand the same thing. And so just as you might think of doing this exercise, again, I encourage you to do it again, on your own going for walks or journaling or finding a friend. And, and seeing you know, kind of what new perspectives understandings come out about your history and your relationship with anger. And it's probably something that will keep unfolding for you as you do it. So let's take a break and let's take a 20 minute break. So we'll start again here at 1120. And enjoy the break and enjoy your each other's company.