

2009-04-03 The Five Hindrances Restlessness

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SPEAKERS

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Good morning. Can y'all hear okay? So, welcome to our Dharma practice day. And start off by apologizing for doing something different than what I said I was going to do already. I said we'd sit for 10 minutes, and then we separate 30. The so for those of you who are new, the Dharma practice days are days where we explore some topic in the Dharma and the practice and in a variety of different ways. A little bit of teachings, meditation, guided meditation, there's often interactive time sometimes breaking into pairs into groups to discuss some topic. The idea is to explore our relationship to the practice in a variety of different ways. To make it quite personal, but also to make it personal in the context of other people who are also practicing, having a sense of community and learning from each other as well. This year we're doing this, these Dharma practice days are focusing on the five hindrances. And today we're going to do the fourth hindrance, which is restlessness and remorse, restlessness and worry, something like that. And so the hindrances are these forces in our minds in our hearts, which make it very hard for us to pay careful attention. And so, the one we did last month or two was sloth, which is our torpor, which is when there's too little energy in the system. We don't have the energy to kind of enjoy And the practice. Today it's so aggressive assessing anxiety or restlessness and worry. It's when there's too much energy. And we're hyped up or energized such a way that the mind can't focus clearly on what's going on here. And the cost of not being able to focus clearly in meditation or daily life is we don't have very easy access to wisdom to understanding to being wise about how to relate and what to do. And so by overcoming the hindrances, we can be wiser, we can see more clearly. And also we can start getting into deeper into the practice of meditation, without having these hindrances being obstacle. restlessness is said to be present pretty much in all people, except those lucky individuals who are fully enlightened. So it's clearly from that point of view clearly relevant for everybody. Everybody has some restlessness. And it can be quite subtle or it can be quite dramatic. The I think of restlessness as being being over energized, so we can't sit still kind of the mind, body and mind hearts kind of just kind of jumping around and can't come to arrest. The and there's two different kinds of ways of being restless or over energized. One has to do with physically the body to be physically agitated, or the other way to do it is to be mentally agitated or mentally restless or energized in some way. And it's important to distinguish between these two because how we approach them how we practice with it varies depending on which it might be. Sometimes the mind can actually be pretty settled. about something, but for some reason the body is energized. It might be because of some biochemical reason, who knows too much caffeine or some other reasons going on. Or it might also be because our thinking or thinking reactive mind has been overactive. So something really big has gotten concerns us. Something's happened in the world and we're really upset about something or really worried about something. We've done something kind of something really big happened. And so there's a lot of momentum that gets set in motion. So if, if you have a, you know, if you were just laid off your

job, and you sat down to meditate, chances are is that your mind will be racing. But it isn't just your mind that's racing. There's chemicals released in your body and there's tension built up in your body and sometimes the mental aspect can sit be settled relatively easy.

But because there's a physical momentum has been set in motion, the physical stuff will continue longer. So I think, for example, tension in the body, if you hold yourself tense, then you because you're worried about something, you might actually, if you're holding yourself chronically tense, you might actually mentally be able to drop the concern, maybe even resolve it. But somehow the, the habit or the of holding your body tense, doesn't let go so easily. So it takes a while sometimes to settle. So you see that meditation where sometimes it takes sometimes, you know, a while in a meditation session, or sometimes on a retreat to awhile into the retreat, to allow some of the tensions we're holding to dissipate. So that tension is you know, represents some of the momentum that builds up in the body. So sometimes the physical restlessness that exists is perfectly the momentum that's been set in motion by earlier reactions we've done. It's very important to see that because if it's simply momentum that's there, to some degree, the momentum has to be allowed to play out. You can't necessarily stop it just because you will to stop. You might have wise approaches how to deal with it and settle it quicker, but little bit, we have to kind of let it go. And so sometimes a very wise approach is to just not be for and against it, but to be very still very present, but not reactive, not trying to do anything about it, but just hold it and feel it in the field of awareness. There's something that can happen in our inner life, when we're really aware of something that can't happen when we aren't aware. And I liken it to, to when we're really aware and give things space to something like having a spring that's well and up but then held inside of a box. It can't move it's inside the box, but if you take a look off the box, then the spring unwinds. So if we take the lid off, by just being very aware and very present and not doing any more reactivity, sometimes things can kind of settle down, and they sometimes take take their time. So recently, I was involved in a situation where there was a lot of conflict. And I was somewhat mentally activated by that and physically activated by it. And, and so I could feel this momentum that was there for me. And it seemed like the best thing that I could do was just be very patient with it and very still and very present, just allow it to be there. And then that patience and allowance, then it was time it just kind of dissipated any kind of any attempt to do something about it. to actively try to relax or to stop it or do something. just kept the kept agitating it and so just Oh, just be very patient. So there's an infinite patience is a great virtue that is very helpful for this process. And then there's also a way sometimes depending on the kind of restlessness that might be there, there might be things you actually can do besides just be present, that can be helpful. So sometimes, some people find the breathing, to be a great support for relaxing when there's a lot of tension, a lot of agitation. It's a classic antidote for tension or agitation or panic or whatever it is to breathe deeply, or to just focus on your breathing, because breathing can be quite relaxing. And then as you get familiar with your breathing, it might be possible to use your breathing experience of breathing in variety of different ways, so that it works faster, more effectively, to help settle the relax, what's happening, and we'll talk more about that while so and then there's the mental agitation Mental restlessness that can exist. And, and in fact, a lot of the physical agitation restlessness that we experience has its genesis in mental restlessness. And so you know, it's really going to get to the source, you have to go look at your mind. And it often has to do. And if you want to look at your mind, we gave it a deep window into your mind. It can be very helpful to look at your thinking, thinking plays a huge role in keeping us restless, and the mind agitated. And so to be able to look at the thinking mind and look at, you know what, what we're thinking about, and is it really, you know, some different way of relating to it, or to look at the very process of thinking itself and find some way to settle that process, independent of what the content of the thoughts might be

in this area of the thinking, We come into the second aspect of this fourth hindrance, because usually call it's called restlessness. And I often call it worry. The classically it's called remorse. And it was a

classic description is the kind of agitation in your mind or your heart that arises because of what you your misdeeds in the past. So in some misdeeds or things you did in some misdeeds or things you didn't do, that you should have done. So sometimes things are unresolved issues are unresolved. Something happened in the past and unresolved. And so the mind until they resolved, the mind will keep churning them over. And, or sometimes we just feel lousy for having done something. And so that allows Enos for having done something wrong, will stay. And it's considered to be somewhat healthy, to feel lousy about having done but having done something wrong You know, to think you can just meditate your way away from dealing dealing with your unskillful actions is very unhealthy approach to spiritual life. And some people take that way or if I just meditate enough, I can just kind of clear it all away and just be free of it. Here in the West many people who teach about the hindrances expand this, the remorse part to worry, because there's it seems like here, maybe, I don't know, maybe we're specializing this in the West, in, in our capacity to be anxious about things that we've never done. And, you know, just that, you know, you know, anticipatory anxiety and so the, and so, anxiety keeps people kind of revved up and keeps you motivated. So we talked about where But worry also covers this idea of remorse. Because sometimes if you've done something that you feel bad about, we worry about the consequences. We worrying about being caught, we worry about what has to happen next. So that's part of this remorse thing. But remorse or worry has very much to do with what we think. And so part of addressing the restlessness is also to be able to have a very wise understanding approach to our thinking world and our beliefs. So that's a little bit introduction for the day. I thought that for the morning, we would just keep the morning in silence is a little different than how these days have gone in the past this year. And, and just kind of practice with some of this stuff. And then, perhaps in the afternoon, we could take it into even more interactive or more discussion about it.

So what so before we, the next thing we do when I say again, but physical restlessness or agitation it's very important to spend some time getting to know what one's condition is. So in terms of restlessness to get some, take some time and really get to know it, look at it, feel it. You know if it's very, very subtle if it's big, and, and to some degree, anybody who meditates will have to meet this because chances are is coming off your life as you did today. For most of you. I'd be surprised if you could follow more than 10 breaths at a time. And maybe some of you do that better than that. But, you know, the mind kind of jumps up maybe with a breath and the mind jumps off and some concerns and thought and so to kind of take the assessed value with look at the state of your restlessness, your agitation, whatever it might be. And if you look at it physically, if it's if it feels physical to evaluate what might be useful to settle it. Sometimes what's useful is to do something physical. Sometimes, meditators on retreat, will do very fast walking meditation, when there's a lot of agitation. And the fast walking meditation somehow holds the agitation. Lets it kind of be there, it's easier to be present for it. When the walking fast kind of speed that kind of lets the energy of agitation kind of just go and go and go, and we can be present for it. And sometimes you can kind of settle that way. Sometimes walking fast, who will just stare it up even more. So it's the wrong call. Sometimes the best thing to do is to walk really slow, very calm and slow walking. And the slow walking kind of helps settle something and relax something. Sometimes it's useful to just go and sit in a not walk at all and not meditate at all, but go sit in the park bench. And sometimes on the park benches is a better place. Some people find more success doing nothing on a park bench than they do meditating. And sometimes just kind of just doing nothing and a park bench allows them to settle. So what I'd like to suggest is we take 20 minutes in silence for each of you to go and do with your body. What you think would be most relaxing or settling for how you are right now and in preparation thinking of another session of meditation so it could be slow walking meditation, it can be fast walk around the block. It could be sitting on our beautiful benches we have now outside, it could be going to the bathroom. And whatever you might think. But whatever you do, if it's gonna be very active, don't do it around people who are be doing quiet things. So you don't activate them and to make sense. So we'll start again in here at Oh, let's say