

# 2009-11-30 Skills

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

suffering, desire, skill, mind, skillful, people, develop, buddhism, bookstores, helpful, situation, attachment, practice, meditation, activity, suffer, clinging, learned, cultivating, notice

## SPEAKERS

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I would like to introduce this some use to a very important concept in Buddhism. And that's the idea or the concept of skill, being skillful. And in English, it's translated like this. Do no evil. Practice what is skillful, purify the mind. This is the teachings. This is the teaching of the Buddhas. So the middle of the second line is practice or engage in what is skillful. And the other two, avoiding evil. Maybe you can understand that it's there's a skill to avoiding the kind of activity which is Have some malice or causes harm in some way. And, and then the third activity purifying the mind is also a skill. So that's Buddhism in a nutshell. And there's nothing in there particularly about about a belief like a creed, you have to believe this. But rather it's about transforming oneself in a particular way. And the way is to avoid evil, engage in what skillful and purify the mind. Now there is a kind of a wider teaching that holds those concepts. Because whenever you want to involve yourself in some kind of transformation, there has to be some sense of what you're transforming towards, and what is what's the, and why you'd want to do that. And so in Buddhism, the wider context for skill is, has to do with suffering and the ending of suffering. So that you If you're kind of person who suffers, then if you're interested in becoming free of that suffering, then in order to do that, it's not so much a matter of believing something. If you try to study the intricacy of Buddhist philosophy, the ins and outs of it, the depths of it, all the different aspects of it, it's probably not going to help you suffer less. Just that if you finally adapt what they teach, but rather if you do cultivate yourself develop yourself in particular ways that inner development is going to have much more effect in transforming your suffering than beliefs are. So the Buddha, the Buddha put emphasis on on this inner transformation. And the key way he talked about that was the concept of skill. The Pali word is kusala k U S. SU la Okay, you As a la and the and if you read the discourses of the Buddha, the ancient texts, you'll see this concept of skill and the idea of what's skillful and what's not skillful appears over and over and over again. And it appears kind of in the, as an alternative to kind of other kinds of concepts that we have sometimes moralistic concepts of good and bad, good and evil. Which are kind of abstract, especially good. Evil, maybe not so abstract if you understand evil as the malicious causing of harm towards others. But good, you know, what's that? How do you define what's good. You can say same thing about skillful, but skillful points to developing certain qualities in Buddhism. It's not so much being skillful with your hands or with your body, though that's a certainly aspect of it. But it's being skillful with your mind or developing particular qualities of mind, or qualities of heart and your qualities of character, which are considered skillful or useful or supportive of the kind of transformation that leads to liberation to freedom from suffering. And so the moral or the ethical evaluation in Buddhism, or the evaluation of how we behave, what to do with our life, is along these forms of what is skillful when it's not skillful. Alternative words that I like to use is to use the word helpful and not helpful. Okay, occasionally, I like to use the word healthy and not healthy. There is a kind of binary kind of evaluation that goes on. Is it healthy or not healthy for you to engage in this activity? Is it helpful or not helpful? I like the word helpful because then you can ask the question helpful for what purpose

And so this idea in any project and what is the purpose of what we're doing this? And what I find quite remarkable and very helpful is in this in the Buddhist tradition, that the fundamental criteria for understanding what is helpful and not helpful is does it alleviate suffering? Pretty simple. It's simple to do. But pretty simple to understand. You don't need a lot of metaphysics, and you don't have to believe in subtenant. You don't have to believe in supernatural or other worldly situations. You don't have to believe in something which is you can't see. But rather, you can believe in something which hopefully, you're hopefully certain kind of way hopefully you're experiencing that you and that is believed in your suffering. And if you don't have any suffering to believe in then you don't need Buddhism. But so Buddhists You know, believe in suffering? What do you believe it? You know, I believe, you know, your other religious friends they believe in really great grandiose things, wonderful things. And they say what do you believe in? You said, Oh, suffering, what? Because unless you kind of have some sense of understanding, direct understanding of your own suffering, then there's no it doesn't make sense to hold Buddhist enterprises to make any sense. The second belief in a sense in Buddhism then is the possibility of overcoming that suffering. And wasn't next Buddhism more than therapy, because therapy also has to do with medicine, a lot of things have to do with the alleviation of suffering. What perhaps makes Buddhism a religion is how thoroughgoing and complete that transformation is that leads to the radical liberation purification freedom from suffering, once we start doing meditation practice for example, or start paying careful attention to our inner life, you start to see it start seeing, how much suffering is there, how pervasive it is. The subtlety in which it operates. This and suffering here means the subtle ways or the gross ways, big ways in which the mind or the heart resists things. grasps clings to things gets fixated on things. It's caught up in desires, its longings, its attachments, the fears of the mind, the hates of the mind, the greed of the mind. There's all these things that the mind kind of gets caught up in in such a way that we minefield gets gets to the heart, the body gets contracted, gets heavy, gets oppressed, gets trouble. is limited, feels trapped, suffers feels pain, and they start seeing it and it doesn't small, small ways. One of the great discoveries for me when I started doing Vipassana practice was to see the very subtle ways My mind was constantly involved in being foreign against things, constantly involved in not accepting things or wanting things to be different, wanting to stay, they were they weren't, they weren't, stay the way they are constantly engaged in this kind of activity of the mind busyness of the mind clenching of the mind, that had to do with wanting things to be a certain way or not being some other way. And a lot of that was subtle. You know, so it could be as subtle as a no such subtle and comes to mind is, you know what clothes I'm going to wear so that I can impress the right people or You know, come into a hall where I want to sit the best best seat in the hall. The best seat is maybe the one that, you know, puts me close to people I want to sit next to, or the best seat is when it puts me away from people I don't want to sit there near constantly evaluating my environment and my situation what I want what I don't want as opposed to having the mind be at ease and addressed with how things are and then showing up and being concerned what is most helpful here. So at the heart can feel at ease, be peaceful. So there can be some freedom, some space some ease in the situation here. If we're operating under the idea of what you know, what's in it for me, what do I like and not like, accept my, my all my kind of clinging desires and attachments. The mind is never going to feel addressed.

And I thought I found That my mind was actually often not addressed. Even at times when I went was kind of conventionally addressed. My mind was still moving and active. I could wake up from asleep, where I was supposed to be supposedly kind of very restful, and I feel conventionally restful. I've looked at my mind. And I was surprised it was churning away with all the desires and aversions and fears and all this activity doing. It was, you know, in a subtle way, and one of the things so that sort of through Vipassana practices mindfulness practice, I could see that and then I became interested in trying to find out some way that the mind wouldn't have to do that anymore. And I found this practice was

phenomenally effective at moving us into that realm to see it clearly. And then putting it to rest, letting go of it and letting go of it. But in order to do that, with the Buddha said as you need to develop certain skills. Now one of the skills is a skills of being able to see clearly. If you can't see clearly what your mind is doing, then you can't do anything about it. And so mindfulness is considered a skill that we develop a heightened capacity to see into the depths of our mind, or our hearts, if you prefer to see actually what operates in there. If we're always focused on the surface concerns of our mind, are always concerned what's out there, what we want or what we don't want. And don't kind of look back into the mind and what's going on there. Then we want to see where the roots are, the foundation is for how we operate, and then the foundations continues operating the way it is. So one of the great movements, I think, in Buddhist practice, is the skill of learning to turn the focus of attention away From objects of clinging objects of aversion that we might have, and turn not to reject that activity, per se, but turn the attention away from the object and turn it 180 degrees around and look at what's happening in you, as you have that desire, as you have that aversion as you have that fear, usually fear, desire aversion, have an object. I desire that food, I desire, that activity, I desire, that person, or aversion has an object, I don't want to have that pain anymore. I don't want to be around that person anymore. I don't want to have that experience anymore. And we can get focused on that thing. Same thing with fear, we're focusing a thing that we fear now. So when we meditate particularly, then we turn the attention away from the object. So we start Thinking about the person activity that we're concerned about, and discover what does it feel like to be at? What's a subjective experience like of desiring? What's this experience? What's it like to be desiring? What happens inside of me? What happens to me physically? What happens to me emotionally what happens in my mind? is you know it is it feel pleasant or enjoyable to be desiring. Sometimes it does. At a certain at a certain particular perspective. But if you really get into even the pleasure of desiring, you'll start seeing that unsatisfactory. Probably, you'll feel find that it's kind of tiring, exhausting to always be desiring. I used to when I was much younger, I used to love going into bookstores, and looking at books and time I used to read a lot and I noticed that I wasn't The bookstore more exhausted than when I came in. So that was kind of odd, especially since I didn't buy anything. And then I kind of paid attention to what happens to me when I go into bookstores. And I saw that bookstores was a field or a domain area, learning to turn the focus of attention away from objects of clinging objects of aversion that we might have. And turn not to reject that activity, per se, but turn the attention away from the object and turn it 180 degrees around and look at what's happening in you, as you have that desire, as you have that aversion as you have that fear.

Usually fear, desire aversion, have an object. I desire that food I desire that activity I desire that person, or aversion has an object, I don't want to have that pain anymore. I don't want to be around that person anymore. I don't want to have that experience anymore. And we can get focused on that thing. Same thing with fear, we're focusing a thing that we fear now. So when we meditate, particularly, then we turn the attention away from the object. So we start stop thinking about the person activity that we're concerned about, and discover what does it feel like to be at? What's a subjective experience like of desiring? What's this experience? What's it like to be desiring what happens inside of me? What happens to me physically? What happens to me emotionally what happens in my mind is you know it is it feel pleasant or enjoyable to be desiring. Sometimes it does, at a certain at a certain particular perspective. But if you really get into even the planet As you're desiring, you'll start seeing this unsatisfactory, probably, you'll feel find that it's kind of tiring, exhausting to always be desiring. I used to, when I was much younger, I used to love going into bookstores, and looking at books, and I used to read a lot. And I noticed that I would leave a bookstore, more exhausted than when I came in. So that was kind of odd, especially since I didn't buy anything. And then I kind of paid attention to what happens to me when I go into bookstores. And I saw that bookstores was a field or domain area where my desires lay into overdrive. And then I kind of paid attention to what happens to me when I go into bookstores. And I saw that bookstores was a field or a domain area where my desires into overdrive.

[illegible]

Perhaps I still have this desire, I think for books because last week, I think I ended up going in the one place where I did an impulse buying shopping spree. When I went in for the few places in the world where that would happen to me, I went to a Buddhist bookstore. Hopefully the books are helpful for me.

So the idea of developing skills when the Buddha used analogies to talk about his, what he was teaching, he often used the analogies of of people have a craft is when you develop a craft your culture, you have to develop a skill, as you know, whatever the craft is, and so use those analogies. He talked about the work of a farmer, being comparable to work of a meditator or Buddhist practitioner or For a person who has developed the skill has a skill of taming wild horses. And so in the same way we develop a skill to tame our wild mind. The Dhammapada there's this verse irrigators guide water, Fletcher's shape arrows, carpenters, shape wood, sages control themselves. So each of this irrigator Fletcher carpenter, or people have skills, develop the skills. Now, the idea of developing skills is not so unusual in our society, because that's a lot of people. Probably all occupations that people have involved developing, cultivating certain skills. Growing up, growing up in maturing as a child to adulthood in develops learning a lot of skills, skills of you know, walking and talking and reading and writing and whole bunch of stuff, you get a new job and one of the first things you have to do in the new job is to develop the skills that are needed for that particular job in that particular work. So, if I'm focusing on cultivating skills, the Buddha, I would like today is pointing back to something that we all do all the time, or we have done to in our life, and something that we're capable of doing. We're capable of developing skills, and is capable capable of developing those skills that lead to more helpful states of mind. to that one of the reasons why this is an also an important idea is that when we look at our suffering, or our troubled mind, or our difficulties we have in our life. Sometimes it's very hard to address it directly. Sometimes it's actually very hard to understand, why am I suffering what's really going on here? And what do I do about it. And sometimes sometimes we even know what's wrong. And we know I shouldn't be doing this. And it's very hard sometimes to you let go or stop doing activity which continues to harm us or harms other people. And so in order to really be able to see deeply and really have the strength of character strength of mind, to make a difference and to change and to have a discipline and to let go, sometimes it helps to develop certain strengths of the mind. So the mind becomes stronger. As the mind becomes stronger, then it's easier to sense have more control over what the mind does. It's easier then to kind of separate out the different aspects of what goes on the mind. So we can let go of that which is harmful, which is unhealthy and develop that which is healthy. The word skill in its at the biological roots, kind of dramatic I know what it's called a, because of ancient Germanic kind of origin. And it means to separate out. to separate out to this things out. And part of the developing skill is to do something repeatedly often skill comes with repetitive activity. As we repeat things over and over again, we start making finer and finer distinctions. finer, finer differentiations of what goes on there. And so for example, someone who's a swimmer, developed the skill of swimming is, over time as skill it gives them greater and greater awareness of smaller and smaller little movements in the act of swimming, that they can refine and hone in exactly how they make their stroke or kick their feet. So the same thing in meditation, we do meditation over and over and over again. So we begin distinguishing all the different things that the mind does all the different ways that goes on within the inner life. So that we can begin separating out, distinguishing that which is helpful to maintain

and develop, and that which is not. So for example, in meditation, it's not helpful. It's not very skillful, to strive to push really hard and be demanding, you know, Nirvana or bust the city.

You know, I'm not, you know, this is the city where I'm supposed to get concentrated. And a lot of meditators have suffered a lot by having an expectation in demand about what's supposed to happen in their meditation. Part of being a skillful meditator is to realize that every time you sit down to meditate, the conditions of your life are going to be different. And so what you have to do is you have to monitor yourself, assess what's going on here, and then learn how to work with with how the conditions are now. Remember, I had a friend many years ago who was a runner, and she had some kind of leg injury or foot injury. And so what she did was that She didn't want to give up or running. But she paid very, very careful attention to the placement of her foot as she landed when she ran. And she discovered that she if she moved somehow the angle of the foot in particular way, she can avoid the strain that caused her the pain. But it took a while to get just the right subtle kind of distinction for her to make a difference. So I lost track when I was saying nothing getting caught up in what I was saying, Oh, well when I say that, but this my running runner friend, separate Yes, separating out. So she's separated out in the running so in her own mind, can we separate out? You know, like so is there's too much striving is there. The reason I told her is that so she took her condition that she had the condition of having an injured foot And rather than just saying, Well, I'm going to run the way I always run, she studied her situation and then adopt adapted to the situation. So every time we sit down to meditate, we're different person, we're different situation. And to say, Well, now that's going to it's going to be a certain way that expected you to be more often than not is going to cause some dissonance within you. And so to sit down, say, Where am I today? What's happening now? And then what can I expect to do now? How can I engage in this process of meditation of being focused, being mindful Now, given the situation now, some days, what's needed is to develop concentration, sometimes its concentration is impossible. And what's needed is just to kind of back off, and just kind of take stock of the busyness of the mind or the concerns of the mind. Maybe their concerns of the mind need to kind of really churn through and be processed in some way. be digested. The best thing you can do is just get out of the way, just notice and be present for the mind as it moves through what needs to do. Other times you don't want to give the mind the freedom to do that. But you want to say not now, and just stay focused, be mindful of what's here. There's many kinds of distinctions be made finding our way in meditation. And the way we learn it is not by knowing from one day to the next how to do it. But by the repetition of day in and day out many, many months, maybe years of learning to pay attention, looking carefully, noticing what happens when we cause get concentrated, knowing what kicks in noticing what our habits are the tendencies of the mind. And so we start seeing what is helpful, not helpful here. What's useful and not useful. What moves me towards suffering, what moves me away from suffering. It's a great criteria the criteria of suffering not suffering, because then you use that criteria to notice how you're doing the practice itself. Because if you try to meditate is the approach you have in meditation, causing more strain, or causing, bringing more ease. And especially when people meditate a lot like on retreat, it's possible to have some to be so fixated on a goal and a purpose. And we're supposed to accomplish that people don't notice how they are subjectively and find themselves straining. But if you have this criteria of suffering, enough suffering, to help you evaluate what's skillful and unskillful then say, oh, pushing this way, straining having expectation. This is not helpful. Being complacent, too easygoing. That's also not helpful and do some damage just drifting into what's helpful is the If you find the middle way you find the way it's useful for you in particular situation. So in Buddhist practice, there's a wide range of skills that can be cultivated.

So seeing clearly like mindfulness is one effort or energy. In practice, which is a topic for Friday's Dharma practice days another. Having developing confidence and confidence is considered a skill. Concentration is useful skill to develop.



discernment is useful skill, discernment, meaning to start seeing more clearly the distinguished distinctions that exists in your mind. equanimity tranquility is a useful skills to develop. loving kindness and compassion are skills that can be developed are skillful qualities of mind that can be cultivated and developed. So all these there's many more a whole slew of them. Some of them you don't have to cultivate intentionally, they just come along in the wake of doing mindfulness practice. There's a whole series of qualities that get developed over time. And as they get developed, the mind gets stronger and stronger. And then as the mind becomes a strength within it, if you have a different tools to work with the mind becomes a more useful tool to continue with the work of practice. And other useful skill to develop is the skill of letting go and meet people sometimes who don't have a clue with letting go means how do you do that? What's this letting go about? but letting go is a skill it's a like a muscle you have in the mind, the muscle to release how the mind or the heart is gripped or grasped. And so it's a skill that can be developed. So perhaps, you can begin where it's easiest. Find something that's really easy to let go of, and appropriate let go of an experiment. Let me try this easy thing. I don't know, I could do it, it's okay to do it. But we'll be like, let go of that. You know, like maybe some of you will go home tonight. And maybe turn on the television when you come home. I don't think that you're going to be harmed too much. By letting go of that tonight. If you are planning to go home and turn on television at home tonight, why don't you try try at least for like 10 minutes or, you know, some some safe period of time to let go that desire and see what happens inside of you. How easy is it to let go of that tonight? Are there protests in the mind? Does the mind say, you know, Gil doesn't know what he's talking about. Or, you know, it's just silly. This is such an innocent thing. You know, it's such a beautiful thing, you know, television and, you know, no harm is done, and so these the lawyers in your mind come into gear and, you know, or, or you start getting really anxious or upset or angry. What happens to you? Can you let go of it? What's it like to let go of it what happens to you or choose something else. It's choose something which is relatively easy. And then when that becomes easier and easier, then you can move to things and more more difficult. Until finally, someday, you'll be ready to face the big ones. Someday, for example, it might be hard to do some profound letting go around dying. I would like to suggest that dying if you're going to die with some peace and ease, it calls on us to do a very profound movement towards letting go. If you're not prepared, having developed your mindfulness, your concentration Your confidence, your discernment, if you're not prepared with some inner strength, it's going to be very hard to develop your capacity to let go. It's gonna be very hard perhaps to let go in those important last days if you have those that are required so we can be peaceful there not be anxious, angry, upset, scared. The attachment to self attachment to life itself, at certain junctures in life or something you really have to be like looked at. It helps a lot in this process. If we like. Not only have we learned to let go, we've learned to identify the benefits that come from having let go. Do you see how it's very healthy for us, the health, the goodness, the purification that comes from letting go

So by focusing on skills as opposed to beliefs, Buddhism puts a lot more of the responsibility for Buddhism for practice, on you, on the individuals. It's not a matter of someone else, teaching you what Buddhism is. And then you think you know what it is. It's really focused on you. cultivating and developing yourself in particular ways. Developing skillful qualities of heart and mind developing certain skills, skill sets, that support this amazingly profound and useful and beneficial process of freedom. It's a skill which is very helpful for us as individuals. And we can only we can only do as individuals. But then it's something that then is very supportive for our community as well. When we know how to become free of our suffering, then perhaps something that we can support other people and help other people to understand also, so that our community as well can discover how to live with greater ease and peace. So about 10 minutes, which was longer than what I wanted to talk, I wanted to I wanted to have give you more time. Because last week, those of you here we broke up into groups. And there was a lot of people who like that these people tell me to kill we don't do that enough. We don't meet

each other as people come Monday night, we don't meet each other enough. So I thought I'll just talk for 20 minutes today. And try to present some idea that's maybe interesting, useful, and then break you into small groups and you guys could talk about in your groups. What do you think of that idea? But I think there's just a few minutes left, it doesn't make sense. But perhaps, and you can ask some questions or some comments about this topic of skill. skillfulness What do you think of it? How does it pertain to you? So any, any, anybody want to share something?

I imagine if I don't desire anything, I just put my hand in the closet blindfolded and whatever it touches, I'm going

to where there would be no skillful,

no.

It's cold and snowing outside and you grab you grab your bikini.

Okay, so maybe I'll

give up right now. But,

Okay, forget that. I'll be very skillful. I'll dress appropriately.

But if I don't,

where am I going with this? If I don't have

desire for something,

I may not leave my house, if I don't desire to go shopping for food, or to come here, or to do the other things that I'd like to do,

those are all desires.

So it's a great, great concern that you have. And it's a concern that people often have when they misunderstand what Buddhism is trying to say. Buddhism is not anti desire, it's not a matter of giving up desires, it's a matter of giving up clinging, clinging to those desires. So it has to do with our relationship. So the idea is to study our desires, understand the nature of our desires, and is there suffering in how we hold the desire and is there and is following following following through and that desire isn't going to cause suffering? So, if there's clinging and grasping to the desire, if you can't put the desire down easily, then then you're going to suffer. And so when we try to do is we repeatedly go the clinging, the desire itself, if there's no clinging, then we have much more freedom to look at the desire and say, is this useful or not useful? Do I have to do this or not doing so so for example, you know, choosing the clothes you're going to wear, you know, it's fine to have not only desire to choose clothes that are appropriate for the weather, to use stay warm or cold or cool or whatever, it's also appropriate to have certain desires to have pleasant, pretty or nice clothes to wear. That's fine. But you know, there is a lot of attachment people have to what they look like, it often relates to their self identity and how they want other people to see them and their status and all kinds of things come into play sometimes when I'm close. And, and so it's not just a matter of what's useful and what's you know, nice and enjoyable to

wear. But it's all the other things going to come into play. And those those things tend to involve clinging. So can you go into your closet, and see what your mind actually does. And if you do the simple thing about looking at what's what's appropriate for the time and place that you're in Maybe what you enjoy the what's lined up there in your rack That's, you know, not going to be such so demanding but if you're trying to evaluate what's going to make the best impression, you know, and constantly trying to you know you'd kind of try different clothes on and this and that and this isn't working as you know, you know you're probably exhausted before you go out of your house so same thing with food right? You know, so you know you buy the food that works you know if the person doesn't have much money there's a lot of people in our society don't have much money. I read this week that like one in every eight American has footsteps gets food stamps. That's a phenomenal number. And so, you know, plenty of people don't have money for food, or enough money. And so but then you go into a store to buy And you buy alcohol, or cigarettes, or chocolate, you know, and you can't not buy it because you're so you know, addicted to it. That's not that kind of desire is not useful. So that kind of desire should be hopefully be let go of the desire to eat a healthy, healthy meal. If you you know, that's a good desire to have, we want you to have that desire.

Remove patriarchy, move it down. That's your right.

What do you make of the fact that we're so attached to our suffering?

So it's a great question. And so what have you learned about why you're attached to your suffering

so far? What I've learned is that it seems that I'm having a misperception of I think that what I'm about to do is not going to cause suffering. It's a blindness kind of a misperception.

So you're not necessarily attached to your suffering you're attached to certain desire certain activity you think you don't you don't understand that there's suffering involved in it.

But there's, there's the veil that comes over of Crimean, like eating the wrong food, for example, or going for the wrong answer to what's really nourishing. You know, and there's an ingrained, there's a deeper knowledge that's not access that at the moment, there's the blindness. With the veil, I don't know what you would call it but in in some ways that the cycle that happens repetitively The knowledge of that cycle should be available, you know, after so many years or whatever. But no I could share right I'm it's not an attachment to suffering is that it's an attachment to delusion, maybe

are blinded by delusion. Tasha you don't see the attachment. So there's many things to me. It's a great question, many great question and great topic. And one of the things is that our desires blinds us to the roots of the desire. So we're so focused on the object that we want that and the expectation, the hope that's there, that we sometimes don't understand what's actually driving it, and what the cost is within us. So if you turn the attention around and look at the desire, look at the anger or diversion of something, you start seeing the cost and seeing the beliefs that might be operating the feelings that might be operating, and we start seeing Oh, this hurts. Going into the bookstore, you know, it hurts to always be wanting all those books. But if I'm so blinded by the titles, but I want I don't notice that I'm tired till I leave the bookstore. So that's, that's one thing. But there are some people who are in fact attached to the suffering, they know they're suffering, and they're attached to it, meaning they they holding on to it, they don't want to give it up. And one of the reasons is a variety of reasons for that, but one reason is that some people's self identity, who they think they are, is so wrapped up in suffering, that they wouldn't even know how to find themselves who they are, how to orient themselves to other people, unless they had that suffering there. They're not going to give it up. It's very comforting.



suffering for some people is very comforting, even though it hurts because, you know, it's familiar. They've had it for a long time, and they know who they are when they suffer. And they know how to relate to other people when they suffer. And they know hopefully they know how to expect to get certain responses. from people and they suffer. So people hold on to their suffering. And it's hard. So maybe one more.

It's for people who use hearing system devices to push the button to illuminate.

Oh, hello.

So a lot of the practice is cultivating skills within yourself. I guess recently I've been thinking about or witnessing a lot of people close to me making very unskillful decisions. So I guess my question is, how do you how do you approach it in a way that's not self righteous and be like okay, I'm much more skilled than you are and it matters you know, in certain things. So approaching it in a way that's, you know, not comparing your level with theirs, but doing something about it, you know, like, I'm having trouble witnessing these decisions. And, and not doing something about it or doing it too forcefully. So I guess in your experience, what? How have you approached situations? that's worked? Well, I guess? It's a

great question, but it's the questions being asked at a very abstract level, you know, very vague level without, it's almost easier to deal with particular situations, because different situations require different responses, different ways. So, just a little bit hard without knowing the details. But sometimes it's been helpful to ask permission, you know, oh, you know, I noticed that you're struggling here. I noticed that you're trying to figure out what to do here. Are you interested in my take on it during my experience, What I've learned about how to do this, and if they say yes, then you have permission. If they say no, then you know, you know, it's not it's not one. That's one way. Another thing that's useful to know is that sometimes it's important for people to learn for themselves. And there's always a very, it's even though people suffer and flounder sometimes they're better off suffering and floundering and so they can really see for themselves and learn for themselves and they are for you teaching them so sometimes it's compassionate to let leave people alone so they can find their way. Sometimes, you know, it's gonna be disaster if they make those particular choices. And so then we have to kind of step in and maybe try to say something. But you know, I've had people I love a lot family members, I care a lot about who have made, I think, really bad choices. And I've explained I explained my concern the point of view of I have And, you know, they're not ready to hear it and then make a decision and it's rather unfortunate sometimes because then I have to be involved in mopping up. But But you know, then if the product but what helps me in that kind of situation is the practice of equanimity, which in Buddhism means that you allows other people really to realize that other people are responsible for the choices they make. And, and, and, and the results of those choices are really reside the real results resides in their own hearts and minds. And so even though I might not want that results for them, I have to give them the freedom where they make that choice. So anyway,

yeah, that's a great question. Thank you.

So that's a good question. Because if it does affect you directly, then you have more reason to intervene. And then then there's a skillful, skillful ways of talking then saying, you know, saying, you know, rather than telling them what they should do is to say, you know, I have a stake here, because this is going to affect me. And I'd like you to know what the effect is going to be. And sometimes making I statements even when it doesn't affect you, you know, some pragmatic, practical way just saying, you know, you're my friend, I care about you, but I know it's also we're, you know, we're family, we're friends, I'd like you to know how this is for me. And I know you have to make your own choices, but this

is hard for me. It's hard for me to be around this and, and, and well, you know, It's important that you know that I'm struggling watching this. That's not a judgment about them necessarily telling you're telling them the effect it has on you. And then they can make you know, if an ethic, they might then care. If you say, oh, you're doing the wrong thing. You know, they just brushed you off perhaps but if you say, you know, this effects man really troubled or I'm really afraid when you do this, then they might be more interested.