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SPEAKERS

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So what I was hoping to talk about today was the importance of intention in practice, and intention is a in Buddhism is a very key topic to understand and explore. And one of the ways to distinguish intention from desire is that desire is that intention is why we have desire. Or if you ask the question, why do you desire what you want? So, desire is really central to human life, maybe all life and it's unreasonable to expect to live a life without desire. But the question is, for what purpose? Do we have desire? What's the purpose purpose, what's the motivation? What's the intention behind our desires? And so, whenever you want something, you can ask the question, what's the purpose I'm trying to accomplish with this desire? There are what I like to call surface purposes. And then their purposes come out of the depth of our being, the depth of who we are the depth of our psychology, our mind our hearts. So for example, there's lots of desires in human beings that are related to reproduction. You know, usually called sex. sexual desire is a huge part of human life. Different eight different periods of people's lives. It's more or less important. desire for comfort or to avoid discomfort. There's desire for

A variety of desires have to do with being in relationship to people, some of them have to do with sex, some of has to do with status, some have to do with approval. There's a lot of kind of desires that go into what people want to do. And to question our desire to look at a desire and ask ourselves are the desire is a purpose we're trying to accomplish this desire? Does it speak to my deepest wish, my deepest aspiration, the depth of who I am? And that's a very interesting topic in question. So, for example, I learned very early in my life, that that desire for the kind of intimacy that can come from a sexual relationship. I had to do that, because sometimes the sexual was kind of surface relationship. And it actually didn't go very deep and it was rather unsatisfying. And there was something very different when the private motivation in the relationship was not pleasure, but rather was real the heart, the heart intimacy. And then I learned that that deep intimacy doesn't require sex. So that's interesting. So the, you know, what is it that drives what we want? So that's a question. Why do I want this? What's the underlying intention underlying purpose or aspiration underneath it? When we look at desire that we're desire, there can be two primary things categories of things which fuel our desire or feed our desires. On one hand, there can be the whole category of things called greed, which is clinging and grasping as part of it. Where there's ego as part of it, kind of self image is being building it up. That's part of it. On the other hand, that can be aspiration or intention and aspiration, I think in my vocabulary aspiration has to do with quality. So the depth of our hearts that don't have to do with the instinct level of our life, the surface level of, of how we often tend to operate. And so part of what we do in Buddhist practice is to look at our desire and ask the question, it has to become asking some exploration, what are the underlying intention that's driving or motivating what I want in my life? And is it the intent is it Am I being motivated by the desire is that really, the intention is that really I want to stand behind the deeper values of my life? So for example, I mean, it was kind of like a little bit of a kind of funny I think, for some of us, that here was we're doing came to a Buddhist center to do something like Buddhist

practice or mindfulness practice, wake up, get liberated. Be free. You know, reinforce our best values. Perhaps you succeeded somewhat well to do that in meditation session, this you're trying to and then you were looking forward to a talk that was going to support that. But then in that wonderful gap, where the speaker wasn't working, and you're wondering what's going on here, that some of you get impatient that some of you lose the underlying intention of, of being present and mindful, being compassionate, being grateful, being free being at ease with what is or you know, it's kind of very, pretty easy to get kind of anxious and kind of like, oh, let's get on with it. Maybe I shouldn't stay, maybe I should leave now. Because it's gonna get more difficult. So that was there was a lot that was kind of very easy in certain situations to lose a deeper value, a deeper sense of purpose. That could have easily been accomplished in those few minutes. But we get distracted, we get lost by it. Other things. come into play. And the other thing that happens here, what happened here this morning is what often happens on Sunday morning, people will come in, during the sitting and come in the doors, they walk across the floor a little bit loud, they come in here and they sit down and there's you hear them breathing next to you for a while until it gets settled. And we're set up here because we're an urban center to allow that to happen. Because we realized that it's difficult in urban life with work and family and obligations, to always follow a kind of strict schedule show up on time. And we want to have kind of a relaxed attitude about it trusting that people are doing the best to come on time. So people come in. So what intention operates for you, when you hear someone coming in late.

So you know so you look at your thoughts and reactions, and your question them what's the aspiration? What's the intention behind My thinking. So if the thinking is critical, those people coming late, don't they realize there's a room full of silent people, they are being thoughtless. Now that's the kind of, I would think some people have those kinds of thoughts are the is the intention, the values behind that way of thinking, the kind of values you really want to be behind, you really want to be what you're at the center of your life. If you want compassion or love or friendship, or generosity or gratitude to be at the center, or if you want attention to be at the center, thing attention, then you would not give a lot of attention, a lot of energy to those kinds of thoughts. Because they represented intention, which is not the one you want to be sitting here. Critical and judgmental is not the intention that's supporting compassion or gratitude. So what if you turn it around? Or if you relax and look at the depth of your life, depth of your heart, say I really want to come live a life where I feel much more compassionate, much more grateful for things. What would I have to do to turn my thinking around here in a realistic way, way that has integrity, so that I can hear someone coming in late and not be upset. So perhaps, you may perhaps it's a reflection of, it's pretty cool to have people interested in the same thing. It's not many people in this society who are interested in these kinds of values. It's pretty cool that 100 people gather together on a Sunday morning. It's really small thing that they happen to come late. It is scale of what's important that's really not so important, given the fact that we're all coming here to share something profound. Or perhaps some people might might, some of you might be helpful to think compassionately. or, or, or feel gender generous. It's a generous thing to open your space that you're sitting in. So as someone who comes in late could feel welcomed, as opposed to kind of feel the vibes of how could you is the intention to be generous one that's meaningful for you? Or is the intention to be grumpy, more important? It's your choice. If you think grumpiness is the inherent operating system of your heart and you have to just kind of go along with it because it's not your choice. You didn't choose to be grumpy.

Then what happens is you reinforce that intention to be judgmental, to be angry, to be critical to be whatever. And so the question is which intention? Do you want to feed in your life? Which intention? Do you want to help become a stronger part of your life? And one of the reasons why we focus on intention in Buddhism is not only because we want to act from our deepest intentions, or wisest values, our deepest values in the moment, but we also want to create the conditions where we're more likely to act on those in the future. And so it's kind of like developing habit. If you emphasize certain intentions

today, you're more likely to remember those intentions tomorrow. If you somehow give attention to certain values, Those values tend to become stronger or you tend to be reminded them more often. Yesterday, partly I was inspired to give this talk because yesterday at my son's school, that a special ceremony and I was asked at the end of the ceremony to do the blessing. And I think that the I'm kind of like, you know, in my wider world kind of the designated designated minister because of my what I do here, oh, Gil, he can do the blessing. So blessing so I so I, you know, what's this blessing thing? You know, it's not it's not really a Gil language. I don't how often do I use the word blessing but I some of you've been hearing me for a long time probably don't hear me use the word blessing very well, very often. So I had to think a little bit Can you still hear out there? Enough? So I had to think what does this mean mean to offer a blessing and my interview Standing a blessing is that is that has to do with intention? What intention and values do we want to be reminded of? And what intentions and values? Do we want to be reminded that we want to live by those intentions? So if I say, may we may our intention be one to live with truth. Then tomorrow you might come into situation where a police officer pulls you over for speeding and asks you, you know how fast you were driving. And you could say, no officer, if you don't know or you could say well was kind of like, maybe you Maybe I was doing, you know 7865 if you thought that was the case, but perhaps you knew you're going 85 What do you say? And you hear that you heard that blessing. May we come from truth. Maybe Be honest. And you're reminded of that you're more likely either either consciously reminded, or subliminally, your mind remembers truth. This is important. Okay, well, Officer, I know what speed I was going. I'd rather not tell you that would be honest. And or the blessing would be may we be compassionate. And then you might remember that at a time, where it becomes really significant, and maybe you wouldn't have remembered unless you got the blessing. The kind of what are they remember once many years ago, someone came back from Mexico and came with us in the Day of the Dead or something. And I think it was related to that, but she got this beautiful silver heart that she gave me. Very small one. It's kind of was kind of a blessing for me. And I put in my pocket and didn't think about it. And I had to go do some bureaucratic thing in downtown San Francisco. And I trouble finding parking and late my thing and, you know, I was kind of didn't like the bureaucracy anyway, and so I was grumpy or irritated or something. I put my hand in my pocket, and I felt that little amulet and I thought all my friend who had this well wishing for me and her intentions for me. I was reminded of them and my grumpiness went away. Her blessing came through. Her blessing was my, her blessing was in the form of her wishing well for me and thinking oh, there's someone in the world who wants well wants me well made a difference for me. So, what I'm trying to we're not doing one things I'm trying to say here is that our intentions that we act on, that we bless that we speak and say this is important for me, in the acting on them in the reminding ourselves of them in the intending them in speaking them, them, them and committing ourselves to them. They operate both consciously, and they operate unconsciously, or see knowingly or unknowingly. And the unknowing way is very significant, where they come underground in our hearts and pop out insignificant times. If you don't set the ground, set the set, this is the soil if you don't plant the seeds, they're not going to sprout later on. So to look for opportunities in our life, to reflect on what are the intentions that we really want to operate on, what do we really want to accomplish? So the example I like to give sometimes is going shopping at the supermarket for you know, food. So the desire someone asked what what do you want to do right now, I want to go shopping. Then you can ask yourself for what purpose Do you have that desire? You can say, Oh, I'm shopping because and then you can fill it in. And how you fill it in is actually very significant for what seeds you planted in your heart for what seeds you water in your heart. If your answer is I'm going shopping to get food because my spouse was angry at me that I don't do enough work at home. And she told me you got to go shopping because I'm fed up. And I'm shopping because I want to I don't want to, you know, get another mouthful when I get home. That's one intention. That's one possibility. What is that feed? That doesn't feed something beautiful. If the intention to go shopping is to create a loving meal for your family that fuels something very different. If the intention the primary things operating when you go shopping is to get it over with it as quickly as I can, that feeds certain thing. If the intention to go shopping, is to go into the

store, and try to have a friendly contact with someone in the store, make a difference in the life of someone in the store so their life is delivered easier and lighter. As opposed to being in competition with all the other people in line. You know, scan up and down the aisles.

Where's the shortest line and can I kind of figure out which which, which which clerk is going fastest and then you go into line and it's the wrong line and then you stand there kind of looking at what they buy, how could they buy those things? And then you look at the clerk and the clerk is talking to the customer and don't they realize that you're a customer, you're important and you know what you know Those kinds of thoughts and reactions are feeding certain intentions. To go into the store with the intention to make a difference, better difference in someone's life. Then as you're standing in line, maybe you remember that intention. And perhaps you would be motivated to stand there with a different attitude towards the people in front of you in line. Oh, isn't that nice? There's a human friendly contact between a clerk, a checkout clerk and a customer. Isn't that special in our society, it's so easy in our society to have kind of be impersonal. It's kind of a personal kind of exchange there. We should have more of that in our society. Maybe when I get up there to the clerk, effect, the clerk for having a personal kind of touch to the person in front of me. You know, it was nice to watch as opposed to, you know, Come on, hurry up. So what I'm trying to say here is that we can take something as simple is going to the market. And we can infuse it with deeper intentions than some of the ones that would not be present, if we just kind of did it because it's to fulfill our to do list. And you could infuse it with profound intentions by reflecting on it by wishing it to be so and it's consequential to do that. We start creating a different inner environment in our hearts and our minds, that we infer we enforce values. we enforce particular intentions of how we want to live our life, that strengthen those in our hearts, but also make it more likely that those operate in the future. Now the strengthening of intention has a lot to do with the strength of acting on those intentions. It's possible to have intentions that are just wishful thinking. And it's possible to have intentions that we act on that what are the very interesting things about intentions, you can act on an intention and not fulfill the intention or fail in the intention. But because you acted on the intention, the tendency that was values behind those intentions become stronger. And so it's not really a failure. So if my intention is to go shopping to make a loving meal for my family, so they feel kind of the care and love. I might have burned vipassana and you know, they have to, you know, try to call it I'll try labeling and barbecued pasta. See if we can get away with that. But you know, it didn't really work, my intention. So in that moment that my family didn't feel it, perhaps, but in my heart, I acted on on reinforced that desire. And that that gets reinforced in a way that's beneficial into the future. So one of the things we do in Buddhist spirituality, Buddhist practice, is be the caretaker of our future. hearts in mind, not only this one right here now, what heart in mind what I want to create for the future. And so what we do now has to do with what we become. And if our, and what's beautiful about this is for the deeper intentions, the depth, depth, depth aspect of our life. For example, the depth aspect of you know places of compassion, of gratitude of Mindfulness, attention of peace. That the intention for gratitude, compassion, peace, mindfulness is is strengthened by acting on those intentions. As we act on them and give energy and strength to the acting on them. They make it more more regular part of our life for the future. They create a better heart, better mind, tomorrow or next year. So are there opportunities for us for you?

To act from intentions of compassion, gratitude, kindness, peace, attention, I think of our attention as being part of the depth aspect of our life. Do you have those opportunities do you have those opportunity As you know, maybe once or twice a day or do you have those opportunities every moment. And I would like to suggest to you that those opportunities exist every moment that you're alive in whatever circumstances you find yourself in. And if you don't choose the danger is that something else will choose for you what intention you're operating on. There's a lot of people in our society who get paid a lot of money to try to influence your intention, because human intentionality is very influenceable.

by other things. By advertisements, politicians buy many things. So if you don't take some responsibility for your intentions, there are other people who will for you. And if it's not the external influence that's happening. Is it the internal forces and switch internal forces Do you want to reinforce? If it's some of the surface aspect of our mind, pleasure, status, avoidance of discomfort, security,

if ill will fear if we wonder if we act on those, which we go along with those. That's what gets reinforced. That part of your mind will choose what gets developed and strengthened. You're always developing and strengthening something As we develop more mindfulness, more attention, it gives us more opportunities and hopefully in a very easy way to begin deciding what intention should be operating here. If you have an if you have a desire, you can always ask yourself, what intention should support this desire. And for those of you who have desires frequently, you will have frequent opportunities to reevaluate, to see what you want to support. So, we have a few minutes here would someone like to ask a question or make a comment in a strong voice? Yes,

What you're saying? It kind of goes against the old saying that the road to hell is paved with good intentions. I assume that the use of intention in that sense might be kind of a

wish.

Yeah, it's a so the question is What about the expression the road road to hell is paved by good intentions. There's a few things about that. One is that our intention should be supported by clear seeing. It isn't just a matter of having an intention. It's also a matter of understanding the context that intention is operating in. And so to understand is this really appropriate for the situation? So that's so wrote to hell as often, you know, we create a lot of hell for other people, if we impose our intention is good as they are in situation is not appropriate. So it takes wisdom to know How to Act. And the intention to be wise involves the intention to study a situation to listen carefully what people are saying and doing and what's going on. The other is that our intent our good intentions, don't guarantee a good outcome in the world around us. intentions, you know, we can have all the best intentions in the world. And reality interferes. your intention today might be to go and help a neighbor who's in distress. But as you leave here, your car doesn't work. your intention was to help but reality is interfering that possibility. There's no guarantee that your good intentions are going to be matched with the world responding in beneficial ways. There's no guarantee how Whenever for Buddha and Buddhist spirituality, we're not necessarily trying to create a good world. But more importantly, we're trying to create a good heart that can meet the world wisely and freely compassionately, regardless of how the world is out there. And so if we act on our good intentions and support our good intentions, we don't know what kind of world out there is going to result. But hopefully we're creating a kind of inner life where when unfortunate things happen in the world, we've we're able to meet it with kindness rather than hate with generosity rather than fear. With with mindfulness rather than shutting down with letting go rather than getting constricted and tight And the ultimate protection for us is not the world out there and how it's set up. But the ultimate protection for us is, is what happens in our hearts, our capacity of our hearts, to stay free, no matter where we are. And so, our best intentions to be free is what supports this inner heart. And hopefully we develop a heart that's capable of meeting meet a beating in the world, in all the different ways the world can be. And there's no guarantee that this world of ours is going to be an easy place for us to live in. And those of us who live here in the peninsula should always be reminded of this. When you remember how close we're living to the center, Andreas fault

Are we ready?

Is our hearts ready to be able to meet something like that there, you know, with the best that we have with inner strength and capacity to meet with the best values, the best intentions we have, or in a crisis like that. Are we going to revert to some of the worst intentions that are in there? are we preparing ourselves for a future? So maybe one more if you think it's a somewhat short answer.

What was the blessing I gave with my son's school? I wrote it down so I read it so remember, but it was

made a good goodness of your heart, protect you May you receive the blessings of a pure heart. May the goodness of your heart to protect you. May you receive the blessings. Have a truthful heart. Made the goodness of your heart protect you. May you receive the blessings of a loving community or a compassionate community. And as you go off, to offer your compassion and care to this wider world may you receive the blessing of the compassion and love of your community to support you in doing that, something like that. So We now have a potluck. I hope you all stay. Especially if you didn't bring anything, please feel welcome to come and someone will offer a blessing. And if you're the kind of person who like I used to be, who kind of tuned out of that kind of religious stuff, perhaps you're the one who should do the blessing for if not listen more carefully than usual. So, thank you all for being here. I read much appreciate it. I'm very grateful for all of you. And may you all made the best in your hearts come forward. Thank you.