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SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

For today is equanimity. It's so one of the most significant thing practices of Buddhism, practice equanimity. Even more important, it's one of the most significant states of mind or emotions almost, that are cultivated and developed through practice is considered to be one of the crown jewels of mental states that get developed in Buddhism. And for some people is quite a surprise as practice develops, how strong and powerful the feeling that quality of equanimity can be. For people who haven't really sense the value of it, it might seem very close to indifference or seem kind of dull. Why would anybody want to be economists. But in fact, it's quite a very beautiful and very meaningful state and quality and practice to do. And it's something I think that's extremely significant and valuable for people in their ordinary daily lives. There's lots of opportunities, situations where equanimity is really a valuable way of meeting in what's the challenges of life? People seems like Lately, I've been meeting and talking to a lot of people who have a lot of family challenges. Usually, family difficulties, that lot of tensions and anger in the family or particular family and family members, close ones even for whom there's quite an estrangement or difficulty. And so, you know, having equanimity in those relationships can be crucial to make them go forward or in a healthy way. People have challenges with work or not having work. And so, having been in quite a mess about finances or work, co workers who are difficult to bosses, they're difficult. People have challenges with their health. People get to, you know, sudden suddenly sometimes big announcements from the doctor about news they'd rather not have or have health challenges. And so equanimity comes into play there. And you know, and over and over again in the kind of variety of crisis that people can face in their lives. equanimity can be a very useful and significant practice. But learning how to be equanimous, how to practice it, and how to tap into this quality is, you know, part of the functions of practice. And the angle I wanted to take in discussing it, is to talk about how equanimity is cultivated, developed in meditation practice. And because meditation is kind of a laboratory, or some call, people call it the gym, a laboratory for experimenting, developing, exploring, developing, cultivating a variety of different inner quality states of minds, cultivating skills, that we learn these skills in meditation and those skills and insights Then applicable to our life outside. And sometimes we could solidify or develop these skills and insights and meditation. So they're strong enough to serve us in our daily life. For some for me to tell people Oh, you should be economists. You know, you have some major tragedy in your life, I just could be economists. And that's all you need to do. That doesn't really help much if they haven't actually explored themselves develop themselves. And meditation practice is one of those places where that laboratory that experimentation that trial and error that development happens, it gives us gives you something in meditation that you can carry with you into daily life. So how is equanimity practiced and developed in meditation practice? infinite number of ways, and I'll go through a series of them in the hope that as you listen to this, perhaps that you can imagine in your mind, similar situations outside of meditation, were the same thing with ply would be valuable. So one of the places is that sooner or later, meditation is uncomfortable. And we don't really advertise that the the, the public press is meditation is stress reducing and produces calm and you

know it's bliss and you know things like that. And that's certainly part of meditation practice, I can't be part of it and part of the value, but at least the kind of meditation we do. A very important part and part of it is meeting your life as it is and learning how to meet it as it is not how you want it to be. And so there are certainly times meditation is uncomfortable. A really great kind of discomfort, and it can arise that's really can teach you a lot is the itch. You have an itch someplace and

And as far as I know, no one has died in meditation for minutes. And, in fact, I don't think it's really harmed anybody to have an itch during meditation. But the, it can be very compelling the strong urge to scratch or do something with but knowing that it's safe to have an itch gives you an opportunity to kind of not act on the desire to scratch. And that maybe goes against how life is usually lived. If you live outside in normal life, you have an itch, scratch, it's not a big deal. no one notices, you know, it's not really nothing, not even thought about almost unconsciously. But here in meditation, if meditation involves a commitment, within reason to sit still and not move, then you're, you're there staying with the itch, and it takes a lot, sometimes a tremendous amount. to not give in to that urge to scratch or not give in to the urge to assign meaning to tell a story about it. The minute you know, I have a stitch, and must probably need to go to the doctor. And then the agitation begins, you know what it all means. And, and so how to stay patient how to stay nonreactive around the edge is a challenge. And, and so you might have to develop a lot of inner strength, a strength and not to give in to the strong compulsion. So then that cultivates the ability to be nonreactive. And, and the stronger the age, the more requires of us, we have to be very attentive to the power of the mind, quickly, it operates quickly it can translate into movement and now in the hand, we have to learn our relationship to discomfort. We have to see oh, you know that in our judgments, and then might be judgments about oh, I guess I'm a meditation failure. I came here for bliss and I Got an itch? And, and if I was really doing this right, I would be sitting here surrounded by white light. And there would be you know certainly no it's just it's just going on but in the in a realistic life where we have challenges all the time, you might actually benefit a lot more from confronting that itch and working through that and not having a comfortable meditation. Then you are sitting there in some kind of blissful calm state because how often you're going to sit in a blissful calm state, daily life and a life you can be challenged all the time with uncomfortable situations and to learn the inner terrain, your reactivity, your beliefs, your feelings, your emotions, to have cultivated some inner strength not to give into it will serve you really well out there. So it's not just inches. It could also be other discomforts from you said it might be pain and pain is a very good teacher because As much more complex than a niche, many more things get activated inside of us. emotions, beliefs, a sense of self. You know, all kinds of things. And so what does it mean not to get swept away swept into the world of reactivity and, and world of ideas and thoughts and feelings around the pain. One of the things I've learned early on my meditation was how my reaction to the pain made the pain worse. And so, learning not to react to the pain and one of my one of the first things I learned was the role of self pity. And I could sit it's very clear that when I started having thoughts of self pity, the pain would get worse. If I just stopped thinking of poor Gil, the pain would get slightly better and slightly better was better than worse. And so I got to see Oh, look at that. There's this reactivity. That's me self pity. Let me not give into those thoughts. Let me know act on those thoughts or it can participate in those thoughts. Let me let go of them. And so I learned to let go of certain kinds of thinking, those thinking themselves made the situation worse. So here I was also in learning to let go, let go of beliefs or stories, ideas that weren't serving me in the situation. And those also helped with equanimity because you come into all kinds of situations in daily life that are tragic, difficult. And the mind can create tremendous amount of stories about what this means where this is going. And those some of those stories are not going to be true. And the capacity to see how the mind conjures up stories, interpretations, meanings around things, and learning how to let go of it over and over again, is very helpful. And the muscle that ability to let go of thinking that way, is very, very helpful.

I find it you know, it's still to this day If I have some interpersonal difficulty with someone, if I'm not in the room with them, if you know there's someplace else I'm not seeing them, my mind tends to kind of leave a little bit more of a story about what this means and who they are and all kinds of whatever. And I've learned that if I have a feel any tension with someone, I should get myself in the room with them can see meet them personally. Because then that breaks through some of those stories and things that my mind tends to make. And so it's easier to let go. But so but in meditation, you can see how this operates and start developing this capacity to let go of all these extra things and thoughts. There also be can be pleasant meditations that can be blissful meditations, and, and Wow, this is great. I don't need an equanimity. I'm sitting in that pinnacle of equanimity. This is like perfect. Nothing's ever going to bother me again. Whenever and you And then and then, five minutes later we have to make an announcement that it during the middle of meditation, my meditation, my bliss, I had it, you know, I had it and now I don't have it and this is really difficult and what was going on I'm upset and this and that. And then eventually person notices, wait a minute, I'm really reacting. I guess I was really attached to my pleasant state. I'd assign meaning to that. I finally made it to probably give me a badge here at IMC metal. And now they're not going to give me the medal or whatever. And, and I've seen partly through a lot of experience, how the attachment to pleasant states and meditation leads to suffering. I tried to reconstruct it the next sitting I tried to hold on to it. I tried protected from not going away. I try to resist other people's requests to me or demands of me. And what I've learned is that it's actually best for me for my well being and health and sometimes for the health and well being of others. If I, when pleasant things happen in meditation, that I don't cling to it, they don't assign meaning to it, I just leave it alone. I don't hold on to it in any way, just let it be. And that equanimity, that balance has come from me partly out of being burnt repeatedly. And that's part of where wisdom comes from. And the meditation hopefully you get burnt in really small ways. And so he's Oh, that didn't work to hold on to that. So even pleasant experience in meditation can help teach us equanimity.

And then there's equanimity around emotions. You can have. Sometimes emotion strong emotions can arise in meditation. And it can be really obvious that All the reactive ways of being with it are detrimental or harmful or cause stress and strain and exhaustion. So there can be a strong I've had strong and despair rise in meditation. And it was exhausting to resist it to hold it down. No, please No, no don't have that I can't have that. And finally, letting go of that resistance and, and having the tears just wash through me work really freely, because I just couldn't sustain the resistance. And to realize that there was no problem with having tears flowed, have the emotions flow, and actually is a kind of freedom, beautiful freedom and purity, to let our emotional life flow through us freely, without resisting or holding on or acting on it, getting involved in it. But kind of being a kind of Clear Channel. For whatever emotion it might be. Could be anger could be fear. It could be sadness, it could be happiness, it could be joy. It could be many things. that come through. And so in meditation slowly over time we start seeing when different emotions come through, what our relationship to it, how we complicate it, and how we can become a clean channel for it. And that clean channel becomes economists, economists the sense that we're not reacting to it. And that can serve us in daily life a lot, because sooner or later you'll have an emotion. in daily life. You will have some maybe some very strong situation. Maybe a boss at work does something and makes you extremely angry, or co worker, or you feel filled with fear around something that's happened with your health or health of a friend of yours or something. And how do you relate to it? If you're not wise about your strong emotions, too strong emotions are going to fuel it are going to fuel reactive tendencies, all kinds of reactive tendencies, perhaps you'll say things you regret later. Or perhaps you'll run away and you You know, in words that weren't present for the situation. But if you've learned how to be open to the emotions and how to be nonreactive, to it be let it move through your freely, it's a lot easier than to stay present for the situation with equanimity. Because the emotion doesn't have the upper hand, it's not going to push you around. And so meditation is one of those places where we kind of emotions happen. And we learn to be with them and learn how to be with them

in an open, relaxed way, just like the move through, even if they're quite intense, it's can be very valuable to do that. Then there's all kinds of sitting in meditation, sooner or later, you'll notice that you're thinking and, and you'll notice the role that thinking has not only that you're thinking but you might start noticing some of the themes, you might notice that you have very strong tendency to measure everything that's going on to your sense of self. You're sitting there meditating. And, and you're, maybe you start thinking your lot Maybe I'm not wearing the right clothes. You know, in order to be a really cool Buddhist that IMC maybe there's a particular uniform, that kind of way people could. So you kind of be open your eyes a little bit and look around and wonder what the right clothes is here. You know, and, and I bet if I came to work here, you know, in a suit and tie in a white shirt, I suspect that within the year, we'd find a lot of guys coming to IMC and started kind of dressing up more. And, you know, wouldn't take much like that. Just because it's very subtle. It's maybe not even me not even conscious, you know, you know, but, but you kind of get sometimes you can see very clearly those thoughts coming in on several, I'm not sitting straight enough. Or I didn't get concentrated enough and that's sitting up at the person next to me is concentrated. And so you can maybe start seeing how there's this reference referencing Back to self and self image going on, and how it takes you away from the present moment being really present and mindful. And so you can see, oh, this sense of self, this story around self is operating, even here in meditation. Wow, I only managed to get to three breaths, I must be a meditation klutz. And whatever it might be, and so it can see that the suffering that's involved that kind of thinking, but more important, see how that kind of thinking is simply not necessary. It's not that doesn't serve any purpose. In this kind of context, you

can just sit and be present with the kind of simplicity of being what is and doesn't have to be interpreted around some idea of self or being someone in particular. This is a very difficult thing to see because the operating real self self image how we want to represent ourselves to ourselves to other people, or we don't want to be in the eyes of ourselves or other people, operates very, very deeply in people's consciousness and psyche. And so but meditation in this illness of meditation and the rapid repetition and meditation we do over and over and over again, we start slow, slowly dawning on us how our sense of self is operating in this context. And we can learn to begin to loosen up around it, perhaps let go of it, too, learn that meditation around something as simple. As you know, meditation might be very helpful outside of meditation, where a sense of self is operating there as well. And so there might be situations you come into maybe at first, it's very mild situations and threatening situations, where you see I don't have to be anybody here. I don't have to prove myself to this person. I don't have to be apologetic. I don't have to defend myself in this situation. All I'm doing is I'm at the checkout counter. And, you know, and I don't know. I don't explain why I'm buying grape juice. You know, I don't To prove to the cleric, you know why whatever. I never once when I was at the I was a town tripper within the monastery, and it was hard to go into Monterrey to go shopping. And that was a kind of a Zen monk by then I had a shaved head and I was very thin back then it was like kind of 35 pounds tall, you know, then shaved head. And I was given I went down the truck, I took by all this stuff, and wherever they sent me had to go buy whatever they needed. And so one of the one of the trips was into into Safeway. And I had to buy supplies for a monastery of about 5060 people with a particular The only thing they needed from Safeway was I don't know why, but they wanted like, you know, I don't know how many, but lots and lots of boxes of motza bread, crackers, right? And lots and lots of gallon containers of jam. So here I am Dan tall shaved head.

I eat crackers and Jan so that raised some eyebrows around me. So do I have to explain myself to say, you know, by the way, you know it's not for me and what does it matter what they think of me? Let them think whatever they want I mean why should I care what these people you know, you know it's not doesn't really you know even say even if you think the worst of me into so what? So that's hopefully a mild situation, you know, let go of trying to just shut the nose. Try to explain to them it's different than

what they think It doesn't matter, right? So what I'm trying to say meditation is a place where you might start seeing how these things operate might be around meditation itself. But chances are, it's about a lot of other things. Sooner or later you start seeing how that sense of self operates, and how so much of it is not necessary. Now, it's not necessary, but sometimes causes undue suffering. And so we're going to be learning to let go. This helps a lot with equanimity. Because so much of the reactivity we have has, can be your own sense of self. There's, then there's the idea of the role. There are other places that the mind does. mind can interpret things. Next stories project into the future, all kinds of fantasies, and meditation, you start seeing this working as well. Sometimes very acutely. And the more acutely, you can see it, you can start getting wise about this functioning of the mind. It's always you know, making stories and start maybe start doubting those stories, not automatically believing them and This can be very helpful, because who knows what the future brings. And some of the reactivity we have in daily life. Where we're not economists not balanced or centered, is we're reacting to the fantasy that projection we have about what's going to happen in the future. And sometimes the projections are accurate for sure. But I don't know about you, but my success rate in projecting the future has been abysmal. And, and it's, you know, things to sell even if things seldom turn out the way they expect them to turn out. Certainly not down to the details, which I'm capable of dissipating how it's going to turn you're supposed to be so then to hold the certainly appropriate to project into the future to think about the future and plan for it. But to hold that lightly. It has been one of the one of the ways of helping us be economists so and then in meditation as we kind of do this practice more and more. There are other things that support equanimity in meditation practice. One of them is starting to is beginning to become curious about what's going on here. And curiosity is a very different mode of being in the world interest than being interested in self pity. being interested in what we're afraid about in the future, being interested in all the wrongs that people have done me being interested in. You know, their strong aversion I have towards my anger, so interested where it gets lost in the world of aversion. All these reactions can happen. But if we're if we're most interested in our interest, what's really happening here, to be curious to investigate, changing The whole ecosystem changes the whole dynamic. And just to be interested rather than reactive, to be it more interested in than you are reactive, tends to diminish the reactivity offers something different, that tends to a different way of being that tends to support. equanimity, more balanced with being centered, even minded. And so, at some point as people do mindfulness practice, at some point, the value of investigation, the value of looking more deeply being interested in experience, rather than reactive to it becomes highlighted. And so that another thing that can create that good equity or accurate equanimity and meditation, because in meditation, all kinds of challenges can happen as well. It's not again, because meditation is just kind of a microcosm, sometimes the intensified microcosm of life as it usually is. So that can be quite subtle. quite difficult challenges that happen in meditation as well. And one of the things that can bring equanimity is through experience and having done a lot of practice, to see to develop confidence that the practice works.

develop confidence that being mindful, letting go, the concentrated, keeping up keeping on just staying, keeping the course with the practice, that things work out for the better things work out. And that the mindfulness supports us is valuable. And to develop confidence in that and to have that confidence under your belt in a sense, then it's a lot easier to not be reactive to the difficulties that come up as they occur. Difficulties will occur when you say oh, I have the practice. Isn't this great? I have something that I can meet this with. I have a tool I have something I have faith in some value and can be very helpful. Another thing that develops equanimity is a As practice continues, and we start becoming less reactive to our experience, we start also then becoming calmer, more relaxed, about things more ease, more sense of peace happens. And then at some point, that calm or that ease that peace can be seen as being valuable, not something to cling to, but it's something that has some sense of integrity or purity, or satisfaction or beauty or meaning for ourselves. And it has more meaning more satisfaction, more value than our neurosis. Imagine that more valuable than then our you know, being involved in our fear, or

more valuable than start clinging to some plan we have for the future or some desire that we have. And so we start Oh, that my desire, you know, might be a very powerful desire is not you know, not as valuable as being peaceful, that sense of the greater value in peace can also come from seeing very clearly. That strong desire, strong aversion to where something is uncomfortable, to feel that it's not satisfying. Meditation are the great places to see the dissatisfaction that's inherent in strong desire, strong aversion. And to have a sense that there's some kind of peace, calm, that's more valuable and meaningful. Then, when you go into your life with some of that calm, and you find yourself beginning to get reactive, it's not just letting go of the reactivity because reactivity is, you know, doesn't serve you. It's letting go the reactivity to drop back into something. That's more For more valuable, that calm and peace. So meditation can give you a place give you a sense or a state, that becomes a different reference point for where you want to live, how you want to be. And so you can fall back into something that's nourishing someplace of, you know, calm or stability. And that now can make you much more economists. Your boss is yelling at you. What's more valuable? Where do you Where do you want to reside? Where do you want to live? Do you want to live in the fear? Do you want to live in the anger you have in return? Or is not worth losing your calm for that state? Can you stay at equanimous because that's closer, it's closer, it's closer in. It's more in touch with some depth that we've discovered. Something that feels more integral to who we are, the reactivity, the anger, we might have the fear we might have the running wave it might have feels like more like it belongs to the surface of who we are. Not really deep down inside is something that feels much more integral to our heart or to our who we are. And so then maybe we're more willing to be there with a boss and stay balanced or stay calm. And that chances are, we'll give you a much better opportunity to know what the wise recourse is, what needs to happen, what's best to happen, than it is to yell, yell back or run away or whatever it might be. Many people have found that by being economists, staying calm in difficult situations, they take care the situation much better than if they're not calm, not reactive. That's a very hard lesson to learn for some people. Because sometimes the angry response, the violent response, sometimes has a much more immediate impact. And sometimes if you're violent enough with your voice or whatever, people will shut up. So carry that Thank you. But it You know, that's not a very effective way. You know, you yell at your boss really loudly, the boss shuts up is afraid of you. That's nice, took care of that problem. Until a week later, you get your pink slip.

I guess it wasn't so useful after all. And there can be a very strong beliefs that our people have about the value of strong antagonistic kind of responses. But chances are, it's much better to respond in a calm way. And I've had I used to live in San Francisco Zen Center in a neighborhood up there, where there was a lot of crime. A lot of people a lot of friends I had there were held up at knifepoint at gunpoint, and I can go through a whole long list of stories of my friends and dangerous neighborhood. And my friends who stayed calm through it, it always worked out well. And Those who didn't stay calm. It didn't work out well. For them the communist one that I heard story was with the guy was being held up at knifepoint and, and on the street corner. And then another friend walked by and just walked by. and so later the friend was being held up said, Oh, you know, you passed me in the street back there. I was talking to that guy. He was holding he was you know, rubbing me. You guys were just having a calm conversation. Well, yeah, what happened was that he wanted my, my wallet. And I explained to him that he was more than welcome to my money. But I kind of needed my driver's license and my cards and you know, could could, you know, could we make an arrangement here? Which he was he was obliging to do and so We had this little discussion and we took care of this business and he took my money and, and so I thought I'd like the story could have been a lot worse.

So the suggestion here today is that meditation is a laboratory, where we learn about our reactivity ourselves. And we learn a different way of being with challenges in a different way of being is one of equanimity or a balance of non reactivity, if you prefer it that way. At some point, the non reactivity is so

well developed equanimity so well developed, that the mind doesn't waver becomes imperturbable, no matter what goes on. Something is really difficult to happen something it's really beautiful happens. The mind doesn't. There's no waves in the mind. It just it is what it is. It goes through us. Things happen very fast, very tremendously impermanent, there's nothing to hold on to. There's nothing that supports us. The mind just stays balanced. Just continue to practice continuous practice. Great states of ease and peace happen. And there's no tendency to hold on to it, just just peace, greater joy and happiness, just that way. And the advantage was finding that balance that equanimity is it allows the mind to drop deeper and deeper and deeper to let go more and more deeply into some of the deepest reservoirs or wellsprings of wisdom, of compassion, of love, of liberation, that is possible for human being. And when the when the mind is being reactive and wanting and not wanting for and against things. The mind can actually not settle to the full potential of peace or well being, of freedom and of love that's possible for human being. So it's a really a wonderful process that we have this kind of laboratory of meditation to find it. And what it means I want to the last thing I'll say, is that when it does happen, that your meditations are not what you want them to be, whatever that is. That's when your practice begins. That nice. So when it's happening in a way, which is more common or more uncomfortable, or in some way, say, then you tell yourself, great. Now I have something to work with. Let me look at this more carefully. This is a time perhaps, where I can explore the whole territory of reactivity And equanimity, that reactivity and non reactivity and it might not look pretty, it might not create pleasant meditation, but it might give you a lot of understanding about yourself and a lot of strength as you hold your ground as you stay patient. Don't give in as you let go, that will carry over and be much more useful in daily life than if you'd had a con meditation practice sitting. So, may you all discover the bliss of equanimity. So now we have our potluck