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SPEAKERS

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So,

in Mahayana, Buddhist tradition, they have a lot of sutras and a lot of scriptures. And there's one collection of scriptures called the perfection of wisdom, to very lofty collection for a title for a collection, that perfection of wisdom who has that. And, and this, it's many, many kind of different scriptures, and they're organized partly out of length. And their titles are such. So there's the perfection of wisdom in 100,000 words, or 100,000 lines, 100,000 lines it is. So that's a lot of wisdom. And there's perfection of wisdom in 50,000 lines. There's a perfection of wisdom of 25,000 lines, which has been translated into English, the only one that if the biggest one that's complete and it's about Big Fat volume in English. And so you can spend, you know, years reading this text, and then there's a perfection of wisdom in 8000 lines. And then they go dead back, you know, and then the perfection of wisdom and you know, 300 lines and 100 lines. And then finally you get to one scripture, that's perfection of wisdom in one letter. And this is maybe the culmination of, and I'm going to teach you this one letter, this one syllable that's so profound and so significant and so helpful in certain situations. So So, you know, some people like to memorize scriptures, so here's a chance to do it easily. So, perfection of wisdom, one letter or one syllable is The syllable

ah

you do that? Yeah, we do together 123

Ah.

Now I don't know what the ancient Indians had in mind when they came with this as being the, you know this, this the summary that the condensation of all this wisdom all these lines of wisdom into that one word, one letter. But certainly I associated with relaxation with letting go is the kind of satisfaction kind of contentment to sometimes have come some kind of easing up that goes on with that, that wonderful sound. And, and is there wisdom in that sound? Is there wisdom in that movement of relaxation and letting go contentment satisfaction that That sound represents or helps us with. Here's a story for you.

A scholar, I apologize the scholars of the world they get sometimes discriminated against, and they were treated in certain kind of prejudice. Go away. A scholar came to the Abbess and explained, I've spent a lifetime studying Buddhism, and it has not helped me much. What am I missing? What is it I need to understand? To prepare the scholar for her answer? The Ibis sat silent for a while. Then she

said, breathe in an easy and relaxed way. And then study what causes you to lose that ease? Everything you really need to know about Buddhism. be found in that investigation. That's something. So what do you know about ease about relaxation? And then what do you know about what takes you away from your ease from your relaxation? And to take that as being an important area of study? And you can't, you can't study that unless first you have some ease, some relaxation, and you have some tendency to lose it. So you have to be able to lose it in order to find out what's going on here in order to go into Buddhism. So what is it that what what are the forces that come into play? What are the beliefs that come into play? What are the reactions that come into play? So the first thing is you have to relax and some people say we're a culture that's highly stressed. And so we now have lots of books and technologies and techniques works. stops on relaxation or stress reduction. And I don't know if we're more stressed than other times in history, but probably we're more self consciously stressed than 80 of the time, we're very concerned about the stress and we realize the impact that stress tension has on us. And there's lots of now studies and literature written about the health benefits of being relaxed and the health harm of being stressed and being tense, tense. So it's easy to come across these things, but you're much more likely to get sick, get the cold, if you're stressed. If you immune system is compromised, your your heart works much better. If and your immune system works better if you're relaxed entities. And so we're a society that's being more more focused on this issue. And because it will really see the harm that's caused from being tense meditation is often prescribed for relaxation, for stress reduction. And it is one of the great ways I think, for many people to relax to let go. Partly because in meditation, you're not focusing on the things that make you anxious or things that make you tense. Anytime that you switch your attention away from that, which is anxiety producing, stress producing the system, or psychophysical system tends to relax. Because to be tense takes a lot of effort. And not only to take effort, but unless it's locked in and frozen. It takes repeated reinforcement. And so you have to kind of keep thinking the same stressful thoughts over and over again. And in order to keep the stress level going. Stress is not something inherent, that you know, that you just kind of are born with, but rather something we create for ourselves by how we use our mind how we use our thinking how we use our body how we use our muscles. And, and so when you stop focusing on the things, the activities that creates stress and tension, then the attention will relax. Because it's not being reinforced. So one of the common techniques is to do something that takes your mind off your problems, your concerns, your drivenness, your ambition, whatever you're caught in. So something has said, you know, focusing on your breathing is one way to do that. Listening to music, getting exercise, taking a shower, or taking a bath, talking to a friend, going for a walk. There's many things that people do that help them to relax to unwind. Some of you probably have your own favorite technique. At the end of a busy day, you probably have something you'd like to do. On Friday, someone asked a group of people, what was their favorite food to eat when they're in crisis? I thought that was interesting question. And it was a high high percentage of people answer at some to do with chocolate,

the meditation, focusing on the breath has an added benefit besides keeping your mind off something. The breathing is also relaxing to focus on the breath. The breath is a wonderful interface, wonderful meeting place between our mind and our body, our conscious and unconscious operating systems. And as we kind of tune into our breathing, we notice attentions in the breath, the breath is hell, the way the breath is speeded up. Then just simply the awareness of that allows something to release to let go. And breathing is one of the great relaxation techniques. It doesn't happen just but natural breathing. Some people find it very helpful to breathe. Take long deep breaths. It's a very common technique for people who are stressed or people who are having panic attacks is to breathe A friend of mine at a Zen Center at the Zen center, he was fixing the roof. And he fell off the roof and broke his arm. And so he was laying there waiting for the paramedics to come. And paramedics came into the Zen center, you know, and rushed in with their paramedic professionalism, I guess. And then woke up to him and seeing him laying there, his broken arm, and they told him breathe deeply. And he rolled his eyes. He spent a year

he spent years breathing deeply that's very knew what to do. You know, he's that student says, you know, breathe deeply. And then, in meditation in other places outside of meditation, a great way of relaxing is to focus on your body type. A general awareness of your body does a few things. First, it keeps your takes your attention off the things that you're usually caught up in concerned with. So that helps. But also you start when you start feeling your whole body feeling what goes on in the body. That awareness I think of as giving breathing room, giving space to what goes on. And one of the functions of awareness, practice, any awareness practice, I think, especially meditation practice, is to create more space, in our system in our mind, for things to unwind things to open up things to show themselves think, have space for things to be there. A tense mind, a mind that's preoccupied and concerned with its thoughts, problems issues, all these things, is a mind that easily gets claustrophobic and gets tight and caught up in its concerns. And once we switch from being focusing on our issues on our thoughts on our process, comes to being aware of what's here, we start creating space and a space breathing room. And part of the function of meditation is to create a lot of room for what is going on in our life. And then we have a whole different relationship to our issues. If there's a lot of room for it. If there's very little room, then we feel oppressed by it very easily. But if we've kind of relaxed and open up and create space, then something else can happen. So as we become aware of the body in meditation, we make room for what goes on the body. And then with that added room, the body tends to begin to relax and soften. Chances are that some of you experienced that in the course of our half an hour sitting here, that your body became more relaxed, some of the things released or relaxed, your shoulders, your stomach or your face somehow soften a little bit. And then addition you become aware of where you're tense in your body. So as you become aware of it, you have a choice of perhaps softening and relaxing and letting go. Some some tensions in the body, some places were held, can actively be relaxed and like oh, you can breathe into it. And then the exhale, I find very nice in the exhalation to relax to soften. Or you can just simply breathe with it. Just something's some tensions don't release easily. But then just breathing in and out through that space or breathe with it, being aware of the place, making lots of room for it, being okay with it, slowly, slowly can begin to yield like oh, and yield. It's like in yoga, some of you might do yoga. Sometimes you hold a certain posture that you know, you feel a certain resistance to release in your legs or, and just hold it there. You're pushing or pressing, you just hold it there. And then at some point, something gives. Wow, how did that happen? And sometimes the body we release, if there's awareness, if there's Focus, and you don't have to be the one who does it.

Also, in meditation, you become aware of what goes on in your mind. And then you can begin because you're aware of what your goes on your mind and what goes on in your feelings. You can you can look and see, are you relating to your thoughts, attitudes, beliefs? Are you relating to your emotions in a way that's useful? Some people have very antagonistic attitudes towards their thoughts, what's going on their mind, the subjects of what they're thinking about. There might be someone you're angry with. And so we relate to those thoughts of animosity with great enthusiasm, or a great belief or great confidence. It's important to think, hostile thoughts. And so we can start looking however, you're relating to what we're thinking. are we holding it in some way that perpetuates it and speeds it up? Are we driven by certain things have certain desires, and we're driven to have that to get that. And so you can start feeling that driven is in the mind around what we're thinking about. Or we're or we're afraid of our own thoughts or afraid of something, or afraid of our feelings. And so there's kind of pulling back closing down a resistance to it. And so our relationship to what goes on becomes a very important area of study, to understand what goes on around tension. As we become aware of our relationship, then we have a chance to change that relationship. Can you can you For example, one great way to one change your relationship is not to change anything except create more space, space of awareness, hold it in awareness, see it for what it is. see it clearly. One of the very powerful little teaching statements in our Vipassana tradition is Which has to be used at the right time. But is it just a thought?

It's just a thought. We can give so much weight and importance to what we think until we realize it's just a thought. You know, what's a thought? You know, I can get upset about what happened my high school prom you know, 40 years ago? Just a thought. prom thought. Why, you know, why should I say it's being so important? Why do I hold on to it after all these years? Just a thought. Sometimes that statement dismisses things that should be actually be investigated, but it's actually a very powerful thing that cuts through to realize that we it's kind of like we see a mirage. Our thoughts create this Mirage, and then we believe the Mirage and we kind of live in that Mirage world. Just a thought. It's really clear. If you ever it's really good one, look for an opportunity to see this time that you get tense. You're sitting peacefully, everything's fine. And then you have a thought about something's going to happen, and you get tense and anxious. You lose your relaxation. And then some point later you realize that your prediction of the future was completely a fantasy and nothing to do with reality whatsoever. It was just a thought. How many times do we live caught up in the imaginary world of thoughts as if thoughts are so important, desperately important? Sometimes our thinking is important. If it is important, is it still important to get tense around it? There are important challenges people have in their lives. Is it worth getting tense because of those challenges? So this is where the investigation becomes interesting. So first we learned to relax the best we can. As and feel it's important to relax, valuable to relax. It's worthwhile to do. And once you have some modicum of relaxation of ease, then it becomes very fascinating to discover what takes you away from that ease. What takes you what causes you to tense up again? And then have a question mark around that. What belief Am I operating on? Or I believe it's important to get tense. Probably many of you don't think you believe that. But you do it anyway. You get tense. There's conscious and unconscious beliefs operating around why our system are psychophysical system tightens up.

It's always interesting, the sounds that come out. I find so to what is it that causes us to lose our attention? And then to look at that in a deep way? And question, Is this really worth it? Is this you know, what values Am I living under? So I know some people feel is really important to get tense around certain issues, because then other people believe they're taking it seriously. So the worry phenomena, there are certain people who like to worry, because if they worry, then they should prove to their family members that they care. And if they don't worry, then you know, how can they show that they care. So that's an example of a belief that goes into it. Or, or the belief that if I can somehow keep the world at bay, then I'm better off Or the belief that if I ruminate around this issue, that somehow I'll fix it. They don't get something will get better. Or if I judge these people enough that somehow I'll be protected. So let me get caught up in my judgments. So for example, here at IMC it's very fairly common for people to come in to our sittings, when we're already so many people are already meditating. And it's ideal if they don't, but we're set up here where it's okay to do that because we're community meditation center. And we realize that it's important that people shouldn't have access to a place like this, given their difficult and often challenging lives as kids and work and everything. So people come when they can. We trust that people are making their best effort. And so and also we have a we do we do a meditation practice here at IMC Where we don't believe in distractions and the nice. Now, it does occur from time to time that someone comes in late and door slams. And some of you think that's a distraction. Why is that personally, that person shouldn't be here. That is an upset place, I need to talk to the people who run this place. And in the body contracts and the mind gets off spinning and running. And, you know, it's my meditation that was just about the edge of some real deep and my depth of peace has been interrupted by that sound. And so there's there's either mental tension, even physical tension come out of that. So you've lost your use. So what might you discover? If you stop and look carefully at what did you What are you believing? What do you what unnecessary beliefs are operating that trigger certain tension around the sound of someone coming late? I'd like to hear from some of you. Some of you might, you know, it doesn't have to be confession time. You can be, I can imagine some people. So why so Carla?

Marie for the mic in the back room. So what beliefs are operating, they would cause a person to be tense when there's a loud sound in the meditation hall.

One belief I found myself operating on was that I need

I need serenity here. And I realized today, yesterday, I was in a place where I could meditate serenely, the place was set up for serenity and I realized here It's closer to real life this is gritty gritty Yes, but the belief that I operate from that gets in my way sometimes when I hear some of the sounds like the dog barking today got me was this place should be serene. I need serenity to get ease

so how do you go from that belief to becoming tense?

I heard the dog barking and I wanted to go Sue that dog

want to fix it wanted to do something about it?

Yeah you know the mother in me.

So the fix it mind came into it yeah attitude so that that's that's what took you out of your serenity. Not the dog but you're attempting to fix the dog.

Yeah.

Okay, Carly, thank you.

Well, I'm I had the same interesting reaction to the dog. Only I wanted to make it be quiet.

Not sued. I wanted to train

it

so just so anyway training

so so for you you wanted to make it quiet but in that in those in that concern to make a quiet Did you lose certain degree were you agitated by that you got cut pulled out of your your ease are we relaxation? Yes. So we needed to fix again fix fix fix it some okay someone else Hillary will take it on this side of the room we can make

my experience is used that a lot of times when I move out of ease is due to expectations. Having them not mad or

not quite met the way I wanted

and I believed If you reduce the amount of expectations, you somehow

you find a little more ease.

So, so with things don't live up to your expectation, or if you're operating on wanting things to be to be like your expect, then you get tense. And why do you think the intense what why you might not think this way. But why do you think you are your system believes that getting tense is helpful.

It's kind of what we assume as, or I think that a lot of people assume is an operating mode that keeps you alert. And that's just what you know.

So it's an operating mode that keeps you alert. And in case if you get tense, it's partly then maybe you can do something about your expectation. You can try to fix it or change it or you Protect yourself or it's a it's an action, which is this attention and action that in relationship to your expectation.

Yeah. And many times depending on the situations even like today the dog, an expedition could be that this is supposed to be quiet in. This is not what is supposed to be happening. Uh huh. And when that steps in, the expectations are not met, and you follow this train of thought that goes with it. And in some ways, letting go of expectations, I guess would be helpful.

Great, thank you. First

of all the dog. I went very quickly the dog barking reminded me of my current relationship with my aging mother produce lots of tension on the coming in late, I've pondered that a lot. And I have a belief that meditation is basically for me risky business. And the meditation state is vulnerable. And so there's some element of risk with the interruption.

So that and that sense of risk sets you up to be a little more tense.

Yes, during meditations with or without Velcro jackets in the back room.

So there's a kind of interesting and interplay then for you between relaxing and being tense to kind of like they kind of are kind of struggling with each other. Yes. Great. Thank you. In the front,

a little tense now because I didn't even hear the dog barking.

So did anyone not hear a dog barking?

Okay.

Back over in the corner,

around noise in general, I, I used to carry a belief I still echoes of feeling a lot of personal responsibility around it, that it's my responsibility to be non disruptive. That was a sort of childhood thing. So as that comes back at me and that noise is happening then it feels like an affront like you violated this rule that exists of harmful so when the car alarm goes off for While I tend to be tense because why aren't you taking care of that? That's your job to take care of your car arm you installed it, shouldn't you be taking care of it? And there's there's just so much kind of othering and shooting in and around that that can create an enormous amount of tension and more when selling alarm went off, you may be, you may be on vacation and your car's just parked down the street. How do I how do I know and why? And why do I get to impose all kinds of rules for other people that you know in my own, and it's in my own want of having a serene and peaceful, undisturbed

for whatever I'm doing,

and it's a lot of work.

For anyone over here you have it. Okay. Go ahead.

I'm wondering for getting it backwards. The Buddha Didn't you Come in light, and so he could sit and meditate. He didn't become a quantum Edison. And just so we can sit and meditate, you sit and meditate, so that she can achieve serenity. So eventually we can, you know, learn and investigate and achieve those goals. And if we're sitting here saying, gee, I'm not sorry. Now, I can't meditate. That's backwards. Right.

Right. Right. So I think kind of what I'm trying to say earlier in the beginning, is that it's really the, you know, it's the interface between peace and lack of it, relaxation and lack of it, ease and lack of it. That really is the path of practice. If you're already peaceful, you're already liberated. There's no path for you to liberation. You know, if you've already already walked to the train station, there's no path to translation that no longer no longer relevant for you and you're there. So it's very interesting in Buddhism to we appreciate delusion, we appreciate our suffering or clinging not because They're supposed to do it better. But because that's where the path to freedom is found. Over here now, yeah. Regarding going back to your original question I find for myself that I what breaks my ease, is a worrier concerned with somebody else kind of puts on me, I tend not to worry. Somebody says, Oh, you should worry about this and I start that breaks my ease. And my belief is there that actually by worrying, I can make things better, I can protect the situation better I can do things in, in a proactive form to make maybe things safer, better. So I don't think my when I look at my belief, I don't think it's an invalid belief. But I do know that these worries of other people to break my ease. Right. And so one of the interesting questions coming in on that statement is how do we best take care of the world? How do we invest? We have to protect ourselves some do you think? ourselves take care of the world around me, I'm not suggesting here just kind of be a relaxed lump. And don't do anything. But how do we do things? And can we do it with ease, rather than with tension? And the suggestion I have is that you look honestly and see which of those two ways gives the best results. If you have to, if you have to protect someone, can you protect them better, keeping some degree of relaxation than you can getting all tightened up. And so why not relaxation, not advocating non action as advocating action with a relaxed mode. So if someone tells you that something needs to be done here, I'm worrying and you better worry. He's, well, I'm not going to worry, but I'll try to help you might be another approach. Miles, although in the US

I didn't hear the dog bark, but I was wondering if it may be a sign of not being on mindful. Because mindfulness, I think, in a sense means you're aware of what's happening around you, right? And audio is definitely one of the things that's hearing that's happening around you. But if you don't hear it, payments are really not being mindful of what's going on around it.

Yes, it could be that it could be that people who didn't hear this dog barking were caught up in their thoughts. It lost in their thoughts so preoccupied that they didn't really, you know, they weren't being mindful, could also be that that as people are mindful and get relaxed and settled, they also get concentrated and they are concentrated. For example, The breath. And that because in the sensory world gets reduced naturally, the deeper you go and meditation, the more simple the sensory world becomes. And at some point, you're not really aware of the world around you so much, or it's not really that important because you're so absorbed on the breathing. And so then you wouldn't be aware of things around you. So they're so strong, that mindfulness that comes along with concentration can have

little bit the same effects sometimes as being distracted and your own thoughts. And one is helpful if what you're trying to do is to go deep, and one is not helpful if you're trying to understand what's going on.

Yes.

So this is sort of an opposite reaction. I actually enjoy hearing people come in late And I think the reason is that it, it puts me on my ears. So I feel like I could cough if I had to or I could sneeze and, you know, if I had to come in late then it would be okay. So it just it puts me at ease. So

thank you for those.

So I'd like to see kind of the end here. I'd like to say that it's very valuable to question what prompts you to lose your relaxation knees and the more relaxed and more at ease you can become the stronger reference point you have for doing this investigation. Because you can see greater swings, greater movements. And sometimes the deeper you are the more relaxed you are It's sometimes it's, you can see some of the more subtle foundational movements of things you cling to hold on to, then you can if you're if you're not so relaxed, but you know, just throughout the day, it's a great investigation, what takes you away from your ease? And then and then is it really, and the beliefs that are behind that? Are they true? Is it really are you really better off being tense or you're better off being relaxed. Now, if you're really tense and caught up in your attention, you might easily say I'm not so not so useful to be tense here, but you can't do much to relax it, you know, automatically, but it but if you can watch the movement, the movement, the initial movement, when you start getting more tense, from being less tense, that movement, there might be a choice there, where it's easier to let go and come back to a more Useful place. Once you're locked in, it's hard. But if you can study that movement out, there's a lot to discover there. And as the story says, all you need to learn about Buddhism is found in that investigation. That's quite a statement and a process of hope that you have more peaceful, peaceful life. And your useful peaceful life is a contribution to the world around you, that you're more able to come from the some of the wisdom that similar new wisdom flourishes in relaxing in relaxed states, stupidity flourishes intention.

And so I'd like to end with one more story. That maybe somewhat similar vein different enough after At lunch one day, the Abbess and visiting philosophy professor went for a walk along the river that passed by the monastery. Being a hot day, they eventually sat down to cool off under the shade of a large tree. The professor asked, I am interested in learning Buddhist philosophy. Could you tell me some of the fundamental doctrines of your religion? Well, so the obvious, I don't think I can help you much. You see, we don't rely on any philosophy at the monastery. But continue to Professor everyone, consciously or unconsciously, has a philosophy with which they make sense of their life and their purpose. It is different than the monastery replied the novice. At the monastery, we rely on awareness not doctrines, but insisted the professor you must have a philosophy which which explains the importance of being aware After pausing to consider how best to respond, the Abbess said, as we walked along, we were both aware of our hot, sweaty and tired would become from our walk. We did not need a philosophy to tell us the benefits of sitting down here in the shade. If you put your hand on a hot stove, you don't need a philosophy to pull the hand away. If the baby is crying from hunger, the need to feed the baby is obvious to the parents. Buddhist practice does not depend on having a set of doctrines or beliefs. Rather, it depends on being aware of what brings relief from suffering. Rather than being taught Buddhist philosophy. At the monastery, the monks and nuns are trained to develop an acutely refined awareness. With such sensitivity. Ultimate liberation is as natural as sitting down in the shade on a hot day. So May you be aware Thank you.