

# 2010-10-24 The Practice of Gladdening Collecting And Releasing

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## SPEAKERS

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So I'm teaching a retreat. At hidden Villa again, I did one in September. This is a week long now. And so as the custom for doing those retreats, I leave kind of as soon as I can at the end so I can get there to close the retreat. And at the retreat, I'm teaching it together with Heather Martin, a wonderful Dharma teacher from Canada. And she gave a beautiful teaching that inspired me. And I wanted to take off on that teaching. There are many ways of categorizing the training the practice of Buddhism, and she offered three categories for putting placing the different aspects of Buddhist practice what it's about. And so you might consider a little bit as I go through these three categories, your relationship to these three, three, which of these might be meaningful for you, which might be the ones that are your most useful medicine for where you are right now to address, which maybe is the weak side of how you practice, which is your strong suit. And kind of explore how it is for you personally, these three and the three that she listed is gladdening the mind, or Thank you, I think she actually said gladdening the heart, collecting the heart, and releasing the heart, releasing the mind. So gladdening means to inspire to bring joy to bring happiness to the heart to the mind. And to lighten it, to elevate it to somehow you know, decline in it is the generic term here. And it's a very important part of practice to do this and some people bypass this particular Part of the practice because they think Buddhism is really serious. And you're supposed to give, you know, it's, it's, it is kind of serious. For some people, it's the most serious thing they do in their life. But remember, I went up to my Zen teacher who was, and that was a monk at Tassajara. Practicing that for some years. And that was probably a, you know, relatively diligent student there was like, you know, I was just there practicing. And I walked up to my teacher, and I said to him, you know, I'm not very serious, but anything, but the thing I'm most serious about giving them a series of anything, is my Buddhist practice. So that was kind of interesting. I thought. It wasn't saying I'm not serious, but anything didn't mean that I was kind of not serious about things. I mean, that it wasn't like I had anything that kept me away or kept barriers to engage in to what I was doing and but What I meant was I was holding all likely that I wasn't kind of, you know, I wasn't getting kind of grim. Or it wasn't like I was at all this attachment or you know, clinging to my Buddhism or anything and it wasn't my sense of clinging and holding on to things was getting lighter. And so my, my stumbling way of trying to say I was lighter and holding everything kind of lightly, was I'm not don't take anything serious seriously. But what I take most seriously is this Buddhist practice that I'm doing. And even though I was holding back likely to but sometimes we take this practice kind of grim Lee it's kind of serious about life and death spots, existential issues of dealing with sickness, old age and death. It's about this, you know, great, wonderful, profound, challenging thing that most people don't have a clue what it means, but it seems to be important enlightenment. And, and so people get serious and then people get serious for other reasons people have all kinds of conditioning from their past that lends them to be serious. There are people, you know, their family of origin experiences, sometimes it's really remarkable to be on retreat.

And there's something about the intensity or the depth of where people go and retreat, where it tends to flesh out some of the deeper underlying operating systems and belief systems that people live by. And that aren't so obvious and you know, you people go around their normal life and everything and but they inform how we engage in a normal life.

But on retreat, we settle down, quiet down, and these underlying beliefs begin to bubble up and, and become seen clearly. And it's quite remarkable how many underlying beliefs that People have stem from their experiences being children and their family of origin What happened to them? And and, you know, people have tragic thing, tragic things that happened to them as children that, you know, I, you know shouldn't really happen but they do right people for whom a I think it's okay to talk about a colleague of mine who's a teacher she she had an older child who was didn't get proper medical care when the sister was born and so lived a very stunted life. They kind of intellectually physically everything and and, and so the parents then father was just not available. wasn't around. Wasn't You know if anything the father was, every more every day when the father came home, it was was the father going to be abusive and angry and yell alcoholic? Or was there gonna be a safe. And then there was overprotectiveness of the younger daughter. Because the older daughter was, you know, such a terrible situation. And then And so that kind of as a child grew up this little girl, she grew up in this very difficult family situation if his abusive father, this mother, who was overly protective of the of her, and comparing being compared to her older sister, and who was being treated very badly by everyone around and this set of condition into her adulthood, which became, it was very difficult to kind of overcome or had to be overcome and dealt with that to be seen. There's people for whom one of the parents died, my mother died when she was a year and a half and then The father didn't have a clue how to deal with both the grief and the pain of that, or a young, young daughter. And, and then the stepmother comes in early on, it doesn't want to deal either with the young daughter. And so that's a difficult situation. And I can go on and on. There's just a long list of stories that come on retreats where they you find out how people the lessons people got, one person said that primary, the most common thing that her mother told her was, you should be ashamed of yourself. So if that's the kind of demand you get over and over again, that's sets a certain conditioning or people for whom something happens in early age and tragedy. And they're not. They're told they can't No, no, no longer can be joy, joyful, it's not appropriate. And the playfulness a spark was out of the child, because somehow they've been dampened down and sometimes on retreat, people remember, you know, I used to be joyful when I was four, and then that thing happened. Or, you know, I just go on and on. So there's all kinds of very deep conditioning that gets set very early. And it's hard to see because it sets in motion, fear, belief system, ideas of self, where we think we need to get in our life. And we need to, it's very helpful to have some system some way of accessing it and seeing how they operate. And I find it remarkable that meditation practice, especially on retreat, flushes these things out faster than most things in the world. I've known therapists who have been amazed. It takes me they'll say it takes me a year to develop the trust with a client for them to tell the kind of things they'll tell you. In the first meeting and 15 minutes. Remember, once I was there was someone being trained to be a be passionate teacher

and she was a therapist to me In two years of therapy, and so she would sit in on the first time she would sit in on interviews. That way we quickly call them interviews, discussions, one on one discussions with a teacher and the meditator on retreat, and in a 15 minute meetings, and she would she listen to watch, you know, she came in my interviews for a while, and she would watch the exchange. And she kind of wrote her mouth dropped, because she said, Wow, you the level of trust the level in which people dropped out and talk about what goes on. It takes me a year in therapy to get to that point. And you don't even know these people. They come in 15 minutes. But there's something about the context of a meditation retreat, where people settle down. There's tremendous sincerity and honesty that goes into their endeavor that to be present and connected themselves. That that pulls out

of them shows out of them, aspects of themselves, which are very difficult to access in daily life. And some of those are things that are dampen our joy or gladdening or inspiration. And so part of Buddhist practice is to gladden the mind. When I went to Nepal, I was amazed to go to a Buddhist ceremony there. And they were chanting that Buddhist refuges, Namo tassa bhagavato in those two things, but they were doing it with tableaus and sitars and they were rocking out. I mean, they were having like a really good time. I was one first I first thought, you know, he said, Okay, that's such a good time. You know, doing the refugees aren't the refuge kind of serious, you know, and like, there's sacred and solemn and Buddha sodden. Um, you know, it's like, you know, like you do it a funeral or something. And but they were rocking out and so, what You know so gladdening the mind lightening the mind opening it up so it's not so heavy and grim. I mean, there's a kind of maybe we should have revival Buddhism.

The some people find it through doing loving kindness, practice. loving kindness practice can bring kind of lightness and joy to the mind. Some people find it from their other faith, their sense of deep faith or confidence in the practice and the teachings and the possibility of freedom of being on a path or their deep confidence in a some person they've encountered some people who seem to exhibit a certain degree of freedom or compassion or love or something that seems to really inspire them. Glad is them to know this is possible that People can cultivate develop themselves in this way. And it kind of lightens them that sense of possibility and faith, part of the function of faith is to gladden the mind and lighten it up. And the gladdening of the mind is very important, because the sense of faith or inspiration that can come, because Buddhist practice is not all happy. Not because Buddhist practices and happy because you're coming along and so you have to meet yourself, you know, and so what do you what do you encounter and some of these things are, you know, are really difficult to encounter oneself these deep beliefs, deep attachments, deep clinging, so that we have that is very difficult to let go of the deep fears that have to be encountered the deep cravings and sense of I need certain things and this has to be this way and And sometimes it's quite challenging to, to, to, to see what's here. It said that self knowledge itself seldom good news. And so it takes some it takes it takes some courage and discipline to work with, with our mind our hearts, to not succumb to the old beliefs that's come to the patterns of behavior which are not very supportive and helpful for us. And so, sometimes it takes a lot of diligence and a lot of strong work to do that. But so we need to have that gladdening part. Not that you can go into it gladdened, but so you go in with some faith and conviction support, this is a useful thing to do. There's a certain kind of joy that can come or inspiration or that can come when you know, you can do something difficult. And you know, it's meaningful. It's worthwhile. It not supposed to be all you know, pollyannish this Buddhist practice clouding your mind and kind of just kind of just smile all the time everything is fine and accept everything as it is gladden your mind enough so that when you encounter the difficulties in practice, you don't get weighed down by it. But so you're willing to kind of stay present through the some places that are quite, you know, quite a challenge. So then the second training 72nd aspect is is collecting the mind. And this is a beautiful part of practice and then it just itself brings joy, your delight. And collecting the mind means that you gather all the desperate parts of our psychophysical being all the fragmented ways, all the ways we're split and divided among in ourselves. And it's remarkable how easy it is to be divided to be fragmented. In most of us are to some degree all the time because we have multiple concerns going on at the same time. Some of you have experienced that here. Myself Guess you came you came here and I would think that your intention to show up here and meditate this morning was to meditate. You know, you came to IMC to meditate. Or maybe you just came along for the free ride or something. I don't know what but you know, your idea is to meditate. So your intention is to meditate. And probably a good percentage you found out that your mind had other things in mind. And, and some people might have come with great intention. It was like the most important thing in your life was to sit down and really be present and get enlightened or do something here and nothing else is more important. And you start to sit down and you start thinking about lunch.

You know, what you'll have for lunch? Where should I go? And, you know, the, the contrast between how important meditation is and how important lunches, you know, in your psyche is quite something. So your intention might be to sit here and be present in a careful way. Your somehow your, your thinking mind is interested in lunch. However, on the way here, someone

cut you off on the freeway. And that's happened one too many times. And so your link lingering is this irritation where you get frightened and irritated in the freeway. And so your body has this kind of still has this adrenaline rush in it. And so you feel kind of the irritation kind of bubbling up in there. So your intention is to meditate, your mind is thinking about lunch, and your body has the tension and the adrenaline still of you being cut off on the freeway. And then, and then you come here to sit and the person who's sitting near you either is very attractive or very impulsive. And so your body is kind of like either leaning towards or leaning away slightly. You know, you know, depending on your persuasion. And so now there's four things going on. And then deeper down below all that is your mother telling you. He's been dead for 40 years telling you that, that, you know, you should act proper. And whatever that is. And so and so there's all these currents going on at the same time. And so, your your intention is doing one thing, your thoughts are doing something else, your mood is something else, your, your body's involved with all kinds of other things happening at the same time. And we carry so much tension in our body from all these different things we do. And so we're split from ourselves, we're divided. And sometimes that sense of division is so strong, that sometimes people are at war with themselves, the different parts of who they are, that there's one impulse you know, to Maybe the impulse is not lunch, maybe it's for sex. And then the other impulse says, You can't do that you're doing this beautiful spiritual practice here you are messing it up that terrible part of yourself that part that your parents told you was evil, or your religion was evil is bubbling up with these sexual fantasies. This is a terrible part of your squash Get down, you think that mindfulness hammer and knock it down, way away away. And then that part of us just feels awful, or maybe feels like it wants to run away or tighten up and maybe wants to rebel. And so it gets stronger, and so get stronger with those thoughts. And then the proper one kind of, you know, and then just just build attention. And this is true. It happens to some people, where the inner war between different sides of themselves builds and builds to a crescendo and it's really ugly, what happens. So it's not just a fragment that it's actually a war in there. And so to collect the mind to collect the heart is to end the war to end The Division. And I think what's beautiful of mindfulness is you don't have to choose one side or the other. There's a way of holding it all mindfulness is is great, open awareness that can hold it all. I think of mindfulness as is creating space, for what is in our psyche, in your mind. It's so easy to be claustrophobic around things. You know, the mind has all these thoughts and concerns and the more strongly you're caught in your concerns, the more claustrophobic the mind is less space there is, as we see it, and recognize it and bring awareness to it. Stay in the present moment for it. It's like creating space. And with enough space, problems we have that we think we have to get rid of or solve can exist without being solved, but can exist with us being peaceful. We realize maybe I don't have to solve those problems. I can just see it and hold it. I'm fine. There's all this peace and well being here. And what I think thought was a problem is still a problem. But rather than being the problem, my, you know, this big thing, it just it can just float there. It doesn't have to be solved, maybe can just dissolve when there's enough space. So part of the process of practice is to gather in order to collect all this desperate parts. So that our intention, our thinking, our mood, our emotions, our body, our energy, is all operating together at the same time for the same purpose. And when we start gathering all our energy is unifying all of who we are into one thing at the same time. It tends to produce joy tends to produce a sense of well being.

And so part of the training of Buddhism is to learn through that collectiveness called Samadhi or summit or sometimes called concentration Together Together to unite. And, and some of that has to do with learning how How to pay attention to pay attention to spaciously. And with acceptance and open

awareness, and to pay attention in a way that is not using the sledgehammer of mindfulness, or the drill drill bit of mindfulness, just drill into it or something I had to learn in my practice that in you know, that concentrating, being mindful of something is not like doing my taxes. You know, you kind of you know, there's I don't know how to do you do your taxes, but you know, it's kind of a challenge to figure it out. And you kind of I board down and I'm not like a spacious and open and everything is fine, maybe I shouldn't be but you know, I'm kind of like really intense and probably have a furrow and kind of this doesn't make sense and this is complicated. The print is so small and, and have to go to what page now. And, and, and so some you know, it's not the So, so, being concentrated in the breath isn't like you You know, zeroing in like this laser up in the control tower that's supposed to, you know, zap down the breath and it's much more like, rather than go rather than, you know, doing the Texas it's more like approaching a lover. You know, you don't have to kind of just go straight up and, you know, maybe some people do, but, you

know, usually there's a you could, you could you could finish the rest. Or maybe it's like, you know, it's like petting a cat. You know, you don't use you know, you don't just kind of like, you know, hammer the cat with your hand, you know, you know, the efficient way left the VA doesn't even tell the pet the cat. So I'm just gonna do it efficiently and, you know, as fast as I can, as hard as I can just kind of get it over with you. You know, is it enough pet cats that you kind of approach gently and you do, it's, you know, softly and you kind of, you know, figure out just the right kind of way. So same thing with concentrating or being present for us for ourselves or for the breath. It's not this kind of tight, hard act, it's a soft thing. It's something we approach more generally, with softly or, or openly or, you know, with our whole being. I find I found that early on that if I kind of did the laser approach to being on the breath, kind of thinking I had to beat efficiently or the willful, pardon me the part that the part that I can think I can do things with and accomplish things by with my thinking mind or whatever, that's not the mind that should be concentrating on the breath. That actually kind of makes me kind of tight. And what I learned is that they kind of approach it kind of like through the back door, or kind of with a sense of composure or some sense of softness or kind of like My body is petting, my breathing. So there's a softer kind of gentle kind of approach. And that allows things to gather together. For me, the willful kind of tax approach tends to continue the split. So part of the training of Buddhism is to gather things together. And it can be beautiful to do something like the breathing, where we stay with a breath and it's like, things get lined up, we stay with a breath over and over and come back, repeat ourselves with a breath and is in a beautiful way in a nice way and petting the cat kind of way or being you know, a gentle lover maybe you're how to know how it is. And, and then maybe it's like, you know, taking the magnet over the sand where the iron filaments slowly begin to line up. That just repeat over and over again and the different elements of who we are soften and, and they're the attraction of our lunch and concerns with what happened the freeway in the morning between into lesson and those aspects of faculties we have begin gathering together. Focusing also on the present moment focusing also on just on the breath of being here. And when when we start to gather together and be unified and more and more of who we are as a being is here and present, then it allows the vat. The advantage of this is not only to feel good, it helps to go out in the mind the heart, but also, it provides provides a very good conditions for us to see more deeply what's going on. And it's hard to see the depths of the mind it's hard to see the latent tendencies, the deeper underlying belief systems that we operate on the deeper attachments that we have. And so as we as we move in, to collecting the mind, we're also releasing the mind releasing it from lunch. We're really concerned releasing it from concerns about the irritation for earlier releasing it from the tension. It's been, we've held our body As we go deeper and deeper, we see how the heart can be freed, where the constriction, the tightness, the fear, the hatred, the grasping that is there can be released. And if and the and the. So a very important part of the Buddhist training is this release of the heart to release of the mind, to open it up, not keep it closed, keep it tight, keep it resistant, but let it become open or soft or free. And to understand that the freedom of the heart, the liberation of the heart,



the release of the heart is a possibility potential for all of us. We don't have to stay constricted, tight, we don't have to live a life of fear. We don't have to live a life of hate, of regret, of shame, of anger. We don't have to live that way. It's possible to release it now. An easy thing to do, but it's possible. It's easier if you are supported by a gladdening. By faith and inspiration, it's easier if you learn the deep calmness and relaxation that comes from collecting the mind and settling the mind.

And, and then the release of the mind is one of the great happy things to experience. It gives us a lot of faith, a lot of joy. It's one of the great conditions for further gardening the mind as the mind, the heart gets clouded, because it makes it easier to get collected. As you become more collected, it's easier to release the hearts and throat further. And it's a beautiful circle. Beautiful mutual support system. These three, they all three operate kind of together. And the question for you that maybe I would suggest it's interesting for you to look at is which of these three is would be most supportive for you right now. Which of these three is the weakest one Which one Have you under developed and would be good to develop and support. If you need to develop the gladdening of the mind the joy and all that, you should probably come to the happy Buddhist celebration. And, you know, come and have fun. Or if what you need is to collect the mind, perhaps what you need to do is to learn to relax and deeper way. Relaxation is one of the conditions that allows for the collectiveness. And if what you need more as the release, maybe you need more honesty, the tremendous honesty to really recognize where you're stuck what's really going on here. impeccable honesty about what's actually going on for you.

So to gladden the heart to collect the heart and to release the heart. And many of you have come here today. And one of the ways that one of the sources for gladdening the heart is to collect together as community and to understand to appreciate each other as community. And so there's a little bit of opportunity for that to hang out now there's the teens have their big sale big offering. And Alicia, are they ready for it's ready could happen. So our wonderful team group and team group had its origin and teens who wanted to have a group here team team program, and so they help design it and figure it out. And it's been a beautiful thing that's gone on here at IMC So, I hope you enjoy enjoy. Thank you