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SPEAKERS

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Come time see for those of you who are new thank Carl for your nice words. And that just happens that the topic for today is compassion. I was kind of asked to talk about the topic and I thought it would be a nice topic for the end of the year or at the beginning of the new year. And in thinking about compassion, I thought about how much it's needed in this world of ours. And many people say so, man, all religions emphasize it. And that was you know, it's still reverberating in my heart that I spent a little bit of time yesterday with a woman know elderly woman with a brain tumor and, and hardly much memory at all. But with a lot of anxiety to understood her state she was in a lot of anxiety and then spending time with her husband who seemed to elderly but seemed quite clear and bright and Somehow concerned about it. But then I came home, my wife said, oh, by the way, he has Alzheimer's, and very touching, touching to my heart. And it's easy to kind of come across lots of stories like that probably some of you, over the holidays have been in touch with people who are in some state of suffering or something. Maybe some of you are as well. And so there's a world we live in a world that compassion is needed, because compassion is a movement of caring for others and for ourselves, to encounter suffering and problems in the world and be concerned about and care about it. And it's really one of the one of the most beautiful qualities of the heart is to be compassionate and caring. And it's a kind of strange beauty because it's a beauty that is so seemingly on the surface. At least, so closely tied to suffering. And so there has to be a willingness to be present for suffering or see it for compassion to usually appear. And so it kind of go hand in hand. It's like two sides of the same hand perhaps, that you can't, you know, you talked about, you talked about compassion, how beautiful it is, but not far away. We're also talking about suffering. I think of compassion as, as there being two kinds of compassion. And these are kind of a no for you. Maybe you don't like these categories, but you can categorize it different ways if you'd like. But I'd like to think of compassion of the mind and compassion of the heart. And the compassion of the mind is the is the public teaching. It's very common in Buddhism and the compassion of the heart is The public secret of Buddhism, it's probably open secret because as a public because you know, it's important, but it's a secret because you can't really talk about it, you have to experience it. And it's something that's inner. And, and part of what we're trying to do, what happens in Buddhist practice, I believe, is discovering this beautiful secret that's in each of our hearts, and having this kind of ripen and flower within us. And, and in my situation, when I was first encountered Buddhism, my young 20s I had no interest in compassion. And I think the books that I read about Buddhism back then, as far as I can remember, didn't really have the word compassion or discussion about it very much. Maybe some of you remember those books, some of you way back then. But like I read the books of Alan Watts, how much compassion is there in Alan Watts? Maybe he was but I can't remember I can come to mind is beautiful books on Zen and stuff and that doesn't stand out to me. DT Suzuki, his books on Zen and Suzuki Roshi, I think is my beginner's mind. I don't make as much emphasis or talk about compassion. But I never knew Suzuki Roshi, but I know that many people who did, and he might not have talked much about compassion, but he was a very compassionate person. And I think that's part of the reason

people were attracted to him. And he maybe didn't have to talk about it, because maybe he was compassionate. David, you knew him, right. Was he compassionate? And did he talk much about it? made up for it? Right. Yeah. So the public secret.

And so you know, when I came into Zen and you know, wasn't thinking about it much or concerned or even interested in it. And if anything, you know, would say I was interested in enlightenment. And, and over those first years of practice, I don't think I got any enlightenment. But I got compassion meant. And to my surprise that as they did my practice, I found that my heart opened up. It was kind of awkward. The way I described it to myself was that the crusts of my heart fell away, or practice was the tenderizer that the mean pretenders or in the meat and they get soft. So the practice was a tenderizer in my heart, and it softened it up. And it wasn't, it wasn't expected. It just seemed to happen slowly. And it happened a lot because in the Zen practice I was doing then the emphasis that I had was just a presence. And I wasn't given a lot of tools or techniques are things to do, to stay present and stay present for what was I spent hours sitting there in meditation on retreat in the zendo. Just being present tenderizing letting go. And, and one of the things that I encountered was my own suffering. And when I didn't, I didn't really have much to do about it wasn't given a lot of instructions on how to deal with my suffering except be with yourself and just be there be present. And, and that kind of very simple presence. I didn't, without keeping it really simple, without getting into a lot of ideas and thoughts about it or, or be adverse to it or try to fix it. But just be present, be present is a very, very powerful thing to do. And now many years later, I'm teaching I teach people skills in Buddhist chaplaincy, people who are going to go into hospitals to be chaplains, and usually your chaplains in hospitals for people or Hospice of people who are in condition terms are in crisis. Your Life isn't, you know, sometimes in tremendous disarray or mentally challenged with some of the greatest suffering people can encounter. And probably the most useful skill that we teach chaplains is be present. Just to be there be present and have the capacity to be present without trying to fix it. And many chaplains have to be taught, it's very hard skill to learn the skill of not fixing. And because fixing somehow conveys the wrong message, and there's something very powerful isn't wrong with fixing them. If you can fix something, fix it, please. If persons dying fix it, please. And but, you know, there's something very different that gets conveyed to a person if you can be present, and allow something to soften and unravel and open up that can't open up if you're there to tinker and technique and make something you'd be in charge make something happen. So many times just being present. People open up in a way that's very hard to open up another way, you know, I know they're sort of their circumstances. So a big part of what Buddhist practices is about learning how to be present in a very simple way. So this is what happened to me as I learned to be present and present. And it's first in I noticed, or notice this in retrospect, but at first I started tuning in to what was compassionate around me. And I would see compassionate and other people, or I found a beautiful photograph of the, the Japanese Bodhisattva kind of archetypical archetype of compassion called quyenya Nora ritesh Mara. And I wasn't I was not iconically interested, you know, in Buddhism, but that icon, that kind of picture of Kuan Yin, she just seems so compassionate it seemed to resonate and speak to me In a way, and in many ways I saw compassion around me. And sometimes I just feel it in the breeze is there a way to kind of blue against my cheek, he just felt the breeze was compassionate. And, and I think what was happening was compassion was being born in me. But I didn't recognize it as such within myself, I could only recognize it outside. And at some point, I recognized that something was being born inside of me or compete coming to a blooming or blossoming inside of me.

So that's what I said, there's two kinds of compassion, the compassion of the mind and the compassion of the heart. And please don't take these categories or these descriptions as being too hard and fast. It's just what works for me. But the compassion of the mind is the compassion here for me is the compassion of ideas. the compassion of you know, perhaps the obligation you should be compassionate, please Okay, now you hear that and they say, Okay, I got to go out there and find

someone and try to generate my thoughts of goodwill and caring and figure out what to do. And, you know, Gil says Be presence. Okay, what does that mean? And you know, you know, and try to negotiate the world of ideas of shoulds. And should students and techniques and understanding and how do I understand people so I have compassionate, nothing wrong with that approach. And there's actually a lot of wisdom to it to think wisely and considerately and understand the situation through our mind as best we can. The other way is of the heart and a heart is, is not mediated through concepts and words. It's not mediated through the idea of there's someone out there, and there's me here, there's someone out there who's suffering and there's me here, who's going to help that person who's suffering or engage the person who's suffering the heart. Is, is that sensitivity that we have that that's simply a sensitive that's receptive to the world around us and then receptivity we it gets activated, or we feel empathy or care. So, you know, if you go out and you know, and dress up really warmly, like I did today. And then I was surprised to leave the house and find out it was actually pretty warm here today, the sun was out. And so kind of the sensitivity, I could feel the warmth of my body and there just came kind of a natural desire to take off a sweater or something. I didn't have to think about it, but it just used to that, you know, I felt I could feel the warmth in my body. So the same thing with compassion, you feel this warmth in the heart, or this resonance in the heart when it's open and present for the world around us. But it's more than that. What I found and I think Buddhism has often pointed to that to the centuries is that when the heart becomes empty or open or sensitive, it doesn't need an object to feel compassionate. But it's somehow inherent in the heart, the open, empty, relaxed heart, to be, to have compassion can be a field of compassion, that doesn't really make sense to talk about an object a person and me and the other person is just a field of caring a field of kindness, a field of empathy, a field of compassion, that has a field that feels very delicious is the right word, but feels like you're at home feeling of being at home or being relaxed or safe or comfortable. And And so, one of the primary conditions that support compassion of the heart, is to be relaxed, is to relax And one of the reasons why this kind of compassion becomes stronger as people meditate or practice is to become more relaxed, or some of the tension or preoccupations, or that we have that keep us kind of tense, caught, begin to relax and to settle away. And in that settling away, then the functioning of the heart can function better and more fully. So if you're the opposite of compassion. In Buddhism, we usually say the opposite of compassion is hatred are cruelty. But there's other things that prevent compassion, heart, hearts, compassion, cooperating as well. So, greed or lust, fear, make it very hard to feel compassion. And one of the reasons for that is to have greed or hate or fear, or a lot of delusion and confusion means that you're kind of you generally Caught persons caught up in thoughts and ideas. When I was asked yesterday to kind of counsel this woman who was to help her out, she was a little bit with who had a brain tumor was a lot of anxiety. It was at a Christmas party. So it wasn't usual kind of place to sit down and have a conversation. And so I thought, well, this person seemingly can't track things as much anymore. So I better say something really simple to her. That maybe she can remember the people around her couldn't remember caretaker and so I said, I said to her, you probably the best thing you can do to help you with your help with your anxiety is don't believe your thoughts. And I suspect that that no one ever told her that in 80 years of life, you don't have to believe your thoughts. And many people chase after the thoughts or live through their thoughts or their in their images of things and the world of anxiety to a great degree in always done with the great degree belongs to that world of thinking. And we have a thought that we worried about something and we get involved in it, we live in it and we have scenarios and imagination comes into play. And that whole world of imagination means that we're caught and preoccupied. And, and then that preoccupation, that preoccupation kind of covers or inhibits other kinds of sensitivity. It's like, you know, if you're, if you if you are really focused on wanting something, something out there, an object or a person or something, and it's a really fixated, you might not be listening to the sounds in the room, because you're focusing on the looking. So if you're focusing on your thoughts, you can get lost people and get lost in those worlds. I've had the time to time, the occasion where It's rather embarrassing to admit this, but I'm hoping everyone had this experience. If I'm alone, then maybe I'm in trouble. But it happens. I've had the situation where I was

listening. I've been listening to people. And I didn't hear what really what they said, because I was listening to my own thoughts. So that's not so nice. So, you know, so again, you're preoccupied caught in our own thinking, and so not even listening to what people are saying. And so, a lot of the cruelty a lot of the fear that people have, belong to the world, the world of thoughts and ideas and things, but even good even when there's not fear, maybe it could be you person can be caught up in other kind of wholesome thinking. It can be caught up in thoughts of generosity or thoughts of ethos of compassion and kindness. But if you're caught up in too much thoughts and thinking about it, that also interferes with a deeper listening of hearts are the deeper sensitivity of the heart. And the primary way of discovering the hearts compassion is being relaxed. And it's a wonderful enough the paradox a wonderful thing because for the hearts compassion to be there, we have to be relaxed. And that means when we encounter suffering, the tendency we might have to get anxious or tense around that suffering hinders the continuation of that heartfelt compassion. But it's very easy. When your heart feels, you know, this feels empathy and feels the kind of pain of pain of the world. It's easy for the old habits of anxiety, old habits of us have to fix it and I have to do something and, and old habits of that person out there and there's me here and I have to do something or I have to run away or, you know, it's, you know, all ideas of what it means to be a self and self image. Come into Play are the messages we got growing up, come into play that what are you supposed to be? And in all those things, it's easy to get back into the world of thinking in the mind and ideas, and then lose the relaxation that gave birth to that heart compassion to begin with. And, but to stay in touch with a heart compassion requires us to be relaxed, they relaxed. And what is is that what does it take to stay relaxed? In the in in being present for someone who might be dying? who clearly the whole family's in kind of distress around what's happening? And what did it take to stay relaxed, soft. And one of the things that I think for some people it takes is not believing a lot of the old ideas and messages that were supposed to be anxious now. Or, or this is a crisis that requires kind of getting All running around in circles. I love Julie Westar was is a spirit rock teacher colleague. But before she was a teacher, she was a hospice nurse. And she and I wanted to say something to the family last night. She says to people, but I didn't see him right at the Christmas party. I let it go. But at some point she would take the family side family of people, someone who was dying. And she tell them from now on, there's no more crisis.

No more emergencies. So it means that you know if suddenly person had trouble breathing or the heart wasn't working properly or unusual things that you call 911 for do something serious. That was no longer going to be treated as a crisis and emergency is just part of the course of nature taking its course a dying process, taking it place that can be quite hard to hear quite hard to be willing to do when people are sometimes in the mode that that's to save this person at all costs, everything you know, all of medicine goes, you know, towards only saving people not letting people die in a dignified way or just die, as nature takes its course. So then we have these messages for their thoughts and ideas. It's not okay to stay relaxed when we encounter suffering. And this is where practice is so important to have spent, you know, long time, maybe years, sitting on a cushion, meditating, sitting in a chair, meditating, maybe being in retreat where you spend, you know, days in silence, just being present, just being present learning the muscle of presence, learning to, to feel palpable kind of visceral feeling of the stillness or the silence of the body of the heart of the mind. That's receptive and open to the turret. The airlines be comfortable with extended periods of deep inner silence deep Silence, where that's the power sensitivity of the pores of your sensitivity, the pores of the heart or the pores of your skin can just be present and open and receptive and feel and without any, you know, in a sense any hard barriers and boundaries between self and other, just be present, feel comfortable with that. And that discover that deep relaxed place where that inner functioning of the heart can operate is a big part of this hearts compassion. And it doesn't really doesn't really, you know, and when you encounter someone who's suffering it's there's an object as a person that you feel compassionate towards. But part of the inner secret of the secret public secrets of practice is that compassion is there without the object when the

heart is you deeply relaxing, we're deeply relaxed and soft. Then there's a kind of a sweetness there a compassion there, that just sense of being home there. And this heart compassion can be trained or these hearts compassion can be awakened within us. And one of the important qualities for awakening in discovering it is wanting to and want to become more compassionate. The world needs more compassionate people, it's probably all of us need to. It's good for us. It's good for our own well being to be compassionate. There's many, many spiritual teachers say if you want to be happy, care for other people, as opposed to and you know, you don't hear a lot of spiritual teachers who say, if you want to be happy, get an iPod or an iPad, or a MacBook or, or all of the above. The more more technology you can get, the happier you'll be for sure. That's the secret of technology and You know, I meet people who believe that my 13 year old son believes that.

So, long training, under learning to understand ourselves, learning to understand how we get pulled into the world of thoughts pulled into the world of reactive emotions, and ideas, and learning how to relax out of it, and, and learning but more than that we're learning to do it enough in meditation, I think is one of the great places where we begin to really learn the body begins to really learn so Something Some of us have, have learned in the past, many people have learned over a lifetime. That to be anxious, or to be afraid, or to be that desire and wanting and getting, or is really the way to go, or to be vain, or to be very insecure. We've learned how people mind develops habits, whatever we do continuously develops habits. And if we're caught up in those kinds of habits or ways of thinking, there's no space or room for the heart sensitivity to be there. And so what we're partly doing a practice is to really learn how to be a different way of being. And one of the one of the important preconditions or conditions for rising of compassion, deep compassion is feeling safe. And I think the children who don't feel safe growing up, have very difficult time feeling compassion for others and developing it with children you feel safe, have a safe environment feel secure with their family are the ones who have been measured to be the ones more likely to have compassion when they grow up. For people who are already grown up, you're not going to go back to your parents and ask them to make you safe anymore. But it's really figuring out how to retrain yourself. And I find that meditation is one of the great places to feel a deep sense of inner safety. Some people call it feeling home, to be able to sit still and quiet and begin to relax or let go of all the usual chatter, and thoughts and ideas and attitudes that keep us spinning and keep us not feeling safe, keep us worried and anxious and wanting and doing and all that and let that all settle down. And it's quite remarkable that when the thinking mind the anxious mind, the concerned mind relaxes and we feel relaxed. And settled in the body. We people feel deeply at home, they feel peaceful, they feel at ease, sometimes they feel joy enjoys that kind of way being. And if you do that long enough, and I think it begins to rewire, the circuitry in your mind begins to kind of change the habits or you know, the, you know, the brain say the brain has these circuits that get laid down. And then that's the way you know, you have to develop certain grooves in the circuitry of the brain. And that's where the mind tends to go, electrons tend to go. And so one of the things we're doing in meditation is to create different groups. And so I think that I think there's a certain degree of Reese re redoing a circuitry in the brain or in the heart, so that different kind of responses tend to happen. And so if we start to feel having an attitude or feeling that we can be safe, then then we're more likely stay in a relaxed mode. And that relax mode is the mode that allows the hearts compassion to operate. It's then the hearts compassion is not something intentional. It might be the, your intentional mind, which is who decides, you know, be really good to develop compassion? And how do I learn how to be more relaxed? How do I learn to feel safe? Or do you feel at home deeply in myself? And it doesn't come from a lot of fixing it when fixing it keeps us in that thinking mind. It comes from softening and relaxing and being willing to give up temporarily, to fix it mind the wanting mind, the fearful mind, the anxious mind. We might have to use the thinking mind the wisdom mind to remind ourselves that right at the moment, we're safe. And right at this moment, you know, the IRS is not after you. I hope not to leave. Or right at this moment. There's no No one who's trying to steal your wallet. No at this moment there are people who are not trying to do something

to you. And so that reminder to be reminded to remind yourself that here and now it's a safe situation. It can be part of the thinking that helps us to actually then let go and relax. And then compassion can arise or this we have a better chance for this heartfulness to be awakened and arise.

And then when I think of the heart's compassion, I associate that with a field of compassion and feel to me it's like this, like like this radiance, or this kind of this kind of, I don't know what to call it to field right kind of institution is radiates outwards. in all directions, so it doesn't have it doesn't have a particular focus. And part of the center of the field is that it doesn't belong to feels like it doesn't even belong to me, doesn't belong to anybody else, I suppose. But if you can't, I don't feel like I can take credit for compassion when it struck coming out of the heart. It doesn't belong to that part of me, that I associated with self, because doesn't come doesn't doesn't belong to that part has to do with thinking about self or having an identity. It just seems to be kind of just in a sense, just kind of be there, open and present. And I think this is an important important part of compassion because then when we feel compassion, without a strong sense of self and other, then the compassion can be compassion, suffering with the you know, the old word passion in the old days, men suffering, The Passion of Christ. And so if you do suffer with someone, and I don't know if this is really at the moment, Once you have the word sorry, but I've been read somewhere that's sorry, comes from the word sore. And so I feel sorry means I feel sore. Which maybe you feel but that's not compassion of the heart. There might be some kind of pain but there's no soreness. There's a kind of sweetness, though maybe some you don't want to say it. I know sweetness isn't the right word, but the sense of rightness and sense of harmony in a certain kind of way or sense of at home with a heart's compassion. The other thing about the heart's compassion is that because it involves being relaxed.

It's a I think it's a profound place from which to act, from which the our intentions come forth. Because in Buddhism, compassion is not only feeling empathy for others. But the Buddhist idea of compassion is closely connected to action, to want to do something, for some for someone else to support them or help them. And I think that the motivation to get off our seat to get out of, you know, out of our own private, little inner world and do something for other people works much better when we're relaxed, because then we don't come along with a lot of self. You know, come on, we don't want to be limited by our fear. We're not limited by our greed. We're not limited by all our concerns, that it's impossible, it can't be done. But rather it just you know, it kind of flows out of us. So one of the things that surprised me again of my early years of practice, was the degree to which through the practice, there was a spontaneous, seemingly spontaneous movement towards responding to the world around me. I think maybe before For that, I've responded to the world through the vehicle of my desires and wants and ideas and shoulds. And so with a world of the mind, in a sense, but as, as I relaxed and learn to be present in a very simple, simple way, and trusted, simple presence, then as I encountered things in the world, it was almost as if there was the world was requesting of me, you know, respond to this, act on this, do something with it. And then there was for someone who had never any inclination to clean up after himself. When I was younger, it was quite a surprise, at some point, to discover that when things were messy, there seemed to be kind of just a easy, almost natural kind of thing. Oh, straighten that out. Remember the first time in a Zen center. I was with that. With me Roshi in LA. And we were doing a slow walking they do in the meditation hall. And this person in front of me bent down and straightened out the black mat they were using for sitting on. And I thought, why would a person do that? I thought that was really strange. I mean, I would concede there was crooked, but he was so why would you? Why would you do anything about it? And I remember how perplexed I was by that. And then some years later, finding myself do the same thing. You know, almost almost without thought it just seemed like the thing to do. So this idea of responding to the world, the response coming from being at home, the response coming from being settled through the response coming from this field of the heart, where it responds in a natural, easy way, as opposed to thinking itself, what do I need to do here, and this just

you know, go through the list of kind of steps and shoulds insurance, just about the heart does it responds. So how far can your compassion go? And I think it's really remarkable how far compassion can go. And I'm quite inspired by all the examples we have in the world of so called ordinary people who find themselves in extraordinary situations. It turns out they had tremendous capacity to respond in ways that didn't surprise them out of compassion. I hope that each of you and I to the degree to which you are engaged in this Buddhist practice, will be interested in compassion, be motivated to be to have the intention to cultivate and develop compassion. But if that That's your intention to then remember that the hearts compassion is not something you approach directly. But it's something you approach by relaxing and relaxing and learning to stay relaxed and in that relaxed, relaxed way of being, learning to be present for our world. You might think that it's selfish to focus on your own relaxation, Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction, reduction.

But I think that as we learn, each of us learn to relax, then we become you know, we relax the self concern we relax or selfishness, to be selfish is not to be relaxed, be preoccupied. And so as we learn to relax in deep way, then that's which is natural insight in the heart has the best chance to come forth and respond to the world. And the world needs lots of compassion. It needs relaxed people. And the combination of the two people who are relaxed and compassionate, I think can do the best that offer the best help for the world we live in. So, those are my thoughts for today. And I hope that you have a compassionate 2011