

2010-05-21 Seven Factors of Enlightenment Equanimity Pt 2

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SPEAKERS

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So one of the ways of understanding equanimity with equanimity is, is by understanding what it's not. And in fact, one of the important principles of Buddhist practice is that it can be more important to focus on what gets in the way of Buddhist ideals than it is to Dive into the ideal itself. So there's Buddhism as various ideals like compassion as an ideal. equanimity is an ideal. And rather than just kind of making yourself compassionate, it's maybe more useful to study what keeps you from being compassionate, or keeps you from being economists. And the reason why that's more useful is that, who knows, you're, you're really supposed to be compassionate. Or you're supposed, you know, in any particular situation, or you're supposed to be at equanimous, or whatever, whatever the ideal is. But if you can, if you let go of the obstacles to that possibility, those obstacles that clearing of the field in a sense, might allow for some other positive quality to arise as may be more appropriate. Maybe rather than being compassionate, what's required is to be generous. And so if you could, if you're no longer hostile to someone, then rather than being you know, being compassionate, you find yourself actually be more generous or Kinder or some other quality. So to and also by studying what's the obstacle to the ideal, our relationship to the ideal can become much more realistic, it's very easy to be to have a kind of positive affirmative thinking, or that kind of covers over what's really going on, or kind of denial of what's going on with something going on healthy is happening. And, and so much fixating on the idea of sometimes can create also kind of judgments and expectations and all kinds of problems. But if we honestly and realistically notice the obstacles, then our relationship to ideal can also be healthier as well. So, the obstacles to equanimity the opposite of acronyms it could be called a reactive mind, a mind that compulsively reacts to what experiences a mind which is an activity when the mind activities is Acts and behaves in a way that you don't feel you have much choice over. And it acts in a way that's painful. So, if something happens, and you resist it compulsively reactively, then you're not economists. So you know, for example, it might be an savory character walking down the street, and who maybe is in need of help. And to if you're reactive, you might just have your version to the person. First and foremost, you might avert your eyes and not look, and that but if you're can not be reactive, which they calm and alert and attentive to what's going on. You might see that the unsavory person needs needs help, and maybe then you feel like you want to help. The fact that someone's unsavory, whatever that is, I don't know what that is. Is is, you know the mean there are there are situations where people are unpleasant means that, you know, the fact that we feel unpleasant in their present doesn't necessarily mean it's our fault. But, you know, there's something unpleasant about the person, but it's possible and with equanimity, to, to just be present with an unpleasant situation. But if we're reactive, if we get pulled up into agitation caught up in our reversion caught up in our judgments caught up in our fears, then that's that then mind would not be eponymous and not be balanced. When the mind is not a quantum as being pushed around to leaning towards something or pulling away from something as opposed to

being balanced or even. It's caught up in its preferences. You know, there's two people, one's a friend and one's not. And so you find yourself leaning towards your friend, rather than being quantum is towards both and being open and present for both and kind of an equal way. So, the reactive mind the preferential mind, the compulsive mind, as you know, are all symptomatic of the mind that lacks equanimity. So what I thought we would do is do a short meditation, maybe about 10 minutes long. Knowing that it's short, perhaps it makes it easier for you to sustain this exercise. He thought it was, you know, and the exercise is

just sit here with your eyes closed, doing nothing in particular. Some of you might have such a strong habit of meditating that maybe your eyes closed and maybe you fall into that that's okay if that has to happen. But just sit here with your eyes closed, nothing in particular. And then see if you can identify if and when your mind becomes reactive. to something, or compulsive, or caught up in preferences or being pulled into something where the mind gets contracted or tight or preoccupied, where the mind goes in a direction that you don't, wouldn't be your choice. It's kind of an automatic pilot, boom, there goes, you know, or there's a loud sound, and the mind goes off, you know, why do they have IMC in such a noisy place, you know, and that's not an economist that's kind of reactive mode, or you know, anything at all. Or it could be sitting quietly and you don't want to sit quietly. And so you start getting agitated with agitation isn't, you know, reactive, or you're sitting here and your knee hurts, and, and then you get afraid, and because of the fear, fear is reasonable to have, but because of the fear, you get pulled into the world of fearful thinking and starts fantasizing about, you know, maybe you're gonna need to have your leg amputated. You know, you know, and you caught up in your reactions and preoccupations about it. So what I'd like you to do is for 10 minutes sit here and just notice if it happens, maybe you won't happen at all, which account, but then you just count your blessings. And every time something happens in your mind that you think would qualify as a reactive reaction, or a compulsive tightening up or resistance or judgments or preference in some tight way or something very commonly label it reaction to say reaction, there's a reaction, there's a reaction. And so sit quietly, eyes closed, nothing has to happen. except you're being alert and attentive to notice the mind does something that is that would be called reactive. And it's okay to be reactive in this exercise. Actually, you're maybe you're supposed to, so you so that you can so that you can just say, oh, there's a reaction, and then clearly see it. Oh, there's a reaction. And the next time there's something Oh, there's a reaction. As opposed to an action, so the action would be to label reactive mind reaction. It makes sense. Hopefully it makes sense enough. So it's close your eyes, nothing more to say

Oh,

what was that like to label reactivity? assuming of course it's had some of you had that

is useful to hear you describe contractions, expansion, the contractions, say could. Before anything gets full blown into a new version, there's a slight movement. And it was neat to tap into just these slight little movements. And by doing that, it sort of like cuts it up the quick in a way. So that was fun. Great. Thank you.

Well, it was a very interesting experience for me because I'm pretty habituated to doing breath meditation. And I found myself doing bear awareness. And my compulsion was to bring my attention to my breath. And so I was sort of a sigma two sides of the coin of, you know, concentration on one side and be possible on the other, it was a good thing to do.

And then with the center component, where their judgments, preferences leaning towards versions resistances operating in that, in that between those two choices.

It was pretty subtle. It's mainly a matter of training. I mean, it's something I just do and I met it Take this time as well. Do something else. Do nothing. Just pay attention straight back there.

In the black car, right right across the street. So across the street, there's a black car. Great. There's windows drivers a little hard to notice. But yes,

and so I'm newer to practice. And so I found myself getting very angry like it was torture. For me, having to not be able to go to a place that was that I could count on the common. So it was all it felt out of control and it felt very, I found myself getting really angry mic reaction. No, it felt torturous to me for 10 minutes to do that.

So so you feel, though, that it was useful in some way to see that that tendency of yours? What what why it might have been useful to have this reveal to you.

Now, I think it's extremely useful. I don't doubt the usefulness. What just how severe it was, who defended anyway was

a verity in my reactions. So is useful to see how severe it was, in what ways might this information is used really what you really reveal to you now, how might it be useful for you?

Well, it certainly gives me an appreciation for how nice it is to be able to go to another place that is much calmer and more peaceful and quieting. That's

and And what about, did you learn something about the tendency that maybe you have in other situations as well?

Yeah, that's what originally brought me to the Dharma practice. I have a very, very active and reactive mind. heartache, quiet my thinking.

So so I wonder listening to you whether, you know you're you didn't have your normal support you normal kind of going towards something. It's comforting. So you're left with yourself, right? And then you had a reaction against that. Oh no, this is not good,

right? So I have the right because I have that where you're taking everything away like you've mentioned in some of the Dharma talks, like, hopefully there's something left when you take away all the other things and I'm at that point where I'm like, Yeah, that sounds scary. I wonder if there is anything left when you take away everything else.

Thank you.

I had a good experience. Unlike the first one, which I had a very hard time staying with it. The first meditation, but I was amazed actually, that I was able to have moments of where I felt not thinking anything. Just kind of been. And then of course, I have more than half of the time I was in reaction of something or other but it wasn't I never let it get really getting out of hand in a way that I got sucked into it. Immediately I found that extremely helpful. Just label it immediately. When the feeling came up, just label it up, there it is, and then go back to the peaceful state, since the first time was really able to do

that. It's really nice to see my mind is usually going 10,000 miles in every direction. But I had really some moments where I felt at peace and quiet.

Great, thank you. So when I when I was sitting when I first set I you know, close my eyes to do it too. Right. And the first thing that happened to me I could see was that my thought was Oh, did I explain this well enough and, and that's that's fine. That's innocent. That's a fine thought if it's reasonable I should be concerned about that. But but the reactive part was that I could feel welling up kind of center of my chest a little bit of worry about that. So that was the reaction part I wasn't a quantum as I was worried about all I know. And so then that lasted for a teeny bit and then my mind kind of settled pretty quickly into more concentrated happy place. And that was fine. But But then I saw my mind react to that and say, Oh, this is preferable. This is better this is where I want to be this is good. You know, as opposed to the quarter this is probably like quite grim anyway, equanimity Oh, this is what's happening and more subtle, that feel good. It was preferring and kind of like judging it. Oh, this is good. I'm glad for this. For against things. Yes. I'm

sort of on the same vein, because of the habit of practice. I would be planning Okay, now what I was thinking About the board or whatever, and then they go, is that reacting? Is it just thinking, you know, planning? You know, can you plan can it can, you know, can planning mind or something else arise without reaction. So if you're not reacting to it, you're just noticing it, then to just notice the next thing that arises. Right? Yeah. So it's really what you were asking us to do is notice what we're reacting to the right where's the reactivity? Right, reactive mind, right? So you can have thoughts arising or planning mind or remembering. As long as you're not reacting to it. You're just being balanced. It's balanced mind.

Yeah, the mind is a thought making machine it'll pump out thoughts. But the mind doesn't have to react to those thoughts. And so you can see, you know, so using this label, React reaction. Did any of you feel that you were more economists or less reactive As a result of just having the label noticing it as it was happening, and what was it like to be a little bit more to be less reactive or more economist or more balanced? Or was that like?

The,

the labeling of it definitely stops my mind from following the thought. So it's helpful. But also the permission to be reactive was interesting because I wasn't very reactive.

I don't know why, but

we should give you permission more often. Going.

I'm not sure how to

say this. This is a practice I do a lot a lot. I think it's I realized sitting here today, this is the core of my practice. I didn't know that and what I find is When I'm able to be economists, my experience is so much more profound. So, as opposed to leaving my experience, I actually gained my experience because I noticed instead of being it in a way that binds me to it, yeah,

it's hard to describe. But,

yeah, there's a darkening that happens in reactivity, we get pulled, pulled out of clear awareness into some preoccupation, some kind of focus, some kind of, you know, so that's, you know, your description giving out of your experience is often can describe a reactive moment because we're not fully conscious. Right? So someone might be one more person about what so

what I'm learning and getting from this is because I don't plan on reacting big But as I become more subtle with it, there's just the mind reacting to want to grab a thought. And I'm noticing just the subtleties even in my body even when it's an okay thought and not a negative reaction to it, it's there still, like a grabbing, just thinking that it's like, oh, I gotta get this thought as skinny as feels like it's getting deeper and deeper and just noticing how thinking is just causing that to have the glue that keeps us

grabbing on to our thoughts. So that I did thought to it, you know, that I explained this well enough. And, and, and I kind of latched on to it enough to a little bit of worry, as opposed to just Oh, that's interesting thought. Let me take that into account. Maybe I should think about it and try better next time or something, but you know, great. So the theme is equanimity and And again, the idea is that equanimity is a good quality to have, it's a useful thing to have. It can be a powerful quality to have it's makes life a lot easier, and makes it a lot safer. And supports the cultivation of all the other beautiful qualities of meditation practice as well and the other good qualities within us. Because if you're economists, there's space if you're reactive, there's less space for other good qualities to come up. So it's good to know it's good to kind of cultivate equanimity. And, and again, sometimes it's not, it's best not to cultivate it directly, but to create conditions for something to happen. So before I mentioned, noticing what takes you away as being a supporting, but another thing is to is to notice what other conditions are could be in place, so that you can support equanimity arise. So for example, if you just want to be calmer in your life, you feel like I need more calmness. Then you don't go home and turn on every possible electronic device you can think of in the house, your radio and television and computer and iPod and iPad and, you know, like your toothbrush and I don't know, whatever you have, you can have it all going you know if that's not the right condition, you're probably kind of leave things kind of kind of quiet and off. And, and that would support your chant, you have better chance of being calm, becoming calm then. So, I'm going to offer you some conditions that support equanimity. And then, what I'm going to do is I'm going to divide you into groups. And then I'll go around to each group once you're divided into group and, and assign you one of these conditions to your group. And then you you'll discuss in your group, how this quality is supportive of equanimity. How it could be supported by equanimity and one person is going It'd be that and then and then we reform as a whole group, then someone from that group probably should volunteer at the beginning of your discussion should be the person who reports back from your group. And it doesn't have to be please don't try to make her say everybody said we'll be here for too long. Your job is to maybe like in maybe like in a minute or so to somehow in your personal way subjective way convey the gist of what was talked about in your group. Okay, so you're not you're not responsible for being an accurate reporter. But everyone's everyone's said, because I don't want to spend you know, a long time verbatim with so somehow the just the basic ideas are most impressionable things that came out and so it's a subjective impression. So that makes sense. So I guess we should do it this way. Why don't we count off one to seven and you'll be in the group that your number is okay. So remember your number.

So

I imagine most of you don't know what the other groups were talking about, and what their what their topic was. So perhaps whoever is going to report from your group, remember is supposed to be brief can first start by saying what the condition was that you were addressing. So the first group if you can wait for the mic, please take the mic.

Okay, our

theme was virtue, how is virtue supporting equanimity? And so we first started out with well what is virtue? What is that really and we took it to come down to the, the, where the rubber hits the road we said well what are qualities words which are considered desirable in this society of ours, and we came up with bravery, generosity, selflessness, honesty, fairness. And another quality is volunteerism that people volunteers things, a lot of charities and so on, help other people and people contribute that much more. I grew up in Switzerland, and that's much less the case people are generous they gave and so on, but going out and actually working with a charity or so is watch virtually or no Very few people do that. Anyway. And then we had the good fortune of having an Asian person in our group who comes from a different culture. And but she is a female and she said for her, what was drilled into her was two things. And one is be obedient and gentle. So anyway, now how does that work? By helping our equanimity? Well obvious one of one a good example of somebody brought up is that an honest person does not an honest person does not have to have a good memory. So in other words, by by being a virtuous you avoid a lot of problems for yourself and for others, you can harm yourself you can harm others. by lying, stealing, blah, blah, blah, we all know that. So I thought that was very good. And I was looking at it also from an energetic point of view. Like, when you do something negative when you react negative to a person or you attack somebody, you know, not not physically but otherwise, you putting out negative energy, you creating more negative energy in the world, and that has a ripple effect, just like good energy has a ripple effect. So that's the other side. So it's very important to realize how much effect we have as individuals in the society. And then we had to say that actually our environment here in our culture today is not really very conducive to virtue and equanimity particularly because there is so much drive for success for money for so much. isn't so much peace in his or moment with the media and everything, it's very hard to disassociate yourself for that find part quietness. So, anyway, it's, it's a task we all have to try to

filter out as much as you can.

Is there anything I missed?

That's probably Great. Thank you very much. Wonderful. And it was wonderful to hear that then the next next people should be a little bit briefer. Number two, group number two, they left. Grip number two is closer.

Practicing

like everybody

I will be brief.

So ours was, how to state support equanimity. And luckily we also have the other definition of confidence along with on with that, so fake How does fake slash confidence support equanimity? So faith provides can provide equanimity and faith can allow you to continue and preserve when things are tough you can continue

was interesting.

One thing that was said was equanimity allows you to be creative in life and faith in equanimity will allow that dynamic to continue. So it's a sort of a self referential feeding. That was quite nice.

We talked a little bit about

the delusions that might come from certain aspects of faith. So, luckily, this practice is a very experiential based practice that doesn't purely rely on faith to before it's for the practice.

Right? So faith and equanimity. That's a great idea. Great. So, group three.

Our question was,

how does concentration and a strong mind support equanimity? So concentration in a strong mind. We also had some discussion, that concentration was more focus, and a lot more discussion about what a strong mind was that sort of led our discussion And we had some very good metaphors about it being like you're the captain of a ship. So you're not trying to control the ocean. And yet you can still. But that's what sort of the strong mind was because that's what we had the most discussion about. And that it wasn't about controlling, but that the concentration gave you a sense of letting something be as it is the concentration gave you the foundation, to maybe choose equanimity. There, there's kind of a steadiness and then when you have the concentration, you're able to be steady, that then when you weren't in that concentrated state, you could still retrieve that that level of equanimity, your daily

life. Thank you very much. So you can't control the ocean but you can guide the boat. Thank you. So group four.

So our question was how do you happiness and well being contribute to echo and MIT and if you would like a very brief response it was well done.

But But we

still managed to find stuff to talk about.

And I

trying to remember this that

that equanimity is possible without happiness and well being, and that well being as possible without happiness, but that both of them make equanimity much easier. And much more accessible because there's an openness and spaciousness that things just don't blow you off course and in the same way when they're present. And also, as Victor was saying, with faith that that equanimity and well being, really feed one another. There was also a sense that to have had an experience of happiness and well being. Even in times of darkness or depression, when those were an accessible to be able to remember that that existed was something that we could use to to have more equanimity. And then finally, a sense that well being and happiness really contributed A sense of, of connection with other people. And, you know, sort of with with all beings that, in some ways was a real guard against the things that masquerade as equanimity, the indifference or the complacency or the resignation, the superiority and so that it was protected.

Great, thank you very much. So, then the next group is five

the introvert again here.

So, our discussion was wisdom or understanding, and you'll asked us does this come out of experience? So, there's quite a process let's just try to hit the key thing. So, the first we Start off with asking, Is it a, isn't it a prerequisite to have wisdom in order to have equanimity and talked about wisdom coming out of perspective as being influenced out of learning and reflecting on things that have happened. There was a discussion about the Serenity Prayer, which is God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference. So we talked about discernment, discerning the things that you can change and recognizing talked about the five remembrances or any Buddhist teachings that talk about impermanence. And that evolved into discussions of acceptance. So recognizing. One of the things is not recognizing that not everything is about you. So when other people react, it's not necessarily about you. And then also that reaction Come out of wanting to change things. So sort of back to the serenity, prayer and acceptance. So the conclusion was that the most important thing It seems really comes is coming back to through wisdom. What we realize is coming back to that not everything happening is necessarily significant. But what's most important is to return to the pure hearts or to return to the pure mind or return to pure love or what we might call returning to true self, which sort of came brought us full circle back to perhaps wisdom is a prerequisite for equanimity.

Beautiful, thank you. So then six,

our topic or our quality was clear scene or insight as relates to equanimity. And another not quite as brief or pungent as previous one, but was the difference between Oh, whatever. And whatever, really embracing the difference, have clearly seen everything that might be going on. And recognizing it might be, they're able to hold that from a bigger perspective. If you recognize all those that you might make, one be able to handle whatever comes, comes up, you'll be able to hold it all there. Something else that Milo had mentioned was about confidence. If you can clearly see the different facets that are going on that that confidence and being able to hold it in to make the right decision or be able to cope with whatever's going on. As opposed to pushing it away or just not not noticing, not the awareness of not appreciating what is happening, and then perhaps not making the right decisions, not feeling the contraction, everybody came back to the most important of recognizing the contracted state of recognizing that might be there evaluating that so you could see what might be coming from that. And once that's recognized, then you can kind of like the previous exercise of noting it, just noticing that it was there, but it doesn't mean you have to go with it. And

and that that can we just a much more steady state.

Wonderful, thank you. And then the final group seven, in the front.

So our question was, how is freedom conducive to equanimity? The first thing that that came up in our group was a snippet out of one of the Buddhist chants, which talks about freedom from ill will freedom from anxiety and so that's kind of interesting to see the worth of the chance that can come up at the right time. So in general, the hindrances, which can include judgment, it was also freedom from emotional triggers. And this came up over and over again to pay attention to the exact moment of when something starts to arise because then it's, that's when we have the opportunity to

be free of it because it doesn't have a grip on us yet.

Then free from the past or regrets and the future or worry, free from compulsive thinking, free from the self and then actually free to choose great

So the seven conditions that support equanimity are virtue, fate, concentration, happiness, insight, wisdom, insight, and freedom. So it's well worth considering those the seven and how to support them and let them become stronger in your life so that you could be more balanced more even more economists, equanimity doesn't it's not something necessarily exists in isolation from other qualities, other other ways of being. And it's then the mind is an ecology of these different species and they work together. So for those of you who are not in, you know, when you heard the other, the other lists, you might in your own time during the week or Something reflect a little bit about the presence of these other qualities in your life as well and, and what their relationship between them is in between and your ability to be nonreactive. So let's take our lunch break, we'll take an hour. Those of you who are new here to IMC, what happens at lunch is