

# 2010-05-21 Seven Factors of Enlightenment Equanimity Pt 3

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

equanimity, confidence, people, balance, situation, ballast, economists, helpful, person, happiness, find, nervous, kinds, group, practice, fret, care, support, responsible, big

## SPEAKERS

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There are two kinds of equanimity words Pali words translated into English as equanimity. One is the most common one is upekkhā. enoteca coupā. The prefix means towards, and the QA part comes from the root meaning to see to look towards. And it's sometimes explained as being having a healthy overview of the situation or seeing it in the bigger perspective situation. And that brings equanimity. So the other is called as long word but it's very simple. Compound compound a simple words taught from my Jetta and it basically means in the middle of it all. And I like to translate it as balance to be balanced and around the neck indemnity and so certain kind of equanimity comes from being balanced. So for example, if you have just the right amount of sleep not too much and too little, then you'll kind of go through your life in a more balanced or healthy way. If you're too too little sleep, you're on the edge, you know, reactive if you have too much sleep either. So groggy, you know, you hardly notice anything. So you know, you're balanced in terms of your sleep or food, you have a balanced, you don't eat too much, you don't eat too little. Exercise, you don't have too much you don't have too little, you know, like on retreat, the balance of what how much exercise you need changes in what it is maybe in daily life. So finding the balance, and that balance then supports you staying more centered, more equanimous more, kind of tougher things. And that's what nice way. in meditation itself, there are traditional points to a number of mental factors that are very helpful to hold in balance. So For example, concentration and energy should be balanced. If you have too much concentration and energy, people tend to fall asleep, if you have too much energy and concentration, tend to get restless and agitated. So those two qualities need to be in balance. The other two qualities that often mentioned is faith and wisdom. That, that if you have too much faith that can be blind faith that can lead to all kinds of problems. But if you have faith together with wisdom, then you have the wisdom or you have the capacity to discern, to look more carefully to question to look at the nuances of how things actually are rather than applying some blind faith to it. But if you have too much discernment, too much, too much process of thinking and analyzing what's going on, then it also might kind of remove you from the experience and leave you a little more kind of aloof for intellectualizing about things rather than really kind of a heartfelt connection to what's going on. And so they say they should be balanced between faith and discernment, faith and wisdom as well. I think of balance as being kind of like a ballast, that if you have a, there's a variety of things that provide strong sense of balance. The ballast is a boat boat has a ballast, it doesn't tip over very easily, but without ballast will tip over and slip smallest wind. So what gives us ballast kind of strength that keeps us from tipping over too easily. And, and so for example, mindfulness of the body being really connected to your body is very, very helpful for this process. The more connected to strongly connected to the body. They think the more balanced you have, unless you're likely to let the mind be on overdrive or the mind kind of take over automatically. You notice what goes on more carefully. If the developing qualities is good, building strength of concentration for example, or calm

creates certain kind of ballasts, probably most of you have had experience of how, you know, getting common meditation lends itself to being calmer through the next period of time. And so you find yourself much more patient and much more at ease with things otherwise we'd be trying for you, and, you know, snap at your friends so easily or something. And so, so, you know, the calm is kinda like a ballast that keeps you from reacting quickly. loving kindness, practice can also be a con but also create kind of a some strength or some ballast and sense of friendliness or kindness, which is there that kind of in the atmosphere and the mood or something that also provides kind of a ballast of balance.

So you know, so if you find yourself, you know, you're going into a situation that can be very challenging for you, and you want to prepare for it. So you know, doesn't Doesn't do you in consider, you know, one of the things that's helped support me both being calm, insightful here, but also what keeps me economists in this situation. And so some people will meditate before they do, some people will, you know, do a variety of things to kind of create that balance. So they go into a situation with some, some stronger ability not to get caught up. And the ballast is primarily made from exercising something, you can't just say, you know, I'm going to have ballast, but you have to do something to change the conditions. So you have to, you know, maybe meditate regularly or, or get enough sleep or, you know, get enough food if you're eating enough for it, you know, something that kind of creates that kind of balance. The and that's not just rely on your own powers of mindfulness, as if that's going to do it, but maybe need to bring in some other qualities. To help you in that situation, the other kind of mind of equanimity is this having an overview or having a clear kind of perspective on what's happening. And that could come from many different things. It can come from insight, seeing clearly what's there. But it could also, you know, seeing clearly the nature of clinging and see, clinging hurts. And so you can say, Oh, you know, Now I see why it's so difficult. I'm clinging here. And so I think I'll let go of the clinging and then you find yourself more economists. It could also be that you have a broader perspective of the situation keeps going to mind today is is a classic common scenario and some people when they're dying, slow and sometimes difficult deaths. They will at some point near the end of the process, they'll get really angry with the people they're closest to. And sometimes you really say mean really mean things to like, you know, a husband of 40 years or You know, or a mother, mother sensitive daughter something terrible. And it's really out of character of the relationship in the past. And now if no one's ever encountered this phenomenon before, I think this is the first time in dying person's ever snapped at someone. They take it personally and think, Oh, this is terrible. But if you find out this is kind of an impersonal process, this is something some something goes on in the inner mechanisms of the brain or something, that, that as people are dying, some different things come out in different ways. And, and it's not not to be meant to be taken personally is kind of impersonal, not really meant to about you. And, and so he said, Oh, now I understand. So I've been warned. There it is. She's doing it, then so then you're less likely to take it personally. It's not all about me anymore. It's just Well, I feel sorry for the person and they'll try to not snap back or something. The now one of the ways of having overview, I think, you know, some kind of clear perspective. is to have a really clear understanding about

what kind of what's an effective response to different situations? What's the efficient or useful way of responding or taking care of different situations. So, not just being mindful of situation, but you know, you have to act in the world to do something. What is the efficient, useful way to do that? So, for example, if I have to go

you know, if I have to go to traffic court, because, you know, I was speeding, you know, I could get really nervous anxious, lost asleep, worried about what's going to happen to me this big authoritative figure sitting up high on a podium looking down at me. And, and, and fret a lot. But all that fretting and being nervous and all that, you know, second guessing whether to do probably is not so useful probably doesn't help me figure out what's the best response, how to kind of stand there and say the truth. And

that's what I'm trying to point to the idea that it wasn't it wasn't very efficient or useful to spend all this time being nervous. If I had been really confident in the usefulness of just showing up and being honest, and standing there and responding as necessary, if I had confidence in my ability to do that, then I would no longer have confidence in the value of being nervous. And I think that you know, at least from, from the outside perspective, a lot of people have a lot of confidence in their nervousness in their fear or a lot of confidence in their anger, or their, their hostility or their doubt, because whilst we do it so much, we must believe that it somehow is going to help, right. But if we really see this doesn't really help. That might not help. Seeing seeing that might not make a big difference. But if you really know if you really have confidence that you can respond. Without being nervous without being attached without contracting without thinking about clinging, then you might be willing to let go of all the unskillful Ways of fretting and being anxious or being angry around the situation. Because when you when we tell people we suggest people be economists some people will protest and say, well then how do I take care of myself? Or let go, just like go right, please. Well let go it's fine for you to say but you don't realize that I have this difficult thing in my life and, and I have to cling, I have to hold on otherwise, you know, who's gonna take care of me or if I don't cling and shut down, then you know how I'm going to keep you know, all those homeless people from squatting in my house. You know, it isn't, you know, there's big dangers out there if I don't, you know, claim to something. But if we have confidence in our ability to say someone knocks on our door I'm homeless, can I stay with you? And you say, No. And you have confidence and saying No. and No, you can kind of stay there and hold your ground you feel, then you don't have to fret and worry and you're you don't have to, you don't have to hold on to being closed and not looking and pretending they're not there they are something, you know, you say no. And

it's like, I was traveling in a foreign country where there was all these people begging them a nuisance. And I tried all kinds of thing, ways of ignoring them or denying them or you know, but I found the most effective way was to turn around my, my tracks, look at them in the face and say, Stop it.

You know, and, you know, maybe we weren't used to that kind of response. But or in other words, remember, in one country it was there was all this kind of, it's always very difficult. With with I guess it was kind of the rickshaw drivers with this little scooter little taxi drivers the red bicycle rickshaw kind of things and because negotiating the price was so difficult and then there's all this back and forth and debating and you know who was taking advantage of who and you know, it was just you know it just kind of a headache the whole thing. And what I learned was you don't ask the price. You say you want to go with you, but you know what the going rate is. And what I learned was you you get on a taxi, you get in the Big Show, you go to where you're gonna go, you jump off and your hand in the going rate and you walk away. And once I figured that out, you know, the whole thing was quite easy. And I had confidence that was okay. Even though you know, they would yell at me as I was walking down the street. I knew it was a fair use fair, it was quite a quite a fair price. It wasn't like I was taking advantage of them. But, you know, you know, sometimes their price depends on your national, the price of the taxi driver to transmit the nationality of the rider, right. So, also so your whole thing is kind of like, you know, kind of interesting. But, so I'm not doing such a good job here. But it is funny about finding out that to be confident in something caught, not something but to be confident in in our capacity to take care of ourselves appropriately without having to cling isn't funny, phenomenally important. foundation for equanimity. And so the question is, what is it? How is it that a person learns to have confidence, enough confidence in their own ability to respond so that they don't have to claim don't have to get nervous, don't have to get angry. Don't don't have to feel helpless, what does it take to be able to stand on your own two feet and be relaxed, trusting that understanding, trusting that what you're going to say next, what you're gonna do next, the appropriate thing will come forth in such a way that you're safe, that you're taken care of. What does that take? So that was a that's a topic I thought might be helpful to explore a little bit in terms of a realistic sense of how to find equanimity, to have that confidence in

oneself and ability to respond. And so what is a good way to explore this as a whole group together, sharing or should we divide up into three or four very large groups because go around the circle people share, everyone has a chance to talk and share something or in pairs or in groups of three You have probably not fair to ask you but we are for large groups. groups of three too tired of talk? So if you're big so the whole big group would would die then you can fall asleep.

Yeah so what I think what I think then I don't know the right answer. But I, but

yeah, I have I have confidence. I've no short no shortage of confidence here. But yes, good. Yeah, that's not what I was thinking.

So what's going for me in my mind as I take all this in as I think I think some smaller groups would be good. And so I think that what I like to ask is that you form groups of five people, five people, and then everyone speak, you go around the circle. And that way of going around the circle is that each person doesn't talk for a long time, but offers something, some perspectives, some ideas, some practice, some questions, something around what I just brought up about, how can we find how can we have confidence in our own ability to take care of ourselves appropriately so that we don't have to cling, we don't to react. We don't want the nervous or angry or fearful. You know, how do we find that confidence to stand on two feet and offer something. And then and then once you go around all five of you do it again and do like a spiral and keep doing it as each time you do it, you're contributing to the group mind to the group conversation. And you're bouncing off each other, you'll learn from each other, what you each say to each other, kind of trigger something else in your mind. And just see where the group goes. It just kind of keeps keep kind of milking this topic round and round the round your circle. So it makes sense. And

so

the important thing here is that one of the next thing and one of the next most important things you need to be able to do, hopefully have confidence in it. Historically, I've learned not to have much confidence in your ability to do this is your ability to count to five. So if you can, maybe maybe at least one of your group knows how to count to five so If you can find find groups of five and if there's extra people to stay standing and come to the front and I'll help you find a place to go. So maybe some of you would like to share a little bit what that was like, especially what you might have learned. Not not so much what you taught for wouldn't What did you learn in that process? What was interesting for you?

It's always interesting how

I'm moving around like that it does keep building and changing and, and one thing reminds me of something else or you hear it in a different way. But when somebody had said Just remembering that it's just temporary, everything's impermanent. So no matter how whatever is being triggered by or you get caught just picking remember the impermanence of it. That is hugely helpful that no matter how triggered you are, it's, it's gonna be gone in a minute. It's gonna change.

Great, thank you.

So, I think

bringing bring yourself back into the direct moment and realizing, regardless of what has happened, that you're actually here and okay in the moment and using that as a practice to recognize The inherent right to be here and that for that to create the confidence and you know,

the competence,

right? That's a very great point and especially since most of our problems are imaginary so to really be here and realize here a safe you're here but grounded can make a big difference. Right?

Okay, give me the mic.

The fact of the saga itself gives me confidence that this many people chose to spend all day on Friday and so many people come on, you know, weekly here. Because they found it rewarding enough, not easy and not always leading to happiness or equity but rewarding enough over time to continue to do it. And then of course, others remind me Yeah, that's been going on for 2500 years, there must be something to it. So I guess it's really, that is perhaps a form of taking refuge in the Sangha, the Buddha, the Dharma Sangha beautiful. And that is an expression of confidence. Yeah,

embrace ever that brings equanimity or greater willingness to be at ease and find your way because you're, you're on a good path. You're in a good habit, good teaching good practice to do. Together with others. Beautiful. Thank you.

beginning to feel this urge to call on people

I think one of it's really crucial that you have a willingness to take risk. Because you can't experience something that you don't know unless you abandon what you know and step into what you don't know. So I think that that's a fundamental.

So but how can you be willing to take risks in such a way that you're economist and doing it or stay balanced or stay grounded or stay.

You have to have conviction to release what you know, and abandon anticipation. And that is courage. It's just something you choose.

So courage is an important factor that supports equanimity in some situations.

I've learned something useful from the tie. So I like to kayak so I was my wife and usually, we can Don't only do that at high tide. So you have to sort of be there when the tide is high. And there's nothing I can do to change one high tide does not accommodate my schedule. So it became obvious how silly it was to be upset about the tide being higher low, the tide was just going to be the tide. And I would have to accommodate it. And that was sort of a step towards prying me away from my own sense that I had to control things and it was just so obvious that the tides would do what they were going to do.

So the hard way, is possible maybe to have more confidence in one's own capacity to respond to situations if we gave up trying to control it. So you can have confidence that the tide do what it does, you have confidence that you can use No, accommodate yourself to the tide. We all

agreed in our group that



practice putting yourself out there to do things that you don't know how to do. And being eventually learning how to do it. And then that gives you the confidence that in any similar situation, you can also do it. And then that also generalizes to other kinds of situations. So practice makes perfect kind of thing.

To have confidence that you know, you don't necessarily know how to do it unless you put yourself in a situation and learn that you have the ability to learn. And one of the great ways of having some confidence like that is knowing that you'll learn from your mistakes.

Not to see failure as failure, but just a way of learning something. Yeah.

The two previous speakers, I think have laid the foundation for my volunteering and also the threat that you might call prompted me to volunteer, but someone down there is that taking refuge in the song and someone said taking risks and courage, set the stage for my willingness to volunteer. And what I'm going to say might sound strange to you, but, but I'll preface it by giving you a brief brief background. Mind you, I grew up in an Asian family and I was surrounded by Asians and the weights are the people that when I stepped outside of the home, there were white people in there were No agents. And that was my experience for about 25 years. Well, more or less until I came to San Francisco than I discovered there are so many agents. So sitting in my group and as we were going around, we had one question and I was struck by and I was looking at my my peers my group very carefully and they were non Asians, but the things that they said were that was just somehow come out of the mouth of my father and my brother, my friends who are Asian. So it made me think that the wish to and ways to take care of oneself is universal and human. That's, I was thinking, Oh, she thinks like that, too. Yeah. Oh, he does too. And they're all wait

Thank you. That's great. I think I think that to have confidence with your statement triggers, related thought and that is that, to have confidence in that part of our common humanity, I think is very helpful that that if we can actually meet and see each other in a heartfelt way, that a lot of beautiful things can be five can be found out can be discovered can unravel and unfold. And it's not always easy to have that confidence. Yeah.

I've got the microphone.

I've always wanted to sing tiny bubbles every time I have this microphone away.

I think oh, wait for another fun.

No, I think that having confidence, in honest communications without fear, that's just so big for me and I've been really struggling a long time with that. But if I could just trust that, you know, with good intentions with that honest communication is really,

you know, is most beneficial and great.

I love that. And that's certainly helped me a lot in my life. When, when I know that, especially if I know that it's reciprocated, that I don't have to be so careful. As you know, to always get it right. If I know that the person I'm with is willing to hang in there we can have a process of honest communication what happened and then we can find our way and mixed puts me much more at ease.

Alright,

going back to the couple of comments just before, in our group, it seemed like the practice of metta. And the whole idea of the commonality of experience or the interconnectedness of others, really helps to support that feeling of being able to step out of that comfort zone or to be able to take care of ourselves. And not only seeing the commonality, but also in the heart felt responsive taking care of ourselves.

And there's a wonderful interplay between our communality and our differences. And I would like to believe that if we can really see the deep heartfelt commonality we all share, then it's the same time it's going to be a lot easier to appreciate and value each of the differences as well and they work together. Like, like, you know, like, two hands holding or something. Okay. So, I want to cover, we have 20 minutes left, I think cover one more area of equanimity. It's a has to do with the equanimity that's a brahma vihara It's a divine abiding. There's many different kinds of equanimity Buddhism has long lists of different kinds of equanimity. And in one of the kinds is called the divine or the boundless abiding of equanimity, equanimity. I like to define it as a form of love. And it's related to in all the forms but it's related to the other kind of equanimity of the of the seven factors of awakening, because supportive of it. And it's the kind of the reciprocal of we just talked about now. And that is The equanimity that comes from knowing that we are not responsible for other people's choices. And so just just if that's really true, that we're not responsible for our choices then how can we hold them in love with caring hearts at the same time? Because generally the notion or you're not responsible for other people, choices, lends itself to the idea of indifference or separation or looseness kind of like, you know, it's your problem. But, but if it's true, true, which is then we have to start there. And starting there, then what's what's, you know, if that's true, what's the loving thing to do then how do they connect in a way then? And I think that the to understand how we're not responsible for other people's choices is can be a great support, to be economists in relationship to them. If we feel like we're responsible, it's up to me that person's happy. It's up to me that person, whatever, then I know that I can get anxious, I can get upset. I can get to all kinds of I get tied myself in knots. And it's not helpful. If I realized the other person is responsible for his or her own choices, I can still be quite considerate about how can I be helpful, I can be supportive. How can I be completely connected and, you know, offer what I can. But maybe what I offer is very significant. But I'm not hooked in. I'm not my well my sense of ease or well being or Happiness is not dependent on me being in charge being in control, being responsible. And in some situations This is obvious, it's pretty easy. In some situations very, very hard, especially when it's like a close relative for example, or someone you very close to. Sometimes it's very hard with a with a partner. Because sometimes with partners, there's a strong identification like, you know, sometimes it's too much you know, you know, they do something and it's like you know, anybody else does that it's fine but but that person does is like maybe because it's you know, mirrors to flex on you You think you identify with a person like you doing it and they're doing it for you and a good day. But, but how to step back and, and have a certain kind of caring for other people and not take responsibility. So what Once you get into meditative position, close your eyes

and do whatever way you know to kind of get yourself settled. Relax Perhaps letting go of thoughts, concerns

Do what you can to get yourself settled into your body, connected in touch with yourself.

And then I'm going to say some statements and listen to them. Take them in as if you're saying it yourself. See what happens to you as you say these statements, maybe you actually say them silently to yourself after hearing them.

See how it affects you. Some of the statements have the word you in it and when you is there think of some person perhaps, that you know of that you're directing this towards.

To begin these statements you are the owner of your karma.

Your happiness and unhappiness depend on Your choices, not so much on my wishes for you.

Whether I understand it or not, things are unfolding according to a lawful nature.

All beings meet their joys and sorrows, according to a lawful nature.

May May I accept things as they are

No matter how I might wish things to be otherwise, things are as they are.

To repeat some of them. You are the owner of your own karma.

Here hi happiness and unhappiness depend on your choices. Not my wishes for you

no matter how I might wish things to be otherwise, things are as they are

So the equanimity which is a form of love is one of the, I think more challenging aspects of Buddhist practice for many people it can fly in the face of what we usually believe how we operate on the face of what our concept is of caring and love for other people. But I found it very helpful to understand this aspect of not taking responsibility for other people. And for me, taking responsibility has been, like one of my Achilles heels. So very nice. This is something I've grappled with an invite to. I think it's also a very generous thing to grant people the freedom of their own choices or in any kind of early American vocabulary for grant them freedom of choice or freedom of conscience.

So what it does is that you might you might feel bad about someone you might feel sad about what people are doing. It doesn't necessarily mean that you're happy. The economists Happy that they're destroying their life. You might feel sad. But in a sadness, there's a kind of equanimity where we're not getting anxious or tight or upset or kind of wound up run, I have to do some it's all about me. So some part of you can stay balanced can stay more equal, even even keeled. And it just also turns out that if you can stay even keeled, that in generally we can actually help work out much better anyway. Sometimes you don't help as well if we're kind of right in there. So this is another condition that supports equanimity is to have confidence or to have a real strong conviction or understanding of what our responsibility is in relationship to other people. Because we can all often lose our equanimity or balance, get agitated or being pulled into that world. It's up to me. a corollary would be not taking responsibility for someone else, but insisting they're responsible for me. And, you know, it's up, it's up to them. To fix me to help me save me to do something, my happiness depends on them doing the right thing. And that's another way of losing equanimity getting all wound up.

So equanimity is a hugely profound topic. We've scratched the surface today. We will in about a year's time, come back to it because next year, next year, The Dharma practice days will be on the armies, the perfections. And the last perfection is the perfection of equanimity. So here again, we see that quidem is always at the end of these lists, because it's so it's, you know, really builds and depends on the



others to expect to have deep equanimity just because it's a good idea. You know, is you know, would be nice. But, you know, it's considered to something that you really cultivate yourself for and cultivation development of yourself, leads to a place where you can have a deep abiding sense of equanimity. And with a part of me is there's a whole nine other steps that support the arising of equanimity. So we'll visit it again next year. Those of you didn't get it today. And we'll we'll kind of do it gradually next year build towards it. But we do have one more of the summer practice days on the seven factors of awakening which is two weeks, so it's faster than usual. Diana has made another one of her lovely handouts of reflections and practices for this. In the back, there's some quotes from the Buddha and equanimity. And because it's only two weeks, she truncated involvements things every four days into reflection rather than everyday every seven days. And so you can, you know, take one of these. And in the Dhammapada, it says, as a solid mass of rock is not stirred by the wind. So, a sage is not moved by praise or blame, as a deep lake is clear and undisturbed. So, a sage becomes clear upon hearing the Dharma virtuous people always let go. They don't prattle about pleasures and desires touched By happiness and then by suffering, the sage shows no sign of being elated or depressed. So May you be nourished by equanimity may help you thrive in your life and bring much happiness and joy for you. And thank you so much for coming today. I appreciate it a lot spending the time with you. I hope this has been nice.