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SPEAKERS

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So, in Buddhist circles, there is a story which is popularly told which goes back to the time of the Buddha there being a king who approached his queen, his wife and asked her who was it that she loved the most Who did you hold as being most dear? And I imagined that this king was maybe a little bit as maybe some kings are a little bit full of himself self importance and you know, center of attention all the time. So probably he was expecting or even demanding that the answer be while you of course there you're in the most important to you, all of you. I love you the most you're the most dear. But you said, I hold myself most dear. So he didn't like this answer. So he, they said they I don't know who decided but they decided to go visit the Buddha. And they explained this full conversation to the Buddha. And the Buddha replied and said, He's right. Each person is most dear to themselves. And some people hear the story and it's still a bit surprising. So some people don't have much capacity to love themselves or care for themselves or respect for themselves. Some people have received certain conditioning from their society or their religion or whatever that that puts them on tremendous that makes them tremendously self sensitive to not being selfish, and anything that seems self centered Someone's self, one's own goodness, one's own happiness was on a well being is considered something to be pushed away or denied. I've known people who felt that they weren't really allowed to feel meditative joy. There was somehow a sin to feel that because there was selfish it was, you know, you're supposed to just suffering sacrifice. I don't know what exactly they believe not religion, but but. But certainly the idea of being selfish. Focusing on self for some people is very hard. But kind of the Assumption or the, the premise in Buddhism is that it's possible to look upon oneself with deep kind regard with generosity of spirit, looking at oneself is one and be and have a certain kind of love or friendliness or goodwill towards oneself. And because it's such a premise in Buddhism, then the approach to developing cultivating loving kindness is usually done by starting or cultivating a towards oneself to strengthening the wish or the capacity for goodwill towards oneself. And then only then is it do we cultivate it towards other people. And part of the reason for that is that if you have a personal reference point, physical, direct feeling or sense or experience of goodwill towards yourself and even more so the capacity to feel happy and well and yourself peaceful safe in yourself, then it's easier to have to know what you're wishing when you wish that for someone else. If you have no experience of safety, no experience or real happiness in yourself, no experience of loving yourself no experience of peace, really for yourself. And you might have some general abstract idea it's a good idea for other people and you wish it for them. But it's a it's a very different than if you really, really know it for yourself and you can the capacity for empathy and measuring yourself in someone else's shoes so much stronger. Anything is easier than to kind of have a more deeper or more connected feeling of goodwill for someone else when you have that as a reference point. So that's the theory. That's the assumption. So in classically, we start by doing loving kindness, practice with oneself. And then as that as a foundation, we start doing a towards others. Now, it seems that there are enough people here in America, at least, for whom there's a rather rather problematic relationship they have with themselves.

And in the, you know, the, the most difficult person in their life is themselves. And there's a lot of, you know, the inner critic and self criticism, feeling of unworthiness inadequate in many ways. There's all kinds of neurotic complexes we have about attitudes towards ourself that get in the way of feeling this beautiful feeling of goodwill, a generosity of spirit towards the year. We feel like we don't deserve We feel all kinds of things.

So when that's the case, then sometimes we start with someone else doing, touching into the feeling of goodwill towards other people, someone else who is easy for, with the hope that we can then once we have established there and have a sense of it there, then at some point we can bring it back to ourselves. where a person just like anybody, another person in the world, and we're just as deserving in a sense are worthy of wishing the best as anybody else we want to wish the best for not to do it in a selfish way. Because selfishness in Buddhism, it's understood. You'll see this for yourself. If you do mindfulness practice, when you're selfish, you're contracted. When you're selfish, there's a suffering that's part of selfishness. There's a kind of tightening down or a kind of kind of obsessiveness that doesn't feel good to really wish yourself well. You have to kind of relax or dissolve selfishness because you can't really be well if you're selfish. So it's not meant to be selfish, this kind of self love or self in this way. But it's considered important. And so as I've said a number of times, if that is classically in our tradition, when begins the practice of cultivating goodwill, loving kindness, by doing it towards oneself. For many people that's difficult to challenge but it's well worth rising to the challenge and trying to find out how can you have it, look upon yourself in such a way that you see yourself you hold yourself or you come forth out of yourself with feeling good about yourself, or at least being generous towards yourself, as opposed to being critical or ungenerous towards yourself? So the topic for the next little discussion I'd like you to have among yourself is what are the ways What are the appropriate healthy good useful ways that you can have? goodwill? loving kindness, generosity of generous attitude? And how you hold yourself? Can you have goodwill towards yourself? I mean, not not in the abstract Yo, yes, you know, but you know what, what, what what are the ways in which you can or you already do look upon yourself and hold yourself generate generously? Or what does it take for you to do that? What are the conditions that support that allow that to happen? That's the topic. And, and it's not so much what you know, some people gravitate so quickly to why it's difficult. So be a little bit, guard yourself a little bit. And as you do start this conversation, you don't kind of slide into all the reasons why it's hard to do this. Right. It's hard to have goodwill or loving kindness or generosity towards yourself. It's okay to touch on a little bit, but don't get lost there. Stay focused and seeks explore and see what how is it that you can? And what experiences in your life have you had of having goodwill towards yourself? When in your life have you had the most positive attitude towards yourself that was really meaningful that you had that. And what you know, you have a reference point like that at some point in your life. So is that clear enough or gives you enough to get into, and what I thought would be nice is that if you would do that with one other person, and have a conversation back and forth, make sure you have both talk to say, number one, make sure one person doesn't talk to the most that most of the talking. But it can be kind of a free conversation back and forth where you explore this for yourself. That Okay, so maybe it'll be maybe about 10 minutes or so 1012 minutes or so, perhaps, that the two of you will have a chance to talk. So you have any questions, but that so and you might want to spread out a little bit. So that You don't hear other people's conversation so you can stay focused on yours. So

any comments, any would like to make any anything you want to say or bring up? Based on that exploration, that discussion? And the issues kind of questions, reports, surprises, certainly was a lot of energy in here.

The interesting thing that arose in our conversation was how clear it became that metta toward ourselves was like a mirror image of methods or that we have toward other people. difficult people.

Okay.

The interesting thing that came up for me was just to be able to identify when is it that I can give easily give kindness, loving kindness or generosity towards yourself and when is it that I can't. And it usually came down to some really specific things like when I'm feeling open hearted and generous, just open hearted for whatever reason, it's easier to give loving kindness and when I'm feeling closed down, I'm feeling shut down. It's hard to give. loving kindness myself, also saw that loving kindness towards myself comes more easily in situations that are emotionally strong or where I'm emotionally loaded, such as grief. Or where I'm a witness to something that's very powerful. And it's nothing I can do except witness it. And but then I'm realizing this with practice that choice comes in those situations. I have a choice to start. You know, may I feel safe content, so forth.

To see these, these differences, beautiful. Yeah.

I guess I noticed the difference. When I was listening to hearing the person talking about being generous with themselves compared to when I was listening to them, criticizing or analyzing themselves how that felt for me, like I had some sense of joy, hearing this other person talk well of themselves and what they do the other I was like, like wanting them to see, wanting him to kind of go back in that other direction and hold themselves and kindness, that area to submit seems like a normal, normal, normal response normal response.

I think the father of loving kindness for myself that doesn't love them was sure that's, you know, something I always strive to do and think I practice, but how do I know what I'm actually I have accomplished that. Because just about everything I do is pretty much a good thing for myself or other people. But I think I learned that for me, it's like, I need to learn to maybe feel, learn to feel maybe what the possibilities are, when I'm loving and kind to myself, so there's some blank, emotional possibility there. So I don't feel it. Like when when I'm meditating on love. You know, it's hard for me to feel what love is, I could, I might have to think back as my innocent self, then I've could feel some compassion. But it's something I'm working on the feelings, the emotions. Otherwise, it's just an abstract thought, Oh, yeah, I'm loving and kind to myself.

Exactly. Yes. Like

it's empty. So that's my, I think,

I think that this is one of the hopefully results. So If something like meditation practices, our capacity to feel becomes bigger and we become more integrated and more holistic, where there's more than just thinking more, or for people who feel too much more than just feeling going on. It becomes integrated in the different capacities. We have worked together harmoniously. And then we have a different reference point for all this. And I think that the kindness of love the goodwill can become much stronger than mercy also more stable.

Because I don't have problems with the actions of being loving, loving and kindness to myself is the feeling part that seems to be missing. Or is it I don't know.

One of the ways to find out I mean, there's many ways of finding out but one of the ways to find out is to sit still in meditation for a long time and it will become clear Hi, everyone.

One thing that that became apparent to me with that something I had done a couple of years ago that I thought was to affect other people. I thought it was sort of a clever thing. I had hung a sign on my front door that said, please remove your shirts.

So people would come in the house and they take their shoes off.

Because they assume that that's, you know what, it's

pointed out, no, no. Your shirt outside but

when we did this, with Exercise if it suddenly dawned on me that I was really doing this

as a reminder to myself, every time I came home

to me my shirts, nice beautiful.

In our talk I was we were both realizing, asking for what we want is a of course, conditions. Some conditions are better than others for that but more often I'm finding myself just just asking very simply for what I want as if, as if

it were worthy of at least asking and in the result have been very good.

celebrating it. And the other thing guilt what you said this morning is it really reverberating with me is it was something about giving space around whatever we're feeling so that so that we're not troubled by what the mind is doing. That seems really important for for my inner environment. Beautiful. Yeah. And I, that's the challenge too, which I hope derives because it's, it's not always easy, you know, it seems subtle to allow that space around, whatever is going on.

So that was one of the one of the things I said in the guided meditation was to do that. Make making the wareness really big and hold it and maybe have an expansive mind or expansive awareness that can hold what's there as opposed to fix it or change it or react to it. It makes sense. A lot easier consider if you have making my big enough and sometimes it is to make your mind so big it's like as big as Redwood City you know that awareness. Sometimes just make it a biggest California to hold some things with you make an expanded sensitivity almost almost a bit some people almost by imagery expanded and then you're less claustrophobic less caught by things and there's more choice, more choice more possibility of not being pushed around by it or seeing the wise way of going forward. It's a very useful thing.

Talking about removing your shoes shoe it before coming in. That kind of made me it was similar to what I talked about that i think i was very critical toward myself and not as loving because I had all this shirt inside of me that once I kind of cut down on this thing, expectation of that I couldn't read and so I was always critical when once I put that down, I felt like I became so much freer and so much nicer to myself and Kinder. So at some point when you learn to let go of all this rules and should that you grew up with, it's just life is so much freer. Yeah, and kinda, you can be kinder to yourself to others. Yeah,

sometimes it's a kind almost like ironic or paradox that, you know, when you give up, I should be kind. Then you'll be kinder. Okay, So one of the I think one of the really important things to explore in any, I think probably of any religious tradition, spiritual tradition, but certainly in Buddhism is To foot to get to explore get familiar with get wise about the relationship you have to yourself. And I think it's very easy to go through a life and never question it or never even be aware of it or just take it for granted. It's like the, like, you know, like the thing about the fish isn't supposed to see the water, it swims in, we don't see the attitudes that we we've float in that we drown in towards ourselves. And as those are, they're operating all the time. And some of them are harmful, and not useful and not even accurate. And some can be quite beneficial, helpful. And, and the direction we're trying to go in Buddhism, one of the directions is towards being able to relate to oneself in a generous, open, relaxed, peaceful way, so that that relationship is one that's nurturing and supportive, as opposed to undermining. So it takes a long time to turn things around, but it starts by becoming Cognizant Becoming aware of what's better at it, what attitudes you carry about yourself. And as you become aware of it, if it's not good news, then then very important part of this is to relate, try to find a way to hold it lightly. And don't let it pull you down even more, just realize that it's hard to be human, we get conditioned very powerfully, and you don't, you don't have to take it personally what you do to yourself and just, you know, it's, it's happening and now you work with it and try to find a wiser way. So that was the first half of our morning and loving kindness, our day and now the kindness and so we'll take a lunch break now and I thought we could start again in here at 130. So give us a little bit more than an hour. For those of you who are new to these days. If you brought lunch, we we talked during lunch we hang out at lunchtime and people know how to do it will bring up tables, you can take some of the table the tables and even take them outside and it's just nice to get the fresh air and the chairs as well as long as you bring them in at the end of lunch. And, and if you're relatively new to our community, you don't know anybody. I'd encourage you, if you're inclined unless you want to be on your own, too, to just sit down with someone, you know, a group of people don't be shy. This most of the people who here are not they're friendly people. And, and so just know, and those of you who are friendly, those friendly people, you know, be friendly. But that but, you know, just you know, please if you're new, introduce yourself or just be a little bit more, step forward into people and say hello, and so, um, so let's start again with 130. Thank you.

So let's start the afternoon with sitting. And I can start with a period of silence sitting together. And then I'll do some offer your son guided or reflective meditation in the end.

As we continue, I'd like to guide you in somewhat common practice of loving kindness. It's often said The common practice of loving kindness doesn't require you to feel any emotion of kindness or love or goodwill. But it relies on your wish or your intention that someone be well.

Feelings might arise which support the practice, but they're not required. And the practice involves three different elements, primary elements. First is to bring someone to mind, some person for whom you're going to have metta of goodwill, loving kindness and then with whatever goodwill that you could generate or have, you express that with an intention that they be well and then you express that intention by using particular phrases that you repeat over and over again. So there's the person there's the intention, and there are the phrases.

And as you get your, your mind involves holding all three elements at the same time. It is to get concentrated or focused on this so you're less likely distracted or caught up in thoughts. Just get absorbed in just activity of practicing loving kindness. So to begin with yourself, see if you can bring up an image of yourself or a sense of yourself an impression of yourself where you can relate to yourself with goodwill. A sense of well wishing and kind regard a generosity of spirit towards yourself.

Some people find it helpful to tune into the heart area. Maybe feel some gentleness or tenderness there as they feel themselves

And then see if you can find a wish or intention that you wish yourself well. You hope that you can be happy and where the goodwill you have expressed a wish, a kind of a wish. Well wishing it feels good to have. It'd be wonderful if this person here happens to be me could be happy.

And then to give expression and strength or meaning to this intention. Repeat the following phrases silently to yourself and as you say the phrases

You get to the end of each phrase that it they kind of like you've opened the door opened a window to welcome in something something new can be something connected to the phrase

silent they repeat these words may I be happy?

May I be safe

May I be healthy?

May I be at ease?

May I be happy?

May I be help Al be safe.

May I be healthy

May I be at ease

and as you say the phrases sink into the meaning of the phrase in such a way that you let go of any other thoughts or reservations you might have May I be happy

May I be safe?

May I be healthy?

May I be at ease

and now bring To mind someone in your life, someone you know for whom it's quite easy or relatively easy to feel friendship goodwill, well wishing and bring this person to mind. Hopefully someone for whom their relatively uncomplicated relationship or your goodwill can be simple and straightforward.

Visualize the person or remember them or sense them.

And if possible to see if you can, you know, connect to your sense of goodwill. Will or friendship towards them. Well wishing with the intention for their well being.

And see if you can express your intention with these phrases and as you say the phrases, seeing if you can connect to a well wishing that feels satisfying to you, meaningful to have this this generosity of spirit for this person

may you be happy. May you be happy

May you be safe

May you be healthy

May you be at ease

trying to let go of any extra thoughts you have and can To your love or friendship or goodwill for this person is if your goodwill was radiating from you, opening up towards this person.

Think the words you like water that water is a seed May you be happy.

May you be safe

May you be healthy

May you be at ease.

Now take into mind that you're in a room here. Full of other people, people much like you, with your eyes closed, see if you can be open to including the people who are all around you. Somehow in this sphere, the orbit of your attention

as if awareness is a light bulb that shines in all directions, with your awareness shine out or be about to the whole call directions in this room to all the people here See if you can extend out to radiate out your thoughts your wishes of, that'd be really good if these people here could all be happy, safe healthy.

As you as you repeat the following phrases at that last word of each phrase, be like dropping a pebble in a pond. Let your awareness radiate out. That quality out into the room to the people here.

May all of you be happy

May all of you be safe

may all of you be healthy.

They all of you be at ease.

One more time, see if you can have sense of generosity or kindness or goodwill or well wishing for the people here in this room, do it in a way that feels meaningful or satisfying. Perhaps because your heart is open, your awareness is open, your body is relaxed.

Perhaps it's a delightful idea that these people could be happy. Perhaps it's wonderful that there are people who can wish each other happiness. May all of you be happy.

Nay, all of you Be safe.

They all love you. Be healthy.

Okay, all of you be at ease.

In this setting you can take a few long deep breaths

Ready to open your eyes