

2011-11-28 Precepts

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SPEAKERS

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Good evening, everyone.

So

I wanted to talk today a little bit about what is English is sometimes called precepts. And there's no really good word in Pali that that translates precepts back into the Buddhist language, but we translate something from the falling into the English word precepts. And the precepts are an aspect of Buddhist ethics or virtue. And the tradition is that the training so Buddhism Buddhism offers trainings for people more than beliefs to believe it's trainings to engage in and that there are three sets of trainings. And the first set of training is a training and virtue. The second is a training in meditation. And the third is a training and wisdom or insight. And so the first virtue is seen as the foundation for doing meditation practice. And meditation practice is seen as a foundation for developing penetrating insight. And so as Buddhism has come to the west, as many of you know, we have this little bit upside down. We have the nightstand Buddhists who are focusing on the insight, the wisdom part, first and foremost, all these wonderful ideas. But then if it's just you know, from books, they can be inspiring. This usually doesn't go very deep, even though it can seem profound as you're reading it, but then next week, you wonder what was that about? And And then often here in the West, we practice meditation, before any real concern with ethics or virtue, the classic thing would be you would actually train, be concerned with your virtue, your ethics, and that somehow creates a good state of mind state of heart for you, that makes it easier to meditate. Because if you are feeling somehow morally challenged, it's usually harder to meditate and morally challenged, so maybe not the right word to use the word moral. So the precepts are said to be five. And these are usually the most basic ethical guidelines that are given for laypeople in our tradition. And so this training and virtue is often people point to these five living by these Five Precepts as being the kind of the very most basic aspect of virtue. And the five precepts are not to kill, not to steal, not to engage in sexual misconduct, not to lie and not to intoxicate yourself. That's approximately a rough rough translation those and then it's very common when there he said, these are taught here in the West, that the teachers will very quickly say as I'm quickly going to say that these are not commandments. Because often in the western kind of Judeo Christian kind of context, people think oh, like that's like the 10 commandments or something. Or, or that these are these are, you know, absolute moral obligations that you have to follow these rules, absolute universal rules like this is you know, you'd be good Buddhist you have to do this. And but there is no external authority in Buddhism, there's no, you know, great person up in the sky and heavens, who decrees that this is what you should do. There is no news there is no external authority that way in Buddhism, they really the real authority is yourself. And so there is no one to tell you, this is what you should do and Buddhism. But there are still Buddhism offers these five precepts. So that's when we kind of want to talk about today. But I want to give a little more introduction background for them. So precepts are these. Remember,

remember, maybe maybe the word precepts not the best translation, and we'll get to that. But you know, to have these kinds of ethical guidelines, it's fair to say is there some principle behind them because sometimes only by understanding the principle that you can really understand how the these guidelines should be applied. Because they can look like amendments. It can look like you know, you know, You know, it should be absolute in some way and like, when you get to sex, you know, that's always interesting. You know, what are the absolute rules around sex? You know, who can you and can't, you know, do things with

and, and, you know, religions in the world over have come down with very strict rules that we're still struggling with trying some some people, some cultures to try and deal with these. He's, you know, very strict guidelines. And then you happen to be someone who doesn't fit those guidelines or those those rules and something and then you feel, you know, like you don't belong in your faith community because your kind of person is not recognized because of how you tend to do it. Or if you're interested in so how is it in Buddhism, you know, is there a principle is there's rules. But rather than looking at a rules, it's I think it's very helpful to look at it from Buddhist point of view that Buddhism offers a principle through which time understand these guidelines. And it's a very simple principle. And this principle is a principle that can help you make your own moral evaluation. And the principle is the principle of not causing harm. And everything follows from there. So, so, I think, you know, they're often the more interesting one, I think that's more and more controversial for most of people in our circles, because we don't most of us don't go around killing and stealing. But you know, that when around sexuality to the rule is no sexual misconduct. And so how do you decide what a sexual misconduct and so there's, you know, in fact, you find Buddhists have all kinds of different kinds of Buddhist who makes all kinds of statements about sex. So you have Buddhists are puritanical and make strict rules and say things which some of you would cringe at hearing. But remember that Buddhism is a huge, wide world religion. So we find everything in it. But generally, the consensus, I think, overall in Buddhism, is that in looking at sexual behavior, knowing what kind of behavior to engage in and when not to engage in, it comes down to the issue of, is it causing harm? Is anybody harmed from that behavior? Is their sexual partner harmed is, are you harmed, or the people in the community around that, you know, harmed? Is there harm being created as someone being hurt? And the idea being that you don't want to cause harm. And that's kind of like the, one of the core core core Buddhist principles that Buddhism is Buddhism is at its essence is about learning how not to cause harm. And freedom, you know, if, you know we kind of advertise a lot in Buddhism, right, like, you know, liberation, freedom, you know, it's like these lofty terms. And you can ask, you know, freedom what is freedom mean freedom from what? freedom to do what? freedom to do whatever you want. That's one of the ways of understanding liberation in Buddhism, it's liberation from being a person that causes harm, that the forces inside of you, that could lead to causing harm, no longer operating, that you're free, you're kind of liberated from that you're released from that. And one other plate per persons that we want to become, of course, most noticeable that you stop becoming causing harm is to yourself. And again, this is one of the core principles of Buddhism, is that is that what your responsibility for as a person is how you cause harm to yourself and how you cause harm to others and it is unintentional harm being made. So there's a whole analysis in Buddhism that you're supposed to do with your own mindfulness practice, to understand, are there ways in which you're causing harm? are you causing and you know, particularly to yourself. So if you're highly hyper critical of yourself, an angry with yourself, then in a sense, you're your own enemy, you're kind of attacking yourself, or if you are filled with hate for someone else, and anger. In Buddhism, we say you're also harming yourself in that process. If you're consumed with greed and lust, if you pay mindful attention to that movement inside of you, you can see that that causes harm to you that you suffer because of it. And so the movement become free of suffering in Buddhism, it can be said, is a movement to become free of causing harm. And why it's important to word it that way. Is that cause harm implies that you have agency

causing harm if you have some role in the action that's causing harm. Sometimes when you say become free of suffering, it seems too abstract for people. It's like, you know, I'm just suffering, I'm not responsible for my suffering. But part of the function of mindfulness practice is to help us understand, what am I contributing here to my suffering, what am I contributing to the way that I hurt? And, and what we see when we contribute is our contribution is how we cause harm. Now, this is not supposed to be, you know, depressing. And, you know, some some, you know, fire and brimstone sermon here, about how you're a terrible person because you're going around causing harm. But rather, it's supposed to be kind of a practical analysis of what we do and how we can become free of something. And it's a beautiful way I think of looking about how looking at our behavior as we go about our life. In the world, and realize and looking at it from the principal is there is there harm in this? And if there's no harm, no one's getting harmed whatsoever in the activity, then perhaps it's morally okay to do. So again, you know, this thing with, you know, sexuality. If, if there's no no person, no people getting harmed at all, then perhaps any kind of sexual expression is fine thing, not a problem from a Buddhist point of view, as soon as someone is harmed in the process, and then we're concerned, because I think it's the nature have a relaxed, open, sensitive heart to be concerned about harm being created. And what happens I believe, is that as people mature in Buddhism and Buddhist practice, there's a stronger and stronger desire to avoid causing harm and more heightened sensitivity to how harm is is caused occurs. So

So I said that these you know, there's no as far as I'm concerned, oh good word in the original Pali Buddhist language for the English word precepts. And so what how do we how does this thing we call the five precepts occur appear in these early teachings of the Buddha. You the precepts, the five precepts don't appear a lot in the teachings of the Buddha. He didn't seem like it was like really that important for him in terms of frequency in which he taught it. It seems like he did teach it, but it seems like it was after his death, that the Buddhist tradition picked these up as being and started talking about them much more as being the central precepts for laypeople, monastics have a whole Other set, met. monks have 227 precepts that to follow. So lay people just fine. It's easy to remember. And but you know so so. But one of the common ways and some of the early texts the way that Buddha talked about these things now he called the five precepts was as, as five virtues. And what that meant for the Buddha was, at some point when you have reached a certain degree of personal maturation, spiritual maturation, that these five virtues describe how you would behave. You're mature enough, you'd be the kind of person who wouldn't kill, wouldn't steal, wouldn't engage in sexual misconduct wouldn't lie and wouldn't get involved intoxication. So they're descriptive, rather than prescriptive. And some people find that quite inspiring. It's inspiring in a world Where there's a lot of harm being created left and right. You don't have to go very far to see you know how much harm suffering is inflicted on human beings. And it's quite remarkable to meet someone who you can feel trust and confidence in, this person is not going to cause harm. And so sometimes you can meet someone just really palpable. The fact that this is a safe person, and it's a great gift that they give to others. And that's the second way in which the Buddha talked about these five precepts. He talked about him as five gifts. If you if you want to give the world a really good gift, make yourself a safe person. Because there are plenty of people who don't feel safe in our society. And, and to be able to be around people that you feel safe with is a beautiful things. As I've said, sometimes it was this woman who came to spirit rock many years ago, did a retreat and she left and then she wrote a letter to spirit rock thanking spirit rock for her experience at the retreat and He said, this is the first time in my life where I felt like I could walk around outdoors up in the hills there and walking my property. What I felt safe, because in my community where I live, being a woman, I don't feel safe going out at night, and looking up at the stars and stuff. And this was a new experience for me. And the old lady, I feel safe walking around. It was the first time in my life where I slept in a place where my doors were not locked, because there are enough locked at their retreat centers. And

she felt safe in this kind of environment. And perhaps many of you feel relatively safe in your communities. But there are plenty of people in this world who don't. So it's a gift to make yourself into such a person. The other way that the precepts are talked about is and this is the word which is maybe closest to the word precept in English. It's a it's a kind of a long word in Pali. It's *seeker pada* *seeker* means training and *pada* means something like steps. So steps in the training. So these are five steps in the training in training yourself become spiritually mature five trainings and how to make yourself a safe person, five trainings and how to become someone who's liberated and become free of causing harm and another way of saying free of three free of causing suffering and so and so Buddhists will take on. Some Buddhist practitioners will take on these five as something to train with. And that's a very important word to train with because training means that you probably need to train the training is something you have to do over and over again. Usually, you know, you do learning a skill and you do it again and again. So it's perhaps that when you train yourself in the precepts, it means that you need to do some need you have. And guess what

that means you're probably not gonna do it well for at first. So when people commit themselves to the precepts in Buddhism, it's not such a big thing. If you break your precept, it just means you're still training. And then rather than being upset that you've broken the precept, the idea in Buddhism is to use in your training. So let me see how I can do better next time. It's like my little nine year old son is learning in basketball team now. You know, and boys, I was at a game today. It was pretty funny. Because of what goes on there and never seen referees. This was so much care and compassion and patience. You know, and they think, you know, stopping and explaining very carefully are the referees saying in Defense go down, go down. And so they make, you know, a lot of mistakes. But that's, you know, weather training for learning. So they don't get upset about the mistakes, they just kind of tree. So the spirit, I think, for many Buddhists is not to take the precepts on these heavy moral obligations that, but rather take them as something that that you're training with, and you'll do your best with it. And if you somehow come short, you know, don't treat that as like, you know, really likely, but don't be burdened by it, but rather say how can I do better in the future? So these five precepts, and if you think of them as being the precepts of not causing harm, that might add up the your sensitivity to your behavior in relationship to the precepts, because maybe many of you as I said earlier, I don't go around killing and stealing. So this What does this have to do with me? You might be wondering so the first precept is not to, not to kill. And, and so for people who don't go around actually I am a surprising experience recently had a retreat where someone was saying that explaining

the person was talking about, I guess certain degree of remorse and poor behavior that had been done and what a terrible person person was, you know, and afraid. And they said, Well, how terrible Could it be what you did? Did you kill someone? Yep. I said oh,

I won't tell you the whole story, but it's something that happened 4050 years ago. So, you know, the whole context you know, I've met a few people in my life who have killed people. The first time I met someone, they were they they did when they were soldiers. It was quite something to listen to them talk about their experience of running into the so called enemy shooting and then, you know, I've go most years and now I do once a year I go to San Quentin, and spend a day with lifers. Some of them are there because of murder. And they're, it's interesting to go to San Quentin and hang out with a roomful of murderers because they The safest people I know. Because typically particular ones I see, or the Why are the ones there's there ones. I mean, you see all kinds of people in San Quentin. And you see people you don't want to. You see them and sense them and you get their vibe and you don't want to be anywhere near them. It's just so much hostility and anger. And then um, that seems to be part of what they are. But then, but the particular ones I see are the ones who have gone through a whole anti violence program and meditation and years of inner work. And those are the ones who you know, I feel

so safe with that, you know, they've done this amazing inner work that becomes safe people. And so there are such people. One of the people I met at San Quentin think was last year was there for road rage. You killed someone to add to right nearby and someone who comes to See here as well. A relative was on trial for murder, road rage murder. So these things sometimes can happen very quickly and surprisingly to people who normally think that they're never going to do something like that. Anger gets the upper hand.

I remember many years ago here also, I was talking we we had a whole discussion about capital punishment. And Buddhism generally is very much against capital punishment because it involves murder, killing to do violates the precepts. You're talking about it some and this man stood up and said, well, I've been on both sides of that question. Because my, both my parents were killed, murdered, but the person who murdered my parents was my brother. So you know so then capital punishment, you know, who's what, where, you know, he's a big, big struggle. So there you know these things do happen. For many Buddhists who were not inclined to gain a close to such activity. There's similar activities like what do you do with insects? What do you do with the ants in your house? What do you do with bugs? What do you do with termites in your house? What do you do with gophers in your garden? What do you do with these things? Do you do you not kill because you're not supposed to kill anything? Or what do you do? And so you find some Buddhist teachers will say very clearly, we the precept means don't kill so you shouldn't kill even that. What how I like to see this is that it's a training of the heart. So not to cause harm. And so you look into your heart to see what you how you need to answer that question. Because there's many, many, many issues involved, about what causes harm where the greatest problems are. And, you know, if you let the termites eat your house up, and your family now in the streets that I don't know, that causes a certain kind of harm. So where's the balance? When asked Buddhist monastics, and they have really strict rules about these things, so they'll just walk away. I mean, they'll just let nature take its course. They're not going to get involved. And but late people are not monastics, so they don't have the rule is not so strict for them. And so then it's a matter of your heart figuring out, you know, what do you do about these kinds of questions, but I find really admirable and inspiring, is that there are people who ask those questions. They don't just simply go and spray the house, you know, the get rid of all the ends. They grapple with the question and they maybe look for alternatives. Rather than doing the quick answer. And so to have anything, have people who are looking for alternatives to violence is a beautiful thing. So it's not just killing but also violence. I remember many years ago, maybe I've told this story too many times. But as in when we used to be made in Palo Alto, a woman came up to me and said, after the Monday night talk, and she said, Gil, I had to park my car in downtown Palo Alto at night. Sometimes they don't feel safe. And I'm thinking of getting a gun. What do you think? And I didn't want to say what I thought, because I don't think it's my place in my role to tell people what to do like this. But what I did tell her was I think it's unfortunate if people go for the solution of getting a gun before they've investigated the alternatives. And there are lots of other alternatives that are comprable they admit to making you safe to having a gun. And with but so what what inspires me is people are willing to do the research and the thinking and investigation and, and even the training that's involved to help avoid putting themselves in situations where they're going to be violent. And we don't have the draft anymore in the United States. But when I was young, we had the draft. And so I clearly was going to be a conscientious objector, if I was drafted because I was not going to be involved. I didn't I didn't want to be involved in any kind of situation where I was gonna be involved in killing. So these are kind of questions that people grapple to grapple with when they look at the first precept. So how is this a training? And one of the ways is a training is that if it's a training, if we can then look at our hearts, look at our minds, look at it, what motivates us and use those grappling and those questions to understand ourselves better. Do we quit Go for the violence do we quickly lash out? Because anger has the upper hand or do we use this as a way of looking at our anger or looking at our greed? You know, I don't want to give up my vegetables. I put a lot of work into my

vegetables. My vegetables are really important. I'm going to get a you know, wasn't you know, some great award for growing the biggest pumpkin.

My my wife grew big pumpkin this year. And Ben are huge as you grow some Tomkinson human came home one day and was gone. It's completely gone. That's all story but but you know, so you have your you have your vegetables and so someone comes and takes it away. Do you there, you know, do you then out of your greed for your pumpkin? Do you succumb to violence? When do you succumb to violence, what's the line by which you look and what motivates you to come to buy islands to get your way. So this is to ask those kinds of questions is to use the first precepts as something you train with. And in that way, what in Buddhism like to say is that the precepts are mindfulness trainings. They're helping us be more mindful, more considerate, more conscientious about what's going on. And, and so when you live by the precepts as precepts are kind of like mirrors that tell you look, look more carefully. Don't just do something because it's automatic or expected. But look more carefully. When you cross this boundary. Don't cross right away, look at yourself. In the Zen tradition, where I trained in there they treated these precepts as mirrors. In a sense, are signposts that if you find yourself that you want to cross a precept meaning to violate one of the precepts stop before you do it. Because what happened they say what you did was happening is you've lost touch with your Buddha nature. You've lost touch with your innate purity or something. And so what you want to do then is you want to turn your attention around to reconnect to your peace, reconnect to your Buddha nature, your inner spiritual essence of something. And, and so the precepts and become this wonderful signpost help. So, when you're going to break the precepts is a sign that you've lost touch with your spiritual essence. And so it's a wonderful kind of signpost to have. So that's the first precept the second precept is it doesn't is not doesn't say don't steal. It's a higher kind of standard. The precept is don't take what is not given. So if it's not, if it's clearly hasn't been given to you, then don't take it. Don't assume that you can just take it. Even if you don't think us you know, that you're not stealing exactly, but it should be offered. And, you know, and probably none of you steal, go out, steal our banks and your neighbors homes and stuff like that. But what if you want to take it on as a mindfulness training the precept of not to steal, then you can reflect on the subtle things that you might be stealing, or taking that's not given. So it could be such small things, you know, like you take pencils at work, for example. You know, that could be a small example. But, but what about taking someone's time? You're in a conversation. And are you dominating conversation? Are you interrupting someone when they speak? Are you taking something from them? When you interrupt them? Are you taking their time when you dominate the conversation, keep talking and talking? Is that taking what's not given? How do you drive? You drive in such a way that you give the right away to people? Or do you take what's not getting by forcing your way in here and there, you might seem kind of petty, but I'm going to try to do is to is to describe the how you can take on the precepts as a way of understanding as a way of understanding yourself more, if you start looking at the subtle ways in which you might take what's not given, because then it's a way of looking into what motivates you what's driving you. And the fact that might be subtle. How you drive you know, maybe you're forcing yourself a little bit too fast, through traffic and pushing yourself where there's no space. Maybe it's not a big deal, people do it all the time. But it's part of the way to train to learn about what actually drives you. And can you start taking responsibility for it drives you so you can maybe let go and not be driven by things which cause harm or, or not to be driven by anything at all, but have more choice in what you do. And then we have The precepts of not engaging in sexual misconduct. For Buddhist monastics, and this means to be celibate. For people who go on retreats that we teach, generally, this is also understood to be celibate. And we don't usually advertise that to come to a 10 day. Come to a 10 day celibacy retreat. And probably, you know, people wouldn't sign up.

But that's what happens. You come there and you're expected to be celibate for the course of the retreat, and suffer some people that's quite interesting experience. Because it's kind of new for them,

you know, to and so that becomes a mirror to understand that part of themselves much better because it's a very strong boundaries, you can't cross and so, you know, it isn't just in sexual, you know, activity, but it's also kind of sexual flirting and, you know, vibing people, and so things that you can maybe get away with in ordinary life. They're in retreat. You can. So you see, you have to look at yourself more deeply. And so you learn about yourself and learn how to set yourself free and a life for laypeople. It's simply not causing harm through your sexuality. And so to be sensitive and careful about it, so if you find yourself involved in sexual activity, do you In fact, reflect about what the consequences of the activity are going to be? or potential consequences are the people who are going to be hurt by this activity, or the fact the consequences are completely uninteresting, given how wonderful it's gonna be. And I know that when I was in my teens, I didn't know that sexuality cause harm. I mean, just hadn't occurred to me. It was just, you know, just something that you get as much of as you can. And then slowly and painfully, you It became very clear that this is a world that it's very complex, and in fact can cause a lot of harm. And you can be heard a lot from this as well. And so and the sense so, to spend time reflecting and be considerate to this, it doesn't come didn't come obvious to me. And maybe it all came obvious to you, you turn 40. And it was obvious. But But the best part of the analysis, you know, is is there some kind of harm? And even, you know, between spouses? The question is, is there being is some kind of harm being caused here is, Are you being forceful, and their demands, you know, in the relationship in turn sexuality, is this really in the spirit of this precepts, to have demands and expectations and be forceful, even when you know, legally it's supposed to be allowed, right? And so, to question what is causing harm, and to avoid causing harm is a very important precept here. And then there's a pretty Tip of not not lying. And, and that's a very interesting state thing, you know, because of how easy and quick many people are at making false statements, or exaggerating, or white lies. And so to use the precept as a mirror, where we're up against as I'm not going to do that so readily or so quickly, then we take a look at what, what's motivating me. Why am I want to say this? What's driving it? Then it becomes a mindfulness practice that helps us understand ourselves better. I think it's a little bit unfortunate when ever I talk about not lying as a precept, how quickly and immediately, the question people ask is, well, isn't it okay to lie sometimes? Now, I think that's a it's a, I think that's a valuable exploration, you know, to explore and think about it just saddens me that's Like the first question people ask, you know, I, you know, isn't there like, you know, that shouldn't be a small percentage of the time. But there is one way one I think I would say one absolute in Buddhism Buddhism doesn't have a lot of absolutes in my eyes, you know, the absolute truths are this like has to be this way. But one of the absolutes, that's Buddhism wouldn't exist without this absolute is that it might be occasionally okay appropriate or something to lie out in the world. Maybe you can come up with these wonderful ethical scenarios of the Nazis coming and people in your closet, you know, that they do in philosophy classes. But the but the one absolute is that it's never okay to lie to yourself. Next one, and the reason why that's an absolutely Buddhism is that the all all of Buddhism is about waking up and being truthful. seeing clearly, I think of mindfulness prayer, a synonym for mindfulness practice is being honest. Being honest about what's going on right now. It's a,

it's a quest to be as honest, as you can hear in the present moment to yourself, this is what's going on. This is what's motivating me, this is what I'm feeling. This is what's happening around me, too. So you can in order to in order to do Buddhist practice. Buddhism doesn't work, if we're intentionally lying to ourselves or not many people intentionally lie to themselves, but but I think there's plenty of delusion and deceit that goes on. And then the final precept is the precept of not having to do with no intoxication. Now, the Pāli This is fun and this is a controversial use. Get my point of view. I asked Ajahn Amaro this question, and he said No way. There's no controversy. It's very clear with this precept means. So he said. People say it's absolutely one way say the precept says not

to take any intoxicating drugs or drinks. More or less This is to not take any. There's some linguists, grammarians with the ancient traditions say actually the grammar is ambiguous. And it could say, don't take any drugs and alcohol to the point of getting intoxicated. So which is it? And so Depending on where you fall on that line, you might make different kinds of decision. Some people might say, well, I, this the preceptors don't drink at all. And some people, they're all social drinking as long as you're not even tipsy, it's okay. Just a little, you know, sip is okay. So I think that's for you to decide there again, in Buddhism, there's no absolute authority says you should do this one particular way. But what causes the least amount of harm, again, is the principle. And to be really honest about it. I think this is an area where there's some kind of where if honesty is the right word, but where delusion comes into play, I feel that oh, you know, I think you know, just a little drink here and there and another one here and there, you know, it's no harm done. And then pretty soon, harm is done, say Say something, do something that you would later regret. But the more interesting, what are the interesting questions in that this precept is supposed to help us be more For a mindfulness training, perhaps any kind of intoxication goes against the grain goes against what we're trying to do, if what we're trying to do is to make the mind clear, clear and independent, not dependent on any substance, or anything for well being. And as soon as you start using a substance for well being, then you've abdicated responsibility for doing that inner work yourself, and turning in and looking. And also, what's interesting, I think, are also very significant, I think is the way in which the precepts are gifts to our society. It's a way of supporting other people too. And there's a tremendous amount number of people in our society who are struggling with addiction issues with alcohol and drug addictions. And there's some people you know, it's it takes tremendous strength and, and create Sometimes and for to, to, to kind of, you know, stay sober. And I think it's a beautiful thing for the rest of us to support that. I recently went to a big public, big, big event, kind of a fundraising dinner a big thing in San Francisco. And I was so surprised how much wine there was. Because it's not in my world, the alcohol thing, and I was just they felt kind of strange. And, and I think, you know, it's unfortunate because of the people who are, who are struggling with addiction issues, it's best to kind of try, you know, avoid 10, you know, support them. Don't make it easier for them, they'll make it harder for them to avoid. So in terms of being a gift to others, is that such a huge social issue in some ways in which it's a gift to the world around you, to limit or restrict or to stop your use of alcohol show that it's possible to others. It's not just For your own sake, but maybe for the sake of your society around you. And then as a mindfulness training for yourself, when you find yourself about to want to take a drink or take some kind of recreational drug to stop and look carefully, what's motivating you? What are the intentions? What are the feelings? What are the consequences for doing this? To keep using this stuff, using all this as introspection to look more deeply, more deeply? Now I can I can imagine that there are some people who can do the introspective work well, and might decide that certain kind of, you know, altering substance might be appropriate for what they're trying to do. Maybe it's you know, they're taking pod for Native American ritual, and it's part of the ritual practice to do that. But the Buddhist thing would be to look introspective to question is there harm being caused here? Not to do things unconsciously, without introspection without consideration, that reflection.

So of course, you're really free not to pay any heed to these five precepts and just meditate away. But I'll warn you, then, that if you meditate away, your hearts going to become more sensitive. And if your heart becomes more sensitive, you're going to be more tuned in to harm and how harm is caused and how harm is felt and experienced and occurs around you. And you'll want to do something about that. And as you'd want to do something about that, I think you'll become one of those people who will tell To one to live so that someone else could say, Oh, look at that person there. She's not killing, stealing, involved in sexual misconduct lying or involved in misuse of alcohol and drugs. And you might look like you're living by the precepts, but you know better. You're not living by them. You're not living by them, you're living them. So I hope that as you mature and grow and become more heartfelt, open hearted person, that you live the precepts more than living by them. So thank you.