

## Right Concentration

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Good evening, everyone. Welcome to IMC and to our time sitting together and exploring the Dharma together. In the fall I began a series of talks on the Eightfold Path, and today will be, I suppose, the last one, because this is the eighth of the Eightfold Path. And the Eightfold Path, those of you who don't know, is one of the most representative descriptions or the stereotypic descriptions used in Buddhism to describe the path of Buddhism from being in a state of suffering to coming to a place where there is no more suffering. And I think that is something that many people would like to do. Many people are trying to cope with their lives and are trying to find a way not to suffer.

They might not use the word suffering per se for their troubles, their distress, their despair, or their challenges, or their fear, their stress. That word suffering is used in Buddhism as representative of a whole package of the problems, struggles that people have in their lives. And Buddhism is designed to address this. By living a life that allows us to turn enough attention inwards to find where within ourselves we contribute to that suffering. So now it's interesting that if you're holding someone's hand, and they're holding your hand, who's holding whose hand? I guess you're both holding each other's hands, right?

And who's responsible for holding each other's hand? You could say both of you are. But if you wanted to find a way to no longer have that hot, clammy, sweaty hand in yours, maybe you know, you have to, you know, and that person's not going to let go. You know, you have to kind of look inside of yourself and discover you know what's holding, what's keeping you holding on for dear life. And you have to figure out what it is as you let go of what you have to release so that you can release that hold and no longer be holding that hand. You could, you know, be holding that person's hand, they can be holding yours and you can beg them to let go.

You could tell them that you don't really want to do the work. You know, I don't like to work. I'm lazy. Or, you know, I don't feel responsible for this. You're responsible and you should do the work. You let go of my hand and you know. So sometimes you have success with other people letting go of your hand. But the remarkable thing is that we can do it for ourselves, too. We don't have to negotiate with other persons. We don't have to beg them or pay them whatever it takes. You can just let go, release your hand, and the hands are free.

So the most efficient way or the most thorough way, most lasting way to discover how to live a life of peace is not by figuring out all the different strategies to get people to let go of your hand, but rather to learn how to release. You do the work of releasing your hand and no longer gripping. So no matter who you think might be responsible for your suffering, if suffering involves two people tangling with each other, then what Buddhism wants to say: Look at how you are holding on, and perhaps you can let go. And once you have an open hand, you have a hand which is useful for many different things. As long as you have your hand gripping in something, it is not useful for so much stuff.

So the Eightfold Path is a way of taking this inner responsibility for oneself and beginning to act and live in a way that supports a process of going from suffering to freedom from suffering, to go from suffering to peace or to ease, to well-being, to happiness. And one of the things that seem remarkable about this Eightfold Path is that it offers a path to freedom, to peace, a religious path. Some people would say a spiritual path without recourse to the supernatural, or not recourse to things which are a kind of way beyond anything you can ever discover as being true for yourself. But rather, it's kind of understanding actions, behavior, practices as you can do, and how they help. So there are aids to these practices.

So these practices are Right View, of having developing an understanding that's helpful for this process of freedom, having the intention to do so, and being supported by a variety of different intentions, attitudes, that supports the process of freedom, of peace, then behaving in ways that support that process. If you want to be peaceful, but you act violently, then you now do not go counter purpose of peace, so to speak. The first one is to speak in ways that support the process of peace, to act ethically in the way that supports a process of peace, and then to have a livelihood, a way in which we live our lives, which also supports that process. And then the last three of these eightfold steps is to really turn the attention within and begin to cultivate the mind or the heart, first by learning in our own minds what it is that we do, what goes on in our minds, to really understand the landscape really well, to understand how the mind grabs on and how it can release, to understand the behavior of the mind, the thoughts, the feelings, the attitudes, the desires, the aversions that we have, and really track them well,

really be able to measure them really, really well, what goes on. So we can then begin taking some responsibility for our inner landscape.

And, you know, I think we all do that to some degree. It's coming close a couple of months now to tax season, and some of you are going to do your own taxes, I imagine, and some of you'll put it off until April fourteenth and a half or something. And you're sitting there, you know, the evening of April fourteenth or something, whatever the day before they're due, and you start thinking about what's on TV and you notice that you're thinking about TV and signal, I need to focus on the taxes. And so you're monitoring yourself well enough to know, This TV is not what's to be done. You monitor yourself and this is what I need to do. So we monitor ourselves all the time.

But to do it in a way that supports the process of freedom is the task of what's called right effort: to know what inner behavior, attitudes of the mind which are not useful and we should not do that. To get rid of it, and to know what kind of inner behavior, attitudes, thoughts are supportive of this process, what to let go of and not be engaged in. And then there's right mindfulness, which is cultivating a heightened level of attentiveness to be able to stay in the present moment and monitor in a really clear way with a spacious, open, relaxed attention what's going on in our life. And then the final one, topic of today, is called right concentration and how to develop a strong, stable, focused mind. So we can see deeply into our mind and really understand deeply what's going on.

We might think that a noisy focus on going in within ourselves to understand this is maybe selfish, but I would think it's more selfish to always be insisting that everyone else release their hands. You never know, to always expect the world to rearrange itself for you, but to take some responsibility for yourself. I think then we can contribute more to the world. We can meet the world better with more love and care and with the best qualities of our hearts. One of the principles of this eightfold path is eight practices that Buddhism offers is a principle that maybe the analogy I like to use is that of floating in water.

Most people, unless you have, I guess, the right kind of, you know, light body, most human bodies kind of sink enough that I think that if a person doesn't know how to float in water at all, never been taught how to float in water, would probably sink and maybe drown. I wouldn't be good for your health. And most people need to learn something about how to float. When you should at least make yourself flat, you should tread water, you should take, you know, big, you know, have a lot of air in your lungs helps a little bit to keep you up. It's a little bit of skill. And once you learn the skill, it's kind of second nature. It's like, feel like you're doing almost nothing at all.

But when you learn, it feels kind of frightening, and you flail around. It takes a while to learn. But once you learn, you still, even if you get really skilled at floating, and you turn your back and spread your arms out and your legs out and really kind of float, and it seems like it's no effort. There's still some effort involved. There's a skill that you have to apply. You have to do something. You have to apply something to it. Even though you would say, mostly what's happening is you're being held up by the water. You're floating. The water is holding you up. But the water is holding you up, but you have to do something as well to allow the water to hold yourself up. You have to do something that allows something too good to happen.

So this principle that you have to do something to allow some part of our nature of the world or inner life to hold us up, support us, and lead us along, is a very important principle in the Dharma in Buddhist practice. If you think it's only up to you, your efforts, and you puff, then you puff, and you're straining to do all kinds of practices, you probably just sink. But you have to do just enough of your own work and make space to allow for something to unfold and hold you up and support you. And these eightfold practices are practices we do. But it's not only about doing those practices, and that's it, the end of it. But it's doing these things so that we cultivate ourselves, we grow ourselves, we develop inner strengths, inner skills, skills in letting go, skills that allow us to let the something supportive unfold.

So we come to right concentration. Concentration is a very important quality. Concentration is a stable mind, a focused mind, which means a mind which is not scattered or distracted a lot, a mind which is jumping around with thoughts, ideas. You know, most people meditate, you know. It doesn't take long for new meditators to wonder if they've, if they've ADD. Because, you know, it's pretty common for you to try focusing your mind in one place and it wanders off and all. As thinking, a concentrated mind is less and less distracted and scattered, and so it just kind of stays there.

The image is kind of an image that I'm thinking of lately for a kind of concentrated mind is if you take a bowl, the big, wide bowl, and you kind of really thrust a marble into that bowl. It goes up and down, and around and about, and kind of does all the stuff, and then slowly the momentum in the marble slows down, and eventually the marble comes to rest at the bottom of the bowl. It has to exhaust, you know, the momentum. So if you keep kind of going down to the bowl, and, you know, in striking the marble, it'll keep going. My kids at home have some kind of top, and they like to be spinning the top, and then going spinning it with your finger to see how long they can make it go spin. So we have these tops too in our brains. Our minds thinking. And we keep it spinning. The marble keeps going. But part of what we do with concentration is we learn how not to keep spinning the marble so the

momentum can go out. And what we find ourselves is, you know, our marbles, we all come to rest in the bottom of the bowl of the present moment and it comes to rest.

And in that restful place, a rested, concentrated, focused mind that's not scattered is useful because it has the best ability to see clearly. It's hard to see very clearly if the mind is scattered, if it's distracted, and if it's agitated, rushing around and what you want to see is you want to see deeply into your own mind to understand the nature of what you are holding on to, how you're making yourself in conflict, how you're stressing yourself out, and what you could do, what you can do to make a difference. And again, I can't stress how useful it is to find out how what you can do to make a difference because you're portable. You go with you everywhere. And so if you have learned the skill of how to be peaceful wherever you go, then you don't have to insist that everyone else do it for you, or you have to rearrange everything you come to. But it's a really profound, wonderful skill to do.

So we don't put a lot of emphasis on this, what sometimes is called concentration. It's the word *samādhī*. One of the primary ways in which the *samādhī* is defined is as unification of the mind, to unify the mind. And I like that better than concentration, because many people in England who speak English, when they hear the word concentrate, think they have to make their mind into a laser and zap whatever is focusing on one point. You don't really contract and get narrow in their focus. Unification is a soft, open, relaxed mind where the mind is not fragmented from itself. The mind is not scattered. We're not at odds with ourselves.

It's remarkable, you know, how you can see yourself. Probably how often the mind is scattered, agitated. But for some people, it's even more dramatic. They have minds which are in conflict with different sides of them, and now they're at war with themselves. Within, there's parts of themselves they hate, and they try to deny or to push away, or they're in argument with, and if you do that, you're fragmented. If you try too hard to get concentrated because you are full of desire to get concentrated, it doesn't really work. They get concentrated because it is a way and you're fragmented, then separating out from one part, one part of yourself over another. If you're too much of a goal that's in the future, you can't really be settled and unified in the present, and so the idea is to become unified and have all the different functionings of our mental emotional inner landscape, kind of operating in harmony.

Harmony is another word. Concentrated mind is one is harmonious mind, so that our intentions, our attention, our thinking, our emotions, and the sensations, and feeling what it's like to be in a body, the embodied feelings that we have all kind of coordinate, harmonize together, stabilize together around the feeling, the sense of being here, present, and focused or stabilized in attention. So it's not an easy thing to do. It's a kind of an art to learn to do

it, and it's a hard one to learn, because sometimes we are, many people when they try to do something, they end up doing it in a way they are in conflict with themselves. They end up doing it, so they fragment themselves rather than unify themselves. So they become aversive, for example, to all the ways they're distracted, and so, you know, push away or deny their distractions. It's bad distractions or bad me. And as soon as we are in conflict with some part of ourselves or some part of reality, it's not possible to be concentrated because then there's agitation. You've spun your top some more.

And so the way to get concentrated in practice is to remember this principle of floating: that you have to learn something, but you also have to learn how to let go and allow something to come forth and happen. It's a bit different than floating, because it's going like a big deal. But it's kind of like you have to allow something to blossom inside of you and grow and grow in its own way, rather than something that you can't just kind of will yourself into becoming concentrated or stable or this unified feeling and presence that's possible. So the first seven steps of the eightfold path are part of the conditions that we cultivate, so we can allow to have something within us begin to blossom. It's kind of like the food or the fertilizer for the flower that's going to blossom. And so especially the ethical guidelines of it. Buddhism puts a tremendous emphasis on how important it is to live an ethical life, a high standard of ethics, because without that, the mind can be agitated or fragmented, or, you know, it's not going to be able to settle in some deep and relax and settle and deep way.

It also puts a big emphasis on understanding an attitude that we need to kind of establish some kind of attitude that is in harmony with being at peace, at peace with the world, peace with ourselves. So the attitudes of letting go of our clinging is helpful, but also being kind and compassionate are very supportive. Being aversive and angry and critical and judgmental don't support them. It doesn't help the mind settle, it just keeps the top spinning. It's not that easy to change your attitude, but it makes a difference to have an intention to do so, to decide in spite of oneself in a clear way. Even though I can't so easily stop being critical all the time, at least I'm going to know that it's my intention to want that out. I don't want to. I don't relate to that any more. I don't want to stand behind it. I'm not a champion of my criticalness any more, my judgments. I don't really believe in it any more.

And then you can get critical or angry about all your judgments, right? No, then it doesn't work. Then you are in trouble, right? So you have to take all your, if you happen to have inner qualities, things you do, mental habits of reactions, and stuff that you're not very proud about, don't feel good about. To cultivate the eightfold path includes being somewhat accepting or forgiving of that, not being critical of your criticalness to make some sense. Oth-

erwise, you tie yourself in knots. So it's a part of it. In order to get concentrated, you have to kind of both begin working on your attitude, heal your attitude, kind of begin doing the inner work it takes to kind of create a kind of healthy inner landscape. We're much more at ease or at home with ourselves, rather than fragmented, upset. It's not an easy thing to do, and so that's a big part of cultivation development.

But as this becomes stronger, then it's easier and easier to be in the present moment, and concentration requires us to be in the present, rather than in the past and the future, past and future. The further you go up in the past and future, the higher up you are in the bowl with your marbles, and then so to come back towards the middle of the bowl is to be more and more in the present. And that's the only place we can rest is in the present. And part of that is because thinking about the past or the future, for example, or fantasy takes work. The mind has to be active, to be concentrated and focus in the present moment. The mind is much more at rest. It's a mind that's a restful mind. It's not a straining mind to be concentrated, but a mind that lets go of all those tendencies to think about the past and future and think about a lot of things.

You still with me? Yes, I can go on and on. I got myself in a profession where I'm allowed these monologues. Not many people get to do that. If everyone smells a check and make sure it's okay, so I know it's. It's interesting what we do with our thoughts. Our thinking is often the vehicle by which we carry along and support and feed and bounce back our stress. If you're anxious about something, your thinking has a big part of what's fueling that anxiety. If you're greedy, your thoughts and what you do with your thoughts is a big deal to do about fueling that greed. If you are hateful or angry, your thoughts and the stories you tell have a lot to do with feeding it and supporting it.

And going back, and I mention this because as the marbles come closer to the centre of the bowl, to the present moment, not thinking about the future so much, the past, not thinking thoughts of anxiety, not thinking thoughts of greed, not thinking thoughts of hostility, the energy we expend to have those thoughts and have those feelings begins to be saved for other things. We don't exhaust ourselves. So what people find who do concentration, you know, meditation, and their mind is more and more stable in the present moment at rest is the mind itself gets a profound form of rest. And it's one of the most restful things you can do for the mind is to have a concentrated mind. People who do a lot of it, especially on a retreat, find that they need much less sleep usually than we do in normal life because we're not exhausting ourselves to all the thinking we do and all the stress that involves. I've known, I know, I've gotten down to retreats for long weeks and weeks on end, very happily getting

by on four and a half hours of sleep. And that's a lot compared to some people. So I tell you, you don't feel bad about yourself. It's okay to sleep longer on retreats. Different people have different ways, different, you know, different needs, and the mind's in a different way. But I've known people who have on retreats have gone sometimes days without sleeping and for long periods of time with two hours of sleep at a time.

This is not the goal. Don't now go home and try that. Most Americans are sleep deprived. They need meditating sleep more than they need to meditate. But I just make this point that I know a lot of the mental effort, a lot of the exhaustion people have has to do with mental, how we use our mind. And so as we begin to learn to rest the mind in a deep way, the mind gets refreshed. And it's that refreshed mind. It's another reason why a concentrated mind can see more clearly what's going on. So a unified mind, a harmonious mind, a settled mind, a mind at rest, a mind that's let go of a lot. A concentrated mind is described as one that's soft, a soft, pliable, resilient mind. These are all very nice qualities.

You can't have a harmonious, soft, stable, unified mind by being hard, fragmented, straining, holding on. There has to be just letting go of this letting go. And part of this letting go is a willingness to allow yourself to get concentrated, allow the settling in, to allow something to occur. So this thing about floating: you have to make some effort to float, but you also allow the water to support you. And so this is part of the art of meditation, is both to let go and allow something to happen and give up control, or having just the right amount of control to stay on track. And so it's a kind of balancing act, which is hard to do. It omits a little bit. Like you ever looked at these images? They're kind of computer generated kind of pictures, or they've all these dots, different coloured dots, and they all look like a blur. You can't see any, just dots. But if you cross your eyes, they kind of, the dots kind of move, and then they line up, and you see there's a three dimensional picture there. And some people can't do it. My wife can't do it. She tried and tried, and sometimes I can do it, but takes a while to do it, and you have to kind of, and if you strain and try to do this, it doesn't really work. But you can't just like not do it either. You have to do something. And how do you do this thing that requires not doing? And, you know, crossing your eyes just the right way. And you can't try and yet to relax your eyes and let them cross. But then suddenly it happens, and you can't believe this is a picture there, and a three dimensional or everything, and you kind of look around and see that. You move a little bit. Then you see the whole thing, can't believe it's the whole scene. And then it seems really stable, like, How could you not see it? It's right there until you look away and try to come back, and then have to re-establish it. I don't know if that's a good example, especially if you've never seen this. They're fun to do.



So this thing of allowing, so as people learn, as people relax, as people are not in conflict with themselves, so in conflict with the world, as the mind becomes more at ease and begins to rest and is able to let go and become unified and focused, remarkable things begin happening in the inner landscape. And the definition of right concentration, this eighth step, the eightfold path, involves allowing the mind to go through the inner landscape to begin experiencing some of this, different flows of energy, or the different emotions or senses of being that arise from being unified and concentrated. And I won't go into all of them, but it's described in different ways. One of them is that the mind has an ability to really just stay present and focused, kind of like it's not easily going to go astray. You choose to have the mind stay focused on something like the breath, and it just stays there. But it's a kind of funny thing, because choosing at this point is too much agitation. You've already done all that and trying to get there. Come back, come back, come back. At some point the mind, the ability to stay focused with something, becomes easy. It's not work any more, and a tendency to the mind to wander off. It might begin that process, but it comes right back. It's like a rubber band attached to the mind, just you're there in the present.

Another quality that arises in this is a joy, a—it doesn't have to be strong, but a sense of delight, joy, well-being. Sometimes it's quite strong. And when it's strong, people describe it as things. I use the word rapture, ecstasy, and I've had people come to me and say, It's orgasmic. It's better than orgasm. It goes on and on and on and on and on. That orgasm just lasts. You know, it's quite intense for people at times. But then as the process goes deeper, the joy or the rapture that's a little bit like a thrill feels like a thrill. As you meditate, it feels like a thrill of delight. A thrill begins to settle, and there's less energy there, less agitation. Better than energy. And then becomes a very peaceful. The difference between these two states of thrill is the first, when the thrill is that feel like a mountain. So a lake, which has no water coming in from the outside, no rain water, no rivers coming in, but is only replenished by a refreshing spring that bubbles up from a lake bottom and fills the lake with water. So this idea that there's no input any more from the outside world that's feeding us or supporting us or threatening us, but all the nourishment we need tangibly, physically, feels like it's bubbling up and flowing through us. And it feels very healing, feels very tangible of well-being from this. A concentrated mind is a mind that, where the body begins to heal in deep ways. The heart begins to heal. And deep was actually feel sometimes the healing energy. So this kind of nourishment from inside.

And then the next stage where there's the thrill, or this inner spring kind of quiets down. The lake is completely still and very refreshing. Still, quiet lake, very peaceful. And now, the an-

cient analogies is those lotus flowers floating, or floating in it, and there's those beautiful flowers are just floating peacefully in a very still, quiet water that's very refreshing. I think the analogy works well in ancient India, where it's really hot, and so it's the cool, refreshing pool. Just lay there completely still, and then even that can become even more peaceful. And then there's some point. There's no sense of water at all. There is no sense of pleasure, no sense of pain, but rather a tremendous feeling of confidence, mindfulness, clarity, and equanimity where the mind feels completely equanimous in a way that feels so pristinely beautiful, kind of like an early morning in the high mountains, and you're looking out, and there's no wind. Everything's completely still. And you look across the lake, and there's the lake. There's not a ripple. It's completely still and flat, and nothing's moving it. They just feel so peaceful, so pure, so delightful. And so, as the mind gets quieter and quieter, this profound state of equanimity is there.

And that state of equanimity, part of the function of all, it's not for its own sake. It isn't like this is like you're a more spiritual person because you get concentrated this way. You don't believe how much suffering exists in the Buddhist world around people trying to attain these states of concentration and getting concentrated and comparing themselves, people who are and not doing fast enough. And it's an unfortunate disaster zone, but still they are useful and not bother them enough themselves. And not because you get a good badge like your Buddhist badge of merit, but rather because the mind is not agitated. Because the mind is soft, the mind is very, very let go. There's very little, almost no holding left in the mind at all. It allows us a chance to let go of the deepest holding and clinging that we have, let go of our deepest fears and insecurities, let go of our deepest attachments that we have. Because the mind is not locked, it's soft, it's relaxed, it's very peaceful. And so it's a mind that can be, that can do this wonderful extra job is just letting go. It's kind of like you're looking out there in the beautiful, maybe mountains early morning. It's very still. You've woken up refreshed from the night. Temperature is really comfortable and nice, refreshing, and you look across in those beautiful, still, quiet mountains. Maybe snow-capped mountains. Everything is quiet and still. Not a bird, not a sound, and you look across the lake. It's not a ripple on the beautiful, calm, peaceful lake. And just look there standing on the edge. And you sit at the edge of the lake, and everything is so peaceful. It feels so good, and you feel so still inside, so good inside. Everything is good and still. And then, amazingly, the ground drops from under you. Everything goes, and it's the best, that last remnant of holding what you're holding on to. It's kind of like the mind lets go of itself.

And that might sound frightening, but you don't disappear when you come back. You're

around, not. But to know, to know that the mind can really let go, to know that you can really open your hand all the way, that you don't know what to grip all the time. And to really know is one of the life-transforming experiences to have that, because then once you've done, once you've had that experience, then you're much less inclined to believe in the value of clinging. You're much more inclined. You might still have a tendency to cling, but you're not so fooled by it, and you don't really, you don't think, This is really going to—I'm going to cling my way to happiness. It doesn't really make sense, cling my way to peace.

So the eightfold path is a process of dissolving. Not resolving so much, but dissolving our suffering through insight, deep understanding, through a lot of inner work and cultivation and growth. Then that involves developing these eight different practices or areas of our life so that we can have this strong mindfulness and strong concentration that allows us both to see deep what's going on and to have a mind that's still enough and soft enough that something can let go in a deep way. And then there is the result is peace, well-being, freedom. Liberation, the word I like a lot, is ease. There is now ease, profound sense of ease. And then to live that ease in our life, to begin discovering how to bring that ease into everything we do. It is the fulfillment of the eightfold path.

So that was right concentration. We have about five minutes if you would like to ask anything about this. Yes, please. If maybe you can, you could use the mike, please. And everyone can hear. There's a setting aside the big three in terms of suffering: death, divorce, illness, which I call the macros of suffering every day. But I—or the worthy death, yeah, death, a death, illness, and a divorce, death, illness, and divorce. Yet those are the top three. And it's been proven, Holmes-Ray, in all different cultures. You know, the top three anyway. Forms of stress or suffering for me: suffering, yes, stress, and suffering. Setting aside those which we don't experience every day, I assume that most suffering comes in everyday life, what I call everyday suffering. My sense is a lot of it has to do with being disappointed. That is, is suffering equal disappointment? The example being we're American, so we aren't really into dust, right? So we set our to-do lists, and we've got like eight things to do today, right and wrong. Get up in the morning, and so forth. Okay, so when we achieve something? No problem. The real rub comes with item number two. And item number five does not get done, or it's disappointing somewhat. So, but could you address this whole issue of what I call everyday suffering? Part of that is being disappointment. We can't be willing to address that.

I can try, see if it satisfies you. It's all subjective. It's also, so the—it's a good question. I appreciate it. So disappointment, you know, there's, I guess, a few things about disappointment. Is

that to understand the mechanism of how we get disappointment, the conditions that bring it about? I think we'd have to get us to look deeply at what our desires are, our hopes. Without desires and hopes, I don't think there would be a disappointment. Our desires, hopes, expectations, demands, shoulds, the whole list of things, the ideas and concepts and feelings that people carry with them. And so are some of our desires and expectations reasonable to have, and some of them are not. You know, it's so. I was not particularly disappointed yesterday by the Super Bowl, you know, it wasn't—a little bit. I was, you know. But you know, it wasn't really. I didn't really care that much. I mean, you know, but I know some people who really cared. Boy, boy, you know, they held that desire really strongly. So it's possible to look at yourself, and independent of the disappointment, to look at the roots of the disappointment, the cause of it. And sometimes it's possible, after your disappointment, to look back and say, You know, actually, that desire wasn't worth having, and the disappointment can go away really quickly.

It's some things are reasonable to desire, but then the question is, how do we hold on to our desire? Do we hold on to our desires with demand, with expectation? And what are the demands and expectations we have with them? And sometimes people load their desires, their needs, their desires with a tremendous amount of extra baggage and requirements. So it isn't just simply that I want my favorite team to win the game, which is a nice thing to do and be happy if they did. But it's my team, and I'm wearing the jersey, and I really want to be able to go down the street so proud and happy and be part of the gang. And there're so many other issues connected to the team winning. They have to do with identity and community that. And so overload some of our desires with expectations and demands, which are much higher than what they are about.

So, you know, I said death, for example. Well, I've known people who have grieved at the loss of a spouse, and you know, it seems reasonable to grieve a loss of a spouse, but when you scratch the surface of that grief, I was surprised. So I have described it. It hasn't happened all the time. But I have described a few times when the real grief was not the spouse, but was the spouse's income or the spouse's status that was so important, or the security they got from being connected with a spouse. So we load our disappointment and desire and attachment are connected with so many different things. So part of the Buddhist practice is to look at this much more deeply, look more deeply, look more deeply.

As we do this, let us say the last thing: there might be disappointment, might be a very natural part of the process of freedom. Or say, in a different way, I've heard some people suggest that the process of liberation involves a process of grieving. Not just disappointment, but grieving

because there's a process. There is a healthy and yet necessary process of letting go in order to become free. And without allowing yourself to grieve in that process, it's not going to be all kind of happy. And, you know, you're skipping down the golden, you know, the golden road to liberation and freedom, you know. It's not that easy. It sometimes, you know, our attachments and clinging are very hard to let go of, and we hold on to them very cherished sometimes. And to be able to let go of things we really cherish a lot sometimes involves a lot of grief and a lot of fear to go through that wrestling with our inner demons. So did that—I kind of get close to it, or kind of—so not you, not too disappointed, not too disappointed. You know, I'm sure I talked to a couple of times, and I'm sure there's a lot more behind what you're asking. So thank you, so but we should stop because it's a way to keep you late. And so may, for those of you who would like to follow the eightfold path, I hope that you float on it and are carried down the stream to freedom. May you learn to float.