

2013-04-15 Response To Tragedy

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SPEAKERS

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If you go back and read the record that we have of the teachings of the Buddha, one thing that stands out was that one of the central messages that he had was practice, practice, practice, the importance of practice. And how this gets highlighted is that there were a variety many religious beliefs that people had at that time, that some people will call metaphysical beliefs about the nature of the self, what the true self is nature of consciousness, the nature of God, the nature of eternity, the nature of the world. And when people try to engage him in these kinds of lofty questions that can seem so important. His answer was always practice, practice, practice. Come back and practice with what's going on. Bring your mindfulness into the present moment and really See deeply what's here and your experience, what's happening here, that was kind of one of his approach over and over again. So I say that as introduction to try to address or bring up or some of the bombing we had today in Boston, as some of you know that when there are large enough events that's happened in our society, I feel sometimes it's not appropriate to come here and not somehow touch on it to see if our practice is somehow divorced from what goes on in the world. And I see that as of what I could follow so far, major tragedy so far, I guess three people have died, including the eight year old child 141 people have been wounded. And, and it's clearly a act of violence. That has a tremendous impact. symbolic value for where it's been chosen to be to be. It's one of the great, probably one of the greatest one of the greatest international sporting events that America presents to the world. And the finishing line at these explosions went off. So it's symbolically, you know, touches the core of something in our society. So there's an advantage. If I may say this at this point, from at least what I could follow so far, is we don't know anything about who did it, how this happened. And the advantage that gives us is that if we had known right away who it was, then I think it's easy for certain emotions to come up very strongly. Like, I hate those people. We got to bomb those people, all those, you know, those, you know, and, but because we don't know, there's a pause between the kind of the impact it has on us and kind of the blame that can Let's do something about it that sometimes can happen very quickly. And people get sucked up in that. And the idea of being able to pause with the initial impact of something is a very important part of Buddhist practice. And even better, more than than pause, but be able to sit and meditate. If nothing, if you cannot do anything in a situation that has a big impact on you. If you're not needed to do something, one of the options you have is to do nothing. But to do nothing in a very deep way, in a way that's meaningful, you know, so sit and meditate. It's not really doing nothing, but it's sitting and meditating is one of these pauses that are very important that provide something an opportunity for us. So to practice, to bring practices situation rather than getting opinions and action right away. you following me? So as far as I could We have this pause going on. And I don't know how long it'll last until we know who it is. And then the next phase might come. But we have this pause to look at it. And so what I'd like to do this evening, for those of you are willing to stay for this is to have you form little groups of five. And I'm going to give you two or three questions that your group can try to address or explore as a group. And then we'll we gather and explore this a little bit more as a group as a whole. And then if

there's time, I'll say a few words. And so I'll give you the first question I was going to have you do as a little group, and that is in the face of the explosion that happened Boston in the face of violence that happens in our society.

What we're 3000 miles away What benefit can we provide to ourselves to our society to the situation? by pausing, and meditating, pausing and being mindful? What are the benefits that come from that? That's the first topic. So I'm hoping your game for that. And then after that a little doing that for a little while, I'll offer you the second question to explore. Okay, so if you could maybe form groups of five, and huddle. And, and what I propose you do is, before you can before you move I should have set up some instruction is, so you sit into groups of five, and offer your comments, your ideas, briefly. Don't go into a long story about why this you have this idea and you know, why, you know, just offer something briefly. Briefly, it can be a minute or something. And then let the next person offer something briefly. Then go around your group of five. And what's going to happen is that, as you hear someone else, it'll spark new ideas for you. And so the idea is not so much your opinion what you offer is important. But what's more important is that you get sparked by what other people say. And then when you cut, it comes back to you. You have, you might think of something completely new that normally you wouldn't have thought about to offer, again, as an answer to that question. And you'll go around a few times. And it kind of a group process kind of comes into play that I think is very valuable. That's maybe hopefully will make you feel a bit more part of a group process group mind kind of, rather than, you know, your individual mind and your opinions and all that your story. So to go around and explore it together. So the next time sense website so now you can form your groups of five and when you're formed, you can start your circular conversation.

Okay, so it can be useful to distinguish between impact and reaction or impact and response. And sometimes the response or the reaction we have is so fast that we don't really distinguish the reaction from the impact. So, sometimes there's an impact of something on us. It can be pleasant or unpleasant. It can be intensely pleasant or intensely unpleasant. And based on that impact, we then react to respond to what's out there. They're when things are intensely painful their impact breaks our heart, for example. It's one thing to stay present for the impact and what it feels like. It's another thing to notice and be wise about the reaction or the response that we have to it. And part of the task of mindfulness practice is to tease apart the impact from the reaction or the impact from the response. Because then, if we can tease them apart, then we can maybe be wiser about how we respond react to the impact. So, for example, someone a friend of yours might say something really nasty, and it's painful to feel your friends say this to you. That's the end pact. Your reaction of anger maybe or lashing out at your friend is not stimulated is not triggered by your friends action. But it's triggered by your response to the pain that you feel. So how are we, our response and reaction we often think I'm responding or reacting to what's happened to me from outside. But in this in this step by step process of these ways, Buddhism understands our psychology. we're reacting to our pain, more than reacting to the external event, reacting to the impact it's had on us. So if you can separate out the difference between the impact and your response, the impact on your reaction? What opportunities does that give you? That's the question. They could be seen it could be seen similar to the first one, but it could be different. What What difference what what, what, what opportunities? does it provide you to see this difference and be able to live between kind of create space between that distance? The McClair. Okay, so, please, please do do another few rounds on that question.

So, so I have one more question for you. And this time, what I'd like to do is just to go around the circle of ones, and remember your comments should be somewhat brief. And then when you finish going around once you eat each circle becomes silent. And that way we'll know when everyone has a chance to finish when the whole room ever is in silent. Okay. And so the question for you is that when you're in

pain, and that's broad, you know what it might mean? When you're in pain. How do you draw on wisdom? Where do you go? Where do you call on the deepest places or the best places of wisdom that's available to you? Where do you look for wisdom? Where do you find wisdom when you're being challenged?

So, of course, I could have spent the evening telling you my opinion about what the US government should do to those people. And this and that and you would have left no wiser. But this way you are practicing, practicing, hopefully to turn it down and back to to see what's going on here for you and what what can you explore what can you understand? So, hope that was useful for you the distinction between impact and response impact and reaction is a very important one. So hope you understood what I was trying to say that often the impact is actually useful in in the Buddhist psychology is often to think of the impact as being a very simple or in simple terms, is whether it was a painful or was it pleasant and based on whether it's painful or pleasant where their heart broke, or where their heart saying, we then will react to that or respond to that, or that will trigger something inside of us. So when the heartbreaks, and when you feel a lot of pain, the reaction to the pain, the pain can be anger, or it can be fear. And we think that the anger and the fear is a reaction to the external event. But it's not an x not a reaction to the external event. It's a reaction to how we internalize the event by the impact of the hideous. So same thing if your heart sings. Then we want more of something and we reach out to grab or have more. And we think that thing out there is somehow the thing, that understanding what we're responding to is what's happening with the heart. So mindfulness practice helps us to make this distinction. And then if we can linger With the impact, stay with the impact before and rushes into the reaction or the response, stay in the impact. What you find is that the impact can have layers the impact can have have a chance to be digested the impact has a chance of, of kind of having a deeper impact or are we have a deeper response within us if we pause and wait and stay with it. So, and then in that pause and that waiting and that allowing digestion of that impact. Then we can ask, what's the wise thing to do here? What what what is the best intention? What is the intentions we want to come from? And if we rush into the reaction, we've lost the chance to respond with our wisdom, our wisdom and our compassion. So we have this opportunity today. Unfortunately, but we have this National pause where we don't know who did this thing, terrible thing. And our hearts break. It's, you know, just terrible that this just hurts so much. Once on retreat, I received a note from a woman who was having a hard time in her life. I forget the story the details of the difficulty had, but it was pretty bad pretty bad. And she left me this beautiful note. And she said, she says a note said, Now I understand. When the heart breaks into 10,000 pieces, it has more surface area.

To field be president for empathy for all, so don't be afraid of a broken heart. Don't be afraid of your pain. Don't rush away from your pain. Don't try to fix your pain too quickly, when you don't have to, if you need to a situation needs to be taken care of take care of it. But there are many situations where there can be a pause. And you might benefit you might become a better person. If you allow yourself your pain and then pause and explore it and feel it and begin exploring. What is the wise thing to do? What's the compassionate thing to do in this situation? And perhaps, rather than 10 heartbreaking into 10,000 pieces, maybe the broken heart breaks into 10,000 little hearts. And so we feel more and that's difficult, but the people who can feel the most are probably the people who can offer the most care to our world. So I hope that that process was nice for you was useful for you. interesting for you. And I hope it was useful to meet some other people, we don't often have a chance to break into groups here. And it's something we should do more of. And I hope it gave you a chance of exploring or understanding something about mindfulness and investigation and being present for yourself in this way. And I hope also that in some way, maybe in a small way, this helped you to process and digest or something or meet these events of today. And I suppose that this will just be ongoing for the next few days and weeks, maybe years. We don't know the impact this will have. And perhaps this prepares you

or helps you support you, as as a nation and as a world. We somehow respond to come to come to terms and hopefully are wise about what's going on. So thank you for this evening, and I wish you all well.