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SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

Because I like the idea of being in community and feeling like we're like more connected, you're kind of like far away some of you with all the space. So I don't know if you those in the floor come closer you can move your chairs closer as well so we can kind of so partly so I feel more connected to you.

Nice. You've more connected. Hope it's nice for you to be this way and also one more Judy, can I talk to you afterwards I have something for you to use. And so one of the important aspects of probably most spirituality, but certainly Buddhist, spiritual life is that of being in community. And I don't think I could have practiced as much as I did, I couldn't have matured as much as I have in my practice without a supportive community that supported me that held me that inspired me. That challenged me many ways. And sometimes, I think with a meditation tradition with emphasis on meditation, it could be easy to overlook the importance of community as part of the practice. And if you're new to this, and welcome if you're new, you know, it's probably just barely enough just to manage sit here in silence for 45 minutes. And that's enough to deal with as opposed to all these other people and community. So you know, you You know, you could take your time you don't have to. You know, that's one of the great things about this practice here is that hopefully everyone could find their own way with it and find themselves in it. But we're still community, traditionally, Buddhism is very important. And I know you've been sitting in silence with others has been very meaningful for me. And sitting alone has been very meaningful for me. One of the interesting transitions for me in my practice was my first I don't know how many years, five years of least five years, maybe more, let's see, no, it would have been eight years of practice. I did in community, I meditated together with others in the Zen center. And the and it was great for me to feel the support of them. I couldn't have practiced as much as I did without other people around me doing it as well. I hear from people who come and talk to me We live here in this area who say that in the context of where they work, they're weird. Because mostly they say, because they started to meditate, and now their values have began to change. And one of the common values that begins to change that people report to me is they no longer want to gossip. And apparently, that's one of the things that goes on around the water cooler or the coffee machine or something. And so it's kind of awkward when that's kind of the currency of the social interactions at work, that they don't want to participate in it. So it makes them odd right in. And so, you know, take that as just a representative example of some kind of different way of being. So then it's good to kind of be around other people who are odd. So now you're all odd coming here, or your rs fieldfield or normalize it feel like it's, you know, that, that there are other people doing this as well so that you feel some support. So certainly, I felt that my earlier practice just the fact that I was interested in meditation There were a lot of people in society were telling me that this was not a good idea. And one of the common voices that I heard expressions was that meditating is selfish. And has always struck me as a very odd critique. Because if if I told people that I so you know, I would meditate, but I first started I meditate 80 minutes a day, 80 minutes, right? two periods of 40 minutes. And, and I tell you how to meditate, you know, 80 minutes a day, boy,

it's so selfish is focusing yourself. I didn't ask people this, but if I could have asked me how much time do you spend watching television? If I told them I watched television for two hours a day, no one would have occurred to anybody that I was being selfish. There's something about meditation being close your eyes and you know, that it's maybe because it's religious or spiritual, or I don't know what. There's something that's kind of threatening or something that kind of you indicate above to religious is supposed to be altruistic and connected. And if you're not, if your religion is not concerned with others, then you're being selfish. So I just happen to watch television all the time, but you're selfish. And the so that was one of the things I heard, you know, the idea that we're selfish and being in practicing a community of other people, sitting with people sitting with sit in groups that I did. It felt I could really feel the mutual support. And I could feel the goodness coming out of that, that these are, these are people who were either kind of slowly could watch the goodness the best of people come out, or if it wasn't the best of people coming out, at least you felt it was trying to come out. And that that counted for a lot.

And then there were times when I you know, I was tired or I was sometimes discouraged or depressed or had other things that are more important are all kinds of things television and so then I will But you know, my friends and my community was meditating. So I went along and had to support and I would show up to meditate and had people sitting next to me. So that when I had doubts about whether I should sit or not there were people there. And then also I was quite capable of having very peculiar ideas, to say it nicely, and about myself about Buddhism, all kinds of things about life. And by being in a community of people who I shared my practice my understanding of practice and myself. I got reflected back, I got to hear myself speak. And in that process, that which was hopefully good could grow, and that which was unneeded would fall away and I'd see it and my peculiarities would diminish. The and one of the things that happened to me in my early years of practice was my The whole sense of self identity started to kind of shift or be challenged or be questioned questions a better word. How I presented myself to the world, how I wanted people to see me, however, bring representing myself to others. The idea of who I thought I was, was starting to be questioned. And, and I saw that the people who are my friends who were not practitioners and weren't meditators, they were kind of as nice as they were, they were kind of both themselves locked into certain mode of being around a self identity identity issues. But they also had locked me and they had an idea of who I was, and I was supposed to conform to that. But as I felt that I was shifting and my sense of self, my identity, how I wanted to be in the world, how I wanted to represent myself started to I didn't need to be a smart person anymore. You know, all kinds of things I didn't want have to be that it was a little bit hard for my old friends. Because they expected the old guild to be there, and I lost some of my friends in the process. And some of my friends remained, because somehow we were able to kind of see through that or that didn't, wasn't so fixated. But it was very helpful to be around other Buddhist practitioners, for whom they were simply much more acceptance. And they weren't so stuck or solidified around who I've had to be or who they were. And so to be around people who are more fluid or more in a nice way, not caught up in themselves not so self conscious, was very meaningful, helpful for me as I was beginning to experiment and find, experiment with letting putting down my who I thought I had to be all the shoulds insurance, and ways in which I stayed hidden. I didn't want people to see me voice. I didn't want them to see me even though it wasn't me. I'd make it up right and try to play the game. And so it's very helpful to be around people who were also kind of loosening up that whole thing. And one of the things I did in community was I started experimenting. I didn't know who I was. So it was begin to shift and change my identity. So I tried on different ones. And I just got to try it out let's face it would be like to do it be this way, or be like to do this way, as opposed both both as a way to kind of break through the kind of more solid idea I had. But obviously it was there some other expression some other way that was more appropriate for who I was. And for me, it felt like a very safe community, the Buddhist community I was in felt like a very safe place through that experimentation and because I felt somehow that the Buddhist community was never going to close this door to me. That's enough to kind of like not what it does,

right? So I was always going to be included. Not that everyone was gonna like me. But then when I was going to kick me out, and for me, that was enough of a high enough standard to, to be willing to experiment and play around in different ways. Through that process, I learned a lot about myself. And in learning, a lot of the Myself, I learned to be freer. And I think that's one of the purposes of Buddhist practice is to become freer. And one of the great things to become free of is yourself. At least you know, the conceit or the ways in which we hold on tight to self ideas. Even protecting ourselves is painful to do and, and how to go through the world about being super self protective is a wonderful thing to do.

And so I practiced for years and community. And then, pretty much all my meditations for many years were always done at Zen center where we sat in groups of people. And then and I went to Thailand to be introduced to the practice we do here. And I showed up a little monastery. And I said, I'm here to do what ever but I didn't know anything about this practice. I just knew I wanted to learn meditation in Thailand. I was basically a meditation tourist. In the sense that I was only in Japan because I was trying to get a new visa to go back and practice and in Japan only in Thailand to get a new visa to go back to Japan. And so I had to wait for my visa. So what is a Zen priests do when they're in Thailand? Well, you go around to monasteries, right? And so I showed up at a monastery and I said, I'm here. And I'm here to do whatever you tell me to do. I want to learn what you do. And so they their habits. Gave me a little what's called a cootie Hill a little cabin little hut is one room teeny little shack, basically on stilts with little porch, it's probably something like eight by 12 or something, the size just enough for a bed and we'll table and the edge of the monastery over the swamp. And there was this big big lizard you know, I don't know it's a big thing kind of crawling around there. And, and there was also a really big pig there in the monastery, you know, grunting around and, and so the habit Tell me go there and meditate in this cab. There's my little fish. Check. And he told me he told me, you know, so I went to check to meditate. And pretty quickly I discovered there was no one around to meditate with, I was alone this little shack. And within a few days, I realized this was new for me. And that I had spent a lot and then I realized how much I'd relied without knowing on the support to the community Design Center. At the grant did a lot of momentum in the practice, it happened because it was together with a group that was doing it. And I'm very grateful for that time. It said it provided a very strong foundation for me. And then when I found myself alone, this little shack, then I thought, okay, now is that now it's time to learn discipline. Now is that time to learn to have the intention, the motivation to practice on my own without the support of a group. And so that was a very important part of my my time in Thailand was learning to find that learning to deal with the issues that came up practicing alone, finding the motivation in myself so that I could keep doing it. And for me that worked really well those two phases of my practice, the phase of practicing and community, the phase of practicing alone, and they support each other and they develop different parts of me that show different aspects of freedom. So much so that by the time I went to Burma to practice I did a lot more or less, somewhat fairly solitary retreat there. The I loved the solitude and some it was eight months basically, I didn't talk to hardly anyone tradesman to the tee. I talked to the teacher for five, six days a week for 10 minutes. Otherwise, I didn't talk to anyone and sat in my room by myself. Will cave like Rome, meditated on my bed for hours and hours on time by myself? And usually not the kind of thing that people do. Any kind of weird right? Another one is odd things people do. And, and it was probably among probably qualifies as among the very happiest times of my life. And I think having learned how to be free to learn how to be comfortable with solitude was a part of what I part of this process of sitting alone did. And then I came back and then I sat with people again. Actually, when I came back, I came back to sit at the, what's called the insight meditation society, three month retreat back in Massachusetts. And I wrote to the center before I came and said, Could I have a single room, I knew they were single and doubles, because I'm used to meditating alone in my room. And when I got there, I never meditated in my room. I found that it was so meaningful to meditate with a group of 80 people who were there and I sat with them, the three months. So going back and forth. So sitting in community, practicing and community, practicing alone, both have a place And here at IMC. I

like to think that anybody who comes here as part of the community or, or maybe more diplomatically saying anybody who wants to be part of the community is by virtue of wanting to be part of it. One of the core values of in Buddhist practice that I partly learned from my Zen practice, is that we're all in it together.

And the more that I practice myself, the more I just feel more and more that we're all in it together. I'm practicing. I guess you're practicing when you come here to meditate. And we're finding our way together. It's not like I'm the expert and I finished my practice and I can tell you everything. But I find what I find meaningful is we're practicing together and we're finding our way to the truth finding a way to freedom as a community as a people together. So here we are. In for today, we're a smaller group, which makes us able to kind of take in But better that we're sitting here with others. And so, I was wondering if some of you now would be willing to speak. And I'd like all of you to speak actually. But I don't know logistically that's gonna work with the time we have left. But I wonder if any of you be willing to take the mic and say something about what you think the value is, of a spiritual life of life, a Buddhist practice, a life of looking for the truth, how that how that can be found the community, the value of community for that purpose. like to hear from you, your thoughts on that.

Someone break the ice.

I'll break this.

One of the most valuable things to me about practicing in community is the opportunity to see my own blind spots. I've spent quite a bit of time in solitary retreat, and it can be very easy to feel like you've understood something, gotten something

or

let go of a lot more than perhaps we really let go out. And other people are ingenious at helping us find those spots that are still a little bit sticky. I really appreciate that.

Great. Thank you. Thank you, Don. If you say your name before you speak that helps our community you connected.

I'm Kelly. And this is my second time here. The first time was probably about six months ago. And it's close five, it's sometimes kind of hard to get that initial motivation to. But I just finished a mindfulness based meditation course at Stanford, and really want to keep it going. However, I noticed in myself, I can't do it alone. Like I absolutely have to have the community. So this is the week after the class ended, and I hope to come back lots, but so I'm very grateful for all of you for helping me to keep this practice going.

Great. Thank you, Kelly.

Hi, my name is Fadi and yeah, I I rather meditate with with group people than I do alone as well. So I meditate in the morning by myself. And when I look forward to coming to me here, yep. Wonderful. Thank you, buddy. Yeah.

My name is Trudy. And

when you ask the question, how community helped us with our practice? I thought, well, I can't answer that question, really. But I did notice that when we were meditating in the whole group, I could feel the group and it's, that happens for me and so it's a really special thing. To have that sense of being one with a group of people who are here for the same purpose. I am

very inspiring. And yeah, and some people, some people find that they so their meditation is more solid or deeper when they sit in the group. There's some people who find the opposite. still useful.

My name is Andrea, when you're talking about the energy of the group, you could feel the group. That's one of the reasons that I'm drawn to meditate with others, is because of the energy that we share, that we're sharing a space where we can be at peace and connected as one recently, I was in Ukiah, and I went to the city of 10,000 Buddhas. I was vacationing there. And we went to their Sunday service. And I've never been there before. I just heard about it for my husband. And the morning service is chanting and meditation, mostly a walking meditation. So I didn't really know what to do. And I was so drawn and connected to the energy of these wonderful nuns and monks who were chanting these glorious chance, I could not contain myself when they did the walking meditation. At first I was shy, didn't want to get up. And the energy like you talked about the connection here was so strong. I just had to get up and as we're walking and dancing, the monks are chanting. It was amazing. So there's another example of what the energy of perfect strangers and Wonderful. Chanting can do.

Nice. Thank you.

Hi, my name is Gus. And mine's a much simpler sort of value of the community which is, it's nice to know that there's kind of a home where I can go a calm home, to be with like minded people. It's the issue of discipline and knowing that I can go to someplace where there is going to be imperfect people like me who are seeking something, and I'm gonna be okay there, but it's a calm home. Great. Thank you guys.

Hi, my name is Betsy and I'm relatively new. I came a few times a long time ago and just moved to Redwood City. So And I find that meditating with people.

It gives me the permission to go deeper. Because when I'm on my own in my house,

I, it's so easy to get distracted. It's so easy to be like, I have to check my iPhone, I've got to, you know, attend to things at the house. But when I come here, I can sit. And there's, you know, I'm not going to get up

all the distractions of the India, the authority of those impulses diminish. Yeah, yeah, it's very important to have that kind of

One of the values of being in community that perhaps is not so relevant always this kind of urban sitting group like Monday night to strap in for meditating to talk and leave. But it's true for people who get more kind of deeply and kind of involved in any kind of Buddhist Sangha is also the value of overcoming selfishness. And selfishness is a kind of a form of attachment and clinging to self. And so to be able to live in harmony with others and to and to have one's be able to questions, one's one's own personal desires, and to figure out a healthy way to let go of those in favor for what's needed for the group or for others. Or to find healthy ways to assert oneself when the group supporting a group is not the appropriate thing. And this is finding oneself back and forth around the dish. That issue I think, is Very important, and certainly is kind of maybe more obvious that when you regroup, there's also going to

have you kind of a little bit harmonized with a group. But there's also then group pressure. And so part of freedom is also to learn how not to succumb to group pressure in the wrong way. And this is one of the things I had to learn when I was living at the San Francisco Zen Center, because institutions like that had a tendency to always ask more and more and more. And so they were kind of impersonal to them personally, kind of institution was asking you and there was infinite needs. And so I learned that I had to say no, and there was no one teaching me to say no. So, but at some point, I said, Enough is enough. I can't do this. How do you know and I'd work. I worked for Zen center, six and a half, six and a half days a week, no, five and a half days a week, there was five and a half days a week I would work for Zen center. And then I had to come back and in the head house task was living there. And so my everyone had to, you know, live in you had to have a task. So, on Sunday, I was supposed to wax the floors. And I used to, you know, be a little bit resentful, or act wax and those four that just worked for them was five and a half days a week. And then Sunday, my day off is supposed to be waxing these big floors, this machine, it was just too much. And I didn't say no to that. But when they kept asking for more, if enough, it's enough. So the ability to stand up for oneself and the bill, the ability to let go of oneself both as an expression of freedom, rather than conceit rather than holding on to self. Knowing how to take care of oneself is part of the dance or part of the part of the benefit that comes from being in a community that doesn't happen as well. When we are living alone and practicing alone. The value of community has a little bit to do with one's background. When I was at the Zen monastery called Tassajara is deep in there in the wilderness In the mountains, east of Big Sur, they have to drive in deep in the wilderness. And there's a there there's this monastery in this little valley and have a dirt road. And I think there were about when I was there, maybe 4550 residents who were living there. And after I'd been living there for a while, at the same time there arrived these two people to be to be practitioners that live there for a year. So in practice, as in the kind of Zen monastic life, and they came at the same time, but they didn't know each other is just. And so after they were there for a couple of months, I asked each of them separately, how was it to be in the monastery. And the woman said, it's great. I finally, I feel like I have time to be alone. And I've seen a more solitude and space around me and it's so great. And then I talked to the guy, and he said, Oh, it's terrible. There's always people around me it's feel so claustrophobic. I'm always kind of caught up and you know, people, it's no space for me. And they're both the same place, right? Exactly the same place. You know, they mean they had, they had different cabinets they lived in, but otherwise we shared everything, you can then monitor to view everything together, right? So once we know the same place two radically different views. So I asked further, what was going on for them and the woman had gotten married when she was in high school and right away had kids and raised two or three kids or four kids or something. And, and so she'd gone from living at home with growing up to having our own family right away, and had raised them. And so finally, they had raised and left home and, and, and so for her, who's used to this intense kind of family life all the time, the monastery was really spacious and she felt so alone. The guy had spent 20 years living alone in a house in Daly City.

And so that's what he was used to. And so he you know, for him it was like, all these people suddenly he wasn't used to it. So the contrast that we're we're used to, and it's not like one is right or one is wrong, but we bring into community, our background, our context, our you know, our culture, our family experiences, we bring everything with us. And one of the isn't like one culture, one way of being is necessarily right or wrong. But it's really great to be in places where it gets highlighted, stands out and becomes a mirror for ourselves so we can find ourselves find out what we're doing, find out how we are not necessarily so we can change how we are. But so we can change how we get attached. And I think that's the core aspect of This practice is to learn how not to cling to anything to hold on tight grip to things. So don't grip to our sense of self. Don't grip to our desires in our versions, don't grip to our fears. Don't grip to one cultural way or another cultural way one way you know, but rather to learn to see it all to discover our struggles with it, discover how we grip and hold on we resist how we defend how we

hide, in order to find out the way to be free in it. And then as become free or then the hope is that you become more yourself. And this is one of the things that Jack Kornfield has written about those of you read his books. He has this he has this idea that the more spiritually mature you become the more eccentric you become. Maybe I shouldn't say you maybe that's a you know some of you don't want to be eccentric. JACK notice is that those people who become more spiritually mature that he met became more eccentric And, and I think the explanation for that is that essentially just means they become more of themselves rather than needing to conform to whatever you know is expected of them. And, and that can be in any direction at all being some people become more eccentric because they become quieter and less extroverted. Some people become more eccentric by no longer being so repressed and held back and they become more extroverted or more outgoing. depending on what's right for them. There's no way of knowing how you should be with the accepted by doing it and discovering yourself. But what the practice does is to hopefully what it does, it shows us the places of clinging and false views and ideas that interfere with us. So that the, with the freedom from these clinging from attachments, that what we are can flow through more easily. And you know, the profundity of Buddhist practice is that It's not meant to be a self help. It's not meant to be like you're like you're supposed to be free to be conceited it's all about me, but rather the freer you become the less attachments less caught up through your your to become yourself to be yourself as you are, the less you become the reference point for your experience, less less it is about you, the freer you are to be yourself out that makes some sense. And so the idea is of self that clinging to self, the need to prove oneself to defend oneself, the needing to be someone for someone else they need to be to make an endless self improvement project, they all fall away. And in the process of falling away. You get to be yourself more, but it becomes but you don't care. It's not great. Great, okay, got it, you got to carry yourself around all the time. So it's nice to kind of carry it around lightly. You know and not be so care about it so much not to think of it, it's this big thing you got to like, you know, engineer and improve and do all this stuff with that make it a better thing. And so it's really great to do become more yourself and then not care. So any questions? We have 10 minutes left. Any questions about we've said or anything else? Yes.

If you can wait for the mic then. Everyone can hear. Thank you.

Thanks. My name is Harriet.

Is there another mic around?

Thank you, Harriet. We're waiting.

Sir, can you hear me? Yes. My name is Harriet

from New York City. I'm very new to this practice about four months. My husband lives a block away. So I found you guys kind of by chance, I guess due to cookies or something my iPhone and was amazed that it was in walking distance. A second time here. Very, really think that it's

in terms of your first question about community in practice, and

I really don't know why I do this yet. Which is what my question is actually about. But I do feel that there's something very profound about people just sitting down together, and that there's something there's something in the purity of that act. But I feel really changes us but brings us back to who we all are both as ourselves but also as a community. I community, I mean, the community, not just humans,

but have really have sentience. Yes. And not just sentient things, but even beyond that, so and I can't prove that. But I just feel that. Like, I agree, that's just to speak to the first point, but my question

is I probably forgotten now actually.

My question has to do I guess, with the discipline

and the commitment, so I'm having a really hard time sometimes when I read Buddhist things, which I read a lot of, sometimes it seems very hedonistic. Sometimes it seems masochistic. Sometimes it seems both.

But

I guess it's hard for me to understand how I can let go of clinging but at the same time, be committed to this practice in a disciplined way. And I guess That's the question.

So you're concerned that if you're disciplined, then you're clinging.

It just, I wouldn't be concerned is the right thing. But every time I tried to think about it, it feels like a paradox to

me. Okay. So my answer is, maybe it's not gonna be satisfying. But the answer is just sit anyway. And it'll work itself out. Thank you. And I like the first statement you made about, you know, yeah, I think it makes me reminds me that were important aspects of practicing and community for me is in fact that when, when I sit and meditate, there's something about the usual, veils are the usual projections or usual, ideations around self and other that fall away. And in that falling away the heart and the mind is more open to connect and feel the connection to others. And whether it's true The people you sit with, but or the other sentient beings, to have a vehicle for that connection to feel the depth of that connection that we can feel. There's been a very important part of my life. And you know, it's kind of I organize my life because of that to be a teacher, for example, and I attributed a lot to this interface between what happens in meditation, and then what happens I come out of meditation and encounter the world to feel that connection.

So any other questions? Comments tonight?

Is it on?

My name is Carrie. I've been coming here on and off for about a year

moved down. hear from Seattle.

I just came off retreat this afternoon.

And with a very small intimate community in the Santa Cruz Mountains

with the with with array Rena here.

And so what this means to me this community is a whole a container to hold my practice in my everyday daily life. And so we're happy to have that.

Great. So you had to scrape experience of retreat, which is important and this kind of follows up and supports this in daily life. Yeah. And now, that's nice to hear that.

Ah, name is Chris. And just a comment on why I'm here, um, I just see, everybody sees the world through a different lens. And I just see absolute madness out there. And, to me, it's just really helpful to be in with a group that are interested in something in higher values and in growing. And so just being in that atmosphere is really good. And this is quite unique because the vast majority of people, they could spend their time in the evenings innumerable ways, watching silly sitcoms, going to a sports, sports bar and screaming at a TV. So in hearing other points of view on spiritual growth and so forth, I've kind of reminded one of my spiritual teachers once made a comment Kind of a flip comment, but there was a lot of truth and he said, If you really want to get anywhere, just do the opposite of what you were conditioned to do when you're growing up. And I've done a lot of thinking about that. And I think he was right on in many ways. There's something to that.

So any last words? Anyone? Feel maturity feel complete for the evening? Yes, please.

Andrea, Andrea, you were talking about your friends perception that it was selfish to meditate. That what that it was selfish. Yes, yes to meditate. That really got me when you said that. Because I think getting to know yourself and who you are. And befriending yourself and being comfortable with yourself is the gift that meditation and solitude gives you. And in our daily lives because we have so many roles to play as either teachers or parents or friends, sometimes we forget who we are. So, what I got when you were talking is what a gift it is to be with yourself.

Or yourself.

It's a gift to be with yourself. It's a gift to accept yourself. It's a gift to relax yourself. And as you accept and relax, you'll be less selfish.

Gus, feeling verbose tonight, so it seems like there's also A concept of trust that's developed in community, at least it is for me in terms of coming here and being with a number of other people and trusting the process and trusting the path. trusting my getting to know myself better, it seems like we can you talk about the element of trust, or trust is that trust. To me, I would say that the developing trust was one of the core aspects of my practice as well for years. And I didn't really it wasn't like it wasn't trusting anything in particular, for maybe it was trusting that it was okay to be relaxed, was trusting not to hold on to some point of view, hold on to some idea of self. It was trusting just to be alive and be present. And there was a message that I didn't get a lot of places in society still. Many places you're supposed to be someone's supposed to do something and you have to kind of be active and my Hope is that a Buddhist community like this, especially meditation, one is a place where people can discover how to trust just being. So I think trust is a great thing to discover.

Not just remind me, I'm not working right now. And I have time for spiritual practice. And I was feeling guilty. And I didn't use the word selfish. But I did some journal writing. So on about page for the bottom, I was thinking there's so much to do, there's a lot I can be doing. And my sentence at the end was the most useful thing I can do right now is to watch my mind. And I thought, because then I want to see more clearly and then I'll make better decisions. So then I feel peaceful. Nice.

Very nice. Thank you, Judy. Okay, so

Thank you for this time to talk about community, sitting and also sharing this way and being together. I hope that it's meaningful for you. When I was coming down here today, I wanted to figure out I wanted to one of the feelings in my heart feelings I wanted to do was to just somehow make you all feel welcomed here. And I kind of didn't know how to do it. Maybe I could have said at the beginning. You're welcome. You're welcome. Welcome, welcome. But so this is what we did. But you I just want to share with you kind of the spirit behind it for me was I wanted to make hopefully make this more welcoming place for all of you. And I hope that you know, we're a legally we're a nonprofit, which means one hand no one owns this place. But it means that It belongs to all of us. So it's not you know, it doesn't belong to me. I don't feel that way. But it belongs to all of us those who come here. And so I hope that those of you who who come here will feel like it's your place and feel welcome here. And like I said, He said it was a home. So, please, you know, you're welcome to thank you.