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SPEAKERS

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So one of the important hindrances that Buddhism emphasizes, is the hindrance to the hindrance of fixed views being stuck in our opinions. And part of being a Dharma practitioner, is to begin to think dharmically, to have a no not just go along and thinking is usually would perhaps, but have a little different new, a new way of thinking, new way of addressing and looking at your life. And one of those is to look, try to look at your life without being stuck in your views and your opinions and your stories of how things are. And so, how do you think in that way? One way, is to carry with you a little slogan, and this can help sometimes. And the old slogan comes from a Zen teacher named Suzuki Roshi who summarized Buddhism in three words, so it's very convenient you can put in your pocket and very portable, take it with you three words for Buddhism. And those three words are not always so that great. I don't know if that's all you need to know for, to be a Buddhist to be, you know, to become free and awake. But certainly if you just carry that with you, not always so you're probably not going to be so quickly stuck in your views or your opinions. This is the way it is. Not always. So maybe it's true sometimes. Maybe not always. So it's always not always so what other perspectives can we bring? What are the other ways can we understand our life? And so this is one of the ways to think dharmically is to think what other ways can we see the situation Maybe it's not just one way, one perspective, what other ways what else is going on here? There's a famous story. Maybe it's been told too many times. I apologize if you've heard it too many times. But in case one of you haven't heard the story, the rest of us will get it hopefully patient as I tell the story, fun story of Chinese story of a farmer, poor old farmer who has a poor old, weak horse to pull the plow. And one day that poor old weak horse somehow escapes. And the neighbors come to the poor old farmer and say, Oh, you horse person. It's gonna be hard for you now. Without your horse. The farmer says, We shall see. And so the farmer's son goes up into them. happens and finds a wild, beautiful, young, strong stallion and brings it back and the neighbors say, Wow, you're so lucky. It's your son found that wonderful horse. Now you have a good strong horse and you can plow and you can things go much better for you. And farmer says we shall see. And so the horse has to be broken in and so the, the son begins to train the horse, but the horse throws him off the back. And he falls off the horse and breaks his leg. And the neighbors said, oh, wow, your poor farmer, how are you going to manage now without your son to help you? How are you going to manage, you know, it's not gonna be hard for you. And the farmer says, we all see. And so then the king of the land, decides to go to war with the neighboring kingdom. So he recruits all the young men but the young the son has a broken leg, it can't go upright. So the farmers so the neighbors say, Oh, you're so lucky your son's not going to go off to war and die or be gone for years. So what is he saying? He will have to see. So that's another way of thinking. darmok Lee is again that way of not being stuck in a view or in a story used to have this idea. We'll have to see. Let's see how it goes. Let's see how it goes.

The equanimity practice is sometimes taught in Buddhism sometimes goes along with this phrase, equanimity is this kind of equanimity is a kind of love. And so sometimes it's called a grand motherly love. Grandmother loves the child grandchild, but the grandmother has seen it all before. That's like first time parents. And so they have much more Aquinas about the summer the child had drama that their grandkids go through. For the first time. Parents are not the Economists. So this grandmother loves to grandma's definitely loves the kid, but there's not, you know, it doesn't get all riled up or upset.

So one of the ways to have this kind of equanimity is, is, again with a phrase is the choices you make are your own. Now let's see what happens to you. I'll be here with you to see what happens. So you're making your choices. And I'm going to be present. Let's see what happens. So this openness so one of the part of the idea of this dharmic way of thinking is to be curious, be open to something unfolding, to be stuck in us is that this is the way it is it's not going to change, and you will not open to see how things evolve and how things develop. Let's see, let's See how it is. I have known many people who have gone through hardships, maybe some of you probably can identify with this, that in the middle of the hardship you thought it sucked. This is really bad you This is how could such a terrible fortune happened with you? A year later, 10 years later, sometime later, you look back and you realize that was the best thing that ever happened to you. Because it forced you maybe to look at your values or your priorities, it forced you to reconsider your life. It allowed you to drop some of the some of the mental weight some of the stories that you live by the opinions you live by. I've known people who were really caught up in being it's fine to be athletic, but really caught and being athletic and fit and strong and being buff and showing themselves to the world that way as if that's really what's important, right. And then they got terribly sick or was an accident and they couldn't be that way anymore. They became invalid or some way handicap After some way, and at first I thought their life was devastated. That was it that people would hate them. People wouldn't like them. They work through their idea of success and recognition was all. But after some years, they realized that it was the way they lived that life before was kind of shallow. And it was taken away. It was the best thing that ever happened to them, because it allowed them to drop into some deeper connection to themselves and deeper way of being in this world. I've known people who've gone to meditation retreats and had very difficult retreats, sometime retreats are difficult. And at the time, they thought that that was a mistake. I should never come on the retreat. And then they've come back to me some months later. Remember, one man came back about six months later? And he said, yes, that retreat was so hard for me. But boy was that important and valuable? Because I learned I learned so much about how I Handle adversity and challenges. And I learned to be patient with it. And lo and behold, in the months after the retreat, all kinds of things happen in my life. And I was prepared. And I could go through it easier because of the difficulty I had on retreat. So you know, it's not always so you don't actually know. Sometimes what's really happening to you, and one way to have fixed views is to think I know what's happening. This is terrible. Or this is wonderful. This is the best. When I was about 20, or 21, I had a great summer, summer 20 or something. It was really great. I was kind of ecstatic by the end of the summer. And I remember telling a friend of mine, I'll never be depressed again. Not always so we'll have to see And so that fall, I was more depressed than I've ever been just a few months later, two months later, you know, so, you know, you never know, right? So not to have a fixed view. This is how it is. Sometimes our difficulties are blessings, sometimes what seems like blessings maybe are not what we think they are. Who knows what they are? Not always. So, let's see. So those two things are kind of very important ways of thinking dynamically. It's not telling you how to think it's not not telling you you're supposed to believe something this way. But rather it's a way of thinking that keeps your mind open to possibilities as opposed to close to possibilities. Your opens your mind to be able to see is there different perspective, more perspectives to look at any situation than the ones that I'm using right now. And so that that's kind of the dharmic thinking, thinking outward open to something. And one of the reasons for this to do this is that there's many reasons to do it.

One reason is that human beings don't have a perfect track record of thinking. Well, you know, thinking clearly what's going on, there's a, you know, a fair percentage of delusion that goes on. And one of the delusions is fixed thinking this, this is how it is this boom, this is how it is. And one of the really strong areas of delusion has to do with self oneself. Anything you can say I am and I bet there's a 5050 chance you're diluted when you say I am, you know, I mean, you know, you could say you Certainly safe things to say. But I know I've talked to many people who basically, the operating assumption about themselves personally, is I am bad. They sometimes are more sophisticated in the word that choose set of bad because that's not very sophisticated, right? But I'm lousy. You know, I'm inadequate and I'm someone no one will love or buy, or I'm a loser. I'm, you know, sometimes when we fill it in, right, and, and it hurts to have these kinds of views about oneself, and hurts even more if we're fixated on that if we kind of stuck in that view. Not always. So is there another perspective? We shall see. Let's see what goes on. Do we know what's happening? How do I how can I How can I address this? How can I meet what's going on in such a way that it opens me rather than closes me? Do you want to open the heart? Do you want to open the mind? Or not? Oh, I don't deserve to I'm so bad. You could feel like it's heavy. But how do I look at this? So you have to dharmic thinking is to look at and say, How can I think about this in a different way? Because I'm the way I'm thinking about it. Now I can feel I get contracted, I can feel the weight of it. I can feel it closes something down. That's the way I'm thinking about it now. So can I think about a different way? Can I think about it in such a way that I don't deny it, but kind of opens to a different perspective, that makes me a little bit lighter and open and receptive to something different happening. So not always, so We'll see.

I thought of giving this talk because someone asked me a week or so ago about doubt. And I was a little confused about what Buddhism had to say about doubt. And I think on the, for some people on first takes doubt seems like an unfortunate thing to have. It's limiting. It's kind of you know, it's inhibiting it's very indecisive or unsure something that is not so good to have doubt. And that could well be doubt can be a great hindrance, part of the force can be a force that closes us down and limits us. But not always. So let's look at that again. Is there a way that doubt can have the opposite? Is there some way that doubt can open us up And see in a freer, more open perspective. Can we resect the value of doubt, and not just relegate doubt to being something unfortunate and bad? How can we use doubt in such a way that the openness so I think sometimes doubt inhibits us from looking more deeply. But sometimes doubt can be an encouragement. Let's look more carefully. Let's look again. I doubt what's I am doubtful What's happening? And with that doubt, let me look in understand better. Let me see if I can understand it in a different way. Let me probe and understand discover. Let me not get the doubt for example, the doubt there's a valuable doubt where you doubt anything that you're fixated on. You know, I really stuck In this view and the story and this, my relationship with these people, maybe this is the time to have doubt. Let me doubt that what would happen if I started doubted? doubting this story, I keep telling myself this opinion, I keep having one of the things I've learned to doubt things. I mean, one of the forms of doubt that I cherish now is the view I have of people. When I feel like I'm in conflict with them, I love to doubt that view. Because I have discovered, unfortunately, are set aside in a more positive way. So because of that, the dharmic thinking sometimes it's useful to kind of, not to deny and, and, and make everything kind of sweet and nice. But sometimes there's perspectives that kind of help us to go forward rather than weigh us down to offer you a different perspective. thing I've learned that when I'm not in the presence of a person that may conflict with, like, there are no we're nowhere near me. And the only relationship I have to them is with the idea I have in my head of who they are and what they did. That I have one kind of relationship to them. But if I'm in their presence talking to them, I'm much more generous. I'm much more like them, and much more nuanced, much more willing to see them in the fullness of who they are. And I'm not stuck in a narrow view. So I've learned to doubt the views I have of people when I'm in conflict with them, if I'm not in their presence, and I give them a kind of benefit of the doubt or something. And so what I do, I don't try to pretend there's no conflict, but then

I tried to get myself in their presence. Remember one some years ago, I was in a really bad conflict with someone It was really intense, was big, big things at stake. And I think this person was, you know, pretty angry with me. So I invited him to lunch. Let's have lunch. And he did. And so we sat down and then we can have this talk. It's very different than, you know, not getting together. So, and from that, and from other experiences, I found that conflict is a good thing. Not to be a conflict in and of itself. But if you use what I'm calling dharmic, thinking around conflict, then you see the conflict as an opportunity. Not as a problem. And in fact, there's a there's a mediator I know up in, in Marin County. She does conflict resolution work. She says that conflict makes her happy.

Because the reason it makes her happy is that she knows that if you stay present and work it out and you're free to help people work it out fine define how to resolve the conflict. Not only does it get back to neutral, but it gets better than neutral. They can really it's really transformative for people to do this stuff. So part of the dharmic thinking about not getting stuck in views, is to be hopeful. There is a path that opens us up. How do I open How do I find my freedom in this situation? And to have that in the forefront of your thinking, How do I find freedom in here? How do I not be stuck? And to have confidence in that? As a dharmic way of thinking and anomic way of thinking is to not have competence to have kind of be discouraged or feel hopeless There's no way out of this. I'm stuck in it. Maybe so maybe not the quiz See? Not always. So what is he? So what? What is where can I look for the path? Can I find a path? It's not saying that the again you have to believe in something, but it's having at this curiosity, this interest, this investigation, this dedication, let's look deeply let's, let's see if I can find a way through. Can I find a way through and, and if you keep that dedication in the forefront, let's find a way through let's keep finding a way through let's find a way. Chances are very, very good, that you're much more likely to find it if you don't have that interest. If you're not interested, I think it's hopeless. Then it is hopeless. But if you but if you doubt your hopelessness If you say, not always so let's see. Let's try and see, let's explore this. Let's show up for it. Let's go towards it. Let's meet that person. Let's try to find a way to work it out. Let's try to be with what's going on here. Then you have a good chance to find your way through. And Buddhism says that there's always a way through if you're stuck, if you're stuck in your views, if you're stuck in your story, if you're stuck in your stuff in your suffering, there's always a way through, but it's up to you to find it, to kind of inquire and ask and look. So

So Buddhism says that one of the Primary hindrances to freedom is having fixed views, fixed opinions and stories. And that one of the ways to overcome that is to is to adopt maybe a form of thinking that you haven't used before, a dharmic way of thinking, or liberating, liberating way of thinking. It doesn't involve adopting a set of beliefs. Rather, it's adopting a kind of a practice of inquiry. And you can ask yourself, one way of dharmic way of thinking is to think not always so and use that at times when it opens you up, or we have to see, see if that opens you up, or turn towards the experience, and keep in look and think and explore and feel your way. Where's the path here? How do I engage in this? How do I find my freedom with it? Just like I did with my I found myself in conflict. I asked Where do I find it here? I find it by having this guy out for lunch wasn't exactly a comfortable lunch. But boy was better for me it was so much better than carrying it with me my head. Good, the there was no hope then. So that's enough for me. Now it's your turn. Do you have any fixed views you want to present? And we'll explore it together and kind of try to think dharmically about it. Then if you have any recognized you have any fixed stories or opinions that you're struggling with, or any questions about the talk or anything else you wanna bring up? Yeah, we're there. And if you could use the mic, it would be helpful so that everyone can hear.

I just had a quick comment as thinking as you spoke that it seems like doubt is one of the many tools of the mind that if used wisely, can really help me along That's right. But if used unwisely can really cause me to spiral, which I've done many times in my life, right? Yeah. So part of the dharmic way of thinking

is to look at what's the wise ways of using whatever is going on and, and maybe everything has a wise use, if we take the time to figure it out. There's a wise way of relating to something. So I mean, it's a different way of thinking that sometimes people do in Buddhist circles where certain things are seen as kind of bad. But maybe rather than think anything is bad. A task is a turn towards it and see what's a wise way of relating to this what's the wise way of using this. They so for example, like a version is considered, you know, or lol, or version is considered a big hindrance in Buddhism and you're not supposed to be averse to well, but they say in the Dharma that if you have an adverse of personality, it's it's a it's a for purposes of Dharma practice, that's better than a desire, desiring personality. Because if you use it right, you say no. To your neurosis. You say no to your, you know, your, your fixed views. No, I'm not going to be stuck. I'm not going to do that again. And there's a wise way of saying no, I'm not going to get caught up in that again. So it's a way of taking a tendency we have and what's the wise way of using it? Oh, sometimes it's wise to use that tendency and saying, I can no, I'm not going to be stuck again.

Yeah, I'm just wondering.

I mean, you talk you're talking about two people getting together to resolve a conflict and it's sort of presupposes that they're, they're somewhat reasonable. People and you can get through that. But what happens when you deal with an absolute jerk?

And just the best example I can think of historically is when Neville Chamberlain was trying to deal with Hitler, and we all know how that worked out. And more. To the point where at home I grew up with a typical neighborhood bully. There was no reasoning with him. You know, he,

there was a, there was a family here, who occasions to bring their kids to IMC, into the family program. And the woman that mother had a daughter son I forget who was who was being bullied in the schoolyard by one another kid and tried for a long time to get to school involved in the school somehow didn't wasn't taking care of the problem. And so finally, she invited the kid over for dinner, the bully to their home, and that took care of the problem.

Yeah, but that does. I want to get back to neighborhood for example.

I'm not I don't have much that's at both my pay scale. Okay, I'll

just say my own personal experience. I'm person who, who's been mugged three times. And it wasn't from hanging around wild bars or anything. I once I was meditating and in Harvard Square,

and you're meditating in Harvard squared average screen, yes. Yeah, I would say there's a good chance of getting mugged too, if you're meditating everywhere.

But I mean, like women dealing with rapist and people getting attacked all the time. I mean, there's, I think there's a there's a point where you have to use for sometimes deadly force to get the point across because dealing with totally irrational people that out to do you harm. You just there's no way of reasoning with them at all.

I think to go along with the theme of the talk. It would be maybe so we'll have to see. Maybe, maybe not always so. So plenty of people have fixed views about the use of violence and their fixed views about the kind of injustice use injustice that you've talked about. And because of their fixed views, and they're in righteousness, or indignation, or the tremendous pain and suffering that goes on it, pain and suffering

is another one common cause for getting stuck in views, then, and that can translate sometimes to fixed views about violence and what we need, what I need, what needs to happen, and what's the right thing to do. And we have a society that's very quick and turning violent, very quick in using guns. And so we have to be very careful not to get caught in fixed views around these kinds of issues. And so I would, I'm much more comfortable. I feel uncomfortable, offering you a fixed view one way or the other to respond to you. But I would like to suggest that Be very careful around these really big issues. And keep the heart and the mind open because probably it's Every situation is going to be different. The I knew a woman who was out in the desert alone and she was young and very beautiful by that time and she was all alone and this she said the survey, which was described as survivalists came along in the desert and couldn't believe is good luck. And he pulled out his gun and it was going to rape her. And she she didn't know what took her or what came over her. And she said, You're no Christian Give me that gun. And he was so stunned he gave her the gun and he and she threw it into the bushes and ran. You know, she wasn't violent. But if she had only had been indoctrinated that, in that kind of situation, you have to fight and kill in order to defend yourself. She would have probably had very different outcome. I knew I knew a man who friend of mine who was held up, held up in San Francisco by knifepoint and, and outside of San Francisco Zen Center. And he was one of the priests there. And he was being he was going to a meeting, but somebody held them up. And so he engaged in a conversation with the guys where you can have everything but you know, even they need my driver's license. And they had a conversation back and forth. And one of his friends walked by, and went into the meeting. And so the guy being held up after a while, came in to the meeting and said, Oh, when you pass me by, I was being held up. But it looks to me like you're having a nice conversation with this guy. So anyway, that was that story, right? So in some ways, you say he lost his money, but he saved his life, right? Maybe it was a really good outcome versus the other priesthood Zen center who was held up. I don't know how he got held up. But he got held up. His response was to go home to his garage and take the revolver he had there and go chase the guy through the San Francisco, Chase them into the housing projects in San Francisco. And he's standing there with his revolver looking for this guy. And the police arrested him. So you have to be so anyway, so I'd rather not answer your questions with any kind of fixed view, except that maybe these things are situational, like Be very careful not to have fixed views. But to be ready to think fresh and think New and to look into open ways and

yeah, oh, suggesting is that the examples you gave that's great. And I've known some martial arts experts over the years and having conversations with them. It's interesting what they said about Violence they said, in every instance, I will try my best to talk my way out of it. Yeah. And one fella said, I'll do it even in front of people where I'll look like a chicken even though I could take the other person apart, you know. But there's a point though when you cannot do that, and you're just faced with maybe this above your pay scale. But there's a it's like example with Chamberlain and Hitler this this times you just you're forced into violence and that should be a last resort. But I just want to put that out there that I

wonder, I wonder why it was so important for you to say this?

Because I'm not because I think I'm looking at it holistically, there's an alternative you. Avoiding violence is, like I said, is a really important thing to do. But there are times when you cannot do that. Maybe so I just want to be totally open. I think it's the best way to survive is to be totally open to all options.

I think that was kind of what I was saying. You know, this is to stay open, stay open, don't have a fixed view stay open. And but I'm a little bit sensitive around this issue because of living in such an amazingly violent culture. That I wonder, I don't I don't think a lot of people are that actually that open to all the options as they go towards violence so quickly. So if it's really balanced, maybe it's okay. But I feel very

cautious around you know, this issue. So we had one more person I saw Abraham's hand right behind you. And

our viewers saying, if I remember, in your talk, that there's always an answer in Buddhism, there's ours a solution,

a path to freedom. Yes. Not necessarily. Maybe not a solution between, you know,

I just I noticed my tendency to My mind wants to take over and say, and I can find it, I configure it out. And that has a

kind of like more fixed views. Yeah.

As opposed to saying, which also happens sometimes. I wonder how I wonder what will come if I remain open is a lot different. I, I have to figure this out because that's just back into the same locked. Yeah.

Abraham that's why I think it's great. Thank you very much. So sometimes we don't want it. The idea of I'm going to figure it out. I'm going to find that path is the headache is just cause more problems. But maybe what's the path is to is to be open and see what happens and see what what the open to see what arises rather than what needs to be done. Because sometimes nothing needs to be done. Some of our problems don't get solved, they get dissolved.

Okay? So I encourage you this week to look, don't don't create any fixed views, but look for, for places where you really have a strong opinion. Or you have a story that you're living with, or a fixed view that's really hard and fast and stuck. And then see if you can try some dharmic thinking, try to look at it a different way and see if there's other perspectives that are open you up and help you kind of move through it or then staying stuck. It's a great exercise. Great, thank you all. And now Jim, can I talk to you from it?