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SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdaal

I'd like to read a short statement by Suzuki Roshi. He said, when you say yes, you forget all about yourself and are refreshed into some new self. Before the new self becomes an old self, you should say another Yes. So thing Yes. So it's a great practice to say yes. You have to of course you have to be wise so what you say yes to or how you say yes. But to meet life with Yes, rather than No. It's a I've been told it's one of the primary principles of improv improvisational theater is you all you never say no. But that wouldn't be a very improvisation improv way of saying it. You guys, you always say yes. The answer is, you know, I guess an employer if someone comes and does something and you just you receive it, they take it, then you say yes to it, you do something with it, as opposed to resisting it. So what so to say, yes, somebody comes, someone comes, something's happening, and what's it like to receive it with a yes or no? Now, if someone comes to abuse you in some way, you don't say yes to that. Right. But he, you know, but you don't say yes to the person. But there is a there is an art to knowing how to receive whatever happens, or a lot of what happens and Find something that you can say yes to that turns the situation around in a way that needs to turn around in some way of someone comes to you and offers you something food that you don't like to eat that food you know, I'm to say yes to what I don't like. No, I don't like it. It makes me sick. It's you know, has something in it I'm allergic to or something, you know. So. So that was a Yes. What did I say yes to that. We were maybe it would means would be you start by saying, yes. This is so generous. Yes. Oh, great that you're offering this to me. Yes, this is really great. And you should know something about me. I'm actually allergic to this. So you receive it and take it in many years ago. There was a woman who was living with us. She was visiting, she was a visiting exchange student or something. And for a few months from France, she was extremely shy. And she was going to fly back to France for the end of her visit. And I offered to drive her from San Francisco, from her home to the airport. And it was a genuine, beautiful thing would be quite nice, simple wish to do something nice for her kind of be nice to offer that to her. And I had time and it seemed like a nice thing to do. And it was came from a nice place inside of me. And she said, No, no, no, no. And so she said no, so much that I said, Okay, I guess I can't do it. But I felt a little bit sad, that, that my generous wish, had been cut short cut down are not allowed to, you know, to be lived in the world. So someone comes and offers you a dish. you're allergic to You say no, I can't do that. You know, that's that's the saying no. And that that you're saying no to more than just the dish. You're saying no to the act of generosity. So can you say yes. So how can you say yes? So say yes, yes, this is really generous for you, but should know something about me. Or many years ago, there was a teacher of mine, a Zen teacher who said, you know, he was a pretty, very full schedule, a lot of people went to see him and meet with him. And I went up to him and asked if I could meet with him that practice discussion with him. And he did a great thing I thought, rather than me being there, and him being here and kind of like looking at me, and you know, just like, you know, my schedule and you and your request, and he just kind of turned around and brought out his date book. And we looked at it together, like this.

So it wasn't like he was going to make a decision like, you know, I can't meet Until, you know, April 2017. You know, and like, wow, was that about, you know, but rather he went like this. And you can see his, this is the old days, right when this, you know, if you remember there was a time when people had datebooks. And, and, and so, you know, I could see Oh, look at that. Look, he doesn't have any time for today or tomorrow or for a week or, or I can see there in two weeks. He has a block of time. And so, So it was kind of like, so it was kind of like it wasn't exactly Yes, but it wasn't the no it was like here you basically Yes, let's look at this together and sorted out together. It's not me versus us like we are doing this we're finding our way to meet meet our life with a yes and Suzuki Roshi says that something about the Yes, a certain way of doing it. Where what drops away is the old self. The self identity is me. myself in me versus You, Me versus the world? Me. I have to defend myself I have to build myself up. But something about that the gesture for yes for me maybe the gesture is more important than the word but is to step forward like this without spread out that the arms wide and the chest kind of open and available and present. No, it's like this right? You can collapse and close in. So what's it like to go like this to the world what happens? And then with that, you sometimes you have to have very strong, maybe even ferocious, ferocious stopping of things. You know, maybe sometimes you stick I've done that sometimes where someone has been very hostile towards me. And they haven't said yes, you know, you know, don't say the word yes to them. But rather than holding my ground or tightening up or pulling back, I take a step towards them. Kind of like internally like this, like get close. to them that yes, what's going on here? And I'm little bit I think the term is counter phobic. I think my tendency is to pull back. You know, that's isn't like I'm, you know, I'm more like one who wants to walk go away. So it's I've learned through practice I've learned through experience in life, how great it is a step forward this way, and then try to work it out and try to find out. And sometimes it's kind of disarming for people, they're hostile and you step towards them, they get what, step two, step three, step towards them with a smile What? You know, that's changes the context. So a life of saying yes, it's a lot more pleasant than a life of saying no, no generally is unpleasant. And even though the No, sometimes we have to say no. But how we say no, and the anytime you have to say no, I think more often than not, maybe maybe I'm not maybe overgeneralizing, but is a kind of closing down is a kind of shutting down is a kind of You know, limiting, limiting something, limiting something to happening. And sometimes sometimes things have to be limited, but it's like that's the that's what no does. And but yes, doesn't have the same limitation doesn't have the same narrowing closing. Yes, it's more like opening, right? And so the art of it is how to say yes. And take care of yourself How to say yes, take care of everything. How to say yes and live a life that's appropriate. We're not saying you just be, you know, foolishly agreed to everything people want to do. But how do you say a life of Yes. Yes, it's a lot more easy software fun. And sometimes it gets to be like Improv Theater. To figure out you know, how do we step forward here, how do we open to this how do we how do we do this dance in this situation? There are some cultures where And some Buddhist cultures were saying no is kind of taboo. And it's a little bit can be very difficult sometimes because, you know, sometimes it's just better if he's got to know. You know, it's really clear and you know, where you stand, you know, situation and people don't want to say no, you know, so some some I know one country where they rather than saying no, they'll say it's different. It's different. Okay. And so it can be evasive to to say no say yes, you know. So the idea is to I think hopefully to be clear to be able to step forward and open up and be and say yes, at least in the heart, but be clear to people what's going on that this is what's happening and I think it's it also does a service to people.

So it's more of a The, the more that I guess the primary emphasis here is in it attitude of Yes. attitude of not closing down of opening up of stepping forward being willing to meet the situation, rather than pulling away from it or closing closing down around it needed with a yes. No one knows. You have to say yes, muted with the Yes, net, that kind of way. And then what happens? What happens next? How do you find your way? It's better for your body. Much better for your body. Your body lives. Yes. Then your body lives No. And if it's good for your body, it's probably good for your soul or your heart and

mind. So then, I think what I'll do then is also read the last the jacket of his little book. This is also from Suzuki Roshi. Do you know the story of Dragon in ancient China, there was a person who liked dragons very much. He talked about dragons to his friends, and he painted dragons. And he bought various kinds of dragons. So the dragon thought, if a real dragon like me visited him, he may be very happy. So one day the real dragon sneaked into his room. He didn't know what to do. Wow. For a long time, we have been like him. That should not be our attitude. We should not just be a we should. We should not just be dragons friend. We should be the dragon himself or herself. Then you will not be afraid of any dragon. Nice. So you can't be a dragon. If you Say No. So thank you very much