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SPEAKERS

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Good evening, and can you hear me all right? The volumes loud enough? Okay. So welcome to IMC and welcome to, hopefully yourself. In the heart of sitting and practicing is in fact to renew yourself to come back to yourself to be yourself. If maybe you never stop being yourself, but too many people do. Many people lose themselves or try to be someone else than who they really are and try to not sure who they are and all kinds of ways it's but to come back and really be yourself. In some ways that could be seen as the essence of Buddhism, to really come back and really be yourself a new. And if you really do it in a fresh way, this wonderful thing happens that you get to disappear. None of that maybe that's doesn't sound very good. But it's pretty, pretty wonderful to really be here and present. and be yourself fully yourself. Allow yourself to be completely yourself. Then if you allow yourself to be yourself completely, you don't have to define yourself. And when you define yourself, inevitably we become limited. Or we let other people define ourselves we become limited. And so when we're not when we don't define ourselves, there's something something disappears, the definitions disappear and there's freedom there. So wonderful thing that happens. I practice for many years in the Zen tradition. And in the Zen tradition, one of the ways where people practice this kind of being fully yourself at the same time kind of disappearing into the moment, not not vanishing. But having the definitions disappear because you're so fully hear yourself was through the practice or the attitude of saying yes to what's happening to say yes. If you say no, or that's your instinct, first thing to say, No. It tends to create definition, barriers, boundaries, it tends to, you know, stop something. And it certainly times in life when we have to say no, but in zen, I was I learned that you begin By saying yes. And then and what the yes means that is you begin by just in a sense, pausing for a moment, just kind of opening and turning towards whatever, ready to meet what's there. Someone said asks you something ridiculous. And use your you know, don't, don't say yes to them out loud that makes it complicated, but have an attitude of like, Okay. Let's let's look at this. Let's meet this request. Let's see, see what this is about? Yes. And then you take a few moments. And then you say, Well, I don't think so. You know, so you take care of yourself, but you begin by deciding, you know, what is this kind of possibility expansion that we can live in a world of? Yes. So, the founder of the San Francisco Zen Center was a teacher named Suzuki Roshi. I didn't know him, but I practiced His center for many years, and some wonderful quotes from him about Yes. 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 the old self is the one that can say, you know, not now I want something or, you know, this is what, who I am. But there's something about a new self kind of just their new fresh open to discover both what's here, but also discover yourself. And this is one of the things also I learned from Zen is in practice, is that the idea that you only described who you are, in how you meet the next moment or how the next moment meets you, that you don't carry with you some idea of who you are from the past. I mean, you can do that for certainly me people do that all the time. It's but in Zen practice, the idea is

you don't carry something along. And you know, you know, you took a class on you one on one and you pass the exam and you know exactly who you are. And you know, and so you don't need to study yourself anymore. You know, you know who you are and you carry with you, you maybe you could have a little badge you know, with your name on it and your profession and your place and your family and you know, all kinds of wonderful things. You know who you are, or your preferences. And then, but then the idea is you don't you don't know yourself if you're if you have old news of who you are, but you discover who you are. In what you in the moment that you engage, so, I'm drinking, I'm sitting up here, I'm thirsty. And I discover who I am as I drink the glass. drink the water. And then I put it down. And that's gone. But I was I was the water drinker I was the water being drunk, you know. So, yes, this Suzuki Roshi says yes and get refreshed. He also said, The Secret we always want to know the secret especially from a teach spiritual teacher. The secret is just to say yes. When someone asks you to do something, but the secret is just say yes. When someone asks you to do something, jump up out of your seat. Then there is no problem. It means you will be yourself without sticking to an old self. When you say self, you forget all about yourself and refreshed into some new self. And before the new self becomes an old self, you should say another Yes. So longer version of the same one growth. So this, I was kind of reminded of this because this last five days or so, I was helping to teach the spirit rock Family Retreat. It's kind of little bit like a hybrid of Buddhist summer camp. And then meditation retreat for the kids from the age of five to 15 and their parents. And if you've ever been to spirit rock, you would not recognize the place. And right that's kind of across from the dining hall. The driveway there just slightly appeal. There's a big art tent with blanket In this all this art goes on in the driveway from the you know, the whole driveway a hole up to the meditation hall becomes a canvas for graffiti, chalk graffiti, and, you know up, you know, mostly people write each other's names and they say they add nice things about them. It's kind of the kids are running and screaming and there's music, lots of music. And if you ever been to that beautiful, pristine quiet courtyard outside the meditation hall it's peaceful, you know, it's like you can come out come out of meditation, it's like so still quiet and have a little little bit of water like a pond that's completely still water with a Buddha in the middle. It's stuck here and it's just pristine lice and then there's, you know, 20 30 40 kids, greening, drumming and rattles and with,

you know, mics and speakers blasting away It's a whole different place you can't believe it. And the theme for this year was loving kindness was met them. And the first is three full days, the first day was loving kindness for oneself. The second day was loving kindness for others. And the third day was the category the Buddha called self and others. And it's a kind of like maybe hyphenated self and others are like, so units one thing and, and the idea is that, you know, you probably know some of the idea, there's just there's you, there's me and there's a we, you know, that's like a third entity and the relationship is the We Are The third you know, the missing link in the family unit is the We Are we you know, there's there's a there's a thing almost that we that dynamic, the process, and we have to take care of the we the community of worrying as well. And so, the Saturday we were teaching, you know, how to care for the community. And so I said that It's the we. And then and I said, Well, it just happens to be that I said, who knows how to speak French. And you know what we means in French. And these, these kids has flew up some of them knew. And they said it means yes. And I said, What was that? Yes. What was that? Can you say it? So then they all said yes. And that was the kind of the theme for being in community, that when you're in community, any community at all, that the practice of caring for the community is a practice of beginning with saying yes, or the attitude of Yes. Meaning that they as I said earlier, it doesn't mean you have to agree. You have to jump out of your seat and do something because they say it, but you you open to the possibility you're open to discover what's here. You are available to discover that something Knew maybe it's not what you thought it was. If you say no, you might be operating from your old habits your old assumptions and you might miss actually what's going on but if you say yes or that attitude of let's look at this Let's meet this let's turn towards this What is this? And meet it not cower not pulled back not and also a kind of yes we're also not acquisitive and

greedy yes I want that which is kind of a open the kind of open presence and turning towards something we do kind of disappear or parts of us disappear. The old assumptions, the judgments, the fears, the fixed sense of self if we are with the hour, okay? So if you don't like the word yes then okay. Yeah, okay, I got to step up and face this, this meet this as well. And then and then then then you have few moments with it and then you can decide if it's appropriate to jump Have your seat, respond or not, but you always, you know, what's this turning towards this? One of the ways that this this was kind of inculcated in Zen training for me at least, was that in the meditation hall, you were never supposed to say no. In the meditation hall itself, so always had to say yes. And the main opportunity had to say, there's a number of places in the meditation hall, you could say, yes. One was, if you were sitting at the brink of enlightenment, sitting there, meditating, meditating all day, and this is it. You're sure he's about to happen. And this is like good. you're practicing for years for your full, perfect enlightenment, or something like that. And the director comes into meditational during meditation and taps you on the shoulder and says we need your right now in the kitchen. No Rather, okay. So you jump out of your seat and you go to the kitchen. And you might think that there's a loss. But there's a gain in the ease and the freedom not to hold on to anything. Something that we had about just Oh, does that open handedness not holding on just this dog say, I'll do or when the bell rings at the end of a meditation in a Vipassana retreats, some people keep sitting there, some people will sit like, you know, for another 10 minutes, 15 minutes, they're having a good time or whatever, and who knows what they're doing, but they're sitting.

They don't feel like getting up. In Zen. The bell rings, you say yes to the bell, meaning you get up. And if you don't get up, then you're not part of the community because everyone's getting up to end. So it has its pluses and minuses both ways. But the attitude is, you know, yes, or Next, I'll let go, I'll let go of what I'm doing and let go of my ideas and assumptions. And step into the next moment that's being asked of me. The other place in the Zen training where this was taught in the zendo meditation hall was during retreats, and then we would eat in the meditation hall. And we'd eaten platforms that have been like the one I'm sitting on, where there'd be a black bizarre button like I'm sitting on, and then about a foot on the wood platform between them zabuton in that and the edge of the platform, and that would be the table and you'd set out these bowls, three bowls. And people come in, didn't you sitting in meditation posture and people would come in and serve you food, they come with pots that put it down in front of you, and you'd hold up your bowl and they put the food in, and there's a lot of bowing and it's if you really get into it and a lot. It's very, it's very choreographed. It takes a while to learn all the little movements of hands and everything and But I don't like tea ceremony. It's kind of nice and you kind of stay in a meditative mode. But one of the rules is that come serve your food. Right? And it isn't like, you know, well show me the menu you know, or do you have anything else? You know, it's just this is your so you never say no, at least when I was there you'd never said no no matter what they brought. And I had a food allergy then and I back then I had an allergy against wheat and there was a lot of wheat. And so you're allowed to kind of you know, you couldn't say no, but you had to you could go like this, you can take your fingers really close together and, and you learn to make really small like, like, you know, like stick your little you know, like this. You have to pinch your finger and your thumb together. It's a little and put it right in front of their eyes like I really mean it. So, you know, at least by the letter of the law, you're still getting saying yes. But that just the idea that you'd say yes, that would be the instinct, that'd be the first thing was very powerful for me. And I feel like I benefited from that, to kind of certainly overcame some of my tendencies for resistance to resist things to resist What's going on? And that, you know, sometimes my instinct, my first instinct was to resist, you know, someone could come and start opening their mouth to say something to me. And already I was saying no. didn't even know what they're asking. So, yes, so I want to read a poem. That is a little bit like saying yes. That and it says that the version I got forgot it when it says it's written by shodo Harada Roshi, and he's a Zen teacher I studied with in Japan and he He was a great he was a very tough and very strict practitioner and we

had these kind of strict Zen retreats with him. And during this machines I would sit next to him and our meditation also kind of privileged is next to the Zen master. And, and, and in zen, they're famous for going around Japan at least going around and hitting you with a stick if you fall asleep. Yes. And, but, but he would never hit me because I was sitting next to him. And I would fall asleep and he'd really reach over in a yank on my sleeves in my Zen robes. That's how they kept me awake and great men and so there was one you know, he he grew up very poor. You always I always had the impression he was he had been a very poor person, a very humble monk and back then he had robes that were all pet pet he'd worked on for years and years there were a patch rope, patch, patched up robes and one day we were in the kitchen cleaning up after a meal. And someone had finished cleaning the pots and stuff. And I guess there was you know, we had noodles and there was one long strand of noodles in the drain. And he came over and said, We never waste anything. You know never. And he picked when picked up the noodle and ate it. That was his, you know, everything has a place If you say yes, your meat didn't say no to something.

Anyway, this is this is the carrot this so it might be emerging by a student. I have this feeling but any case it's in this passing moment. Karma ripens and all things come to be I vow to choose what is If there is cost, I choose to pay. If there is need, I choose to give. If there is pain, I choose to feel if there is sorrow, I choose to grieve. When burning, I choose heat. When calm, I choose peace. When starving, I choose hunger. When happy, I choose joy. Whom I encounter I choose to meet. What I shoulder. I choose to bear when it is my death I choose to die where This takes me, I choose to go, being with what is, I respond to what is this life is as real as a dream, the one who knows it cannot be found and truth is not a thing. Therefore, I vow to choose this Dharma entrance gate. May all Buddha's and wise ones helped me live this vow. In Mahayana Buddhism they often many times make bows and his vows is to say yes, and he has stated in different ways to choose what is and in the kitchen when he he chose to reprimand us. When the students need to be reprimanded, I choose to reprimand them The but there's a kind of a freedom in what he's talking about here the what what given what is you choose what is and you do that? Are you dissatisfied with what you have? Do you want something different? Do you? Are you angry at what you have what goes on with you? Do you pity yourself sometimes what's happening to you have you know great vision and ambition that's someplace else? I mean, there's all those things are reasonable human responses to what goes on in our life. But maybe there's not much freedom in that. And so this this movement of choosing the intentional choosing, can that be? Can there be freedom in that? If you're sick what's the difference between choosing to be sick Not in a resigning yourself to being sick and not doing anything about it like going to a doctor or anything like that. But But what is it like you're sick to choose to be sick as opposed to what are some of the alternatives to choosing to be sick that probably make you sicker what are what are some of the alternatives that you're familiar with? What offer are semi some words? What? denial resentments that's a favorite. What beings spirit stricken mean Oh to feel or be a victim. Oh no it's oh my god I can't believe it. Not again this is the reason some people have you know there's a difficult somebody are sick a lot and have serious chronic illness. And so, you know, it's it's understandable but what happens if we say yes choose it. So kind of a challenging teaching, the teaching of saying yes, the teaching of choosing what you have. There's a lot of psychological forces in us that can operate that can prevent us from choosing what we have choosing what is choosing this moment saying yes to what's here, this time. There's a lot of messages from our society and our family that reinforces the idea that in some way or other we supposed to say no, some way or other it's supposed to be different.

But to have an attitude, the first attitude is to turn towards what is and allow it to be there and meet it. Yes. This is this is what is I choose what is but not passively not to be rolled over or not to be, you know, the cars barreling down on this road as you cross the sidewalk sides of this crosswalk and you see the car and you go Yes. Yeah, you know, that's you know, so you know, you have to understand

what I'm saying is not you know, not taking is not the same thing as not taking care of yourself, but this you know, this here and then to be refreshed by that, the Suzuki Roshi said being refreshed by the Yes. And be refreshed means we let go of the tiredness we record go of the limitations like over the weight that we carry with us to be lightened by it.

So this is The meditation hall in Zen is called the zendo. The meditation hall. And this is a girl she said when you about but this about coming into the zendo The moment you enter the zendo you should forget everything and be ready to start a new life. Isn't that nice? How many of you start a new life when you came to sit down here, I didn't. But by the end of the setting, I felt like I was close to it. At the end of the setting so much dropped away and my day dropped away and I felt pretty light. Fresh was kind of nice. So we could rush he could do it quickly. I could do it slowly.

Here's another quote from him and better, being fresh. Talking about his own practice, our practice is a practice of settling oneself on oneself. Which means to always have a new fresh experience of your true self. So coming home and being yourself fully, but that kind of being yourself, where you again, as I said earlier, the definitions of who you are the history of who you are, the history of all your experiences you've had fall away, and you meet this moment, fresh, just this. Just this. And what's marvelous about life Zen practice, Buddhist practice, Buddhist training, is that sooner or later we're given limitations. We're given things that it's so easy to say it shouldn't be this way. I mean, it's in Zen training, they say Zen training the click claim Is there just speeding that process up of limiting you? And you know, Northern life, you can think you can go around and do all kinds of things and, and put things in training in the monastery you like wake up bells at four o'clock. You get up? You don't have to say yes, but you have to get up. And it doesn't matter if you say no, you get up. And but it's easier if you say yes. And then you eat the food that's given. And you do the whole schedule through the day of what you have to do and then they tell you what kind of work you do. You don't get to choose your work. Yeah. You know, now you have to do that so and so there's all these limits and you can't move you sit meditation, you can't move, you can't choose to move. You have to choose to be still and then right. And so you're being limited. So what's what's happening is we're getting a firsthand, quick experience of a very natural Human phenomena that happens to all human lives. Sooner or later our life is not what we want it to be. And we can't have the freedom to do whatever we want. And we're life is limited, we get sick, we get injured or all kinds of things happen. And so in so in the limitation of Zen training, the opportunity there is to discover how to be free in that. How to say yes, how to open up how to be Suzuki Roshi, how to be refreshed, how to let go and just just this be with us discover who we are. So what do you choose? And do you choose your life as it is? Can you choose this that you have? And in doing that, are you refreshed? Are you finding a heightened vitality and a wonderful life to live?

So I'd like to end with one more quote from Suzuki Roshi And service this is, so student asked him But what happens if something happens to you, meaning if he dies and you can't be our teacher anymore. And Suzuki Roshi said, That cannot happen. I'm always with you forever. I'm always with you forever. And I believe that the clue to understand what he means by will always be there forever. is when you say yes. Let go of all your definitions and are fresh without yourself weighing yourself down, then you'll understand what he's talking about. Always be with you forever. So any questions, any yeses or any nose? I'll say no. I'll say yes to your know that that's what you want. Yes, Mary. No, please wait for a moment.

My main practice is my piano. And I fought the cons. I thought I I'm just gonna just go to the past tonight. Nobody has to work. By coincidence, but pasilla and then something came to me that I was there because that's where I was supposed to be. And when I stopped fighting, and well, the whole process changed. So I said yes to that.

And this this means those of America that people don't hear our co Anya. So you you were struggling against this, this practice of being given these enigmatic questions that you had to kind of deal with and come up with responses to and as long as you were struggling with them, you couldn't pass those questions. But when you finally said chose to just Yes, do this and just be there and relax. Then the process unfolded by itself.

But that's the thing that's so different from my way. I was always a struggler and always and I have a large family. So I thought that's the way it is, but And you said something earlier about your identities. I've just see I was gonna write them all down because I'm getting close to the end I will never forget and I saw that those are not my identities and that was very freeing. But I this may be too personal for you but I wondered I've been wondering why you move to pass enough from your Zen training you don't need to answer that if you don't want to know I let's see. Well, this is an example right my first thought was actually no.

And but sit but admitting it as part of saying yes. To stuff just like this is how it is and So, yeah, even really, I think the reason to say no is it we only have nine minutes. And it's a bit of a story, I think. And I right now I'm a little bit tired. So I can't come up with a short, I think, precise answer, I don't think. But, but one short answer is that it's fairly common in American Buddhism and America to have people who are both Christian and Buddhist, Jewish and Buddhist, just like, you know, it's pretty common for In fact, you're studying Zen with a Christian, pre straight Catholic priest. So he's doing both right. It's kind of, so it's not a problem. So. So, in the same way, I think I'm allowed to be both Zen Buddhist and happy Pastner Buddhists, right? So I don't feel like that's like I don't feel like there's a conflict with them. It's just like, kind of two different religious Are approaches that I find I can hold together harmoniously? That's one answer. And the other answer is that in December, about somewhere between four to seven, eight years ago, I gave a talk about this. And so if you go on audio Dharma and look at December's months, you know, that that that many talks I gave him that month or for those that span of time, you probably think it's in that title. It probably says Zen in the title. And my story is there.

Thank you.

He SE

Hi. Hi.

So let's say that you get sick and you get somehow irritated by being sick again, you say yes to the rotation or you To the sickness try

I think you want to say yes to whatever is first. So if what is if what is irritation? There's There's a wonderful way to say yes you don't say I supposed to say yes to everything I missed my chance I'm irritated and I just blew it then I'm just and I'm no good and lousy and you know, and this is you know, like, I can't do this yes practice, but you're irritated. So you say yes to rotation you, I choose to be irritated. I'm irritated, I choose to be irritated and then find your way through it with that kind of attitude of being open, you meet it, then you kind of recommend or this is what's happening, make space for it. And then you can study it, you can understand it, you can be wise about it. So yeah, so say if you're irritated, say yes.

Okay, thank you.

And then but you can remember Yes, it's not the same thing as condoning something or agreeing to it or You know, or, you know, just kind of just kind of going along with it blindly is a differently this yes is a yes of, oh, I'll open to it and see what is this? Yeah. Okay, I'll be here for it, I'll meet it. That's what,

then sometimes it happens that it lasts for a long time that you're irritated about something. Right? And then is there a moment where you say, I don't know too much? Or are you just say or Yes, I'm irritated. I'm irritated and

so on. And so say you're irritated for a long time. And after a while, you say this is too much. What what options you have? Yes. If you don't have any options, I guess then you just, you know, if you don't accept the fact that you're irritated, then you're just suffering even more, but there might be options when option is to try to understand why you're irritated. And so you kind of go a little under the surface and see what's really going on. Another option is to begin that's why mindfulness practice is so helpful is to really get not not why but what is actually happening for you when you're irritated. And one of the reasons to say yes to things is to really kind of discover in a deep inner way what's really happening. So what's really happening when I'm irritated what's going on physically Am I tense anywhere? What's going on emotionally? a fair amount of resentment is a is a is a secondary emotion to some deeper emotion. Sometimes it was deeper than resentment is hurt. Sometimes there's fear and so sometimes if you drop below the resentment and discover that deeper emotions, it changes the game. So one of the options say yes, and then be present and study and get to know it and let it show itself to more fully. Another option if you're if your irritation resentment goes on for too long. I don't know what too long is but you know, to the same resentments kind of just, you know, just having a great time with you and it goes on for a few years. It might be time to go to therapy. Thank you. Yes, please. There's another mic we can send over there.

Saying yes reminds me of what I've heard about Improv Theater training. And what keeps the conversation going and makes it interesting and lively is that each response needs to be a yes. Because when when somebody responds or adds in with a no it stops

deliver life

work that helps with this kind of desk.

Water so Anyway, so I agree with you that, that improv is a great, we can learn from that, that we say yes to everything and then we can find our way and, and hopefully also become wise so we don't say yes in the wrong way. You know, some when you're doing improv and someone says, you know, can I jump up and down on your head? You know, you don't say you don't, you know, there's some yeses which don't work and some yeses there work, right? You don't say, Sure. Let me lay down here and you can jump on me. But rather, you know, say, Can I jump up and down your head? And I don't know and you kind of take your hands and kind of make a round oval kind of shape and say it's right here and put it down on the ground. And then they jump on that nothing that's there, but that's representing your head, you know, so you could play with it, right. So, I think you know, life is would be occasionally I've asked students of mine to take improv classes, because I felt that would really help their Buddhist practice they needed that. Because it's such a powerful training to do. So I want to end with this thing as I started saving the Microsoft that I had the Family Retreat that I just finished teaching, the, the idea teaching of Yes, I related it to the idea of being in community, the we, the family unit, you know, your society, our world, the world family, who we are, is there something in it for the families to this community, for our world society to really work together? harmoniously? I think we need to learn how to say yes to each other more. This way I'm talking about to, to open and meet and, and, and be fresh and

that yes, so we don't carry with us our old ideas and definitions of each other and resentments and, you know, do Be fresh and can see and then meet each other in a newer and fuller way. And if we say yes, then I think there's a lot more peace for all of us. So I hope that some of you will take on this practice of yes this week, and that you'll have fun. It was much better with Yes. than with no. And if you need to say no. Which you sometimes need to do, see if you can say it in a way through a yes. Don't assume it has to be through a no. Sometimes nose can be said with a yes. So for example, with this funny thing with a I want to jump up and down on your head and improv and you just say Oh, sure, and you hand them you know, something different to jump up and down until pretend anyway, so. Okay, thank you all very Much