

2015-08-09 Importance of Relaxation

Thu, 9/17 11:02PM • 20:13

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

relax, relaxation, muscles, life, tense, profound, problems, buddhism, group, nice, profundity, practice, tai chi, deeper, people, offer, purification, applicable, book, sit

SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

So what I have in mind for this morning, your report is to say some very profound words. But just a little bit profound, you know, little, you know, a short period. And then have you have a little discussion amongst yourselves about this profundity. And I think from time to time, it's really good for us as a community to have a chance to meet each other and talk the practice in a way and get to know each other and learn from each other. Sometimes, we learn the most when we hear ourselves speak, when we have, I've noticed that in myself that sometimes I'll believe something in my little teeny brain. And I can go along for a long time with this little, you know, belief, and then when I tell someone else and hear myself say it, I say what you You know, or Oh, you know, it's like that, Oh, I see it in a different way. And sometimes by speaking and exploring it out loud personally, we kind of it goes in deeper or we engage in material more deeply. So I think it's a, it's also a community building thing and we don't have many opportunities for this. And today we do have a tea. So maybe, to break the ice with having a little discussion here is a nice thing to do as well. So hopefully you're up for that. So as for the profundity, the profound things, I'm going to say the sometimes the simplest things are the most profound. Sometimes the simplest little practices and ideas are the ones that are most applicable in most situations and, and kind of, if they're followed through on in a deep way, can take us quite far in our lives are quite deep, if you like that metaphor. quite deep into our spiritual life or in our life, our healing, our awakening all kinds of things. And sometimes the simple things that we can talk about are dismissed as not being so profound as being simplistic. And they're not given their due and sometimes we want to go to our books or our teachers and look for some really, you know, sophisticated statements. Something that's really kind of like, you know, difficult to understand or a little bit mystical esoteric could be great. And then it's, you know, really meaningful, big but you know, what do you want to we don't want to you know, who wants simplistic religion, but sometimes the simple things are the most profound. So the simple thing that I'm offering today is a tremendous importance and tremendous value and power of relaxing. Just relax. Chill To relax and in fact, when the Buddha gave instructions for meditation practice, one of the first things he said in a different language is relax. Be aware of your breathing be aware of your body and that usually is translated into English with the word. Make a tranquil tranquilize, but you know to stay tranquilizes seems like we're gonna they're gonna give us a dart and so we don't you know, and I like you know the word relax comes from a Latin and I guess lacs means something like loosen so to what I like about relax or be loosen is that it implies that once upon a time we were relaxed, we were loose. And maybe back when we were baby maybe we can see baby sometimes how soft and relaxed their muscles are, their shoulders are kind of soft on the face and we all have it in us. And so that is to relax again. Come back to that very loose. way of being. And the opposite of relax is to be tense to be tight. And that has a lot of problems to be tense and tight. Chronic tension is very debilitating for people's health. It also limits our ability to engage fully with our lives. It limits our ability to see things clearly. Very tight and tense and revisit, resist and pull back, something shuts down, and our full capacity to be problem solvers, to be observers to be to understand things,

and to respond wisely. It's not really so available when we're tense and tight. Usually, when to soften and relax allows us to see more clearly and figure out things more clearly.

It also allows us to not identify so strongly with our problems. Usually when we're tense and tight, it means that we have identified we're we're, we're caught in we're entangled with something. We feel like something's up Important, we're worried and anxious about something. And so we're kind of glued to something. And Buddhism says that we want to unglue we want to disentangle from even our problems or things we don't identify with things. It isn't that we are then aloof or distant from things. But when we kind of not so strongly identified, we see things clearly. And sometimes what we discover is that the real problem we have the real source of suffering and is not the so called problem itself, but how we're relating to the problem. And so how we relate to it can be through the medium of being tense or tight. And so if we can learn to relax the tenseness, tense tenseness, and tightness, sometimes we see the problems we have are still things still problems in a sense, maybe we have to solve them, but they're not personal problems. They're not something that we feel angst or upset about. So we say sometimes in Buddhism that Buddhist practice doesn't doesn't solve doesn't always solve your problems, but it does solves them. And that's, you know, the whole different approach and the fixed problem, you got to deal with something. So, to relax, and one of the instructions I like to give to people, is to sit in the middle of whatever is happening for you, or turn your gaze directly at what's happening. So there's not, there's not turning away from anything, you're not denying anything. But imagine that whatever the challenging situation you have, or feelings or emotions you have, whatever they are, imagine like there's a seat, a chair in the middle of it, and you're going to sit down in the middle of it and really be who smack there in the center. And then relax. sit there and relax and look around and see what's there. So relax, and the deeper the practice goes and meditation and Buddhism, the more relevant it is to relax. In fact, relaxing is another way of saying letting go. And to let go fully is the upper reaches of what the Buddhist path has to offer. And it liberates and frees some of the best qualities of a heart and for the benefit of us in the benefit of others. So, that's the profundity Just relax. Now if I you know, if I just said that, you know, bell rang was time for Dharma talk, and I just said, you know, just relax. And then we went home. Yeah, I don't know some of you might have gotten angry or some of you would have needed to relax after that. You know, you wouldn't have maybe understood that this is actually quite a significant thing to relax. Powerful. Maybe that's all I should have said. But anyway, now I've given you more context for Then hopefully that's helpful. So with that context in that presentation about relaxation, why not help us hoping that? Is it uniform groups of four people, introduce yourselves to them, and then share with each other. And whatever, you know, this doesn't have to be, you know, confessions are talking about things you don't want to talk about personally. But where do you think relaxing, can be really important for you in your life. Whereas this may be the most applicable or the most powerful place where you could practice relaxing? Probably you shouldn't spend a lot of time telling a long story about what it is like leading up to work well it started you know, 10 years ago and you know, the nine years ago it was this eight years ago is this and then eventually you get to try to make a kind of brief because if you make it relatively brief, and give other people that this is a primarily an exercise, and listen Not an exercise in speaking. So you have to offer something so other people can have something to listen to.

But then also, if you can go around the group of four, and come back to you again, you might have new ideas you hadn't thought about about what to offer next time. And you might have a chance to offer two or three or some different areas in your life where relaxing is really applicable, that you wouldn't have thought about except that you heard what the other people said, as well. As you spend a long time with a story, then there's less time to be surprised as it goes around and around. That makes sense. Of course, if some of you don't want to do this, or it's not appropriate for you where you're at today, you're welcome to leave, or you're welcome to sit quietly and just hang out and then afterwards, we'll take it a

little bit, a few moments to check in with come back as a group and just talk about what that was like, before we stopped for tea 45 so there seemed To be some excitement to talk about relaxation I don't know if that's quite right and did you agree that in the end that relaxing can be profound? Yeah. So anybody want to share Did you surprise but anything that you learned or that came out of your mouth or anything about that conversation you want to share? I didn't go to any of them and so there's a start up here. Only one mic is working. I came to me is as your towel vertically is purification.

So your relaxation is because purification purification which we all I guess, having common. The whole universe, I guess, yeah, relaxing. can be very purifying, we carry a lot of stuff gunk inside of us in our muscles. And our signups is and all kinds of places that you know, met, you know, for my life growing up life our whole life. And so as we relax and make space for deep things to be released, and then often in Buddhism, that release of old stuff that we've been carrying is called purification. And sometimes purification is not pleasant. It's not pleasant. So relaxation is really great, but some of the, what it what it allows to happen, sometimes you have to be patient with them, and seek against things get released. And as I'm with me, our discussion was actually really nice. And there's many layers of this to me. And when I meditate, I feel like I go through different layers of meditation. And as we talked, we, we got two different layers of how this works for us. So it was kind of interesting. There's a lot of parallels between just sitting in content Playing in how relaxation comes to me. I think the whole group Hmm. So there's layers of relaxation as you get into it. Wonderful. Yes.

So there you want said something that I found very profound and live by and I'd like you to repeat it. So I get it in better phrasing. And that was something to the effect of why ruin this beautiful moment by worrying about something.

Yeah, I'm so sorry. repeat that for you. Why?

I thought you said it better. Sorry. I thought you said it. Better, but better.

Oh, I think it was beautiful. That was great. Why ruin this beautiful moment by worrying about something imaginary in the future.

Thank you. I use it every day. Great.

So yeah, I think it was Guilford. to advise us to keep the story short, or comments short, because we got to warm up a little bit and the conversation got deeper and deeper. And we as we did this round robin, each of us got to share about four or five times. It was helpful.

Great, that's what I was hoping. Did other other people have that experience that it was helpful to go? Yes. Yeah. Thank you.

So over something that I shared in the group, which I think resonated and so can you hear me so I'll share it with the larger group is that years ago when I was taking a Tai Chi Class, our Tai Chi instructor said you know, you shouldn't think of Qi Gong, which is energy movement, as being something you have to set aside an hour for 20 minutes or whatever. Tai Chi is that Yoga is another form of meditation is another form. But if you're standing in line at the bank, or you're sitting at the doctor's office, you know why read a magazine or look at your text. Just close your eyes and start doing breath meditation. And for a minute, two minutes, whatever, you'd be surprised how that can add up. He said, you could should think of your Qigong practice, like the pages of a phone book, you know how thin those pages are. But if you add them all up, what is it a couple thousand pages, it's really quite a substantial book.

And so I started practicing that, and I found that it makes an incredible difference throughout the day, just a minute here or two minutes there three minutes here. They really do add up.

Nice. And so it's kind of to kind of build on what you said. Why only relax when you're tense

And as was said, there's layers and layers of relaxation. And one of the things that I've learned is that is that there are layers of holding, which are kind of invisible in the ordinary life. And so conventional relaxation is not really the deeper levels of relaxation that we can attain. And so if just if conventionally you think you're relaxed, maybe you can still relax further throughout the day, yes.

I noticed in our group, there was a lot of commonality in what stresses us out the most and where we want to relax. So it was like Work, work, work, all different kinds of work, and then an interesting one, worrying about the future, the future, the future. And then family life. It was just, for me a very bonding experience that our lives are so different that have us and yet that common human experience sang out. Yeah.

Great, thank you. And there's relaxation relevant to all those areas,

all of them. Yes.

Thank you. Over here,

those themes came up in our group as well. But one question I had coming out of it seem that several of us had some big goals coming up that are pretty major, like buying a house finding a new job promoting a book. And we all you know, relaxation or something we struggle to do in the midst of those things. And I just I wonder how it and it seems like there's these outcomes that matter, no matter how you look at it, and those are really big things to kind of let go and relax around. How do you do that? Because they're all pretty life impacting.

I mean, maybe this is not answering your question the way it's been asked. So hopefully, you'll allow me to Respond how I what comes to me mind. And that is that we don't want to overdo the emphasis on relaxation, because we're not supposed to speak kind of, you know, blobs in the floor, you know, you know, you know, all the muscles kind of, you know, just kind of soft and you know, whatever man, you know, the alternative to tension it I don't know if I play the right word, maybe some of you can think of a better word but alternatives attention. That's not exactly relaxation, is is to be taught, taught and taught this or there is a kind of engagement that involves tightening the muscles a little bit kind of holding ourselves together. So some some activities require us to really kind of put ourselves into it. But can we do it without being tense without being a story that was told many years ago, Suzuki, Roshi Zen master here in California, he was he loved to work in his rock garden. And he'd love to move big rocks around and place them in different places. And even a small man, you know, he was 6970 years old. And the young Americans who are helping him, were amazed that when he picked up big rocks, he seemed to have the ability to do it with using the least amount of extra muscles. So it required, you know, tightening up the muscles to really hold those rocks, but the idea that was nothing extra being used. So some activities we do, we have to kind of, you know, do some kind of tightening some kind of tightening up or engagement with it. But it doesn't have to be tense. It doesn't have to be a suffering. So don't think of relaxation. So we only say relaxation, it sounds like you can never kind of give yourself over to an activity wholeheartedly. So I'm going to ask you a question again, since I didn't really answer your question. Exactly. We did close enough. Okay.

May I suggest the word being upright?

I love what being upright is a great word. Yes, the upright because being upright, you know, it requires and this is what I found is that is that sitting upright in a very like literally upright in a balanced posture allows for much deeper relaxation than, than being a no slouch in the couch. And, but it also requires some kind of something has to be strong and so you know, there's stronger than muscles are the stronger the core is right, the more everything holds itself up and it's good way. It's not just about relaxing. It's also becoming strong. Yes, as a as a massage therapist, I use the word muscle tone nice, which is a steady partial contraction of the muscles. And that would describe what you're talking about. Very nice. muscle tone, good muscle tone. Keep good muscle tone. Don't over relax those muscles, something like that. Great. Thank you, Jonathan. Okay, so thank you all.