

2015-08-10 Relaxation

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SPEAKERS

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Okay. So these last days, I've been thinking about something very profound. And so I talked about a little bit yesterday and I'd like to kind of basically bring up the same topic because it's so important. And then we do a little bit the same as we did yesterday, which is I'll talk for a little while, and then have a chance for maybe a few formula groups of four, to discuss this topic together. If you'd like to do this discussion, and because sometimes by discussing something you really understand better what's going on you grapple with it, you make it your own, you kind of explore it. I find sometimes when I know that people hear themselves speak, it's something different happens inside, inside and if you just listen to something like a talk or read a book or something more personally engaged and helps us move along better with it. So it's a very profound topic that can seem very simplistic. It's so simplistic that if someone told give you this advice, you might roll your eyes or you might be annoyed. Or you might kind of not understand how profound it is and how it's applicable in almost all circumstances. And whether it's times when you're stressed out or times when kind of a deep spiritual realms and experience. And so this the profound thing is to relax. That's it. Just relax. The and in some ways, relaxing can be seen a little bit close to the heart of what Buddhist practice is about, because the heart of the practice is to Let go of how we cling, we tighten up and hold on for dear life to things, how we resist and all movements that require attention. And so to learn how to release our attention to release the stress is very much supported by relaxation. The word lacks in relax means to loosen and lacking to loosen, like to untie or to loosen. And to re means again so to loosen again, which implies that once upon a time you were loose. Once upon a time, you were relaxed. And so let's get back there. That's good. You know, if you see little babies, sometimes it's beautiful to watch. Sometimes the bait the skin, their shoulders, the back because of babies and they just seem so relaxed and kind of an upright baby sitting upright. When the ones that are big enough to sit upright, to see their back sitting upright sometimes one of the beautiful things in nature, I think it's relaxed, whole present. And slowly over a lifetime, we lose some of that. So to come back to a state of relaxation, he's calm tranquility. And some of that is done physically, to relax the tensions we carry with us. And as many of you know, and maybe that's why you meditate but meditation is considered one of the important ways in which we can learn to relax, relax the body, relax the mind, relax the heart. And the and it's very important to learn how to relax. Because if we don't learn how to relax and how to have the skills to relax, the tensions we build up. The tensions we have can be chronic. And it can be you know, go on for decades and build up and not release and then it becomes a habit, to be tense to be tight to be held some way

And now we want to be able to break the cycles of staying tense, tense, intense. And some of those cycles come from the way we think, you know, I don't know about your mind, but to some minds can run a mile a minute, you know, or can go to zero to 60 in five seconds, you know, the kind of spinning around and around the round thinking and thinking and thinking. And many times it's the strength of our thoughts and our fears about the future. Our anxieties, our resentments are not, don't are not

inconsequential to have that. But they often can translate into our body tensing up being tight, various ways. And so and then as the body gets tight, it's uncomfortable. And then there's an inner response or reaction to that tension that we carry. That sometimes makes more tension. We get upset we get angry, we get, you know, upset with how it is, we tense up even more so you need to find some way to relax and meditation is one of the ways that helps us do that. One way is that it just helps us to stop. It stops the perpetual going and doing and doing we do both physically activities. But also it starts to help us stop. The incessant spinning of the mind at quiet begins to quiet down and interrupt it so it doesn't go just uninterruptedly, thinking, thinking thinking, building up attention that comes in our gripped in fear, anxiety, anger, things like that. And as we stopped that way, there's this kind of natural relaxation, the body wants to relax, the mind wants to relax, I think of the analogy I like is you if you put a ball on top of a hill, you know the edge of a hill on the slope, it'll run downhill unless something's blocking it. In the same way, our whole physiology and psychology is Set up to relax. If we let go, if we give it half a chance, if we're not pushing the ball up the hill, or if we're not just holding it in check, the ball will roll downhill, the body and mind will relax if we give it a chance. And so meditation is one of the places we give ourselves a chance to do this. And I think one of the important aspects of in relationship to relaxation, and meditation is that we learn to do it for ourselves, we learn a skill to be able to relax. And so if you're standing in line or at work or in some kind of difficult situations, you've acquired the skills to kind of relax your belly, soften your shoulders, maybe soften your face, maybe to kind of shift your posture in such a way that your posture is not leaning or tightening or pulling back with just a balanced posture. So you learn the simple things you learn how to try In your mind what you're thinking and how you're thinking and to recognize Oh, this this way of thinking is not helpful. I am catastrophizing I'm thinking of every possible catastrophe that can happen if I you know, do whatever and so this kind of thinking is doesn't have a good track record because I've been catastrophizing for decades and it's seldom comes true you know most people learn after a while you know they're you know how poor their predictions are and you know begin loosening up but he just funny mind we have sometimes slow to learn, believe so much that kind of thoughts it has. And so with learn Oh, there's catastrophizing again, and then relaxing, relaxing the mind kind of loosening up letting up, maybe dropping those thoughts just for a few moments. Just to kind of let things to unwind and relax.

In many teach many spiritual teachings, including those of the Buddha, relaxation, and tranquility that comes from it is seen as a very important doorway, for insight for wisdom for really understand something deep in our life. And the ancient quote by Confucius, supposedly, is that you don't see your reflect your own reflection. In running water, the water has to be still the lake water surface, we still have to put your head over the over the lake and see your reflection. So in the same way, you know your mind if it's running and spinning, you don't really see yourself or the world very well. And so we need to have some level of tranquility in order to have a chance for wisdom to come. One of the principles that that I've seen about the inner life is is it Tremendous amount of wisdom in their intuition understanding there that is easily covered over by anxiety and stress by a busy mind that's spinning and thinking and fantasizing. But if you're learning to relax all that, not to fall asleep, but to be relaxed and alert, then this deeper wellsprings of understanding of intuition of sensing and feeling of, can be their relaxation as also in Buddhism is understood British practice is understood to be purifying. And the word purifying what it means is that we carry with us a lot of many of us will carry with us. Many unresolved issues, feelings, emotions, that from childhood from adulthood from any time period in our life, and sometimes they are kind of in remission or kind of buried under our attentions and our busyness of our life. As we begin to relax, then those unresolved issues have a chance to surface and come up. Sometimes there's almost like they're held in the muscles. And as the muscles relax, they get released. And it would seem like that's good news to have that happen. But sometimes it can be quite uncomfortable to have these energies and feelings and emotions come forth as they get released. And that process of this release in Buddhism is sometimes called purification. And sometimes you have to

be patient and you go through a period of that of purification and, you know, it usually doesn't last that long, but you know, if he had to see it through so one of the great practices that is applicable in many, many situations that are kind of sums up for me Buddhist practice in a nutshell is to imagine there's a very comfort comfortable chair in He's each year in the middle of whatever situation you're in. And whatever emotional situation you're in whatever challenges you have in your life. Wherever they are those challenges, there's a nice chair and you place yourself right in the middle of your challenges. And sit down in that chair and relax.

Isn't that great?

So look for where your challenges are, look for the difficulties. And don't, don't shy away from them. Don't run away. Don't, don't try to be too busy involved in fixing it and solving it. Because that sometimes just keeps everything kind of tense. doesn't allow the deeper kind of intuition to operate or deeper process operate. For kind of like a don't, you know, don't Don't, don't avoid anything but you really have to look at right in the eye whatever's going on. Look it with a look at it with a loving gaze, kind eyes and relax. Then see what happens. It's a quite a wonderful thing to be in the middle of what is, wherever, and relax. And one of the things that people learn in this process is that you don't have to take so much responsibility for solving your problems for understanding what's going on. You have to make the conditions to allow something to unwind and unfold. That you can't do you know, that comes out of the relaxation. So finally, I'll say that the deeper realms of Buddhist practice, this tip is teaching to sit still and relax with what's going on, becomes more and more important, even though there's a lot of tranquility and peace. And that happens as meditation goes deeper, we will still be able to relax and go further with us. So the instruction is to relax now What I'd like you to do is to relax when you hear the instructions to form little groups, and that you're going to talk to each other, if you'd like, if you don't want to talk to someone, you can sit quietly, and we'll have a little period afterwards to kind of follow up, follow up, follow up discussion. We'll do about 1015 minutes, a little discussion you can have. And you can also leave it's fine. If you don't like to do this kind of thing, maybe not what you're up for today. But it's a great thing to be able to talk to other people at IMC because often we don't have a chance, you know, I'm here and I usually carry on monologues. When the few places in my life, I'm allowed to and but you know, it's really nice to be able to meet other people do the same practice into the same thing and to share this. So that's the idea. So what I'd like to suggest is that you form groups of four and I think four is a good number. And that you discuss in your group. Where in your life is it really appropriate, really to the point really think helpful to relax. And that's thing strike. That's the dirtiest talk when anything you don't want to talk about. And this is not like True Confessions of difficult things. And also, the recommendation is you don't tell a long story. You think of this as more of a listening exercise in a talking exercise. So you have to say enough to explain your thing. But you don't start by saying well, you know, it started 10 years ago. And then nine years ago, there was this and eight years ago, but then I forgot to tell you what happened, you know, it just kind of met because because the advantage to you of keeping your little description somewhat short, mean not concise, you know that? The short is you get to hear the other People and, and, and, and they're going to affect you, they're going to think new things you're going to kind of remind you, it's going to evoke new ideas understanding for you. And then by time it comes back to you, because they're on their circle clockwise, whatever, then you'll, you'll explore and think about something new you want to say. And then, so it's nice if you can go around maybe three or four times going around and hear each other and see what comes out of it. Is that clear? So if, if you can't find a group of four to sit in, walk towards the towards me, you'll either find people to who are also looking for a group, or I'll help you figure out what to do. Please do not ring a bell when it's time to stop

Yesterday nothing

Great, thank you. I hope that was nice for you. It sounded like there was a lot of energy. You were pretty aroused to talk about relaxation.

And I hope that, you know, I think sometimes I think that, you know, the idea of relaxation can be overlooked because we're so sophisticated as you know, we're smart and we think that we have, you know, to analyze and use our brains to understand in some big way and, and, you know, relax is so simplistic, you know, it can't be that easy. And maybe it isn't so easy. But there's a difference between the problems. We have the challenges, we have And how we are in the midst of those challenges. And some challenges won't go away if you're tense, and they also might not go away if you're relaxed, but which is more comfortable and which is more useful. In some situations, it's much more useful to be relaxed. You know, it's kind of just a waste of energy to be all tense. And so and sometimes by being relaxed, we can see what needs to be done better. We can be wiser. We don't have blinders on. We don't have bias, it's quite useful. So maybe we can have a few of you say, what was it like to have that conversation and anything come up for you that was surprising or interesting, or did you learn anything? Or was it like, I wasn't privy to any of the conversation so maybe I can get all flavor up and from a few of you

Take the mic over.

We, we just had such a good discussion and everyone was seeming relaxed around each other and one of us even talked about how we tend to get worried about the impression we're going to make and kind of get tense around each other. But very quickly, especially with your health, I think we, we realized we could just talk very easily together and I think the talk was even better because of that. And what's coming to me now is kindness. It's so much easier to, for me to relax when I'm remembered just that we're all in this together and then in that there's a lot more kindness than, than I usually can imagine.

Great. So relaxing helps us to access that. Thank you very bright behind you.

We also had a really great discussion and one of the things that we noticed is that there were at least two different types of things that we needed to relax from. Kind of like external factors so like other people who were making us stressed or outside situations that were really affecting us or like the internal thing that you know, just kind of your internal mom or voice being like, Oh, I need to do this or this is how I want to be in everything that really made everyone tense and needed the relaxation. So one of the important things was distinguishing distinguishing which of those situations you're in and then kind of applying those relaxation techniques with that,

Greg. That's very good. Thank you. Someone else? Okay, maybe, Michael all the way now Outer Rim.

Think relaxation happens.

The healing happens in relaxation.

That's right. healing happens in relaxation absolutely allows the healing capacities of our whole psychological physical system to operate. I can't operate it for stress very well for stressed

Kind of an embarrassing realization, when you were talking about how it's so simplistic to relax versus to be thinking and working and strategizing. I'm very tense most of the time just thinking and just putting a lot of pressure on myself. And I realized, like, well, what if I actually had the opportunity to relax, but I

want to take it when the answer was? Well, no, because then I wouldn't feel important. I have I have such a strong bias. You know, I think this is very typical of our culture or towards the idea that thinking and using the mind and just hunting things and being ambitious and driven and distressed is more important and inherently superior to relaxation and kind of looks down on that I was just, I accept this fear in me of what would I do if I had to relax if I had even five minutes where I had to just relax like, I just, I'd feel like I was naked. You know, just like standing in a crowd like, like, this is a great, great insight. You have I want to congratulate you. So it's great. And I think even be able to talk about it so clearly means that you have some wisdom about it, you don't quite believe it. Right? Not quite, almost. So I would encourage you to keep looking at this and questioning this and don't just fall back in the old habits.

Yeah, actually, something happens to me almost every morning where I wake up, I don't set an alarm clock and I just wake up whenever I wake up, and then I'll lay in bed until it's time for me to get out of bed. And during the time when I from the time I wake up till the time I get out of bed, I'm laying there thinking about all these issues that I have, particularly at work that requires some kind of solution making and it's really clear to me that when I'm really relaxed and I'm laying there in bed, just kind of, you know, enjoying myself. You know, I think of all these incredibly creative for figuring out these problems, and I actually have a pad of paper and a pen by the side of my bed and actually write down, you know, which which cases that I deal with. And what, what the solutions are for various things that and it really works. I mean, it's amazing the number of extraordinarily creative things that pop into my mind at that hour.

It's true. Some people find going for a walk or taking a shower or meditating. You know, that, you know, a good creative thinking happens. It doesn't happen other ways. Yeah.

So our group spend some time on catastrophic thinking, starting that going in the morning and I have this great quote, by my desk at work. I can't say I always look at it at these at the appropriate time, but it says Anxiety is not preparation.

anxiety, it's not preparation great. Anxiety is preparation.

All right, I wonder what happens if you tried everything to relax on a given day or with a given issue and it still didn't work. Like it doesn't mean work, what it was working mean. I mean, like, let's say that there is a very stressful day or a week or whatever, then use all the means that you know that you are doing sports meditation and you couldn't focus because you were so stress is just overwhelming. And all the other means that usually you can use to use and it's still there and the stress is still there. You know what, what then

I guess sometimes everyone,

I think I work comes I don't know, but I have to two things come to mind. One is do some therapy. And because if nothing works after a week of trying, you know, all meditation and exercise and even in distraction, there's all kinds of things to do, right? Nothing works, then maybe you need to kind of get some help to get underneath the surface of your mind, and your thoughts, your beliefs, what's going on there. And therapy is a great way to do that. Sometimes. That's one thing. The other thing to do is to if you really are tense and you do everything you can not to be tense, just do a better job at being tense. Giving again, give yourself over to it more fully. And really have those thoughts or strongly see what happens then

make sense? Thanks.

Sometimes you need to do things thoroughly, just to see them through. And if you keep one more, just

I have a question that just came up and that's does naming things make a difference. and Canada does naming like naming, like we do with noise or whatever. So like saying, I've never done this but saying tension. Yeah, I just wanted your comment on.

Yeah, oftentimes, if we, if something is named, sometimes with a conversation, someone says a mean name, what's happening here in this meeting, and there was Oh, yeah, that's what's happening. Everyone relax, everyone relax, you know, somebody sees something. So naming something can help many situations. And we use that in the personal practice. This mindfulness practice is one of the tools in the toolkit is the we don't call it name and we call the mental noting. And it has many, many functions but sometimes the acknowledgement that clear acknowledgement of what's going on, we might kind of know what's going on. But to really say it in our minds with a label, like oh, this is tension, that acknowledgement sometimes let something release or some of you open up around it can be very helpful. Okay, so thank you. And so relaxation is really a great thing to do. And you might explore good situations where you can kind of, you know, step into it and relax. Don't try to do it. Just see what happens if you just relax in the middle of it and put aside the problem solving mind just be present in a relaxed way. See what happens to you. But be careful that you don't overdo relaxation. You know, it can be done too much. We're supposed to we're looking for is balance what we're looking for. Is is, is, you know there has to be strength together with relaxation and the right balance of strength and relaxation. And we also want to become strong people in this process as well. Not just kind of, you know, weak relaxed people but strong relaxed people. So there's a certain strength of mind strength the body even supports this whole process. So but have made you have a relaxing week. And if you can't relax this week try to understand why. Thank you.