

2016-02-07 Teachings On The Gratification The Danger And The Escape

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SPEAKERS

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So, good morning. So one of the principles, teachings of this insight, tradition, insight practice, is that this practice is not about seeing something new, but to seeing in a new way. So not about seeing something new, but seeing something in a new way. And so if you're sitting, meditating, kind of waiting for something to happen, waiting for something special to happen, then you're looking for something to see. But if you kind of begin to turn around at yourself and look at how you see, and is there are other different ways of seeing, can you see in a different way? Can you see your experience? Can you be aware of yourself your world, in a way that's freeing that you're not caught? One of the very common teachings that the Buddha gave his teachings on what's called the gratification, the danger and the escape. And these three little considerations is something the Buddha emphasized that what distinguished his own teachings from other religious people of his time. And he also said that he did not declare himself to be fully awakened, fully freed, until he understood that gratification, the danger and escape of this world, and hear the word world, the word world refers to kind of the subjective world of our experience that we live in. So it's a common teaching of the Buddha. And I find that to be a fascinating teaching this idea of gratification, danger and escape, I understand it to be a reframing of our experience, so seeing in a new way. And we often when we go into our lives, we often have a perspective or maybe almost always have perspective with which we're seeing which by which we're understanding what's happening to us. And that perspective, sometimes is not very helpful for us. So a person might go into any situation. Always ready to see what's wrong with it. And the perspective is, what is it that I don't like here, someone else might go into same situation. And they're always interested in what they can get from it. And they're always looking, what are the what are the goodies here? And then what can I get? What can I do what's good or good, but good for me? Someone else might go into a situation and their conditioning is one of fear. And they're looking always like, Where's the danger right here. Another perspective is, or perspectives has to do with being self conscious in various ways. So concerned about one's own self. So you go into a situation, and you're always looking at the whole situation, from the perspective of me myself in mind. How am I threatened here? How am I being seen here? Does anybody like me here? Do they not like me here? But can I get what's in it for me. And so there's a, you know, often a very strong, self conscious kind of framework, in which we go in and see the situation and, and some of these frameworks or perspectives that we bring into our lives are can be fairly subconscious. And they can be so obvious to us personally, that we just think it's just not even there. Just like that's how things are. And one of the functions of mindfulness practice. Meditation is to help us to see the perspectives that we have, and to put a question marks behind them, after them to quizzes is really the best perspective. It's just the only perspective that I need to bring with me into my life. Are there other perspectives, in our experience? And so what I find fascinating about these two, three insights, the Buddha talked about the gratification, the danger, and

the escape, is that it offers a different perspective, a particular perspective, maybe different what people often have. And so I want to talk a little bit about these, this threefold insight a little bit how you know, it has inspired me or I found beneficial. The word gratification, I like to translate it as gift. What's the gift? What's the gratification little bit is?

You know, what is it that's pleasurable, what's enjoyable, what's beneficial, what's gratifying in a situation, but I like the word gift, what's the gift in the situation? many situations, have gifts. Many people have gifts. When my son was, I think he's possible, he's grown out of it now. But when he was, you know, 67 89 years old or so he had dyslexia. Or say he was dyslexic. And he didn't, he went to a school where reading was taught quite late for standard schools here in this country. So he didn't, the only play place where it came out really was around reading. So that because they were taught, he was taught to read the late, you know, the teachers didn't notice was a problem. He didn't notice any issue with my wife, who would often read to him and he would read a little bit to her, she noticed something is not quite right here. And so she started investigating, and sure enough, discovered that was the first to discover that he's had dyslexia, it kind of a certain kind of classic version of it. And so then she started reading about it. And one of the books that made a big impact on her was a book called The gift of dyslexia. And so, when it was time to tell our son that he had dyslexia, it was presented to him that he has, he had a gift, rather than he had some kind of disability or illness, he has a gift. And then he did, then he did a dyslexia program, to kind of help him with his reading, and the person who was teaching it, or it has dyslexia. And he also tweeted like a gift and my son looked admire at this guy, he was a bit of a character, and he just really admired that. He's a really cool, wonderful man. So his role model for what it is to be dyslexic was, you know, this great guy. So he, my son, there, I didn't suffer from the idea that he had some kind of disability, his parents didn't come to him. So we have to tell you something, there's a real problem here, we have to do something right away, you have dyslexia, and this is going to be a lifetime's problem. And you know that what a poor kid, but rather say that it was a gift. And I've seen this, in other situations where people have, you know, we have, we have things called disorders, attention deficit disorder, for people with their brains, or just how they are another told to have a disorder, it turns out that, it seems to be what anthropologists are saying is that there's something like 10% of the population have this thing called attention deficit disorder. In the good old days, back when we were were tribal, it seemed like it was really helpful for society to have 10% of the population to have this particular capacity of mind, to always be searching and looking and jumping around and exploring. And people, you know, people lived out, you know, in the forest or the plains of Africa. And having some people in the in the tribe, having that ability was a gift to the community. And in fact, people who live that kind of lifestyle, they don't have a disorder, they're completely adapted for their environment, until they move to the cities, and a whole other thing is needed for them, then it becomes a disorder. But what are but What a sad thing to put onto people that, you know, you know, it's a perspective, right, you've disorder, as opposed to their perspective, is it? What's the gift of that? And so many, in many situations, you know, people we go through a variety of crisis, health crisis and other things. And not a few people, when it's over, hopefully it's over. We'll look back upon it as a gift. And they're grateful for it because they've learned they've grown, they had to look at their beliefs and values, what they think is most important, and some, some of their priority shifted some of their understanding what was most important changed. So that was a gift, that situation.

So the idea that when the Buddha talked about, you know, the gratification of what's happening, though, the what's what's nice about it now, what's good now what's pleasurable know, what's the gift to the situation is, but then that's balanced with the second know the danger. And what's the danger of the situation you're in? What's the risk, what's involved in it? Or what's the challenge of it? So I know some people have something they love to do, and they know it's harmful for them, and the danger to it. And so they they will do it anyway because of the benefit for it. So for example, I seem to have now have

problems with my feet. That's Surgery last year. And when I was walking down here today, I thought I really love to walk. I think that even if it causes some harm to my feet, there's a risk, there's danger, I think I'm still gonna go do a long hike someday. Because it's so great to do. And that's, you know, it's a cost I'm going to live with. But to take the pretendo, that that's the case, and then to walk into that with, with, you know, with that knowledge, as opposed to being bitter, frightened or upset about what's going on. So to understand that the risk and the danger, some things we probably wouldn't do, if we understood the danger of it. So if we go into a situation with conceit, what's the gratification of conceit? What's the gift of conceit? Well, if you guess if you're pretty conceited, sometimes you're a little bit more strategic and figuring out how to get what you want, which may be that's has some benefit, I don't know. But maybe the danger is much greater. The danger of conceit is that one of the point of view of a meditator, the primary danger is what it does to your own mind, where it goes to your own heart. That kind of contraction and tightness, and kind of a preoccupation that involves conceit, is painful to walk around in that kind of mind and heart. The danger socially is that maybe people will keep their distance from you because you feel uncomfortable with you. So what's the danger? What's the gratification? And so this can be applied to meditation practice? And what's the gratification? What's the pleasure, what's the benefit of meditation practice, and there's a long list of things that can happen. One of them is that we can feel good sometimes when meditating, and not a few meditators feel quite happy when they feel happy. You know, it's, this is a great, you know, and then and then, but what's the danger, one of the dangers is that if we, if we're focused on feeling happy, or feeling blissful states, or calm states, or peaceful states, as being the point of meditation, or if we have conceit, about I'm a great meditator, because I have these states, the states of meditation come and go. And if you live a full life, come and go in different ways, you can't expect to have a steady state of you know, Kasia treasures, bliss or happiness. But if you identify yourself with the holding on to these good feelings, the states of safe that can arise, the danger is when they go away, you're going to be miserable. I know I've met quite a few maybe because I'm a meditation teacher. So people come and talk to me. And sometimes people talk to me when there's problems more than when there's difficulties. So I've quite a few people have come and talked to me about how distressed they are, about how there was a meditation state that was present. And now it's gone. I've known people who have had blissful states of meditation at the end of a retreat, and a year later came back to retreat, only to try to recreate that bliss. And usually people who try that usually have a miserable retreat. So what's the danger of having blissful states of meditation, the danger is that if you get attached to it, that and you over prioritize it, that when they go away, or they're not there, that you will suffer. But this is not to deny that there is gratification, there's gifts, there's pleasures, there's wonderful things that can happen in meditation, but we have to be very careful about how we relate to it because there are dangers, with meditation, you know, with how we relate to it, and what we do with it. So then the Buddha talked about, so the third one is gratification, there's a danger, and there's the escape.

Live the freedom from and this is not to deny the gratification in danger not to turn Are you know, but it just that everything has its benefits and you know, scratch, it's, you know, it's it's, it's a gift maybe and everything has its danger or its risk. And that's a wise life to to see that understand. That means you're wise to consider it that way. And you can go about your life much wiser. But the third one is the escape from and maybe it's unfortunate that the English translator has used the word escape. I prefer to translate it as liberation from or freedom from. Because escape kind of means you're running away from it, okay, meditation was good. But then I got attached. And I suffered. Now I know the gratification, danger and meditation. I'm out of here. I'm gonna go take up you know square dancing. But the escape the way the Buddha talks about escape, had to do with no longer being in the grip of desire. So being in the middle of this stuff, but no longer being run, caught in desire, desire for things to be a certain way, desire for certain things to be not a certain way. And to understand the role of desire in this realm of gratification, and danger, is where the real wisdom of Buddhist practice arises. So what is my

relationship to it? What are my wishes, my expectations, my hopes? And how am I caught in the grip of it? Am I holding on to them? Am I making poor choices around the experience I'm doing because of this desire. So in meditation, again, if I have conceit about myself, as a great meditator, it's good to have proof of that, how great I am. And then and just and you have proof of it, then you can go and tell people. Wow, I sat there and meditated. And I, you know, I enjoyed my breath for 10 minutes. Wow, that's cool. And then everybody's impressed. Something. So you kind of want some proof, right. So driven by the desire of conceit and wanting, wanting proof of conceit and wanting to prove how wonderful we are to other people. There's this, we're caught in the grip of desire to escape from gratification and danger, is to not no longer be caught in that desire of conceit, wanting a certain kind of result to show off, it is just going to be there. So the gratification danger and escape. So the Escape is not does not mean turning away from things though, sometimes it's wise to do that. It's not about turning away from the world. But rather to learn to be in the world without being caught in the grip of desire. And the image that I have for this is someone who can walk through the world peacefully and fully interacting with a world. But they know that they don't lean into it. And they don't lean away from it. They're just they're in a balanced way, ready to experience that which is gratifying, in a healthy way, and avoid that which is dangerous in an unhealthy ways. So the gratification danger and escape. And we have that kind of perspective, then even things which are healthy and appropriate to do, we can look and see, what's the danger here as well? Is there danger in this environment, the fact that something is healthy and appropriate, doesn't mean that it's all, you know, great, the way we're involved in it, what's the danger, so then we can take that into account and be wiser about how we walk into that particular situation. So as I said, at the beginning, there are you know, we have different perspectives for looking at our lives, we have the native perspectives that we walk into the world with, that we never even consider. We know we don't, we don't even know we have a perspective. And sometimes by adopting a different perspective, we can discover what our kind of inherent perspectives might be. And one of the perspectives the Buddha is proposing here is to go through your life with the perspective of asking yourself, what is the gratification here? What are the benefits? What's the gift here? And what is,

and what's the danger here? And what's the escape from it, literally meaning? What's the escape from the grip of desire in relationship to this? And if you ask yourself that question, then maybe you start seeing that you have a different kind of emphasis, different priority, how you want out of the situation. And then you might see that and become wiser about that. And ask, then you might ask yourself, what's the gratification danger and escape from that orientation from that attitude that I have? That gets revealed?

One of the reasons I also like this idea of credit, a great way to call gratification the gift is that I think it's a really wonderful way of seeing other people. What's it? What's the, what's the gift of other people? As opposed to No, I don't think I like this person. Even if you know he's or something, it doesn't quite work for you about the person, but to ask yourself, what's the gift? And I like to assume that everyone is a gift, everything everyone has a gift. So what's the gift? But also what's the danger? what's the what's the challenge with this person? So don't put don't have a blind eye to this, but to be wise about it? And what's the escape in our social relationship is again not to be caught in the grip of our desires or wanting or not wanting something, but have the ability to stay present. Again, not leaning forward and leaning back, but staying present in such a way that we can be respectful and compassionate and, and generous to the people that we are with. So, gratification, danger and escape. So do you have any questions or comments about this, or testimonials about how this works for you?

I had a burning question as I was trying this on. I am involved in you know, basically a mission, that I'm very passionate about something positive. And I get tangled up in the desire aspect. I want so much for the school to work for these kids. I want so much for things to work out for my kids.

What's that? What's, what's a danger for you having so much desire for it?

Oh, it just rips me up inside.

But I don't know how to keep myself doing it without this engine of passion that I have. I'm really interested to see how I can integrate what you're talking about. Do you have any suggestions?

Well, I don't know if it's a suggestion, but I'll tell you what came to my mind, I just came back from being at the retreat center. The common phenomena on meditation retreats is that people will come to their retreat enthusiastic with lots of energy to practice. And then after, sometimes the first day, first day, or to some point, the energy level drops. And not a few people have come to me and said I don't understand why I'm so lethargic and so tired. I've gotten lots of sleep, lots of rest, I prepared for the retreat by taking it easy. And I you know, he started off really well. And I just like I'm uncharacteristically tired, what's wrong with me. And then, after a day or two, or sometime, that some point a different kind of energy arises. And then they had this very clear clean energy that keeps them going. So because some people are Run, run their lives on either desire or aversion. And as you know, some of you know, I call this this, that caffeine of the soul. And if we stop it, just like when we stop taking caffeine, real caffeine, some people have like a three day withdrawal period, and they feel lousy. And then at some point, some kind of clean, nice energy resurfaces, and then it's nice again, but they have to go through that time. And some people aren't willing to go through those three days. So same thing might be same thing for you, that you have to be very patient and willing to go through a transition time where you try not to act on your strong desire and strong wish. And maybe it's going to be a rough ride as you do that. Because you don't you don't see how you can do it, it's not possible, the whole world is going to collapse. If you don't do it, you know, it's just like the pressure of no attack can be so strong, like it has to be done now. But you might have to go through this transition at the technical field and feel hard to do. At some point, a different motivation might arise for you. And you'll find a difference is a very different motivation is not driven by the kind of desire you're talking about. For example, another another motivation. And you know, really great motivator is compassion. and compassion and compassion is done well or cleanly. There's no stress in it. But it's very motivating. So is that it? How's that as a response?

Thank you that offering compassion is an image rather than desire is was really helpful. And I think I need a retreat.

Yeah, we call it a detox center. Great, anything else? The inside Recovery Center.

So in this context of gratification, danger and liberation or escape, so before I started being mindful, I just started a few years and in fact, only in the last one year, so I wasn't mindful of anything and, and of my, like, good times or bad times, and I would just move on with my life. But since I've started being really mindful, I also noticed that I'm mindful of my, all my emotions and my psychology. So I feel like it's kind of a noticing all the negative side of my life, which I've never noticed before. So I was kind of freely moving through my life not knowing what I'm doing. So I feel like there's definitely the gratification that it comes with mindfulness and more of a control on my emotion, but also, it comes with this danger of kind of really being aware of all my negative aspects of my life.,

yes, yes. Yes. So, then the task for you is maybe to, since you maybe are more aware of the danger that put a drag it is to, you know, to see all your foibles is, is, maybe ask yourself, what is the gift of seeing all that? How does it benefit you to see it and become clear about how it benefits you, and then

maybe can be inspired. Because like, for these, like, meant, for me, being a Buddhist teacher, my first instinct, you know, when someone comes tells me, I see all this kind of, you know, all my foibles in there, you know, all the funny ways, my mind works, and my greed and my hate and all this. And my first reaction is great. Because I know that this is a stepping stone to growth and freedom. And we have to see all this and it just, you know, it's a little bit of a drag, it's gonna be painful to see. But the fact that it's painful does not mean it's bad. It can be very gratifying. Wow, I'm on the path, and I'm growing up. So that's my, you know, so anybody who might spend a bit of time looking at the benefit of it and appreciating the benefit of it, as opposed to thinking about Oh, no, I'm a terrible person. This thing about, you know, I'm a terrible person is not a very useful perspective. So it's relevant what I said,

Yes. Great. Thank you, thank you.

I really appreciate that the, especially in the beginning of your talk, when you're talking about the different perspectives, and I feel like it's so easy as a human being to be stuck in this kind of trap of like, you know, my way of thinking about something is how probably everybody else is thinking about something on some level. And it reminds me of the story about my dad when he was a little boy. And his mom asked him to go pick some strawberries. And this was a time I guess, where kids could still do that on their own. But he came back with a basket full of strawberries that were all green. And it turned out he had color blindness. But he didn't know that it kind of took that experience of you know, his mom going, Hey, wait a minute, these aren't red, they're green, to figure that out. And I feel like, probably for all of us, we have this, you know, assumption Yeah, of our way of approaching a situation is kind of the same. So it's just interesting to me. So it's good. It's good to have something then, which can kind of challenge that or highlight that. So today, I'm suggesting this gratification danger in escape. If you really engage in that in an active way, maybe then you can see where the you know, what you're carrying with you.

For many years, I rode horses, and that was one of the most wholesome and gratifying activities in my life. It's also very dangerous. And I was lucky and I wasn't seriously injured. And then recently, I got into riding bicycles. And I thought, well, maybe that won't be dangerous, like horses, bicycles. I did that for a while, I thought, well, no, I mean, you can go like 30 miles per hour and there's cars and it's over summit. That's not safe either. But it's so much fun just like riding horses at but I don't know what the Escape is. I'm always afraid. I never wholly enjoy any activity that

I could get some joy from I think you should wear a helmet.

Well, I do wear a helmet but I mean, that's not gonna help you with the I don't know, but I don't know the answer is a reasonable question you're asking. I think that what comes to mind is that if you're going to do something, there's many things in life which are enjoyable, nourishing gratifying to do which involve risk even you know going for a walk in the local park can be risky You know, there are all kinds of things can happen. And we have to live with the risk. But if you know the risk, you know that this the riding bicycle has a risk. Then when you have an accident and break your arm. The Escape is not that you escape from breaking your arm Escape is that you escape from believing it shouldn't have happened or escape from all these kind of ideas we have but this was wrong. This is bad. I was bad. As opposed to saying This is the cost and this is the risk. And now my job is to live upright with that with the consequences, I have to live with the consequences. And this ability to live with consequences as part of a mature life. And again, to stay upright, meaning forward, feeding back, which is there, I'm here and not and not be depressed by the, by the consequence, but rather, what's the gratification? What's the danger? And what's the escape in relationship to the consequences? So I've broken my arm. The benefit is that, you know, benefit is that I don't know what the benefit is, maybe you have to stay home

instead deal with Super Bowl traffic. And, you know, you probably think of better reasons, you know, better but there might be some benefits to it, maybe you get to stay home for a while, and you finally take care of all these things that you were ignoring at home. Oh, so it's a benefit to it? Or maybe you know, all kinds of things that could come along. And then, and what's the danger of the consequences? Well, I can't do some of my responsibilities. But the Escape is that I'm not going to be snowed under, I'm not going to be depressed, I'm not going to be caught in the grip of expectations, hopes, conceit, all kinds of things that operate with a broken arm or whatever it might be. So that makes sense. Living with the consequences.

It makes some sense all I worry more about things like being quadriplegic.

Just to break their neck.

Yeah, well, I don't know. I mean, I shouldn't speak. I don't know that. And it's such a severe thing to happen to someone, I feel reluctant to make any comments. But it does happen to people, and might happen to you might happen to me. And so what's the gratification danger and escape? in those? And I think what most people think about is how, what how limiting it is a terrible it is, and people get depressed. But what about the gratification? Is there any benefit to it? Is there anything any value to it? Is there something to be discovered there? And it might seem like a depressing thing, or just tell someone to do that. But what's the alternative? Just be miserable. And so you look at it. And but most importantly, like that, is diversity escape? And is it possible to be a quadriplegic, and not be caught in the grip of desire, expectations, ideas, conceit, all these things are going on? Is it possible to do Is it possible to free the mind, and I've known people who's one other gifts to the world around them, has been their, their disability, their limitation, their illness, and parties that gift because of other when they stay open and, and receptive. Other people find tremendously beneficial to care for them. And some people don't want to be cared for, they don't wanna be a trouble for others, they want you to want to be as trouble for anybody, you know, and so that they feel very self conscious, being sick or being limited. But there's people who thrive, I found it very meaningful to go and care for people who are sick sometimes. So maybe that's maybe it's a certain gift to our society.

Thank you, um, that hasn't happened to me, I've been lucky. So it's mostly the worry, let us know for as well. But the best thing I can do is when I do something, I go, instead of trying to convince myself it's safe, I just say, look, it's not safe. I think I'll do the best I can to try to mitigate it.

Yeah. Thank you. And the years ago, I went hiking and this year is by myself early in the spring. I think it was the first person hiking in the back country and had to walk across no fields and stuff and but I was walking in and desolation wilderness. And part of it was so amazingly beautifully pastoral. I felt like I was walking through a well groomed Park as a Wow, this is great. This is so safe and comfortable. And then I was then after a while, I think, yes, it's pretty safe. It's beautiful. But I am like 20 miles away from any other human being probably. And what would happen if I slipped and broke my leg here? How safe would that be? You know, so I was careful. Yes, please.

Oh, sorry. I have been playing guitar since I was really young. And I've never really disciplined myself to really practice a lot. And I've been in a band for a few years now. And we play we're pretty good. And then I got exposed to this kind of next level of musicians and I've been playing with them now. And I've gone to a couple of, you know, sessions at somebody's house and then I kind of deal with With like, you know, there's a danger to playing with these people, because there's so much better than I am. But there's a lot of gratification might do play with them. And if I do well, I saw them play last night at the club, the whole band, like I've been playing with different ones. And I was like, Oh, I stink. I mean, that

was kind of my reaction was like, these guys are so much better than I am. But, you know, friends might say, well, you play with them, and you actually enjoy it. So if this really fits with this discussion, but I was thinking about this in a way. And there's so there's a lot of gratification, because there's actually a lot of fear in this whole thing for me too. And I'm trying to balance those two out. So maybe for you, then the task is discovered the escape part. And if you understand the escape, well, then you just maybe some of that dangerous don't won't exist. Because some of the danger has to do with your conceit, your fear that you stink, right. And then and, and you know that people are not going to like you or they're going to boo you off the stage. I know. But, but maybe the Escape is to, if they're willing to have you, if they ask you to be along, and you have fun and great. And if they don't want you anymore, then this will be it. And you know, just use your gift, your gift you give them and say you tell them you know, you know, I don't think I'm really as good as you guys, but I really enjoy playing with you, I feel grateful to play with you. Just let me know when when the time is for me to stop. And then you'd have to worry about it. There is no longer your issue. And so then, so what's the upside? For you? I think understanding the escape understanding what what you need to be freed from, so you can engage in it in a in a way that works. Okay, so gratification, danger, or do you want to say one more person, let's ask one more person. So one more.

You spoke at the, at the very beginning of your talk about changing the way that we see things. And I wondered if you have a situation, I have a situation with a family member where there was a kind of Fallout situation? And I'm trying to figure out how, how do I change the way that I see the situation? Because I was emotionally very affected by what happened? Yeah, I was wondering if you could talk about that, because the problem was intense intestines, you know, in my relationship with her that I get caught? Like you were saying, you know, I get caught in the in the dysfunction, for lack of a better word, right? Of the relationship. And I'm trying to develop a kind of distance and detachment. And I was wondering if you could comment about that. Because how do you? How do you find a different way of looking at it so that you don't get emotionally affected?

Yeah. So it's hard for me to not to say anything without knowing a lot of the details of that, because it's such a wide range of things that fit that description. But here's a little something you can drop into it. And then maybe you could help you answer the question for yourself. And that is what do you think you would what what new perspective you think you would have on yourself on the relationship on the situation? If you gave the person a gift?

That's a really different way of seeing.

And in what way? Would it be different? How is there a different? Does it give you a different way to look at it that would somehow make it kind of loosen it up somehow? Or?

I would have to give up my anger about it.

And is that something you want to do?

I think it's something I have to do. You might because it's you know, it just catches me in its grip.

So you might try that, then you might try the gift thing. But you have to there's there's a danger there and giving a gift. Because gift exchange often comes with expectations and people have to understand in different ways. So you have to understand yourself, Well, what expectations Do you have when you give a gift? The Escape would be to give the gift without any expectation. It's a way for you to help you

see it the new way not to manipulate the situation and get it to be what you want it to be and then see what happens.

Thank you so much. That was really helpful.

Great, thank you. Okay, so now you can escape. Thank you