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SPEAKERS

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So historically, Buddhism was not called Buddhism. It's a kind of a modern Western name came up maybe in the 1800s. More often in Asia and in places like India and Sri Lanka and Buddhism was called mugga, or Marga. A path. And it's one of the salient features of Buddhist practice is involves walking a path following a path. And most simplistically, it's a path to freedom, freedom from suffering. When we start where we're at, with the challenges of our lives, our suffering we have, and we engage in the path that moves us towards something quite phenomenal, which is the profound peace that comes with the liberation from suffering from the forces of suffering inside of us. Another another word that's related to path is journey. And I prefer the word journey, as we engage in practice and mindfulness practice, where you're engaged in a journey. And part of the reason I like journey is that the journey is something you do personally, a path, you know, can be out there, and you know about it, but there's no personal role in your life, other people can walk the path. But journey is something that's personal something it's describes an engagement and traveling along a path a longer trip. And it's very personal word, partly because the word comes from the French French word day. And apparently it originally meant, however, however, however far you traveled in a single day, so each person's journey is complete at the end of the day, because each person travels a different distance, because they traveled, how far they go. So it has this kind of personal quality to it. Also, I think the word journey, I don't know how, for me, at least the connotations little bit has to do with an adventure. He goes on a journey. And it's the process of the travels, which is part of part of what's important, not just where you're going to go, where you're going to get to, so the process of the journey. And so I think of this mindfulness practice as a journey that we undertake. And it's a journey that we were, we always start here. And a lot of it is learning how to be here. And we start here, where we're at. And it's a journey that takes us to here. And, and, but when we come here, again, we've always been, it's so poignant, are so powerful are so significant, that perhaps we could use the spelled the word with a capital H, here, it's such a significant thing to really be here. And the journey, the adventure, to arrive really here in a way that's profoundly significant, profoundly, spiritually liberating, involves a lot of lessons. And a lot of changes in our hearts and minds. It certainly involves learning the value, appreciating the value of being here, as opposed to being there. And then, and a lot of the distractions we have have a lot to do with there. And then the ideas in the past the stories, the memories, the resentments, the hopes for the futures, the fears of the future fantasies we have. And so it's a journey to learn how to let go of what Buddhism would call it, we'd call them distractions. They're strong compulsive ways in which we go into the mind into our thoughts and live somewhere anywhere, but here and now. It's also a deep encounter, as we really hear and beginning to kind of wake up, be mindful of what's here. There has to be some degree of courage, some degree of willingness to be here. And this idea of willingness to be here, when here is difficult and challenging, is part of the adventure part of the journey. And it's difficult to be here sometimes, for many reasons, our lives are difficult. And so we have to somehow feel and experience our lives have an impact on us and our emotions and our feelings and our thoughts. And so those have

to be processed and seen and addressed. Also, there are past experiences in our life, the ways we grew up the ways that

things that we experienced, that maybe are never quite resolved or we never quite finished Growing up out of. And so to really be here, in a grown up way, we have to really kind of see the unresolved issues, the incomplete ways in which we have been grown. And we have to kind of address it and deal with it. And it's not easy to do that. And if we don't do it, then the inner pain, the inner struggles, the inner challenges we have, there can be very powerful forces to recoil from it, and pulled back from anywhere, but here, please. And so to learn how to be here, even when it's challenging is important. And to learn to be able to recognize the preciousness of here, the value of the treasures of being really here. And how some of these amazing inner treasures of heart of mind are perhaps a greater form of wealth and treasure, than external treasure, the kind of things we chase the outer world, and how to really understand appreciate this Inner Wealth has tremendous value. And in fact, its value is greater than, you know, some of the things we chase after. So it's a process of learning. And eventually, we hopefully learn to be here in such a way, that it's one of the most valuable places to be something that our life is enhanced by bigger, because we're here. And of course, in Buddhism, as we get more and more here, there's a wonderful thing that here disappears. And now it disappears. But not because we've left it to go back to the past to the future, or left it to go other places. But because we're so deeply settled here, that the that all these concepts and ideas that we tend to swim in and make up and organize our life with, for temporarily can just settle away and relax. And the deeper kind of wellsprings of peace and well being don't require concepts of here, I now don't require concepts of me, myself and mine don't require concepts of me and the other person. And at least for brief periods of time, all these things fall away, to really be here. So a journey from here to here. So there's a couple of stories I want to tell you from the Buddhist tradition. That kind of present the idea of a journey a little bit. And the first one is, both of them are from ancient Mahayana Buddhist sutras and sutras from a different Buddhist tradition, there will be practice here. So you might not have encountered them. And the first one is maybe a little bit magical, teeny bit. So there was a young person who grew up in a village and decided upon becoming an adult to young adult, to go travel around the world, see the world. And the last night, the person who was in the village sleeping, someone came along and sewed a very valuable, expensive, jewel, in the lining of the person's coat. person got up in the morning, put on the coat, didn't know about the jewel, and set forth out into the world. And the person traveled and on the journey for many, many years. Whatever money and means that person had, was used up after some time, and the person eventually lost track of the way home and where the person was and ended up in poverty and misery. Begging, stumbling along. And then the wonderings around as a poor popper and confused and lost. It just so happened that one day the person wandered into the home village. And a few Oh, so happy to see you. Welcome back. And how are you? Oh, it's been hard. I've been so poor and hungry and a lot of challenges. But, but But didn't you realize that right there in the lining of your jacket? Was this really expensive jewel? No. You didn't tell me. And so this little parable or fable or something, points to the idea that we have in linings of our hearts, perhaps a jewel. And but we don't know about it. And because we don't know about it, we can wander around lost in the world and think we're quite poor, begging for not to maybe money in food but begging for love and

belonging and all kinds of things. So we're looking for something But we have a we have all we need here that we can be successful. And why it's a bit magical, the story is that it's points, there's like a singular solution. You know, if you just can discover what that jewel is inside, you'll be happier ever after. You know, and so just point Tell me where the jewel is, you know, not so I can get on with it. So, but it's a nice story and this idea that, you know, there's something inside. So the second story is also a very young person who goes off into the world to see what's there, travels for many years, and also runs into the same kind of, you know, fate where poverty lost. And then a difficult time perhaps as a

popper wandering around dirty and hungry. You know, sometimes people don't treat people like that well, and they're outcasts. And they can people throw rocks at them and leave our village, we don't want you here. And person kind of ended up kind of, after a while even forgetting where home was. And even forgetting family name and given name and personal identity can be a little bit maybe deranged. But as it happens, the person eventually wandered around, ended up back home, and was walking down the street, past the parents homes, and no childhood home. And it turns out, there was a mention kind of wealthy place with big gardens and barns with horses and lots of wealth. And one of the parents saw the person walking down the street and said, Oh, that person doesn't remember me or the where you know, where the home was, and seems a bit deranged. So went up to the child and said, Hello. And it was obvious a child not only didn't know who the parent was, but then you really know that the child of that parent to hold that home was the dimension in the wealthy place. So the parents had said, Well, I think I made a baby do this in this as a journey as a process here. So parent first said, You know, I see that you're hungry and poor, and I bet you could use some food. I have a barn that's full of horse manure. Maybe I should say horseshit for the sake of the story, and why don't you come and if you can shovel some of that, then, you know, I'll feed you. And, oh, that makes sense. So the person shoveled shit for a while. And then eventually, you know, after a few hours, got a meal, the parents said, Would you like to become the regular, you know? Poop shuttler you know, we need them here. Okay, yes. So the person had a little room in the back of the barn and every day would shovel and person would was pretty diligent and worked hard. So after a while, the parents said, you know, you work hard at this shoveling, what do you think of a little promotion? Would you come up be a gardener work in the garden, and you can dig and plan to the person. Okay, I can do that. I can learn maybe how to do the garden after all the shoveling in the barn. And so the person went to the garden started a shovel and the head gardener taught them the art and craft of shovel of gardening. Through while became a pretty good gardener and had a lot of confidence that he she they could do kind of the gardening task. And then the parents said, Hey, you doing pretty well, when you come into the house, I need an attendant and so became this personal attendant and took care of all kinds of household and things and all kinds of things and started to feel like comfortable and confident living in the house didn't feel like an outcast and felt like it has a sense of purpose in life and value and belonging and then the parents said, Well, now you're doing so well. Why don't you become in charge of the Treasury all my money and you can do that I'm sure. So that person did that and confidence and sense of belonging and integrity and all that and it was great. And pretty soon it was kind of almost like you know that, you know, ran the household ran everything and felt confident to be able to do that. And then at some point, they're the old age of the parent, a parent said, Oh, and by the way,

you're actually our child. This is your rightful inheritance this place. But you were so deranged and so had so little confidence in yourself so little belief in yourself, that it probably would have given you a heart attack if I told you or if I told you, you would have run away, not went away, not believing it that just wouldn't have made any computed for you. And you need to slowly gain confidence and a sense of competency, to eventually be able to hear this news, the good news of your rightful place where you're born who you really are. So, this is also kind of a parable and kind of a fable. But heroes here is not, you know, magic is just realize you have a jewel. But it's a journey, a process by which the person slowly came to realize and understand what was always true. The Jewel was always there to sense. But it took a long time to learn that that's the case. And the person to kind of step into that role of, you know, being an autonomous, powerful, significant person to discover the Inner Wealth, not just the outer wealth, or the mansion. And so we all have this, this the story, idea, the story, but it takes not so easy to discover it. And so this journey is partly to be here to arrive really here for the first time is also a journey of rediscovery of discovering something about ourselves. And whether we already have a rightful place, you know, we already are the child of the Buddha in a sense, you just have to realize it, or whether it's something that we develop over time, and we grow into it, even if we didn't originally

have that identity. That's kind of, you know, in the philosophical question that we don't have to deal with. But it's still a journey to discover something here a way to be here. And Buddhism puts a lot of emphasis on the idea of a journey or a path. And I think it's does a lot of respect to what now in modern world we think of developmental models of personal growth. And I think a lot of this idea that humans develop have a developmental stage as they go through, arose out of studies of developments of childhood, childhood psychological growth during childhood, and people like Piaget show different, very distinct stages that children go through, if everything goes along healthily, appropriately. And people have also taken these ideas and tried to discern them in in their people's religious life as well. And there's a scholar named James Fowler, who came up with stages of, he called them stages of faith, that the way people grow in religiosity goes through stages as well. And it's interesting, you know, it's not everyone agrees with his stages. But it's a journey, it's a path of personal growth and development. And part of what this journey from here to here entails is sometimes completing the psychological development that maybe got ordered as a children or wasn't completed, or the parts that part of the stages don't, not just for James Fowler are not just about childhood stages, but also into adulthood. And so, you know, the psychological development of human beings, the maturation is not only a childhood issue, but also we go through developmental stages as adults as well. If everything goes along well, if we don't get stay frozen in one particular stage. And so this idea of progressive development, development and growth is, is the, is the model that Buddhism has. In fact, it's so important, this idea that in some schools of Buddhism, they say that the real development, the real stages of growth happen after your first experience of awakening. Some people are looking up at awakening, I want that, and everything with that will be everything's gonna be happy ever after after that. But in some schools, it's once you have that first taste of awakening, then you then you know what it's really about. So now you can start your growth. I don't know if that's encouraging or discouraging. And so

some of these developmental models that have human growth of childhood growth that apply applied into religious life. Start with some of the first stages the father talks about the first two years of life, that that's where we learn. We're there to feel safe and to trust this world that we live in this universe that we live in, and many people and it really comes from by a lot of has to do with how our parental experiences look like that we have parents who provide safety and security and they're there for us. And there are people who don't have that. And, and, as a teacher, talking to people about their personal lives, I hear amazing stories of people who, you know, really attribute their sense of lack of safety, lack of trust in this world, feeling of fear, and not belonging to how they were received by their parents when they're born, or some people even talk about, you know, my, my, my mom told me that she was really clear, when she was pregnant, she didn't want me I was I was an obstacle. And she kept telling me growing up, that was just an obstacle for her, you know, and like, and she basically ignored me, one person told me recently that, to this very day, the person was probably in his 50s, or 60s, now, the person who told me they said, to this day, if you met my mother, you wouldn't have no no evidence that she cares about me at all. So that, you know, started quite young. And some people have, you know, received this kind of basic nurturance and sense of safety. And so part of this journey to hear and practice for people who, at this very early stage of life, didn't get that message to get that kind of conditioning is to recondition ourselves. And it's a powerful thing to be able to meet this core sense of, lack of safety, that lack of basic trust, and work with it and feel it and slowly learn to, to have a reconditioning, and part of the value of, of meditation, if once we can kind of settle deeply into it's not easy to do, is that the sense of unification, the sense of wholeness, and well being that comes from meditation is a kind of kind of conditioning or kind of atmosphere that penetrates deep down into the marrow of your bones into ourselves or into a deep into the psychology of our mind. And there's some possibility of doing some kind of, you know, reconditioning, redoing of this basic trust when it hasn't been created, young, early in life. And so if all I said that was that set in place, the first couple of years of your life, and I found parenting quite difficult at times, and but I take some solace in the fact that I

think those first few years were okay. So the foundation is there. So then, the next stage of follow talks about is just, you know, when starts, people kid starts speaking, learning a language, is it, we don't just learn a language, where we will learn ways of thinking, we learn concepts, and ideas and images in which to organize our life. And some of those are religious. And so some people learn like religious concepts and ideas, as they learn language. And so sometimes the belief system then, is so deeply embedded in the kind of linguistic mind that it's very hard to see the world without the lens with a particular religious worldview that you grew up in. And so that's kind of acquisition of ideas and concepts. And when we do meditation practice, sometimes that's quite challenging also, because least in Buddhist meditation, to go really deep into here in a deep way that there's there at the right time, there is also a dropping of all concepts. And it can be quite frightening for people who don't have basic trust, to start seeing the world without some of these core deeply embedded linguistic structures in their mind, that that's how they find their way in their world. That's what makes them safe in the world and how they understand their world. And so, you know, that seems to be kind of some point addressed. And then the next stage of followers that with these concepts and ideas we have

young children will have a kind of anthropomorphic anthropocentric kind of idea of the world, that the world is kind of like people and there's agency in the world and there's a fixed ideas of what makes order in the world and justice and fairness and it's a bit magical thinking I had this remember when I was about five or six. I had this kind of thinking where it was Fourth of July and I brought home a long like branch or stick or pole. And there was in the back of the apartment complex where we lived there was a pic, you know, Fourth of July party, and there was a picket fence and I kind of brought this big pole or stick and put it next to the picket fence. And then there was an older, probably a teenage boy, he seemed like pretty big to me. And who picked up that pole, and was then tried to pull vault over that picket fence. And the process of doing, as I remember, it, tripped on the fence, and broke his leg. I was responsible. So this idea of assigning responsibility, because I brought this to pull back. So there's not strong sense of responsibility of who's in charge and who's did something is sometimes sometimes kind of very clear. kind of thinking I'd make order make sense of things sometimes arise at this age. And that's something they say that in later stages, people begin to grow out of if their developmental process, you know, proceeds, but that if it doesn't evolve out of there, then they can stay in very strong, dichotomous thinking right and wrong thinking right up into adulthood, and so forth. And often it comes along with assigning of blame. Other people are responsible, other people are supposed to make things better, the world is supposed to provide in some fixed way. And sometimes there's not so much of looking at personal responsibility. And then, you know, these are very big stages, and we shouldn't take them as being dogmatically true, but they're kind of points to some kind of trajectory, perhaps it's some of us can recognize. And then there's stages of, of avoidance identity, acquire acquisition of identity, that seems to be kind of clearly important task around the age of 12, or 13.2. Father, and so, sense of belonging, having a place in the world, being someone in the world. And so here in terms of religion, people then come to develop very strong identification with their religion, at this age. And what he says is that the identification and engagement in their religion and belonging, they tend to ignore what they don't like, or what seems wrong, or what they don't believe in, it just they kind of, they suspend their critical thinking, in favor of just belonging and being part of this identity of religious identity. But then a little bit later, in teenagehood, or young adulthood, then there comes a stage where people are willing to question their beliefs and look at some of the contradictions look at some of the challenges they have. And to stop looking so much as for having identity by acquiring or taking something from outside, I cannot I belong to this religion, I'm a Buddhist, that's who I am. But rather, to start looking, taking responsibility for their feelings, take responsibility for their thoughts and beliefs for themselves, rather than having them given to them and adopting what's given to them from the society around them. So a period of questioning and exploring and personal responsibility becomes very important in this stage, and then he goes on and says, Father says that after this kind of questioning, and begin to take

personal responsibility for one's own beliefs, there tends to be the ability to transcend beliefs, and not see the world only through belief systems. And you know, those people have those beliefs, I have my beliefs, this is what I've come to, but maybe to see it a little bit their route, or the relative nature of some of these beliefs, or the paradox and beliefs and understand how people have ideas and concepts and ideas to organize their lives. But perhaps they're not the ultimate, but maybe there's a kind of way of harmonizing them and not kind of, before and against. And the story that I've told maybe too many times here

that maybe points a little bit to this is when I was living in a Japanese monastery in Japan, and learning Japanese learning to live with, I was the only non Japanese person living there. And Japanese culture is very different from American culture. And so not only not only learning a language, but slowly, learning what wasn't being taught to me, I mean, explicitly, there's learning a whole different cultural way of being or worldview. And so every morning we would clean to add a 20 minute cleaning period. We're all these, most of the most of the monks were, you know, 2122 so strong and vigorous and you had to do everything. Fast and strong, and it was called Zen power was called, you know, one point it fully engaged. And so everyone had these cloths and brooms and stuff we were all cleaning and doing. And in the morning, the commonplaces I had to clean was the big kind of Hall of worship, the ceremonial Hall had pillars and an important thing was to clean. It didn't matter if it was clean already, you should have to so we had this phenomena that we would, you know, I would clean a pillar, and someone would come right after me and clean the pillar, I could find another pillar, somebody was not at all been cleaned, but it was no one, no one was there to clean that pillar. So we just had to be cleaning, right. So it was vigorous, this whole dance moving around. And then one day, I had this experience of kind of waking up. And it's the best way I can describe, but suddenly, I realized that I was living in different social universe than the Japanese monks I was living with. And so I don't know if I can describe it. So exactly how it is. But I was an individual working together in a group of other individuals. They were a collective, first and foremost, a group first and foremost, that had individuals who are participating in the group, something like that. So their starting point was they saw themselves as an organism kind of, as a collective, maybe, for the purpose of trying to explain this. And I had no idea. I mean, I had no background to let me see this kind of way of being in the world, I kind of assumed that they were just like me, until I kind of realize, wait a minute, they're here very different in the world, very different everyone at then, and how I am. So that was a key part, that part of the story. And here's the point I wanted to make. And that is, when I saw that, I did not think that one way was better than the other or one way was more right than the other. I thought I thought different, as human beings find their way and organize themselves as societies, that they have to kind of have some worldview about how they are together. And there are different choices in different societies make. And that's how they managed to get along and to do what they need to do. And so this is just one way. The Japanese, the strong individualism that I grew up with, is another way they both have, they have strengths and weaknesses. But you know, I'm not going to hold one as being the best or the right one, they're appropriate in their own way. And so my job is to harmonize or to understand or participate the best I can, depending where I was. So this is an example where rather than taking some dogmatic view of what's right, to appreciate that some point that kind of transcendence or overview of ideas, and not to hold on to ideas as being the thing, but see them as relevant relative, relative or contingent, and then find a way to kind of transcend them and have a larger view. And then for James Fowler, that sets the stage for his final stage of faith. And the one that's most controversial in terms of other people, other people, you know, see his his points of view. But this is to add to this kind of transcend into particular views and ideas of what's right and wrong, allows people then to have universal compassion, and allows people to see a kind of universal quality of human beings. So that that allows to see that the compassionate impulse to cherish and value others takes precedence in a sense of a compassionate

world that we live in. So I'm not presenting these ideas of followers being definitive, like the right way, right? That would go against the sixth stage.

But rather, to point to this idea of a journey, that once we sit down to be here in mindfulness, to really start being willing to be present for our experience. What we sent what we run into over time, are the forces inside of us that momentum, the movements of the mind inside of us that are most active at different times, it was important for us, as for example, if the mind gets quieter and quieter, it's kind of like goes through layers in the mind. And some of the quiet underlying layers are, we peel away like the skins of the onion. We run into some of the stages where we run into some of the hindrances, some of the distraction some of the compulsion some of the needs some of the other unresolved issues, we run into the places where the developmental growth, the momentum of growth that's within us is trying to push up and move forward. But you know, it's been buried for so long. But then as it gets released, then there's this movement, you know, like, oh, some people sometimes called a, see it as a yearning, or as a expression or as a, you know, as a need or different things. And, you know, and sometimes it's conscious, sometimes it's subconscious, this that goes on. And, but there's a powerful process of being here, being present. And then mindful here, being aware here, that over time, you will get what you're supposed to get. In fact, if you do a path of mindfulness, and do it, well, there are no mistakes, in terms of what bubbles up and arises from inside of you. Whatever it is that you sit quietly, like, for example, with your eyes closed and meditating mindfully, whatever wells up inside of you, is perfect for you. It's just there, just what the doctor ordered. It's just like, this is your next stage, this is what you need to address this with needs to be met with. And if some of these earlier, early childhood experiences are on, kind of kind of need to be healed or need to be kind of completed, sometimes it's very hard to do it alone. Sometimes it really need to have community sometimes we need to have teachers or maybe therapists or different kind of elders, you know, in our lives that can kind of help us support us and hold our hands and guide us and make it easier and more possible to do it. And in Buddhism, this journey, from here to here, it can sound pretty just to say from here to here, I mean, I mean, like cheated, like, why bother, you know, I'm already here. But, but I think it's one of the most significant things we can do, to mature and to grow. This thing about going from here to here is quite a powerful thing. It's quite a significant thing. It's probably one of the great, the great journeys of a lifetime to do this. And I hope that little bit of how it's presented today can give you a little bit of sense of how significant it is, to go nowhere. But to go here to be here in a full way and in doing that, to arrive where you've always been in a new way to arrive where you've always been, and here becomes your treasure and here becomes your your your kingdom your mansion, your paradise here here becomes the place where who you are where your good heart can become a gift for the world around you. Because in the end, entering into the world with gift bestowing hands is one of the great tasks of any human life. Thank you