

2017-06-26 Thinking And The Me Train

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SPEAKERS

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meant to the discussion. Usually on Mondays I sit on this platform low. Some of you've been here Sunday. See it's a pie. But lately I've been sitting without a cushion without everybody's round cushion. So don't sit as high as I used to. And I felt like I was so low. I couldn't see anyone. Yeah, you've some of you nodding, yes. Is this better? Yeah. Well, in some ways, maybe. For years, I was very reluctant to sit on a platform actually, back in the old days, I kind of resisted for a long time having a platform at all. And then they got me this platform that was this high. And I kind of okay. And then some years ago, they said, you know, you have to attend Sunday mornings, you have to sit higher and nice, resisted that. So maybe I'm getting corrupted. With the, I kind of, you know, have this idea that sitting high is a little bit more hottie or something in that Dharma teacher should sit on the ground. But, but then people don't hear me or don't see me and I don't see them. So sitting here today, so low, I felt this is too low. So Is this okay? Yeah, I should get over my resistance.

So is first, is it loud enough? Everyone? Good, a little bit louder. So let's see, is this better? Okay. So I believe the main point that I want to make this evening is that what we think about, and our relationship to our thoughts, is state dependent. So depending on the state of mind that we're in, we think certain ways, depending on the state of mind we're in. We have particular relationships with our thoughts. And I thought of talking about this, because I read recently, an article of or some that mentioned thinking, and they had this claim that most people their default way of thinking the most common way people have a thinking is negative thinking. Now, I don't know if that's true. But certainly, there's a good amount of negative thinking going on, in this world of ours. And with the article, the way I read the article, it was like, you know, it's almost like this is who we really are at the bottom, like we're just like negative thinkers. And that didn't seem right to me, because what I've learned is that, what we think and how we think, is very much dependent on the mood we're in, but also the state of mind how concentrated we are settled we are on ourselves. And so one of the things we learn to do in meditation and mindfulness practice is not just learned to be mindful of things, but also our state of being or state of mind shifts and changes. And there are better states to be in than some of the states that keep negative thinking going. spinning and spinning. And I think we need some help with the mic with the hearing system device. Looks like someone's getting another one for you. That's wait so everyone's on together here.

So so you hear me and that that one is coming through that one. Is anybody else having here since the device said working? Yeah, it's working for you. Watch it on now. know someone knows how to help put it on D.

Let's see is that working now? Great.

There are no interruptions in mindfulness practice.

So the relationship to our thinking, and thinking about this today the I was thinking that sometimes a metaphor for thinking that's used is that if a train and you come to the, you know, you're on the train at the train crossing, and a train is coming by, and maybe a freight train with open wagons, and then you find yourself you've jumped in, and your train takes you off. So we have all kinds of thoughts that come through, they come through like trains, and sometimes we get on them, and they can carry us away quite far. But to stretch this analogy, those trains are the track they're on. Is it a huge circle. And they're on a carousel. And the trains are moving with a carousel is spinning. And if you stop the train, you're still there, six carousel is still spinning. And if the carousel is spinning in such a way that you get dizzy, it doesn't really help you. Or if the carousel is spinning in such a way that it makes you afraid, then you might want to jump back on new trains and get the get the trains going, again, to get out of there. But you know, it's getting out of there means just go around and around on the carousel, so more just faster. And but if you can stop the carousel, then the whole situation change changes. For one thing, the trains are not going to go so fast anymore, because part of their speed around the round depends on how fast the carousel is going. So what is a carousel that you're on? That your trains of thoughts are spinning on? going around and around? And can you stay on a carousel that's going slow, or carousel is being still and you can from which vantage point you can watch the thoughts go round and round The trains go round and round, without jumping on them. So to try to explain this a little bit better. If if we're afraid, then we might have thoughts about how to make ourselves safe, or thoughts about how you know concerns and look out for what's dangerous out there. And that's quite reasonable if we really if there's really a danger there. But our thoughts, then, my tell us if we're afraid, tell us that there's more dangers out there than they really are. As we see and think about dangers or potential dangers, then we get into problem solving mode, we start thinking more about how do I deal with this danger? And are there more dangers out there? And what should I do? And how should I plan ahead. And those thoughts of danger and solving problems of danger and fixed thinkers begins spinning and spinning and spinning. And they have that they can pull us into their orbit. So they were just kind of spinning around in those thoughts a lot. And if we try to just quiet those thoughts down, if the underlying fear is still there, we'll find ourselves probably been pulled up into those thoughts again and again. But if we're trying to solve certain problems in the thought trains that are spinning and spinning, sometimes there's no way out. There is no solution in there. But we think there is so we keep thinking them and thinking them. There's another way, and that is to go behind the thoughts or under the thoughts and address the you know, the underlying fuel the underlying mood or the emotion or in this case, the fear that's there and settle that. And if that fear is settled, is quieted down, then our thinking is not going to be driven by the fear. And chances are is that we can think much more clearly about things. We can plan more clearly, more realistically. And probably our thinking won't be a loop where we keep spitting back over and over and over again. Not being able to take care of ourselves. An example of that I was reminded recently of someone who doesn't know how to take care of themselves, because they're caught up in their in the kind of spinning out and feeling uncomfortable Are toddlers who really need to sleep.

And I don't know how all toddlers are, but we had at least one toddler who didn't know that he needed to go to sleep. And he would just get more and more energized. You know, like, you know, it's just like getting out of control. And there was no solution there, except crashing, or somehow managing came to bed and read a story. And, you know, somehow, but you know, he didn't think he had to go to sleep because he, you know, he was all this energy, because he was so uncomfortable being so tired. So there's a ways in which our thinking is self perpetuating and self driven. And certain negative thoughts and negative ways of thinking, have this tendency to be self perpetuating, they kind of feed on themselves. And sometimes it's very hard to get out of them. If we're, if we're playing the game on their terms, if we're trying to address the problems, certain problems by thinking about them. But the thinking

has been influenced too much by the fear, driven by the fear, then the thinking might not be productive and useful, it might actually keep us spinning and spinning around and around. If we can get calm, and settled and relaxed, and we're not so identified or involved with our thinking, and we can feel at home here contented here at ease here, the nature of our thinking tends to change. For one thing, one of the important changes is we don't identify with thought so much. We don't live in the thoughts. We don't take up residence in thinking that we're doing. And I think many people, their residents, where they tend to live most of their life is in their thoughts about things, thinking about planning, remembering, doing all these things. And if that's all someone has known for many, many years, the idea there's no alternative is inconceivable. Why would anybody do that? And all the promise in life seems to come at the end of the thoughts or the thoughts are leading to all the safety, we're going to get to come when we just finally be able to figure it out through our thoughts how to get safe. Or all the desires we have, you know, are some somehow get fulfilled, or somehow there's the allure, or the promise that if we just keep thinking about them, then somehow it'll manifest. And so they the pool into the world of thinking is very strong. And then because it's so strong, the idea that one wouldn't think so much wouldn't be living in the thoughts so actively would seem like, we're not only would it feel, I mean, we would believe we think that it's not helpful. Because how can you solve the problems that need to be solved, if we're not thinking about them. But also doesn't feel like it's going to be a solution to not be so involved in thinking. Because a lot of thinking can be driven by discomfort. And if we're stopping to think, then one of the things we might feel is the discomfort that's underneath it that's driving it. And there's a why kinds of discomfort. So we can feel I've mentioned fear, there could be dissatisfaction, there could be loneliness, there can be discouragement. There can be you know, there's a whole long list of things. But as we kind of switch gears, and be willing to feel and sense what's going on underneath, then we're addressing what's primary. And what I've learned over my lifetime of practice, is that for the most part, thoughts are secondary. thoughts about how I live my life and my concerns are really kind of more like symptoms. Then they are the essence of what our life is about. And they're symptoms of what's really going on more deeply. And so if there's a lot of negative thinking going on catastrophize thinking going on, a lot of generalizations going on, but a negative thinking going on. Chances are that underneath underneath that there is some kind of discomfort that's percolating or driving or running the running the show That's what needs our attention.

I think I think of I tarts funny to keep saying what I think and talk about thoughts. But I think of my my thinking as kind of like a flag. That's a waving at Gil St. Gil, pay attention over here. But you don't pay attention to the flag, you pay attention to the, you know what's holding the flag, what's driving the flag, what's waving the flag. And so if we're always looking at the thoughts and concerned with what we're thinking about, then we're going to miss that messenger, we're going to miss what's underneath it, what's driving it. So one of the things we learn to do in mindfulness practice, is to step back from our thinking, to not give it a lot of authority, to not invest a lot of importance in our thoughts. Not to dismiss them, not to belittle them. But we don't want to, we don't have to live on the train all the time. There's other places to live. And if we think being on the train, is the only thing that's important, then we're gonna always want to be on the train. But that's a you know, not such a great life to always be on the train. It's kind of like living in a two dimensional reality, when there's a three dimensional reality waiting for you. So for some people, that the entryway into this deeper kind of sense of self deeper experience of being comes from shifting attention away from our thoughts, to what's underneath them, what's driving them, what's fueling them. And if that is discomfort, then the art of mindfulness is to learn how to be comfortable with the discomfort, how to be willing to feel it. Me feel it kind of as if it's a, the jack and the jack box. As long as the that little doll jack jar doll is in the box with a spring, the spring is going to be taught and ready to just unloosen the tension is there. And but once we take the lid off the box in the spring releases, that attention goes away. So a lot of this deeper psychological discomfort we have inside is a little bit like a jack in the box, that it needs to be it needs to be space to unwind it needs

space to kind of flow and to release some of the tension that's underneath it. So what are the ways we do that is we feel it, we're present for what's underneath it, what's there. And we learn to shift our attention away from living in thoughts to living something which is more intimate, we're connected here, how we feel in a deeper way. As we learn to make space for that and settled into that, then what can happen is the mind begins to quiet down. Because then the energy of the discomfort, the fears, the anxieties that desires the dissatisfactions we have, are not feeding the thoughts and keeping them spinning. So that the thoughts are not getting much more energy anymore, and they tend to quiet down. As thoughts quiet down, then we start, it's possible to notice there's actually a lot of things to be aware of in this life, that are not thoughts. It's possible to aware of the world around us in a more vivid way in a clearer way. It's possible to be aware of our inner life in a more vivid way in a clear away. It's possible wherever emotions and feelings. It's possible to be aware of reservoirs of calm and peacefulness and well being that's within waiting for us. As we get more concentrated and settled in peaceful. What tends to happen is the nature of our thinking changes. And it tends to our thinking stops being so negative. So fear driven, it starts to be driven by a sense of peacefulness or calmness or a sense of well being, confidence, contentment, a whole bunch of other things that become the kind of the food for how we're thinking. And the thinking becomes more satisfying. And what some people have pointed out, is that thinking becomes much more creative. When we have a calm, settled, contented mind and having creative thoughts is A much more useful way to solve problems.

I can't tell you how many problems I tried to think my way out of trying to solve and I spent days and days sometimes it was some kind of preoccupation of concern, thinking about thinking about it. And then certain kind of tension operating. And then something happened where I was distracted from my concern in a nice way, I went for a walk in the woods, I went, you know, did some kind of exercise or did something different. And in this alternate to kind of state of being my mind, on its own, popped up some ideas, some creative solutions, something what to do next. And if I said it that way, my mind had those thoughts. And what was what was happened I was those days I spent thinking about my problem. I was thinking, you see the difference? And it turns out that for a good percentage of this me, but I think for a fair number of people, that one of the things that's spinning and fueling incessant thinking thoughts, the way we get cooked in and caught in, is that a lot of those trains have me written on them. You know, transport by trains going by fast, it just says me me me me, me, me me because it's an amazing amount of thoughts that people think that one way or the other, we're the subject of the thoughts. We're like, the main character. And it's, you know, that's a pretty interesting person for you. And so we get hooked. And we get hooked, and we start thinking me thoughts. And there's this can be this wonderful looping, of perpetuation of perpetuating me thoughts. Once you have a me, you have to keep the me going, you have to fix them be improve the me protecting me do all these things with the poor me. But you don't have to be on the meat train. You can just be, you can be on the beat train rather than the meat train.

So the point I was trying to say, is that how people think, and in our relationship to thoughts is state specific, or is dependent on the state that we're in. And sometimes we want to tend to our state of being, before we get involved in thinking too much about things. Because if we can change our state from one that's anxious or tense, to one that's confident and relaxed, then our thinking becomes much more useful, much more creative, it tends to be less me in the thinking. And so part of the function of mindfulness is to help you with this, which helped us to dis identify with our thoughts just enough that we're not living in the thoughts only the trains can still operate. And we can get on and off sometimes. But it's very different to have control over when you get on a train. And when you get off, then if you're just on the train, and you don't have no idea how to get off, all you can do is move to the next compartment. You know, and that's still in the train. So those are the thoughts I had for today. And if

they made sense, maybe you had some questions for me. If those my thoughts didn't make any sense for you, maybe have some questions.

Sometimes I feel the underlying things. And the things digital spins, it doesn't stop.

So the underlying emotion or feeling spins and spins and spin doesn't stop. Yeah. So there's a few things about that. There's a feedback loop between our thoughts and this underlying state that anxiety or fear that's there. So one of the things to become aware of is if you can is what that loop might be, are you even though it doesn't stay under Feelings might just stop you can you see how your thoughts so they affect your thoughts. But your thoughts in return affect that state? Can you see that connection? Sometimes seeing that connection can begin creating space where things can quiet down a little bit. That's one way. The other thing is sometimes the underlying state that doesn't stop if it's very difficult or uncomfortable, sometimes it needs other things than mindfulness. So sometimes it needs compassion, or kindness or support. Sometimes they need support from other people, before we can really do it on our own, do it ourselves. So I think that as we get more and more familiar with the underlying state that you're talking about doesn't stop. Sometimes you want to maybe check in and talk to other people. And to really kind of consider what's really needed here for this, that might be more than just the kind of mindfulness you're able to bring.

Hi, I'm just wondering, when you following this analogy, when you get off of the meat train, and you are on a platform, I can get off of the meat train, but I'm on the platform, watching the trains going, with the rush of them passing and so on, and I have you ever been lost in that space? and not knowing what to do when it's like I'm off of the me train. But in that those moments of, am I here? Am I somewhere? Where am I? This is all becomes unfamiliar, is there a way that you have oriented yourself in? I don't know along your practice, or at times in your practice to be like, Is this real? Is this happening and to having faith and trust in it or something?

Yeah, I don't think I've had that particular experience. So I can't speak to it directly. But I can well understand that sometimes it's quite disorienting. The transition from getting off the train, and just watching the energy of its spin, go, go go because it's the momentum because this is there, it's not going to stop right away. And some people orient themselves, to their lives orient themselves to find their way safely around the world, by their thoughts and ideas that they have. And if that if they're not orienting ourselves through those and not grounding themselves and sensing those, then it can be disorienting for a while until there's a big transition. And probably, it's like caffeine. And so it takes a few days, once you stop once you stop taking that caffeine or doing the caffeine. And so you have to give yourself the time. And that's that's why some types, do some like a retreat. You know, his retreats are kind of like a thought Recovery Center. And but you know, but certainly I've had times where I was, the closest thing that I can think of that I have you described is sometimes I can't stop my thoughts. There's a lot of momentum in my thoughts. And not troubled by it. But it's like, wow. And that's what I practice. I found it very helpful for me to practice. Wow. Wow. That's amazing. Wow. Who would have guessed Wow. And if I can really say, wow, I really kind of step back and go, Wow, look at that. That's amazing. I'm out of control. Then, I've kind of in control. I've kind of stepped away I've kind of not identified and sometimes the pull into the thoughts are quite strong. But if I go wow. But I have to keep doing it. Wow. In those moments of Wow. I am not locked on I'm not pulled in. It's a way of stepping back and not being continent. So you might try the wild perspective.

Required group prepares no thoughts. Everyone thinks someone's coming from the outer Hall.

Hello, um, I have a question. And I think I might know the answer to this but right now I'm feeling a lot of emotions but don't have thoughts tied to them specifically. And that's so I understand the thought train but now I'm on the Emotion train, and I have to, like, navigate through that, if I don't know what the root of the motion is, then I don't?

Do you have thoughts on that?

Or emotions? I think that I don't always know why I have the emotions I do. And sometimes there's momentum there, or there's something spin on released or uncovered or something, and it's kind of there. And I think I think of all emotions having a lifetime. And sometimes a lifetime is shorter than what I want. And sometimes the lifetime is longer than what I want. But it's not, I'm not in charge so much of the lifetime sometimes. So some of the things to learn to do, when the emotions are there, they're not understandable. And when, why is there any particular reason or cause is to respect them a lot, make room for them, and try be so aware of them know that they're there, so that they don't, they don't, they're not the perspective through which you're seeing the world. And one of the ways to try to help with that, is try not to make any big decisions, you know, or come to conclusions, if the emotions have the upper hand. And if you need to make conclusions, then you might want to preface what you're going to say, you know, I'm, I have this really that particular emotion to them, I'm gonna, I'm really grumpy today. Like I occasionally I've done that I've told people, you know, I'm grumpy today. And then it's easier for me if I say it, because then I'm not so identified. For me when I make it public. I'm not so identified with it's kind of like, it frees it up inside of me. And so those are thoughts that I have for you, I don't know if they relate to your country, unless you want to ask again, or a different way or, more specifically.

And now I think that

I think I've been the approach I've been taking his to accept, and sort of feel it and feel what it feels like in the body. And that's what, you know, the last meditation was about for me, and then just investigate and see where it's coming from, and try to invite that insight.

Sounds good.

But I don't, yeah, I don't know. It's, it's, on the one hand, the cause of the emotion is external. And I understand that very clearly that it's an external thing. But then, on the other hand, it's, you know, the emotion wouldn't be there unless I had an internal interpretation of that external thing that happened. And that's that connection, I'm trying to figure out because I don't

know. So there's a there's a kind of a maybe subtle and not so or not so subtle distinction that sometimes made in Buddhism, that maybe it's helpful hear that, rather than thinking that the cause of the emotion is external. And Buddhism tendencies, you see that it's the condition for it is external. But if there's a cause that causes within one of the things, one thing I've had success with, with emotional states that I couldn't understand, sometimes he did couldn't even identify what it was. But it was just there was I spent a lot of time doing mindfulness of the body around it. So it really feeling in the body connecting to where in the body, it's most energized by the emotional state. And then if I hang out with it long enough, occasionally what's happened is that the underlying reason was there. The underlying belief, the underlying assumption, the underlying, kind of something deeper as and as soon as I realized, oh, then something lifts. But the doorway to that understanding is not from thinking, but it's really connecting to the body and feeling into it, and then something can happen.

I think it at the beginning, you mentioned I'm here. Sorry, I'm here. There. At the beginning, you mentioned something about states of states of mind or that are influencing the thought train. Could you elaborate a little there? Yeah. So

so right, well, this is what comes to mind. So I don't know if it addresses the question, but this is a story from my life. When I was 14 I met a girl happens Sometimes a 14 year old, maybe and I was very much attracted to her. And so in my attraction, all I could do was think about her. So the state of being attracted or having falling in love, you know, that was all that, you know, my thoughts were really, in how wonderful she was, and special she was and the best one, and this is the one and you know, you know, duck, you know, all these thoughts. And it was quite strong because I knew her first name. And I knew her which street she lived on. That's all. So my friend and I, we got two telephone books. And we went through one from the front and one from the back, and called everyone who lived on those streets asking for her.

So so what my actions my thoughts what was driving me was being fueled by particular state that lasted about two days. By day three was like who what is that explain a little bit, exactly an example of a state that affects our thinking. It's a little bit a little bit an alternate state example, would probably shed more light to Oh, and a completely different state example. So I could go for having a good night's sleep, I can have a nice breakfast, I could come to IMC in the morning and meditate and just have a sweet, very nice meditation feel happy, I could be walking down the street and just to be very nice person says hello very nicely. And I said, Oh, that's so good. So I just feel contented at peace at home in this world settled calm. For this day, it's pretty good. And then I go around the corner. And someone says, you know, kill, you know that men who wear black pants are pretty lousy. pretty crummy. And, you know, I'm such a nice calm state relaxed, contented, happy. Very little Gil here, be here. So I kind of like oh, that's an interesting thing for someone to said and what I wonder what was going on for them didn't really affect me, I just keep going. a different day. You know, that day when I was 14, if that girl had said, or is wearing black pants is you know a crummy. And I was wearing a black pants. I probably thought about it for the next three days. The big thing I did with her. The only thing I remember was I want to remember two things from this girl. One was, you know, searching for her on the phone, and the telephone books. The other was what accent metal element. And we were on the streets. And so I wanted to impress her. And so somehow there were cigarettes involved. So I was gonna smoke a cigarette. But I had never smoked a cigarette before. So I didn't know how to get it lit.

So my attempts did not impress her. So and then I was felt kind of crushed, you know, and that's the end of the world. And this is not, you know, this is not a good thing. So the, you know, what, what, what impacts us when we're 14 is a particular a particular state and concerns that and probably you're, you're a little different than when you were 14 now, probably your state of mind is such that things that bothered you when you're a fifth 14 probably, you know, probably doesn't affect you too much anymore. Some of them. Now you're shaking your head. So, anyway, I hope that what I had to say tonight was useful or gave you food for thought. And more importantly, food for investigation. kind of really see look more carefully and yourself and what your relationship to thinking is how thinking works, how you get pulled into them and can you Find a way to practice Wow, to step back and really step back and look at them with a kind of broad perspective. So you're not living in the thoughts. You're more living in awareness of the thoughts. And when you're doing that, then you'll be able to figure out for yourself, how it works for you on this. So wonderful thing to do. Great. Thank you.