

2017-07-12 Dharmette Taking Responsibility

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SPEAKERS

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So I believe that one of the characteristics of Buddhist practice is taking a high degree of personal responsibility for your practice for ourselves. For the life that we live, the choices we make, and media, taking personal responsibility, I think is really a strong, important part of this practice. And it probably is not talked about enough, this idea. And one of the reasons maybe is not talked about is that it's hard to talk about responsibility, personal responsibility, without it feeling oppressive, without feeling, like on here another reason to sing on them a bad person, or I'm doing it wrong, or I'm not doing well enough, not doing enough. And, you know, it's so it's up to me, if I'm responsible, then I'm to blame. And so then that's pretty bad news. And, you know, and so it's not. And so often in the West, where there's so much self criticism going on, tendency is to do a lot of teaching on self acceptance, self compassion, all kinds of things because of the need people have here. However, it doesn't, shouldn't over overshadow the importance of personal responsibility. And that's kind of a key aspect of Buddhism. And perhaps one way of kind of getting into the topic is to consider something that you do every day that you're clearly responsible for no one else is going to do it for you. But perhaps it's something that you don't even think you're almost that you don't even think about doing it. You're so do it. So unselfconsciously, you know, you don't it's just like, Well, of course you do that. And maybe some of you, it's different than the example I'm going to give, maybe it doesn't work for some of you, I recognize that but maybe getting out of bed in the morning, you wake up and you get out of bed to go pee or get out of bed to have your coffee or get out of bed, whatever you do next, you know, you're responsible for doing that. If you're able bodied enough, you're responsible to get yourself out of bed and get to the toilet or get to the coffee machine or get to the shower, get your clothes and put them on. And but you've been doing this for many for most of you here in this room for decades. And it's just something that you do and you know, you don't think about it, you might think about what clothes to wear or think about certain things. But the idea of getting up out of bed is just you know, it's not like if someone said you're responsible to get yourself out of bed. I mean, you know, you might tell that to, you know, a teenage boy has no mic. I know. But girls, but I know about boys now. And they get out of bed at around one or two in the afternoon. It's quite amazing. And But anyway, so maybe maybe some other example like that, that you just do that, that you take responsibility for. But you don't think that you're taking responsibility. It's not by accident, your mindset, oh, I'm responsible now. But clearly you are because no one else is going to do it. So the idea of personal responsibility doesn't have to be oppressive, or it doesn't have to be like you have to do a lot of work or like being forceful. It can come with ease and come with a naturalness to it. But it doesn't exclude the idea that in order to do this Buddhist practice or find a life of freedom and liberation, there is a required of us a high degree of personal responsibility. And so part of the responsibility is to be aware, be mindful and be awake, without being aware of our life as we live it. There is no Buddhist practice, there is no awakening. And as I said earlier, can be aware it doesn't have to be a struggle doesn't have to be a responsibility, that becomes a burden. It's a responsibility we take

on that's actually can be quite freeing and quite relaxing. Especially if we learned that recognize that being aware is a natural phenomenon. It's natural to be aware, we are always aware. And so it's not something we have to do to be aware, it's more of what we have to allow to be aware, kind of get out of the way for awareness, relax and open and recognize that we're already aware. Recognize that that kind of ride that ride along with it. I like the idea of being a passenger in the car of awareness. You don't have to be the driver even sometimes. So but you have to take responsibility for that. You have to get in the car, otherwise the car's not going to take you anywhere. You know, you see you know you have to get them in a car. You have to kind of keep doing it to allow for it. No one's gonna do it for you.

Sometimes people can kind of you know, you know, maybe clap their hands next year, a year and you can't alone, like, Oh, I guess I'm here. But that's not really where the path is, you can't have someone next to you all the time telling you wake up, wake up, you have to do it for yourself. So you have take responsibility and how much how much responsibility you want to take, how motivated are you? You know how to take that responsibility. So that it's a, certainly a grown up thing to do. It's a maturing thing to do. It's like, you know, you're not become an upright citizen of the world, you're responsible, and you're engaged. But how do you do it, so it's relaxing, so that it's freeing, so it's not contracting, not tight. And then we take responsibility for what goes on inside, we get a responsibility, to some degree of our experience, some of the experiences we have, we sit down and meditate. Those experience, some of those experiences are there because of how we've lived our lives. If we're always rushing and hurrying around, and we sit down and we feel agitated, and the mind is spinning, then to take responsibility, that you know that it's the how much we've been rushing, and doing and reacting to things. And it sets a momentum in place. And we have to take responsibility for that momentum, you can't just push a button and have it stop. So you have to kind of let it be there. I've sometimes gotten angry. And there have been times when I sit meditating and meditating quietly and peacefully and minding my own business. And somehow some thought comes up, and I get angry. And so taking responsibility for that means I can't just push a button necessarily just stop the anger, there's no momentum, there's some there's an energy that's in the system. And so now I have to my require be responsible for it, is not to act on it, but to hold it, make space for it, and let it kind of play itself out. without adding to it, you're fueling it anymore. And so I have to kind of just like, I'm responsible for making that space, I don't know, I don't make it a problem that I'm angry enough to make it a statement about who I am and what a failure I am to be angry or something. I'm a meditation teacher, I've been doing this for a long time. So I guess I just blew it. But rather than just Oh, just anger, and now that it's in motion, I have to kind of let it you know, if you if you roll a ball hard enough, it'll roll for a while until the momentum goes out. If you spin your anger hard enough, it takes a while for it to spin out, you can expect something to suddenly stop. And that took me a long time to learn to really appreciate with all kinds of emotions and things that they have to play out sometimes because the momentum is so strong. And so that part of is taking responsibility to get out of the way to make space for it, to let it kind of very mature thing to do to recognize that some things are there. And we have to just experience them. The Buddha said that very interesting statement, he said, the body, your physical body is old karma. And your job is to experience it. So say whatever you're experiencing physically. There's the Buddha want to say it's there because of the momentum of your choices, your intentions, your activities in the past. And rather than saying it's wrong or bad, the instructions are not just feel it, feel it in your body. And so to take responsibility to show up, so when it's uncomfortable, what's happening. To be responsible is to make space and show up and be present for it. If it's comfortable or nice show up and be in feel and be present for it in your body. You know, no one else has been doing that for you. It's on you can do that. So to be responsible for how you're feeling responsible for the momentum that's set the emotion responsible for the choices you make. So as we become more mindful, and more more mindful, it's our ability to see the amount of choice we have in our life goes up higher and higher. And I think that's one of the signs of maturing and mindfulness practice, is we start seeing this more and more choice. When I was really young. I mean, I'm pretty sure when I was six or seven. I don't think I

was aware of having any choice. That wasn't like the, you know, there wasn't like understanding I had I just did things you know, point number about my life and I'm sure I made choices, but I don't think I was thinking that I'm making a choice.

As I entered into adulthood and especially started to practice, I think More and more aware that I was making choices all the time. And choices in the most subtle things. How I sit, how I stand, what I do with my hands as I speak, choices about what I say and how I say it and why I say it, choices even about what I look at and how I look at things. And so I started things that were just kind of like an automatic pilot, just stop being automatic pilot, I started started seeing there's choice here. And as I started discovering that choice, I recognize that it's my responsibility what I do with those choices, I can't ask someone else to make those choices for me. You know, if I'm going through this street, and I'm, you know, and I noticed someone who's attractive. You do I kind of, you know, stare? Oh, you know, you know, that could be inappropriate. So who's whose responsibility is what I do with my eyes? It's me. So do I take responsibility for that. And so over time, I saw more and more and more subtlety in which there's choice all the time. And rather than being oppressed by all the choice, I was inspired, because I could see in the choice, there was two ways to go. I mean, there's many ways to go, but two general ones, for me personally. One was to go in the direction where I felt worse, or go in the direction I felt better. And I got more. And as I started becoming more aware of what really feeling better is, then I started noticing that feeling better means to feel more peaceful in the situation more at ease in the situation, more expensive in the situation. Not more pleasant in the situation, not just simply because though now it's more pleasant, because it was only pursuing pleasure, then that's a dangerous route to take. And so the thought to see that the choices I make, I could move towards choices that were actually for my betterment choices that actually felt more at ease, happier, freer. And it got more and more subtle. It got, you know, like I already said this, but my posture, I noticed that sometimes if I slumped. Or if I scrunched my face, or if I tighten my jaw, that that has one effect on me. And when I was younger, I used to think that those were just kind of Biden, I wasn't even aware I was doing that. With a practice, I started noticing that I was actually making the choices. choices, I didn't recognize when I was younger, and therefore I didn't have the choice. So who's responsible for those subtle choices about what you do with your eyes and your posture and your hand and, you know, you're all these things? I think it's, you know, you're responsible. So take responsibility to do to take personal responsibility is central to a path of liberation and freedom. It's also central to a path of love and compassion. And so how do we engage in this area of personal responsibility? How do we become more responsible is, you know, as central to the whole Buddhist enterprise. As we learn about it, as we understand it, and understand how we do it, it becomes easier and easier. At some point, things we start taking we were we had to make efforts to be responsible for start becoming second nature. And then we're back to a place where it's more feels like a natural choice, or it's because like, I'm not making the choices, or there's responsibility, but it's not personal. And you know, it's not like I'm making the choices. So it starts off, maybe we we just it's natural, just to make choices without even knowing you're making them when you're small and young. And then we go through a phase of life, and also with Buddhist practice, where we get increasingly aware that we're making the choices, it's up to us and our choice, our responsibility.

And then we engage in those in an appropriate way. And then at some point, we come to the other side of that, where it starts feeling less and less personal or starts feeling less and less. You know, some data doesn't agree denta phi with or it starts feeling like sometimes almost is like a I don't have a choice. anymore. They just think that, you know, there's no choice, it's just things are happening. But it's happening after this, the whole path of growth and development and, and taking personal responsibility for a while and to maturing in that. And then being able to cut it something else begins to take over, something else begins to, to operate, that is not so personal anymore. And free and capable. So I'd

encourage you to spend some time considering what your relationship is with this word, person, this concept of personal responsibility. And what's your attitude towards it? What's your feelings, emotional relationship to it? What are your reservations about it? How do you hold it? When you hear this word? How can you relate to and how can you engage in this topic or this practice of personal responsibility in a way that it's nourishing, meaningful, helpful, supportive, to not a burden, but actually the opposite of a burden. It's almost like you're putting down burdens by engaging in this personal responsibility. So hope that gives you something to explore. Thank you.