

# 2017-10-23 Senjo And Overcoming Separation

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## SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

So I would like to tell you a Zen story. See what you think. There was a woman, a girl named Sendo. And she had a cousin. He was named otaku. And they grew up playmates, companions, when they're kind of inseparable. And when they were quite young, the father appreciated their inseparability and somehow joke that, oh, they grew up, they we get married. Well, as they grew up, they fell in love with each other. And they thought that was the deal, they would get married. And, but then her father had other ideas, and she arranged for her to get married to someone else in the village. So the night before the wedding, the cousin Oh, to hit us, he didn't want to stay. So he got on a boat to go down river. And he was going down, boat and, and then he saw that in the dark. Because he slept at night, he saw this figure running along the banks of the river, calling out his name. And so he went over to see and it was essential, chasing after him. And so she joined him. And they continue to go down the river together and found a place for downriver where they got married and had children and they lived there for five years. Better five years sendo kind of missed her family, Mr. hometown, and asked to be taken back to see if she can ask for forgiveness for a father and somehow be reconciled. So they traveled back by boat up the river. And given the delicacy, default diplomacy needed, and this thing that Otto, left send you by the river, and he went by himself to go and talk to apologetically politely carefully with a father. And he came to the Father and He said, You know, I want to apologize that I went off with your daughter, and we've been down the river, we have two beautiful children and send you would like to come back and ask for your forgiveness. And the father said, I don't know what you're talking about. Essential never left. The night before her wedding, she got sick. And she stopped speaking and she hasn't left bed ever since. Come and talk. So they went into the house. And sure enough laying there in the bed was central. And so this was confusing. And so then, Archer said to that his brother in law said, Come with me and I'll show you. And so he's going to take her down to the dump him down to the river where send Joe was waiting. But as they were walking down the road, St. Joe was walking up. And as she was walking up, St. Joe was coming out of bed, walking out of the house down the street also. And the two scenarios walk together, and then they merged, became one. The Zen part of the story is the question, which one was the real essential? The one who was sick? Or the one who went down river?

What do you think?

See, can you give him the mic?

It feels like they both are real.

Okay, they're both real.

And they're both real. They're both different entities that the Father needed and that have shown you as well.

Okay, they're both real because they were needed by someone. Also dualities are parts of potentials for her she could go in either direction. And if she stayed with her father, she wouldn't be your true self. So that's why she stayed in bed and just had kind of a lifeless presence but she was able to fulfill her kind of higher self by following and taking a risk of leaving home. Right nice.

Have any of you been separated from yourself? Yeah, you want to say so some other? Maybe no, you know, maybe don't talk for yourself maybe talk about someone else down the street. But what are some of the what are some other ways in which people get separated from themselves?

I'm do this a lot less these days, but depending on who I'm with, or what the situation is, there was a time when I tried to do whatever.

Some I thought somebody else expected of me and be that person that they expected.

It wasn't me.

Thank you. Some other ways in which we is there another mic by the stage there you can pass them.

I find that when I'm caught up in work

this way.

I find that when I'm caught up, yeah.

Caught up in my worry and anxiety or just negative thought patterns, I feel separate from myself.

I'm truly awakened because I came from a very meager past. And I grew to work in a high powered management position. And a very well known corporate America.

And

in doing that,

it made me ill.

I suffered a stroke. I had double bypass surgery. And I told Buddha, God, I'm not ready to leave yet. So give me guidance, simply give me guidance. And he awakened my soul. My spirit made me stronger.

guided me to this place

where I'm here right now. And I just moved here a couple of weeks ago.

And in walking,

I was asking the same thing. Give me guidance.

And he led me here.

And so now I

I feel like I'm meeting so many people

that I feel a connection to spiritually. And I see, I understand why he led me here. She led me here.

And I'm truly grateful.

Great. Nice. So you were separated from yourself, but not anymore? No. Yes, right. Thank you. Some other reasons why people get separated from each other for themselves. And we can move it back down here to the

loo.

I find the idea of self compassion and our need to re establish that as a way of reconnecting ourselves

and tapping into

the

feeling of, of as you were a child and a child exists and there is no judgments and being able to go through becoming an adult And then circling back to that and finding that and reconnecting is kind of how I've personally felt a way to bring those parts back together.

Oh, and growing up, there's a loss of connection to oneself comes separate. So I think someone behind you is asking,

Well, I get separated when

I don't pay attention

to a deep inner wisdom that I have, I lose sight of that. And I get lost in, caught up in things and do things that probably are not the wisest, in my best interest.

When I'm not living my purpose, or what I'm here to do, which it's very clear, if I isolate and stay away from my network, or people who I collaborate with, then then I really feel disconnected from myself.

So the question was, how do we separate from ourselves? Sometimes, in some of the things you said, were great, but they're also kind of tame. Some people are at war with themselves. Some people have a really strong battle going on, within themselves between that which they don't want to admit that they don't somehow I've learned not to like that which they want to deny. Doesn't that also happened? Yes.

Long time ago, I was in a really bad marriage. And I would spend a few minutes every day realizing, I hate this.

I don't

like this, there is no space for me in this life. But I could only face that for a few minutes a day. And then I would go back to whatever I had to do to get through the rest of the day. And it took several years to be able to hold that realization for long enough that I could do something about it. So you were frightened by the realization, or?

I think Yeah, I was horrified.

So you pulled away? Oh, yeah. Thank you.

I think one way of separating is waking up is worth waking up. Waking up. One way, one way of separating is waking up, explained a little bit. I think sometimes it takes a big event in our life, to make us realize our place in this world. And sometimes we just walk the path and do the practice. And slowly, we come to recognize the separation from from ourselves. Yeah. So you're so waking up, we realize we have been separated or we see the separation is there is the contrast. Now, Yes, that's true. Sometimes it takes a long time before someone sees how disconnected they are or how separate or how much they're at war with themselves or holding something off at bay or there are some people who use Buddhist practice and meditation actually as a way of districts distancing themselves from what they think is painful, what is unacceptable, who they're not supposed to be. It's kind of painful to see when it's like that. Then some people I've seen, I've known people who heroically done Buddhist meditation practice. So they could stay separate. So they wouldn't have to admit they wouldn't have to look at something be here. So which one is the real central? So it's a kind of a Zen koan. So you know, when I practice colons with the Zen teachers, generally if you try to come with a logical answer you got thrown out of the room. And you have to The next day you go back and try again and you try a few hundred times, sometimes several times in a day, we'd get the chance to go with our design question and present it and then the Zen master would have rolled Bell and go. See you later. That dancer didn't work. So that that the risk of that what the query the question is traditionally posed is which one of the two is a real Central, but I think neither one are their real Central, but rather, because they're separated from each other. And it's the coming together, which makes it somehow real, each is part of each each is partial. Each is disconnected to the other part. And I see this, especially as a teacher on retreats, how many people are struggling against themselves, how many people practice live their life in such a way that they're at war with themselves or struggling against something or pretending something's not there, or trying to hold something at bay or, you know, keep it down, so it doesn't show itself. And generally, if you do mindfulness meditation, especially if you do it somewhat, you know, deeply or intensely, like on retreat, it's not sustainable. The cost and the exhaustion of doing that becomes pretty evident. And then slowly, people being settled and relax and deepen, and sometimes at the expense of having to face what's really painful, or what's really frightening. And people associate nowadays and kind of secular mindfulness. This is a critical mindfulness movement. I think, I think for many people, the association with mindfulness says that it's kind of clinically safe. That it's, you know, that it's good, it's good for your health. And that, you know, it's stress reducing, and a lot of people are stressed out, you can lose sleep better. But, and that's true in many ways. But Buddhist meditation was done more deeply for deeper purposes. That sometimes just not so pleasant, automatically, not because it's meditations fault.

But because we've been holding ourselves separate, and holding something at bay, we're pretending we're avoiding something that that is difficult. And part of the advantage of this kind of practice. And part of the purpose, among other things, is to be able to meet the parts of ourselves that we're holding at bay, there can be a whole distance, and meet and that's a whole range of things. Sometimes it's a difficult things, frightening things. And I've known people who've sat and did is peaceful stress reducing

read the New York Times and stress reducing and good for your blood, blood and everything. And I've known people who've broken out in a sweat, sitting doing this mindfully, because of what they had to face. And I've known people who have slowly opened up to some aspect of themselves. And rather than being difficult, it was some of the most beautiful parts of themselves that they disowned, that they were afraid of some of the most inspiring parts of what made their heart sing and the sense of purpose in life that they didn't, never dared admit to themselves or never, did never felt courageous enough to follow. And so this idea of sitting quietly, and being mindful, being alert to what's here, and let what's here show itself to us. Over time, we'll start seeing or feeling how we're separate how we're holding things at bay, how we're shut down, we're resisting. And rather than seeing those as a mistake, or a problem, for some people, that's the beginning of the healing, that's the beginning of the path to open up. And so it's important not to associate this practice. Only with stress reduction only with bliss, you know, use can go and meditate a lot you'll float on the clouds and have lots of friends or something nice, win lottery tickets. But But you know, I think it's a, this is meant to mature us in in real ways we become real and that path of becoming real and becoming connected. reassembling all the pieces of ourselves. For some people is an arduous task. There's so many disconnections, so many separations. There's so much to reclaim and bring together. So classically in Buddhism The practice of mindfulness is done together with the practice of concentration. And the word and the concentration practice is explicitly understood as the unification as a unification practice. And the idea of becoming unified is from the ancient times as part of the purpose of Buddhist practice, to bring all the different pieces, the desperate parts of ourselves, and bring them together, so they can all be in the same room and the same heart held together. And it requires being willing to be present for that, which is good, bad and ugly. You know, I don't know why the bad has two thirds of that. Of that saying, maybe it's just a coincidence, just sounds nice. It comes off the tongue. But maybe it's the good, bad, ugly and everything else. But the, you know, to be willing to kind of sit and kind of be present for the whole shebang, everything. And that takes a lot of courage, because we don't we were not many people are not coming to meditation, to feel unpleasant. They're coming to be pleasant to have a nicer time. And, and, yes, that's be good. But, you know, sometimes in order to grow up in order to heal in order to bring together what is the whole thing to a whole unified, whole, harmonious whole, we have this the reopening or reconnecting or, you know, can be quite difficult. take a long time, I was struck in the story of said job of the role of the parent, the Father, the parents, choices, the parents, ideas of what the child was supposed to do. And the impact that had on the child, she got disconnected from herself, she had one thing she wanted to do that was kind of her kind of more, much more Maybe her What made her heart saying and her set her sense of purpose, you thought she had this purpose to get married with this guy.

And but then there was a father's voice, others expectation of what's supposed to become ever life and if some people live under that struggle, parental expectations and what they want to do and they can make a real divide. Sometimes people give up parts of themselves to, to to live for their parents, sometimes they decide the opposite, but then there's a rupture with the family. And that's also rupture inside of oneself as well as difficult. So then how do we come together? And hold that? And how do we breathe with it? How do we form a kind of unified unification? So to bring together that which is held apart, is one way of understanding purpose of meditation. So what are you holding apart? What are you not willing to look at? What are you avoiding? The there's a story of Buddhist hermit, who live deep in the mountains. And the story goes that if you went to spend two, three days hiking into where he was, that he would have the perfect advice for you just what you needed to know. And he would assess you and see you. And so people would hike for days, three days and go all the way in and he didn't say much, but you'd come there and you tell your story. And he'd listened maybe four hours you tell your story. He was he was a great listener. It felt so good to be listened to. Some felt understood. And then he would be silent for a long time. And then he would whisper in your ear his advice. And everyone

when they heard his advice that really, I worked three days, this got this far. And then they'd hike out three days. By the time they got out they realized it was perfect. Perfect advice for them. And the thing is, uh, you know, he was considered really wise could see people and so everybody, no one was supposed to say the advice they got. So that's why I kind of had, you know, this this this mystery mysterious. But turned out he always had the same thing to everyone. All he said was, what are you avoiding? You think of that? Would you go for three days? hike three days into the mountains and have someone tell you what are you avoiding? Probably some people took that many days and that many days out to take that question seriously, and to spend that time looking and looking and asking that question. What am I Avoiding What am I avoiding? I think of mindfulness prayer synonym I have for mindfulness practice, is to be honest. In a sense, honesty is mindfulness out loud. But there's no mindfulness practice, unless we're honest with ourselves. And so it's very important. If you really want to do mindfulness practice deeply, not to do it, just to feel a little bit better not to do it only to kind of relax and take away stress or sleep better. And those are all those are certainly worthwhile doing it for those purposes. But if you want to really do this Buddhist mindfulness related and taste the power of it, then you want to see it as a synonym of being honest. really honest with yourself, what's really going on here? What are you avoiding? What are you afraid of? And also, what do you most want? Some people are afraid to ask that question in themselves. What do you most want? What would be the most important thing for you? And one reason keeps some people are afraid of that question, or the answer is, they might want to change what they're doing.

Maybe the life you've chosen is not the job. Maybe that's not the life that makes your heart sing. Maybe it's not really what you most want to do. So what happens if you sit with the truth of that? and honest about it? Maybe you would recognize that if you're doing a life, that's not what you most want to do, because of security, because of social pressures? Or because of ambition. If you're really honest about that, and sit, sit with that honesty. Do you feel the separation? Do you feel that not being connected to yourself? And if you're not connected yours yourself? Which one is the real you? Which one is that you know which one? And in my interpretation of a story, neither of you are the real one. How about that? That kind of radical? You're not real? If you know if you live that divide? Or what happens if you're honest about it, and sit with it? What would you do? What does it take courage? Do you have courage? Does it take risk? Is the risk worth it? Can you listen more deeply? Can you be creative? Can you find what you most want? Can you find what you're most trying to avoid about yourself? Can you find what is most painful inside of you and hold it in kindness, hold it in love. One of the one of the kind of instructions that are sometimes given in this kind of meditation, Buddhist meditation world, that's kind of a little bit like a variation of mindfulness is to sit in the middle of your fire, sit quietly is still in the middle of your pain. And be kind. Be still in the middle of where it hurts. And just be kind. That's all see what happens. Sit in the middle of your string and behind, sit in the middle of your life and be still and be honest. What would your like life look like? If you were whole different pieces all came together. So that's the purpose of Buddhist meditation, at least one of the purposes and someone who took the idea of being awakened, we awaken to who we are the you know, to really become ourselves. And the paradox is that if we're no longer divided, let's be really truthful and be present in this full way and still the way that we realize that one of the ways we are divided from ourselves separate from ourselves is by being conceited. That's something we think we most think we're This is me, Boy, am I me boy am I ever hear being caught up in too strong ideas of self too strong ideas of me myself in mind is paradoxically a way to separate from yourself. And a way to reconnect involves a certain kind of dropping of conceit, a certain kind of dropping of strong, referential concern. And so the excessive interest in becoming whole, I'm going to become whole, I am going to heal all this division. If it's too strong or too conceited, that effort, I'm going to be the most non conceited person on the block. It actually exasperates the division. So this is partly why the CTF sits still in the middle of it, be quiet still,



and be honest. Because then there's not the movement of conceit and that stillness. And then things begin to line up, things begin to come together, things begin to reveal themselves.

It's a wonderful process. And I like to, I like to think of this process as a process of maturation, becoming spiritually mature. Sometimes, lately, I kind of prefer that to the idea of becoming liberated or enlightened, or these kind of very idealistic kind of big ideas. To me, the idea of becoming mature, spiritually mature, human nature, just seems like it has a lot more hearts in it a lot more flesh, and this whole enterprise. So I hope these little words of today in the story are nice for you. The I'm actually in the middle of teaching a two week meditation retreat. And somehow the experience, it's so deep the experience, people have so connected, this healing process that happens, they're so powerful. That, you know, that's mostly what's on my mind. So I thought, I've tried to share a little bit of that, with you, as I'm being a witness of people at the retreat, doing this work of coming together and meeting themselves sometimes meeting themselves for the first time, perhaps after a long time. So we have about, you know, 10 minutes or so. And if you have any questions or comments about anything, you're welcome to ask a question or comment or

I have an add a comment. I just have something that Matthew Brent silver said, at one of the retreats as he was quoting somebody else but

it he said, meditation, come for the peace, stay for the war.

On that

note, could you say a little bit more about the difference between mindfulness and concentration?

If you take a snowglobe and shake it, and then hold it still. All the snow settles to the bottom. And then the globe is clear. And you can see clearly what's their concentration is a settling of the snow snow. And mindfulness is the clarity to see what's there.

So we sit, we sit, we do concentration in order to quiet the mind enough, stabilize the mind enough so that the work of that mind's eye can see clearly what's actually here. What's going on. That makes sense.

So concentration is the effort or the skill of the work is the work of meditation, whereas mindfulness is the attitude, or the

well, the two can be done as separate meditation practices. Some people only do practices that still calm settle the mind. And that could be quite nice. Some people only do mindfulness where they're what they're using the ability for the mind mind's eye, or knowledge or awareness or mindfulness, to see what's going on here to really see clearly what's happening. But they ideally they work together, because it's hard to see clearly, if there's a lot of snow in the globe, right? Because it's just all cloudy or something. And so it's good to settle because then it becomes clear. Or it's like mindfulness is like having a telescope or you're looking at the moon. But if you're holding in your hands, it's wildly concentrations, putting the telescope on a tripod. So we put our Mindfulness on the tripod of concentration, and then it's stable, and it's doesn't wobble doesn't shake. And we can see much more penetratingly. Thank you.

Let's have someone appears or hasn't spoken yet. Yes.

So concentration is let go of the thoughts, there is no flake. And then you can see clear.

So a little bit louder. Concentration is letting go of thoughts,

or the thoughts, the cuff coming down all the time on you. And then when you Okay, this is my time, I'm gonna let go everything, I can see clear, Why be something like this.

So because it requires a concentration is having all the thoughts settle down. And then mindfulness is seeing who you are. Yeah, that's a good one. So what else is stripped back?

I'd like to get your thoughts on this relationship between becoming a whole self and this identification. So say, for example, I'm moved by desire. And this desire could be for something for goodwill, a status, just desire. And what what's what's except that it's a good desire, I'm going to try to do something good in the world. Sometimes the path isn't so clear cut, you have many choices to make, in order to pursue this desire. A lot of these a lot of these choices are on par. They're not necessarily better or worse, thrown on par. So then you're one one might be paralyzed by all these different choices, but they have this burning desire to do good in the world. So reflecting on this desire, perhaps through mindfulness practice, you might be able to understand what it is, in fact, that's moving you in practice causing you distress, when you see all these choices proliferate for you. But isn't the act of observing that desire, also an activity certificate, this identification with that desire? So isn't through this separation of that desire that really defines you? And also this observation, that desire, where it's itself coming?

So where it was last? What's the last thing you said?

Where does the whole self come in? I guess,

yeah. So, this identification, there is a ways in which we, if I understand the word, identification, here, we have to define it is some people will, will define themselves, by desire, by certain thoughts, by roles by all kinds of things we define ourselves by. But often when we define ourselves by it, people also get attached to that definition. So if I have a desire to do good in the world, if I identify that desire, now I'm at now I am the world's Savior, you're going to get you're probably going to get in trouble. With such delusions of grandeur. If I'm the one who's going to be the hero, I'm the I'm the great one, I'm the good one. It's not necessary to have that. It's not necessarily define oneself any way at all. in pursuing a healthy desire, just to have a desire, I don't be the one who desires. So the dis identification. So as soon as I identify, I'm the one who has this great desire. That's the separation. Because it's not really real. It's like the, it's like, here's the analogy I like for this identification thing, is you hike down to the river, you take a bucket, and you sweep up a bucket full of water. And then you go walking back to the village, and you say, look, here's the river. So, you know, you we sweep up, I'm the one I'm the world's Savior. I'm the one who has desire. I'm the one who's you know, worked for the charities or something. And what you've done is you've scooped up some part of the stream of life and say, This is who I am. And that happened to me when that's a similar thing. When I was in college for a short while, I decided to be an art major. And that was all fine. I enjoyed that a lot. And then, and then the special day came where I decided I was an artist. And that was the last day I did art. Because somehow that then that I could feel my motivation was to be an audio an artist because of the identity. So that I became separated from that part of me the creative part and kind of locked it up. So at least in the Buddhist language identification, defining ourselves by things, that's what creates separation. So if we can step back and be mindful enough to see how we've identified how we've been caught by that desire, we realize that's extra it's possible to have a healthy desire without then using it to define who we are. Does that answer your question? You think? More or less good luck. So thank you all for coming and



sitting here today. I hope it was nice and it was nice for me to come here from the retreat. It was kind of like a no sweet for me. So man up hole or at least look at what you're avoiding. Thank you.