

2017-12-18 Like A Lotus In Muddy Water

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SPEAKERS

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You've been really dirty, you know, you go out, rolling the mud, caked with mud and grime and dirt. And it kind of feels pretty good to take a shower and get kind of a reset and be cleansed and clean and kind of fresh and ready to go back out into the world. In a sense, I think of meditation sometimes as being a kind of like a reset button where some of the things that are sticking to us kind of fall off. And then we're in a fresh place to go back into our world and address it and deal with it as appropriate. And sometimes it's very helpful to have that reset, or that cleansing or that purification process. It's very easy for our thoughts, our feelings, emotions, to be sticky to us, I've certainly had thoughts that are recurring, and just keep staying swirling around certain concerns I have, and they're still, you know, I'd rather they weren't there. But they're kind of sticky. And they seem to have a lot of momentum of their own. Or I've had emotions that are kind of swirling around inside. And they're kind of like just, they're, they're churning and, and if I go about my daily life, sometimes they just the thoughts, the rumination is kind of still there, and they're going to be sticky and I keep reviewing, reviewing what's going on or thinking what's going on. And remembering what happened or something, or the emotions are swirling around my heart or in my chest. And there's a way in which there's, you know, I don't think I'm doing it, but it feels like I'm just kind of like, you know, keep spinning though, spinning the, the carousel, you know, it just keeps going and going. But, and some of these emotions that we have things happen to us in our life that are often quite difficult. We have. So we have some, it's natural to think about them and be preoccupied with them. The difficulties or challenges can be rest in our hearts and our emotional body. And it's natural for them to stay there or be there. And sometimes they have a lot of momentum. And so you can't just expect them to just sit down and just push the meditation button. And that's it. It's zero to 60. And to zero seconds or something. The it's kind of like if you go for exercise, or you go climbing steep hill or something. And you are really out of breath. I bike home from here, sometimes and when I came home, I got a quite a spike up the steep hill. And when I came home and put the bike away and climate off steps, turtle house, walk into the kitchen, my wife's thought was good, what's wrong with you. Just out of breath, I just biked up the hill, in the dark and it took a while to a couple of minutes for me to kind of regain my breath. Because you know, you don't put the bike away and push the reset button. And then you know, you're happy ever after. There's a momentum, you know, by physiological momentum that's going and so it takes a while for it to kind of dissipate, and I get my breath back and all that. So the same thing with some emotional impact of some things, some things, the cognitive impact of thoughts and all that.

But meditation practice to sit down and meditate can be a reset, it can be for one, one, it's a wonderful place, if we can to sometimes let these things dissipate. And they sometimes can dissipate faster, if we're courageous, if we're willing to sit in the middle of what's happening with our sort of feelings or thoughts, and not to push them away, but really allow ourselves to feel them. And sometimes we had to feel what is unpleasant, what we don't want to feel and sometimes we want to meditate in order to feel

better. And so maybe we're trying to kind of bypass them or something. And oddly enough, sometimes you feel better by facing them by being really present. And the art of mindfulness meditation involves learning how to sit in the middle of what's happening with whatever sense of ease or calm that's available. It isn't like you have to manufacture comedies. But to kind of look and see, can you sit still quiet, and just allow yourself to be in the middle of what's happening, and feel it and sense it. And then if you can feel or sense or be present what's happening without adding to it. So without picking up the, those thoughts getting involved in them, the thoughts might still be going. But there's a difference between letting them kind of flow as if, as if they're kind of like emptying out, versus picking them up and getting involved with them. And, you know, thinking them better. Or, try to figure out how to get them to go away, or how to problem solve, or, or try to think of a better answer to the problem you had earlier, the difficulty, they don't get involved. Same thing with the emotions, to, to really feel them. But don't try not to be bothered by them, the best you can be bothered means you don't pick them up, you don't attack them, you don't hold on to them, you don't cherish them, you don't validate them, you don't criticize them, just let them be. And what happens is the momentum begins to dissipate. Because we're not feeding it, we're not pushing it along. So there's emotional momentum, there's mental momentum that we have in meditation is a place to let the momentum roll out, let the let it kind of empty out, if we can get kind of a stop. I like to say for myself, I like the expression getting out of the way of them. But, but not no longer spinning them. So then things begin to settle and settle slowly. And then there's a kind of falling away or shedding all the stickiness of it all. And we can it can sometimes serve feeling cleansed, sort of feeling centered or settled here without the the, the compulsion sticking to us the compulsivity capacity of our thoughts and concerns and desires and fears and worries and angers and all that. And I think of it as a process of turning being turned inside out. Because, or going from the outside in. Because oftentimes when we're spinning and thoughts, and spinning in our emotional lives, it has a lot to do with what's happening in our wider world outside of us, what happened to us what people said, what people did, what we have to do, what happened. And there's it's very often the mind is kind of, we're outside of ourselves, or we're not really centered or grounded or connected in a deep way or ourselves. And so it is a kind of way of being disconnected or being out in the world out there. And the process of meditation is to come and be centered on the world in here. It's interesting that the Buddha and that in his language.

He more often than not when you use the word world, in the Indian language, the word is *loca*. Instead, when it used more often than not when to use the word world. He specifically referred to our, the world, our personal world, our internal world, here is where you find the world in this very body here. So to kind of settle and come into this world. And it's not just like you're leaving the world behind. But you're coming to the genesis of your world to the beginning of your world. And so to really be able to settle to get to reset to kind of be in the shower and get clean. Then you're you're you you kind of find your world here, you settle in this world here. And then you can you come out of the shower clean and you're ready for the world. You come out of your meditation and you're and then you really see how important it is that your world begins in your heart Your world begins and how you react and respond and think and do and the advantage of the reset button or the purification process is that it gives us sometimes it gives us It gives us a chance to see where our world begins. So if I sit quiet if I go you know, busy active, you know, life and kind of frazzled and upset about something and I'm driving down the road and Someone cuts in front of me, I might get angry. And I'm just in the anger. And I just can't. That's the world I'm in. I'm kind of caught up in the world and the anger and the momentum and feeling. But if I really managed to reset myself, and I'm here, where I know that this is where the world begins is here, I don't allow the world to begin out there. I allow my world to begin here, then when that car cuts me off, I see that I, that is a upwelling of anger, that anger is born in me. And maybe I have a choice whether I get on the anger bandwagon. So there it is, and I let it go right then in there. Because I see the Genesis is here. Even I'm busy going around and upset and you know, spinning around and the world is sticky.

To me, the external world is sticky, I'm sticking to it, then I'll say, then, the person who cuts me off, they are the origin of the world. My world begins with them, if I'm sticking to it, if I'm preoccupied with it, caught in it. But to sit quietly and still. And who kind of shared the external world for a little while, take a shower, meditation shower, then you then there's a big, and I mean, maybe not all at once. But slowly, we get the same claim. It's, I think it's a powerful idea that our world begins and begins now. Our world begins in us here. And now. We don't have to let our world begin out there, what other people do. And I find that really delightful thing to sit and quiet and meditate and have this reset, and be able to step into the world, even to not to ignore the issues of my life. But to be able to address them in a fresh way. And to address them with some sense of, of freedom. And some sense of being a little bit. I don't know the right word is expression is because I was going to say a little bit in charge of my life. But usually in our kind of spiritual world, we don't like the idea of being in charge. So I don't know, maybe it needs to be resurrected. You know, a little bit in charge of your life because it begins here, you're tracking yourself, you know, what's the responses are you see how things arise from here, and you see, we have a choice. And we stay, stay, you know, we don't build up the stickiness. So I don't know if this little talk makes sense for you. The idea of taking a shower, or being purified or being for some people. It's not this nice, sweet, refreshing shower kind of thing.

It's like stepping into the shower, but into the fire. And sometimes it really feels that way we sit down to meditate and like everything's burning or like, it's so hot and so difficult. And some of the emotions are so intense, that sometimes it's we're burning off the stickiness rather than just taking a nice, sweet meditation shower. It's the meditation fire. So all kinds of ways in which it works in different days, different ways. But what they have in common all these ways, is a willingness to sit in the middle of our life. Sit in the middle of the fire sitting middle, the water sits in the middle of the love, we feel sit in the middle of the hate we feel to really sit in the middle of it to see if the stickiness can fall away. The momentum can kind of dissipate, and then kind of be turned inside out and come back come out again. You know for new fresh way in a centered way in a balanced way in a clear way where we're kind of present but not caught. And the image that's in Buddhism that's used for this is the Lotus and muddy water. So a lotus flower. Apparently sometimes they grow out of muddy water and grow in waters but sometimes they guess they do they grow out of muddy water. So the mud. muddy water nourishes and feeds the Lotus, lotus flower blossoms out of the top of the water. The mud doesn't stick to the pedal and so the beautiful white pedal shines kind of pure. And so to be like Lotus and muddy water means to be rooted in the world and not to leave it behind. But don't have anything stick to you. And then you shine for the world. So and this little talk with them, then maybe we can take some questions if you have won some or some protests or is, is some of you, if you drive up and down Highway 101, here in Redwood City, some years ago, there was a curious thing that appeared on the edge of the freeway. There's a kind of a, I don't know, like an odd little office block building there and side of the freeway, and there's a parking lot for the office building kind of thing. And office, that parking lot kind of abuts the freeway. And one day there appeared this Big Buddha. And the Buddha is something like, I don't know it's back maybe it could it be 10 foot tall, some of you seen it. 10 foot or sitting meditating. What? It's a 10 foot, you've seen it right? Yeah, it's a pretty big, and it's up on kind of a platform is kind of high up. So it looks down on the freeway, as if the Buddha has nothing better to do than to watch a one on one. And so you know, I've seen it periodically and curious about it, and never gone to look at it. And then some friends of mine went over, take a look with this thing. And so you can go look at it too. You drive over there. And it turns out there is kind of a when a platform turns out to think it's a cinder block kind of little No, for the platform is the right word, but kind of a box, I guess or it turns out it's kind of like a one room thing. And it's a one to one side. It's open. And so you can see what's in a little cinderblock little thing. And it's trash cans. So under the Buddha is the trash. He sitting on the trash. I think it's fantastic.

So, you know in India, it was the Lotus growing out of muddy water. in Redwood City, it's the Buddha sitting above the trash. So I don't know what metaphor you like for your yourself what maybe have another one. But my trash, stickiness quietness, attachments, preoccupations, fears, conceit, all this stuff. That's the stuff of we sit with to sit in sit above ground of where to sit and all that let this meditation be the reset. So now if you have anything you want to say or be great to hear from you, your turn, I've done my job.

I have a question. Oh, that's really loud. I have a question go. When you're when you go to meditate, and you kind of your mind is like a cat like when it gets really scared and grabs onto your face. Like it's so tight, like you just go into meditation and all of the unease and all the thoughts are just so wrapped around you so tight. That Do you have any are what is your way? Maybe to unhook a little like their claws, like they're just totally a grip on you. Is there a way to break through that and somebody said try metta like just try a metta practice but I didn't know if you had any there's two things that I'm inclined to do in a situation like that.

One is that I metaphorically go sit right in the middle of the gripping this I just go right as close and intimate as gonna be with almost like I imagined my awareness I put my awareness right smack in the middle of where it's strongest. And then I sit quietly and look around for me when I do that, I mean that is great. I'm gonna try now with with having heard you say that because maybe it's a fear thing that happens. But I what would happen when I have tried that it's you know, the old like the 1950s tin tops that used to press Make them spin faster. Do you know what I'm like? Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. So you press it and then like got like it would spin, spin spin, and it would start slowing down. But you could keep pressing pumping that and would spin faster. My mind if when I start slowing, even if I start slowing down, I'll catch a thought, my mind will just give it some more pumps, and it keeps spin back up. And it's like, sounds painful. It's so bad. I mean, it I mean, it's very, it's good.

Have you ever ever have you ever taken it to the end? That's, that's my other because I'm like, I'm trying to envision this instead, as meditation being, you know, on the grapevine going to LA

man halfway ask how fast can it go could just do

I know, keep it maybe I'll try keep going and play that played out. You have to get to the end of the record, okay.

I'm just gonna explode in the corner one night, you'll be like, Oh, my god, there's Morgan all over the wall.

So I don't you know, I don't know your situation well enough to advise you. So you have to kind of be a little careful what I'm saying that way. But there is some times when it's appropriate, to just let the mind play something out only by playing it out to the end, can you really understand it really let it you know, and sometimes, sometimes we have to reach rock bottom even. And, you know, and that's the whole process, you have to kind of do that there are times when nothing else works. But just to kind of reach rock bottom, it's hopeless, and you give up. And you've been told that you should give up, like, oh, and you do you have done that I just give up, give up and nothing works. Until I just kind of just plays itself out. And so to speak, you know, just crash and burn. And then I finally surrender. So sometimes it's not pretty. So that's, you know, maybe that's discouraging to hear. But another thing you can do is find your breathing. And take a few couple of minutes to really kind of get into the rhythm of your breathing. And then after you've been with your breathing for a while, then either either stay with a breath, if it's working, if you've kind of hooked into the breathing, and sometimes really getting into the breath and

avoiding all that constriction. And not being concerned with it kind of just letting it be like, imagine that the head of the person next to you is constructed and you're not gonna it's like you're none of your business. And just stay with the breathing, that kind of complete ignoring of it. Sometimes, it can let it begin dissipating, because as you said, sometimes when we stay focused on it, we're so self conscious and self involved, there's something in it, that we do actually tighten up and spin it out. So sometimes it's really useful just to ignore it as much as you possibly can. And then yes, maybe I don't want to take too much but that the hybrid of those two is to find your breathing be with a little bit. And then are rather than feeling the gripping a breathe through it, like a massage. And sometimes that breathing through can help kind of loosen the grip. I wish you well with it sounds painful. Someone else

Any of you feel that you had a little bit of a shower coming here today or a little bit of a reset? Yeah. Anybody want to talk a little bit about that? And what that was like?

You had it yet please turn it on. It's a green button on the side, or the button on the side that turns green. My teacher Oh, seven their name at the time right now. But she is she talks in terms of taking a three Beth three breath retreat. You're wonderful. And I really like that. And that's really useful in daily life. We know in the middle of whatever's going on. Just three breaths sometimes can do. Sometimes a mini reset.

Sometimes do one breath.

Do one breath what I do is I off if I can. I take a deep breath and then as I breathe in and breathe out I try to relax my belly. That's sometimes a very interesting way of getting our perspective on what's happening, not be caught in it.

So, recently, I have been trying to switch a little and do a little more. Not I wouldn't call it concentration practice. I don't think I'm there. But more just calming practice, as opposed to more the Andrea style of whatever is arising following that. And it reminded me because that's, that was helpful. I'm like calming down a little bit. And it reminded me that these different tools are, it kind of depends where you are as to which tool you need to use. It was like, Oh, yeah, that that was a better tool for where I am

right now. Great. I think it's fantastic that you see that. And one of the nice things about doing different meditation practice, like sometimes doing a more mindfulness practice, sometimes more common practice, is that you get there'll be skills that a little bit skilled at them. And as you become skilled at them, you can better use them at the right time when they're most needed.

Yeah, figure out which one is which. Yeah, yeah. The other thing I was reminded, hearing the I love that analogy of a cat caught on you, that is just that that totally works. It reminded me of you're letting the story run out of something that I had forgotten was really useful. I was back when I was in college, that I had to have this really difficult conversation with my mother. And I was like, dreading it. And it would just kind of keep going over and over and over and over and over, you're like practicing it ahead of time. And people would say, Oh, we shouldn't do that, you know, you just go in there and wing it or whatever. But what I found was, eventually, by practice, it was an essence that was practicing, I hadn't realized that I finally, like got that inner confidence to have the conversation, and then it totally dropped away. And then when the conversation came up, it really didn't have to be a conversation, because I was, I guess, like, my body language was communicating whatever. And so it was a non issue. But I didn't realize that sometimes the mind doing this is just, I don't know, building up the confidence to do whatever it needs to deal with them. Okay, maybe I'll share that.

Thank you. The idea of confidence is interesting one I have in terms of meditation practice, because one of the functions of meditation practice is to evoke an inner sense of confidence. And the stronger and more are more engaged, the person is the meditation practice, it tends to unleash certain kind of psychological and physiological physiological forces within us. And one of the unleashed forces forces is confidence. And to be able to sit and record reset not just be calm and soft or something, but to be calm, but also feel a very powerful confidence in this being here. And a full embodied clear away, can put it get a create a very different perspective for all kinds of things that we have to do in our life, we can bring that confidence with us. And that the confidence sometimes makes it easier to drop some of our preoccupations

here in the front.

Along the same lines, I had a difficult encounter with a colleague today. And while I was meditating, I was thinking of different ways to deal with it. And then I just decided to trust future me. And I didn't have to have the conversation. And then what happened then there's those thoughts faded away, faded away, it really felt like sort of dry, caked mud flaking off. Nice. So trusting the future, you want a nice little expression? Yes, please. She has one.

I had a question about something that you had brought up, like a week or so ago. But you're mentioning once that you notice that a lot of thoughts would be associated with like physical sensations, and sometimes by focusing on the sensation the thought would kind of dissipate. Ever since you said that I have been experiencing that a lot. Like every time there's a thought there's kind of like a it's usually like some tensing in the face like your iron jaws and like that. And I'm just curious, like, does the thought come first?

Or does the sensation come first

fantastic. I love it. When people ask that question and people start noticing it, it's very good mindfulness to see that it can work either way. Sometimes the thought comes first, and then the sensation, the body, sometimes it's a sensation arises, and then the thought and a thought, and you can watch very fast thing to watch the connection, how they, how one is a condition for the other. So, you know, I sit here, and suddenly there's a there's an itch, or is it and, and then I have thoughts that it must be cancer.

I sit here and I'm very contented, happy and, and you know, the heater goes on. And then I start having heater thoughts. But then I can have a thought, minding my own business, you know, watching my breath and just quiet the content, and then unbidden to me, comes up. You know, you know how some 45 years ago, how my high school sweetheart betrayed me to such a start to, you know, the thought floats by God is quite innocent. You know, it's this this flooring bias, you know, it's no charge and the thought, but just this happens to be, you know, thoughts are easy, cheap. It's suddenly it comes, I don't know, why did it come? I don't know why I came. And then I'm all hot. My body just starting warmer and warmer and tighter and tighter. So then you see the thought came first in the body sensation. So it's interesting to watch both directions.

And have you noticed, like, patterns between thoughts and the physical manifestation?

a pattern,

like for example, you know, I feel like for me most of time, it's just like, most of the physical sensations are not in the body. It's more just like, a lot in the head. It's like your neck and things like that. Your face.

And I haven't found like an association between something that's positive and like something clenching or whatever, but like, you feel like there should be a pattern? I don't know if I'm, like overthinking it. But

yeah, I think for different people, there are different patterns. So some people their thinking is very much like, sometimes certain kinds of thoughts are manifested around the eyes, sometimes in the jaws, sometimes in the chest. And various kinds of thoughts have different places, maybe depending on what emotions they come with. And their intensity and, and kind of kind of the drive or the motivation behind them. So rather than I mostly what I want to say is in response to you is, yes, there can be patterns can be. And so for you, you can have to discover yours. And as you discover yours, you'll become wiser, because you'll know where to pay attention and how to be with it. And it's actually quite useful to notice the common patterns.

Just keeps

what I was noticing something tonight, I've been using the concentration practice of counting my breath up to 10. And then and then going backwards. And I found it really, really helpful. And But recently, I've been thinking, well, maybe I'm getting a little bit too dependent on that. So what happens if I don't do that? And so tonight was a good example of where I wasn't doing that, like I usually do. And some very unpleasant sticky thoughts that I really didn't want to indulge in. It all started emerging. And I first I say, Well, I don't want to go there. I don't want to go there. And then I was bouncing all over and I said, Okay, back to counting the breath. And then all of this, then you know all that distraction just started falling, falling away. Nice.

So that's nice. That's nice. So sometimes the process of taking a shower reset, for some people can go faster if we do a more of a concentration practice than a mindfulness practice. So counting the breath, you're just really staying with the breath. And then not allowing yourself to wander away can make a big difference that way. But sometimes what happens is that you can do concentration practice as an avoidance practice, and think that the point of practice is is only to get calm only to get reset. And mindfulness practice, that is part of what can happen. But for really, you know, as the kind of their full advantage of mindfulness practice comes not when we only try to get a result, like get a reset or get calm or avoid the difficulties. But we also then learn how to face the difficulties and sit in the middle of them. And it's possible, I don't know your situation at all, maybe you're doing just the right thing. But I've known people in similar situation to where they had a really big need to stop distracting themselves from the distractions, stop avoiding it by getting calm or getting concentrated, but really mean the fact that certain things keep reappearing certain thought patterns and concerns, it's really time to take a good look at those. And part of mindfulness practice is return to look directly at them. And so this instructions to go and really feel and see what's going on, and then metaphorically sit in the middle of it, then you get a little bit of combination of both worlds to sit quietly in the middle is a little bit of a common concentration practice, but put a shelf in the middle of it, then you have the connection to it, you start seeing what's going on, look around.

So maybe this can be the last one at least.

I was stuck in some sticky thoughts during this meditation, and was sort of drifting along with them. And then miraculously, I came up with a fantasy solution to this problem. And then, ironically, a set of circumstances that doesn't even exist arose where suddenly there was a problem with my fantasy. And I had to have a good laugh about that internally, because because, you know, it's just so ridiculous. But also it to your point, it shows that I was putting the problem out there or the issue out there rather than putting myself in the driver's seat, so to speak. And it was all having to do with what other people were

saying and doing rather than what I what I was experiencing what my feelings were and my perspective.

So you're caught up in the external world, your world began out there. The way I'm talking makes sense. And to reset, so you can begin here again, until I said, so much better, we're there with the rest of the world, the world out, there will be a lot better. If you can have your world began here and yourself. Because then we're not reactive to the world or caught in the world. And then you know, we can be involved in the world in profound ways in meaningful ways. But not caught in it. So I'll end with a little quote from the Buddha. Where he describes someone who lives in the world where their world begins here in themselves. He calls that a wise person. And a person who is wise, is someone who's concerned with the welfare of themselves, the welfare of others, the welfare of self and others, and the welfare of the whole world. So to do this movement of turning yourself inside out to really sitting here and coming back and sitting here and letting the world drop away your concerns with the world drop away, is not an abandonment of the world. But it's a kind of a preparation to come back in the world, without being stuck in it without being able to be concerned and hopefully contribute to the world. And as we get to the end of 2017. And soon then days and get longer again, it's a wonderful thing, to spend a little bit of time reflecting and considering having an intention, having a wish being a wise person who's not just concerned with oneself. Not just concerned with others, but concerned with self, self and others, others and self, the whole world kind of in all directions. And I hope very much that this meditation practice that we do here We'll increase the number of people in the world who are trying to improve their world improve birth our kindness and care. Thank you