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SPEAKERS

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An interesting and maybe evocative analogy is that of a magician, and the magic trick, if the magic trick is quite good, and kind of spectacular, some of us will be mesmerized by it. And we'll keep wanting to see it again that again, like how did that happen or what goes on and, and each time we each time it happens it's kind of like fascinating. But if the magician actually shows how it's done, then we're not so interested in seeing again, the kind of you know, we lose our interest. So, one of the magic tricks that our mind does, has to do with desire and desires are very important part of human life. Probably human life on in general way would not exist in any kind of meaningful way without desire. But the mind plays all kinds of tricks with desire and magic tricks that we get fooled and seduced and in awe and caught up in desires. And so part of the aspect of Buddhist practice is to become wise about desire. And we've become wise about desire by studying it by becoming familiar with it. And that's one of the purposes of mindfulness practice, is to start paying attention more carefully, not only to our life in general, but in particular, to pay careful attention to desires when they arise. To understand how they work, and eventually understand the magic trick that might come along with them. The magic trick that maybe keeps us seduced in them or caught in them or reactive to them. And if we can see how that works, or see something about the nature of desire and not be fooled by it, then some desires will lose interest in and some desires will learn to appreciate and value and maybe make them you know, important part of our lives in a good way. So desire is to be studied through learned about. And one of the things to keep in mind as we look at desire is that for some people desires are continuous. And they are the analogy in Buddhism is a monkey swinging from one branch to another in the forest, that just as the monkey grabs one branch, the other arm is swinging to grab the next and so the mind will get one desire and then move on to the next one before that one's really taken in. And not a few people have discovered that you know that they've had a strong burning desire for something and finally is fulfilled and And then they're already in the middle of or having fulfilled the middle of getting what they want. They're thinking about the next desires tomorrow more. Sometimes the mind cannot be addressed or content with what it has, because of the momentum of desiring more other things. Remember, when I was a little kid, I was probably eight or nine. I really, really, really wanted something for Christmas. And my parents were not so inclined to get it. I think because it was a plastic machine gun or something like that. Or plastic robot I remember so well anymore. I remember really wanting it. My parents not wanting to get it to me. So then they got it for me anyway because I really wanted it. And my interest in this thing didn't, didn't last beyond even to the end of Christmas Day or something. It's just they know I just kind of sat there in the room and was there Use again but it was it was so important you know to have it didn't it was you know the magician had done the trick and I had fooled for hours I fell for it. The and you know so they can be insistent and ongoing and come from a lack of contentment are just come from and just kind of the incessant kind of flow of which desires can come so easily. And it might be interesting to reflect that important part of human life is eating food and being hungry and wanting food is I would say basically, it can be a healthy and important part of life. But don't eat all the time.

And I hope you're not only thinking about wanting food, non stop throughout the whole day that makes life a little difficult and kind of truncates it and limits it. You know, it's there's a time and place to one food time place to eat food, but not all the time. So the same thing with desire, there's a time in place for desire, but not all the time. And one of the functions of meditation practice is to is many functions are one of the important ones is to give give us a palpable experience of being without desire, where the especially the ordinary desires of our life are not present. And that's not meant to necessarily be critical of desire, all desire, but it's nice to have the experience of not having them and some people are quick to want to defend them when they hear this, but we're just talking about a temporary stop and know it's a little bit challenging for some people. The idea of having a vacation workaholics but you You know, it's good to have vacation, or it's good to sleep at night, if you you know, and not be caught up in your desire, some people can't fall asleep because they're caught in their desires. It's good to have a break from these things. And what happens in meditation is a high quality can be a very high quality break, very high quality break, because because desires are kind of incessant or continuous. And meditation can show that it's hard to see that without some high quality attention to really kind of slow down and pay attention to what goes on. And we can merrily go along our life and we're kind of basically I shouldn't say we, since I don't know about you, but I think there's probably a few of you who maybe who are a little bit primitive preoccupied with your thoughts as you go through here and go through your You know, go through your day. And, and you know, and new things have been in new desires happen and we're so focusing on what we want or what we don't want our desires, what's happening or thoughts that we don't pay much attention to the drive to have those thoughts. And there isn't that kind of deep subjective kind of introspection. meditation can provide that mindfulness, where we stop and one of the surprises that some people have with meditation is how much they think. They say that it's the first important insight is the insight that your minds out of control with thought just they just incessant and we try to come back to the breath we try to focus on something and the mind has other ideas and will take us off into our thoughts and come back and it's surprising some people are shocked at how much their mind veers off, gallops off into thoughts and how difficult it is to really be centered and quiet here. That's an insight that's beginning to see the trick how the magician works and how we get pulled into that world. And sometimes we have to see that really really well. It's not a mistake that a mine does that and it's not wrong that it does that you're not bad because of it. But um, but you know, you are being fooled by the magic show. And so if you want to stop being fooled by it, you want to study it and really see it clearly. And sometimes it takes a lot of seeing a lot of time to understand this trick and how we get seduced by these thoughts, what drives them and, but one of the insights to have is we start seeing how incessant that thinking can be, is it a high percentage of thoughts could be seen as arising out of some kind of desire, they represent a wanting something, both in terms of wanting something and not wanting it, negative desire and, and there's actually a lot more desiring going on. In human minds, then simply wanting ordinary things in life. And so you can kind of the flavor of desire, the kind of or the quality, desire kind of infuses even our most subtle kind of thinking. So when we come to meditate, it's not just stopping to think about surface desires. But it's the start seeing the underlying, letting the quieting down the underlying desires, that are fueling even our thinking. And, and as we sit in Quiet, quiet the mind, we start kind of going through layers of the mind and see more and more subtle ways in which desire operates.

And there's a whole range of desires, which we probably call subconscious, that are operating, but we usually don't have much contact with them and aware of awareness of them. And those desires, even though there's subconscious that we don't necessarily know them are influencing the show influencing how we see how we perceive our bias our preferences What we look at what we know what we're what we're interested in, influencing our desires. And so as we sit and quiet the mind, the subconscious layers slowly becomes revealed. One of the areas of this subconscious desire has to do with desires

about self, self identity, self promotion, self representation. Now we want to represent ourselves delusions of grandeur of you know, kind of stories about how great I am I'm going to be something or I wanted some or two illusions of what's the opposite of grander delusions of what? louder? delusions of inferiority. That's the good one that probably wasn't quite I thought that'd be better one, worthlessness delusions of worthlessness. Hope you hear the word delusion head of it. delusions of grandeur, delusions of grandeur, delusions of worthlessness, you know, the mind kind of spins, this magic show spins, all these magic thoughts that we get hooked into, and we believe and, and so anyway, so, these desires and they come along and even even the delusions of worthlessness can be fueled by certain kinds of desires, when one of them is this desire to be something, to be someone, and to have that frustrated or take it away from us, or be criticized, can be very difficult and kind of translates to all kinds of ideas about ourselves. And so, this desire to be someone and then more subtly, even the desire to be turns out to be a desire to desire to exist, you know, kind of one or more dramatic form, it takes his desire to be alive, stay alive desire not to die, I mean, seems like pretty basic human desire. To have, and that's pretty deep in there, you know, it's kind of helps us stay alive. And if we want to stay alive, it's, you know, it can be a good thing. But it's still a desire that's there. And we can get pulled into it sometimes in unhealthy ways or unnecessary ways or something. So, meditation is one of those places in life, where it's meant to be safe, appropriate to take a break from desires. In order to do that, we use desire to come to the end of desire, because it is a desire to put her temporarily put her desires to rest. It isn't it you know, so. And so some people like to hear certain Buddhist teachings thing. I'm not supposed to have any desires now. And, you know, if you think that way too much, then the only option is to be depressed. I think sometimes that's a symptom of depression is to have no desires, but the It's fine to have desires, but we want to be wise about them. We want to have the right desires and be able to use desires appropriately. And it's appropriate desire in the context of meditation, to have some some to some simple desire, not a craving, not a demand or expectation, a desire that yes, this is a good direction to go to quiet this mind down, to let go of the desires I usually have. And to tune in to that part of my life. being alive with it's not driven by desire or influenced by desire or covered over by desire or preoccupied with desire. Is there something you have something available here as you sit and breathe? That is not somehow influenced by desire or continent? Are there desirelessness places within you? Are there places within you of being content and just being just being settled and peaceful? Are there parts of you that is not being influenced by desire If I sit down to meditate, sometimes I can see the effect of my desires as I live my life. Sometimes I feel the desires in the subtle tensions of my muscles. Because you know, if I want something I can sometimes well My arms are engaged, you know, like when you really want something, it's so subtle tension of my arms. And that tension doesn't necessarily drop away just because I sit quietly. Sometimes I feel that the leftover tension in my arms and my shoulders or the stomach or different places, that is there from those desires that have been living with for a while.

And so and so some of the muscles you can feel that's still involved with desire. But are there other places in your body where there is no not caught up in desire? Is your little toe desire free? You know, sometimes it's not. But it is, you know, it You know your your back. You know the muscles of your back rib cage or they desire free. You can you find some place in your body it's kind of a reference point for you know something that doesn't involve the cut up in desire. Can your breathing, be desire free. Sometimes meditators are caught up in all kinds of desires about their breath. They're supposed to have a deep breath or a quiet breath or still breath or their breath should be this way or the breath is supposed to get them concentrated, I want to get concentrated, I'm going to hold on to that breath so I can get concentrated. And we tie ourselves in knots with these desires. But to have an easy breath, a breath that the breathing itself has no desire. The body knows how to breathe perfectly well without you Without your conscious effort. So to sit down and be able to let the body breathe without any entanglement with desire. So discover that parts of you Where there's no desire, even if they're

simultaneously their places of desire. So you begin seeing as desires are not the whole picture, the whole story. And then some of these things, to have the trust or the confidence to begin softening and relaxing the mind. So the mind and yourself can be addressed and at ease without having to get anything without needing to want anything to discover what that's like to have the trust and the confidence. Some people don't have the trust and confidence. So there's another route that some people take. And that is, they become sensitive to how unpleasant it is to be involved in desire. And that takes a while because for some desires, they are. They're kind of pleasant, and that's part of the hook. That's how the magic trick works. We have pleasant fantasies, some people love having anticipatory desires. And so some people anticipation of having a desire getting something, it's actually more fun than getting it. And, and so they, you know, spent a lot of time anticipating they sometimes people create a hole in it become kind of anticipatory fantasy experts. And that's they spend a lot of time in their life anticipating. And there's a lot of hope and promise and fantasy, that's maybe more, you know, grander than reality. So this idea of kind of, and also some people with desire, feel a certain kind of a liveliness is and it can be energy to come along with desire, and have desire, you feel kind of alive, and some people want to feel alive and vital, and that's, that kind of has meaning or something. And so that's another hook to it. But if you pay careful attention to desire when you sit and meditate, especially, there's aspects of desire, which are unpleasant, there's a kind of strain or stress involved. Sometimes there's a kind of tiredness involves kind of a weariness, there's a kind of that kind of sort of feeling of some, some quality of it is unsatisfactory. And for some people, that's what helps them to let go. And then Okay, I see now what's going on, I don't want that I'm going to give myself a break, give myself a break, not now. Not now, not now. And slowly take my take quite a while. But we big start feeling experiencing the lessening of desires. And at first, it might be some of the large desires of our life. And we feel that Oh, it's possible to be alive. It's possible to feel content, it's possible to feel actually quite good about oneself without fulfilling some of the desires we thought we needed to fulfill in order to feel good. To see that and feel that is a cornucopia and revolution is that the right word? is not the right word. Copernicus. So the closer and, you know, it's real revolution and that to realize that you don't have to fulfill many of the surface desires, many of the common desires that people have in order to be happy. You don't have to have, you know, the perfect relationship. I've known people who have anticipated having a perfect relationship, thought that person was the perfect person, put a lot of time and effort into it.

Got married, and then they woke up one morning and looked across the breakfast table. What have I done?

The magic trick, you know, they could if you see how the magic trick works earlier. And but you know, so this idea so you know, the perfect room relationship only if I have that, then I'll be happy. The perfect job, the perfect this perfect, you know bank account, the perfect vacation, the perfect, you know, just whatever it might be. And, and some people only feel fulfilled if they certain ideals of desires are fulfilled, but to have a high quality, and I want to emphasize high quality, sense of being alive and present, and just kind of being no desires, no ordinary desires fulfilled and feel happy. The most sustained periods of happiness I had in my life that lasted for months, came not from fulfilling a ordinary desire in the world. I had a desire to sit and meditate. But that was the point in doing that I was just letting go of a lot of thoughts letting go of my desires. So to really to experience this high quality good the goodness of it or the rightness of it or the fulfillment of sitting without being caught up in desires, for some people is a radical shift to see the best possible a kind of kind of you understand them there's, you know, more games in town you know there's, there's no other way of living. You don't have to put all your eggs in the baskets of conventional desires and fulfillment and getting things. There's another you know you can you can put yourself in this other basket of just being peaceful and alive. So to quiet and subtle the desires and haven't and ultimately in Buddhism, Buddhism points to an experience of

radical complete cessation of desire. And that's a whole game changer. And one way it's a game changer is that then one understands the nature it's easier to understand the nature of desire in a whole different way, it's easier to see that there is another alternative, a radically good alternative to having desires. So desires are now held more lightly, they're not taken as quite as seriously as they were before. Also as the as the, with this full cessation of desire, it's kind of like we have a, a clean slate or something, we can see more clearly, the nature of desire when it arises. You know, if you're swirling in a sea of desires, you can't really see one desire from the other perhaps, but if you have the experience of all desires are quieted enough then a desire arises you can see it clearly. So this radical cessation of desire or the quieting desire helps us to see desires in a new way. And in seeing desires in a new way. The hope is that we can see which desires are healthy and useful, helpful and which desires are not. We're more likely not to be fooled by the seductive power of some of these desires, the authority the messages of some of these that come along, if only if I have this will be fulfilled. But we start seeing that there are some desires which are nourishing in a deep way, some of the desires which seem to help us stay free, open, not contracted, not constricted, not caught up in the compulsion of desire, but rather certain kinds of desires which help us support us to be compulsive free, to have freedom in the realm of desires and desire arises and we can see it for what it is is, and we have the wherewithal to see, thank you. And it just goes, or we have the wherewithal to say, this is useful. This is a desire to pursue, it's not easy, it's going to take a lot of effort. But this is worthwhile to do. And some of the extra things we do with desire aren't weighing it down. And one of the extra things we do with desire has to do with this self thing, self identity, self representation, proving ourselves apologizing for ourselves, fixing ourselves, building ourselves up, all this kind of kind of enterprise of selfing that human beings do. Make desires more complicated the need to be.

So if there's a whole kind of desire around being a self, has it quieted as well. That helps us to make much simpler relationship with their desires. We just have a desire. So all this is to say, to encourage, I hope this can be encouragement for you to become a student of your desires. Don't take them for granted. Don't let them take you for granted. Notice how your desires sometimes have you, as opposed to you having your desires. Notice how they work. Notice what they are, maybe do an inventory of desires. Sometimes people that have no one's very few people have sat down and actually done a wonderful inventory of your desires and kind of see which ones are the common ones. What are the uncommon ones and how do they work and what goes on and, and how do you relate to your desires? What are your beliefs connected to your desires? What is your sense of self connected to your desires, what desires come with demand expectation? What desires are easily frustrated? What's going on? There's a whole kind of world to discover. So I was motivated to give this talk on desire by receiving yesterday in mail, a program for a memorial service of a person from who used to be part of our community here for many years, then was some of you might remember Frank Ryerson. And Frank died last year, last maybe June or something. And so in July, they had a memorial service and, and someone just yesterday I received a copy. I wasn't there, but I got a copy of the memorial service. It was kind of nice picture of him was nice for me to see him and I'd seen him some months before he died. He came here to see me and he was happiest he'd been in his whole life. He knew he was dying and I kind of Are you? You're dying, are you really happy? Is this real? And, and he was definitely he was real. He was relaxed. He was completely like, he was living his life to the full in certain kind of way, just really here he was really happy. And so I opened this, you know, program and there was a poem by him. So I never he was an English professor. He was in the first year he was a high school English teacher. And so it, you know, relates to this topic of desire, though he uses the word hunger, which is a certain kind of desire, you know, that's more compulsive. And after the poem, there's a poem by his is a poem by the Japanese poet basho. That read first because it's a little bit sets a context for his poem and Basho writes Even in Kyoto hearing the goals cry I long for Kyoto. These desires, even when you have what you want, you get caught up in desire wanting wanting. So, Frank wrote this, and the title of

this poem is, nothing is enough. Nothing is enough or everything is not enough. I have a hunger beyond any object, it chooses. A hunger never still, nor satisfied, only occupied for moments. The Hunger is and is not me I can't outrun it and if I feed it, it wants more. Mostly it wants something else. A wise person said, Stop, hold still for a bit and you will be used eventually you will become the instrument of what needs to be said. You might be lucky this way, become nothing, then nothing is enough.

Two meanings of nothing is enough, which you prefer? But you know what part of the poem that I'm most emphasize here A wise person said, Stop, hold still for a bit. And that's what I was trying to teach here. This is the value of stop your desires Be still. And I love this idea just for a bit. It's not like you have to like once and for all let go of every possible desire, you know, just be a couch potato. But for a bit for a bit, but then what follows is what I think quite remarkable, deep. And then eventually you will end you will then be used, eventually you will be used, you will become the instrument of what needs to be said. So, what he's pointing to here is at some point, if you get still and stop enough, and don't kind of have your ordinary desires, maybe selfish too. iers stop. And eventually you wait and listen. You can hear or feel or discover that something wants to move through you, to speak, to do to help to do something that comes from a different place, then what you can say, this is me. It's you, it's coming out of you in a sense, but it's not something you what you take so personally. You become an instrument for what wants to be said, as opposed to being you become the speaker. Look how great I am. I'm a great speaker, thank you, as opposed to, you know, this just coming through me kind of and so this idea of stopping the desires or quieting down discovering a new not just new desires and healthy desires, but discovering a different way in which desires can arise in us. They can arise from some place That is not so coagulated or contracted around self and around fear and around greed and around, you know, being defensive and getting and getting. But something that some places feels very natural and free, it bubbles up or it flows through where it comes. And you can't quite Take it, take credit for it. And what good is it if you can't take credit for it? I mean, it's, you know, it's all about getting things for yourself, right? And, you know, it's all about you. Turns out that there's a whole other life that's very rich, very meaningful. That doesn't, doesn't it's not based on this paradigm. It's all about me. And not even about all about you. You become an instrument, where the goodness in your heart become an instrument for some something profound that can move through you in response to this world. And, but to add, but to allow that which is good inside of you to respond freely to the world and wisely to the world does require that all those surface desires, all that squirrel desires on the monkey mind that's caught up in desires and wanting of all the forms and positive desires and negative desires. The expectations that come through desires are fantasies that come with desires, the frustrations that you know the whole world somehow begin to become quiet and still. And then you can listen to something or hear something else that wants to come through. And that's a beautiful thing. There is beauty there is goodness in you and to waiting, if you haven't already tapped into it and And then way to access it is to not be tricked by the magic show.

To see how the magic is done to understand the nature of these desires, the nature of our involvement and identification with them, and to have access to a different source within us a different place where we can be living the world in a free way and in a compassionate way, loving way, generous way, not because we are that way, you know, intentionally or in a way that we can claim it to me, it just what's an instrument for that we're an instrument for love, an instrument, an instrument for kindness, responsiveness, support for this world of ours. So become a student. Have your desires and then graduate. So thank you for this this morning and I hope that you find it enlightening and engaging to study yourself in this way. Thank you