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SPEAKERS

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So, thank you for the day and thank you for practicing here with us practicing together. And I'm fond of saying that I'm fond of these days. These day alongside there, we sit together and, you know, just really, you know, really no teaching or guidance throughout the day. It's really your practice is your resolve, dedication. Your continuity of practice, which carries the day and to have a group of people this many come together and have that kind of personal initiative and dedication to do this for a day is a wonderful thing. And I don't take it for granted and I appreciate what you've done here. Sometimes, you know, back in the ancient world, the time at the Buddha, they had chariots and pulled by horses. And so they used that as analogy. And probably the fewer parts than cars so it's maybe easier to use as analogies. And so borrow from that won't be strictly that ancient analogy. But you have a chariot with two horses and the two horses are pulling it along. And chariot has two wheels. And if the wheels turn well, and if the brakes are off the wheels, then the chariot rolls nicely. If the chariot has two horses that are going to have equal strength and ability, it'll pull them Pull the chariot straight. But if one horse is stronger than the other or working harder than the other, then the tendency is to veer the chariot a little bit in one direction or the other direction. So in this way, we have our chariot upright, which is we can call the practice we have, and the practice moves along smoothly, well, if the wheels can turn nicely, so the hub has to be true. If there's a kink in the hub, and the hub has a little dent in or something and not smooth, then the wheels can be wobbly. And to have a smooth hub is our ethics, our morality, their goodness that we live in the integrity we have, and without a certain degree of morality that the wheel is going to be kind of wonky and the more unethical We are the moriwaki that we're going to go and at some point that will appear it's not going to even go at all because of how the chariot wheels are not working. But then there can be the brakes on the on the wheels and the brakes are on, then it's gonna be hard to get those horses to pull that might they might be able to scrape along the ground with the wheels if it's locked in. And the brakes to the practice are the hindrances and things like greed, hate and delusion, but essential desire aversion, restlessness and agitation sloth and torpor and out that there's all these forces that we have preoccupations, things we get caught up in. And if we're too caught up in these forces with these duck preoccupations, then they would walk through you know, one sense there won't be any chair you know, at all. But if you have a chariot you're trying to make it to go and but you really are really preoccupied with other things. It's like having the brakes on and it won't roll But once the, you know, the hub is moving smoothly, so there's no resistance no wonkiness in it. And once the brakes are off, then really good two wheels of a chariot which is roll kind of freely and nicely and, and, and they're available to roll. They're ready to they're ready to roll. And all it needs is something that pulls them along and moves them. So if we have an ethical life, they've with integrity, if we able to do the purification work, the deep work is it easy to find out how to kind of free ourselves from our preoccupations, especially the strong ones, those that are powered by greed, hate and delusion, those, you know, involving greed, or you know, the hindrances, then, then what happens is that we're available for the practice. The practice is the chariot. The charity is available to roll.

And getting into this place we're available to roll we're available to be moved to be unfold to, to go be pulled by the horses is a wonderful state to be in. And it should be remembered we have to make ourselves available for the practice to pull us. There's so much that we have to do the practice. We do it certainly to some degree, but it's also our availability to roll along too smoothly and be pulled along by the horses. And the two horses, one of them is samatha, not samadhi almost almost treated as synonyms but samatha and then the same first four letters, s.a.m.a. But then it's t.h.a, samatha and the other is vipassna.

So these two are the horses that pull along the chariot, samatha and Vipassana. Samatha is usually translated as tranquility. And it differs to a kind of a whole class, kind of category of states of mind and practices that bring tranquility, calmness, sometimes translated serenity. My favorite translation is calm, abiding, calm abiding. And I like this word of biting, kind of resting or just being in calm abiding. So that, so cultivating calm abiding. Vipassana is usually translated into English as insight that's the name of IMC the insight the you know, the Vipassana meditation Center, the insight meditation center, but it also sometimes is translated as clear seeing because the person means to see. And sometimes I like kind of a loose translation and, and think of it as clarity. And so with these two somata Vipassana one is his drink is calm, abiding, and clarity and we're cultivating both those are the practices that we're cultivating and developing. And as we bring along these forces and develop greater and greater, kind of this tranquility and greater clarity, then that is what pulls along. That's onward leading for the chariot moves the chariot along smoothly. And in some ways mindfulness is is the, what's called the pole that the chariot pole that that they have between the two horses that come up from which the chariot they may know The back. That the yoke, the yoke goes between the horses with the pole that goes from the chariot, to the yoke. The chariot pole. And that's mindfulness. Mindfulness is what connects us to the States. Mindfulness is what connects us ourselves to the practice to experience. Mindfulness is the means by which the momentum of tranquility and insight can pull us along. We have to be present but be aware we have to be connected. Partly mindfulness is the connection making that connection. And some people say that faith is the harness that you're holding on to the horses. So the harness doesn't move things along, but you know, they don't get pulled by the harness. But the harness the harness is very important for guiding the horses and getting them to go just the right way. And so I'm not sure quite how that connects to faith, but maybe you can figure it out for yourself. And so and so part of the work of practice is that purification work. And a lot of what we're doing as we do this kind of practice is in fact purification. If you don't like that language, which I used to not like. purification also means resolving the issues that unresolved issues in our life, that kind of make things hard for the chariot to go. So sometimes the hub of the wheel needs to be smoothed out, sometimes the brakes need to be fixed and release they're locked in. Sometimes we have to do something that we need to put in springs and the chariot and go smoothly. Sometimes we need to go out get out of the chariot, and we have to kind of smooth the road a little bit Fill potholes that are too deep or something.

There's all this work that has to be done that I put on the cutter purification. And in both these as well as samatha develops, as vipassana develops, we're inevitably run into a lot of these things that have to be worked out, smooth out, shed, resolved, healed, developed. All these things that fit on the category of purification. Both Samatha and Vipassana share with them the need for concentration. Concentration is the primary thing that brings us tranquility. And, but concentration also is what allows for Vipassana without concentration, there's no Vipassana insight. And so cultivating concentration is or Samadhi is part of the game here. And then it kind of one way of talking about it is to maybe talk about how someone who comes to meditation for the first time. I don't know if anybody of you have this I doubt any of you are that situation today to be so quiet so quiet in here. But if someone had never meditated before, and they just showed up here this morning said, I'm just going to try this out. Kind of relatively

typical mind that this hasn't practiced at all, is a mind that's preoccupied with a lot of things, and might have anxiety that's driving the forces of the mind. The mind is preoccupied by things interested in things. And their untrained mind is often a mind that jumps around and caught up in ideas and thoughts and preoccupations, and coming to a new place like this. Who that kind of mind every sound that comes in, it's like, Oh, what's that? What's that? You know, the floor creaks, so the door opens or someone moves next. to you or every sound like part that specially if there's anxiety everything is so important if there's a lot of desire every you know middle sound around like this had a good one or whatever the one is a person or lunch or whatever you know the mind is searching looking wanting trying to be safe so I you know it's very concerned about the outer might be very concerned about the outer you know world and what is what's going on as the mind so that's a busy mind as the mind settles down gets calmer, gets more quiet. It no longer is jumping around so much or following chasing the things around us the world around us. And the world of sounds the exterior world begins to settle away. It's still there. But it's not so much interesting for us. We're not focused on it when the mind is not no longer oriented. To pay attention to the world around. And so that begins to recede in a certain kind of way, from our interest received from where the focus of attention is. tendency is then to become more inward. As we become more inward, then some people, their mind is still jumping around, but maybe has a very different way. And it's jumping around in their own mind, their thoughts and ideas and feelings and judgments and commentary and stories and all these ideas. And if there was, if that's understood to be where we're going to work out our life, that's the place to solve everything. And then of course, we're going to be interested in that. There also, if there's a tendency towards anxiety or a tendency towards a lot of greed and desire, or a tendency towards ill will aversion that can be a prioritization of those kinds of concerns in the mind and we can get that What's important and that's what keeps us kind of a yoke to those thoughts. This is important, it's really important. My anxiety is really important. It's like the most important thing in the world. I mean, I have to solve this, I have to fix it, how to deal with it. And so whatever you're anxious about becomes very important. And it's wonderful how anxiety will just come along. You just choose new things to be anxious about. They know it can be a never ending, never ending. And so you know, solve one and look around for another good one. Same thing with, with a version. That's what it's about. That's what's about that's what gets prioritized. That's what's important. That's where my identity is what's important. Somehow, I'm going to fix everything or take care of myself. If I just blame everything. There's angry at things. And so that gets prioritized. And of course, the things we're angry about, then the thoughts ideas are important, the mind goes there. And the same thing with desire that, you know, does is a little bit more subtle.

It's tricky, because desire sometimes are nice. And so they can feel good. And so it can feel like you know, why not, you know, but it's still you know, so that's some people that's kind of their thing you know, everything's about getting my desires met. And so the thoughts the concerns and the fantasies about that get the upper hand and so the mind is still busy and active and moving a lot. has a wonderful saying they say that's been said that if you look into a moving river fast moving river, you won't see your reflection. You have to if a river which is very, very slow and clear, or even better, a still pond you like you might see your reflection. So in the same way, if the mind is moving too much moving and moving, moving is too much agitation to really see yourself well to it. See the depth of us be connected here. So this is why we do a practice like concentration like something as simple as mindfulness, of breathing, focusing on breathing. That's a fantastic place to cultivate both horses. mindfulness and concentration, mindfulness and tranquility and calm, coming back and be interested in the breath becomes more interesting than breathing. Then you are in all those fear based concerns, desire based concerns, or version based group concerns or doubts based concerns that we have. And that's a training of the mind that has a lot of purification. We have to work through a lot for some people, to begin to work through enough of that and to have a new relationship to all that to no longer be wedded to it to no longer feel like this is what's important. This is what's gonna do it for me. I know some people who met to meditate

for a year Before they kind of, you know, I finally realized, you know, something, I'd be doing that way for a long time. And it didn't get me anywhere. It was kind of nice to sit there and my body worked its kinks out, and I could sit comfortably. But, you know, really what I'm doing is just all this thinking and you know, I thought was calmer in the end of the day. So that was nice. But you know, after 10 years, I don't think that's the way so hopefully not 10 years, but sooner or later we learned that's not the way that's not so interesting anymore. So at some point, what becomes interesting is cultivating samatha and vipassana, cultivating Samadhi. Really, let's let's go deeper here. And so something like mindfulness of the breathing allows us to shift where attention goes and begin exercising our capacity. To choose where our attention goes, and to shift it from the default of thoughts and preoccupation to just staying with the breathing, for example. And why that is important, is I like to think of food of attention or awareness as kind of like food. The Buddha called consciousness food. But I think of awareness is kind of like food, and where your awareness goes, feeds something. Sometimes it feeds what you're paying attention to. So if we're, if we're focusing, kind of innocent in a kind of, if we're, you know, absorbed or if our attention is lost or preoccupied with fear, the fear is actually fed. If are we preoccupied with desires, desires, desiring movement is fed. If we're preoccupied with anger, that's what's fat. That's what grows. We're trying to shift where the food goes. It's such an amazingly precious resource we have to be aware. It's like one of the most precious things, valuable things that you've been entrusted with. But no one told you, you were, but no one else was entrusted with your awareness. If it wasn't, you know, we can't hold somebody else responsible for it. You know, or, you know, unless it's the people who produce good TV shows. We're gonna trust them. But the, but you know, we have to, we're interested to be responsible for our awareness, what we do with it, where it goes, where we attend to what we focus on. And we have some choice and we want to focus on things which are wholesome, that are beneficial that we nourish and feed us feed something useful.

So samatha and vipassana are useful things to feed. So if we focus the attention with a purpose of cultivating concentration and mindfulness, then we're cultivating something healthy. So what happens as people start, continue able to do this? It's just like the sounds around us we meditate begin to recede from importance, and we're not so focused on them. We're not, you know, on eggshells, listening to everything. So the same thing happens with our thinking that our thoughts no longer become so interesting. They recede. They don't necessarily stop, they can sometimes, but I think it's more useful to think of they just recede or more, they become thinner and lighter and less interesting. And there might be some thoughts in the background, which are not very interesting, but we're not interested in them. So they just kind of do their thing in the back And what's interesting where the focus goes, where the discipline this wonderful food can go, is, you know, to something wholesome. mindfulness of breathing is considered to be one of the very wholesome things you can do. Provided that when you focus on the breath, you're not doing it with greed, anxiety, fear, or hostility, you know, you want to just be able to focus on it within an open relaxed breath. You want to focus on it without any brakes on the wheels. Gonna be able to focus on it, you know, in a way that the road is, you know, have good springs, he's rolled along nicely, so the road is smooth. So, so, as we get more focused and what recedes. The second level of receding, is this, you know, all the thoughts, all the preoccupations and everything. to agree to which thinking is still useful. It's very simple thoughts about the practice very simple thoughts about what we're bringing your attention to. And some point to thinking becomes mostly just thoughts around the breathing. And they're also you know, the host those simple, very simple brief thoughts. It might be very simple thoughts where we give ourselves a little instructions. We're back to the basics. Just just let's just be with that in breath. Let's be without out breath let's feel that breath fully. Let's kind of release kind of tune in to just that experience of pleasure or joy that comes with that breathing or expansion. So giving yourself that very simple, rudimentary thoughts, giving yourself instructions to go is a good thing to do. When the alternative is worse. And if the alternative is here, you kind of you know, you keep getting slipping into those other thoughts and ideas that you know, don't net helpful. Give yourself some very simple, relaxed, gentle instructions, thoughts

stay there, they're here. Stay there, you can do it. And then as as we get more focused and more settled to the comma biting, we settle in. Those kinds of thoughts aren't needed anymore. And it gets simpler and simpler. And then at some point, it becomes really easy to stay because we're abiding. So wonderful feeling of calm abiding, this idea of calm abiding for me is so delicious. Calm abiding is when you're shocked so clearly here while you're here, like, finally. I'm here. I'm nowhere else. And I'm kind of like resting or the whole system, the body and Mind is unequivocal, unequivocally here present in this body and this place this time. So clearly here and it's, it takes work to go anywhere else. It's like going uphill to have the mind start thinking about other times other places other things, they just feels like this is like the bottom of the, of the bowl. You know the ball, the ball, you know, put a ball in a marble and a bullets does all this you know up and down and around and around and its momentum slows down and it comes down and finally the marble is calmly abiding at the bottom of the bowl. So it gets this thing of finally being here. It's calm, abiding. So this that's when combining begins when we're really here. And there's clarity, and these two are the horses that go together.

If you have too much calmness, without clarity, it's easy to fall asleep or get dull. If you have too much clarity, without enough calm abiding, some people actually get a little bit too. It gives birth to a whole other kinds of way of thinking or ruminating or, or excitement certain goes on. But the idea is to have the two together to have clarity, that's with common binding. And, and that combination that allows you to kind of the waters become still and quiet and you can see your reflection, you can start seeing what's really going on here. And in much deeper way. The waters calm and all the sediment has settled away. So now you can really see both yourself and you can see reality, we can start seeing what's actually happening here and a deeper and deeper way. And this is a great, wonderful thing. It's wonderful to have the sense of just it's so good to feel like you're really here. There's no boredom. There's no feeling that something else needs to be done or I have to accomplish something. Nothing you have to do to prove yourself because you just feel so good to be here. settled. It's so brilliant, to be had this clarity. The clarity of mind is, I think, is one of the best things going in the world in the universe. Like this clarity, and the clarity when it gets really good. One of the things that recedes, just like the sounds recede and the thoughts recede, one of the things that recedes is what normally is your favorite topic. The self disappears. The idea of there being the term out there have me myself in mind that thoughts about me myself in mind and I'm doing something I've accomplished something I need you know me what's has to happen for me it's a brilliant thing to have this clarity to the center kind of a sense of me myself in mind the sense of there being a central I often use the word the central you know, control tower to it all, but a central clearinghouse as to clear everything in the Central Processing Center for it all central hub, the central tax collector. I don't know what but the, you know, this sense of this, this center falls away and just clarity without that center of self. It's quite lovely. So these two horses that we're cultivating as we cultivate samatha and we pass in our calm abiding and clarity, because calm abiding the way I talked about especially sounds like just their stationary kind of everything still, it can kind of feel kind of the idea can be given that, well then there's no horses that are pulling anything. And maybe the horses disappear too. But, but what happens is that somahta and vipassana, when they're gets strong, are onward leading. They will naturally unfold and actually move along. Some so they're the horses that keep pulling their their water that will flow downhill. There You know, it's the you know, this is the I don't know if this is a good analogy but it's the dandelion seeds they get picked up by the wind and get blown gently along. It's the wind that pulls, pushes the dentin line. Seeds are it's the water the water that carries the leaf down the down the stream down the hill or it's the you know the horses that pull the chariot. It's armored leading and it's a one This was also a brilliant and wonderful thing to feel the kind of momentum feel the growing the unfolding that happens. That's not you're doing. We're we make ourselves available. We put all the conditions in place. This idea of being available the brakes are off. The wheels are smooth and intuitive. Feel this, you know, this kind of wonderful momentum of deepening and opening and clarifying and seeing that goes along in the practice.

So it's a great journey. It's a great thing to do to cultivate these things to develop and work and, and it's just really good to be on the path. Doesn't matter how long it takes doesn't matter. Quickly it is just doesn't matter how far along you are. It's just so good to have the opportunity in this lifetime to be the custodian, the caretaker of this wonderful thing that you've been entrusted to with. You've been entrusted with him. I think one of the most precious things in the universe, your awareness, be the custodian of it. To care for it well, don't let others dictate where your awareness goes. Don't let advertisement Don't let politicians don't let the messages of society somehow become the default of where what you focus on what you pay attention to and what you think about become your own custodian of it. And it's been led to be very careful that your attention goes to things that feeds and develops that which is best in you that which is wholesome and beneficial. That which is good for you. So thank you for this day. And I keep saying and we have the practice here at IMC that it's the people who practice here. who care for the center? Everything that's all the caretaking for this building from, from cleaning to buying toilet paper to being everything is done by volunteers and people who practice here. So the end of the day we did a long way out.