

2019-08-18 To Care And Not To Care

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SPEAKERS

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So I think it needs to be different slider. It's on like two. Yeah, so let's see if that's sometimes I sit and wait to see if I can hear myself but I have to speak so I think it's gonna be a little bit louder still a little bit louder until like in there now we're getting there. Hear this vibration and then I know I'm on. It's a strange thing to get used to that. So, is that okay now there's volume. Great.

So, good morning everyone and welcome to IMC. And that talk, I would like to give today could be titled to care and not to care. And to little bit in spite by a line from Ts Eliot's poem, Ash Wednesday, which goes to teach me teach me to care and not to care. And it may be plays on two different, subtle different meanings of the word care. The first one meaning, compassion, more. And the second one maybe meaning, to be caught up in or to be agitated by our preoccupation with something. And maybe another way of saying this, reversing the two meanings of care is hold everything lightly. But let compassion motivate you. So these two sides are practice to treat everything likely but have compassion. act on compassion, to care and not to care. The challenge for people who do Buddhist practice is as we discover, degrees of freedom, degrees of peacefulness, ease, release from our attachments is how to live that in our lives. And, and how to negotiate the authority that comes along with behind being agitated, the authority the importance of being upset, being angry, being dismayed, being discouraged by things that we encounter in our lives. And there's a lot of things that can happen that in the world that could be quite arousing, quite activating the stimulate a lot of strong emotions, all kinds of overwhelm. And then how does it how do we go associate that with this idea of the freedom we discover or the peace we discover, do we give precedence to one over the other? I think they in in Buddhist practice, the idea is to give precedence to the capacity to live with a heart that's free. And not to give that up. But often we do give it up. And then there's this kind of, because sometimes these other things are more important, or seem more important or give more value to it, or authority to it. So I think the background of this talk is the idea of climate change. And there's people who have tremendous sense of strong emotions around what they're learning or reading about what's happening on this globe with climate change. Some people feel overwhelmed, people feel despair. Some people feel angry and grief. There's a lot of different emotions that come along. And some of them might Be quite appropriate. And I don't want to say that they shouldn't be there. But the authority that they're given sometimes to people means that we give up our connection to some inner freedom. And so how do we negotiate? How do we stay true to whatever degree of inner freedom we discover? How do we not sacrifice it in the face of all kinds of challenges that the world comes along with not just global, global climate change? And, and I think negotiating that in a wise way is part of the task of Buddhist practice. So I wanted to give a tell you a little story that a little something I learned from a friend of mine who was a hospice nurse and she said that in working with families of a dying patient, there will come a day where she will tell the family From now on, there are no more crisis. From now on, there's no more reason to call 911.

Because the person's dying and it could use a certain point. That's really what's is happening. And I imagine that was quite helpful for family members to hear, because it's kind of natural for family members to treat someone's dying, great alarm concerned. Sometimes they won't do everything they can to keep the family member alive. And at some point, it doesn't make sense for that. some point it makes sense to accept this is what's happening. And sometimes it's the hospice nurse or the doctor on call, who maybe lets the family know, you know, we've reached that point now. And that allows the family to hold the person's hand or to be present offer presence for the dying person. That is very different if everyone's kind of running around to see if their heads on fire, agitated You know, calling 911 screaming help, which doesn't create an very nice atmosphere for the person's dying. Maybe there's a different way atmosphere to create, to support this person who is that's what they're doing. So I thought that was a pretty powerful thing. The family cares definitely cares about the dying paid patient, but teach me to care and not to care at the same time to, to care about the person, but not to care in such a way that we get agitated or angry or caught up in it. So it kind of certain kind of way, both caring, loving and not being and not caring, that they're dying, not caring in the sense of not getting agitated by that. I have known people who have come to they're dying and known people who have had terminal illnesses. They knew that they were kind of kind of that's what they had. But they didn't accept it. They did everything they could to fight it. They did, you know, lots of medical care and doctors and all that, which seems reasonable seems like an important thing to do and appropriate many times. And then they come to a point where it's clear to them that this is what's happening. They don't need a hospice nurse to tell them they know. And I've watched remarkable transformations in people, when they come to that point. They when they kind of, they just relax and allow it they but this is what's happening. And I've seen something very, very deep, letting go that they weren't ready to do before that. And sometimes they really have to be up against the fact the fact of they're dying in such a clear and obvious way. And they've tried what they could and they said something gets released. Okay. This is what's happening, I'm not going to fight it, I'm not going to argue with it, I'm not going to, you know, and to let go deeply and to. I've seen the transformation, people attain degrees of peace and well being that in healing in a sense, spiritual healing, perhaps a heart healing that they had never experienced in their life. Until then. I've known people who were kind of chronically agitated, chronically anxious. And then they came to that moment where they accepted, they're dying, their anxiety went away. One person who has anxiety had was anxious for years, that person was going to die from cancer. And when they finally got cancer, the person's you know, that anxiety went away at some point. That's what's happening. And so, and then I've known people here in our Sangha who've gone to visit these people, because it was kind of like dark shine, it was kinda like, there's grace to be in their presence. Because of the steep equanimity and peace that they had. So the challenge of Buddhist practice is to attain this kind of peace is very deep letting go and well being that can happen at these end stages of life for some people. Why wait?

Why wait? Why not now? And I think that's easier to accept the possibility Yes. Now, if it's not an either or it's not just about giving up because a little bit you know, when people are finally dying, there's a kind of giving up. I give up trying to save the person and give up trying to save myself. There is a kind of giving up. But that's not what we're talking about in Buddhism. We're letting go for sure. But I hope it's not a giving up on caring about life. But it's a giving up of being attached to it. Why not give up our attachments to life? while we're still alive? some spiritual teachers will say that you can only live if you die. And you're in Zen monasteries in Japan this sometimes I've heard that some teachers will yell, and people are sitting in meditation. And I'm not going to try it here anytime soon. So don't Don't worry, but they'll yell and meditation and teachers will yell and say, die. Clear they're not telling you to just literally die. That's not what they're saying. Absolutely not what they're saying. They're talking metaphorically let the ego die let these attachments dive at the attachment to lifetime then you can live something get set free. The Buddha said this in a very powerful way in a poem in the Dhammapada that goes something

like to paraphrase it those who are aware, though, those who are unaware are on the path of death. Those who are aware on the path of life those who are unaware or as if already did, those who are aware are I forget exactly but in a good place. And so, you know, this idea of, you know, this possibility, you know, some people live as if they're dead, something is dead, when we live with our attachments and get caught and we life gets born, certain kind of life gets born when we can let go. So, why do we insist and feels so important to stay attached to stay clinging, that are behind many people's relationships with their grief, their sadness, their anger, their despair, their discouragement. I'm not saying that grief or sadness or despair or discouragement, necessarily always involve attachment. They might arise but many of us will then get attached to them will relate to it as importance, give it value, identify with it, hold on to it. Take it personally in some very deep way. And so it becomes a big deal. What is it to the Not take things so personally, what is it to not get attached? To allow things to move through us? What are the things that it involves? I believe, it also allows some of the best qualities we have to move through us freely. And that's one of those is compassion. Teach me to care and not take care. You know, if I was going to summarize what motivates me to be a Buddhist teacher. In some ways, it's those two words, those that allow expression, or to say in the other way I said before, is to hold everything likely. But let compassion animate you or let compassion motivate you to act. To have those two together. It's really kind of what I want to do. As a Buddhist teacher. I really want people to know what it is to be free and I want people to act in the world. for the betterment of everybody to act with compassion and caring, be sensitive to the suffering of this world and live in such a way to ameliorate ameliorate that. But to do that, to act that way, because it's almost like a natural expression of who we are. It's almost like a movement that comes through us. It's not a burden. It's not an obligation. It's not a something heavy.

But it is something that fully animates us fully kind of flows through us. And some people feel like it's not okay to do that. Because we only show only show that we care if we're agitated, we own the people only. Only show that we care if we're anxious or worried about people. We only show that we care if we're up If we kind of get, you know, a rally probably around something, some families that's the vehicle by which love is shown or mutuality shown, some communities that seems to be it's, you know, it's kind of like, and it's also kind of easier to show that you care. If you get all upset. You know, things, obviously you've been touched. But you know, do you see suffering in the world and not be upset? It's not, sometimes it's not so obvious to people that you care unless you act in good ways to try to do something. And so we want people to know that we care. So let's get upset together. So, a little bit Can you notice that it's not always the case what I'm describing here? I've met with people and, you know, met encountered encountered suffering in the world, whether individually met people and groups sometimes times even reading the news that goes on in the world and started to cry. And but that crying seems to come out of this freedom. I didn't get angry, I didn't get discouraged. I didn't feel despair. Someone who saw me cry might have had, you know, gotten agitated. gaki like, What can I do for you? Nothing was needed for me. It's just this is what happens. This is like a beautiful thing in a kind of way that we have this capacity. So in Buddhism, in our tradition, there is suggestion of daily reflection, daily thing that people think about called Five reflections. And one of them is, so I'll try to go through them but somebody You're no better than me sitting up here sometimes sitting up here in front of everyone giving a talk. I'm actually not as you know, not everything's my mind. So this assessable wish it's a little bit you know, odd thing to be, you know, this kind of way, right? So if you'll forgive me if I've so. So everything has a nature to get old. I have the nature to good old. Everything has the nature of becoming sick. I have the nature of becoming sick. Everything has a nature of dying. I have the nature of dying. We are the heirs to our own karma to our own actions. And then there's 25th when they're left out. Everyone I love must be separated from me. There's no way to escape that Everything I care and love will be separated from me, there is no way of avoiding that separation. So you know, that you will get old, hopefully that that you will get sick, that you will die, that you'd be separated from everything that

you care for and love. Either that they'll go, those things will go those people will go before you or you will and how you live the actions you live by. I don't just end when the actions are done, but they create certain kind of karmic momentum in your hearts and minds, that you'll reap somehow the results of that the consequences of that. So to reflect on that every day, every day, can function. Kind of like why wait until you die to you're dying to really let go. What is it that you can really let go of now? What is it that interferes with your freedom with your good heart? What interferes with your capacity for some very deep sense of well being, that can be here, so that when you close your eyes to meditate and you're with yourself inside kind of that it could kind of feel like you come home to your temple

to your kind of sacred place, like here, eyes closed, sensing and feeling. This living life here is actually a place that says comforting as you know, coming home or to your temple or sacred spot or something over and over again. So climate change I feel a little bit something I'm worried by the tremendous emphasis that we have right now on global warming and climate change in some circles, that it seems like it's become a, you know, it certainly seems like it's one of the defining issues of our times. So it certainly seems very important to address. But the reason I feel a little bit tender, like it's maybe over emphasized is that independent of climate change and global warming, we human beings are doing so much destruction of the natural world, that all those other things we're doing to the environment are reason enough to be hated, to change how we live and not to cause so much damage. And, and by kind of making this because focusing over and over again, nowadays, Climate change, it becomes a singular issue. And many of us many people in the public discourse kind of losing touch that there's so much other forms of environmental destruction going on. I was kind of amazed by the news this week. You know, the earlier this last year there was news about these micro plastic particles. They're ending up in the ocean in a day they is full of, you know, micro nano particles of plastic. Now, there's plastic fibers that are raining down from the sky. Like you know, these little fibers you know, that are so light against the wind blows them and breathe it we drink it and plastic right. And all these sea creatures that are you know, imbibing are taking in, you know, plastic. What are we doing with our plastic independent of climate change? And what are the issues Iran climate change is the degree to which people feel some people feel overwhelming grief, overwhelming anger and despair and discouragement. Some people feel like you know, they're almost ready to give up. It's hopeless. You know, we've, we've passed a point of no return. And it's just going to be just horrible from now on. Maybe it will be. So here I'm going to read you a part of a story. From the time of the Buddha. There's a king presentity, who comes to visit the Buddha. And the Buddha says to the king, where are you coming from Great King, in the middle of the day, where you're coming from what you've been up to. And the king says this amazing statement. Just now, venerable sir. I have been engaged in those fears of kingship typical of a anointed king. So what are the what are typical behaviors of anointed kings? Some of you may already know apparently. So, I've been engaged in those affairs of kingship typical of anointed kings, who are intoxicated with intoxication of sovereignty, who are obsessed by greed for sensual pleasures, who have attained stable control of the country, and who rule having conquered a great sphere of territory on earth. He was just what political leaders confessed to. I'm intoxicated within toxic, toxic, they can talk and then toxification of power, obsessed by greed. Vote for me.

So anyway, you know, it seems like a very honest statement. So maybe he maybe he's able to hold his greed lightly he can confess it with in front of the Buddha. Anyway, it's quite quite a statement. And so this is the Buddhist response paraphrase. The Buddha then replies and says, great king, what do you think? One of your messengers comes back from the east and reports. The Eastern mountains are rolling towards you. Nothing's gonna stop them. And then a messenger comes from the south and says, great king, the mountains of the South are rolling towards you. Nothing's gonna stop them. The messengers from the west Great King The Western mountains are rolling towards you, nothing's going to stop them. And what's left the messenger from the north, the mountains of North are rolling towards

you, nothing's gonna stop them all the mountainous areas coming towards you. Nothing's gonna stop them. So that's the scenario that Buddha sets up. And he asks, then he asked the king

do whatever you think should be done, great king. Oh, the messenger say that they especially East messenger says at the end of it that mountains are coming, they're rolling towards you the road. They're destroying everything in its path. And then the messenger say politely because it's the king, do what you think is suitable. Do what you think should be done great king. And so then Buddha says, If Great King such a great peril should arise such a terrible Destruction of human life, the human state being so difficult to obtain what should be done. So what should be done? So the end of our globe is coming. If not, through global warming, it's going to come. I don't know what the prediction is when I think that prediction is when the finally the sun exhausts itself. all life on earth will disappear, which just a few billion years and sooner or later it will happen. So what should be done? And so the king answers, if such a great peril should arise, such a terrible destruction of human life, the human state being so difficult to obtain what else should be done, but to live by the Dhamma to live righteously And to do wholesome and meritorious deeds, to be good things to live by the Dharma. So

if someone is maybe some of you, I'm pretty confident, at least some of you that I know well through practice for a long time. If it came time for you to die, or even if you had a terminal diagnosis, you would say, this is really when my Dharma practice is useful. This is what I'm going to rely on the most, this becomes the most important. And even on the last day on your deathbed, if you are so lucky to die in a conscious that way that you would call upon your Dharma practice the best you could. You would practice mindfulness you practice letting go. You practice not giving in to the authority of Greed, hate and delusion, you would see the tremendous value of even in that time, to not be to work with your fear fear comes up to work with your attachments have attachments come up. But to keep practicing and practicing and opening up and letting go. And you know, I'm one of the consequences to me for doing this practice is I am quite confident for myself that if I'm conscious enough as I die, it's one of the very best things and actually kind of a really wonderful thing to do is to allow that continual letting go deeper and deeper in the process of dying. I think it dying then I kind of a certain way, look forward to the process of dying, because of course they're conscious enough. I imagine that it's a, it's B The same process of going into the deep lead of deep meditation practice, which is some of the best things that I know to experience that freedom that letting go. So to rely on your Dharma practice during that time, as being really anything to do. The Buddha goes on and his this story, and then tells the king the so he talks about these mountains that are coming. And the king says, You know, I should practice the Dharma. And then the Buddha goes on. It's kind of prophetic, this little story. I inform you a great king, I announced to you, great king, aging and death are rolling in on you. When aging and death are rolling in on you, what should be done. And then the king answers appropriately, as aging and death are rolling in on me. Bye. Hon Sir, what else should be done, but to live by the Dhamma to live righteously do whatever wholesome and meritorious deeds. So, the story about the way There are mountains coming to you, you probably had some of you maybe don't remember, remember, right, you know that you got the you haven't gotten the message. But they're these mountains are rolling in on you from all directions, you're not going to get away from them. Aging and death are coming. Some people live as if that doesn't matter. It's not going to happen. But sooner or later, people get some most people get the message. And I could see myself I've known this for a long time I've been in Buddhism, which emphasizes this and all that. And now that I'm 65 now that I'm in my 60s, I could feel like it's sense inside there's a shift that thinking changes that obviously, there's a change and just kind of different orientation and like one of the thoughts is you know that I have this you know, that comes up now sometimes, like, maybe this will be the last time I do such a thing, this particular thing, maybe I won't do this again. Or, you know, I don't think, you know, there's certain certain endeavors that I don't think, like I used to, like learning languages, you know, as younger and I you know, maybe not you know, I'm not

gonna have much use for it, you know, once I learned so anyway, so I could see, you know, these kinds of different thoughts are happening, right. So even though this idea of death has been, you know, common theme for my life, it's still it's having a new new life new meaning as soon as I get older. So, to practice but why Wait, do the work now. powerful teaching that I learned from the teachers Suzuki Roshi is you bet kind of like to paraphrase him, you should start your practice now. When you can,

because when you come into a crisis in your life and you try to start practicing, then you won't have prepared yourself to practice you won't be ready you won't have the skills and the mindsets and the strength, inner strength to meet it. So, you know, don't just wait until you're in your deathbed find out you know, I think, you know, Gil said it was good to practice now. Now we'll start What did he say you know, in breath out breath, was it breathing? What was it he said? And, and what is letting go? You know what, what is attachment? I know some people who come new to the practice, and they don't have a clue what letting go means Just like sofas for an idea. And I've known people also who when they first hear teachings are brand new to meditation, and they hear that teachings about being mindful of thinking, they're completely, it's a completely foreign idea. They have no idea what's being talked about, you know, pay attention to thoughts, look at thoughts do I think. So, prepare yourself, you know, really prepare yourself. But if you prepare yourself now, and learn how to care and not take care, learn to let go. Learn to practice well, and learn in the process of that I think you've definitely will, your capacity to have compassion and care, to have goodness. Because one of the things we let go of you'll naturally let go of as your practice is you'd let go of all the obstacles for your capacity to care to have compassion and love and kindness. The obstacles are hate the topic of last week, the obstacles are greed, intoxication with power intoxication of all kinds. We have a capacity for care and compassion, fears an obstacle. But to look at the issues of our society, the defining issues of our times hate racism, how we treat the other immigrants coming to this country, for example, how we treat people who are on the other side of some political divide that we have the issues of economic oppression that America is a big part of causing United States the issues of the environment, climate change, What are the obstacles that in you from really being part of the movement to make a change for the better to address these for the betterment of all? Is their fear? Is their greed is there hatred? Is there annoyance that you have be bothered by these things? Is there what is what stands in the way and to use the Dharma practice, to look at our attachments naturally means, of course, you'd look at all these obstacles, what goes on in you? Of course, you would want to discover how to be free in relationship to them. And are you being limited by your overwhelm? If you are from Buddhist analysis, you're overwhelmed with some of these issues. has its genesis in some form of attachment that you Some way in which you're relating to taking me to to personally attach yourself in some way attached to something. I think that there is no overwhelmed. If you've really done, cleaned yourself on the inside, really empty yourself of attachment, there's no reason for it. The mountains are coming anyway. If you're overwhelmed by the mountains, you want to practice who knows what the world will need of us as the world changes even further. Right now, I think it needs everyone to participate in all kinds of ways to make this a better world. It needs all of us to learn how to consume less, consume more wisely, so we don't contribute to the environmental destructions. We need to be involved in the political actions that produce Somehow the environmental destruction that goes on in this planet,

we need to address this issue of racism in our society. We have to address the issues of, of hatred In our society that's so divisive. We have to look at all these issues, and how we each of us address it, I don't know, to so many different ways of doing it as individuals, but somehow, in our way, in a way that works for us and makes a difference. To teach me to care and not to care. Live likely hold everything likely. But let compassion animate you that compassion flow through you. And compassion be the source of your actions in the world. As we face climate change even that even that Don't give up your freedom. Don't give up the practice. Don't give up the hearts capacity for being at peace. But don't do

that, and do nothing else. If you do that itself is probably a form of attachment. That itself is probably a kind of violence we do to ourselves. I don't think that if we really want to care for ourselves and really honor the peace and the movement of freedom and non attachment, we would give voice or give freedom to the impulses to care to have compassion to make a difference. That's lives in us as well. But we would not be oppressed by those impulses. We would not be overwhelmed. We would not feel like we're not doing enough work because favorites do enough, but we'll hold that lightly. So as a piece for me, my understanding of where I've come to with through this practice of Buddhism is very simple summary of it is to care and not to care. Hold everything lightly, with like compassion and it makes you engage you. So I hope this talk has challenged you to really look at yourself and reflect how these ideas I'm talking about, exist in you. How are you with these issues of our society in our world? How are you with your the authority you give you hear in your emotions and your attachments. How do these live together? And is there some powerful way that you can give authority value importance to non clinging so that you are not overwhelmed. But you do act. That's the challenge that I hope this talk has given you. And I hope I very much hope that since it's such an important motivation for me to be a teacher, this those of you've been listening to me for a while and coming, I probably have permission to ask you please think about this. Talk to your friends about this, explore this and consider this really kind of do some deep. I guess in Buddhism, we would say, heart searching, soul searching around these topics and issues, and I think the world needs it. And I would suggest that we need it all of us. Thank you