

# 2020-03-30: Equanimity

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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## SPEAKERS

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So I'd like to talk about equanimity. And in thinking about it today, I thought of someone walking across a tightrope with a large balance beam in their hands. And as I think we know, that tight walk a tightrope walker is a lot more safe balanced, the easier to hold the balance with a long pole that's helping to create the center of gravity that's more stable than if they're just standing upright themselves on the wire. equanimity to develop and cultivation of mental Ecwid. equanimity is our balance pole that we carry as we go forward into the world. Go across the tight rope wire of our lives where we can encounter all kinds of challenges. Some of them wonderful things, some some of them very difficult things. And we have to keep going. Sometimes we have to keep going, we have to go to work, we have to go to the hospital, we have to do whatever they care of, and how do we do it? So we don't fall? How do we do it, do it so we don't have some kind of collapse or, or cause problems as we go along. And so we can have a balanced poll that keeps us balanced, keeps a center of gravity in the middle and makes it more difficult for us to wobble. tip over. And that balancing polls, I said is equanimity. And cultivating that strong equanimity allows us to be in the world, not separate from the world. In the world, and keeping our balance. I think sometimes I get the sense that equanimity is not a popular idea. I think people associate it with being indifferent, aloof, something like that. But another image for equanimity is maybe rafting, kayaking down a river. And where there's a lot of rapids and a lot of rocks, and a lot of obstacles as we go down the river, it can be quite dangerous waterfalls to go over and it can be very dangerous and maybe easy to get hurt. But we come down into where the river is really wide, with no rocks. It's no longer noisy as it is in the rapids. It's quiet hum flowing straight and strong. And it's definitely going it's going harmoniously, smoothly. He's just like flowing in this really nice way. So when we have equanimity, the flow of our life is quiet, the flow of our life is not so dangerous. The inner dangers that we carry with us are no longer there. The inner rapids of the we trip over and get caught in and rather than being diminished by equanimity. equanimity allows us to enter the flow of life, the flow of our stream of our life, and be in the place where it flows freely and openly and moves right along and we can move into our life and through our life with much more ease with the equanimity. So equanimity is two different things in this practice of mindfulness. One is that it is

balance. That's the ability to stay centered and balanced and not to wobble. Not to be pushed around by things. And the classic reference point for what pushes us around or loses our balance is said to be one of them. It's a classic teaching is the four worldly wins. So there is pleasure and pain, gain and loss. Some people call this success and failure, praise and blame, and fame and disrepute. And they're called the worldly wins because when they blow against us, and we're caught by them or entangle entangled with them, then they push us around and knock us over. But to be balanced, such a way that praise and blame can come success and failure, loss and gain of things possessions, and even pleasure and pain, to be able to stay balanced with it all. atomists the middle of it all. So then we're not swept up into reactivity, we don't collapse out of despair or a sense of, you know, pity or victimhood or we don't get angry and blame and push, don't hold on to something. This allows us to flow in the river without hitting the rapids. This allows us to kind of walk across a tightrope of life without falling in. So, that sense of balance and the other form of equanimity is known as upekkhā. Commonly known word probably word for equanimity. And a peck literally means to look overlook to look at to look towards. And I think of it as having the, you know, higher perspective or a bird's eye view of the situation. And it is a form of wisdom to be able To look at a situation kind of from, from above, or broadly or wisely, and in seeing the situation, understanding the situation in a broad way or bird's eye view of the situation, then not getting diluted by it not getting again entangled by it, not grasping at it or pushing it at a holding on to it or pushing it away or all the ways as the mind gets kind of wrapped up. But some kind of vision that we have of life and activity that keeps us economists or balanced are peaceful or not caught up. equanimity is a very important part of mindfulness practice, because mindfulness is one of the very strong cultivators of equanimity. And especially if we really allow ourselves to engage Well, with mindfulness like meditation. And what I mean by this is that if we sit and meditate every day, rain or shine every day, whether we want to or don't want to every day, whether it's pleasant or unpleasant every day, whether we think that it's, we're being successful or not successful every day, whether we think we're, we're going to be praised by all our neighbors for being the best meditator. They just knew the bliss you're having. Or we're free to tell anybody we meditate because our meditation is so poor and we're afraid of the criticism, you know, that people are going to give us whatever it is. If we just sit regardless of what's happening. What begins to happen is that we learn to recognize the reactions, the thoughts that we have in relationship to what's happening. And we, for example, just were thinking, we watch ourselves thinking a certain way about it. And we let go of the thoughts and come back to center, come back to the breath. And rather than giving into those thoughts, believing those thoughts, acting on those thoughts, by proceeding in meditation and letting go and coming back, over and over and over again, we learn how to stay balanced. We learn how to stay not caught. We're gonna stay economists in the midst of all kinds of things that come our way. And so it's actually important for the, you know, deeper, fuller potential of mindfulness meditation, that your meditation, not always be enjoyable. Not always be good, not always be pleasant. Not that you're supposed to go out there and make it unpleasant and try to drum up difficulties to sit with But if you just live a relatively normal life, and sit every day, eventually everything comes through the field of meditation. And, and to, in a certain way to when it's difficult to understand that this too is important part of the training, to not to get caught. And when it's really pleasant, that's just as important to not get caught. We can watch what the mind does when we have a pleasant meditation and go wanting or the

fantasy. I mean, I was younger, I used to have pleasant meditations and I started fantasizing about sometimes by giving Dharma talks about how great it was or telling my friends or I fantasize about going on. Now I'm ready to go on a retreat and think about the retreat. And you know, the paradox of it all was that I would be thinking about how great it is to meditate. And while I was lost in those fantasies, I'd stopped meditating. I think we're in better If I appreciated the wonderfulness of the meditation, and they kept doing it rather than, you know, go off in my fantasies. So, to sit, and every time we let go of our thoughts, it's a little bit of a training and equanimity. It doesn't mean that we're going to. Yeah, it doesn't mean that we're supposed to be indifferent to things, but rather to come to a place to see things, without the mind being for and against all the time, without the mind getting caught up in its fantasies and its ideas and commentaries to rush to judgment that goes on. equanimity is the opposite of a rush to judgment. So to learn to sit and so a very common phrase I'd like to say is that if you're only free, when you're comfortable, you're not really free. If you're only economists, when things are going well, you're not really economists. And so the training is to learn how to be quantum is in all situations. And so this thing of, you know, sitting and letting go of thoughts, sitting going, go have the reactivity, just enough so we can stay present. Another thing about meditation and in our mindfulness that really can make a big difference for becoming a quantum Miss. And which makes the practice I think, kind of real and authentic, is that mindfulness is an isn't Buddhism in general, it's less about holding on or trying to be an ideal, like if the ideal is to be economist. And now I have to make myself economists. It's much more realistic. Stick to think about it as, as we're studying, we're bringing our mindfulness to what it is that makes it takes away the equanimity. We want to get to know our reactivity. We want to get to really use our time in meditation other times to step back and really study what it's like when we get angry and pissed off or resentful, or we start blaming. What's it like when we get filled with fear and greed? And pull back? What's it like when we kind of are wanting fantasy wanting things in order to fail the hole we have inside or feel our discomfort? What happens to the what forms of conceit what what's forms of self identity or self definition do we have that gets challenged and threatened in such a way that we lose our balance we lose our identity. So You know not to criticize any of this stuff for not to, you know, make yourself a bad person for have reactivity, but also not to let the reactivity just have a free ride. Mindfulness is the way to allow ourselves to be with the way we are, and then study it, be mindful of it, to see it, hold it in awareness. And by study, I don't necessarily mean we kind of analyze it, just kind of really steal it and register it and be with it, hold it in awareness. And that very act of turning towards a reactivity that we have, and holy can awareness is a form of equanimity itself, because it's just seeing it for what it is and just allowing it to be there and just kind of being present. As we have this presence for our reactivity. It's inevitable we'll start understanding it or learn from it. We'll learn its tricks. We'll learn how we get tricked into Becoming reactive, we'll learn to recognize their early warning signs of reactivity, how we're feeling uncomfortable or tense, or what beliefs are coming up or judgments are coming up that are warning signs. And we'll learn to kind of navigate our inner territory in our mind in reactivity, and know how to not to pick it up, not to get involved, step back, learn to recognize it. And this ability to see more and more clearly what's going on is a natural byproduct of that is we're naturally more economists, not because we're making ourselves economists, but because we have this clear vision of what's happening. And the clear our vision clear understanding is that what's happening internally and around

us, the easier it is to be imbalanced the easiest is to be not to be in reactivity. There was a bit of surprise for me when I went and practiced in Asia practice in Burma. And I think that the word equanimity when I was young was probably in my vocabulary. But I probably I don't know how often I used it if at all, but it was a surprise to me to start doing Vipassana retreats, and to discover this you know, powerful river of equanimity is powerful strength, that felt like so harmonious, so soothing, so settled, so healing, that the word the concept that at fit, it was a concept of equanimity and to feel them feel the health of a mind which can see and not react, health of a mind that centered in itself in a deep way or the body that centered in itself in deep way and doesn't lean forward doesn't lean back doesn't go for and against It was, you know, it was such a wonderful discovery this, that the mind has this capacity. And what it felt like to me when I first discovered it this way, it was it's a natural faculty of the mind. It's a thing in its own right just like, I don't know what memories of faculty or doing arithmetic as a faculty or, or, or you know thinking as a faculty or having faith as a faculty, mindfulness attention as a faculty of the mind. So equanimity is a faculty. And if that's true, then it's a little bit like a muscle and it's a muscle gets stronger and stronger and stronger. And who knows when we're going to need that strong muscle. Who knows when we're going to come across a crisis, a challenge or perhaps for many of us It's arrived. We're here now in the COVID-19 era. And we don't know what's coming. We don't know that sometimes I have a feeling last two weeks there was a tsunami coming. And, you know, I didn't know what was going to happen and and, you know, was today, you know, what was the difficulties we're going to have? What was the challenges we're going to be facing? And to is it so then the question is, is it appropriate in times of crisis isn't appropriate in times of the corona virus, to cultivate equanimity? Is it appropriate to study our reactivity, fear, distress or anger? Whatever we do, study it to discover how we're become reactive. How we're judging other people for what they do or don't do. How judging the limitations we're living under, maybe we feel resentful that we have to be shelter in place or who is supposed to tell me I know better. You know, so what do we for and against what are we reacting to? Is there ego anonymity in we are? Is there peacefulness? Is there calm? The more of the crisis, the more valuable equanimity and calm and peace are because we think clear, we seek glimmer, clearly, we can act better. And so what happens in these kinds of situations is a great opportunity. Because the ways in which we've been triggered to be reactive, the greater the crisis, the greater the reactivity, the more it represents something deep inside of us. Some deep beliefs. Deep attachment deep concede that deep self kind of self identity were organized around. And to really take this as an opportunity to practice with it, to learn now what it's like to let go of thoughts to let go of a thought. Come back to clarity come back to clarity to now look and really see what is this reactivity about? What am I believing? What are what am I trusting my life into? Some people put their trust into fear. Some people really trust being angry. Some people really trust, acquiring and getting and making them feel safe and secure. All kinds of things. And you know, to trust the trust things that make us more agitated. What is the trust equanimity trust being calm Just enough that we're willing to study the inner lawyers that we have arguing for why we should be agitated, why we should be upset, why we should be distressed? why we should worry? Can you have that debate inside of yourself? Can you see clearly enough? What is going on. And that's, you know, the benefits of mindfulness to be able to stop and look and take your time, what's going on here and feel it and sense it and be with it. And until it starts becoming clear what's going on, to start seeing the underlying assumptions and biases that

are happening, to start seeing some of the subtle emotions that are actually fueling and driving the show. To start seeing some of the ideas we have about me myself in mind, some of the ways in which we have been trained or taught that this is the kind of person And I have to be, I have to be a person who worries at the person who's angry or I have to be a person this way or that way to keep coming back and study all this study all this to learn how to be equanimous. So a few things about cultivating equanimity. So I've said, I've said a few things about doing it for oneself. If, if we're when we need more equanimity, one of the ways to learn it is to be around economists people. And to study them or to take them in or register how they are. Because we have like mirror neurons, we have this resonance we have this way of feeling or sensing how other people are. That's not just ideas. Oh, that's a common person, that's an economist person. But there's a way of could be kind of learned by osmosis. Learn by example. It's really clear with young children, how much they learn by example, how people are, how people are emotionally and energetically. But adults can also do that. And if you spend a little bit of time around calm people, let it register take it in, if you have the good fortune to be around those people linger a little bit or you know, kind of be close enough to like let third vibe their, their demeanor kind of penetrate or absorbed into you. You might learn something you might touch your own capacity, your own muscle, for equanimity. And the and the other thing that another thing that can support equanimity is a deep investigation into what is it that you trust that's what you think you trust. But if a Martian anthropologist came to the earth and watched your behavior, your demeanor, your emotional reactions to things, and maybe didn't speak your language. And we're just watching you. What boy, what would they decide that you trust? Oh, that person trusts being irritated. That person really trusts complaining that person trusts hiding the person trusts, you know, trying to be invisible and pull away and what do we trust? What would a Martian anthropologist see in you? But what is this person trusts you don't think is trust because it's not doesn't belong in the trust category? Because we don't say we trust fear. We don't say we trust conceit. But the Martian anthropologist might say that for you. So to what do you trust and that might also clarify and help you find your way to more equanimity There's a beautiful teaching that I saw at least I was inspired by it from tick, not Han, when the both people were fleeing Vietnam, and going out into the, into the seas crossing over to the Philippines, and the small boats, they were way overloaded with people and their sides of the boat. Were just above the waterline. And then the waves and storms would come, many people died. Take that Han Vietnamese monk, Buddhist monk who does apparently sometimes he went to the beaches of Philippines and receive them and to help them get integrated and take care of them. So he spent a lot of time talking with them and learning about their faith and what happened. And one of the conclusions he came was it was a wonderful metaphor for other things as well. He made that he made the statement, that if one person in these overcrowded boats, small One person remained calm. It would keep the whole boat safe. If one of us can become an economist and peaceful, what can what benefit can that create for our world? when other people are becoming anxious, other people are being upset. How do we become the person that conveys equanimity and peace to the people around us? Wouldn't that be a great gift? Wouldn't it be a great gift if the children growing up, had encountered someone who really express the feeling of deep equanimity deep calm, even a sense of safety because of that, in this world as they walk through the world, for a child to pick the see that that's possible, as opposed to being around and seeing people are always anxious or to like To be an

economist person who's helping anybody who's in trouble. The world needs all of us at this point. I think that's one of the lessons of the this COVID-19 time everyone is needed to support and participate in trying to make a difference. to slow down this virus, slowed down the death rate and come up come out the other end as best we can. Everyone needs to support their social distancing. Everyone needs to support the pay of the medical staff, the people, everyone needs to try the best they can to stay out of the hospital for any reason Besides, if they're really sick. I was really touched them and I heard that in France. bicycling is outlawed right now, because they don't want anybody to have a bicycle accident and end up in the in the emergency room. So if you have to drive your car drive really carefully, don't have an accident. This is not the time to end up in hospital. The world needs us needs all of us. And may it be that this practice of mindfulness that we do, may it be that it makes us the kind of people who support the world to be a better place. May this practice and were developed and grow and change by it. Help us to be calmer, peaceful presence that can help compassionately timely caringly help make this a better world. They all beings be well and happy. Thank you all very much.