Good morning everyone. And as I was at the beginning of the meditation I feel quite happy to have this connection with so many people go in a certain way I'm alone here at IMC but I'm together with the whole world. And perhaps that's one of the perspectives about what to see what's happening now in the world is that many of us are alone the Certain Way maybe alone in our homes with the people who live there. Some people have no no when they're living with there is a kind of quality of aloneness that many people have now in our sheltering at home lockdown that we have huge majority of the people on the globe. But we're alone with others we're alone with. We're sharing this amazing phenomena amazing, global event that in some ways seems unprecedented. as something that we share together, maybe the flu of 1918 was a shared event all over the world. But the degree to which we know each other and have an experience and have news and about everyone in the way that we can have this YouTube connection to so many people. It's we are sharing in something I know a huge, huge scale. And you know, life has taken a dramatic turn. It reminds me of this saying that The difference between school and life in life you get the test first. And so, here we are, in a certain certainly it can be seen as a test, or it could be seen as a new opportunity for, for care for practice for really looking and meeting at some of the deepest existential issues of human life. And that we are doing this together in large scale. It's certainly a time for a lot of compassion and care. And I was thinking about now much more than before, about the symbolism of in Mahayana Buddhism there's a great personification of compassion called a Loki tissue, or Kuan Yin or condone That Bodhisattva of compassion, who sees the cries of the world sees the suffering of the world. And the fact that she's kind of in the traditional language said to be the one who sees the suffering of the world. Maybe it's a little bit behind the choice by the Japanese camera maker to call their cameras, Canon Canon. It's named after the Great personification of compassion. And, and thing about one of the images symbolic imagery of cognition. We look at the tissue for this being is that she has 1000 arms 1000 hands, and each hand is an eye and so she has 1000 eyes, in thousand hands. And in some statues, each hand has a different
tool. implement, and the idea is that you need 1000 eyes, at least, to see all the different forms of ways human beings are challenged, all the different kinds of situations people are in and you need 1000 hands to be able to care for that. And you need 1000 implements and tools to offer the right kind of care for all the different ways in which people's human life is like. And the challenges that people are under these days are so multi varied. Some people and this, you know, getting a sense and kind of slowly kind of realizing that, that, you know, pretty much I think everyone that I know, in some way or other is challenged in these days. And, and the challenge is kind of, you know, the knowledge of harmony. What, how many ways people are challenged these days is just growing. And certainly obvious that in the United States and I think around the globe, the medical profession is challenged hospitals are at the breaking point some places and the medical staff are working overtime and to exhaustion and, and some of them are clearly going into situations where their own health and maybe even their life is at risk in very dramatic ways. And so it's a huge challenge. There are people who have you know, losing their work and their finances and MIT can't afford maybe rent. There's I know people who didn't have housing when this whole thing began, and now are scrambling to look for housing and not easy. And we have people who are home alone, maybe with kids It's a big challenge to take care I just can't you know, I raised two children and when they were quite young It was a chat very, you know, had a lot of challenges the amount of time and needed the challenges of the kids and their energy and at home and the to have this in a 24 seven now, I can imagine that it's huge challenges for some people at home with children and being alone and there are people who have illnesses of all kinds different kinds of illnesses and make them particularly susceptible to the Coronavirus and or you know, it's more dangerous for them. And, and to have those challenges going on and they just goes on the list goes on and on. So what's called on for us is to be like a bulky tissue or to have 1000 arms, 1000 eyes and 1000 implements, ways to care. And the ways that we can. A neighbor yesterday came over with handmade face masks that she'd made and, and that was very, very touching and to, to feel her care and that's brought it over to our house and for our family and very nice. And other people also know or are making face masks and offering them and I'm very touched by the people have offered it to me and to IMC and to our retreat center, the staff that are there. The and, you know, it's kind of a time of compassion of care. That is very unusual, because in terms of the virus itself, in terms of what everyone has to now, deal with Then worry worth and prepare for and contend with is on this globe. It's not really a person or a people or a country, that is the enemy. We have very strong tendency human beings to make another and to push away into close in and separate ourselves from others and blame others. Certainly some of that is happening for sure. But, but it's very hard to see other people as the enemy in causing this illness as being what we're contending with, we can't like point to we certainly can point to people maybe in government who maybe are not been fast enough to take care of things or make choices maybe we don't agree with. So certainly we can kind of see that there are, you know, human issues that need to be dealt with. But there's something about the shared nature of this kind of crisis. is where everyone is kind of facing the virus in a way where it's all shared. And, and how do we open up all our hands? All our eyes? How do we open up our humanity so that our care, our compassion goes out in all directions to everyone. And one of the ways I think, is to do self care. I think of the, you know, one of the ways to do self care and care for others, care for the whole world is to use the basic practice of mindfulness as a way to take
care of the different layers or different dimensions of our life in a kind little bit can be a systematic way, where we, you know, use the practice, to really check in with ourselves and do And see where does the care need to be? What needs our attention now, and often in in our practice at least, mindfulness practice. I think it's so we put a lot of emphasis on self care as the foundation for the care for others, that we have more to offer others. If we have resolved some of our own tension and stress, if we're not as agitated, if we're less agitated, if we have some calm, if we'd be able to work through and come to their side of some of our suffering, then we have so much more to offer the world. We have to we have, we have embodiment and a modeling and understanding of how to live without agitation, how to live without stress, how to live without suffering. And that understanding is so important because then we're less likely to perpetuate stress and suffering and agitation in the world. If we're caught in the grip of fear Then that's the model modeling. And when we show other people then it's contagious. Fear is contagious. Certainly it's, you know, easy to be afraid now, but to have enough presence and practice with fear, so that we can stay calm enough, even with our fear, that we don't kind of spread fear into the society in the world, to have been able to resolve and work through and understood the dynamics of anger or frustration or hatred in ourselves. So that does spill over into the world. To be able to, to know how to calm ourselves when we're agitated. So we go out into the world, or, you know, have contact with people that what we offer is a calm presence and non anxious presence. So the use the mindfulness as a checklist can be done like this, that the way that we often Teach the mindfulness practice here at IMC is we do it systematically. First with breathing, posture and breathing. Then with mindfulness of the body, then mindfulness of emotions and then mindfulness of thinking. There's more to be aware of for sure. But as a as a checklist for checking in with yourself, this is a very, can be very effective. That what is your posture? In your when are you tense Are you slumped over? Are you collapsed? Are you overly rigid? Are you somehow turning away physically from the world? Can you find a posture that represents some way that you care appropriately for yourself, that you're not collapsing, that you're not falling into lethargy, you're not overly tense, you're not grasping your hands or you know twisting your fingers and you know, sometimes just checking in with your overall What are you doing with your body is not the first kind of place to check where it's relatively easy you get the evidence kind of directly. And like so and take a posture that maybe is like a meditation posture, a posture of balance, a posture that represents some kind of confidence of being present here. Even if you don't feel that way. It's not insincere to adjust your posture to take a posture that's balanced and alert and upright and, and not collapsed or not overly tense. And then within that posture, how's your breathing, or your breathe is your breathing tight is your breathing shallow, is your breathing fast, how is your breathing with a situation and sometimes, the feeling the holding patterns in the breath I we're holding our bell Enter, holding the chest or breathing only in the upper chest, for example. It's to start noticing that and then see if it's possible to relax and the breathing, to let the breathing settle in. And, and sometimes even small adjustments in breathing, or maybe consciously taking a few long deep breaths or relaxing in the body as you breathe can can be a big mood changer really to kind of settle us and balance to some degree relatively quickly. And sort of check in with a breathing. And if you check in with your breathing, sometimes it can be hard to do that because some of the difficult emotions and beliefs and ideas and concerns we have, can take precedent can seem so important that we don't take don't want to take the time to check into what's going on here. Some of us who are
sheltered at home I'm actually have a lot of time. And it's not a time to sacrifice the self care, because we have all this swirling of ideas and agitation and worry. And sometimes just checking in with your breathing, maybe simply taking some breath. And then mindfulness of the body. What is happening with your body internally? Where are the tensions and the holdings? What's activated, what's tight? what's hot, what's numb, what is what is moving in, in your bodies that are a lot of restless this last physical agitation in the body. To really understand what's happening with the body, is to understand this kind of all these kinds of ways is to understand how the body is expressing our relationship to what's happening in the world. And to sit in meditation for example, and tune into all the different energies and sensations of the body as a check in That's what's happening. I can't tell you how many times in my life that I've been busy doing something. And then it occurred to me to check into my body. And then it occurred to me to check into my body. And only then that I didn't realize my shoulders were tense. Only then I realized I was holding my belly. And sometimes that's been very easy. As soon as I recognize that it's something really says something relaxes. thought through. It doesn't have to be dramatic, but it's definitely an improvement. Or sometimes I feel by through the body, I noticed that sometimes it's the early warning sign of certain emotions coming along or stresses there are sometimes I only know what I'm feeling emotionally. If once I've discovered what's happening in my body and the sensations that are swirling there, the butterflies in the stomach maybe attentions in the in the jaw that might be there. And so self care by checking in with your body There might be signals in the body that tell you what you should be doing. Maybe you should be moving. Maybe there's all this energy in the body that needs movement and needs to be dissipated and needs to be expressed. Movement exercises, Tai Chi yoga, tai chi gong dance. For people who are cooped up at home for a lot, maybe this is a time to dance, with music without music, just to get the body moving and shaking. When the body doesn't move enough when holding yourself still too long. A lot of inner things kind of get bottled back then, and repressed or the pressure builds inside. And it's a lot easier to handle some difficult emotions. If we give movement to the emotions. So if we're afraid, move to fear expressing your body. What that fear wants to do and if you're angry express it physically a little bit. And not not to hurt anyone or not to, you know, throw plates across the room. But, but kind of just kind of like almost like you're dancing it like you're choreographing what you're feeling. It gives a freedom and looseness and a little bit of healthy distance from some of this difficult emotions we have. So feel what's going on in the body and give it expression sometimes can be very helpful. And then the third area See? So then the third area is emotions, kind of already began talking about it. But this is a time to really tune in to what's going on emotionally. Even if it's subtle. This subtle emotions that are chronic and continuous, have a huge impact on our on ourselves and our being. Notice to how we relate to our emotions. If we're angry For afraid if we're sad if we're happy, if we feel peaceful, when do we feel peaceful? our emotional life does not have to be completely out of our control. We don't have to be just the recipient or the victims of whatever emotions we have. We can practice with it through mindfulness, and to bring careful attention to emotions, changes the nature of the emotions, you because when you bring awareness to an emotion, really step back and get the bigger view and really kind of mindfully aware of it, then we're less entangled with it, we're less fueling it and feeding it and that begins to change it emotions that get fed, you know get perpetuated misery, usually in a in a not so useful way. Even happy emotions. If we too involved with them and feeding them a certain way or, or pushing them a little bit. They go a little
bit off kilter a little bit quite not quite right. So how to kind of open to them and feel them and allow them to be there. And in doing that, it'd be healing and harmonizing brings us to homeostasis calms things down. So we can have calm fear, calm, distress, calm, stress, calm. Happiness, you know, whenever it's possible to be calm in the middle of these things. So to check in with ourselves emotionally, what need what emotionally do we need to do? What needs our attention, what needs our care? And as I said earlier, we could offer a lot more care to the world. If we've cared for ourselves first. And one of the ways is through our emotions and being so we can be very conscious of what their emotions are. So that we're not acting out of them in unskillful ways. If the emotion kind of is pushing us to act, then maybe we don't act so consciously or knowingly or intentionally, from the best places inside of us. And then to be careful to check in with ourselves, what's going on in our minds? What kind of beliefs do we operating under? What kind of thoughts do we have? What are the flavor of our thoughts? What are the the back background mood of how we think? Because the mood of our thinking is like a filter by which we think and how we think and the things we think, if we're the mood of our thoughts is fear. The mood of our thoughts is our version. If the mood of our thoughts is is harshness and anger that tends to reinforce discomfort reinforce an unhealthy way of thinking To look at the kind of beliefs we keep, we keep thinking and believing. If you're when you're following the news, listening to news or reading the news. Take a little bit of time after learning the news to notice what now you believe. Because it's generally people will take in news and have an opinion about what they read, absorb an opinion of what they read in the news. Go along with the mood or the conclusion that the whoever's thing you've read is, but if you take time to take mindful time as you watch this happen to me cognitively. What just happened to me as I read this, do I now have a new belief? Do I have a new way of thinking, am I interpreting this through a certain lens? Is it Am I jumped on the latest solution? I know holding on for hope. And this is it because of the way that person spoke so confidently, who was the person who wrote or spoke about this? There's a whole way of, of wise way of critical thinking of careful thought about what we're doing in the mind what our thinking is about how we think. And our relationship to our thoughts. Do we believe our thoughts? Do we think we are our thoughts? Are we so enmeshed in our thoughts that whatever we think, of course, is true, because we are wondering the same as our thoughts. To practice mindfulness is to realize that our thoughts are not the sum total of who we are. They're not the center of who we are. We're not the definition of who we are. It's quite phenomenal to be mindful of thinking and just see think thoughts are just thoughts. Almost as if, sometimes, as if they're not yours at all. They just arise and they pass We don't have to latch on to them. So there's a whole way of checking in with ourselves with our thoughts, you know, and being aware of it and, and if we find ourselves too entangled into gripped by our thoughts, it's probably a good time to learn to relax deeply. And one way to relax the place to go through these four, these four different areas of mindfulness, or five, awareness of posture, awareness or breathing, awareness of the body of emotions. Can any of these be softened and relaxed? Can any of these be somehow settled, so that when they're more settled, than there tends to be not so much of a grip or compulsion to think so insistently. So these are some ways to do self care. Someone has learned to do this can do this very quickly. And it's almost like second nature after a while we go around and we're checking in and feeling and knowing what's going on. And then the same thing can happen when we're caring for other people, we care for other people through our posture, through her
breathing is affected by the care of others, our bodies affected, our emotions are affected or thoughts are affected, and to maintain some contact with ourselves and self awareness. I think a nice kind of guideline for how to care for the world how to do things for others. Maybe even no matter how intense it has to be, maybe even the more intense it is, the more useful this guideline is. In that is to keep 50% of the attention on the people, the person we're taking care of. And 50% of the attention on hearing oneself on one's body, one's breathing, with emotions, one's thoughts. And there's a way of doing that, where it doesn't feel like we're separating from others, but actually to do it to really be centered in this practice of mindfulness. There's a wonderful way in We are caring and paying attention to what's happening here. And the boundary between self and other kind of disappears. It isn't so much that we're well not, isn't so much that we're merging with others. That's not so useful. But we're clearly aware of what's happening here. And so there's no sense of a contract itself around what we're paying attention to what we're noticing here. And so it's more like we're transparent and open. And we're also very attentive to the other, so we can take care of them as well. And this kind of being with others with the mindfulness centered here, in an open way, but centered in the situation where we still are aware of what's happening here. Not selfishly, but almost because selfishness has disappeared. And so naturally, the awareness is all encompassing, goes around and includes both self and others in the whole situation. I think of mindfulness As when it's mature, as not being self centered, but being situation centered, that we're really centered on the situation we're in. And in being centered in that situation, the mindfulness is 360 degrees, where we pay attention to ourselves and pay attention to what's outside of us. And, and interested, all equally valid and equally important for attention. And I found in situations of great challenges, that I actually work wiser and better when I can manage the study of about 5050 for the attention inside and out. So I was very touched by a passage that's been going around now, probably maybe many of you seen it maybe many times. The first time I Credit they're so hard to as you just said that came from an unknown neighbor. Second time I saw it someone, thank you. For someone who sent me a beautiful video from the made by the Belfast, Northern Ireland Fire Department. were beautiful scenes of the town of people with going on right now in Belfast, around sheltering at home. And then someone else sent another saying, it was originally composed by a man named Paul Williams. So maybe that's the case, but it's a beautiful I think was meant for the world. When you go out and see the empty streets, the empty stadiums, the empty train platforms. Don't say to yourself, it looks like the end of the world. What you're seeing is love in action. What you're seeing in that negative space is how much we care for each other. For our grandparents, for our immune compromised brothers and sisters, for people we will never meet. People will lose their jobs over this. Some will lose their businesses and some will lose their lives. All the more reason to take a moment when you're out on your walk or on your way to the store, or just watching the news, to look into the emptiness and marvel at all that love. let it fill you and sustain you. It isn't the end of the world. It's the most remarkable act of global solidarity we may ever witness. We are in this together. The world society's we'll get through it working together. Not everyone will get to the other side. But let's do this together. Let's support each other and let's love each other. Let's care about each other. As much as we care about ourselves. Not let's not be overly focused on our own situation. Remember that as you take care of yourself in this environment, it's the same behavior off much of it, like sheltering at home and caring for the world around you. Now that we're all been asked to wear face
masks and public, the face masks are not to protect you. From yourself, that your face mask not protecting you. Your face made mask is you protecting others and when they wear their face mask, they're protecting you and What a fantastic thing This represents that each of us is caring for the other by wearing these masks. This is love this is care. May it be that we appreciate the solidarity, the care, the attention, maybe we appreciate the medical profession that's working so hard to help. May we appreciate this. The people in the grocery store workers in the grocery store are keeping the food available and stocked and in some ways, also risking their own lives by helping and supporting me, we appreciate all that's happening. And in seeing this appreciation of what is good right now and supportive, that we sit laying down the seeds, the foundation for the beginning of a new world. This is not the end of the world. I like to see it this is the beginning and may we create the foundation work caring and loving and, and, and a world in which we really care for ourselves and see ourselves as a global family. Maybe we all care for ourselves, maybe we all care for others. Maybe we all care for the whole world and may begin by the self care that mindfulness brings us. Thank you all very much for being here. And I appreciate it so much to have the chance to share and talk and, and to share my love and my wonderful opportunity I have to, to be in touch with so many of you and I don't take it for granted. I value it very much and may the goodness of our practice together, spread from each of us out into the world around us. May this period of time we've had together now be something that's spreads goodness across the globe. Thank you all very much