Gil Fronsdal
I want to tell a little story. There was once a family who went for vacation to another country turned out to be a Buddhist country. And they were there for a couple of weeks. And there was a teenager who the family and she noticed that their vacation spot was right close to a Buddhist monastery. So the first week, she kind of just noticed that you notice there was particularly calm and peaceful place that struck her as unique. The second week, she decided to kind of venture in and see what's going on in there. And fortunate for her, she got to meet the Abbess pretty soon as you came in, and this this struck up a friendship and they went back to see the Ibis every day and ebus taught her a little bit about meditation, without wakes up quickly. And she was going to go back to her home country, which was not a Buddhist country, and she'd never heard of meditation before. So she asked the Abbess, you know, when I go back to my country, how can I you know, how can I continue this and learn what this meditation is all about. And this was, of course, before YouTube, so. So not that so. So the episode, oh, when you go back to your country, ask around for different people who were you know, you're wise people you think are wise. And ask them, if they can point you to the person what they think is wise, wise person who really knows how to listen. And then learn how to listen from that person. That was the instructions, that was the alternative to meditation. Learn how to listen. And this idea of listening is something that's very keeps repeats, repeated in many religious traditions is kind of representation of the kind of attention that we bring in this kind of life of ours of practice. That is represented, I think, in my mind that by the idea that that direct disciples of the Buddha, in the Pali word is subaqua, which means the people who heard the hearers and to be able to hear, and there's something about having the ability to hear the Dharma, literally by hearing it back in the old days, there was no books, there was no audio Dharma there was. And so it was only heard numbers only, could only be heard in someone talking about it. But not just here in the Dharma as a spoken, but to hear the Dharma and everything. They hear it in the breeze that goes in that rustling of the trees or in the hum of the air purifier or something, to what is it to hear the Dharma. So I wanted to read a little poem. That verse that is by one of the early Buddhist nuns named Tama, and it's slightly abbreviated, I took out some of the technical terms that would maybe not mean anything for anyone, or most people not attaining mental peace, and with no control of my mind, I approached a nun who was trustworthy. She taught me the Dharma. I listened to the Dharma. As she instructed me, I listened to the Dharma as she instructed me. For one week, I sat cross legged in one spot, filled with joy and happiness. On the eighth day, I've straightened out my legs and shattered the
mass of darkness. She woke up. So the turning point for him or her distress was, listen, hearing, listening to the Dharma as it's being taught. And also listening, how do we listen? Why is listening so important?

Gil Fronsdal
The when I think about listening, I think about listening both externally but also listening internally. And the importance of that is that it uses metaphor, this idea that the world that we can perceive around us, is kind of infinite. It's like, you know, six spreads out wide and big this world of ours. And we feel you stand on top of a mountain that look out across the world, that's you see the vastness of it, you know how big it is, maybe there's so much to perceive. But if you look inward to yourself, is actually equally vast and big. And it turns out this little human body that we have, is when you when you when you kind of bring the inner eye to see or the inner ear to really listen to what's here, it can feel just as vast, it says, buried and multitude, multifaceted is the external world. And listening, sits right at the junction between this external world and this internal world. And, and you can listen both externally and internally. But the place standing there at that junction and where they're listening happens either way. It's not like a straight, pure separation to an internal and external world, the internal world that we have, is influences how we listen to the external world. How the external world is with us and our experience with it influences how we experience the internal world, and to and to be centered in the listening. And really attend and be open to what's there. Sooner or later, you'll be starting your different times your attention will sometimes go more to the external world, but sometimes goes more to the internal world, to the point where some point we realize that the two are not so separate from each other, or not, not distinct from each other. That how we are the internal light affects how we listen to the external world. Our listening, our perception of the world, is seldom innocent, seldom just pure and simple. And we're just seeing things just as they are. But too often we're listening or perceiving for certain things, we have our agendas or concerns or bias that we bring along in how we perceive the world what we listen for. So just stay with the idea of listening. Some people are, might be primed to listen to their tone of other people's voices. Because a tone tells them whether they're safe or not. And so they're that's what they're listening for. That's what they pick up and with other people never occurred to them that for some reason, they that that's not an issue for them. And so they're listening, not for the tone of the voice. But there it may be listening, but what are they saying? That reflects back on me, I hope they're saying good things to me, I'm speaking to me in a way that they recognize my wonderfulness and greatness. And if they don't, let me tell them about it. And, and other people are listening for how that, how, because they have a maybe a lifetime history of this, of how they're going to be disrespected or ignored or not seen or not understood or overlooked or diminished or someplace that their value. And so they're primed to listen to that, listen for that. So, so we perceive different things for different purposes.

Gil Fronsdal
If you're walking down the street, and you need to buy a pillow, you'll notice pillow stores or, you know, but if what you're hungry, you might be looking for a grocery store. And yes, that's what you notice. Or you know, so that we kind of sometimes have a we look according to what we want, what we're interested in, what our history is, what our associations are. certain sounds certain voices, certain something. We have histories of of that. And so if you know if you lived in a foreign country and had
wonderful experiences with people speaking that language, and you hear people, you know, down there walking down the streets speaking that language Oh, yeah, that's so good. And our history of that language influences how we hear and the impact that has, but if it was a difficult experiences with that, that language, maybe you were in a warzone and traumatic to hear that language around, that it could retrigger some of those fears and concerns in pain and in the listening. So as we as we Go into this more more deeply in this practice, we start seeing that listening, we stand at the junction of listening to the external world and the internal world, we start seeing the two worlds, so absolutely separate. And that's where we begin seeing the Dharma experiencing finding the Dharma. Not by co someone's teaching the Dharma, but how we can find the Dharma in every place we go, every experience we have, because that's where we can see, are we clinging? Are we resisting? What are we bringing with us? What what what are we adding to the situation, and some of we're adding might be appropriate and wonderful. Some of it might actually be harming for ourselves and other people. Some of it might not be particularly harming and the way we think about harming, but it's a kind of a wind drag, it's kind of a, it kind of, like, you know, interferes with our freedom, or our ease and peace. So something is kind of pretty subtle, maybe. And I've noticed in my mostly I see this in my meditation these last last few weeks, something has become kind of more acutely aware of that before is, how much time comes into play. In my conceptions of the moment, and how it enter, it penetrates or is kind of there, initially, kind of unconsciously, it's kind of like, ooze in to how I perceive what's going on in the moment, it can be so simple that as I exhale, I'm aware that the exhale is going to come to an end. That's time, right? It's an idea of time, a concept of time. And I can see that I can just let go of the just a simple thing of the exhale, coming to an end, it's just an exhale, and doesn't have to be part of it at all. It's as if it's timeless, just the exhale. And I could see that all added addition of time concept of time that added on top of it. Some people might feel what do you mean, Gil added on top of top of it. Time is real. We live in time, kind of. Yes. But I but my conception of time is my addition. It just like for example, if I'm sitting meditating and and someone says, well, the roof of the building is real. Does that mean that was be thinking about the roof all the time, roof roof, sitting your roof, roof, roof, roof, rough, rough, you know, what? A real you know, you know, you know, ideally, when you sit and meditate at IMC, none of you will think about the roof when you're sitting here. Except now that I brought it up, he will always think about it

Gil Fronsdal

when you come. So same thing with time, yes, the roof exists, but you have to think about all the time you can. Time exists, you'd have to think about it. And they're so subtle, the addition to it. And an even something like sometimes I'll relax when I meditate. And I see it even there too, that I'm a little bit ahead of myself to the end of relaxation. Or to that what's going to have good it's going to be what I am relaxed. You know, it took me a half a second ahead of myself to the end of relaxation. Or to that what's going to have good it's going to be what I am relaxed. You know, it took me a half a second ahead of myself or something but I am, you know, living in this extra as opposed to just feel the relaxation be with it. Just don't don't have time. As if everything that occurs, is here forever. Kind of or just it this is its moment that I really be here for it. So the same thing. So listening, all these things that come along with listening, all these associations, memories, meaning, agendas, preferences that come along. So as we learn to sit back and listen deeply, then we're also learning to listening to ourselves. There's a story of a man who came to a therapist, and said, You know, my spouse is always angry, and it's so difficult to live with my spouse. And we tried to deal with this for years, but I think I need some help here from a therapist. And that therapist said, Well,
have you ever tried listening to your spouse? Well, no. Well go home and listen. So the person did he came back the next week to the therapist and said, I've been listening but it doesn't change anything. Okay, I'm glad you've been listening. Now go back and listen to what's behind the words your spouse speaks. Where are the words coming from? So that person went back and spend another week listening and listening. But what's behind the words, I came back to the therapist and said, Oh, this made all the difference in the world, there's peace at home now. Because I realized that when my spouse was angry, for me, I had to, you know, I felt attacked, and I, you know, I kind of assumed I had that tag back, and we had to have a fight, I had to protect myself. But I listened, I was behind the words, I realized my spouse is afraid. And when I realized the fear was there, and I asked if we could talk about it, that just changed everything. And there was no more any fights. And we had a whole different conversation. So to listen deeply to ourselves that way, what's behind our words? So many of us live in conversations, live in memories, live in projected futures and concepts and ideas. What happens if we listen to ourselves deeply? And, and in doing so, maybe hear what's behind the words? If we're some people are phenomenal league. You know, in the world of thinking and stories and imagery, it's a fine story. Sometimes I find worlds sometimes to be in. But what happens if you listen to what makes you think? And listen to that? What do you find that what happens to you, if you listen deeply there, to what, what makes you think what makes you your impulse to be and once you're there, and discover that I bet also then you'll learn to listen to others in new ways. Because what was making you bet a lot of time thinking probably is influencing how you were listening as well. Certain subtle agendas or concerns. But so this idea of settling back into listening deeply, deeply. And I grew up speaking Norwegian. And there's a word just like in English, there's a word for hearing and a word for listening. And listening, the word is Li Li. But if there's a academic Norwegian dictionary akademisk nilfisk. old book, the dictionary that has a definition for lichter for this lesson that I really love. It's, it's make an effort. And I've never known maybe other dictionaries do this, too, but part of the definition is in parenthesis. So I don't know why you know, but Okay, so it says, make an effort. And the reference point I have for that is listening to a very quiet sound far in the distance. And I think some of us if we tried to do that, we even close our eyes and get really quiet and kind of quiet our thinking mind. So we can really hear their subtle sound. But But what happens? Is it possible to quiet the inner chatter, even if it's just for two moments. And what what that's that and that suggests that's a way of beginning to hear the Dharma. In everything. Attend that quiet we can pick up an experience better, where the stress is where the compulsions are, where their preoccupations are. And one of the marvelous things about being quiet for one moment or two moments, it doesn't have to be long, is that it could be just long enough to see how difficult it is to be quiet. And, and as soon as you start seeing how difficult it is to be quiet. That's where the Dharma can be found. That's where we see where there's compulsion and clinging desire and fears operating. And rather than being upset that seeing that in the Dharma, we kind of celebrate Oh, I saw it. I see it more clearly than ever before. And some people have a specialty
specialize it you know, being critical about what they see, like, all good news, all self acknowledges bad news. But then the Dharma we're training ourselves to kind of learn to appreciate seeing the compulsions, their agendas, the fears, the angers, their greed, the desires that we get caught in, will appreciate it not so we can do it better, but so that we could listen to it. And listen to where does it come from what's even deeper than that, and to listen in such a way that the listening has a lot of space in a room. One of the things I love about listening. And I may hopefully, there's not a good argument that it's different than this, you can make probably some argument. But there's something about listening that, at that you're not touching what you're listening to. You're not, you're not interfering in a certain way. It's almost I think, of listening as making space to allow oneself to hear. And so there's a kind of a peacefulness or non aggressiveness hopefully, in the listening. There might be times when listening is aggressive, and maybe even problematic. But then what I'm pointing to is, if what inspires me about listening is it's kind of like this ability to have perception that doesn't require any kind of interfering with what's happening. It just allows things to be as they are, but they're heard. But, but to but to really know how to do that, well, then we have to also hear ourselves, listen to ourselves, to see where the extra baggage we bring the extra judgments and values and preoccupations we have, because seldom listening is seldom innocent. But but to have this sense of x is this clear reference point of the possibility of listening without interfering. And the reference point for that, for me is hearing. The difference between listening and hearing is that listening is requires some effort, as a Norwegian dictionary says, you know, make an effort. The do some directedness to listen. But to do here,

Gil Fronsdal
we can do me hearing and listening. Sometimes it's anonymous, the way we speak. But sometimes hearing is doesn't have that directedness doesn't have the effort, we can hear without having to think about or want to hear what we want to you know, a loud car goes by we hear it. But initially, we're not planning to hear it, choosing to hear it, directing ourselves to hear it, we just hear it, a bird sings and we hear it. And there's something about just hearing and leaving things alone, and be able to relax and open just hear that is is a wonderful reference point for seeing when we can't hear when we do and when we do get involved and caught up in our thoughts and ideas of what's going on. And that's one of the functions of mindfulness meditation. His path of Buddhism is not to kind of fall into some wonderful bliss state, wonderful place of peace, I just call the cabinet kind of enlightened retirement. And I haven't made that, you know, if only I could kind of rest in peace that everything will be okay. The purpose of the Dharma is to have just enough peace. So that we can see what takes us away from it. And that's where we see the Dharma. That's where we hear the Dharma. And so when we listen to the trees rustling or the birds, or their rivers going or the rain falling we're not just hearing the rain. The leaves rustling we're also feel listened well. We're hearing that there's a mutuality, cooperation in the hearing. It's us and our memories and associations and all kinds of things that come along with the hearing. And this and some if we don't have any attachments and clinging fears and all this extra kind of suffering, producing things as part of it. It gets to be a very rich world to hear and listen to perceive the natural world around us and the social world around us. It adds a kind of deeper dimensions to it. What do we listen to? It's kind of CO created, it's kind of like we're, it's not just completely out there. It's not completely in here. But something is happening in the interface and that connectivity and the ways in which we somehow overlap our lives or co creator lives together a cook, who could co create with the wind blowing in the trees out there. And what is that? And what is that world? What is that life, a life
that's not maybe so self centered, but it's not exactly self forgetting either. So to listen, to listen deeply, to hear, to allow the so to be able to hear the Dharma not only Edwin, it's darbus, being taught by someone, but to be able to hear the Dharma all the time, wherever we go, Dharma is available, if we've learned how to listen. And that we become a disciple of the Buddha, a sub aka a listener. So let's all listen. And remember also to listen to each other, and maybe listen to what's below the words of what people say. So that we can love in some deeper way, what's behind the words. May listening, be a vehicle for care and compassion and love in this world that we live in. So thank you very much. And for those of you who are on YouTube,

Gil Fronsdal
we've started now a few weeks ago, have a Zoom Room that's open after the talk, where Jatin Barry kind of hosted than they do some breakout groups, and that just to have a discussion about the talk or about the Dharma or get to know each other a little bit. So and I think that the, the link is, I think it's in the chat at the very top of the chat. And also I think it's going to be posted in a few minutes or at moments or, again now. Thank you, Martha. And then also, if it's also on the IMC calendar, on the homepage of IMC was a calendar you can find a link there to the Zoom Room. So thank you. And we do have a little bit of time left before the official ending of today. Does any of you have any comments or questions that you'd like to make at this point? Brian

Thank you. That was a wonderful talk. A lot of my work has been with listening to the world so it was very appropriate problem is that when I listened to my body, my body won't stop complaining. It says Oh, you're finally listening to me. Your shoulder hurts here. You know, it's and also I have really bad tinnitus so whenever I listen, I hear the tinnitus. So you know, there's a lot of things that that are difficult for me when I actually listen to my body.

Gil Fronsdal
Yes, so so that the what you're calling the difficulty, yeah, that's where you find the Dharma. Okay, so I wouldn't shy away from experiencing that difficulty. But for you to discover what it what do you mean by difficulty what exactly is happening? Because painful shoulder at one point, you know, one way of just as a way of thinking about it, it's helpful to think kind of provisionally that a painful shoulder is just a painful shoulder. There's no difficulty. Difficulty is what you're adding. So what is that? And so I would spend, I'd encourage you that you seem to sit well, and still, I would encourage you to, in meditation, at least, spend time being very patient with that physical pain. And listen to it and feel it and discover what you're adding. That's extra. And the advantage of that is that once you can find what's extra, the resistance, the judgments, the fears of Whatever the expectation or whatever the deck extra that that's very respectful for our body, then you might be able to listen to your body more deeply. And then you might be able to discern that there's subtle, subtle or not so subtle shifts you can make in your posture, how to take care of this part of yourself better. Also, you might discover that the body has self healing powers. And sometimes some of the places of tension will begin to unravel themselves or soften or open up. Or you start discovering that, I guess this pain will be forever. But the problem was not the pain, the problem was all the tension I added around it, and I can soften the tension that's around it. And then it becomes simpler and simpler. And it turns out, I can be peaceful, I can be at peace with the
pain, once I've kind of, you know, settled some of the extra layers. So I don't know if how I worded it is meaningful for you. But maybe that's, that's wonderful, that's wonderful. Take your time and a lot of compassion and care, the only thing I would suggest for you is some basically suggesting, you know, sitting pain is what I suggest for you is only do it sit with a pain, when you feel you want to Okay, this is this is a good exercise is useful, I understand why I'm doing it, I see how I understand I understand this is this is a bit there's a way in which this is beneficial for me. And it's not easy to do. But I feel motivated. When you no longer feel motivated, or feel or understand how it's beneficial. Probably to take a break. You don't have to force yourself to kind of, you know, bear through it at all costs. So it may just be caring for yourself that way.

Thank you, you're Sangha. So in my 10 years of practice, I've gone from someone who is unable to listen to being very, very good.

**Gil Fronsdal**
You hold the coin in my ears. Oh, sorry, yes. Okay.

So in my 10 years of practice had gone from not being able to listen to people to listening so deeply, that I've become very reactive. So I was wondering if there's a difference, or there's a passive listening, active listening, what I do, I'd call it reactive.

**Gil Fronsdal**
Great, great. Well, I congratulate you for listening deeply. That's, that's a really great thing to learn how to do. And Chad said, I don't know you well enough. But what I suspect is happening is that you've come to a deeper place inside of you, that the what you hear is striking it. So what I mean by this is that, if I hold my hand like this, and someone comes along like this, you know, there's resistance to hit something. But if my head relaxes, then this goes right through, it doesn't start. And so or if I had like this, lots of space, and things just find their way through. So you're probably getting a touching something very deep inside of you, that those things are striking. And so discover what they're hitting. And if you can find out what's going on what's because it doesn't have to hit anything. So what is that, that it's hitting? And, and then that I think you're probably what's wonderful sensitivity and capacity to perceive and feel. And others might even get more acute, but it's gonna not land anywhere, it's not going to hit anything. You'll feel more porous. And you won't be unfeeling if you do that, but you actually be more, more capable of holding what's going on.

Thank you. That makes a lot of sense. Yes. So PTSD. So

**Gil Fronsdal**
yeah, one of the things we're trying to do in this practice, I would say suggest that and I think listening is, again, a nice metaphor for this is where we're expanding our capacity to hold life experience. So
rather than necessarily solving the problems or fixing things that happened, we're making more rum in
the mind, the heart, the body, to be able to hold things and to be present for things as they are. And so
sometimes we were so preoccupied with ourselves with our concerns our life, that there's very little
room and then it's very filling room in there. That is sometimes I feel like I have to change the world, so
that everything can be okay. And the other people have to behave better so that can be okay. But as we
learn to open up the years to listen, then there's that turns out there's lots of room and hearing, to hear
all kinds of things without being reactive to it. There's lots of room in the heart, amazingly, lots of room
in our love. That can just be really spacious. And it isn't it doesn't forgive people for what they say
sometimes isn't like you know, with everything is good. But we don't have to, then it doesn't have to, we
have to react to it, because we have so much space. So thinking of meditation as increasing our
capacity is rather useful orientation so any last last one anything else anyone wants to do? Well, thank
you all for coming and and I hope that you'll come back soon. And as they stay will probably make soon
maybe in a few days an update for the registration and things for how we do it here at IMC and what
we're opening for. So, you know, I think a lot of you have registered, so they're probably you'll get an
email within, you know, within the updates for a number of November probably will open with more at
IMC and we might change a little bit how we do this Sunday morning and, and so, so that information
will be you know, will come through those emails, people who are registered. And the reason we do it
that way is we don't want to make it too public when we're open. Because that's a little bit of a
challenge for for the managers and people who show up without having been that we know that they're
either been vaccinated. And also we want to try to keep the numbers an appropriate number. And we
might slowly increase the number but by when I keep on I keep keep putting to keep tabs on people
wondering it so it's through getting registered and getting that email that email that you find out what's
actually happening. So thank you all very much.