

## Mindfulness Of Heart Mind Quality

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**2007-11-04**

**Keywords:**

mindfulness, citta, four foundations of mindfulness, attitude, relationship, mind state, equanimity, present moment, quality of mind

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So I just mentioned that my Intro class, Introduction to Mindfulness class, and this Wednesday will be the last evening, the sixth evening, and it's somewhat unusual that I teach six weeks. Usually this Intro class is five weeks long, and this time around I was inspired to add one week into it, and I would like to talk about what I added. Some of you may have taken the Intro class before, and you would have missed this part of the introduction because I didn't teach it before. And as I think many of you know, the basic idea of mindfulness is to pay attention, to learn to pay attention to what is happening in the present moment. For many people, it's a challenge to really maintain our attention in the present moment, in the lived experience and the experience of our life as we're living it. Such a strong tendency of the mind to rehearse the past, relive the past, or fantasize about the future, or be in fantasy about the present.

And to really have a quality present to stable here. To really notice what's happening here is somewhat unusual. Even people who are in the present moment fairly well, many of you probably were pretty well in the present moment driving here. If you drove here, couldn't be too far away from what was happening. But the quality of that attention perhaps was not as strong as it's possible to be and what are things we're trying to do in mindfulness practice is to strengthen that capacity to allow the attention to be stabilized in the present moment, so we can see much more clearly what is here.

We're trying to do in mindfulness practice is to strengthen that capacity to allow the attention to be stabilized in the present moment, so we can see much more clearly what is here. And when we teach mindfulness, we often teach about some of the areas of your life that you can pay attention to. It's kind of like giving the map of a terrain of territory, and once you have

the map, it's easier to find your way in it. So we could just say you don't give the instructions very briefly and say pay attention, but that's pretty vague, and what you most pay attention to. So we kind of draw out the sign on the map and the map as given here at IMC. The Intro class generally begins with a mindfulness of breathing, mindful breathing being a very good place to stabilize the attention, to train the attention to be in the present moment.

Your breathing is always in the present moment. And then the next instruction has to do with the body, mindfulness of the body. And the body also is always in the present. Your body is not going to be anywhere else. So if you're connected to your body, you're connected to the present moment. And much of our life is mediated or expressed or manifested through our body.

So being embodied is a very helpful practice for cultivating attention. It's also a little bit an antidote to the idea that attention or mindfulness is all about the mind, something you know, some disembodied kind of attention. A lot of the attention, the awareness we're cultivating, could be said to become mediated through the body, with the body. Then Master Dōgen talked about mindfulness, the four foundations of mindfulness. And he said mindfulness of the body is the body's mindfulness. I kind of like that.

So it's not so much like you're mindful of the body, but the body itself has a sensitivity, this awareness. And then the third week, I usually talk about mindfulness of feelings, of emotions, and a huge part of human life. Then the fourth week is mindfulness of thinking. So the way I often teach it in these four areas, you know, part of the terrain, the territory, is being pointed to. And now, what I added this time around was another area, which is not just another thing like the mind can focus on, but in a sense is to turn the attention around and notice the mind itself, not just the content of the mind, the thoughts or the feelings or things like that. But to turn around and actually look at the quality of the mind, the mood of the mind, the state of the mind that the mind is in.

And sometimes it's not so easy to notice, though, the overall state or the mood or the quality of the mind, because we're focusing so much on the details of what's happening. If there's something we really want, might be focusing on that thing that we want, if something we're trying to avoid, or somehow focusing on avoiding that thing. And the quality of the mind is you don't pay attention to. Maybe somewhat like if I just take your hand, if you want to grasp something because you really want that thing, or if you want to push that thing away. You're focusing on what you're trying to accomplish, not on the degree of tension in your hand. And so you might be surprised at the end of the day how tired your hand is because there might

have been a lot of extra effort in the hand, in grasping or pushing away.

But if you paid attention to what's happening in the hand, the quality of the muscles in the hands, you might notice, Oh, there's a lot of extra tension in the way I grasp, the way I push. Maybe I didn't need to do it that way, or I don't even know I was grasping. Look at that. And so it's turning away from the object of what we want or don't want, and looking at the quality of the now. To get to this a little bit different way, I'd like to say that there are two things always happening at any given moment. There is what is happening, which is, in a sense, what I said earlier, the definition of mindfulness, paying attention, what's happening in the present moment.

There's what's happening, and then there's also your relationship to what's happening. So there's what's happening and your relationship to what's happening. So that's, you know, in almost everything that's going on, we have a relationship to what's going on. We're for it, we're against it. We have some opinions, judgments, ideas of what's happening. We bring ourselves to a certain kind of individual sense of self-identity.

We measure what's happening according to how it benefits us or how it takes away from us. We come with some motivation, some attitude, something we want. It can be quite beautiful. It could be what we want as we want compassion. We want to help someone. Still, that's the attitude, that's the relationship.

We have someone suffering. We want to help. We see a beautiful bell. It's a beautiful bell we have here at times. I see and then someone thinks, I want that bell. So there's a sound, and then there's the relationship to it: I want.

I want something. So in almost every possible thing we can pay attention to, notice there's also embedded in that, or holding that, or entangled with it, is the way we relate to that, our attitude to it, the way we approach it, what we want, we might motivate in relationship to it. And so to turn the attention around or take a backward step and look at the What is the What's the relationship I have with this experience? or What's the attitude I have to what this experience is? And that attitude can be with the specific aspect of what's happening here and now. So I'm driving on the freeway and the traffic is slowed down.

That's what's happening. And then there's the attitude about slow traffic on the freeway. And that attitude might be specific to that particular day: I'm late to get somewhere. So there could be the attitude is one of irritation: The world is holding me up. Doesn't the world realize that I'm an important person? I've important places to go.

Or it might be that the attitude comes with a lot of huge history of being stuck in traffic, and so the frustration of having this repeatedly repeated problem with the traffic, that attitude of frustration, is there as well. That's not just specifically today, but has to do with a much bigger picture. What's happening? And if we don't notice the attitude that we have to what's happening, then that attitude can be there and fester, can build up stress and tension. And one of things I think many of you can realize is that something it's very relatively mild tension or stress, if it's chronically held or chronically reinforced throughout a day, can build and build and build.

And even now it's innocent enough in the moment. Having it build up all through the day, you know, at the end of the day, there can be a lot of tension or a headache or something. So there's a specific, you know, attitude, and the same thing in meditation practice, an invitation to practice in particular. I, at least I've found for many people, and for myself at times, that I can be so kind of trying to do the instructions focusing on the breath, must be on the breath, the breath. Just be with the breath.

Or, Oh, there's a pain. I suppose we be with a pain. Pay attention to the pain. Oh, there's an emotion. That's what I was told to do? Can I pay attention to the emotion, feel that emotion? There's thinking. I can look at thinking, and I'm kind of engaged, in a sense, focusing this way, this way, and it might not occur to turn around and look at, How am I focusing? What's the attitude that's there with the focus?

Because the way I'm focusing is not the practice is to look at the breath, right? But actually, how we're looking, how we're paying attention, how we're present, the attitude in which that comes with it is a very important part of the mindfulness practice. And I've known a lot of people whom, especially on longer retreats, it becomes obvious that they have some kind of attitude about how to be mindful, how to pay attention, which is a little bit off. And in practising, you know, half an hour, an hour every morning meditating at home, that little attitude, you know, the stresses of that attitude, the false, the weaknesses, whatever, that attitude doesn't stand out enough. But try meditating all day for several days in a row, or a week in a row, and these things start to—the weak links begin to crack or break.

And so I've had the experience in my early retreats where I thought, you know, my attitude about meditation was on me, the great doer, the real agent, the great successful meditator. I'm in charge here, and I'm going to get concentrated, and I'm just going to focus on that breath and really zero in. And so when I did that, did that at home, you know, for forty minutes, you know, basically I was kind of stretched out, and I just taught. I stopped, and I wasn't

running around, you know, with all my life. Just that was relaxing, and I just got unwinding a little bit, and I kind of took credit for it because, Oh, you know, I'm the one who's meditating. I'm the good concentrator.

Why look what I did? I didn't do anything. I just kind of stopped and just my muscles relaxed. But so I took it, get credit for it. Then I go on retreat, and that initial kind of relaxation would settle away, and that attitude of me, I'm supposed to concentrate. I'm the one who can concentrate, was still operating, and it wouldn't work.

That attitude just didn't kind of work for, you know, getting settled, getting peaceful, really being present in a kind of quality way. And so on retreat, this stood out and got highlighted in a very formed, a very painful way. And it didn't occur to me to turn the attention around and look at my attitude and my beliefs in something that I was doing. And so, in my unfortunate circumstances, I had to burn and crash meditation. You do you think I associate meditation with burning and crashing? But you know, I burned and crashed, and you know, just finally you know, just because I was trying so hard, pushing and pushing and trying to focus, and the more I tried, the worse it less would work.

And so finally I just gave up. And when I gave up, that's when the meditation started. That's when it began unfolding for me. So that's a rather unfortunate story. It's kind to illustrate this idea that it's possible to ignore the attitude because you're trying to accomplish something and doing something. And I think that meditation practice unfolds much more peacefully, much more smoothly, if periodically—not every minute, but periodically—you actually turn around.

See what's my attitude, what's my approach, what's my relationship to meditation, what's my relationship to the breath, what's relationship to myself as I'm doing this, and include that in the field of what's happening and the relationship we have. It could also be, perhaps, it's closely connected to the sense of the attitude we have, and it's also connected to the state of the mind, the overall state of the mind. And I would say that a Buddhist spirituality, to the heart of Buddhism, is not so much about what is happening in terms of the breath, or the feelings, or the thoughts, or about sounds, or whatever. So what's happening? The heart of Buddhism really lies in this issue of the relationship we have with whatever is happening.

And that means that, at least in a sense, we're not trying to change what's happening. We're trying to discover a new relationship and relate—a relationship which is healthy, wholesome, and ultimately a relationship which is liberated or freed. So we're trying to find, you know, so always going back and looking. That's where the heart of it is, in the relationship. This is

so central. The relationship we have, the attitude we have to what's going on, is so central to who we are that, in the—I would, my interpretation of the teachings of the Buddha is that this is called the mind.

The mind is characterized by this attitude or relationship we have to our experience. The word for mind is *citta*, or mind state is *citta*. And *citta* in the Buddha and Buddhist language also means heart, or can be combined heart-mind. And so I like this, because if you say mind, for some people, that doesn't seem very warm. But say heart, for some people, that's really kind of core, central to who they want to be, who they are, or something. But *citta* is so central.

And the third foundation of mindfulness that the Buddha taught was not thinking or not emotions, you know? So some people think that I am teaching the four foundations of mindfulness when I do the Intro class. I teach you breath, body, feelings, and thoughts. This is not actually the case. Even that happens before, the Buddha has different foundations. And the third foundation of mindfulness for the Buddha is mindfulness of the *citta*, or the mind state, the overall kind of what the state or the attitude characterizes the mind.

And that attitude is sometimes specific, as I said earlier, to a particular event. But sometimes an attitude of the mind is actually much more like a disposition that we carry with us, regardless of what's happening in the moment. So we bring it with us, the attitude. So there might be an attitude of impatience that maybe a person has, and regardless of where you go, that sense of impatience is there with you. Or there might be an attitude of aversion, and so no matter where we're going, that aversion is there, and perhaps even though in a particular moment is characterized by desire or delight in a particular thing, the background mood, there's still there a background mood of aversion that may be masked for the moment. But give it half a chance, and it may surface.

There could be a background mood of compassion or kindness that maybe is over. Maybe somehow it is. It's not the operating thing in the moment, because maybe it's superseded by something in the moment. But that's the thing in the moment. If that goes away, then that background attitude might be that you come back to this default of compassion, such a default. Where does the mind go as a default?

What's the background attitude that we have? And this background attitude, you know, is, for some people, it's really kind of the heart of some of them, I say, at the heart of what makes them tick, what motivates their life. And at the heart for what many people suffer, what causes, where people feel, you know, where people are trapped or caught in their suffering

or in their life. So to turn around and look at the attitude is not just to look at the attitude of the moment, but also if you do it well and do stabilize your mind, that you're stable and calm and be able to look clearly. You begin and begins to surface and show the underlying attitude that might be very pervasive.

So when I taught this class and went into a class on Wednesday, there was someone who spoke up and said that he was surprised to realize that fear or anxiety was pervasive. It's always there for him. He had no idea. He knew there was an issue in his life around anxiety, but he had no idea that was always there. And that's not uncommon for people to come and tell me this, that they were surprised to discover a background attitude or mood.

Sometimes it's not so healthy or helpful. That's always there, always in the background. It often can be also connected to a kind of a belief, a belief about what the world is like. So a belief, for example, the world is a threatening place, or a belief that to be successful in life you have to have a lot of things, or you have to look smart, or you have to look beautiful and so, or people have to like you, or an attitude that a belief that you know the world is a threatening place, or a belief that the world is here to serve us, do you know? To, you know, benefit me. So eat all you can.

If attitude is often connected to beliefs as well, the relationship we have is connected to our beliefs about ourselves and these things. So in the teachings of the Buddha, it's the third foundation of mindfulness, which focuses on this quality of the mind, the state of the mind, the overall kind of mood or state. And so the way that that's talked about here in this ancient instruction, how does a person abide mindful, mindful of the mind as mind? Here, a person understands mind affected by lust as mind affected by lust, and a mind unaffected by lust as a mind unaffected by lust. Expanded, just to become called greed or craving or desire, but lust, you know?

Here, a person understands mind affected by lust as mind affected by lust, and a mind unaffected by lust as a mind unaffected by lust.

So there can be a strong desire that is not just desire of the moment, you know, a particular thing in the mind, but actually colors the mind.

The whole mind is kind of suffused with a kind of attitude of desire.

The background desire, it's filled with desire.

You can see people sometimes, and you can notice how that person's kind of on fire with lust.

Look at that.

You know, that is so obvious, and he doesn't realize it.

But, you know, so it's not just simply there's a desire in no particular desire moment of desire that arises, but just kind of colors the whole state.

So it's possible to know that for oneself, know when there's this craving or clinging or lust is present, and know when it's not.

One understands a mind affected by hate as a mind affected by hate, and the mind unaffected by hate as a mind unaffected by hate.

So there's this kind of dichotomy, in a sense, being looked at here, the presence and absence. Either it's there or it's not there. You can't be partially pregnant, they say. So either you're, you know, either there's strong desire, either the desire in the mind, or there's not desire. There's not a partial desire. Because if it is partial desire, then there's desire.

So you look. So the instruction here is simply to notice the presence and absence of these things. And what's, I think, very instructive around this instruction is that it doesn't say, Notice the mind is characterized by lust, and then criticize yourself for that. Notice the mind is filled with hate, and then hate yourself for that, or justify it, or whatever. Just it's very simple. Just notice the presence and absence, and the advantage of noticing the absence.

Absence is kind of a strange thing, because the absence, you know, you know, it's not nice, like nothing there, right? Must pay attention to what's there. But an absence is something's been present for a while, a strong mood or mental state and attitude. It's very helpful or instructive to get a sense of what the mind feels like when it's not there. As a contrast, and for one thing, it's a knowing what's not there. Really recognizing it, Oh, it's not there now reinforces, in a sense, the value of it not being there.

Perhaps you can feel sometimes if the mind that's not driven by hate, when the hate is no longer there, it's a higher quality of mind. It's a more satisfying mind, is a more peaceful mind. And so it's nice to see, Oh, this is what the mind is like when it's not filled with hate, and then when the hate reappears. That contrast helps do the highlighting, helps to help you understand more deeply what's going on. Also, the more you can appreciate the absence of something, it's more like you're getting a message, the more you kind of—you're getting used to the experience of not being caught in the grip of a particular mood or attitude.

So then it goes on and says, One understands a mind affected by delusion as a mind affected by delusion, and a mind unaffected by delusion as a mind unaffected by delusion. Then one understands a contracted mind as a contracted mind, and a distracted mind as a distracted mind. So it's possible to sit down to meditate, for example, and realize, Well, my mind is really



distracted. Then five minutes later, Oh yes, I'm really distracted today. That was five minutes, or I wasn't even present, and so, Oh. So then you can get curious: What is a distracted mind feel like? What is a distracted mind like?

As opposed to criticizing and pushing it away and saying, That must be distracted, supposed to focus on the breath. Maybe the breath is not the point, the important place now is to turn the attention around, to look at the quality of the mind or the heart and see, Oh, the quality is one of destructibility, of being contracted, being scattered, being fragmented. And then to take that in, because the taking it in, feeling it, being present for it, helps us not be caught in the midst of it, caught in the grip of it. Taking it in is actually, in some degree, a kind of healing. And the way I like to describe that is that if we give our system space, air, room, then things have a chance to unfold or unravel, dissolve, evolve in whatever way they're supposed to evolve, dissolve, unravel.

But if we're claustrophobic in the mind, we're so preoccupied, concerned, and upset, and pushing, and lost in thought, or whatever, there is no room for things to unwind. And mindfulness has the function of creating room in the mind, space in the mind. So if you notice, Oh, this is a distracted mind, and you step back in a sense, make room for that, and stay present, feel that's what it's like, then you're making room, and perhaps that distracted mind can settle itself, can relax, and then it goes on. One understands an exalted mind as an exalted mind, and unexalted mind as an unexalted mind, an exalted mind. His translation means some mind which is starting to get concentrated and come into a little bit of an altered state of mind.

That's not the normal state of being distracted or preoccupied they're in. But the mind somehow has become a spacious, light, open, soft, malleable, so that the quality of the mind has been to shift, and some higher quality of heart or mind is being—he knows there. So you know, Oh, this is a good quality. And I would say that one of the most, I would say, the most precious thing that any of us have is the quality of our mind, a good quality of our mind or a heart. And the most beautiful thing I've ever seen in this universe of ours is not art, is not some beautiful thing in nature. It's not looking deep into the galaxies in beautiful way we can these days, but rather the most beautiful things I've seen is a purified heart, a liberated heart, a settled, peaceful heart.

And I think that's something that all of us hopefully have access to, or something is a possibility for all of us. I remember a little story when I went to Nepal to practice there. I had very little money, and I think I had three hundred dollars to my name. And there I was in Nepal,

you know, to practice, you know. I'd gone to Asia to practice for the duration there. As the end of the line for me, nothing else had any meaning for me.

And I was on, gone to practice. And the teacher I went to practice with, I was doing a month-long retreat in Nepal, and so I went there to practice with him, and now with my three hundred dollars for—and so I had a few days to wait before the retreat started. So I was walking around Kathmandu, and they have all these kind of tourist shops that sell a lot of Buddhist art and windows. You know, Buddhist art that use stuff in it. And there was one window there where they had a statue and Buddha. That really spoke to me.

This really kind of struck me. It was a hundred dollars, and so I went around for a couple of days. Should I buy it? You know, it really speaks to me. It's meaningful for me. And you know, so I'm so going around debating my mind and, you know, a third of my wealth to buy a Buddha. That seems, you know, too much as I was wondering, you know?

And so then, lo and behold, out of the blue, as far as I was concerned, well, what happened was I called back. I made a phone call back to Berkeley, where my girlfriend lived, and her roommate said, Oh, she left yesterday for Nepal to be with you. Oh, she doesn't. Nowhere. Kathmandu was big. How do you? How do you find Gil? You know, you know. How do you find? How was she supposed to find me even?

And so I went out to the airport and put a big note on the bulletin board, hoping she'd see it. And anyway, we were connected, so she showed up, but she had even less money than I did. And so here we were, the two of us in Kathmandu and me thinking about buying this Buddha. And then my decision was, I would not buy the Buddha, because the most beautiful thing I knew was a purified heart, and I would save my money to help her so she could practice in Asia. I think it's a nice story. So somehow the beauty of one's own heart.

So to be the caretaker, the custodian of your own heart, of your own mind, to look at it, take it seriously. It's a really precious resource, a precious part of who we are. And it's very easy to take for granted. It's very easy to lose touch with it. It's very easy to get caught up in the day-to-day concerns. Or even in meditation, it's easy to get caught up in the ideas we have of what's supposed to be happening and trying to accomplish something, and we don't actually take in or stay aware of what's the quality of this heart-mind that's always here.

The heart-mind always has a quality. It always has an—almost always has an attitude. It always has some way it's in relationship to either the details or to the big picture. We have an attitude or relationship to life itself, or what our life is about, or who we are. So to inquire:

What is this attitude? What is this relationship that we have? What is this quality of mind-heart that's here?

And then it's important to remember that the instructions the Buddha gave here, there was no emphasis whatsoever on judging or criticizing, being upset with what you see. It's really a phenomenal thing. It's really an amazing thing to just see how it is to be present, to be present, and to see clearly. It's so phenomenal that I liken, I think, of seeing clearly without judgment, without criticism, not even trying to change it. I see that kind—I understand that kind of seeing as a kind of love.

So even if what we see within us is unfortunate and maybe doesn't speak very well about who we are, what's going on, there's a way of kind of being present for that, and seeing it, being present, and allowing it to be there, seeing it very clearly, not being caught in it. That is actually an act of love in relationship to what we see. And slowly, I believe, what'll happen is that we keep coming back, trying to find that place of just being present and seeing, and we see the attitude that we have. We step back, and we see the attitude a very little bit. At first perhaps we're stepping out of the gravitational field, perhaps out of the orbit of that attitude. We're not in it. We're not caught by it.

And the act of seeing helps us to kind of—because we're not—help to step out of it, and because we're not in it, the unhealthy attitudes and approaches begin to settle away, relax away. And amazingly enough, as we step back, the beautiful, active qualities of the mind-heart have a chance to shine and grow and become bigger and bigger. It's one of the miracles I think of the human heart is that the act of attention, careful, steady, ongoing mindfulness, just that has a way of somehow unravelling those forces in the heart which cause suffering and tend to augment or feed or nourish those forces in the heart that tend to bring out the best in us. So your attitude, your relationship, and the quality of your mind is part of the instructions. That's the insight. That's part of the introductory instructions in mindfulness.

So we have a few minutes. Anyone have any questions or comments? Now, I wonder what the attitude is out there. What relationship do you have with us? Yes, please. So I get what you're saying about why it's important. What I don't get is how you examine it, except maybe through the first four things. By becoming aware of those things, it might help you to understand or to get that attitude. Great, thank you. Yes, I think that the more we've cultivated mindfulness of breath, body, emotions, and thoughts, the more access we have to be able to notice what that attitude is, because the attitude, the attitude is often—that's what the attitude, in some degrees, is being manifested through those things.

So the more embodied we are, the more we can notice the feeling tone, what's going on. So these instructions are all kind of very closely connected, but you know, you can also kind of at least, you know, some people, it's possible, if they are sensitive enough, to turn around and, for example, look at the quality of the mindfulness, because being mindful, being present, noticing what's here, sometimes it comes together with a baggage, comes together with other approaches or attitudes. So there might be a sense of kind of push. You can feel a kind of pushing in the mind, or pressure in the mind, or resistance, Oh no, I don't want to pay attention to that, and it's feeling like pulling back. You can feel a kind of pushing in the mind, or pressure in the mind, or resistance, Oh no, I don't want to pay attention to that, and it's feeling like pulling back.

Again here, the mind is contracted. You feel sometimes I feel like my mind is really tight and small. You know, it's kind of caught up in its little world of concerns. And sometimes my mind, as you know, you know, it's bigger than this room here. It's like, wow, I can handle anything, bring it on. I can, it is so big. The space of everything and that sense of space is there. Is it helpful? Yes, please.

I know on the same topic as the contracted versus expanded mind. It's easy to be expanded when you're in a group like this, and people are positive, and you're talking about, you know, a purified mind, and you can get in the mood, and you can really feel it. And then you go visit some friends that are making twenty thousand dollars a year, and they're really struggling, and try to, you know, say, But if you just had a purified mind, you would be happy. It's really hard to maintain that sense of inner openness and beauty. When people, it's really hard for them and you feel like pulling in and not sharing because you don't want to make them feel bad or inadequate. And how do you maintain that when other people just—but I think that. So again, we want to look at the attitude.

It could be that we have to say, We have a wonderful, expansive mind. And the attitude towards that expansive mind is, I want to keep this. I want this. This is important. I finally got it. And everyone should have this now. There can be an attitude towards that.

So I think for you, rather than trying to maintain it, I think what's more important is to bring mindfulness to what's happening for you in those kind of situations. What attitudes, what relationship do you have to their pain, their suffering, their demands? What attitude and relationship do you have to where you're at? What beliefs do you have connected to it? And try to understand what's going on with you. And probably there's a whole lot to unpack, understand about yourself and that relationship. And it might take a while to unpack everything

that's going on.

But until you unpack it, you might not be able to go into those situations without getting pulled into something, hooked. So how are you getting hooked? So I know, for me, one of the ways I've got hooked plenty of times is my sense of responsibility, my Achilles heel is my sense of responsibility. You know, I'm responsible somehow for this person's well-being, so somehow I have to get in there and adjust myself or fix or do something, and I have. I've had to learn to kind of have an appropriate sense of responsibility, which partly, for me, has meant backing away from being responsible for other people's suffering. I can try to be helpful, but I'm not responsible.

But can you go into that situation? For example, you know that if they had a better understanding of finances and could plan their money better, that they would do better and they would feel better. But they aren't ready for that. So you say, Well, OK, I can't help them. Can you say, I can't help them and still feel compassionate and are mindful of their suffering? If you make the decision that you can't help them, it could be, it could be very meaningful. If you can't help, if you really can't help them, you'll feel a lot better accepting that's the fact than trying to help them, knowing you can't, right?

So yes, you can still, you still have a lot of compassion and care for them, but realizing, you know, regardless of my care and compassion, my willingness to help, I can't help right now. So what can I? I can't help them figure out their finances, but what can I do? Maybe it's enough just to be there empathetically, compassionate with them. Maybe it's enough to say, Tell them, This is really hard. I'm sorry for you. Maybe it's enough just to sit there on a couch with them and cry, Oh, this is really hard. And no one's ever cried with them, Oh, this is more serious than I thought. They think, Oh, maybe I better do something. Someone's crying.

So the Buddhist practice that's most connected to some way you're talking about here is equanimity. And the practice of equanimity is the practice of somehow staying balanced or non-reactive in a situation where we can't make a difference. When we have, we have to realize that other people are responsible for their choices. And even though I'm trying to help, or even have other wishes for them, you know, I'm not going to be caught reactively by the choices they make. Then the last piece. But how do you truly convince yourself? Because not saying, I can't is, in a sense, always easier, right? Because you can now stop. How do you convince yourself? You're really honestly being expansive. I have done the most that you can.

And rather than, Well, I tried for a couple of hours, and that's about the most I feel like today,

so I'm to decide I can't, and then I can quit and feel good about myself. Yet it's hard, you know. I think that the—Rain—I wish there were easy solutions to life, and I think that sometimes it takes a lot of attention to ourselves. I think the more mindful you are, the more you can pick up the cues in your own heart and mind to know what's going on with you. And so at least you're not bringing any kind of—you're not messing up the scene or yourself. You're coming as clean as you can be to the situation that's helpful. So try to do your work.

And that sometimes takes years to really do one's own work, to be clean enough to go into very difficult situations. And so, you know, answer. Then it's a matter of trying to figure out, you know, what we do in trying to do the very best we can, and sometimes doing the best we can that we do together with help with others. So you're asking here, but there might be sometimes maybe going for a walk with a friend, or talking to a therapist or someone about these kinds of dynamics, and trying to understand, get to the bottom of some of the important issues for you before you enter into a difficult situation. There's a lot of things that can be done. It depends how much time and homework you want to do. But sounds like an important one, sounds really tricky and difficult.

And that sounds like it could be really rich for you, and potentially a great, potentially a great opportunity for you to delve into some of the core beliefs. If you have that effect? The Quality of Your Own Heart. We shall stop now, but if some of you'd like to come and talk up afterwards, that'd be fine. I'll stay a little bit. And so I hope that each of you can appreciate how beautiful your heart is when it's really left alone. Thank you.