

Mindfulness, Conflict Resolution, and Neuroscience (Part 1)

Daniel Bowling

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To all of you, my goodness. I understand there's some sort of meet up tonight. So it's great that you decided to meet up here. And I hope you have a good time tonight. As Marin said, I'm going to be here for the next three weeks counting tonight to offer a series of teachings from the Buddha's voluminous teachings on how to deal with conflict. As you may have noticed, we don't have a lot of conflict in the world right now.

Things seem to be quiet and peaceful. People are getting along remarkably well. Our Congress is functioning at a high level, making decisions. I don't know about you, but I certainly have plenty of conflict in my life. I have conflict most of the day between Daniel and Daniel, and then there are the people that I talk with. Some of them are imaginary, but others are real.

And as a mediator, I deal with people caught in conflict all the time. From my perspective, the Buddha is best known or most accurately known as the very first psychologist, not as the founder of a religion. And I have a lot of experience with them. Since I come from roughly nine generations of Southern Baptist ministers, including my father, it skipped a generation with me. Maybe several religions come from belief. They invite us to believe some aspect of teachings, or a lot of aspects and teachings.

The Buddha explicitly said, Do not believe what I say. I'm not here to teach you to believe something. Practise it, and if it turns out to be true for you, then continue to practise it. Belief and the difficulty we have with belief is one of the strongest forces of conflict, because as the Buddha taught, we're obsessively attached to certain things that we like, we resist things that we don't like, and we go numb a lot. We blank out. He called that greed.

The things we want, we're attached to desire or greed, aversion or hatred or anger, the things we push away and delusion or numbing out, or zoning out or twittering away, unmindful of

what's going on around us—greed, hatred, and delusion. He said that untrained minds are the source of all our conflict and all our suffering. Our minds are like dogs running around tied on a leash to a post, and they're running around the post and around the post and getting all tangled up in the leash and in themselves. And the purpose of his teachings was to help us train our minds so that we could speak and see clearly who we and others are. He taught, Speak or act with a corrupted mind and suffering follows, as the wagon wheel follows the hoof of the ox. Speak or act with a peaceful mind and happiness follows, like a never departing shadow—seems pretty clear distinction.

I'll go for the latter, a peaceful mind. But of course that begs the question of how we get there, because if your mind is like my mind, it's far from peaceful most of the time. And in that lack of peacefulness, I come into contact with you, and I misperceive what you've said. I mishear what you're wanting me to hear. I get attached to something you say that I like, I get angry at something you say that I don't like, and I blank out a lot because you say something, and it causes me to think of something, and I'm thinking of what I'm going to say in response to what you're going to say while you're talking. So I'm not hearing you, I'm listening to myself and I'm preparing to speak.

As soon as you will just hush up so that I can hop right in and tell you what's really true. I don't know if that sounds familiar to you, but it's the way my mind works. So to train our minds is the focus of all of the Buddhist teachings. I had a particularly humbling example of my untrained mind recently, with a lawyer who practises frequently in the federal court up in San Francisco, where I'm one of the staff mediators, who is my chief teacher. I believe he trains me constantly in humility and patience and perseverance. And we had a mediation scheduled, and routinely the day before a mediation I called the lawyers separately on each side of the case to find out what's going on.

And he said that the defence lawyer had filed what's called a motion to dismiss his case, and so they weren't really ready to go to mediation the next day. And that made sense to me, because when lawyers are not ready to mediate, it's not going to work out so well. So I said, Well, it sounds like we should postpone Mister James. I'll call him, but I need to call Miss Waters. I'll call her, the defence lawyer, and see if she agrees, because now I can't just cancel it because you want to. We have to get agreement.

After all, it's a mediation and I'm not the judge. I'll call Miss Waters, and I'll get back to you. So I had a call scheduled with Miss Waters. A few hours later, I called her, had a talk with her, and she didn't want the mediation postponed. She had agreed with her client that they would offer the plaintiff a loan modification. It was a foreclosure case, and that was exactly

the relief the plaintiff was seeking from the defendant, her client.

But she didn't want Mister James to know that in advance of the mediation. She just wanted to go forward. And I said, Well, he wants to postpone, so I'll see if I can get him on the call, and I'll call you back and we'll work it out. I called Mister James's office and his secretary said he's gone for the day and he can't be reached. I had no reaction at that point much. I wondered if I was being played and I said, Well, it's very important.

I have a call set up to talk about the mediation in the morning at ten o'clock, so please have him call me right away. Forty five minutes or so went by and no call. So I called again. This time I was pretty reactive and I said, Where's Mister James? He hadn't called me back. She said he's gone for the day, but he left you a message.

And I thought, Oh, he left me a message with her, but he didn't return my call. And the message was, The mediation is cancelled. Neither my client nor I are coming. I could probably see steam coming out of my ears because I don't like being disrespected in that way. And the rules, after all, the court rules require lawyers to cooperate with the mediator, and he was far from cooperating. So my voice raised a little bit, and I spoke very clearly and firmly: get in touch with Mister James and have him call me.

An hour went by. No Mister James. I called back. The third time I spoke with the office manager, I was unskillful. I said, Why isn't Mister James calling me back? He's left another message. He says the mediation is cancelled and, in the midst of this, not very proud of it, in conversation with my colleague, who runs the mediation programme, and he said, You should come down to my office and hear a voice mail that Mister James left for me.

Oh, he called Howard, didn't call me, but he's unavailable and not playing me. Yes, right. So I went down. The voice mail, as you can imagine, was awful. It was all about how I had agreed to cancel the mediation, renege on it, and I was inappropriate with his staff. I imagine you've never experienced anything like that.

The Buddha taught that there are six roots of conflict, six spaces that we get into that create all conflict: anger—I was certainly caught in anger—arrogance or contempt or insolence—I was definitely feeling that he was being that way, and I was unmindful of how I was being that way, because after all, I was the mediator—for the envy or avariciousness. I felt like he was playing me, and I didn't like it, so I was acting in a way that was not appropriate for me. And I thought, The fourth one is deceitfulness. He was clearly being deceitful and not telling the truth. He didn't want the mediation to happen for some reason, and he was playing me. Five is evil wishes, a wrong view.

I certainly had evil wishes for him, and he for me, and I had a wrong view. And the wrong view I will talk about a little bit more. It's my view that it was about me. I was taking what he was doing personally. And he had wrong view also. He was taking what I was doing personally.

And last, we cling to our views. We cling to our anger. We cling to our arrogance or contempt. We cling to our envy. We cling to our deceit. And we cling to our evil wishes.

We get caught in that way, the Buddha offered a framework for all of his teachings in his very first sutta or sermon known as the *Four Noble Truths*. I'm going to reword them just a little bit about conflict. The first one is: know conflict as *dukkha*. The word *dukkha* is a Pāli word that is often translated as suffering—not very accurately—or dissatisfaction, a little more accurately. The etymological root of the word is an axle wheel that's out of balance. If you can imagine the hub of a wheel and the axle, the wheel goes around the axle. If the axle hub is not true, you're going to have a very bumpy ride.

So *dukkha* is the bumpy, dissatisfactory ride we have in life because our minds are out of balance and not true. Knowing conflict as *dukkha* is not an intellectual matter. It is an experiential knowing. As I guided our meditation, I suggested that you note inhale and exhale, or note thinking, or note sounds, note or label it. So if I had been mindful with Mister James, I would have been labelling or noting: A conflict is arising. This is conflict, I would know it in that moment as an experiential knowing, rather than intellectually understanding it.

I would have access to that knowing in that moment. That's knowing the first noble truth in the moment of my experience of it. This is the *dukkha* of conflict. Conflict is like this—knowing the first noble truth. The second one is knowing that clinging is the source of *dukkha* or suffering. So that's how I got hooked, because I was clinging to my anger.

It felt good. Actually, if you are an angry type like I am, getting angry feels good. It feels not so good afterwards when I realize I've been angry. But in the moment, there's a shot of adrenaline, and my mind is trained that way. I have, over years of habitual patterning, grooved my mind to slip right into a place of anger, of envy, of arrogance. I don't recognize that when it's arising most of the time, and I certainly didn't then that day with Mister James.

So knowing the Second Noble Truth experientially, not intellectually, is in the moment being able to say, I'm clinging. This is clinging to my view. This clinging feels like this, so I feel it in my body. I know the feeling of anger, and I recognize it in the moment, not later. But then knowing the second Noble Truth is knowing that clinging is *dukkha*. I want to be respected as a mediator.

I want to be appreciated for my work. So I have a self that can be pushed and hurt and hooked, wanting that respect that causes me to cling. Now, if I just knew that conflict was *dukkha*, and I knew the conflict in the moment, and I then knew and recognized in the moment that I was clinging to that suffering, clinging to that unskillful way of relating to life, it could be very depressing cause. That's a pretty constant experience that we all have. But the Buddha was a brilliant psychologist. He named our disease *dukkha*, the dissatisfactoriness of the way we live our life.

And he named the cause of the disease, which is clinging and not recognizing our clinging. And then he named the cure for the disease. The cure is knowing that *dukkha*—knowing the cessation of *dukkha*. So had I known I was creating conflict in that moment, not intellectually, but experientially, and recognized my clinging, I would also recognize when it ceased. Because we have moments of peace in our mind, we have moments when we are in touch with our heart, when we are in touch with being connected to one another. And those moments are the cessation of *dukkha*, but we go right by those too on automatic.

We're not conscious of them. We're with our friends, and we're having a beautiful walk and talk, and we're connecting with them, and we're off in our heads somewhere planning what we're going to say, thinking about something that's going on in our life, not being aware of that precious moment of cessation of *dukkha*. So we know the conflict in the moment. We know the clinging, the stickiness of that experience. And then we know, we experience the moments when it passes. It comes back.

Dukkha is arising. Ah, I'm clinging again. Ah, I let go again. Ah, I'm caught again. Ah, I'm clinging again. Ah, I let go again. That's life right there. The whole of life is in those three steps.

And then the fourth noble truth is the path by which we practise to be able to be mindful of those three steps: knowing the place we're caught, knowing that we're caught, the stickiness, and knowing the cessation. The wise view, the wise intention, the wise speech, wise action, wise livelihood, and the wise effort, wise mindfulness and concentration—the *Eightfold Path*—they're specific practices that the Buddha gave us to train our minds. He also gave us some specific teachings around conflict, and there are three of them that I want to talk about tonight. One, I imagine you're not very familiar with—being the son of a Southern Baptist minister, I'm very familiar with this one. It's called the entanglement of I'm right and you're wrong. The second one is reflecting on truthfulness.

Actually, there are four that I'll talk about tonight. The third one is recognizing when we're hooked. Mister James just hooked me, and off I went, running down a neuroscientific groove

in my mind, what a yogi would call *saṃskāra*. If you took a sled up to the top of a new snowed hill with no marks in that hill, and you went down the snow, and then dragged the sled right back up that same path, and went down again, and dragged it right back up the same path over and over. That's what we do with our minds, and we create that groove that our mind hops into and we think that we're thinking—we're on automatic. So knowing when we're hooked and then finally developing wise view.

So the right, you're wrong teaching comes from a time when the Buddha was talking to some Brahman scholars who taught the ancient Vedas that went back way into time and were the foundation of all the Hindu teachings that were in the Indus Valley when the Buddha was teaching, and this young Brahman master who was only sixteen years old named Kapithaka said, Master Gotama, in regard to the ancient Brahman hymns that have come down, the Brahmans come to the definite conclusion, Only this is true, everything else is wrong. What does Master Gotama have to say about this? So Kapithaka was challenging the Buddha about his teachings and saying, The Brahmans say that the Vedic scriptures are the only truth. That's exactly what my father taught me. And as far as I can tell, that's what most religions teach: that my way is the only true way and everything else is wrong. And that distinction is inscribed in our human DNA.

As far as I can tell, because almost everyone who comes into a mediation with me believes firmly that they are right and the other party is wrong, and they have a whole long brief and lots of evidence to prove that they are right and you're wrong. It's such a fundamental human trap. And the Buddha taught Kapithaka. He said do any of these great Brahman teachers who wrote the Vedas—could they say of their own personal experience that what they wrote was true? And Kapithaka had to acknowledge they could not. And so it is with all belief-based teachings.

The believer cannot say of her own personal experience, This is true. It's based on faith. It's based on approval from those we respect. It's based on tradition, reasoning sometimes, or some reflective practice. So, for example, I could believe that Toyotas are the best cars, and I would either be right or wrong. But I could believe it based on my faith. I'd still be right or wrong.

I could believe it because people I respect told me they were good. I'd still be either right or wrong. I could believe it by tradition. My family always had Toyotas, still right or wrong. I could study the repair records of all the Toyota cars and all the other cars, and I would still just be right or wrong. Or I could reflect on my own driving experience with Toyotas. Mostly we're not that detailed. We just believe if we reason in this way.

The Buddha said we see that a wise person recognizes that no matter the basis for our belief, unless it's our own personal experience—like we know we're here right now in this room of our own personal experience, that kind of knowing—unless it's that kind of knowing, we're either right or wrong. So approaching conversations, approaching conflict, with humility is required. The Buddha specifically said, A wise person who desires to honour the truth says, My faith is thus, but I cannot come to a definite conclusion: Only this is true, everything else is wrong. Mindfulness carries us this way.

He then taught his son Rāhula about truthfulness. We think of truthfulness, he said, in a very narrow way. We think of it in the way we speak. But he asked Rāhula, What is a mirror for? And Rāhula said, It's for looking at your reflection. And the Buddha said, Yes. And truthfulness is a way to reflect on who we're being in a moment.

Am I truthful not just with my words, but with the way I'm seeing you and me, with my body? With the thoughts that are running through my head? Are they in synchrony with the words that I am speaking? Is my body language, my energy, the way I'm acting around you, is that being truthful? How many times have we said to someone, Oh, you look great, and we're thinking something very different, and our body betrays us? But we have this wonderful human agreement, I won't call you on it. If you won't call me on it, and we don't, we have a degree of social politeness.

But in terms of opening our hearts and clarifying our minds, reflecting on truthfulness in this way is an important aspect of dealing with conflict more skilfully. If I recognize the humility of letting go of I'm right and you're wrong, and then I reflect on being with you in a fully synchronous, truthful way, I've taken two big steps towards resolving any conflict with you, and then I have to see when I get hooked. There was a big argument among the Kosambians who were the students of the monks of the Buddha, and I love this description. They were in hostile factions, and they were stabbing each other with verbal daggers, just like Mister James and I were stabbing each other with verbal daggers. The Buddha said that there are eight ways we get hooked. He loved a list, and they are very helpful because the teachings were handed down in an oral tradition for five hundred years.

So the lists were mnemonic devices for remembering. And these eight obsessions are: the first five are the five hindrances that you may have heard about—desire, I get hooked when I want something; aversion, anger, I get hooked when I don't want something; sloth and torpor, I go to sleep, I'm knocked out, I'm deluded, I'm not paying attention, and I get hooked in that state; restlessness, the anxiety of modern living, that restlessness and worry hooks us; and doubt, I'm really unsure about what you're saying, I'm unsure about how I'm feeling, I'm

unsure about the situation. And then the other three: I'm speculating about what's going on with you, I'm speculating about what went on in the past between us—the Buddha's words were I'm speculating about this world and I'm speculating about the other world. And then finally we get caught by obsessions when we're quarrelling and brawling, and we're caught, we're stabbing with verbal daggers. That wonderful image—I was hooked by Mister James, by my aversion to his disrespect. I was hooked by my desire for wanting his respect and wanting him to treat me respectfully. And I was completely oblivious to how I was not paying attention and being unmindful.

And then the fourth of these specific teachings is, How do we develop wise view when we're caught in the midst of conflict? In the Effluencement Sutta, the Buddha responded to a practice, to a question about how to practise mindfulness when we're caught in wrong views, and he encouraged us to say, This is not mine, this I am not, this is not myself. So he gave us a specific note to apply. Had I been awake when Mister James was acting the way he was acting, I could have said, This is not me, this is not mine, this is what he's doing, this is not mine, this is not about Daniel. Can you feel the letting go that's available there?

When I get into it with my right wing fundamentalist sister, I get into it a lot less these days, because when I'm with her, I do say, This is not mine, and it's not her. It's what her mind is hooked on, and I'm not going to get hooked by her hook. I'm not going to be obsessed by the five hindrances, or speculating about her world or my world, or getting caught in brawling with her. I'm going to reflect on being truthful and in synchrony with my speech and my thoughts and my body when I'm with her, because I know that it's a powerful ancient battle that we're fighting with each other. But it's not mine. It's not about Daniel. There's no permanent Daniel about which it could be.

Have you noticed how much you change? Have you noticed how during the course of the day you're different? Have you noticed that when you get up in the morning and you decide that it's going to be a bad day, sometimes it is because you hold on to that thought as if it were permanent? And have you noticed sometimes that you get up and you think it's going to be a bad day, and something wonderful happens that surprises you, and suddenly it all shifts? We suffer because we think it's about us, and we hold on to those thoughts as if they were permanent and fixed, and that creates our suffering. And those are the three—what the Buddha calls the self. The attachment to the self, not recognizing everything changes all the time, creating suffering or *dukkha*. And that's exactly what I did with Mister James.

Fortunately, when I called Miss Waters back to let her know about all the difficulty I was having getting in touch with Mister James, to my surprise he had called her. So he had called

his office. He had called my colleague Howard and he had called Miss Waters, but he hadn't called me back. Imagine, but it wasn't about me except that it was at that time. Now that I'm here in my role of teacher, of course it wasn't about me. She agreed to postpone the mediation, but the voice mail that he left for Howard was: Not only was I such a terrible person, and I had lied and promised to cancel and then renege, but he was not going to mediate this case with me, and he was not going to mediate any other case with me ever. And that would make things difficult, given the nature of our work, and given the fact that he files many lawsuits in our court.

So that required a cleaning up of that incident, which required a lot of practice for me over a good period of time. Before, Howard convened a mediation between me and Mister James, and he was a former pugilist in college, so he's that kind of body type. And it was tense, but I had done a lot of *mettā* practice for him and myself—a lot of hours—and I was in a good place about him, and I was really practising, noticing where I had been hooked, being consistently truthful in my words and my body, being aware of how I was holding that I was right and he was wrong, and being aware of it wasn't mine. This is not me. This is not mine. This is not myself. I was practising these four specific teachings of the Buddha and the conversation went well. It was stilted. It was a little formal. There was no deep heart connection, that's for sure.

But he was OK with going forward with mediation with me and reflecting on truthfulness. I took a very courageous step. I knew that I had to stand with him in a different way. So I said, After everything was all nice and smooth, and Howard was very pleased that we had managed to get through it, I threw a small bomb. Deliberately I said, Why didn't you just pick up the phone and call me? He exploded. He stood up. He brought both hands down on the table. We shook the table, shook the room, and I sat and breathed. I knew I had to do that to maintain some relationship with him, of some equality.

I had to stand for the self that I am not. It is a paradoxical thing. I could not completely collapse, and neither can you. When you're in a conflict, we have to stand for ourselves, while we acknowledge that it's not about myself. The explosion passed and I knew that I had got through to him, that I would not simply roll over every time he wanted something. That was an important balance place to be.

The Buddha also taught that at the time we have concluded a conflict, people from each faction, a leader from each faction should stand up, arrange their clothing, fold their hands, and confess, We have been in conflict. I have said some unskillful things, and I ask that you cover them over with grass—not the kind they grow up in Arcada, but the green grass. I ask

that you cover them over with grass. So there is a time for having peace and letting go and moving on.

So the Four Noble Truths: Know conflict as *dukkha*. Know that clinging is the source of my conflict: clinging to my view, clinging to my view of myself, clinging to being right or wrong. And know that conflict can cease, that every conflict can cease internally and externally. If I practise the *Eightfold Path* to train my mind and become more awake to see the trap of right and wrong, to see the trap of not being aware of consistent truthfulness in my body, speech, and actions, to see where I'm obsessed and hooked, and to see where I am caught in it—being about Daniel.

Next week I will talk about the source of our conflict. Is it that we all carry and we all have inside us that is the source of every conflict we have. And two weeks from now, I haven't decided what I'm going to talk about, but I'll talk about something. So we've got time for just a few questions. Yes, in the back—a microphone will come.

Thank you very much for the great talk. Thank you, very helpful. I guess I'm going to buy into. The question of the night is, what did Mister James say to answer your question? You know, I don't even remember, because it was just this explosion. He never answered the question. He railed for a while, and I sat, and truly I was ready. I just was going inhale, exhale, inhale, exhale, exhale. And he calmed down and sort of got over his embarrassment. But I believe and it's been reflected. In fact, I didn't laugh because he was sincere in a recent mediation. He'd exploded like that again with the other parties in the room. And I said, Mister James, sit down. And he did. And later he came up to me, and he said, You know, I'm really impressed that you are able to deal with my upset without getting hooked. And he said, I've tried that meditation stuff, so there's even hope for the Mister Jameses of the world.

What was also very fascinating was your follow-on comment about why you threw the bomb. Yes, the need to establish even though you didn't. Even though we don't have a true fixed self you dealt, but you still had to play the paradox or it whatever. Yes, I doesn't have a self, although not having one. That's right, because if I don't, I am not truly present with you, and I am not being truthful. I am allowing myself to be so not self that I don't even show up with you, and that's not serving you, and it's definitely not serving me. You're welcome.

Another question, okay, right there. Yes, thank you very much for being here tonight. I think everyone else maybe talk a little more on the acceptance of, like, our suffering, and being able to accept all of that path, of being able to try to move forward it. That's a hard one for me. It's a practice. I find that there are times when I am not accepting of the suffering that I'm experiencing. And I'm in those times. I see when I wake up, it's like I'm caught in a fog,

and I believe that suffering is permanent. I've gotten caught by *anicca*, impermanence. I've lost it. There are places in my life where I have a blindness and believe that the suffering that I experience is my *kamma*. I'm just got bad luck. I just—it's never ending. And those are the places I really have to work. And the key for me always is recognizing, Ah, this is the cessation of that *dukkha*. Maybe it's just a couple of minutes in the midst of a time of deep suffering. Maybe it's a whole afternoon, or maybe it's like just this Tuesday night when I had dinner with a good friend and was able to share with him in a deep, personal way, and that suffering for that moment ceased. So I could come back to the recognition that indeed that fundamental teaching of the Buddha of impermanence is the key to dealing with the deep, difficult suffering that hooks me, someone else.

Yes, over here. How long were you meditating before you realized that it was an easy practice? I have meditated and I have a little difficulty because I'm not well. It's always good. Yes, sometimes you don't feel inspired yet. I was wondering if you had any advice for uninspiration to meditate because I like it, and it's fun, and I was good at it. But it's hard now. Yes, I've been meditating for since nineteen seventy six to—what's that about?—thirty something years, and I still have an experience that it's not hard. It's a way—it is that the *dukkha* that you are talking about yet that? Yes, having trouble with that. I noticed that you had your eyes closed throughout the whole meditation. No, I have never done that. If I closed my eyes, it might be a more powerful meditation. Yes, yeah. And a place to find that is find a place in your body that you can focus your attention on. It might be your belly. It might be the tip of your nostrils or the rising and falling of your chest. And just bring your attention there and soften your body, relax your body, and it starts to get easier. But it is a hard and challenging practice. If mindfulness were easy, we would all be mindful, and there are moments when the mind lets go and the feeling of ease arises. Yes, because I've done some powerful meditation before, and I'm here because I think it would be a good place to meditate again, but I've been having difficulty. And I guess that's the *dukkha* that you're talking about there. It is lots of different things to learn about, like the *Eightfold Path*. And I think Buddha's biggest teaching was on the act of self love. Pretty sure I'm glad you're here. You think yes?

Other questions, one more right here in the yellow shirt. Say thank you again that this made a really great meet up event, cause I'm the one who asked my members to come in—good. So thank you, thank you. I'm so online. Topic of conflict, like if I had a conflict with someone in the past, and we couldn't reach a mutual agreement, so we didn't talk to each other any more. So I do see his point, and I know where I come from. We both, right? So do we just let it go, or what we do? So you clearly haven't let it go, or let meditate some more and let it

go. It would be nice, but I often find that my meditations are a conversation with the person that I'm in conflict with, that I'm incomplete with, and they say all the right things. Then because I'm having both sides of the conversation, and instead of being present, I'm back in that conflict. So you will know what's the right move for you? There are places in my life where I've had difficult conflict with people close to me. I've tried to resolve it with them, and I've not been successful. So when they arise for me, I do loving kindness practice for me and for them, and I notice that *dukkha* has arisen. I know the *dukkha* of the conflict with, for example, my stepson. I know that I'm clinging to my view of how it should be, and then I know when he's gone and when that conflict is not present. It's ceased, and then it will come back. And that's the way life moves. There will be a moment. There may be a time when that person will come back to you in your life and there they will be. And if you have practised in the meantime and have done loving kindness practice for you and for them, when that moment comes, the whole thing may unravel and fall away and be complete. I've had that happen many times and it's very joyful. You will know—life is a brilliantly clear teacher. What we need will come, and when you are ready, that will happen. The thing for you to do in the meantime is practice to train your mind to be ready when it comes.

Let's sit for a moment. Just be aware of all the heart and energy of all of us who are present tonight. Take in the connection and the relationship that we have established in all of our desire to develop and grow and learn together. Be grateful to Gil, the founding teacher here, and all the volunteers who make I am here possible. And most profoundly, be grateful for yourself for coming, for being here, and for taking away something of value, for all the conflicts that will arise for you in the future. And may the merit of our practice go out into the world especially and touch all of those we love and all of those in our relationships. Peace. Thank you for coming. I hope to see many of you next week.