

Dharmette: Five Precepts (3 of 5) Freedom from Sexual Misconduct

Gil Fronsdal

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So hello and welcome to this third talk on the five precepts.

And the third talk for a third precept is not to engage in sexual misconduct. And exactly what that means is not very specified in the ancient teachings. One way it means is not to cause harm through our sexuality, not to harm others, not to harm ourselves. And what sexual misconduct means is interpreted or understood differently in different cultures, different contexts, in different systems of ethics. Right. So it's a somewhat vague idea, though most people don't see it as vague. They have their own inherent understanding of what that means.

That can be very clear, or maybe it's never been deeply considered, but there are deep, deep, maybe subconscious, unconscious, cultural values that are carried in this idea of sexual misconduct. But the core thing is that makes everything kind of simpler is not to cause harm, intentional deliberate harm, and not to bring about consequences that will harm people. And so for this week I'm connecting the precepts with the basic instructions in meditation that I teach here at IMC. And so today the connection is between this third precept and the mindfulness of emotions. And with human sexualities, human sexual interests, motivations, are deeply, deeply tied to our whole psychophysical being.

In some ways, some of the most complicated behaviors that humans have, that's complicated by biology, psychology, sociology, darmacology, theology, political philosophy. There's just so much that comes to bear on this very deep thing that almost inherently has to do with our interconnection to other people and our interrelationships. And the strong biological urges that come with sexual desire can be quite strong. And so sexual misconduct has a lot to do with being able to understand, process, be present for all these different drives and emotions and sensations and experiences that we have. To be present for them in a

wise way, in a caring way. And one of the key things that, why the connection to mindfulness of emotions, is that we want to learn how to be very respectful of our sexuality, our sexual motivations, our sexual drives, the emotions, the feelings of connection to other people, the romantic feelings that we have, the ways in which we relate to people, the ways that we have desires in relationship to people, the ways that we have love for people, all this stuff, to be simple with it, to be able to sit quietly and not push it away, not deny it, not to condemn it as being somehow wrong and not part of our mindfulness life, but that rather it too is included and how to hold it all peacefully.

Neither accepting nor rejecting, but allowing it to be there without having the desires that are part of it pushing us around, driving us. And this is where separating out desire from the emotions. Desire is a kind of an emotion, or a lot of emotions come with motivation. The interesting question is the mindfulness exploration is, what's the motivation that's inherent in some of the different emotions we have? But then to learn how to recognize the motivation, recognize the desires that are part of it, but learning how to be free with them, how not to give into them. I have to be able to say, no, I'm not going to participate in that, but I'm also not going to condemn it.

I'm not going to push it away. I'm going to allow the desire to be there, but I'm not going to act on it. And for people who do mindfulness practice, mindfulness meditation, this allows for a very significant something to happen, is it allows something deeper to start happening, some deeper relaxation, opening, letting go, some evolution of our emotional life that cannot happen if we're always acting on our emotions, always acting on our desires. And the more intense the desires are, the more it's connected to something very deep inside. Sometimes deep places of challenge that we have inside, sometimes deep places of inspiration and beauty inside. But to really kind of sit quietly so we can kind of settle and find what's underneath, what's the deeper drive, the deeper movements, what's the deeper sources of our emotions around sexuality, romance, feelings, what's happening in a deep way and what's happening on a not-so-deep way.

To what degree is it response to insecurity and fear and status and power and, you know, hostility and aversion. And there's a whole bunch of complex world that comes into play. And if that all gives a chance to just be left alone so we can see it clearly, allow it there, see and understand the things which maybe are not so acceptable in the society or with ourselves or in the values we have, but not to condemn anything, not to criticize anything, not to feel shame for anything, but to allow ourselves just the gift, just be with it, be with it, breathe with it. But don't give into it. Don't collapse with it. Don't push it away. Don't react to it.

And this is the very radical thing we're learning in mindfulness, is how just to be sitting peacefully and allow it all to be without acting, without reacting, without... but staying peaceful with it all, staying still in a peaceful, quiet way, not frozen, not tight, not holding on for dear life. And this is not easily done, but this is part of the movement, the goal. And so as we learn to do this, then we start having a very different relationship to the kind of desires that would cause someone to break the third precept, to engage in sexual misconduct. And we have a very different relationship to it, that we're not going to act on greed, on lust, we're not going to act on attachment, we're not going to act on clinging, we're not going to act on compulsion, because all those are what we lose ourselves in that process.

There's a way in which we can just keep, we want to open to ourselves and allow for all of this here to understand the deeper movements, the deeper movements of emotion, the deeper movements of the source of emotions, the movement where it comes from. So to cultivate mindfulness of emotions, to develop, to make that really a study, to make that really something for a period of time to specialize in it, to really understand deeper and deeper not only what the whole range of emotions, the kaleidoscope of feelings and emotions that go on, so they're not there unconsciously. They're not there subconsciously influencing us and affecting how we see the world and what we say and do and believe. But to really be peaceful with it, to center and allow. And meditation is one of the great laboratories to learn this.

Where in meditation no emotion is shameful, no emotion is wrong, no emotion is right. Right. No emotion is denied. They all have a place to be there, because what we're cultivating is not emotions. We're cultivating the space to hold emotions, whatever they are, to allow it to be there and be there peacefully without defining ourselves by it, without saying, this is who I am. It's just emotion, it's just weather that's moving through.

And we don't define ourselves by the weather that comes across our lands. We don't have to define ourselves by the emotional weather as it moves through us. It's just a movement. It's just the winds and the rain and the snow and the hot summer wind. It's hot summer wind. And so learning to sit well deeply with our emotional life is a phenomenal support for this third precept. It gives us the information, it gives us the understanding, the wisdom, the deep connectivity, that we really understand the deeper dynamics of what's going on around our sexual lives, which is sexual misconduct then, becomes, we see, not as a moral rule, but as a guideline of how not to lose ourselves, not to lose ourselves in activity that can cause harm, including harm to ourselves when we lose ourselves to desires, lose ourselves to these strong drives that come sometimes with very strong insistence, very strong sense of authority, but also in which we lose our freedom.

And how to keep this peaceful freedom while also being sexual beings. This is the great discovery in art that it's possible to learn through sitting with mindfulness of emotions. So thank you. And so then we'll continue with this, with tomorrow, mindfulness of thinking, and not speaking falsely. Thank you.