

New Year New Now

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Am I loud enough for you? It's okay. So as I sat down just now to have a few words to say, what somehow, I guess is one of the obvious things is that it's the new year. So the word new stands out in my mind quite a bit. And it's kind of arbitrary that this particular time, as we circle the sun, should be New Year's Eve. Someone once said many years ago, in the Bay Area, there's so many different cultures, nationalities that live here now from all over the world.

You could probably go around the Bay Area and celebrate New Year's Eve every week. Like there's Chinese New Year's and there's different, all these different other times that people celebrate New Year's. And we have this Gregorian calendar way of celebrating it. And it's kind of weird that it doesn't mark any real thing in the world. It's not even, you know, it'd be nice if it was the solstice. Then it makes more sense.

Or, you know, it used to be the full moon. It was tied to that, but it's like not tied to anything. It's just like an idea that we go along with. We're all co-conspirators in this concept that we, you know, just the only real place it lives is in people's minds. And I guess on paper and now on your Google Calendar. But... But what it does, what this whole convention and kind of in part fiction of this New Year's Day, New Year's we celebrate, is that it's a concept, it's an idea by which we're connected to other people.

And that's special. The connection we have with each other's hearts, the connection we have our human connectivity, that's precious. and how we communicate in that network. So the New Year's concept of New Year's Eve, New Year's Day, New Year, is something we share with people. And how do we hold it so that we care for the sacred relationship that we have between each other? How do we care for each other through this concept?

And one way that I'd like to offer you today is that... In that it's kind of a fiction, it's also very true that every day, every moment is a new year. Every, we're all, it's always new. We're

always stepping into the next moment. And it's actually brand new. It's never existed before in a particular way.

Some of you have been to Wednesdays here before, but every time you come, it's a new Wednesday. It's a new configuration of people, new things, new feelings, new temperature, new lighting, new. It's always new. And one of the ways of living with mindfulness is to very... It really supports this practice of mindfulness, and mindfulness supports what I'm about to say, is that it's all... Every moment is new.

Every moment is fresh. Every moment is where life is found, a new life is found, new life is born. If you ever are bored, it means you've gotten caught in some thought, some idea, some attitude. Boredom doesn't exist that it's like New Year's Eve. It does not really exist in the universe outside of what your mind builds and creates and makes. Boredom is a creation of your own mind.

Nothing in the universe is inherently boring. Boredom. unless your mind makes it that way. And then things aren't new, things aren't fresh. One of the advantages, nice things about sitting in mindfulness is the way, in fact, that it refreshes the mind, refreshes our eyesight, so that when you open your eyes, boredom, grumpiness about how things are, maybe, have lessened some, and we're ready to see in a fresh way, in a new way.

So there's a way of practicing mindfulness. We see every moment new. Every moment is a new year. Every moment is an opportunity to start fresh. And I think that's phenomenally a phenomenal gift.

Many people carry with them the past. Many people carry with them the judgments, the ideas, the stories, the shoulds from the past. We don't want to deny that. We don't want to forget the past. We don't want to forget the past. But there's a way that the present moment is very forgiving.

The present moment doesn't need you to be accountable to what you did. You can start fresh. You can start in a new way. Even with all the things that you bring with you, with the past, there's always an opportunity in mindfulness to begin again. You can begin again with being mindful. you can begin again with the activity that you're going to do next, the next step.

You're always at a beginning, it's always new. And the question in Buddhism, how do you make that next step? How do you move into this newness of this moment? And finally I'll say that one of the really key orientations around this is that not to be weighed down by the past, to learn from the past so we can take that next step better. And at any moment at all that

you're alive, the next moment there's always a choice.

And the choice that we want to take in Buddhism is do we not see that there's rather a fork in the road at every moment? And the fork is, do we do what's next? The next thing we do, is it healthy or is it unhealthy? The next thing we do, is it wholesome or is it unwholesome? The next thing we do, is it somehow beneficial? Does it make us better, fuller people?

Does it support this world that we live in? Or does it do the opposite? And if you don't know which it is, then the healthy thing to do is to do nothing but be mindful. I don't know what's healthy. So let me just keep showing up for the next moment, for the next moment. Really be there until it becomes clear.

Oh, this is the good way to go. This is the waste forward. And this is where I don't want to go. This is where I'm not going to swear at the store clerk because they're too slow. That doesn't seem healthy. This is where I say thank you.

Certainly there's something to appreciate. So every moment is new. And there's something about the new year where we wish ourselves a good, may, you know, happy new year. May you have a good new year. May the new year be good for you. And may that be so in each moment that's new.

May you find the goodness of your life each moment as you go forward. And that mindfulness puts you right there in the present moment where you can find the wonderful place where you get to begin again, unburdened by the past, unburdened by your attachments. May you find the newness of each moment and make the wise choice with that. So thank you.