

Dharmette: Don't Make it Worse (5 of 5) Express

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So hello and welcome to this fifth and last talk. It's based on the practice of not making it worse. That maybe you don't know what else to do. You don't understand the situation. It seems impossible. It seems like it's, you know, not going well.

There's always one thing you may, I hope there's always one thing you can do. You can at least not make it worse. You can restrain yourself from speaking if the speaking you think is going to make it worse. You can restrain yourself from the actions you're going to do if that's going to make it worse. There is a profound way, or very important way, that sometimes what's most important is doing nothing. And doing nothing, not to celebrate doing nothing, not to kind of imply that that's the only thing we can ever do.

But if we don't know what to do, and all the things we can think that we might do are going to make the situation worse, maybe restraint, maybe holding back, is the wisest thing we can do. And how to make that wiser so that it's not just only restraint and kind of gritting your teeth or something, is to have a practice you can do while you're doing nothing. And so that's what I've been offering this week, and around the acronym WORSE. So you can wait. And there's something very profound about waiting.

You can pull yourself together, get organized, get oriented. Let all the different pieces of who you are, your body, your heart, your mind, your emotions, be gathered together, be recognized and be here. You can relax. And maybe even more valuable than relaxing, you can rest. Relax and then rest in the place of relaxation.

Abide. Allow yourself to be there in that place. Don't pick up right away with your thoughts and activities and doings. Don't relax and then jump up and act. Take in and be nourished by the gentler, softer, relaxed state. Rest in it for a while.

And that allows you to sense and to see. So after going through this process, sense more fully what the situation is, what's happening in you. And when all your senses are open to the situation, what do you pick up? What do you tune into that's different than if you're only tuning in through your belief systems, through your bias, through your preferences? What does your body feel as you kind of be there with the situation? Feel about the situation or feel about yourself?

So sensing. And then part of the sensing world is eyes, seeing. But seeing is more than just sight. It's studying, looking at, understanding the situation. Take a good look at what's happening here. And you might be in a better position to look and begin understanding after you've done the first steps in this process of not making it worse.

And then we come to the last today, and that is to express. The E is to express. And not making it worse is not supposed to be eternally passive or not doing anything. There is a time and a place to speak. And so learning how to speak wisely, how to express ourselves wisely, has many different dimensions. And it's a huge, fantastic learning.

So, for example, there's mindful speaking, and learning how to stay mindful as we speak, being embodied as we speak. There's learning how to speak, to speak in ways that don't diminish other people, or don't criticize them, or don't judge them. So there's the practice of making I statements, and making statements that are really expressing the truth of the moment for ourselves. And in this regard, I'm a big fan of mindfulness out loud. Mindfulness out loud means that mindfulness inside is just to name and see and understand directly what is here, without any additions to it, judgments, reactivity, opinions for and against.

Just, oh, this is how it is now, without blame, without shame. This is how it is now. So that same way can be expressed out loud. So, rather than saying, I'm angry with you, you can say, you know, how this conversation has gone, I'm feeling pretty agitated and pretty upset and somewhat angry. And that shift in conversation goes from, you know, maybe I'm angry with you, as if you're to blame, to not saying anything about the other person, but taking time to speak about yourself.

That can make much more room in the conversation for something deep to happen. Now you're expressing what's true for you. And so what needs to be expressed? What needs to be said? What needs to be shared? What needs to come out?

And then there's a deeper dimension of this, what wants to be expressed. Because if we can really find ourselves deeply connected to the wholeness of who we are, or the deep, quiet place within of who we are, we've discovered that there are layers and layers of things that

want to show up and be here, that are covered over or ignored or don't have a chance. That as more who we are, more essential, or more feels like the fullness of our freedom, the fullness of our spirituality, of our love, then a lot of the kind of surface ideas of me, myself, and mine, and this is what's happening to me, and this is what I want, and this is why I'm hurt, or something, there's something. And so meditation is one of those ways we can drop down, quiet, to that place of deep, deep under the surface.

And from there, what wants to be expressed there? What is the expression of that? And I find that meditation at some point shifts from when I first sit down, it's something I'm doing, to a shift to I'm participating, I'm going along with, I'm riding along with something deep that wants to unfold and move within me. And sometimes it's just the breathing. The breathing wants to happen. And it's not me breathing, but breathing is breathing itself.

And I'm there receiving that, or participating in it, or allowing it, resting in it. But deeper than the breath, there can be a deep sense of care, a deep sense of love, compassion, kindness, peace, that is also very quiet, that in a sense maybe feels nothing to do with what you want and your sense of self and exchange with other people and what you're going to get back. It just kind of, it maybe is a form of love that has no object. It's not about loving something or being loved back. There's just something profound. Or maybe it's something difficult. Maybe it's grief. That's the deep thing.

But there's something fantastically important about this reverence and care to open up to what's deep inside and make room for it. And feel the rightness of allowing this depth to be expressed, to come out, to be expressed in our body, expressed in our heart, to be expressed kind of from the inside out. And so not all expression is spoken. Because sometimes the spoken expression maybe isn't as deep as we could go. But sometimes we do speak. And sometimes when a situation is very difficult, there becomes a time to speak.

Not just wait. Not just, you know, organize and relax. But there definitely is a time when we have to speak. Speak up. But don't speak up automatically, reactively. Go through this process of wait, organize, rest, sense and see.

And then you'll be in a much better position to speak wisely, caringly. And hopefully in doing that, make the situation better. And that in the end is, you know, I think what the heart most wants. The heart most wants to not make it worse if that's the danger. But more than that, we want to make things better. We want to make this a better world.

We want to make ourselves a better person. We want to support others to live a better life. And so may this process we've talked about this week be one that supports you in many dif-

ferent ways in your life. So thank you very much.

So a couple of announcements. So I'll be teaching a three-week retreat for the next three weeks at the Insight Retreat Center. And Matthew Bensilver will be here next week. And Diana Clark will be here, I think, the following two weeks. And both of these are wonderful teachers. And I'm very happy and glad that they're coming to teach and that you'll have a chance to kind of hear their teachings.

And not just their teachings, but also their beingness. I love them both quite a bit. So I'm happy they're going to be here with you. And then it might be worth saying that I teach every year a Buddhist chaplaincy program. It's in person. We teach it here at IMC.

It's through the *Sati Center*. And that'll start up in the end of September. And it's been a very significant, for some people, training program in offering spiritual care that is kind of moving into, for some people, it's a stepping stone to becoming a professional chaplain. And so it's a very rich world of stepping into care. And people who do it have to have a volunteer role, to volunteer maybe in a hospital as a volunteer chaplain, or in a prison, or jail, or many places, hospice.

Anyway, so if some of you might be interested in it, it's a rich way of continuing with this practice that we do. And you'll find more information under *Sati Center*, sati.org. There's both an online version and an in-person. I'm involved with the in-person here at IMC, and the online has other wonderful teachers who are teaching it. So thank you, and I look forward to being back here in a few weeks.