

Four Foundation: Hindrances and Bundles

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Today's topic is part one of the fourth foundation of mindfulness, fourth way of establishing awareness.

And one of the core insights of our practice and of Buddhism has to do with that everything's always changing in constancy.

And in this sense, in this fourth foundation, there is a deep understanding of how we get stuck, so we don't allow the change.

And how when we allow the change, psychologically what goes on inside, how it can be freeing in a quite beautiful and wonderful way.

Because of this deep inner sensitivity that's being cultivated in the first three foundations, now people are ready to really see in a new way and see how we get stuck.

But how we see it is so important.

We see it in a new way.

We see it without being stuck on the stuck.

We see it with kindness, with openness, with making space.

I call it breathing room.

So things can start getting unstuck.

Then things can return into the flow, the current of change.

And I'll talk about the stuck part.

And Francisco gets to talk about the freeing part.

And to do this, I want to first make an analogy for coming on retreat.

That it's very much like doing a ritual.

Not just any ritual, but in many cultures down through the ages, maybe thousands of years, cultures have had very profound rituals that involve deep personal transformation, coming-of-age rituals, or all kinds of things.

And those rituals can often involve a process that, to begin with, the person going through the transformation puts down all these things from the normal life.

They leave them behind.

And sometimes in rituals, you leave behind your given name.

Sometimes you leave behind all the clothes that you have that represent your status, your tribe, how you fit into society, fashions.

And you put on maybe nondescript clothes.

Occasionally they do things like shave everyone's head, and so the whole social meaning of hair kind of falls away.

And if a group of people do it together, then they might come from different class, status, positions in society.

But as they go, that falls away.

So so much is given up.

Then there's the ritual way in which that's done, the kind of leaving it behind.

And in that leaving it behind, then something can happen.

That's where the transformation is possible.

Or it's much easier than if you brought all your luggage with you.

And then there's these classic rituals.

Then there's the return.

And you go back.

But now somehow you've changed.

You've changed.

The dropping, the putting down of so much allowed something to be transformed.

So you come back, sometimes they tell you even just like being born a new person.

You might even be given a new name, and this represents this big change that you are.

Like for example, this can be done sometimes in rites of passage, coming into adulthood.

Then you go through this process of letting go and somehow transform, just go through some kind of process, and then return now as a full adult member of the community.

So retreats are like this, that we come here, and we don't say that's what we're doing, but to some degree we are.

And kind of slowly on a retreat, our social personality begins to quiet down.

There are preoccupations with our world and our job and our relationships and all kinds of things that get stirred up in society outside.

And as the mind gets quieter and quieter, there's all kinds of things that fall away temporarily.

And what can fall away is sometimes it's quite nice.

Your social personality disappears.

It's so peaceful, turns out.

I grew up in different countries and learning different languages.

And one of the surprises was to see how much of a personality is a social personality.

How much a personality, as we learn to speak, we also learn how to gesture, how to act, how to speak, how to, all our whole way of being.

And I saw it so clearly because I could see people, I knew people who spoke fluent in two different languages.

And one very good friend of mine, I liked him when he spoke one language.

I'll tell you the story.

He kind of, this was back in the 70s, and we were living in a commune together in Norway, or an ex-commune.

And he had learned his English in the 1960s in the American communes, which was kind of like my tribe.

So he was great, relaxed, easygoing, drunken.

But in Norway, he'd grown up in an aristocratic, stiff family.

And so that's how it wasn't just he spoke that kind of aristocratic, stiff Norwegian.

His personality was that way.

And it was like, it was so radical.

I could see, you know, he learned more than just English on the hippie communes.

He learned a whole way of being, a personality, and the whole different thing grew up in the aristocratic family.

And I could see that in myself, too, going in different languages.

When I went to Japan, I learned much more than Japanese.

I kind of learned a kind of personality that communicates and harmonizes with the culture there.

And it's a very different culture.

And so it took a while to even understand kind of the medium of communication was more than just words.

It was gestures and ways of being and so we all have this.

It's normal, it's healthy, it's appropriate, but we don't often know it.

And so we associate everything, all our personality to it.

This is who I am, thank you.

But it's actually constructed, it's conditioned, it's a part of who you are.

But on a retreat, the best can quiet down, quieter and quieter, not operating.

And it's not uncommon for some people to say at the end of the retreat, just when they start coming out, you know, a little bit horrified or discouraged or something, my personality came back.

It was such, you know, so nice not to have it.

And so much comes back, pouring back.

So don't worry, whatever you put down here, chances are it'll come back.

You're not going to lose anything.

But there's an opportunity to quiet, to settle, to let go, and so many of the concerns about things fall away.

And sometimes that could be quite strong, quite thorough.

And even for some moments of time, the past falls away.

There's no reference to a past anymore, right?

And we realize how much of our thinking, concerns, is somehow rooted in the past, and what happened in the past, and what should have happened in the past, and all kinds of things.

But it falls away.

Some people find it very disorienting because who they are, their understanding of who they are, is dependent on that past.

But in these classic rituals and down through the ages, letting go of the past is kind of just part of that ritual, right?

And then maybe also there's a few moments where the future disappears.

And for some people, that's where their preoccupation is, what's going to happen, what they want to see happen.

And so there has to be this kind of putting things down.

And as I said, it can be disorienting if that's our whole life, is based on the past and the future in some way or other.

And that's where the solutions are going to be.

Think about the past enough, you can have a better past.

Think about the future, you can have a future which will never arrive.

So, but to be here, really here.

And then to be at rest enough in here, that's like the heart of the ritual, right?

Where we're not running off, being somewhere else, we're not caught up in these social personalities, past and future, not caught up in desires and aversions and resentments.

You know, don't worry, you're not betraying them.

Chances are they'll come back, so it's okay.

But it's a wonderful thing.

When I was in Japan, a little bit, the teeny ritual that was very socially very meaningful, right, was back, I don't know if they still do it there, but there was a lot of community, as a community of *furo*s, community baths.

And Japan is a fairly stratified society.

But when they go to the baths, they're all naked.

And that disappears.

It doesn't matter what's your place in society when you're naked in the baths.

And it's understood, this kind of equalizes, and everyone becomes equal, and they all talk to each other, and talk in a simple way with each other, without the very formalized kind of Japanese that sometimes is representing the status, the class, how you speak has to kind of be class-appropriate.

And so that's kind of a wonderful thing to have that.

So here, we come here.

So something is possible here.

And I want to try and give you maybe a little taste of what's possible.

I don't know if this is possible, but sometimes someone will ask a wonderful question where it's almost like the answer doesn't matter because the question just opens you to something new, a new way of seeing.

What's that?

What's that?

And it's the openness, the wonder, the lack of strain, lack of trying to figure it out.

But it's kind of like, oh, the...

So I like, I don't know if this is so dramatic for it, but it's just a question I offered at the beginning.

What is it you're trying to grow?

What's growing in you?

If you've never heard that question, I hope that the question doesn't bring you right up to the logical mind to kind of figure it out rationally, what it is that's growing in you.

It's like, oh, let me feel this.

I have to kind of open myself to be present for myself in a way I've never had before.

No one's ever asked me that question.

And like, where does that happen?

And it's rather than straining, it's more like, oh, and something falls away because in that openness and receptivity, something else happens.

There's a really, Buddhists don't usually use this question, but there's a question that some people use, that spiritual question of, who am I?

It turns out the answer, you don't get it in the book, but I think it's safe to give you the answer.

At least my idea of the answer.

The answer, there's no answer.

The answer is how you open up to allow, to find out, to, you don't know, not knowing is more like the answer.

Not knowing, just curious, not knowing and not seeing anything.

And just like that, without picking anything up, without landing anywhere, without having certainty and doubt, just this openness, availability, receptivity, maybe wonder where past and future fall away.

Social personality falls away.

Something is here.

And you can't put your finger on it.

You can't even maybe name it what it is.

But it's in that.

And so sometimes spiritual teachers will say, answer to who are you, one answer is, you'll find yourself in the seeking.

If you're seeking a self, it's in the seeking itself, the answer is found.

In the search, in the looking, in the questioning, in the wondering here.

So it's a radical kind of turning things around where you can't look for an answer.

You look for that willingness to be empty and open, to be available.

Something profound can happen there.

So that's at the heart of the ritual, this kind of this.

So in a way, this four foundations is moving us in this direction.

And these four foundations, as I said, are offering us an alternative way of being with ourselves than the usual ways that we've been taught in society, the usual ways that we've been taught in family, what's important and who we're supposed to be, and what we're supposed to attain, and what we're supposed to prove, and what we're supposed to gain and become.

There's so much, that's not the orientation.

It's something very simple where all that can kind of fall, be put aside for now.

So whatever is going on, how does it feel in your body?

What's happening with your body that puts you in the present moment?

Here, what's happening in the sensations of the body?

The sensation body, what's that like?

In the middle of all the different emotions and drama, what's the sensation body like?

All the sensations that are coursing through you.

To breathe with it, to relax into it.

And then there's the feeling tones.

What's the feeling tone of this, pleasant and unpleasant?

Is it more surface?

Yes.

Is it more being stimulated by society?

Are you really jazzed up and excited and enthused and just, it's a new day.

You feel wonderful because Apple just released its latest products.

And you saw the advertisement?

Wow, this is the best.

I'm almost like as good as enlightened.

It's the latest and the greatest.

That surface joy, delight, that's not the steep place of home, the source within us, the source of our life.

Just be there for that.

So what's the sensations like, the pleasant and unpleasants?

And what's the quality of your inner life?

Is the inner life with, as Francisco said yesterday, is your inner life with greed, with ill will, with delusion?

It's a wonderful question because it implies your inner life is not totally different.

As Francisco said, totally.

It's not like a greedy inner life, that's what it is.

I'm just stuck with it.

It's who I am.

Greedy.

Greed is never who you are.

Greed has visited.

It's a visitor.

It's just a part of it.

And when you practice mindfulness, you'll see that.

The strong mindfulness is part of you which is not greedy, knowing the part that's greedy.

Then you know, this isn't who I am.

It's just, it's just a visitor.

And then we also start knowing there's more than what we've identified with, the greed perhaps, or the aversion or the delusion.

There's more.

And that sense of more, the expansive mind, the *mahācitta* it's called in the big mind, the expansive mind.

And it's also the liberated mind.

It's also the settled mind, the unified mind.

There's all these wonderful minds that we start discovering are here that we are distracted from ever noticing because we're so caught up in these concerns we have.

So what's the quality of your mind like in the present moment?

So it's this heightened sensitivity, and then it begins that we become aware of the five hindrances.

And the five hindrances, there's a series of things.

There's five different things that open up for us as we go through the fourth foundation.

And the coarsest of those, the one that's most gross or activated, is the first, which is the five hindrances.

And the Pāli word is not, it literally doesn't mean hindrances.

It literally means it's what covers over something.

It's coverings.

It's the things that cover over reality so we can't really see at all.

It hinders our ability to see clearly.

And this is preoccupation in sensual desires.

Preoccupation with ill will, aversion.

Preoccupation in English, but usually because it's Victorian English, the translators, they say sloth and torpor.

The Pāli dictionary, English dictionary for the first one, they translated it, one of the meanings is rigid, which they kind of...

And so I think of it as any part of us that shuts down.

The movement of shutting down, because things are too difficult or too challenging, it's not ordinary tiredness.

It's a strategy of shutting down, so going numb, freezing, becoming rigid, tight, becoming, you know, slothful or torpid as a strategy, just because things are just too discouraging or depressing or something.

Yeah.

And then there's restlessness and regrets that we get caught up in.

And then there's being caught up in doubt.

And these are considered to be ordinary human capacities that all of us will have.

It's not a sin that you have.

It's not a crime to have these.

But they are, they do get in the way.

We get stuck in them.

And I think the longest that I ever counted, and I got stuck in one of these, was in a very long retreat.

I was stuck in desire for three days.

I just couldn't get off it.

I was like, come on, Gil.

Yeah.

I said, what's going on here?

I couldn't believe it, that the mind had this...

I was just, like maybe I'd gotten concentrated, and something, the mind decided to use all that concentration to stay on the desire.

They're not going to go off.

Come on, three days.

You know, I got so, so tired of it.

And in the beginning, it was kind of exciting.

It was a good desire.

Yeah.

But three days, give me a break.

I was begging to end.

And it's part of the, there's a lot of wisdom to be had from repetition, seeing something over and over and over again.

And so they can be quite strong, they can be weak.

There's a lot of temptation in them or a lot of authority in them.

They're very tempting to be pulled into.

I think of them as black holes of the mind.

Black hole is a star that its gravitational force is so strong that light goes in and doesn't come out.

So the light of your awareness goes into these hindrances and doesn't come out, gets lost and preoccupied for three days or longer.

One of the most useful things I believe for many people to understand about the hindrances is that they involve stories.

The mind is telling you stories, stories of desire, stories of ill will and what's wrong.

There's some story that is overwhelming and difficult that maybe you keep telling yourself or keep living in for why we shut down.

Regrets are a story that's kind of obvious.

Agitation, restlessness.

I think the idea here with hindrances, they also involve some kind of story, that we feel trapped, we feel lost, we feel out of sorts, something is wrong.

And doubt can be a very simple story.

The story can be, I don't know what to do.

I'm not sure here.

And I can't decide.

But still, it's a little bit of a story.

To take a good look and recognize the story, to recognize that we're being caught in the story.

We are, you know, we give the story authority.

It's alluring.

We're fascinated by it.

And some of the stories, they're so inherent in our way the mind works.

Sometimes we don't even realize we're doing it.

It's just so, so...

But to notice, what's the story?

And do you need to be a storyteller?

Is this the time to be telling stories?

Maybe you don't need to tell the story.

Why are you telling yourself a story?

How does a story support you?

What are you trying to do with a story?

Where does a story come from inside of you?

And does it come from fear?

Does it come from loneliness?

Does it come from confusion?

Yes.

Does it come from hurt?

Does it come from sorrow and grief?

What does it come from?

When you ask that kind of question, if you get an answer, then you're coming home.

Then you're beginning to discover what's going on more deeply.

You're discovering what probably most needs your attention, what needs to be seen.

The story doesn't have to be seen.

The story is almost like a distraction from what's really here that needs to be breathed with and recognized and allowed and felt.

We have important work to do with our emotional life and to care for it, to love it, and allow it to show itself and allow it to process itself.

Our heart knows how to process things if we allow it, if we get out of the way.

And we're not out of the way if we keep telling ourselves stories.

That doesn't allow the heart to do its work.

So, then we begin quieting this process of moving to the heart of the ritual.

And so maybe the story-making mind quiets down, and we're just more present in a simple way.

And then comes the second instructions in this fourth foundation.

And that has to do that from time to time, probably happens occasionally to some of you, that you grasp something, that you get attached, you cling to something.

It's probably an accident that it happens, but it's been known to happen.

We cling.

And what the Buddha said is that we collect clings.

We gather them.

We're gatherers.

So, you know, there was a time when I clung to my hair and what my hair meant.

I probably had hair longer than most of you here, once upon a time.

I clung to the clothes I wear and what they represented.

I clung to my family.

I clung to what people thought about me.

I clung to my fear.

I clung to my despair.

I clung to a lot of different things.

And one of the ways I clung to them was I said, this is who I am.

I am my despair.

I am my loneliness.

I am my fear.

I am my jeans, blue jeans.

And I'm defined by my clothes and my mother would buy me these clothes.

And, you know, I had this problem.

I mean, am I supposed to wear these to school?

I can't.

I can't.

But, you know, she's expecting me to.

What do I do?

I'll be laughed off the playground.

So, you know, I had these ideas of self and all kinds of research, layers and layers of these.

So I was gathering, collecting these things I was clinging to, a fair amount of them had to do with me, myself and mine, what I thought I had to be for people.

When I first started going around San Francisco Zen Center, something very peculiar happened there that was kind of one of the reasons I went back.

I would, the social personality I had back then was one where I played, I called them social games, that I would present myself in a certain way so they would see me in a certain way.

I wanted to, you know, make sure they saw me the way that I wanted them to see me.

So I would talk a certain way, I would talk about certain things, I would explain myself to them in a certain way.

It was all about having this effect on people so they would know who I truly was, which was my fantasy, which was kind of a fantasy.

Right.

And I would tell you, when I was with my friends, that worked just fine.

They were doing the same thing probably.

So we were going back and forth and we had, you know, it all worked fine.

I went to the San Francisco Zen Center and I talked to some of the more experienced practitioners there.

When I did that, there was no response.

Like, you know, what?

It wasn't like they were rejecting me, but they weren't buying it.

They stayed present, but they weren't going to get involved with that.

They weren't picking it up.

And so they became my mirror.

So I saw what I was doing in a way I'd never seen before.

And I liked being with those mirrors.

So that's one of the reasons I went back is so I can keep seeing myself better at what I was doing.

So we grasp onto things and we gather them, and some people have big, big bundles of things they cling to.

If you really start making the list, probably it's a pretty big list.

So the Buddha, he said there were, he organized it into five bundles.

The first bundle is your appearance, appearances.

Your appearances, other people's appearances.

It turns out appearances is really important for people, sometimes tragically so.

A lot of suffering happens in society by how people appear and what that means and is projected on, how we see it for ourselves.

And so that's one of the big bundles that people live with, being attached to appearances.

And people gather them and gather them and live with them and suffer a lot because of it.

A second bundle is, some people are really, they're big.

Some people's kind of small bundle, sometimes a big bundle, that cling to comfort and discomfort, pleasure and pain.

That's the feeling tones.

Some people are really driven by having pleasure.

Their life is successful if they're comfortable and things are pleasant.

There are some people who feel like they're a failure as a human being if they're uncomfortable.

Like they must be doing something wrong.

Or they expect what it means to be a successful life is to have an uninterrupted pleasure.

And anything else is a mistake.

Some people are highly preoccupied by what's unpleasant and just on the lookout to notice.

And I've had that sometimes on retreat.

And just some reason I was kind of like, anything that was unpleasant, it was like I put a magnifying glass on it.

And I realized after a while that it was the same discomfort as I had in ordinary life.

It was no different, but I was just like making it this big thing.

And so the clinging to it was a reverse clinging.

It was like I was attached to it, but the attachment was like, get rid of it, push it away.

I don't like this.

But boy, was I concerned with it.

And it's like somehow I was locked into that.

So I got stuck there.

The next big bundle is our opinions, are sometimes called perceptions, our concepts of things.

The raw basic idea of what something is.

And we have sometimes, we're caught in that it has to be this way.

This is how it is.

And so people suffer a lot.

Their concepts of what it means to be a human being, a good human being, a bad human being, what it means to be, you know, what the idea of what kind of clothes is the right clothes to wear, the wrong clothes, what kind of speech, what kind of words to use, what kind of...

We have all kinds of ideas.

And of course we have ideas.

We can't live and get along in this world without notions, ideas, understandings of what things are.

But what this practice here shows us when the mind gets really quiet is how much we're painting the world with our concepts of things.

So, you know, we have, I mean, I look at this thing here.

Most of you will have a concept, you know what it is.

It's a water bottle.

What's the big deal?

That's like, they're a dime a dozen in our society.

I suspect that if we went back somewhere like 50,000 years ago and handed this to a human being, they would like think it was the strangest thing in the world.

They would be completely, they had no concept of water bottle, and they would just like, it would be a jewel.

A big diamond.

It would be, you know, they don't have a concept that we have.

Right.

This bell, it's a bell, right?

It's only a bell here because we ring it.

I've seen the same looking, I saw one like this, Japanese, this is a Japanese-style bell.

I was, many years ago, I was driving down Mission Street, I think, in San Francisco.

And then maybe I stopped for a red light or something, and there was someone who was begging.

Yeah.

And he was begging with a Japanese bell.

I couldn't believe it.

After I drove by him, I said, should I go back and offer to buy it?

It was a begging bowl for him.

As far as I could tell, some of the Burmese meditation teachers I spent time with, they would have something like this next to them.

And during the Dhamma talk, they used it as a spittoon.

Right.

I mean, that was seemingly totally okay, unself-conscious.

If I started using this as a spittoon during my Dhamma talk, that would be major news in American Buddhism.

Probably Joseph Goldstein will call me up, Gil.

What are you doing?

Yeah.

So we have ideas, and we project the ideas onto things.

I mean, this could be a pencil holder, this could be a doorstop, this could be many different things.

And if we just used that for a few days, we would call it a doorstop, or, you know, and so we see it with its function that we attribute to it.

We don't realize we're actually in some ways painting that on top of it, and we're doing that all the time.

And it's when your mind is quiet enough, there's a funny way in which you can kind of almost feel like a veil between you and what's there.

Because you can kind of, kind of the way the mind has concepts and ideas, thoughts, is kind of in between you and the thing.

The first time I ever saw this was that time, the first time I was driving to Tassajara, I'd never been there.

The Zen monastery I was going to live in for three years.

And I'd already been doing a lot of Zen practice then, a year of it, more than a year, and a lot of, it's been...

And so I was driving in, and I don't know if you've ever been on Carmel Valley Road.

Once you get past Carmel Village, there's this long kind of rural road with amazingly large oak trees.

Some of these great valley oaks.

And so I was in the backseat and kind of going to the monastery, maybe kind of falling into my meditation kind of state a little bit, getting me calm and just being present.

And I looked at the oak trees, and I had a clear sense that I was painting oak trees on top of the oak trees.

The painting was relatively accurate, thank you.

But still, I could see that I was adding this on top.

So the mind has these concepts of things, and sometimes we get attached to the concept.

I say it's a bell, you say it's a spittoon, and we're going to have a war, right?

Because we have different concepts of it.

So sometimes part of this, what we're bundling up and gathering together, is all these ideas of how things should be.

The next bundle, there's five of them, the next bundle is the bundle of stories, the constructions.

The mind is a constructive activity.

It constructs stories, it constructs ideas, and constructs the idea of appearances, that they're important, and these are the appearances that are important to look for.

That's a construct of the mind.

It's what constructs the very things we're going to attach to is this fourth bundle.

And one way of understanding it, it's the mind that makes stories.

Stories about who I am, who you are.

And then we get attached to that.

And we start gathering these bundles together.

And the fifth one is a little harder to understand, maybe, but it's usually called consciousness.

But I think a better English word to represent what this word meant, *viññāṇa* meant in the early Buddhist tradition, it's cognition.

But either way, some people get attached to the idea of consciousness, the feeling of it, the sense of it.

This is what's important.

And it's really easy because when you really sit really, really quiet and still, there's a feeling of something that we can call consciousness, maybe, that feels so ultimate, feels so peaceful, so final, or so wonderful.

And then people get attached to it.

The idea of it, the having it, being there.

Cognitions, there's a movement of cognizing.

It's a fantastic function of the mind.

And some people get attached to this simple, even they get attached to mindfulness, the cognizing functioning of mindfulness.

That's what, this is where it's at.

This is what's so good.

And we get, we gather these, we accumulate these bundles of cognitions, bundles of ideas.

And some of these, and one of the, for the ancient teachings, it's a lot of this that's being bundled together has to do with self, identity.

Not every possible identity involves clinging.

But a lot of these things have to do with how we build up a sense of self, and we get attached to a sense of self.

And we can even be attached to a true identity, and we still cling to it.

So the hand might be very happy being a hand.

It's proud of being a hand.

It's a good hand.

Yeah.

And it's so, but it really likes it a little bit too much, and it really is important to defend it and assert its right to exist.

So the obvious thing to do then is to grasp it.

So there it is, I have it.

But in grasping the hand, I lose all the wonderful functionality of the hand.

The fist is a very limited phenomena.

So we can have very important, useful identities, but if we cling to it, we lose some of the functionality of it, we lose some of the freedom of it.

And of course, many of you know society can treat us in such horrible ways that it's almost like we have to cling in order to survive.

We have to hold on and be strong or something.

So it's a very tender thing.

This whole idea of clinging, we have to have a lot of respect and care for the fact that we get attached and clinging.

So even though that's what Buddhism is helping us be free of, even though we're making all these bundles of attachments, we don't want to make it a crime.

We don't want to make ourselves bad for it.

We don't want to make it, in a sense, don't even want to make it a problem, but we want to see it.

And one of the ways to see it is that these are the places the mind stops.

So I'm sitting here minding my own business, meditating very nicely, thank you.

And I look down and I see the bell.

And I think, you know, that's not really the right bell for us to have.

That proves to the world that I'm a really great teacher.

I think we need to have a bigger one that really kind of shows the world that I'm, you know, kind of cool or something, cool teacher.

So now my mind has stopped in a certain way.

I've gotten caught, I've gotten fixated on that idea, and reality has just kept on going on.

And I missed it.

I'm not there for the flowing, changing, unfolding nature of the present moment.

Right.

I've kind of stepped out of time.

What we're trying to do here is to stay in time, to be in time with time, which means the only place time exists is in the present moment.

There is no future and past in a certain way.

So we're trying to be in time.

And in music, being in time has a whole different meaning too, which is kind of nice.

But to be in time and not stop for things and miss what's going on.

And so that's one of the things that we start seeing as we get quieter and stiller, we start seeing when we latch on, when we hold on, where we cling.

And part of the art of this is, again, as I said, don't make it a problem or don't now create a new self that, oh, you know, I'm clinging, but I'm not a very good clinger.

Other people are much better at clinging than me.

And if I'm going to cling, I'm going to be the best clinger.

That's an example.

You're clinging, you're making, or it's the opposite.

Boy, I'm just a Buddhist failure.

Buddhism is about the end of clinging, and here I am clinging, and everyone else has probably let go of their clinging, but I'm the last one who's clinging, and hopefully they don't notice that I'm clinging.

They'll probably kick me out if I cling.

We've gotten stuck, and we're out of time.

We've left time.

We've stepped away from time.

We've stepped away from reality a certain way.

We're trying to put ourselves back in time to see clearly what's here without stopping for it, without getting caught by it.

And so the idea is not to make clinging a problem, but rather to make it something that you care for, believe it or not.

Care enough so you can feel it carefully.

Feel it so maybe the deepest sensitivity you have.

Sense it, know what's there.

Everything is connected to the depth of who we are.

As I said yesterday morning, our intelligence operates when everything is in communication with each other.

Everything is in harmony, everything is integrated.

And so you have to find a way to integrate your clinging into the whole so that clinging then can begin to release and let go.

You don't want to make it a problem.

You want to kind of invite it.

Everything gets invited.

Here, come.

Let's know this in time.

Let's stay in time with everything, with the flow and the change.

Hold the clinging.

And then one of those questions that you could ask that might, kind of at the right time, that might kind of do this opening and you can't know the answer, so you have to, and you can't search for it anywhere.

So you have to just kind of like open up, and then notice what it's like to open.

What wants to be born in you when you have a really good bout of clinging?

And so you're all fisted up.

In that fist, in that tight...

What wants to be born?

How do you relate to that then?

What wants to grow?

What wants to be revealed?

What?

That's a very different question than, how do I get rid of this?

Let's get rid of it quickly, because I have a practice discussion with Francisco in 15 minutes, and I need to have something to show for myself.

No.

So what wants to be born?

And it's really best if you don't get an answer.

Then you'll probably make another bundle, add that to your bundle if you get an answer.

Just no answer, just that availability, this space, this receptivity.

There's a freedom there.

So these two things, so the hindrances, which are coarser, they involve more complicated stories, and then it gets more subtle.

And there's not much stories involved, or they're very, very simple.

At some point, as the story mind kind of quiets down, then we start seeing the little ways in which we get, or big ways we get stuck and caught and step out of time and how we're holding on, how we're building a self, building whatever.

And you're on your, on a ritual journey with it all.

And I offer you that idea of a ritual journey.

Because rituals are temporary.

You're going to return.

But you're in a ritual.

And the reason I like to say that is that maybe if you understand that, maybe you're more willing to put things down.

Maybe you're more willing to do the deep work of a ritual which is to leave things behind.

Drop the clinging, leave it behind, whatever you're attached to.

Maybe trust, be courageous, and leave behind your past, especially if you're clinging to it.

Put down a future.

It's what the ritual is asking you to do.

So you can come to that middle of the ritual and be available for what wants to be born.

You want to be available for what's at the other side of the question.

What is this life?

What is this life?

What is freedom?

And then at some point, it all returns.

But maybe when it returns, you'll have learned how to hold it lighter, how you hold it without grasping at it.

Maybe you've learned how to care more, to love more, to have more compassion for it all.

Maybe you've learned in such a profound way you've learned how beautiful you are and you won't forget as the social personality comes back.

Well, I know, and I'm not going to be so tricked again, that you're beautiful.

So, that's our ritual.

And if you, next 23 hours, trust the process of letting go, part of the ritual, then Francisco will be there to meet you at the heart of the ritual.