

## Dharmette: Water as a Metaphor to Lift you

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Hello everyone. So, some words about mindfulness of the body. It's phenomenally useful to drop into the body and experience our life through our body, and it's not just experiencing life through our body. It's allowing the body to process your life. If we're trying to process it only through our thoughts, or only through our kind of thinkingful way of feeling emotions, then we're really limiting what our whole system of life can do for us. But to drop into the body is a phenomenal thing.

Because the body is somehow connected to everything. I'm struck by this amazing nervous system we have, that neurological system of nerves that travels throughout the body. Every place in your body that you have a sensation, or can have a sensation, means that it's part of the neural network of the whole body and system that's here. And I don't think the mind is only in the brain. If there's a definition of the mind for me, it's as big as the nervous system. And it's all a system of communication that communicates in all kinds of ways, not all of it just to the brain, but to other parts of the body.

And so when we say, you know, drop into the body, it's literally drop into the sensations, the experience of the body. If you're in the sensations and experience of the body, you're immediately, exactly, immediately, fully, intimately connected to your mind. Don't think your mind is just separate from your body. It's completely integrated together. And then you're part of an integrated system that works together. Whereas if you're in your mind thinking about things, that's where you're isolating. That's where you're pulling out and away from the totality of this wonderful, rich, interactive system of the mind that we have that is not separate from the body.

Being in the body actually connects us to the mind in a fuller, more complete way that allows for all kinds of things to happen. And so I wanted to offer one thing, one analogy for what

can happen sometimes. Maybe I'll do it this way. Lately I've been doing something out in the rain, out in our backyard. There's work being done there and dirt's built up. Or I go hiking in the hills here, and I come back and the bottom of my boots are full of mud. I mean, it's inside the soles, in the ridges in the soles, it's packed in there.

And so usually what I do when I get home now, I sit down outside the house and get a stick and clean them all out, all the mud, because I can't bring the muddy boots into the house. But what I could also do is I could suspend the soles of the feet, the shoes, into water, and just leave it there for a while. And slowly, the mud will dissolve into the water. So imagine you have a clod of mud, and you drop it into the water. And you can maybe watch it slowly, over I don't know how long, hours, days, just dissolve. It dissolves into the water.

And eventually, maybe it's a little bit murky right around the clod. But it just eventually gets all clear. And the mud you put in there, in the clod, doesn't disturb the clarity of the water. So we have mud in our mind. We have things that are clogging up the soles of our soul. And so what do we do with it? Drop it into the water so it can dissolve.

Take all your difficult emotions, all your difficult thoughts, all the stories, everything you have, and just turn it into your body. Drop it. Imagine you're dropping it into the body. Just feel how it is in the body, the whole embodied experience. Don't get lost in the stories. Don't get caught up in the judgments, the commentary.

Those are important in their own way, but they're most valuable when they're integrated with the whole field of the wider mind, the body-mind, the mind-body. And if it is mud that you've gotten all clogging up what's going on, the body will dissolve it. The body will help it relax and settle, and something unwinds. It gives room for things to unwind. It gives room for things to settle and calm.

Just come into the body. Dip into the body. Drop into the body. Feel, ah, that's what it's like. I'm furious. What's fury like in the body? And maybe because there's so much fury, you can only drop into the body for two seconds. Maybe three seconds, like it's a miracle. And you feel it, and then you do it again.

Because you get pulled up into the story, and how could they? And drop in again. Not as a way of being dismissive of what you're feeling, or rejecting it at all. But rather, so something which is not you, you trust this bigger thing. Some things are not the you that you identify with, that you create. That's only a piece of the puzzle. You're much more than anything that you can think about who you are.

Any definition, any idea, any thought. You're much more. And so to drop into the body is a

way of connecting to the wider whole, which is not a thing, but is a whole series of processes, a whole series of things that are moving and unfolding and working their way through us. And so we're supporting ourselves in a profound way, dipping into the water. And if you happen to have mud stuck to your shoes when you do that, give it a chance to dissolve. Breathe with it. Stay with it.

Stay in the body. Breathe with the experience best you can. Come back over and over again. Dip into it over and over again. Dip in. You know, those muddy shoes, the real shoes, the mud might actually fall off and dissolve quicker if I put them in the water and then lift them up and do it again, over and over again, than just keeping it in there. So who knows?

It might be useful to be pulled up into your thoughts again, as long as you remember to dip down again. Just keep dipping. Keep dipping into the body, into the water of the body. So then two things about this water analogy. One is that the Buddha used water a lot to refer to the deepening meditation. And the body, the mind, just feeling more and more like a lake, a water, a stream, a clear mountain lake, where lotuses grow.

And then over time, Buddhists came to say that the maturing in this *Dharma* practice is like a lotus growing out of the muddy waters. And the lotus blossoms are very slick, so water doesn't stand, it just washes right off. And the blossoms stay beautifully white. The white lotus is kind of pure-looking compared to the mud that it grows out of. And then I think it was Thich Nhat Hanh who said, "No mud, no lotuses."

So don't worry about all your mud that's dissolving into the water of your body. Without it, there won't be any lotuses for you. Something will grow out of it. And here in Redwood City, we don't have lotuses growing out of muddy ponds, as far as I know. But we have the equivalent metaphor if you drive out on Whipple to Highway 101 and go south.

And in a safe way, keep your eye out on the right-hand side of the road there, of the freeway. And right there across the fence, the highway fence there, as you're going down, within, I don't know, within a few hundred feet probably, there's a Buddha. I don't know if you've ever seen it. The Buddha is probably eight feet tall, a sitting Buddha. It has his hand up. I don't know, it looks like it's blessing all the cars driving down Highway 101.

So you're being blessed as you drive by, or you can wave back at this Buddha sitting there. And it's quite something, you know, the contrast between the Buddha peacefully sitting there and the cars driving by. But the most amazing thing about that Buddha, he's sitting high up on this cinder block kind of little box, cinder blocks, little hut or something, just big enough for what's inside. And what's inside is big rolling trash receptacles. These are the rolling

things. So we don't have lotuses growing out of muddy water in Redwood City. We have Buddhas growing out of the trash.

And I don't want to call your body a cinder block building. You know, let's just keep the metaphor of water for your lotuses. Dip into your body. It's really a good thing. Let your body hold it all. Let your body hold your sorrow, your anger, your grief, your joy, your happiness, your hopes, your hopelessness. Trust the body.

It's a way of trusting all of who you are. Not just the physical body, but the mind-body, the body-mind. It'll take care of you. So thank you very much. And we're going to do the cleaning now.