

3 Characteristics: Not-Self (Anatta)

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So today I'll be sharing some thoughts on the third of these three characteristics, not-self, or *anattā* in Pāli. And it's an idea that's often misunderstood and causes a lot of confusion and way too much thinking. So we'll try to keep from overthinking it.

And in practice, the idea of not-self is not meant to be a metaphysical idea. It's not meant to be approached that way. It's not a philosophical idea. But it's really meant to be very practical and simple.

And when the Buddha was asked, "Is there a self, or is there not a self?" one time when he was asked, he just stayed silent. And afterwards, he explained. He said, "If I said there is a self, then there would be this idea of eternalism, that there's some unchanging, permanent soul, and that would distort the truth. And if I said there wasn't a self, then people would get the idea of annihilationism, the idea that we exist now and then we go extinct when we die. And that wasn't the truth either."

And so that's why he stayed silent. So he taught this concept of not-self as a strategy, as a tool, as something very practical.

One way to understand the practice of working with *anattā* is that we're not trying to get rid of the self. We're trying to understand the activity of selfing. So think of it as a verb, not as a noun. You know, it's something we do: we self. And it's not a solid entity, that there's a self that we're relating to, but really the process of creating a self.

And, for example, if we look carefully at ourselves, what we think is me and who I am, are you the same person you were when you were four years old? Would they recognize you? Maybe you'd recognize them from a picture, but would you recognize that mind, that way of being? What's still there of that self?

And even right now, you know, the self that's doing the taxes is incredibly different than the self that's playing with the dog, right? The mind is so different at those times.

You know, the Buddha said, he said in a really poetic way, but I can't remember the wording, something about it being a thicket of views, trying to think about the self and what the self is, and self or not-self. You know, a bramble of views. It's just something that complicates the mind. And that's not particularly useful for the purpose of freeing the mind.

He said, you know, what's useful is what's happening right now. What's happening right now? What's the mind doing right now? You know, what leads to contraction? What leads to ease? What leads to freedom?

And those are the important things to pay attention to. And those don't require any belief. Okay, right? We can see it right in front of us. You know, if we're really holding on to an idea and fighting for it, we can get really pretty miserable. And if we're in a loving space, we just feel the freedom of the heart.

You know, we can see this in our lives. But one of the things we begin to notice, well, you know, you don't have to have a Buddhist practice to notice these things. But we can see that the mind organizes itself around me and mine. You know, around, "This is for me. This is against me."

And so we're selfing when we compare ourselves to others. Now, comparing ourselves to others can be very useful, right? You know, if we need something from a tall shelf, Matthew's a little taller than me. It helps to know that he can get it.

And so comparing is natural. We're doing it all the time. You know, they're driving a little bit slower than I like. They're doing this, they're doing that. And so the comparing mind that just notices the difference is not problematic. It's useful to notice all these differences.

But there's a way that we do this. We compare, and then we add something to it. I remember there was someone I knew who, for some reason, was very competitive about being an inch taller than me, since I'm on height. And they would just really make it a point all the time that they're like an inch taller. And it was just kind of a funny thing. I don't know where that came from.

But, you know, that extra, that, "I'm taller, I'm better. I'm taller, I'm better." Or, you know, we do this like, "This is my opinion. This is my meditation session. This is my success, my failure, my reputation." You know, we keep consolidating a self around this me, who this me is, in a way that does not lead to our happiness.

You know, the Buddha taught practitioners to notice these things we construct with the mind, and to practice with actually using the idea of, “This is not me, not mine, not myself.” And I want to say a little more about that.

You know, when we say, “This is mine,” I had a cup. This cup my husband made me, and it was my morning coffee cup. And this is my cup. Nobody got to use my cup.

And I always remember the day I broke it. I actually cried. It was a beautiful cup. And then, you know, it was like, “My cup.”

And I have a different cup. You know, it's my cup. But it's like that extra of being really attached to it. And we do that with material things.

And so, the Buddha mentioned three main ways that we tend to selfing. You know, three main categories. And one of them is over-possessiveness and attachment. It can be over things, over people. You know, “My spouse, my dog, my this, my that.”

You know, it's a craving for possession. Our house, my lunch, right? My lunch. We do it over anything.

We also do it with, “I am this,” with identifying with being something, like ego status or image. You know, “I'm smart. I'm beautiful. I'm...” You know, “Who's the prettiest one of them all?” We grew up with this stuff.

I don't know how many of you grew up with those kinds of fairy tales. But there's so many ways that we hold on to our image and the conceit. And that's a major way that we tend to do this. And it's the constant psychological work that we do to maintain a certain image in front of others.

And a lot of you might have noticed at some point, maybe you're totally relaxed when you go into your first practice discussion. How many of you were completely at ease in your first practice discussion? Maybe some of you were. Yeah, it's great, but many of us were not.

And the example that I think about, you know, I mean, it'd be embarrassing if I didn't think it was funny. But I remember going into this practice discussion. It was a long—I'd already sat a bunch of retreats. But this was with a particular teacher.

And I knew I was meeting with them. So that morning I practiced extra hard. I got up and did an extra sitting. And it had nothing to do with practicing for myself or my practice. It was all about wanting to have a good enough experience to report.

You know, that was my motivation: my image. And I didn't tell him that then. I didn't have the transparency in me yet to say something like that to my teacher. Eventually, I got transparent

enough and was able to share, to not make a big deal out of those things.

But it's painful stuff. It's actually painful, that kind of conceit, pride. So, "This is mine. I am this. How do I look?"

Joseph—it was pretty funny. Joseph Goldstein, I don't know, he was one of my first retreat teachers and one of my big inspirations in practice. And he used to talk about how he learned how to meditate when he was in the Peace Corps in Thailand.

And so he set up this really nice platform for himself where he would meditate, and then he invited all his friends to come over and watch him meditate.

So, and the third category is, "This is myself. This is my essence. This is who I really am." And it's like a belief in something permanent, something inside that's permanent.

And it's driven by views, such as a view of self or not-self, a view of a soul, of a permanent soul. And this is driven by some kind of idea, some philosophical belief of who we really are. And any belief we have about it is actually limiting.

You know, anything we... I think reality is so much more fantastic than anything we can imagine. So any belief we have is so limited. And so when we go deep inside ourselves, we experience some of the deeper aspects of ourselves. What shows up can't be grabbed.

It can't be, "That's it, I found it. I found the self. It's this little pin dot here." It's like it just isn't there. And you can keep chasing it down, trying to find this permanent self, this thing. But it just gets in the way.

And I really went through that kind of thing at one point. I was very expanded in the meditation. I was feeling very open and spacious. And then I went on a search for myself.

Yeah. And the more I tried to do that, it was like I just complicated my whole experience and kind of brought me out of this nice, wonderful experience. But there isn't anything we can pinpoint to that.

So it's not that there isn't—who knows, who knows? But it's not what helps us be free. It's not anything that helps us be free.

Retreats really bring this out, because you're usually in daily life where sometimes we're too busy going from one thing to another, one thing that's calling us to another. And it's not as obvious, the way we cling to the self, to the idea of me, mine, and myself.

And I just remember, it was a retreat where it rained 23 out of 28 days. And one day, a couple weeks into the retreat, somebody took my umbrella. And my umbrella had my name emblazoned on it. It was my umbrella.

And I kept looking at umbrellas. You know, did anybody have it? Eventually, a few days later, I found it outside the dining hall, and I took it. But there was all the drama that my mind went through around my umbrella.

I mean, it's nice to have an umbrella. There's no question about it. But my mind: this person took it, and how incensed I was, all the stories that my mind made up around it, and quite a bit of suffering. It was interesting.

Not huge suffering, but this unsettled mind that just isn't at ease. You know, "This is mine."

And having talked about how unhelpful it is to identify with me, mine, myself, it's not to not recognize the usefulness of the skillful self, of the functional self. We all need the self. But it's how we hold these selves that show up.

We keep creating selves for useful things. You know, when I'm teaching the *Dharma*, I'm very different than I am when I'm cuddling in bed with my husband. It's a very different self that shows up.

And I need to consider the time, remember to record, remember to put on my microphone. All these little things that are functional, they're practical. And so we need our useful selves.

So the idea is just to make ourselves—not to make them be useful, but to condition ourselves to move in the direction of making ourselves skillful, to have ourselves serve us in the service of being happier, in the service of being at ease, in the service of helping other people.

And so, really appreciating that there is this wonderful part that has a role to play if we're not identified with it. You know, Gil used to talk about how, when he first started teaching, he'd come home to his wife and she'd say, "Don't talk to me with that voice, that teacher voice."

It's like we can buy into it too much, right? Buy into our roles too much. But it's so easy how this very wonderful functional self can quickly turn into a clinging self.

See parents with kids. A lot of parents are wonderful parents and taking care of their kids. And then their kid does something wonderful, and they go, "Oh, it's my kid. My kid did that." And they're clinging to it now.

Instead of just being this wonderful parent, now they're clinging to being a wonderful parent. You know, they used to have these bumper stickers that said, "My child is an honor student." I would cringe when I saw those.

It's like, God, that's a little obvious, isn't it? But that's how we cling. We cling to these things.

Another way we cling that can be really painful is attention to ourselves and how we are. It can be really wholesome, or it can be really painful self-consciousness when we cling. You know, for instance, I've never been a person who liked parties. I've never liked large groups of people. It wasn't something I was comfortable with.

And when I started practicing, I started becoming aware of paying attention to how I was, how tense I'm getting, and relaxing. And seeing the difference between being aware of how I was and when I just go, "Everybody's looking at me, and I'm not doing the right thing," and all this social awkward stuff. And so that's clinging to image again, wanting to be somebody, conceit, wanting to look good.

Much of our suffering doesn't come from the experience we have, but from what we add to it. You know, for instance, if someone says you did something wrong and is just telling you that you made a mistake, you might turn it into, "Oh, I'm a terrible person," or, "How could they even say that to me?"

And there's all these things that we can do when we're clinging to our self-image. Or maybe we're having a really peaceful meditation, we're enjoying it, and the mind goes, "Oh, my practice is going really well. This is a really good sit," not realizing that it's really easy to cling to that.

And then that wonderful feeling of having a really good sit completely falls apart at the next sit because you can't focus, or whatever. You know, I know you've had that kind of experience during the day, to have that follow a really good sit. We call it a good sit.

So there's experience, and then there's interpretation of the experience. Yeah. And it's the interpretation of the experience that often is where we create the self, where we create the clinging.

I mean, not that there aren't experiences that are useful to interpret. That is sometimes useful. But this is just the unuseful way that we do that.

You know, just when selfing arises, instead of making it wrong—because it's so incredibly common throughout our days, the tendency to organize our lives around this self—if we can begin to see it as it happens, and that it's just another transient thing that comes and goes.

So, for instance, this thing that happened with my teacher, where I was trying to impress him. Later on, I noticed the same desire to impress a teacher came up, but I was able to watch it. I was able to see it: that urge, that sinking feeling that I'm not good enough or whatever came up, and then just watching it come and go.

And then just showing up and being real. Yeah, being real with the teacher. And maybe I said something, maybe I didn't, about it. It didn't really matter if I did or not.

But it was really just a process of seeing, or self-seeing. And how much I've done it during meditation. It's amazing. Once I started being in tune to that, I started seeing it more and more in places I never thought I would see it in my life.

You know, it's like, "Really? I can't believe I'm doing that here." Defending, comparing ourselves, rehearsing—that's what many of us do—protecting something, wanting to become something, where the mind just continually wants to solidify around me, me, and mine.

And one way of holding it, of viewing it, is instead of saying, "I am anxious, and I'm an anxious person," we can begin to see, "Anxiety has arisen." And there's something very different about seeing "anxiety has arisen" than "I am anxious."

It's just not so personal, and it's much easier for it to come and go. Because anything that arises is going to pass. You know, sometimes people get this identity: "I'm an anxious person." They see themselves as an anxious person, and it really gets in the way of feeling their beauty, feeling their ease.

And it's a small shift. It's a small shift, but it's a huge shift. You know, when we say, "I'm anxious," we go into cycles of, "What's wrong with me? I shouldn't be this way. I'll always be like this."

There's all these things that tend to continue and follow when we identify with these transient, challenging emotions we may have. But, "Anxiety is here," leaves room for kindness. Anxiety hurts. Being self-conscious hurts.

Walking into the room and feeling awkward, that hurts. And I've shared this a number of times, but it was such a powerful influence in me. And again, Gil, in his very early teaching, was teaching to a group about this size. I just barely knew him then.

I was sitting in the audience, and he was giving a talk and forgot what he was saying. He kind of looked around. He goes, "This is awkward." And I cringed in embarrassment for him.

And he did feel awkward. He felt awkward. And somebody mentioned where he was, and he goes, "Okay," and he went back to his teaching. And it wasn't lingering anymore.

It was just like he felt the awkwardness of the moment. He felt that, but he didn't take it with him. He didn't carry it with him. And to me, that was the transparency of the moment that showed me a certain freedom that I really wanted to find in myself.

You know, a certain ease that, “Oh my God, it's okay to be awkward?” Yeah. It's okay to be socially incompetent. That's okay. I don't have to hide all that.

And it was like, it didn't mean I changed immediately based on that. But it was a reference point for me over some years.

You know, one way of thinking about it is that mindfulness doesn't judge, doesn't ever judge what arises. Right? There's room for everything with mindfulness, whatever arises. But what we do, we learn to discern what leads to happiness and what leads to suffering.

So if we're really mindful, we begin to see that adding all this stuff—“I'm a terrible person”—that leads to more suffering, right? So we go, well, let's not go that way. Let's go in the direction of, “This hurts. This hurts. This is painful.”

Can we be kind to ourselves? This is awkward, and it's painful. So it shows us, it gives us the room to make the choice between what's helpful and what's not helpful, what leads to our happiness, what leads to our suffering.

And that's really what the entire practice is about. It's about clinging causes us pain. When we cling to our image, we cling to what we want. We cling to things to be different that can't be different.

And so we don't go in that direction. We go in the direction of freedom, of letting go. You know, like the simple things, like on retreat. We might notice our shoulders are tense.

And we can say, “Tension is here,” or, “I'm always tense. My shoulders are always tense. I live this way. I'm such a tense person.” And you're often running with this.

Again, these are the common things that show up when you really pay attention to these patterns. Yeah. Judgment carries hostility and identity. Discernment is just very simple and practical.

This is just very simple. Ajahn Brahm tells a story. When he was a young monk, Ajahn Brahm is the abbot of a monastery in Australia. And he built this kind of big wall for the center, for the monastery.

And he put a lot of effort into it. It was a fairly big wall, and two of the bricks weren't right. They were really awkward and kind of messy. And he felt really bad. He felt really embarrassed.

He did all that work, and this thing was not right. And some years later, a visitor came by. Every time he walked by it, he said he would just kind of try to not see it, not see the wall, not see the bricks, because he was so identified with this thing.

And the visitor said, “Oh God, what a beautiful wall. That's a gorgeous wall.” And he says, “But don't you see those two bricks?” He said, “Well, yeah, but I see 998 other bricks. They're beautiful.”

And in the way that the visitor said it, he realized how deeply identified he was with his mistake, his lack of perfection. That was very familiar to me. You know, the mind keeps selectively gathering evidence to reinforce our image or self-image.

It keeps looking at the way... I remember there was this one student who had a lot of conflicted relationships in the *Saṅgha*. She was a *Saṅgha* member, and people saw her as someone very difficult. And part of the issue was that she was always looking for rejection.

She called on the phone, and I didn't answer her that day. I had appointments, I was busy, and I didn't get back to her until the next day. Before I could even get back to her, she sent me this really nasty note about how terrible a person I was for not getting back to her.

And it's like, she set herself up to be rejected. You don't really want to be friends with someone who would do that. You want somebody who would say, “Hey, I didn't hear back from you. What happened?” Right?

And that's kind of an exaggeration of what we do. I mean, some people might still do that, but there's subtler ways we do that, where we kind of set ourselves up to reinforce how we are in the world. “Nobody likes me,” those kinds of things.

Or, “I'm not intelligent.” We're always looking for proof of how we're not intelligent. Or the other direction, always looking for proof: “Look how smart I am. Look how bright I am. I had a great idea.” It's like we look for ways to reinforce ourselves.

You know, mindfulness reveals also that the selfing process is not continuous, right? All of us have probably experienced at some point moments or times, maybe walking in nature, where we're just not selfing, where we're just like, “Ah,” totally relaxed. Or maybe listening to music.

Or a number of other things: petting the dog, loving a child. A million other things we might do that just allow us, for a while, to not be doing this process of selfing. And when we pick up the self again, we can feel kind of the burden of the self.

We pick it up unnecessarily, unneededly. Because there's so much ease when we've set it down, and life is richer, actually. We're not less when the self isn't up, isn't doing its thing. We're not selfing, but we're actually more. We're more alive.

Yeah. We're walking down the beach, feeling the wind blowing, hearing the sound of the

waves. Sometimes it's just so alive, and my mind just opens to the experience without anybody showing up.

But sometimes, I mean, I was with a friend: "Oh, I've got to get a picture of this, and me and mine." Right? How quickly. "Oh, this is a really beautiful sunset. Let me get a picture."

I mean, not that there's anything wrong with being a photographer. That can be a beautiful experience. But there's a way that, "I've got to have it. I've got to have it," that cannot let us experience it.

I actually stopped taking pictures when I went to *Bryce National Monument*, which is just this incredible place in Utah with all these amazing rock formations that are pastel colors. And they look like these huge beings in these gorgeous pastel colors. It was just an amazing place.

And I was so awed by it, and the sun's hitting it just right. And there's like 300 people there, I think, who were visitors. Click, click, click. They're all taking the same picture.

And I thought, "You know, maybe why don't I just get a postcard and enjoy this view?" But again, I'm not really criticizing that. But it did stop me from taking pictures for a while. Yeah.

So the question we can ask ourselves is not, "How can I get rid of myself?" but, "How can I see this process with kindness?" You know, see it arise. It's not that important, in a way, when we see it. "Oh yeah, there it is. Comes and goes."

Just like an itch comes and goes. How anything else comes and goes. You know, Ajahn Sumedho, he was the abbot of Amaravati Monastery in England, and also a wonderful, wonderful teacher.

He used to talk about the inner tyrant. And he said that there was nobody in the world who had ever been as critical and tyrannical toward himself as his own mind. Nobody would be that mean.

And he said, even when he started teaching, no matter what he did, it wasn't good enough. And he talked about his early *Dharma* talks. He'd go give a *Dharma* talk, and people would really like the *Dharma* talk, most of them. And he'd always find something he said wrong and feel bad about it.

And he'd say to himself, "I shouldn't have said that. I missed that point. I could have done this better." And he would do it with a tone that wasn't helpful.

I mean, sometimes I give a talk like, “Gee, I forgot to say that.” And yeah, that's just something that happened. I forgot to say that, or I could have said something better. And maybe I have that thought.

But it's the quality of that thought. Is it the inner tyrant talking? Is it, you know, any of you have anything happen in the groups you went to where you regretted something or you wished you had said something? Or does that happen?

You know, we all have our different patterns and ways of doing these things. Yeah. You know, the desire to be perfect, the perfectionism, the perfect meditator, the perfect loving person, the person who never gets reactive, confused, tired.

That's always been a big one for me. I don't ever want to be tired. That's been my running dialogue in my life. I don't want to be tired.

And so much clinging to these things. The other one that's really been a cause of great suffering for a lot of us is, “I don't make mistakes. It's not okay to make mistakes. I've got to never make a mistake.”

Yeah. And no human being can ever live up to these ideals that we might have, these imagined ideals of who we should be. And this comparing mind can be a source of chronic dissatisfaction in ourselves, because we're never good enough, no matter what.

You know, there are people—you see that in the Olympics—who feel they failed because they got the silver medal. And they feel like they failed. I've read some of their stories. And it's like, one of the greatest athletes in the world, and it's sort of tragic to feel like you failed.

There was something really interesting that Ajahn Sumedho said. And really the point of the teaching was that he said he never defeated the voice. Yeah. It's not like the voice completely went away. He said he just stopped believing it.

It was just, “Oh yeah, there it is, coming and going.” And the issue is what comes afterwards, right? Are we adding something afterwards?

I don't know how many of you have, at some point—those of you who've been practicing a long time or been on a path for a while—made some kind of movement toward simplifying your lives, and kind of really understanding that simplifying our lives adds more ease in some ways. Yeah.

But it's so interesting, because there's a young *Theravāda* monk who, when you're a monk, you're a renunciate, right? You give up all your stuff. The only things you have are like a robe

and your bowl. It's like a begging bowl, an alms bowl, where people give you food, and that's all you get to eat, what they stick in that bowl.

So these are your possessions. I guess they have shoes too, sandals. But there's not many possessions. And he was a young, idealistic monk.

And he said, "Wow, I won't have anything. I won't have any clinging toward stuff. There's nothing to cling to." Well, he found himself polishing his bowl and kept looking around. "Mine's shinier."

Yeah. Yeah, mine's shinier. And it's like, it doesn't matter what it is. The mind keeps wanting to make me and mine.

We do that with so many things. We can simplify. We can do it with spirituality. Okay, I've given up all this stuff.

I remember when we first got rid of our television. And I had some pride about it. "Oh yeah, we don't watch TV." I had this little bit of pride around it.

And not seeing that I gave up TV, maybe that was a nice letting go for me at the time. But the pride was just creating a self. And the selfing is incredibly adaptive. It is so tricky, what it does.

If I can't be the richest, maybe I become the most spiritual. If I can't be the most successful, maybe I'll be the most humble.

So yeah, there's an old Jewish story about this. And it's been told in many different traditions by now, but maybe you've heard this in different ways. During Yom Kippur, which was a major holiday, the chief rabbi of the synagogue was standing outside looking at the heavens.

And he was beating his chest, tears streaming down his face. "Oh Lord, I'm nothing. Lord, I'm nothing." And so the cantor, who leads the singing, was deeply moved by this emotional outburst of the rabbi.

And he goes and stands next to him and starts doing the same thing. "Oh Lord, Lord, I'm nothing, I'm nothing." And the janitor, standing nearby, notices them.

And he's sweeping with his broom, and he looks over. He goes, "Wow, oh, that is so touching." So he joins them and he says, "Oh, I'm nothing, Lord. I'm nothing, Lord."

And the rabbi says to the cantor—he nudges him—"Look who thinks they're nothing." But out of anything, we're good at making ego out of anything.

One of the really wonderful things about the fact that the self is continuously being created, right? We create the self that is sitting here, listening to a *Dharma* talk. It's not the same self that was eating lunch, right?

We're continuously creating, bringing up what's needed for the moment, the personality needed, the skills needed, and the patterns needed. We learn how to hold our forks and knives and spoons and all that. All that is part of that particular self, that eating self, right?

And because of the fact that we keep... You know, it's not just this fixed thing. The self that arises, the created self, can be shaped. So instead of a self that's grumpy 90 percent of the time, we can create a self that's kind 90 percent of the time.

But it's not something we can force. It's something that we can shape. It's the plasticity of the nervous system, of the mind. It's amazing what we can do with our minds just by shaping them a little bit each day.

You know, for instance, we all have had habits, right? I used to bite my nails for a long time. But I also used to like to tear apart my split ends. That was my compulsive habit as a teenager.

I just spent hours in school just ripping apart my split ends. And that changed. At some point, I decided to stop doing that. And at first, it's like the body wants to keep doing it. The mind wants to keep doing it.

And eventually, somehow, I dropped it. But it wasn't like I decided, "Today I'm stopping," and then it's gone. Yeah. But it can be shaped, just like we're shaping our minds every time we meditate.

Over the days, no matter how our practice goes, hour after hour, day after day, we're gently shaping our minds to be more able to be here, to have a greater tendency to show up. And by encouraging the wholesome way we respond to ourselves and we respond to the world around us, we're developing a healthier self, a happier self, a skillful self, a more skillful self.

You know, we all have some skillful self. We're here, we all have a skillful self. We just have a more skillful self.

But the practice allows us to discover in a very real way that freedom doesn't come from creating a perfect self. We may make a kinder self, but it's not the perfect self that the practice is about. It's learning how to hold all of it really lightly, really lightly.

You know, to embrace all of who we are, including our foibles, including our imperfections, the ways we're unfinished. And to hold all of that with care, with lightness.

And the thing is that even the difficult parts we have inside us, the embarrassing parts, the parts that just seem so immature sometimes, even those are actually there in a not very successful way. They're trying to make us happier. And that's how we developed them to begin with.

You know, we developed our defenses as a way to protect ourselves, take care of ourselves. So even our foibles, or the ways our egos show up, even all those ways that may seem not helpful at all—the inner tyrant—it was trying to keep us safe. It was trying to keep us happy.

“If I do this right, maybe my parents won't yell at me.” Maybe it's whatever. And so we start seeing that even in the way we make ourselves suffer, there's some wanting to be happy. There's a movement toward freedom. There's a movement we have toward happiness.

And as the self becomes healthier, it becomes more playful, lighter, more flexible, more compassionate. We basically stop carrying around as much. We unburden ourselves from so much extra. And life becomes simpler.

Right. Things become simpler when we set down this habitual way of selfing and holding on to it for dear life.

So maybe I'll wrap up. I just want to really end with a very simple phrase. We notice it happening. You know, we see it happening, just remembering, “Not mine, not me, not myself.”

And that can be a shortcut to that process of selfing. I'll end with a quote from Wúmén Huìkǎi, 13th-century Zen master.

Spring has its hundred flowers. Autumn its moon. Summer has its cooling breezes. Winter, its snow. If your mind is not clouded by pointless things, this is the best season of your life.

So thank you.