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SPEAKERS

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So Good evening, everyone. Can you hear me? Okay? Maybe a little bit low, a little bit low. You can turn up a little. Let's see that it's up better. Okay, great. Thank you.

So one of the pithy little teachings that comes from Indian because that teacher named Munindra, his teaching was, if it's not simple, it's not vipassana. If it's not simple, it's not the practice of mindfulness. And I think he felt the need to say that because people would get very complicated very quickly and trying to meditate trying to Do things and accomplish things and get rid of things and, and it's an easy thing to do, because we can give a lot of instruction and our tradition, I'm just amazed how much instruction can be given. And it's kind of a wonderful thing because there's these wonderful teachers who spent 20 30 40 years more some of them exploring their minds exploring the practice, and all kinds of different situations of their lives. And from that comes a big repertoire of how to be mindful and may different situations. And so they have all these approaches and techniques and things to do. And poor students have to listen to that. And, and, and so it's easy to get some idea of is all this stuff to do and if you Come and take my introduction to meditation class. You know, I give five weeks of instructions, so a lot of instructions. And you know, by that fourth week Some people think, oh, what am I supposed to do now and this situation and they wonder and all that. So it can start seeming kind of complicated. And but if it's not simple, it's not mindfulness, it's not simple as not be possible. So I wanted to offer you at the risk of more instruction. I wanted to offer you some way of understanding this practice of especially especially in meditation and how it applies in daily life, you have to have some wisdom. Understand that but start with meditation. Meditation is a wonderful laboratory. It's a wonderful domain or area of our life, where the rules of behavior are different than everyday life. Because in meditation of one thing, when you sit down, close your eyes, to meditate, you don't have to cook Your dinner go shopping, you don't have to solve your taxes you don't have to solve your life problems or the world's problems that you don't have to, you know, you're basically a safe person because you're committed for the duration of meditation not to move. And so it's okay to have murderous rage. And where and where in your life can hit. Okay, murderous rage. Usually, you know, you could say it's good society is supposed to keep a kind of, you know, polite society, you don't go around demonstrating your murderous rage. But in meditation, you can have tremendous upsurges of all kinds of emotions, anger, greed, grief, sadness, all kinds of things can come. And so it's a different kind of rules apply. It's like you can allow things to happen in meditation that maybe it's not okay to allow it to happen at work. For example, you know, you don't want to let your boss know you have murderous rage. You know, it's not a place though to allow it, you know, so, so. So such a kind of a special place. And I like to think of it, it's kind of like being a little bit akin to being at home. In the in some people have a sense of being at home is the place where you can, you know, if you're a home and loan, it's your house, you can go walk around into pajamas in your underwear, you can just kind of, you know, you kind of just be yourself without having to worry about, you know, being something for somebody. And so the rules of society don't quite apply when you're at

your house home alone, you can just kind of unwind and just kick back and just feel at home with just being yourself. You don't have to prove yourself or anything. So meditation is a place to be home like that to be at home with yourself. So one of the ways to in this area of meditation, and one of the approaches that can make it simple and I think very interesting and also wonderful protection. For some of it. Challenges are gonna happen meditation is to have meditation primarily to be about how you are. How are you? I'm fine, thank you. How are you? Not about what you're trying to do. Not what you're trying to accomplish, not what you're trying to be. But just check in How are you? And notice how are you. Because often in our life and human life, it's pretty common for many people to be about something, to be trying to accomplish something, you go to work, you have some hobby, you have something you're doing. And so your focus is on doing the activity. And the activity may be sometimes supposed to do us good makes us feel good. And so we feel, you know, the How is we feel good because of doing it. Or that or what we're doing is trying to protect us from feeling bad.

But the focus can be on what we're doing, and what we're accomplishing or what we're being who we are. And meditation is not about who you are. It's not about what You're doing, but it's more about how you are. And so put aside when you sit down to meditate, any attempt to try to do something, but rather use meditation as a time to check in. How are you? How are you with what you're doing? So how are you, you know, you. So you sit down and you find out some people when they sit down to meditate. It's the first time that they take the time to check in with themselves. And they are surprised to discover what's there, the emotions, they're the feelings, they're the attitudes that are there, the beliefs that are operating, because we're running around being busy, don't stop, we don't really catch up and see what's going on. So how are we? So we can be any any old way until we notice how we are? And then that's fine. So you notice that you maybe this is an unfortunate example I got stuck in here. You know, how are you Ares you're you're Rachel, what's the range? So that's what you notice. And then you can ask again Well, how are you? How are you with having rage? I don't like it. I wish it was different. I feel justified. You know, there's a How How are you? How are we relating to that rage? I want to hide it. I want to avoid it and we get rid of it. How is it that I'm using it rage as a mirror to define myself? I'm a bad person because I have this rage. I should you know, I shouldn't be you know. So you know, we're not simple. We have the rage and then how are we with a rage it gets complicated that attitude towards it. So we noticed that and so what do we do? Well, then we try to get rid of the rage. That's a doing that's not a housing. And meditation is more about how going How are you? Is there a wise way? Is there a wise how to be with what's going on? So maybe the wise way with rage is just to make a lot of room for it not do anything. They really simple make space for it. And the power of making space a power of just allowing it to be there is that it's not the same as condoning it or letting her exactly free rein to get involved and but rather to allow for it is to make space in a space you don't get involved. Just let it be. Just let it be. So how are you? So how are you? You know, over and over again? How are you now? How are you with this? Are you with this? Because I think most of the time, we are some way we we add to the how we are with with what's going on. And but we don't pay attention to we don't notice it. Because we're barreling ahead. So one example I like to use is like holding on to this striker. I could use a striker to point I could use it as a tool to do something I could hold on to it for a status symbol, every good meditation teacher should have a good striker you know and I can I can, you know, I can be holding it as straight striker how I was meaning and all this usefulness and I can focus in on it, but if I've asked myself, how am I holding it? Well then I notice that I'm gripping it really tight and my knuckles hurt. As soon as I see it, that that's how I am I'm kind of hurting, then the natural instinct is to relax. But if I keep focusing on the status symbol and don't want anybody to take it from me, or if I keep trying to accomplish something, get your attention. You know, then I don't notice maybe how I'm holding it. So the question How are you how are you with this? How are you holding it reveals The attitude, the approach that the what you're doing. And when you're seeing how you are, then you can ask yourself the question, is this the best way to be? is the best? Is it best to grip this really tight? Is it better just

hold it lightly? Is it better to put it down? So the information you get about yourself by the question, how are you? How are you, I send any kind of information that's most helpful for finding a direct path to coming to some ease with the situation. If what you're trying to do is to get some deep state of concentration, or get bliss, for some people told you in meditation even get really peaceful. And that's the goal you're trying to do that. It can be just one more thing that you're doing that blinds you from how you are. It's like one more thing you're holding on to like the striker. Don't try to do anything.

And one of the wonderful little sayings in meditation just this kind of work. Place his domain of meditation is the saying nothing needs to happen. Nothing needs to happen. And for some people, that is a radical thing to say. Because the human mind for some people is constantly wanting something to happen to do that nothing needs to happen is frightening for some people, some people it's upsetting. Their whole life is built on always making something happening, wanting something getting something, but it does anything need to happen. And so we asked, and nothing needs to happen, but how am I right now? How am I right now is I'm trying to prove myself. I'm trying to get something try to be someone. Is that necessary? Maybe not. Maybe I can let go and be simpler. So this question, how am I is a protection. So say that you're going to do very simple practice of meditating on your breath being present for your breathing. So I've I've some time You know, tried to get involved with breath meditation as a doings I think to accomplish, as you know, I'm going to become a good meditator, I'm going to be the best breath meditator in town. And you know, really going to focus you know, and really get concentrated is all about this doing. And in that doing and trying to accomplish something, I lose touch with myself, I lose touch with the cost, the feeling of what it's like to be trying to do it. And I've literally gotten headaches, and I've been meditating a long time. So it's not like a regular thing. But when I was a new meditator, or get headaches I get sometimes, like, I did get really angry, I got really angry with myself because it was just wonderful thing that the more I tried to get concentrated, the less I could. So my solution was, was to try harder. Then, you know, so I try harder and guess what that means, is even harder, even less likely to get concentrated. So I just kept chasing concentration by just trying harder and harder. And it was pretty ugly. So finally I crashed. But if I'd asked myself how am I, how are you? Then I would notice Oh what how am I is I'm striving I'm pushing. I'm expecting I'm afraid. I'm afraid of not accomplishing afraid of what's going to happen if I just kind of let go and just be here somehow. The how reveals what the how question reveals what's actually going on in a more intimate or personal way that sometimes is lost when we're trying to accomplish something and do something and make something happen or be someone so the how question is always coming back. How am I am I and one of the one of the important nice things about meditation is kind of meditation practice is that it's a way of really becoming intimate with yourself, really getting to know and be present. It's very easy from the people I talked to and C to become alienated from yourself. Could not really be in touch with yourself not really connected not really know what's going on. So the question How am I? How am I? How am I now? And then how am I with what I notice? So I'm sitting here and I noticed that I'm agitated. How am I with being agitated? So then you can fill in the blank, how am I is that I'm disappointed, or I'm unhappy. Or this must mean that I'm a failure of a meditator. So the house we start seeing the beliefs, the beliefs, we have the ideas we have the reactions we have the attitudes we have, that are happening in the present moment towards what's happening. So how am I how are we keep asking, keep asking, and some ways to start seeing kind of go step back, back and back. So maybe you're restless? How am I with being restless? I don't like it. How am I with some how am I with not liking it? I want to get rid of it.

How am I with wanting to get rid of it? Well, I'm just angry that I have to live with things I don't like, how are you as being angry? And at some point you step back far enough, you start saying, Well, I can just let it be, I don't have to keep adding more and more on top of it. I can just kind of step back and make space. And that is one of the one of the now I don't dare say it's giving this person so far, one of the

goals of of doing the how question is in asking how is to begin to relax about how things are to begin to open up and allow for them to be their IMC space around them. Not because as I said earlier, because we want to condone them or because we want them to take over our lives. But there's something about the process of stepping back relaxing and allowing or Picking up Oh, like this, it's like this all takes the pressure off it takes the fuel that keeps it going away. So many of the activities of our mind are being fueled, are being driven by our desires, by our fears, by our versions by our non acceptance by all these things we're trying to do. And that's why they that's why they persist through time. How am I how am I and then open? How am I always like this? How am I without like this? And then is it possible to be at peace with it is the possibilities with no matter how difficult the situation is, so it's like this. It's like this. How am I so I've used this a lot this question, how am I checking back and I learned this in my meditation because I needed to learn it. I learned it because I noticed that if I was trying too much to do something in meditation, I lost touch with myself. It was like I was out there and my breath trying to do something. And I wasn't kind of settled back and feeling the fullness of who I am. And so by asking how I became came back into myself, and then back in myself in the fullness of the wholeness, then meditation or settling or becoming more peaceful, had a chance to happen on its own. Rather than something that I'm doing, there's a kind of settling of letting go and relaxing. Maybe not so different than you finally come home from work, and you're home alone. It's nice to be home and you just, you have to be anything for anybody anymore to do anything anymore. And it's kind of relaxing kind of things being to fall away and settle away and just, you know, just because Not being fuel not fueling the, the stress or the tension of the day, just here's allowing yourself to be. So how are you? So that's my offer for you today to keep it simple. You can use that question, how are you? And I just keep asking it to see what happens. Just that knowledge what you learn when you ask that question, what does that reveal for you? What does that show you? What happens if you follow the thread of how am I now and how am I with this? How am I? does it lead to peace? That's the question. So what do you think of that? Are you with that? Anything you anybody wants to say or ask

How are you? You're quiet

I wanted to keep it simple. I hope this was simple. I don't know. It wasn't you know, but it was three years this simple question How am I ideas me very simple because I think that's partly inspired because I've done so many retreats last year currently actually teaching a retreat that came home to spirit my family and I came down to You. So I'm on tweeted the retreat center and just so simple just to just to be, of course, yes, please. Right behind, right behind you, Jim first.

I guess this is a question that I'd been meaning to ask. And maybe not directly related to talk but sort of related. I've read books about them. And

in those in the stories that they tell there,

it seems like they emphasize this idea of like sudden, enlightenment, like you, somebody says something and you're suddenly changed, and, but in the pasma tradition, it seems like That's not emphasized at all. It's a gradual thing. And I guess tonight's talk is sort of like that if you keep on asking, how are you?

You're sort of gradually going towards dicey

and like, see what you want. You want the sudden thing? Well,

what I, what I what? I mean, because you've studied in both of those traditions. What do you what do you think of that? I mean, is there any truth to that sudden thing or is there? Does that really happen?

All right. I don't know why it happens all all of the above ways. There's many people that sudden, until, would you stand, stay there, that's kind of nice. The it's gradual until it's sudden You know, you you know, there's many many activities in life which you're building towards it and you're working towards it then finally you get there and it's the actual accomplishment is sudden. Right? So many that's pretty common. And so even in Zen they don't put a lot of emphasis and all the years that the Zen monk was training and preparing and working with the actual experience is very quick. And like mentors so it's sudden when it finally happens, as opposed to you know, some novice guy you know, I think I'll go down to the Zen monastery I think this enlightenment thing is good. Oh, come knock on the door, the Zen master and he you know, oh, yeah, here it is. And it done you then you can go to Europe is this this gradual things are a waste of time? Because you know, it's better to be it's better to be enlightened quickly so that you can then you know, live a life. No, it's gradual until it's sudden kind of thing. One plus one approach. So it's a little bit complicated. I mean to really get into this whole sudden gradual thing and what it all means it's a little bit more complicated what I just said. The some people they sometimes they say it's, it's sudden awakening followed by gradual practice, sometimes is gradual practice. That's sudden awakening followed by more gradual practice. All kinds of different combinations and ways in which this can happen. Some people by accident have some kind of realization like experience, and then it's been years practicing because they have to come out and they want to now understand something they want to actualize it or live into it. But I could offer you if your game I kind of Zen thing to kind of see if we can get you suddenly enlightened.

I saw somebody was so we don't want to You know, take the risk so my striker

try it. Yeah. So but we have to pay very careful attention for this is it there's going to be a, a little flicker of a moment where there's a little gap and see if you can notice that little gap where you're free. Does that make sense? So this is this is a Zen question for sudden enlightenment. So pay attention and see that flicker How are you?

You didn't get it. It went by so fast, it was sudden. But you weren't sudden you weren't fast enough. Thank you.

That's a problem with a sudden school you have to have to be there. Yes, please.

So if at the heart of it, it's simple. I hope so. And if Buddha was the master of it, why are Buddhist writings so complicated? Buddhist writing so complicated? Yeah. One one answer to that is that because human minds are so complicated and it's so you have to kind of meet the complication at its own terms in order to unravel it. So here's an example I this is the other topic I was thinking of teaching today. So and this gives me a chance. So, I hope I can do this shortly. The there was a disciple of the Buddha, who encountered some non Buddhists spiritual teachers of his time and the spiritual and, and those spiritual teachers asked this disciple of the Buddha, what is the Buddha teach? and What don't we know? What are the Buddhists views? The views means like, you know, philosophy, which is philosophy. He says, I don't know. And so what are the what are the what's the philosophy of some of the Buddhists, others disciples? I don't know. What are you? What is your philosophy? Well, I don't know exactly. Which I may tell, I'll tell you, but first you tell me what your philosophy is. And so, these other other spiritual teachers, give them their philosophy, which are kind of medicine, big metaphysical things, that statements. And then and then this disciple of Buddha is going to tell him kind of his philosophy, his approach, and his approach, he says, My view is to focus on how philosophies are

constructs of the mind that are volitionally intentionally created. And if you notice how the mind the activity of the mind that creates the view. And you see that you don't have to be involved in that activity, you're there, you'll find yourself free. So it's kind of like coming in at a whole other angle than this Yeah, made sense to you. So it's nice to give two talks in one night.

Is there a microphone at the corner of the stage? Hi.

I'm gonna try to put this into words. Um,

could you

elaborate on the balance of thinking? So I'm still like, I still have this impression that meditation is about not thinking yeah. In a way, it's kind of It kind of sounds like what you're talking about, but it's about being rather than having or doing right.

This isn't about being anything special. So not thinking would be doing something special. So whether you think or you don't think, how are you? That's where the freedom is found. That makes some sense. Yeah, I bet you had a question. So please.

Well, no, I'm just add because I heard another talk you said, you know, don't, don't necessarily come right back to the breath, you know, kind of sit there and figure out what you were thinking about. So you can start to understand your mind. And you know, so when I start to feel agitated or something, I start to think I go back to like, the three characteristics like what you know, what is this? What am I doing? So I'm wondering like the balance of like thinking and trying to figure out your mind versus the balance. So just coming back to your breath.

I think it's good to err on the side of being sent and not try to make meditation is complicated thing. But if if you find yourself wandering off into thoughts over and over again, especially if it's the same kind of thought, then sometimes it's important to investigate what's going actually going on. So you could ask the question, how are you? When I'm when I'm thinking having all these thoughts? How am I What's going on? What's happening? What's this about? kind of take a deeper look at it? Because some things, some things you won't be free of until you understand as well. And so we have to so what is it? What do you need to understand in the thinking mind, and once you've understood it, maybe then you can put it to rest or it puts itself to rest. That makes sense, but it doesn't mean you have to do a lot of thinking about thinking. It's more like a quiet mind looks at it and sees what's going on. Good.

So

So how did you stop trying to be peaceful? You mentioned earlier how oh that's how you are dressed I stopped

trying to be peaceful Yeah, I mean I mean the trying is just not peaceful

so the how how am I you notice all this effort effort that I'm making is going counter is going again going counterproductive is going against the grain against the neck is countering what i'm trying what I'm trying to do I want to be peaceful. But there's a certain I mean it within reason you can do something with it. You do things to be peaceful, you can like you know, if you're at a wild party, and it's not very peaceful people having a fight like they had a fight right on Santa Barbara, right. And it wasn't very peaceful. So one way to get peaceful was to leave, you know, and that's, that's, you know what you can

do certain things sometimes, but in meditation is as the mind gets quieter, then the mind gets quieter. At some point, you come to a place where any effort to do anything to try to accomplish anything just feels irritating. It just does get in the way, and it doesn't feel peaceful even attempted to be the attempt to try to be more peaceful is itself an agitating movement. So the best thing to do is just leave it alone. And the mind will settle on its own if you leave it alone. If you're not bothered by it maybe Yeah. Maybe it's come to my care.

Green light should be on it.

If you ask your question like how are you? And there's no response You're lucky.

Not never last word. Never last. Yes. Then ask it again. Yeah, I mean, so how are you with nothing happening with nothing They're frightened to arm board or I'm blank blank, you know, and, you know, but yeah, I think it's fine to have nothing and then see you then ask it again How am I with that I like blank is or nothing is sometimes very important time in variety different ways. Sometimes it's the cusp of something new happening. So here's a, my son was in fourth and fifth grade, he had the same teacher. So. So, during the summer between fourth and fifth grade, the teacher spent time choosing a poem or a verse for every student in the class that was going to be their verse for the year, the fifth, fifth, fifth grade year. And then, once a week, each student recited their verse out loud, to the whole class. And so they had always good They're all tailor made verses for the kids kind of somehow spoke to their character or something like that. And my son, he was really happy. He was very happy with his verse because he had the shortest one. And his friend his best friend had the longest one. So he was kind of relieved and but his verse make it even shorter it was but it was almost the shortest what I'm going to tell you, it was like this. Without darkness nothing is born without light, nothing flowers. I can't wait for a fifth grader to recite that once a week. What do you think that means? Without so this thing, that blank darkness, in a piece of fallow time, maybe it's something new that's about to be born. The darkness also means, you know, we talked about the dark night of the soul are difficult. times in our life things are dark. But without that maybes nothing, nothing really important is going to be born. Without darkness, nothing is born. But then once it's born it flowers in in the light. So the light I like to call it the light of awareness or attention. So don't be afraid of blank.

Yeah, please. Although in the outer Hall if someone could bring it at him, could you bring it to the empties? Oh, here comes one.

A little more about how you get from the How am I

Let's say I'm feeling murderous rage actually somehow what letting go of that living with understanding that yeah

so so how do you go from having murderous rage for example asking how am I and noticing how it is and then letting go of it so sometimes it might be easy because just seeing it is enough and realizing this is this this doesn't serve me this is not helpful. And if you're lucky, maybe it's the grip is not so hard. And maybe it's possible to let go. Or it might it might be the see I'm in the I'm in the moment of imminent danger. You know, this is not this is not cool that I should feel this way I'm about the next time someone talks to me I'm probably off their head. So I need to go do something. I need to go be by myself I need to go. So just that note noticing that's how you are can give you the information you need to make yourself a safe person and be wise just you know Go do Go, go, go to the beach and go for a long run, come back tomorrow, when it's all settled away, so that's got can be helpful. But in the process of meditation what can happen since you're not killing anyone there, you're sitting still? How

are you just into open to it and feel it more fully, but feel it and be present for it in such a way that you're not feeding it. You're not involved in it, you're just making space for it. And generally, what can happen then is it begins to dissipate. Because, you know, so I don't know maybe some of you know the actual number but a few years ago, they started publishing these reports psychologists are mind scientists about how long an emotion lasts. And they said something like emotions only lasts something like the most two minutes. And like what they didn't, they didn't interview me and what they want and what why they said that is that emotions have a natural tendency to dissipate unless they get reinforced. And so if there's new, more thoughts, more stories, more intentions come along. So the act of how am I leaving it alone is an act of not act adding more stories, adding fuel to it. So it might not go into minutes, but it then begins to relax and dissipate. And so rather than being the person who has to fix it would become the person who make space for the heart, the mind to relax and settle away itself. And if you keep asking the question, how am I it's a way of getting the information you need, it's helpful to see, it's really helpful to know what's going on, you don't just leave your mind alone, and not know if to really see clearly more clearly you can see what's going on. Then there's space in a sense for things to unwind or unfold the way they're going to unfold. So that's one way that so there's many ways this can work and something as serious as murderous rage. I don't want to hold it lightly. It's a simple thing, you might use a lot of different things that might be needed if it's really a real life challenge someone's under. But the general approach of meditation, one of the general approaches is to get out of its way and stop feeding it stop fueling it. And one of the ways to do that is this question of how am i is to notice that even not liking it, if use it, even trying to get rid of it, it's subtle ways. Sometimes it keeps adding to fire to fuel to the fire. And so you just leave it alone leave it alone. Makes sense? So I hope that satisfying answer. Okay, good. Okay, so I hope that you find occasions this week to ask yourself repeatedly, how am I how am I? Or if someone asks you how you are? Be grateful use that as a mindfulness bell. Oh, Yeah, my question then don't start giving them a long explanation. But, but yeah, oh yeah how am I how am I you know and i hope how you are is happy. Thank you