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SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

So mindfulness of speaking, there is a saying, that goes something like this. When meditating, watch your mind when in the world watch your speech. But you could also be it maybe said more kind of a different way. Because some people would like to meditate and they don't. Some people for some reverse reasons can't meditate. So if you can't meditate, pay attention to why you say what you do. If you can't meditate, if you want to do kind of the next best thing, pay attention to what motivates your speech. Why do you say what you say? Because if you pay if you started really paying attention to why you say what you say, you'll learn a lot about yourself. And you'll be surprised by many of the motivations that are operating and concerns that are operating. And it becomes a door for kind of inner purification, dinner, you know, discovery that's very effective. So speech is a very important part of human life. And I find it, I found it over my time as a mindfulness practitioner, one of the most difficult places to be mindful, it's very easy to get caught up in the speech and be involved and not really pay careful attention. But it's also I think, one of the most powerful places to pay attention carefully, as that's all those little cliches maybe point out. And then it's not just speech, but all forms of communication, all the ways in which we communicate with people and, and we have now you know, more and more people who do a lot of their communication into embodied ways. Back in the Buddhist time, I think most communication was very embodied people basically talk to each other. And there were no books to read or newspapers to read or emails to do. So if there was going to be a communication between people, for the most part had to be in the, in the presence of people who actually spoke and listened. About delivery 20 years ago, I was invited to a small symposium at Stanford University. To get all the way there that thought allama was going to be part of a panel to discuss ethics. And one of the questions that Dalai Lama was asked was the ethics of disembodied communication. And it was coming out of people who were becoming aware of the big, you know, advent of email and other forms of disinvited communication. And I don't remember very well what the Dalai Lama said. And responses. I don't know if he was prepared for The question back then. But one of the things I remember was, he said, Oh, yeah, you know, there's, I know about that. Because in our tradition, we believe that there are beings who are made up of pure mind with no bodies. So you know that that this, you know, they're disembodied and so and so maybe some of you are becoming celestial beings. But I was struck by the, you know, the bits kind of stayed with me this question of what's the ethics, what's the appropriate way, the right way of communicating? And then, in the early 2000s, IMC had late 90s 2000s. We had some kind of like maybe an email listserv that people could sign up for, and then people IMC will communicate with each other and but things and It became quickly apparent that we needed someone to monitor it. And, and kind of not allow things to be posted until it had been read. And because not everything that was said there was appropriate to say it lightly. And some of it was actually there were some things that were actually quite mean. And this was the IMC community. It was kind of surprising. So eventually we stopped having that that just didn't seem like it was. Somehow it didn't seem to work well enough.

So the Buddha gave a lot of teachings on embodied communication on speaking. And one of them that there's number of lists of things, but some of what he gave was guidelines for how to consider what you're going to speak and the criteria for speaking. And he also gave guidelines or ethical teachings about what not to do. And it's easy to kind of list those things and talk about them. And it could sound like a list like this is what you should do, this is what you shouldn't do. And it becomes kind of like a rule based approach to how we speak, which has its place for sure. But when people meditate, or have an inner life, then there's a possibility of what guides us in our communication and our actions with each other in this world is not be so rule based so much, but to be based on an inner reference point, an inner kind of standard that lives in oneself. And so for example, if your heart is at ease, then you'll notice if you are about to say something, hopefully you notice, you'll notice that you're getting agitated. That's a very interesting reference point. And then you can ask yourself, do I really want to give up the heart's ease for this agitation? What's so important to say here is this really more important to get agitated and say this than it is to keep my ease and find a different way of communicating? If the heart inner life, the quality of the inner life is one of love, of compassion or caring, then if we really know that and feel that and touch with it, that becomes a reference point. And then if we're going to say something, that's mean are not loving, and we feel that that's contracting. We feel like in the process of doing that, we're going to lose some of that, that loving quality of the inner life, then you can ask yourself the question, Is this worth it? Is this appropriate? Do I want to do this? This is you know, if the inner life feels somehow a certain kind of sense of integrity or purity. That is there. And you feel that what you're going to say is going to lose your integrity or lose a sense of being held or have some kind of ethical purity. And that ethical purity integrity really feels delicious feels sweet feels, you know, intimate and, you know, it really feels like a home, do you want to lose that home? Do you want to darken it or close it up or you know what kind of impact you have on it. So, it becomes a very different reference point, then a rule based and then what happens when you start having these lists of teachings, how to you know, that Buddha gives the Kumar rules or the ideas then rather than seeing them as rules, they can be seen as mirrors or reminders to let me pay more careful attention here, what's what's happening inside and I'm about to lose something that's precious and valuable. Is this what I want to do and then This inner reference point might actually be a guide, where it becomes clear how you want to live your life. You don't want to lose that, not only for your own sake, but because in your connection to other people, the connections are so much richer and more meaningful if you can come from this when the inner quality of life is in a good, good place. So in terms of what not to do, the Buddha gave this to four things, and which sounds like ethical precepts, but he called them he didn't actually call them. precepts are commandments or rules. He calls he called them skillful actions. The Quaker, he put them in the category of skillful things to do. And in my kind of modern translation of it, I kinda like to call it healthy things are healthy things to eat, you know, things to avoid in a healthy way. So the first is not to lie. The second is not to have malicious speech.

So speech which is going to harm. The third is not to have harsh speech. Maybe it's not meant to harm but it comes out so harsh that it's actually hard for people to listen to. And the third is not gossip, no gossip. And, and interesting ancient teaching in Buddhism is that it's easier to stop lying than it is to stop having malicious or harsh speech. And it's easier to stop having malicious and harsh speech than it is to gossip. Now I don't know if that's true. But I find it kind of fascinating that there's some somewhere in the ancient world that way. And what is it about gossip that pulls us or grabs us in a way that is a more difficult to drop it, then to lie or something like that. And interesting to consider. And so not to lie. And it'll look, a little cliché that supports that is that if you don't lie, you have less you have to remember. Because once you lie, you kind of have to kind of, you know, remember, remember it, keep it going. And so it just makes makes life easier. And so the principle of a life that's more easeful and easy to live. Certainly one of the reference points we can have for this, how we want to live our lives.

The and when he talked to the Buddha talked about not lying. He suggested that people that want speak the truth, adhere to the truth, and be trustworthy and reliable and not deceive the world. And then, there's more malicious speech, which is, you know, one of the central kind of principles of Buddhism, it put us ethics is not to harm. Just just that it's like the principle, the principle that core principle don't cause harm. And, and if you go in and look into the, you know, if you have a higher inner quality of heart of mind, or, you know, you feel settled, peaceful, at ease, warm, connected to the world in a nice way. It's very hard, it's very hard. You'll see that when we will harm others, we're harming ourselves. If we're not connected to ourselves in a deep way, we tend to focus on the object of our concern, you know, to have an impact or what we want or something. And so then it could be, you know, there can be good or kind of good, but there can be strong arguments for it's okay to harm maybe But if you're really in touch in here, he realized that you're harming yourself. If you don't get blinded to you what's going on here, if you're include yourself as the mindfulness, then you harm yourself. And sometimes it's the speaker who is harmed more than the recipient. If some people you know, they just shrug their shoulders, and you know, they don't, it just bounces off them. And so the Buddha Once there was a man who was angry at the Buddha and, and so he came to the Buddha and was angry at him for something. And the Buddha listened. And then he said to him, if someone came to your house and brought you a gift, and you didn't accept the gift, who does that object belong to? And the man said, well, then it belongs to me, you know, me know that it belongs to that person. You know, they didn't receive it. So did you know Steel belongs to the person. In the same way, I don't accept your anger. You know, it belongs to you. You know, so you're the one who's you know, smoldering and, you know, suffering with it all. So, you know, so the idea that sometimes it can feel, you know, really justified or self righteous a right to be angry and to attacks people or be resentful. And the question is, who's being harmed the most, and I've known people who've had resentment for years. And that pivot or the key that helped them to drop their resentment was when they realize that they've been smoldering for years, but the person they were resentful for, probably never remember who they were, you know, so, you know, they they're the that person didn't wasn't having any effect on them. And so, you know, it's kind of why why kind of, keep having this sense of hostility. So avoiding malicious speech that's going to harm.

And here is the way that's defined by the Buddha. It's speech which divides people. So that creates division separation or animosity between people. So, you know, in addition just hurting other people, there's also hurting society hurting other individuals by how we treat other people and speak about other people and is it to kind of divide people against people and rather than malicious speech, the opposite is that one reunites those who are divided, and promotes friendships and who in and, and brings about Concord. So that's nice. So again, it's nice to be in principle is kind of nice not to divide people and have people become enemies. We'd rather bring people together and create Concord great unity between people nice. But then if you use this inner reference point, you know, people who meditate, keep keep coming back to here this reference point, not because we're self absorbed, or you know, conceited or self centered, it's actually it's the inner reference point. That's the antidote to selfishness. Because it's a place of freedom or ease or not being contracted around self. We come back here so we can be turned inside out and return to the world with a much better place so we can live what we're feeling inside what we know inside and, and it feels so much better for the inner life to be involved in promoting friendships and Concord and harmony and unite people. It just makes the heart sing in a way that you know if you know I got them, you know, angry at each other doesn't abandoning harsh speech one speaks words, as our gentle, pleasing to the air and lovable as go to the heart are courteous, desired by many and agreeable to many. So you know what one of the motivations people have for harsh speech. One of the I think a fair number of times when people have harsh speech, they're hurting inside and so they haven't attended to their hearts to their inner life they haven't attended to their hurt, they haven't found a healthy and appropriate way to live with hurt with you know, it's over. Every week they recoil from it, they act react from it, and so they're kind of, you know, ready to

attack and be harsh and be bitter rather than something else. And thinking about this today, I noticed exactly to the point but I will I'm touched by this little story that I have no idea if it's true, but I like it too. I say once upon a time there was a young boy, maybe seven or eight years old who came home from school really late one day. And he was supposed to be home earlier and came home and the mother was upset. So how could you have come you knew you're supposed to be home earlier, and we were waiting for you? And you know, where were you? And, and the boy said, Well, my friend building his bicycle broke an estate, I started to help him. And the mother who was still kind of upset said, You don't know anything about fixing bicycles. And he said, Yeah, I don't know anything about fixing bicycles. But it felt important to stay with him while he was crying. So suddenly, that context of everything she Right, you know, the mother is angry, but how can you be angry after that? You know, oh, like that. So to have harsh speech to have speech, which is not thoughtful or caring, do we really know who we're talking to? Do we know the impact we have? We know what their struggles have been. Do we want to listen first before we speak this way? And then abandon and gossip. So, one of the most common seemed like in the last year or two, my impression is that one of the most common ethical challenges that people have come and talk to me about has been being at a work situation, you know, working with a, you know, some build some company and the common currency around the coffee machine or you know, when people hang out is to gossip.

People come to me I know one on longer want to gossip. However, it's really hard, because that's how people talk to each other. I don't feel like I'm part of the scene, or I feel like I'm outside now. And, you know, this is a difficult thing. So sometimes gossip has functions, it brings people together. Sometimes people bond around gossip, sometimes be bond, because costumes are way up sometimes of saying, look, we're better than those people, can you believe what they did? It's kind of like, you know, then I know better, you know, because I can judge it. And so it's kind of, you know, it's kind of builds up a certain status and, and it's nice, you do it with someone else. So you kind of like, you know, feel good or feel like you're in the know or special. And sometimes it's a form of malicious speech. Sometimes it's a way that causes harm. There's an ancient saying before this, this embodied communication time. I guess what that someone made Maybe it's really ancient saying from someone can gossip in Syria that kills someone in Rome. So, you know, gossip spreads, moves out. The another tale of teaching around speech, all these kinds of you know, is that wrong speech is like an arrow enough like a sword because you can pull a sword out. And if it seems not needed, you can always put it back in its sheath. But once you've let an arrow go, you can't stop it anymore. So once you've once you've spoken and the words are out, then you know you, you know the impact can be there. So those are kind of what not to do, and he's kind of give us kind of opposite things. But then there's a wonderful list of five criteria. Speaking. And I find these wonderful to keep close at hand. And when a team's necessary important to consider what you're going to say, to have the so close that they're second nature. And you're ready to think about it and reflect on and say no. And stop for a moment. This is this at fit this criteria. So the first criteria is truth is a truthful, what I'm going to say. The second is it kind is it a kind thing to say? friendly thing to say? The third is, is it useful? Is it beneficial? The fourth is does it produce Concord? does it bring people together to unite people? And the fifth? Is it timely sometimes it's true. It's Kind of its intention is to bring people together. And in principle, it's useful, but it's really the wrong time. And so, you know, you know, definitely the compulsion to speak sometimes is so strong, that we don't take into account that this is not the right time the person not ready. It's, you know, so. So be careful with the timing of it. Consider when is the best time to have effective communication with someone, just because you feel compelled to speak doesn't mean that it's going to be effective communication. And then this thing about usefulness, is it useful to say it might be true, it might be kind, and it might didn't tend to bring people together? But is it useful? And sometimes, some people are not going to. There are some people for whom we can say the truth, we can say what we think is necessary, but they're not going to change whatsoever. And then you could say there was no purpose in speaking to it. So why

exhaust yourself? Why keep trying to knock on a door that never opens? And some people it's people, some people are infuriated or feel really upset that what's true and kind and everything is not received, but that happens sometimes. So why go to the trouble to you know, when it's not going to be received? And this idea of is it bring people together in a very interesting area of attention is when you're speaking to speaking. The words you speak to they bring people together. There is more friendlies more warmth, there's a more more people feel connected. Or there's a divide people or does it make everyone feel more uncomfortable?

And, you know, and remember, a couple of weeks ago, I was talking kind of idling With a group of people, and someone said something, and I introduced something, which was not malicious, not false. That wasn't really harsh. Exactly it was, it was some little idea. There was kind of a footnote to what people are saying. But it turned out it was a little bit of a downer. And I said, Why don't you know, it didn't need to be said. And it had a little bit of a kind of damp and the whole mood of everyone. It wasn't, you know, it was Don't worry for a moment, you know, but I could feel like, oh, everyone Oh. Oh. And, and then, you know, it all kind of picked up and recovered, but I didn't get I thought to myself, you know, you didn't need to say that. That wasn't useful. It didn't produce Concord or, you know, it wasn't contributing to anything, it was useful. And it was, you know, was just a footnote to reality that no one needed and so is it truthful? Is it kind? Is it caring? Sort affectionate? Is it you know, or not? Is it useful? Does it produce Concord? And is it timely? And here again, rather than taking them as rules, how do these five guidelines relate to the quality of your inner life? These opportunity with mindfulness practice when it's strong, and is to really keep relating it back to the quality of your inner life. One of the principles of Buddhism is that you're the only reliable custodian for the quality of your inner life. If you're looking for other people to be the custodian, if you want other people to behave in a certain way, so they Your inner life can feel good. Your little bit, you know, in dangerous territory. And but a lot of people do that, you know, in codependency and expectation are people who were, you know other people love me then I'll feel good or something if other people approve me then I'll feel good and if other people praise me then I'll feel good inside. But, you know, to give to give away responsibility for your own inner life is a very dangerous thing. So life that's not going to be very stable or it's going to be fragile in many ways. And, but to become the custodian, your own inner life and know how to maintain that inner life, in a good way, is one of the functions of this practice we do and to discover within us a quality that's worth protecting are worth being. It's not always easy, but sometimes it's all we have is in in tuition, that there's something that resides in there some kind of sense. Oh, yeah, there's a possibility or once upon a time I knew something or, you know, there's, there's a, you know, or it's not all or nothing. It's like, you know, if the quality of minor life is not so good, but it's better today than it was yesterday. And this you detect that it's better is better. And now Gail has been talking all this stuff and now I'm exposing them that I think I'm supposed to have this pristine, beautiful, pure inner quality and, and now I really feel bad. I think it's better is sometimes better, is good enough. And to appreciate that and to use the better as a standard is good enough. Also, can you see? Well, I'm better it's not as good Maybe it could be, but it's a little bit better or it's not as bad. And so then we use that and see what do you know, what do we do? That moves us to worse? And what do we do that keeps not so bad? That's the beginning of this inner kind of work. And then we can slowly learn what's a better, better quality inside. And then we can learn to be a custodian of that. And since the world of our communication is so important, we communicate so much.

How does being truthful, kind, useful in our speech, beneficial and creating Concord and timely, how does that support us in the well being of our heart And because it's about it's a valid concern, how does that support the well being of other people? How does it support the well being of our society? And to ask these questions, is equally valid when you're in the presence of somebody in an embodied way, as it is when we're doing this disinvited communication thing. And I think our society needs to learn much

more of that it's kind of mind boggling to me to you know, when there's all these kinds of responses to articles and things and the amount of hostile comments that go on. And so, to offer the opposite, to be an example of the opposite. For our sake and for the sake of others. And in doing that, in being careful with mindful speech, paying attention to all this, it is at cultivation develop a mindfulness of attention or being in it being present to really track what's going on. And so the more we cultivate this presence and attention to what's here, we're developing mindfulness. As we develop mindfulness, we have greater access to the quality of the inner life. And that turns around and wants to support us in how we speak. And so it's a wonderful cycle, wonderful mutuality, that mindfulness supports right speech. Right Speech supports mindfulness, and hopefully it just grows and develops for you for all of us. So those are my thoughts for today. So we have time if you want to, in a truthful, kind, use useful concordantly and timely way wanted to say something. Please. What did you say on your T shirt? I'm sorry, what was that? What did you say on your T shirt?

Oh, this is a sushi

sushi? I asked. I asked because I kind of like that. Is that the Heart Sutra?

canggih which is a Yeah, yeah. And then the English translation. Yeah.

So I don't know what if I said was useful? They're timely. So I'm already failed. So

please, I tend to make things complicated. And there's two things one is I'm not sure what the definition of gossip is of what the definition of gossip Yeah. How its you know, what my gossiping or one or the other thing is

confronting, say a bully.

Last word confronting a bully?

Yes.

If you, you know, it's I, like I said, I complicate things, I think of the exceptions. And I'm just wondering, what's the skillful way to do that? Or does anybody have an idea how to confront bullies? And the definition of gossip?

Yeah, two questions. And I think of gossip as, I don't know, I don't have a good definition of it. But in my kind of idea, is that it's unnecessary speech, which talks about a third person in a way that's still a terrier. So that third person,

even if he's a bully,

even, even if he's a

very

well, what's the purpose of speaking to it? So you're talking about a bully to someone else? And you're trying to figure out what to do and how to respond or processing your own feelings. So you can be wiser. It might be appropriate, provided that the person you're talking to, is going to hold that in a way

that's responsible or caring. Because sometimes, I mean, we probably should be addressed should be, you know, so talking that way, but if all we're doing is complaining, you know, and we're kind of bringing everyone else down from our complaining and, and everyone feels discouraged hearing all this, is that really helpful. But to name it and talk about it that way, you know, and let's, let's try to figure out what to do. I need to process my feelings, that's good. And then a bullies that we're encountering. If someone's being harmed, in our presence, it's good. If we could step up and be a support stand next to the person stand between the person and then putting a bully if you can. Try to Do something, you know, it's that I've told this story before, it's not exactly a bully, but I was living in San Francisco. And, and you know, I don't know what to say, but it's certainly a dangerous part of town. And, and the I was out in the street in the middle of the day and this car came careening down the hill, and screech to the halt in the middle of this of the intersection. And through the backseat, his woman tumbled out of the car, kind of to get away but you kind of stumbled into the intersection and I was standing on the sidewalk. And these big, big, strong, tough looking football kind of size. guys came out of the front seats and they clearly wanted to somehow approach her and she was wanting to get away from them. So what do I do? I didn't know what to do with it seemed like this is not a good scene. So I went and stood between her and them. And, you know, I'm the Little bit All right, but like I was talking and they and so I didn't know what to do except it took it they kind of stopped and they took a step towards me with the wisdom I had I took a step back that's about all I you know, I was like what where's this gonna go but I was standing there between her and then because it didn't seem to seem to be good and then some other fellow came off the sidewalk and he walked up and he said he kind of addressed them and said you know if I was in her shoes I wish that you would stop and help me and everything. The escalated that that was the little trick that got everything settled down. So were they bullies for her were they endanger for her? It wasn't clear even afterwards. It wasn't clear what was really going on. But but here's someone else's stepped in and was able to, you know, figure out how to address it without violence and without having a fight or something like that. So I think, you know, and then if you're being bullied, you know, maybe that's a different different, you know, skill set to know what to do. And it depends how dangerous it is to know what to do and what can be done. And I think the criteria like is it useful to speak up? Or is it harmful? Sometimes it's better to just you know, it's more more harmful just to address it than it is to walk away and lick our wounds later. Or is it useful to have a way of of usefully speaking up and saying, you know, that, you know, that's, that's painful. There was a man who came here into this building, who was upset with me. And that wasn't even with me, but he was upset. There was work being done in a building and the person was upset with a noisy the work was and K marched up to me and was really angry and kind of went I don't know if he was a bully exactly, but really letting me have it. And I listened for a while. And when there was a chance for me to say something I said to him, I looked him right in the eye and said, listen to others. It's actually very painful for me. And as soon as I said that, his shoulders dropped, he relaxed, and he just pulled back in. And then there was a whole different conversation, it kind of came to an end. So that was useful. So is this address your concern?

Any questions? Yes, thank you. I was just, I have issues with did I act with courage or cowardice? And that's, you know, constantly bouncing in my mind. You know, was I courageous to have courage or Was I a coward?

Is there a prescription In Buddhism about how you deal with speech that is not following those rules, and at the interpersonal level, at the society level, and then at the level of politicians what's going on in the country? Well, I think those five criteria are the answer to that, you know, so if someone is not doing those things, first, is it useful? What is useful? What's a useful way of responding and dealing with that? There are people who are upset and insist that things have to be that their friend or and their approach to, to to try to criticize it or try to stop it is counterproductive. So the more becomes into the public world in politics. I think the more skill and the more consideration and what it actually is effective. I'm quite

inspired by the example of Mahatma Gandhi, his salt March. I apparently spent a long time I don't know how long Wondering what can you do to respond to the, you know, the English Empire? And, and, and then he after a lot of considerations, the salt March. So he didn't do it impulsively The first thing and write a letter to the editor you know, he thought about and thought about it so something that the more the more it enters into the public domain, I think, you know, attention to what is actually useful and effective is part of that. And, but those five criteria are still relevant, you know, so someone is not living that way. Are we going to, we're going to speak truthfully usefully who can be supportive, how are we going to do it? And sometimes that they have Concorde. We have to be a little bit sophisticated about it. Because sometimes, our intention is to create Concorde, but the other person that can respond that way, and so, we still speak up And sometimes it does create more division. But it's inevitable but you know, we know that that's not our intention. And, and no has to be said, you know something has to stop. And so we put our even sometimes our life on the line because this can't continue. And so you might it might be interested to come back here and June 16 as Saturday we're going to have wonderful men come in and woman to come and talk about qingyun non violence, they approach to non violent action that the Martin Luther King, Jr. Pro voted, you know, developed for the United States. And in certainly that was one way of responding with some of these. I think it was a very ethical response to what goes on in the world. What my father came was developing, and I think there's a lot of guidelines there. So when work

You actually address my question, which was about saying no when it will, in the short term produce discord, but it is the rest of the criteria.

Yeah. So I mean, it's possible to tell someone I care about you. And I don't want us to be alienated from each other. But this can't continue. And if this continues, we can't talk or you continues, there's not going to be any more this way so that sometimes it's, you know, sad, but sometimes we have to make really strong lines and, but so I'll end with this. So, in the, you know, the Buddha developed a monastic community that had to live together. And that's always interesting. And, and so, sometimes, the monastics had to admonish each other. That was part of the deal. But here's the criteria for it. How to admonish skillfully a monastic who desires to admonish and other should do so, after investigating in the following way. And after establishing these things, then they can speak. EMI, one who practices purity of bodily action. So, how do I act? Do I act in the world with some ethical integrity? Am I one who practices purity of speech? Do I speak in ethically sound way? Maybe these criteria? And then this is the one I think his most significant? Is my heart free of malice. And is it established in goodwill? So, yes, there's sometimes we have to monitor someone or speak to someone or, you know, give feedback to someone. But, but, you know, we have to look at how we are, how we're going to speak how we behave. And are we doing it out of an ethical place in this inner resource place? That goodness. And then do we have loving kindness when we do it. But if we're doing with resentment with hostility, you know, who don't really think don't have the other person's best interest in mind when we admonish them. I think it's counterproductive. Yes. Okay, hear me. We're done for me. So I just want to end. Thank you very much.