

# 2020-05-03 COVID-19 Era as the Era of Care

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

care, people, world, imc, virus, protects, spread, buddha, compassion, support, mutuality, natural, connected, caregivers, outwards, deeper, free, benefit, greed, ways

## SPEAKERS

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Greetings from Redwood City, and I appreciate very much that chance to share with all of you that Dharma or at least my best understanding of the Dharma, the practice, and how it expresses itself in the world, and in particular, how it expresses itself in in the world, caring for the world, caring for the welfare and happiness of others. That this Dharma practice Buddhism is integrally, integrally connected are part and parcel of our capacity In our motivation, to care for all beings, including ourselves. For some time now, I have been referring in my conversations with people that were living in the COVID-19 era. Maybe other people are saying this as well. It just came out. Maybe I learned it from someone else, this idea of where the COVID-19 era. I hope that in the future, when people think back to this time, that this time it'll be not be known as the COVID-19 era, not named after a disease, but rather, it will be known as the era of care. The era in which people cared for each other. It's a time will be known as a time where there was a clear call in all of humanity. To care for each other, to care for everyone in this planet, and in particular, to the poor, the sick, the oppressed, the people who are most challenged with already before this COVID-19 spread around the globe, but now is even more challenged than to the breaking point around the world. And we know that many more people have been mobilized, been engaged in caring for others who have the disease of COVID-19. Then are people who have have the disease or people who've died that is from the disease. I suspect for every person who's died of the disease, there has been a team of caregivers. Hopefully, around them. Maybe not everyone, some people have died alone. But that we have, you know, in the news every day stories of in hospitals and medical teams who are actively involved working day and night, to care for people to save people's lives. We have family and friends and neighbors who are caring for people who are sick. And the Circles of Care that goes outwards is in fact greater than the people who have the illness, not to diminish our care for the people who are sick, but rather to remember the goodness to remember how much compassion kindness support that people are, there are people motivated. And this is the bright light of the world I think, is these people who are supporting and helping so much and I suspect, and I hope that a majority of the people on this earth have done some act of expressing care for others care compassion, support for people who are impacted or could be impacted by the

pandemic. And what I mean by this is that even people who are not sick are sheltering in place, or washing their hands, or doing the kinds of things that will somehow reduce the spread of the disease. Caring for those who might get it if we spread it. I think it's highly symbolic, that that in this with this virus, that the same behavior that involves caring for oneself protecting oneself from the disease is the behavior that protects others from the disease. So what I mean by that, if we shelter ourselves in place, stay home. Certainly we can do that protecting ourselves so we don't get sick. But simultaneously that act is protecting others from how we might be the vector spreading the disease. And we know that many people have the disease without even knowing it. Or they have it for several weeks, many days without knowing it, and are therefore vectors, they're carried along out into the world. And once one person places it on a doorknob or in someplace, then it can spread from there and, you know, multiplies the context that goes outwards. The so the fact that we shelter in place, it protects ourselves and it protects others and I find this deep symbolic that caring for ourselves is a way of caring for others. And caring for others is a way of caring for ourselves. The and maybe this applies to many more things in life than the virus. I think that you know that there's something very, very significant that we're all in it together in this world. And the sum total if we care for each other in all kinds of different ways, the sum total benefits for everyone is much greater than if we have many individuals only taking care of it themselves, only thinking about themselves. And the fact those people who are really think they weren't really mostly concerned with themselves. If they only knew if they could open up their hearts and their activities and they're concerned to a much wider field, he would come back to them in finance. wonderful ways. So too. And so this idea, too, is a time. And also this other symbolic thing about this time in the Coronavirus time is the phenomenal way we're seeing experiencing how much we're interrelated. We're interrelated in a ways that we can spread the virus. But we're interrelate interrelated in the way that we can care for each other and, and benefit each other all over the globe, all over what we do. And that's also symbolic that we're so deeply interrelated at a global level. It was a time when, you know, not so long ago that people didn't know people beyond their Valley beyond their little community beyond their neighborhood. And I grew up in you know, from from Norway and There, they had many, many different dialects of Norwegian. I was surprised when I met someone who spoke Norwegian I couldn't understand them, because they came from far up in the north. And there used to be that people didn't travel. It was just they were no roads in the country. And there are all these different fjords that were semi isolated. And people developed a whole different languages of different kinds of Norwegian, because they only knew the people there. And but now, we know people all over the world and know about them. And the more we know about the world now, the more we understand that we are medically connected through things like the virus, and we've known that for some time that viruses spread around the world flus that were economically connected. We're politically connected. We're connected in so many different ways that was unimaginable A long time ago. So, again, this is also a call to care that the all the networks of interrelatedness are also potential networks for how the spread of our care can go in all directions. And certainly to really kind of come out the best possible way from this COVID-19 illness in the virus, we The more we can care for each other, be careful and in the right ways and supportive, the more we can manage to get along. And at the same time, how we care for the peoples of work and economy and economics and care for the people who are not becoming sick. But the people who are going to be who are and they're going to

be in tremendous economic distress because of what's happening. There are predictions that more people might die from the recession and economic collapse, then from the illness itself. I don't know if that's a true statement in any way that's going to play out. But certainly, there's going to be all kinds of problems that are not that are in the wake of this illness. And some of the weakest links in the world, the weak links of our human chain of connectivity we have are going to suffer the most, there are millions of people, you know, it's phenomenal number of people in refugee camps, and those refugee camps, you know, they're just eking out to barely eking out an existence and in all these different places where they are in debt for and Bangladesh and refugees from Syria, and he just goes on and on refugees around the world. And they're barely surviving and dense camps and even if they virus hasn't come actively into them. The food chains are disrupted the ability to help support the nonprofit's who support them are challenged financially and getting the work done. So who cares for them? Who cares? How do we care for the rest of the world? Do we care for them? And I hope that we in the United States will have as much dedication to caring for each other at this time to find our way through in a healthy beneficial way for all being support everyone, as this country did dedicated itself to World War Two. It's touching to me that that generation of world war two was called the greatest generation. What are they going to call this generation or the generation of us that are here now? The people who step forward and really try to make come out of this In a way that it'll be in the history books that this was a generation that cared? Could it be the caring generation? Could it be the greatest caring generation? You know, what, what, what what would it be known this time? And what a lesson what a inspiration, what a, what a kind of Ambrosia, for the heart for the soul for the psyche, to experience and no care and all kinds of ways and that it's Ambrosia and that it's nourishment for us. And, you know, I think it's because it's deeply embedded in our human system and human nature, to care and to be cared for. It's touch touch with something profound within us. And I think that to call forth as an example of this, how central Care is and how central caring for each other is for our very well being, is to consider the amount of care that goes into child care into child raising. A baby is born and can't care at all for itself. And the amazing amount of care that it takes to bring a baby into toddlerhood and into childhood into adolescence into adulthood. is is you know, is phenomenal what it takes. And the child the baby needs to feel that care needs to feel that safety needs to kind of take it in and this is the world they live in. Otherwise, they don't kind of grow up into the fullest human being they can where, where they feel they can trust this world and are present in a safe way and can offer the world something in return. And we care for our elders. You know, and our parents, you know that when they get older and, and need help, there's care for them that's provided. And, you know, it's kind of natural to do this, to offer care. And it feeds something inside of us. And to expand those Circles of Care to think of those Circles of Care, not only for the people who are friends and families, or our particular community, but to have that sense of care to go outwards into all directions for the whole world, I think is part and parcel are intimately connected to Buddhist practice. This freeing up of the heart freeing up of our capacity, to care, to have compassion to have love or freeing up freeing ourselves from whatever barriers we have of being present in a full and bodied, complete way to meet This world to be in this world like it is. Using this word care repeatedly here is, is my translation of a Buddhist term that the Buddha used, called a new compa. It goes back to the time of the Buddha, where there's a very clear usage of this word that lends itself to not only to understand that it means

compassion, but also means something broader means it has to do with care and caring for others in more ways than just caring for their suffering and not wanting them to suffer. Income also means to care for people's welfare, and for their happiness. Even people who are well off, you know, comfortable and safe, maybe have enough food. We can. They're not suffering in some deep, obvious way. We can also kind of with our generosity To care for them, care for their well being care for their happiness. As much as a compassion is one of the most profound things you inverting a person can feel. It's not really suited in all situations. If we only have compassion for our friends, our friends might start feeling comfortable around us. But if we care for them, that maybe there's infinite room to care for the well being and happiness of our friends. It's a broader sensibility. But also, it seems like it's a natural sensibility, it's a natural sensitivity that we all have. At least that's the impression I get from reading the teachings of the Buddha. Because the Buddha never talks about cultivating or developing a new compa this capacity, this, this capacity for care. He just assumes it's there. He assumes that it's there more and more, the more We let go of hatred, the more we let go of ill will, tomorrow we let go of things that block the existence of it. And the people who become more spiritually mature people who are more liberated and free, awakened, maybe what they awaken one of the things they awaken to, is they awaken to their capacity to care. I like the word care a lot because it's a to my mind. In my mind, it's a humble word. It's a word that hasn't been used very much in the translations of the Buddhist texts into English. There's been these grand terms like compassion and loving kindness that have been used. But the best care is a I think it's part and parcel of what the Buddha was teaching. But that it's kind of a humble word because it's a natural part of the human life. And we probably use it all the time in our in our language, but it doesn't really get elevated that highs like come Passion does in the world of religion, religion or Buddhism so much. And I'd like to elaborate a little bit I'd like to point out that it's here as a natural part. I'm touched you know how if you start thinking about where the word cares used in our society, it's used in health care. You know, the intensive care unit, palliative care, and it goes on and on new places spiritual care. So, Department of chaplaincy, sometimes it's called spiritual darkness, spiritual care. It's used for child care. The childcare providers. People who work in nursery schools and kindergartens are sometimes called child or babysitters, childcare providers, caregiving, many, many people are caregivers. Many people who aren't doesn't don't get paid for it. There are caregivers who are paid and then there's family members who are known as caregivers. If we're caring for someone Sick, someone who's maybe dying. We talked about the families caregivers and their needs and how to support them as well. And so this word care is used to kind of over and over again in English. And it has its wonderful word because it has kind of two meanings. To care is to care for something can mean to value it, to be interested in it, to attend to it in some way or other and not necessarily because it's suffering because it's something we want to care for and make make it function well. To care for our car. I don't think our car suffers usually. But we can we care for a car but getting oil changed and different things which can help it kind of function well. And then to give care To be a caregiver is to, there's a care that has to do with actually supporting people, helping people, supporting people to have a better life and to bring benefit to people. And this two things to be interested to be able to value people together with the idea of supporting them and doing things that are, you know, to help them out or things that are compassionate sometimes. And these two are fascinating these two meanings of care to come together. Because we could say that we take care of

what we care for. We take care of what we care about. to care about other people. We take care of other people. And how do we enter this kind of mutuality or this place where it comes from, to have value other people, we take care of other people? And how can we not value other people, if we're deeply rooted at home and centered in ourselves? Because to be as the practice deepens, and we open up and become freer and freer, of the forces of contraction, attachment, clinging, it's natural to see others to feel others to be sensitive to others, in a deep way from that place deep inside, where care is a natural functioning of who we are. There's no need to there's no need to evoke care, or to create care, build care or remind ourselves care or care. Think about that. What a good idea care is, if we're centered on ourselves, So that inner sensitivity, the empathy can be there. The word under compa that I'm translating is care is a compound means to shake or to tremble, a new means, towards, in relationship to something. And for the heart to tremble to shake, to resonate towards what's happening in the world to other people, for our inner life, to have the sensitivity to be to be mindful enough, awake enough to feel the natural sensitivity that we don't feel, if we wear armor if we're closed off if we're caught up in anger or greed or ambition or conceit and this beautiful and profound spiritual task of settling Letting go of conceit, greed, ambition, letting go of the very touching and, and profound ways which we're afraid, scared to let go of all the difficult ways where we have hatred or ill will. And then in that letting go to feel the sensitivity of our inner life, the way we can pick up and feel empathy for other people, to drop the barriers to drop the armor. And this, you know, this kind of mutuality of how we care for others, we care for ourselves, has a kind of a kind of very diverse principle. And that is that if we're self absorbed self, only taking care of ourselves, me myself and mine, if we paradoxical You're also harming ourselves. If we have unfettered, it might feel like we're freer. If we have unfettered expression of our hatred, just I'm free and I'm expressing it. Or if we have unrestrained ability to follow our desires, whatever we want want that should be able to free to do. It's it becomes an alienation, a disconnection from something that's deeper than does deeper than desires are deeper than greed or deeper than hatred or deeper than delusion deeper than conceit. In fact, we harm ourselves when we act from greed, hate and delusion. And so this paradox The more we act only for ourselves, the more we harm ourselves. The more we not out of obligation, the more that we free ourselves from greed, hate and delusion. The More we become someone who benefits ourselves frees ourselves touches into what's most beautiful within ourselves. Turns out that if we do that work, what a beautiful thing one of the beautiful things we find inside is to is our natural capacity for a new combine our natural capacity for care. So, in this COVID 19 era, in what I hope will become the era of care that What do you care about? At what point does the welfare and well being of others become not only something you care about? But something your care is motivated by your actions and how you are in the world. How can you not wait for someone else to do the caring? But how can you, your care be expressed. I think our hearts need to know that we're doing something. Anything that makes a difference. Some people are living in good circumstances. And some imagine some people who are living in good circumstances who are sheltered at home are actually spending less money than they normally would be. Please use some of that money. Don't just sit and make your savings get bigger, make donations to the places where people really need it. There are people who are hungry in the United States and around the world. Let's make sure that people have enough food. invest that money in someplace that makes a difference for our society that brings benefit. Don't just sit on the money.

For those of us, those of you who don't have money to share who are struggling financially, allow yourself to be helped. Allow yourself go out and try to help let people know that you're in need. Because unless we know we won't be able to people won't be able to help. And if you are being helped by others, there's still others that you can help as well. See what you can do. Even if it's just a smile or a phone call or a friendly conversation with someone you meet. There are infinite number of ways that our capacity For a new compa our capacity for care can be expressed. To begin expressing it more and more is also the path of freeing ourselves from all the forces of attachment and clinging. care enough act on your care and you begin stretching the into the limits into the edges into the places of attachment and clinging. And then you bring your practice there and begin to dissolve it or stretch it thin and eventually let it go away. We have a practice to let go of attachments and clinging so that we can care better and we can care so that we can meet those attachments and clings so we can let them go. The mutuality of practice and care Care and practice in Buddhism, may we be contribute to a wonderful potential that's inherent in this globe right now. The potential possibility that this becomes the era of care, and that we are part of the caring generation that is remembered and celebrated for generations to come. it's that important what's happening now. So thank you for the opportunity to talk with you and to share what's on my heart and I hope it has some benefit for you and inspires you had this the difficult time for our society, our world. I think I have one announcement. I see that you've made Have you are here and I appreciate seeing some of you who come repeatedly. At in about 30 minutes or so, at 11 o'clock here in California, we're going to have a community meeting for the IMC community. And it's going to be on zoom. And those of you who are logged on today, you're part of the community and if you would like to join the meeting, you're welcome to do so. And just a chance to talk a little bit I'll talk a little bit about IMC and they'll do it we'll do a little zoom breakout group so people get to meet each other a little bit too are connected to IMC and, and then we'll take some questions, concerns from the community. And so if you want to be part of that in a few minutes, certainly before, you know in the next 15 minutes or so, I'm going to put the zoom link to to that meeting. IMC calendar and with log on little bit before, so you'll probably be in the waiting list waiting room because because of the zoom bombing and stuff like that hacking in, I think at 11 o'clock or so I'll take the link off. So hopefully we can do a little bit more protected from as a community that way. And so, thank you very much and I wish you all well