

2020-09-04 Mindfulness of Thinking (5 of 5)

Joy in Not-Clinging to Thoughts

Fri, 9/4 7:53AM • 13:51

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

thoughts, clinging, thought, thinking, deeper, pressure, attachment, mind, ideas, push, fascinating, sense, meditation, compulsion, drive, almond butter, lunch, happening, content, spaciousness

SPEAKERS

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This is the fifth of the five talks on mindfulness of thinking. And to end this series with the idea of freedom in relationship to thinking. Or to use another language for it to begin to appreciate the possibility of thinking without clinging. And this is possible. And in fact, it's a very important part of the path of Buddhism. There are times it seems that the primary clinging that people have is to thinking is to the ideas and concepts that are part of thinking.

It is fascinating that many times when people are clinging to something, they're actually not clinging to the thing. They're clinging to their thoughts about those things. So if I'm thinking about something I really want, I'm really attached to have for lunch later today. And I made it almond butter sandwich. And I like almond butter, so you know, maybe I'm sitting here clinging, I can't wait this lunch, I want lunch. I want to go make sure no one takes my lunch from the refrigerator. And this is, you know, I'm really attached to my sandwich. But the sandwich is somewhere else. And what I'm clinging to are my thoughts about the sandwich that I'm thinking about. I'm attached to the pleasure maybe that'll bring. I'm attached to the nourishment I think I might get, attached to the delightful experience of having lunch and eating. It's the thoughts, ideas, the fantasies, the projections, the plans anticipations, the anticipatory thoughts. That's what I'm clinging to.

And, you know, the subject of those clinging, of those thoughts, is the sandwich. But what I'm clinging to those only thoughts, the only thing exists is thoughts. And it's really fascinating sometimes to if you pay attention to this, and to realize you're clinging to some idea of something you thought was real. And it turns out it's not there at all. Maybe I forgot that I made a, you know, that I forgot and maybe yesterday I had an almond butter sandwich. And after that I thought about probably did it today so I'm clinging to this almond butter sandwich that I, you know, think is real and sitting in the refrigerator. But

it turns out that what I actually have is leftover dinner for lunch today. And I forgot so I was clinging to something that kind of didn't exist. And so then it's really clear that the clinging was only to thinking and thoughts.

We cling to stories, we cling to opinions, we cling to the past memories, we cling to our plans. There's a drive, a push an attitude of importance, a strong interest, a fascination, a pressure and glue that keeps us bound to our thoughts. And it can be very intense and I think anyone who meditates for a while can begin appreciating how strong the pull or the pressure or the drive is to be thinking at times. And sometimes it is almost impossible to let go of the thoughts because it's so intense. And that's a time when it's particularly interesting to study this nature, the feeling the texture of clinging, is when your thoughts are just going a mile a minute and just out of control, just like this can't stop it. The compulsion to think, the pressure to think and because then you kind of begin really sensing and feeling into what that's like, not the content of the thoughts. But what that drive is like. How's your body activated? What sensations and muscles in your body are alive and maybe contracted or tight or hot or energized? What's happening emotionally and how strong are those emotions that seem to be feeding and fueling that thought?

And to really pay attention to all that, and then eventually finding your way to seeing, oh, there's something here that the Buddhists call clinging or attachment. There's a holding on, a grasping. There's a, maybe even a little It comes with a little sense of desperation at times or insistence, or entitlement or horror. There's a kind of a negative attachment of being repelled, being troubled and trying to push away. And oddly enough, our aversion to thinking is sometimes the very thing that is where the attachment is, and it keeps the thinking going. The more we don't like it, the more we craft, actually feeding it.

And so we start looking at what is this attachment? What is this clinging? As meditation gets quieter and quieter. And the mind maybe starts thinking in a quieter, quieter way. And just a few thoughts might arise, there too you might start discovering that there's something more than just the ideas of the thoughts, the content of the thinking. There's also a little bit of push or pressure, something going on with meditation is really, really calm and peaceful. It's fascinating to watch when it's very little thoughts, maybe gaps in thinking and you can feel sometimes the initial little bit of pressure or little bit of activation, that indicates a thought is about to happen. But if you're really mindful and you can really see that little activation sometimes it just dissolves right there. And you'll never know what you're going to think. And this is a fascinating thing that, that the underlying, there's almost like a subconscious or unconscious beginning of thought before they come into consciousness. So who's responsible for what you think then if it's happening from your unconscious and you didn't choose it, your conscious, conscious self didn't choose what you thought. But if something deeper is happening.

And so there's something deeper always going on with thinking. It kind of begins off stage, I guess, in a sense, but by feeling into the experience into the emotions, the sensations, the impulse, and the

drive to push the pressure that might be there, we begin dropping down into the deeper and deeper sources of where thinking begins. Maybe we can't get to some primary source than they are conscious. But we get this place where we can get feeling the sense what's really deeper than the content. And this is probably one of the important aspects of really following the path of liberation is we don't want to be so, you know, in meditation, you know, and as meditation deepens, we don't want to be so involved in the content or caught in it. We're really looking to let the mind become quiet and clear enough to begin seeing the deeper operating system, deeper things operating there. And one of the deeper things is clinging, is grasping, this pressure drivenness, craving, a drive to do something or want something or push something away. It's very, very simple and but simple doesn't mean that it's unimportant. It's really at the heart of this much of what makes us the mind in our psychology tick and work. Is this what the Buddhists will call craving and clinging. And one of the primary clings is attachment to ideas, stories, thoughts, and all that.

So we're not really asked in the end to let go of the thoughts. We're asked in practice to let go of the clinging to the thoughts. And then it's fascinating also, because there's no clinging or compulsion to think and we gave the thoughts are freedom. There's this delightful freedom, where the thoughts just have space have room they float, they become thinner, they become lighter, and they kind of vanish. I find it delightful to let go of the clinging to thoughts. There's a kind of you deep kind of not kind of spontaneous sense of the light, even sometimes something that borders on amusement in bringing mindfulness to thinking and letting go the clinging to thoughts. The compulsion to think, for me is associated with a narrowing of attention and narrowing contraction involvement with something. And when I can let go that clinging that creates that narrowness, the narrowness goes away. And there's a sense of openness or open or spaciousness or expansiveness, and there's something without the movement from there or contraction to spaciousness, that I just find delightful and a little bit amusing and you know, it's just a happy thing to do that.

And then to discover how to think how to allow the mind to think freely not to be troubled by thoughts. We can become friends of our thinking, we can have a friendly relationship to thoughts, and let the thoughts move through likely and easily and creatively. To be able to engage in thoughts and rich and valuable ways thinking is an important part of human life. And to be able to do it creatively and intelligently wisely, to look at thoughts carefully to be, have to be, be able to be relate to thoughts wisely. Not believe every thought, but also know how to think things out and reflect on things in deep ways and not kind of act on the first initial opinion we have a rich world of thinking that becomes possible when we've lightened up our relationship with thoughts when we hold our thoughts lightly. And we are spacious around them in a certain kind of way forgiving, accepting of them, not necessarily accepting of the content of thought. But if we just let the whole process to be there freely, guided, operate and move through us, then we have much more freedom or under our thoughts and our wisdom can help us decide, no, I don't have to be involved in that. Oh, that's a good thought. I think I'll continue that. Or maybe I need to think maybe it'd be good to think about something else today. Maybe it'd be nice for me to think about something useful and helpful for the world. And so

rather than just kind of floating passively on the winds of the mind, winds of thought whatever the mind is thinking, with freedom with less and less clinging to thoughts, we actually become more and more that guide, the supporters, the wise tenders, shepherds of our thoughts. And may it be that through this meditation practice over time, you discover the great joy of non clinging. The great joy not cling to thoughts and the way that that allows your thinking to become wise.

May you may be wise, thought wise, a wise thinker who develops a friendly relationship with your thinking and your thinking with you.

So, thank you so much for listening and being part of this and I look forward to coming back again on Monday.