

2020-09-21 Mindful Letting Go (1 of 5)

Learning from Letting Go and Letting Be

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SPEAKERS

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So with us this Monday, the theme for the week is letting go. And I use that term as an umbrella term, a category term for a whole family of movements. From the simple relaxation of the body, releasing of tension, to the full cessation of suffering, that is the end of the Buddhist path, and everything in between. And then the Buddha has a lot of different words for this family of mental movements. And in English, they translated and things like that, but certainly relaxing, tranquilizing, calming, or relinquishment, release, freeing liberation, freedom. So, you know, it goes on and on like that, giving up.

And so we could add that other words there any English that kind of in that family, and each of them maybe has this little different quality, a distinct characteristic, and it's appropriate in different places. And in one way, or the other Buddhist path of Buddhism, is to bring something to an end. And that's something is our suffering. The ways in which we suffer because we hold on, we cling, we resist, that there's some kind of inner compulsive behavior, driven behavior of holding and clinging, that might have a lot of authority, might be there for sometimes for good reasons. But with practice, we see it limits us. It diminishes us. It constricts us. And it doesn't really allow the for the full flowering and thriving of our the hearts, of our minds of our being, of our life.

And so part of mindfulness practice, is not just being present for things, and seeing and being mindful and being a little bit calmer and less reactive. But it's really too, as a platform, as a means by which to have the deepest and fullest letting go. That's possible for human being. And the path there is to learn something about all the different shades or forms of letting go that a person can have.

Now letting go is ordinary activity. There's a tremendous amount of letting go that people do throughout the day, and probably doesn't take much reflection to realize how much you're letting go of. And maybe sometimes it's so automatic and so easy that, you know, you don't even think of it as letting go. That maybe you were expecting to have fruit for breakfast, some particular fruit, and you show up and it's not there, it's finished. And so you just okay, well, I wanted it but it's not there. And so I'll have cereal instead, or something else. And in that moment, there is a kind of letting be, letting go. The desires let go of and maybe it's so easy that you hardly even know you're let go of it because there's no power and the desire just was a nice little thing to do to have fruit. Or you're expecting to go

you know, for a walk with a friend outdoors. And here in California, you wake up and nowadays, some days the air is clean, and sometimes it's not because of the smoke. And so you realize, well how unfortunate it is, you can't go for the hike with this kind of bad air. And maybe they're letting go is not that easy. Maybe then because of the desire of so strong. The anticipation is wonderful time with your friend and ongoing continuity of the, you know, the limitation to life because of the smoke and COVID-19 and all kinds of things that you don't let go of the desire easily. Rather the desires remains but the desire now is frustrated and there's frustration and anger and weariness and kind of like, not again, I kind of collapse all because that desire was being held kind of strongly. And it wasn't just simply letting go of the morning breakfast, the fruit, but now that desire, or maybe if you want to be free of all the secondary reactivity, maybe requires a deeper kind of more difficult kind of releasing of desire and putting it in the context of finding our freedom even with that.

So, you know, all kinds of very ordinary ways in which we let go life requires us to let go. We driving down the road and we expect to get somewhere, but the red light turns red. So we have to let go of, you know, pushing, you know, as fast as we can to get someplace and for a few moments, we let go, but as soon as it turns green, we pick up again, and, or as even as we're anticipating, the light get green, we pick up that attachment, that clinging to getting somewhere fast. And you can feel physiologically, sometimes the difference between holding on and wanting and pushing ahead and letting go and settling back. Even in the car, it might be that we let go in the red light, we stop and sit there and rest. But as the time goes on, we get closer to when we think it's going to turn green, we can see physiologically, the tension builds up, the foot starts kind of ready kind of feeling poised to push the gas pedal, and ready to go as soon as it's green, because we have to get somewhere.

And so it's picking up and letting be picking up and letting go is, you know part and parcel of everyday life. In Buddhism, Buddhist practice mindfulness practice, that's one of the things to be mindful of, is mindful of letting go. And starting this week on this topic, of mindful letting go, is really following on the foundation of the last four weeks, where we did mindfulness, of breathing, of thinking, of emotions, and the body. And this is kind of like taking that to the next level, with all that as a foundation, knowing how to be mindful and find our way with all these different areas of our practice of our life.

Now, the next task can be to add to that on top of that, be with that as a, you know, as a, something we understand, how to do to become mindful of letting go. And this can be as simple as becoming mindful of all the simple ordinary ways we let go throughout the day. We're tense, standing in line in the grocery store, and we feel the shoulders go up. And we, once we see it, we kind of take a breath and relax the shoulders. And that's a kind of letting go. And to become aware of all the ordinary letting goes throughout the day, builds momentum or builds familiarity. And just like we want to become familiar with the workings of thinking and emotions and the body and even breathing, we want to become familiar with the workings of letting go and how it works and how we do it. And where we're good at it where it's hard, and how it's done in different ways. Sometimes with the shoulders, sometimes with the jaws, the clenching of the jaws, sometimes with the clenching in the mind, a gripping of ideas and thoughts. And if you're having a conversation with someone, and you find yourself kind of leaning forward, you can't quite, you're so eager to say something you almost don't hear them anymore. And you feel a little bit frustration because you can't they stop talking, I'm going to say we're caught. And perhaps seeing that you're not really listening or seeing it's disrespectful to interrupt them. Maybe there there's a wise letting go that happens. So to to start being mindful of letting go and how we do it in ordinary life as a support for doing it when in some of the deeper and

more challenging ways. So it builds up a muscle of familiarity and understanding and wisdom around letting go.

And, for today for the meditation. I suggested that one of the movements, actions in the family of letting go is letting be in some ways it follows naturally from mindfulness. And maybe it's a simple next step. Maybe another way it's a very advanced practice. Only when there's a real strong mindfulness that can we just be have used mindfulness you just let be. But I want to emphasize letting be today because it's easy for people to think that letting go is when they hear teachings or especially from books. Teachers, that this is kind of like the, this is the depressing teachings that put that Buddhism has to teach letting go means you have to let go of the good things in life, we become less than and, you know, something is, you know, why can't we have all the things we want. And now I have to become a monastic and probably a hermit someplace because they emphasizing letting go of everything.

And so some people react strongly to this teachings of letting go. So I thought it might be nice to in that last meditation to begin with letting be. You're allowed to have everything you know, to be exactly who you are. But to discover, letting be in some profound way. Letting, just there's something, there's a powerful way of, respectful way of letting things be just as they are. But letting be as they are, is not holding on or clinging or wanting or pushing or it just stepping back and seeing Oh, that's how it is. Okay, let me just watch this now. And let it be. And let's watch it, let's be with it. And watching something in your mind's eye is as a powerful effect on something. It's kind of like the sun shining on a young plant in the garden. And the sun allows it to grow. This watching and mindfulness, letting it be and watching is like the sun on things. And things that are unwise to do and be, there tends to be a little bit of a no longer being so invested in it. And things which are wise to do tend to grow in the sun of awareness. It's a powerful thing just to let it be, but not let it be and just ignore it really let it be and see it clearly. And this capacity to let something be, is I think of it as part of the family of letting go, because it is a kind of letting go as well. It's letting go with this ongoing, incessant involvement, gnawing at something or picking out something or holding something or investing ourselves in something or trying to push away or pull away from something. It's just just sitting still, metaphorically still, have the ability to be present, and look something right in the eye. Kindly, lovingly, I see you. But I see what this is. In the moment. It's just a thought. In the moment, it's just someone angry at me. In the moment, it's just my fear in the moment is just, it's just, and there are times when all this kind of just letting be is appropriate. Not always, of course, but there are times and then build this muscle of learning how to be in this way. And just look at it and be with it. There's something powerful that begins to happen. And in the deeper areas of personal practice, the capacity to let things be becomes more and more important. To no longer be the agent of change. But let things be and allow ourselves to be the subject of change, allow change to happen. Allow letting go and release to happen. The deepest fullest kind of letting go that we do in Buddhist practice is not something you can do. It's something happens on its own when we really learned the full maturity of letting something be.

So my friends, thank you and look forward to this week, exploring different aspects of mindful letting go.