So this week, we're talking about the topic of self and no self in Buddhism. And a little bit to review these first three days that Monday I talked about the positive understanding of self, people that the early tradition had. And I didn't mention it, but there are some very clear words that correspond to the English word individual or person. That's different than the word for self. And even though there's positive uses of the word self, there's also there's no questioning and no negating in any kind of way, the idea of an individual to have a person and that they they have a person is important, and it's to be fulfilled, it's to become abundant is to become free. That person and the capacity for that is really at the heart of Buddhism. That the capacity for individual to become really free.

But one of the things that becomes free of is free of self. And that involves a number of things. But it involves a lot the ways in which we're selfing. The contribution we make in our mind to construct, identity, construct ideas of self and construct selfishness, construct conceit and arrogance. These are activities of the mind. And part of that was Tuesday, and then yesterday, part of this construction is really projections, that we project itself onto things, identity onto things.

So we have a thought, and we project onto it. That's my thought, if it was a wonderful thought, we pat ourselves on the back, it was a horrible thought, we feel bad about ourselves, feel embarrassed. Another option is just to have a thought. And not tie it to any kind of identity or definition of oneself. It's just a thought. And it can seem second nature or inherent that we should always measure ourselves by whatever thoughts we have. But that's a form of selfing, a projection, a construct that idea that every thought somehow has some bearing back on as a reflects back on the idea of who we are.
And so as we go deeper into Buddhist meditation, the activities of the mind get quieter and quieter. And so we don't, we're no longer actively constructing these projections or operating through them. And so for example, to use a variation of an example yesterday, I'm sitting here at the IMC meditation hall. And we have a lot of cushions, meditation cushions, people to sit on. And someone could come here when we're open and pull down one of IMC's cushions from the shelf, place it on the floor, sit down and get up and go to the bathroom. And if they come back, and someone's sitting on their zafu it wasn't theirs off before they came here. But because they claimed it for the hour, now it becomes theirs. And that's a projection. That's an idea that it's a reasonable one. I mean, it's you know, we kind of go along with little bit ideas of possession. But still, it's a construct that idea. So they come back and see that someone is sitting on it. And, and they associate that with all kinds of other slights they've had and insults they've had and the harm that's been caused to them, where people weren't caring for them or ignored them.

So there's a lot of anger that arises. In the anger is about me, myself and mine. And then another option is a person who has sat down for a little while and gotten very, very quiet and calm, go to the bathroom, come back and someone is sitting on the on the on that cushion. But because their mind is so calm and peaceful, the person can watch thoughts of Oh, that's my cushion, that thought arises and maybe feels a little bit the stress of that thought. And because it's so calm, the person says, Wait a minute, do I really need to go down that road? Do I really need to pick up and be involved with that thought that that is my cushion? You know, it's not really mine, belongs to IMC. And there's more cushions on the shelf, there's more spaces to sit. And I don't really need to get into the stress, into the activation of this all the series of things, you know cascade of thoughts that can happen once I say it's my cushion and the person sitting on my cushion. And so there's a freedom there to decide on what to do. And said okay, it's not my cushion. You know, it's fine, let it go and let it be.

And so this idea of seeing things as not this, this is not me, this is not personal, it becomes more and more clear and more and more an aspect of meditation practice as we go quieter and quieter. And so if you were sitting here, and sometimes all this, train whistles and train sounds we hear nearby, and I'm sitting here, and I hear this sound, and I can just let it be sound, or I can make it very personal. The sound is coming into the IMC meditation hall. And the sound is being maybe projected onto YouTube, and all these people are hearing it, and they're disturbing their meditation. And if it disturbs their meditation, then I'm not being a good teacher. And in order to make a good impression, I had to figure out how to get more soundproof windows. And now I've made it very personal. The story, as opposed to it's impersonal, just okay, I don't have to pick it up and make a self out of this experience. I can be responsible for it a little bit if I need to take care of something.

But the construct and projections of self, not only is stressful in some small ways by itself, but it can very quickly escalate into all these associations. And it's a magnet for our history, our memories, our past experiences, our values, are conceits, and can become very big very quickly. So in meditation to sit and more and more appreciate that what happens is we're sitting moment by moment, a lot of it is
impersonal, this thing is not myself. So if you're sitting there and a breeze comes through the breeze goes over and maybe the top of the hand, and Okay, that's not self is just a breeze just sensations. If I get involved in that liking and disliking of it, that kind of begins creating more energy around the breeze. And I might believe that that's who I am, the liking and disliking and or the pleasure and the discomfort of the breeze. But the pleasantness or unpleasant of the breeze, is also just nature, pleasant and unpleasant.

Turns out that the first kind of arising appearing of liking and disliking also has a quality that's impersonal, it just the system working and it can kind of arise off, I don't know if offline is right the word, but it just appears without a plan, without intention for it to be just kind of almost spontaneous, a system creates liking and disliking. And for a moment before latching on to it, it just impersonal. Oh look, there's there's the experience of liking happening. And it's possible to see that experience of liking without any attribution of this is me, myself, and mine. Without any projection of self onto it. That activity of making it or associating yourself. And for people who don't meditate and get quiet, it might seem not understandable what I'm saying because the self and selfing and taking a personal is just, it's like that's who we are, of course it was just who we are, then it's like how can I be different and it's all part of it all. But as we get quieter and meditation and mindfulness gets stronger, we're beginning to deconstruct all the constructions we have all the ways in which we latch on to things. So for example, if I've preferences liking and disliking of the simple breeze across my my hand, I could very little bit start to coalesce around that little bit start getting involved in believing it and holding on to it and picking it up and then thinking well I like this. How can I have more of it and that coalescing around it? It can also be a little bit physical, a little more energy they're a little more pressure coalescing tension and that gives a sense of others a location here. So I am the place of my location. There's a there's a me here because of this sense of pressure attention that giving location to that kind of engagement with liking and disliking. And then there's thoughts about it. Well, I like it so now let's plan to have breeze more often and what would it take to get a fan here at IMC, and what speed fan and we have to get a quiet fan and the mind goes off. And those also can be seen as impersonal. And it's really freeing to start doing that.

Or many people they think they're for where they are. And then the energy around thinking is strong enough that it can reinforces the idea of there's some coalesced energy, coalesce pressure, attention, sensations, or this is who I am. I am my thinking. And then this idea of I Am. That itself is a construct. That's also believing in an impersonal phenomena that just a thought that arises. By time any of this stuff arises, there's this whole kind of construct and coalescence of ideas and associations and energies, intentions. And it all seems like a big self. This is, of course, I'm here, this is me. But as we meditate, there's a deconstruction process. And we start seeing this marvelous thing, that this is not me, this is not me.

And the Buddhist teachings on not self, anatta, is not a metaphysical teaching. But rather, it's a teaching always about something particular. And this is very important to understand. It's all about
always about something in particular, particular sensation, a particular perception. And it's the recognition that that particular perception is, this is not me, this is not self. So there's not self is a characteristic. It's called a characteristic lakkhaṇa, characteristic, that of things. It's always something characteristic of particular things not like a generalized statement, there is no self.

So for example, if you cut your fingernail and have the fingernail clipping on the table in front of you, it might be relatively easy to say that is not myself. There's no self there, that's not who I am, that was my finger clipping. But if you look at your finger, click finger nail on your finger, some people might make a big self, a lot of personal associations, a lot of self, a lot of concerns about how it seems it's nice, it's not nice, I have to do something with it to be nice. And there's, there's a beginning of creating of a self.

Or it's possible, just look at fingernail. And this is just nature growing fingernails, and it's just impersonal. It's just, this is not self in itself. So this beginning to kind of see in the particulars of experience, moment by moment. Particulars of perception, how many things are not self, not self, not self, not because you have to believe it, like it's a philosophy, you have to believe there's no self, but becomes a little bit like looking at the finger clipping on the table. Oh, that's not me anymore. That's impersonal now. It's like outside of me. And they can see actually, so much of our experience is that way, like finger clippings, not so not to make it diminish its value or its importance in our in life itself or in nature. But it begins with loosening up the grip of self, loosening up the holding on of self, the associations that constructs the projections we have. And it's phenomenally relaxing, phenomenally freeing to do that. It's phenomenally inspiring, sometimes to feel like we're in this natural world of things just arising and passing and its nature doing its thing. And to start feeling, the free the emptiness, the lack of self, that's attributed projected, made up in relationships, just breathing and being animate being alive and feeling and sensing and experience the world that that absence of the projections and the selfing, and the weight, and the planning, and the associations and the judgments and the comparisons. And all this stuff we do around the self is such a relief. And it provides a wonderful experience of freedom. And that, to know that freedom teaches us about a potential about how free we can be how open we can be how relaxed we can be. And then when we start getting involved in the world of projections and the selfing. And taking things personally again, we can do it with a very light touch. We can do it without attachment. But instead we do it as it's needed, as it's appropriate. And when it's not appropriate and not needed. We're happy to put it down. And, and so we were self as lightly as we'd wear a very light shirt. That may be you know, maybe very light coat that we take off and on as we need.

So That's kind of the heart of the Buddhist teachings of not self. I hope that you have some taste of not living in a world of the constructed self, projected self. Thank you