The Experience of Wisdom

Andrea Fella · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Andrea Fella · 1:00:43

Tonight the topic is wisdom.

The word wisdom might have a range of meanings, a range of things that we can have wisdom about. But the wisdom of the Buddha is quite specific. When he began his own exploration, the question he asked was: Why do we suffer, and is it possible to be free of suffering? And so the wisdom that the Buddha teaches, and that develops in our minds as we practice, is related to understanding dukkha, understanding suffering—how we suffer and why we suffer.

Sayadaw U Tejaniya actually says that the purpose of practice is to develop this kind of wisdom, that this wisdom is what allows the mind to let go. Wisdom is what allows the mind to release the ways that we cling, the ways that we are confused, the ways that we push away, the ways that we hold on. We sometimes think we're doing a letting go, but that letting go happens with the presence of wisdom.

When I first started really tuning in to the word wisdom—and in particular for me this happened through Sayadaw U Tejaniya's teaching, as he uses the word wisdom more than any other Dharma teacher I had heard up to that point—at some point he suggested that I notice wisdom at work in the mind. This was a little mystifying to me. What does that mean? What did he mean by that? And so I began trying to explore that, to answer that question for myself.

I think I had the idea initially that either wisdom was something very grand that would be out there someday in the future, or that wisdom was something abstract and not really relevant moment to moment in experience. What we see as we begin to explore wisdom directly in our minds is that it is a factor, a quality in the mind that is conditioned—much as mindfulness, concentration, energy, and confidence are also conditioned wholesome qualities that arise in the mind. We can create supportive conditions for the cultivation of these qualities.

These qualities I just named—confidence, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom—are what are sometimes called the five faculties, the five faculties that support our minds waking up. Wisdom is one of these faculties. So it is a conditioned arising in the mind. While we can't actually do wisdom, we can cultivate conditions that allow for its arising. And we can begin to recognize it when it is arising, when it's present in our experience.

This is really what I'd like to explore this evening. What is it? What does it feel like? What is the experience of wisdom? Not an idea of what wisdom is, but what is the experience of wisdom? How can we begin to recognize it when it's working?

As with any wholesome quality, mindfulness is a great force in our minds. It has this amazing capacity: when we turn our attention to hindrances or reactive states of mind, when we turn our attention to the kilesas, the factors of mind rooted in greed, aversion, and delusion, mindfulness creates the conditions for them to appear less in our mindstream. But when we turn our mindful attention toward wholesome qualities, it creates the conditions for them to grow, to increase. And so if we can begin to recognize the experience of wisdom—not just let it slide by us, but truly recognize it—this supports it, nourishes it, to be mindful of it.

In the texts, the Eightfold Path begins with wise view. We could say that the path of practice begins with some kind of wise understanding. Understanding of what? How to orient our practice. Sayadaw U Tejaniya has said that mindfulness alone or awareness alone is not enough, that we have to have wisdom with that awareness. And so the path begins with an orientation around some wisdom teachings. We don't start in the abstract, thinking, "Oh, let me pay attention." There's an orientation that helps us look at our experience from a particular perspective.

That perspective—the most common way that wise view is described in the texts—is as an understanding of the Four Noble Truths: understanding that there is suffering, the truth of suffering; understanding the cause of suffering, recognizing the cause of suffering as craving in the mind; having a sense that there's the possibility to be free of that suffering; and recognizing the path that leads us to the ending of that suffering.

I like to simplify that to a rephrasing of the Four Noble Truths, of this wisdom that the Buddha offered: The feeling of offness in our experience, that things just aren't quite right, is created by our own minds—and it's possible to change our minds.

Embedded in this teaching of the Four Noble Truths is an understanding of states of mind that lead us towards suffering and states of mind that lead us away from suffering. Skillful qualities of mind that lead us away from suffering: the Brahmaviharas—love, compassion, joy, equanimity—the five faculties of mindfulness, faith, concentration, energy, and wisdom, the seven factors of awakening. All of these qualities that we cultivate to support freedom. And the unwholesome qualities of mind, all of those different reactive emotions, basically filter down to states of mind rooted in greed, aversion, and delusion.

As we start to explore our practice, we see this very simple, in some ways ethical, distinction of our states of mind. And that ethics isn't about right and wrong, but about suffering or not suffering. Our heart wants to orient more and more towards not suffering.

So this understanding of what is skillful and what is unskillful is another way that wisdom is framed in the teachings of the Buddha. This definition or understanding that certain actions, certain mind states, when acted on, lead us to suffering—they have that consequence. Other actions, other mind states, when acted on, lead us more towards happiness—they have that consequence. There's a cause and effect recognition built into the wisdom of the Buddha. Suffering is not random and freedom is not random.

The cause and effect nature of experience both works to catch us up and keep us hooked, but when we begin to see how this cause and effect relationship works—and see that cultivating mindfulness, wisdom, compassion, and love supports moving us away from suffering—cause and effect works in our favor to free us.

These basic definitions of wisdom are where we begin. We begin our path by having an understanding, by hearing these teachings. We probably would not find the way ourselves without hearing this perspective. It's said to be highly unlikely. The Buddha found the way; the rest of us need help. And thank goodness we have that. We have the teachings.

The path of practice, which begins with wise view, begins with hearing the teachings. We start there, but then for those of us in this room, it's not just, "Oh, heard that. That sounds like a good idea." We actually start reflecting on it. We may begin to think about whether this makes sense. Does this work? How might this work in my life? Or perhaps, "This sounds like something different."

My own experience when I met the teachings of the Buddha went something like this. I was really suffering. Somebody sent me a book that pointed out the teachings of the Buddha. I read the book, understood very little of it, but got one little piece out of it, something like: try just knowing you're having reactive emotions instead of acting on them. I thought, "Well, what good is that going to do?" Anger was my issue. If I look at anger, isn't that just going to make me more angry? But I was willing to engage, to try it.

This is how the practice begins. We hear the teachings, and something in us—perhaps some conditions in our lives—in my case, it was a condition of feeling like I'd hit bottom. I'd tried everything I could think of to find happiness in my life, and none of it had worked. And here came this very unintuitive suggestion, and I thought, "Well, nothing else has worked. Why not try this?" There was that engagement with the wisdom, engagement with trying it on.

This is the next turn of the wheel of wisdom. We reflect on it, we're willing to engage, so it's bound up with trust and confidence and faith. In my case, I didn't have any kind of outward faith in the teachings but was willing to give it a go because it sounded like something I could just try. Like running an experiment. I could try running the experiment. And lo and behold, in a very short time, I had some confirmation that this experiment is really useful.

This is the next turning of the wheel of wisdom. We start by hearing the teachings, and then we may begin reflecting on them, thinking about them, trying it out.

And then we start to know for ourselves that this is useful. That knowing for ourselves—seeing how the practice helps to free the mind—this is wisdom at work in the moment.

Most of you have probably had some kind of experience that solidified this for you. I mean, you're all sitting here in a six-week retreat. It's not just that you think this might be interesting. I certainly wouldn't

have considered going on a six-week retreat after reading that first book. It took quite a bit for me to actually gain enough confidence to even sit a day-long retreat. And all of you are here in this room. There's some degree of wisdom that has you here—some experience of wisdom that has you sitting in this room.

As I started to read about all the teachings, I discovered that the suttas, if we stacked them on the stage here, would probably be three stacks of books about this high. There's a lot of teachings in the Pali Canon. And so, as I started studying and learning, I thought, wow, there's a lot of stuff here. We might think we need to understand it all.

But actually, what it feels like to me—and what I think I saw in that very first book I read, where I got this one little nugget—is that you don't need everything at once. Try looking at your reactive emotions instead of acting on them. That little nugget was enough for a tremendous amount of learning to happen simply by turning to my experience with that question: What is it like to be experiencing this reactive emotion?

In my sense, the wisdom of the Buddha is really dense. It's like the most rich, dark chocolate possible. One little tiny bit of it on your tongue and you're going to taste it. The wisdom of the Buddha is like that. One little bit that you can understand, one little bit that you can turn and apply in your experience, will take you a very long way. So you don't have to understand all the links of dependent origination and how the seven factors of awakening work with the four brahma-viharas to lead to awakening. You don't have to know all of that. When you find some wisdom that resonates, use that and look at your experience.

I think in many ways this wisdom of the Buddha comes into our system, into our organism, and works in conjunction with the way our organism functions. Our organism, like any living organism, tends towards well-being. Only delusion in our mind has us operating with a layer over that direction towards well-being, and this delusion puts on a very short-sighted perspective of well-being. If I get this next little hit, that'll be well-being. This next little hit of happiness, this next little hit of getting rid of that thing—we end up with this idea or belief that this very short-sighted way of navigating the world is as good as it gets.

But what happens as we start with this perspective, with this wise view that the Buddha offers, bringing our attention to our experience? Those two together—mindfulness and wisdom—even at the beginning when it's simply the perspective of wise view rather than the inner experience of wise view, where we're just borrowing the wisdom of the Buddha, as I did when I said, well, okay, let's see what happens if I look at my emotions instead of acting on them—as we start to do that, our system, the organism, gets a whole different set of information. It begins to recognize that the continual grasping for something in the future, the continual grasping of "I need that hit, I need to get rid of that thing, get that thing"—that the very grasping, the very aversion itself, is not well-being. The delusion of those states obscures the non-well-being of the greed and aversion itself. But when we bring mindfulness and wisdom to that perspective, the organism gets different information and begins to orient towards how to let go of those states that are very clearly not well-being.

So many of you in the interviews have talked about this—seeing how much suffering it is to want something to be other than it is. The good news is that as you're seeing that, your mind is getting an education. We can't skip over that education. We wish we could. We wish we could say, "Oh, I saw that once. I've seen that feeling of craving, that feeling of wanting things to be other than they are. That's suffering, so why do I need to keep feeling it?" But the patterns of clinging and craving are so deep that it has to be seen over and over again. And the wisdom develops in contact with that dukkha.

It's not a mistake when we are experiencing dukkha in our practice. It's the process of the mind beginning to learn. The way it thought happiness was found—it's not going to be found in that way. Over and over again this lesson needs to be relearned. So wisdom develops through contact with dukkha much of the time.

As the practice develops, there are different ways that wisdom comes into play.

can be aware of what's happening. Just in that example I gave where we're caught by something, we're sitting there—I remember so many times sitting in this hall feeling the suffering of something, and the mind saying something like, "I'd let go if I knew how. I don't know how to let go of this."

Well, in that moment the mind is essentially getting the education about the dukkha, the suffering. And that's what we seek. Can we meet that? Can we be with that? There are times when we're in that space. In that time, wisdom is not strong enough to free that moment of contraction. But we can borrow wisdom in that moment. We can potentially bring it in.

So we're aware of some kind of struggle, and we can use reflection—reminding ourselves, "Right, this is impermanent," or "This is dukkha." I love that reflection. When I finally started recognizing that, it was a great reminder for me that what I'm experiencing right now, this struggle that is being experienced—this is dukkha. And that became shorthand for me, reminding me that the Buddha asked us to understand dukkha. Again, wisdom develops in contact with dukkha. So that very reminder—"Ah, this is dukkha"—kind of let my mind settle: "Ha, right, that's what's happening. Okay, the practice is to be with it. It's not a problem. This is what we open to."

We can drop in these reminders. Sometimes even consciously using mental reminders, like little wisdom nuggets that we drop into our meditation, can be very helpful at times when we're struggling. I have some favorites. "This is dukkha" is one of them. "This is nature"—we've talked about that. This is one that Sayadaw U Tejaniya offers: "This is nature, what's happening right now. Of course this is what's happening right now. It really couldn't be any other way."

Again, a kind of orientation to the cause-and-effect nature, the conditioned nature of what's arising in this moment. It's been conditioned based on—well, actually the entirety of the universe up until this moment. What's arising right now is what's arising. It's not random. And it's conditioned based on our experience, how we're relating to it right now. This is nature. This is what's growing in this moment. Can I know that?

At different times we may be able to see through certain kinds of struggle, certain contractions. We're experiencing something—for instance, we might be seeing something happen and recognize that there's a relationship of aversion to it. Over time we begin to see there's a skill that develops. "Oh right, I can check the attitude. Oh right, what's happening is there's aversion going on." The mind begins to be able to have the skill not only to remember the tools, but in that moment the tools kind of draw the wisdom to the surface, and experience shifts.

This is a kind of intermediate time where wisdom is beginning to operate. We see there's a kind of intuition, or we've practiced certain ways for a while using the tools that we offer—checking the attitude, for instance, or just meeting experience. And those tools become kind of intuitive. As we see a struggle happen, we remember, "Oh right, there's struggle happening. What's my relationship to what's happening? There's some relationship. Oh—I want it to be different. That's what's going on right now." So we see that.

And in the very seeing of it, there's a little space that's created. And it's not so much of a struggle anymore. So we see the little space created. Oh, this is what's happening. That's wisdom at work in that moment.

There can be a kind of feeling that we're consciously drawing on our tools and practices at that point. But in the moment of orienting to, "Oh, let me look at it this way," suddenly there's a feeling of freedom, a feeling of at least loosening or letting go around the suffering. And then there's a kind of wisdom that we don't even have to try to make work. It's like when wisdom gets very strong, when the conditions in the mind are right, sometimes wisdom just comes in—you don't even have to think about what to do. Wisdom just comes in and makes a choice.

An example of this from my own practice: I think my very first example of this unfolded over the course of a number of weeks. I had been observing anger in my experience for many, many weeks. And one bit of wisdom that was developing during that time was that when I'm experiencing anger, I'm suffering. That kind of took me by surprise. I think I mentioned the other day in the metta session that sometimes I've had the idea that I want somebody to suffer from my anger. In my first few months of practice, I really saw that when anger was coming up, some part of my mind believed that the person I was angry with was going to be suffering because I was angry.

And then came the recognition: they don't even know I'm angry. They're 7,000 miles away. I'm in the middle of the South Pacific and that person's in California. That person is not being touched by this anger, but I am burning up. This is suffering. So there was a very clear understanding and a kind of mind-blowing recognition: oh my gosh, I thought this was supposed to be making that person miserable, and it's making me miserable. I mean, it's kind of like, "duh," but it's amazing how deluded our minds are.

So in any case, there was that recognition, that seeing of "anger is suffering," over the course of a number of weeks of just being curious about it—being curious about what it's like to be experiencing anger.

And then one day I was doing something, and as I was doing this thing, a thought arose in my mind about the person I was angry with. In that moment, the mind started heading towards—as the person arose in my mind, it started heading towards the anger. But in that moment the mind saw it was headed towards suffering. In that moment the mind knew: that way lies suffering. Enough experience, as I said—part of what our practice is, is to really get that the reactive states are dukkha. And so as the mind saw the thought and saw the kind of inclination to jump on that thought and think more thoughts in order to get angry, as that inclination was seen, wisdom came in and said, "That way lies suffering. I don't think so."

I was stunned. I did not try to not become angry. Wisdom arose in that moment. It was years before I knew that was what happened. But that's an example of wisdom coming in and taking the lead. Wisdom knows: that way lies suffering, don't go there. I didn't have to do it. And so this is where wisdom can become very strong.

Now, it may sound like we start by thinking about or reflecting on and bringing in and borrowing wisdom, and then there's this period of time where we're able to navigate and bring in our practices, and wisdom just gets deeper and deeper and deeper. It doesn't quite work like that. There are certain—it seems to me that there are certain—well, there are conditions. Wisdom is a conditioned factor of the mind. There are times when that wisdom is available and times when conditions don't allow for it to be there.

Just a simple example that you all recognize: there are times of the day when the mind is more tired. Conditions such as how much food you've had or how much sleep you've had affect how much connection there can be to the present moment experience. So various conditions make the wisdom more or less available at times. And so the very same kinds of things—patterns, especially our habitual patterns, the ones we see over and over again—there are times when we see them and think, "Oh, there's that pattern. Hi, pattern."

We just get a different perspective on it, and the mind is pretty balanced about it. Another time later that same day, maybe we're completely caught by that pattern. This is not some kind of personal failing. This is really just the conditioned nature of wisdom. Sometimes the conditions are such that it's more available than others. And we just keep doing the best we can.

So sometimes we have to go back to drawing on borrowed wisdom. "Oh right, right, this is just anger." Okay. And whatever we try doesn't seem to have inroads into the experience of the dukkha. "Oh, this is dukkha. Okay, this is dukkha." Again, borrowing the wisdom, drawing on the wisdom that we know but maybe don't have experiential access to in that moment. It's not a failing when this kind of cycling happens. It is the nature of the mind.

And then there are times when certain kinds of patterns are more seen through. We may see through a certain pattern completely. At one point I had an insight around a particular anger with a particular person, and that pattern fell away. So there was some wisdom that developed around that particular pattern. But that didn't mean that all the anger went away. Wisdom seems to drop particular kinds of

delusion, and we have many, many ways the mind holds delusion.

So we learn. Just like sometimes we gain little bits of wisdom, and then that wisdom gets obscured, and then it comes back. There are a few ways I've already been describing how we might experience wisdom. That little shift of "oh, this is just frustration"—when we see something just as something arising in the present moment, that's wisdom at work. When we can see, "Oh, this is just frustration arising," there can be a shift of perspective around a pattern that allows us to just watch it as a pattern instead of being caught by it or believing it means something about us.

This kind of shift sometimes feels like we've put our mind into neutral. If a car is traveling really fast down the freeway and you put the car into neutral, the car doesn't stop. But you know it's going to stop, because you're no longer giving it gas and it's just in neutral. This shift of perspective—"Oh, this is just..."—you can just watch a pattern unfolding and not be caught in it. That's like the mind is in neutral. It allows the pattern to unwind in its own time. This is wisdom at work. This is a form of wisdom at work. When you have that capacity, wisdom is present in the mind.

Part of my aim, I think, the purpose in offering this talk, is to help you recognize that you all have a lot of wisdom. It works in your mind a lot. That simple experience of "oh"—wisdom at work.

Sometimes we have maybe a little bit stronger wisdom that sees something in the moment so clearly. The mind is just so interested and curious and right there with it, and the experience vanishes. Again, that's wisdom at work.

I remember one time on my first three-month course, during the transition between the first half and second half. My first half teachers left, and the second half teachers came in. I felt abandoned by my first half teachers. I was sitting in the yoga room feeling really sorry for myself, feeling abandoned. I felt like a three-year-old. I was just feeling that. I was aware of it. I was feeling it, and I was practicing compassion for myself, so I was kind of feeling into it.

But at some point the mind got really curious. "Well, what is this? What is this feeling of abandonment anyway?" And it's like I turned to look at it and it was gone. "What? Where did it go?" I was very confused at that moment.

When my second half teacher came and I reported this experience to her, my original interpretation was that I must not know how to investigate emotions, because it disappeared when I tried to look at it. So I reported to her, "I don't know how to investigate emotions."

And she says, well, tell me what you saw. And I say, well, I saw when I turned to look at it, it disappeared. And she said, trust your experience.

So that was a case where wisdom was at work and I thought it was delusion. When I described the experience to her a little more clearly—that I was being with it with compassion, and then there was this

real interest that arose that said, "Well, what is this anyway?"—and then poof! She said that's wisdom at work. The curiosity.

She said sometimes when we're hanging out with emotions like that, being with them with compassion, there's a little bit of a hook into it. And this just little bit of curiosity lets that hook go. If we go back to the car analogy, in that kind of scenario, it's like the car doesn't go into neutral—the car just disappears. It doesn't come to a stop; it just vanishes, that pattern. It just goes. That's another way that wisdom can be seen.

And there's another form of wisdom that many of you have talked about in interviews, and that is recognizing essentially when reactive emotions are not happening—the non-arising of reactive emotions, the non-arising of the hindrances. We've talked about this, recognizing when the hindrances are absent.

There are certain ways this non-arising of reactive emotion might be experienced. We might recognize that at particular places in our day, we tend to get caught up in reactivity, and we learn how to navigate that time or place in order to avoid that hindrance from arising. An example of this would be something like noticing that going into the dining hall, judgments tend to arise. Many of you have talked about this also—just how much judgment arises there. It's like the dining hall is a sea for judgments: self-judgments, other judgments. Am I taking more food, less food? It's a minefield of judgment in the dining hall.

If you notice that going into the dining room involves a lot of judgment, you could think, okay, let me avoid going in the dining room. Well, that might not work because you need your food. But you could also explore bringing mindfulness to the seeing process. Joseph gives this suggestion that if you notice there's judgment for you walking into the dining room, as soon as you cross that door, start noting seeing. Know that seeing is happening.

That very orientation towards knowing that seeing is happening begins to short-circuit the movement to reactivity. Because the reactivity, the judgment, arises because we don't recognize that seeing is happening. Thought arises from seeing, and then the idea of more or less arises from that thought. So when we can just be right with the seeing, it can avoid the arising of that defilement.

That's one way we can know the non-arising of defilement. We can be practicing in a particular way—we learn what leads to the defilement and learn how to avoid that.

Another way that many of you have talked about in the last few weeks is beginning to see that whatever's going on right now, three or four weeks ago when this kind of thing was happening, you were way more reactive. So you start to see a lessening of reactivity. The conditions are such that you almost should be reactive, but you're not. Another way that we can see the non-arising of defilement. Again, wisdom at work there. Wisdom is present in that time.

It's a quieter kind of wisdom. It's not like the kind of wisdom that's big, mind-blowing, earth-shattering. We think of wisdom or insights as being these big kabooms. I certainly thought that was the way it was

going to be. I was going to have one big insight and then I would be done. But it's much more these small, little shifts of understanding that happen. And this is one way we begin to see—oh, wow, I'm not as reactive as I was. A whole pattern of reactivity that I know would have made me really crazy here, but now it's just a little bit of agitation. There's not a whole big pattern of aversion and going off the deep end.

So we see the weakening of the defilements, the weakening of reactivity, as an increase of wisdom. We can also know the mind is free of reactivity when we see calm, equanimity, the brahmaviharas. When those are present in the mind, these also can indicate that wisdom is present. Balance of mind.

We recognize that when the mind is free of reactivity, wisdom is often present—though not always. Sometimes the mind can be temporarily free of defilement through suppression, through concentration. We can have these periods of calm and peace that arise simply from being very concentrated. But at the same time, there's the possibility for wisdom to grow there, because in that state we see just how optional our reactive patterns are. We're in a place where we're not reacting to things through concentration, and the mind learns that the reactivity actually doesn't add anything useful. So wisdom can grow in that situation too, even if it's concentration that's keeping the hindrances at bay.

And then there are moments of insight, moments of wisdom that happen around clear seeing of impermanence, the unreliable nature of experience, the conditioned nature of experience, seeing the not-self nature of experience. As the mind begins to see just how rapidly things are changing, at a very deep level it understands there's no point in clinging to this. It's just going to vanish. That's the wisdom around impermanence.

There are times when we see some perhaps beautiful emotion, a beautiful state of mind. Sometimes I find after an insight, after a clear seeing of dukkha, there can be this feeling of bliss—*oh, I figured it out, I understood something*. And there can be a kind of sinking into that bliss. But that bliss will bite you at some point.

I had one really clear recognition around this. I saw a very strong pattern—just the conditioned nature of it and how it was simply a creation of the mind. It was like self-hatred just *poofed*. And the next moment was *oh, bliss, no more self-hatred*. And the next moment was *no, this is just for this moment*. This seeing, this insight, this recognition, this moment of wisdom is conditioned in this moment. Insights are impermanent.

That recognition matters, because insights can lead to some beautiful states of mind, and yet we can cling to those. When we cling to something wholesome or beautiful, we will suffer when it goes. As the mind begins to deeply understand the impermanent nature of those pleasant experiences, it understands the dukkha of holding to that, the suffering of holding to that. And it just doesn't do it. Wisdom simply says there's no point. There's no point in holding on to that. It's dukkha to hold on to that.

When we see a pattern as conditioned, as simply an arising phenomenon, we watch it arise. Sometimes we

can see the conditions themselves arising. A thought arose in the mind, and that thought led to this feeling, and that feeling led to this belief. It's like watching dominoes fall. And we see—*who did that?* This is just conditioned unfolding. Not me, not mine. The mind just lets go. These are deeper levels of wisdom at work in the mind.

Deep insight can happen around a pattern in a moment, and then the next day it sometimes seems so obvious—seeing through something, wisdom at work in the mind. When wisdom is present and we're seeing through a particular kind of delusion really clearly, it seems so obvious. How could we not see it? We've figured it out. It feels like we've figured it out.

It's really helpful to recognize, rather than *oh, I figured it out*, that this is wisdom at work in this moment. To acknowledge that this is wisdom at work in this moment. This helps us recognize the impermanent nature of understanding. It comes and goes, conditioned, based on conditions.

We have an insight into something, and it seems so obvious. Then two hours later, we think, "Wow, I guess it wasn't so obvious, because I have no idea why it seemed so clear." The veil comes back. The delusion returns.

Again, this is not a personal failing. It's just the practice. It's the conditions of the mind.

Learning to recognize these moments of wisdom, learning to recognize when wisdom is at work in the mind—this will strengthen wisdom. Wisdom is at work in all of your minds. These insights, when we see them, when we can recognize, "Oh, this is wisdom at work," it inspires some confidence.

It works in a spiral nature. As we see something clearly, it encourages us to keep looking, to keep exploring. Trust and wisdom feed off of each other. As we see something clearly with wisdom, it feeds the trust. And then when we're no longer in that place of seeing clearly, we can draw on that trust. The practice spirals deeper.

Our work is not to *do* wisdom, because we can't do it. Our work is not to *do* insight. Insight arises based on conditions. And the conditions are the steady mindfulness, the simplicity of meeting moment-to-moment experience with the perspective of wise view—this curiosity about how suffering is created in the mind, and how it is possible for it to release.

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