Understanding Delusion

Andrea Fella · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Andrea Fella · 1:06:12

The other night, Bruni talked about mindfulness of mind—awareness of particular, really simple aspects of mental experience that are useful to pay attention to, as described in the Satipatthana Sutta.

The first part of that teaching talks about noticing the presence and absence of greed, aversion, and delusion. Bruni spoke quite beautifully about working with this and its value. Greed, aversion, and delusion form a list of three that the Buddha spoke often about, emphasizing the importance of understanding these states. They are described as the three unwholesome roots, the three tendencies of mind from which all unwholesome mind states arise. In fact, he described freedom—Nibbana—in the simplest way as the absence of greed, aversion, and delusion.

I really like that definition. It's so simple. It also feels like something we can get a taste of, a sense of the direction that the mind is headed in this practice. For moments, we may experience times when it feels like greed, aversion, and delusion are not arising. The peace of that, the ease of that, the spaciousness of that, the non-problem of that is quite lovely.

The practices the Buddha taught—mindfulness, the practice of observing what's happening in the present moment while it's happening—as we've discussed, the simple practice of mindfulness from the perspective that Winnie so beautifully pointed us to with the Eightfold Path, Wise View mindfulness with that perspective, creates the conditions for transformation. When we are observing greed, aversion, and delusion with this perspective, it creates the conditions for them to diminish, to weaken, to fall apart, for us to get that taste of release from greed, aversion, and delusion. So they are really worth paying attention to, getting to know, looking at, and becoming familiar with.

Now greed and aversion are relatively easy to recognize. We know that feeling of wanting, of pulling, of being pulled towards something—the feeling of "gotta have, gotta have." We know the feeling of aversion, that wanting to be separated from, wanting to not have that thing, that experience, that person, that idea, that thought. In the meetings I've been having with those of you I'm meeting with, people are describing pretty clear experiences of recognizing greed and aversion.

Delusion, by its very nature, is much harder to see, to recognize, to experience and understand. It's not so hard to recognize, "Oh, this is greed. I know greed's happening." But to recognize, "Oh, this is delusion happening in the mind"—not so easy.

So tonight I'd like to explore with you some ways we can begin to recognize delusion and begin to work with it. Recognizing it is the biggest part of that work.

Delusion can arise following on from greed and aversion. Greed arises, we want something, we get it perhaps, we get a hit of happiness from it, and the perspective that we get is, "Okay, having that thing made me happy, so I need to keep that thing, I need to hold on to that thing—that will be what makes me happy." That kind of idea or belief that having anything is what ultimately makes us happy is a form of delusion. Greed and aversion can create perspectives or filters in the mind—views where we're seeing through the lens of aversion or greed, and then everything is colored with that. That's a form of delusion. Our minds are obscured by this filter.

But delusion itself is more fundamental than greed or aversion. Ultimately, greed and aversion are based on the tendency of the mind to have delusion. If the mind did not have the tendency toward delusion, greed and aversion would not arise. We'll talk about that more as well.

Tonight, in exploring this topic, I'd like to look from what we might think of as the more obvious forms of delusion through to some subtler forms, and then ultimately to some very fundamental forms.

The first level I'd like to look at is basically losing awareness—not being mindful, disconnection, uncertainty, confusion, often manifesting as sleepiness. Just this disconnection from experience.

The second level is delusion that operates even when we are aware. This is a kind of delusion based on views, beliefs, and ideas—things that we've grown up with, perspectives that we have taken up just because we've grown up in them. We're swimming in the soup of those perspectives and we can't see that we're seeing the world from that perspective. This is a more individual layer of delusion, based on whatever soup each of us grew up swimming in.

Then there's a deeper level, a more profound level of delusion that it seems we all share as human beings—basic distortions where we mistake reality to be something it's not. This one too operates when we're aware. So we'll go through each of these.

The first form of delusion is basically not being aware. Mindfulness is gone. We're lost in thought, perhaps believing the fantasy or construct of whatever the mind is creating. I might have mentioned this the other night, but at one point, after a long relationship broke up—maybe even a year or so after—every now and then my mind would get lost in fantasy, and it created that world of being back in that relationship. When I came back out of being lost in thought, it was very confusing, because in that space of being lost in thought, the mind completely believed it was back in that relationship. That's delusion—in that space, lost in thought, believing something that's not real. Living in an unreal world. We do this so much in our world of thoughts.

We can also be lost in states of mind—spaciness, sleepiness, dullness, the sloth and torpor and restlessness flavors of the hindrances. But none of those are inherently non-mindful. We just have a very strong habit of not being mindful in those states.

This became very clear to me at one point. I was sitting at my table, having a meal, and while I was eating

my mind kept spacing out—losing awareness and drifting off. I was practicing with being present. It was like I said to my mind, "Come back and be with eating. Pay attention to eating." And seconds later, it would be spaced out again. This happened several times. Come back to eating, space out. Come back to eating, space out.

At some point, I decided—or perhaps wisdom kicked in—and it encouraged me to just be curious. "Well, okay, so the mind is spacing out. Let's see what happens if I just try to be aware while the mind is spacing out." I felt like the mind went and hovered somewhere above my head, sitting up there. And it was very restful. It felt very relaxed and peaceful.

What I recognized in that moment was that I was really tired. I was exhausted, and I had been yanking my mind back—"Do this! Do this!"—and my mind was saying, "Look, you're trying too hard. Just rest, relax. It's time to relax. We're too tired to pay attention to something in particular." And yet it was quite easeful to be aware of that state of what I had called spacing out. It was spaciousness. It was easeful. It was relaxing. It was restful.

The mind hung out in that state for maybe twenty or thirty seconds, and then the state shifted. It was kind of like a foggy space, this foggy state—diffuse, fuzzy. Not a lot of precision to what I was noticing. I wasn't really attending to particular senses or body sensations or smells or sights. Just this fuzziness. "Oh, fuzziness feels like this."

But after thirty seconds or so of just being with that, letting the mind rest, it was like on a sunny day where the sun slowly dissipates the fog. And then there was quite an alertness in the mind and a clarity of body sensations and smells and sights and sounds. Being aware of eating at that point was just very natural.

So that state of spaciness—I had thought of it as not mindfulness. There's a habit of not being mindful in those states, but I would say pretty much every state of mind, except perhaps non-mindfulness itself, we can be mindful of. Sleepiness. Dullness. Fogginess. Restlessness. All of them. We've talked about this possibility of waking up into them.

We may think of these states as inherently delusive states. "I can't be mindful if I'm sleepy." That thought itself is delusion. If you find yourself thinking, "I'm too tired to meditate. I'm too spacey to meditate. I'm too whatever to meditate"—just don't believe that thought. It's a deluded thought. It's delusion at work.

We can be aware of whatever it is the mind thinks is in the way. Be aware of tiredness, aware of sleepiness, aware of spaciness. We can also begin to get familiar with the quality or feeling of what that disconnected mind feels like.

When the mind returns, when there's a kind of waking up and mindfulness returns—in that moment, often there's a particular response. It depends on what you're doing, but often we judge ourselves. It's like, "Oh, I've been lost in thought. I should be mindful. I should bring my attention here." And that actually can

obscure something very useful to see in that moment. All those ideas and thoughts about what I had been doing, how my mind was wandering, what I should be doing instead—that's a very common response. So just notice that, of course, when it happens. Judging, believing something needs to happen.

But in that moment, it is possible—the more continuous the mindfulness is cultivated, the more we're just okay with mindfulness coming and going and seeing that mindfulness comes and goes—the more we can be aware right as mindfulness arises. And in that place, when mindfulness is arising into something, there's a kind of lingering taste or scent of what it was like in the moments before. So the moment of coming back into mindfulness, there's a lingering feeling or sense of what that disconnected, non-mindful state felt like. We can begin to get a taste of that sometimes in this space.

Sometimes we're waking up into something stronger like anger or aversion, and then we actually get a taste of that state, a really clear sense of it. Or we might wake up into thinking and get a really clear sense of, "Oh, this is what it's like to be aware of thinking." But sometimes if we're returning from one of those vague, diffused, disconnected, fuzzy states, the return of mindfulness is like waking up into that state, and you get a sense of what it's like to be mindful of this. There's a little bit of a recollection, an awareness—it just felt like I wasn't here. Like the mind wasn't here. We can get a taste of that, a flavor of that. We can begin to get familiar with that kind of feeling of having a veil or a haze in front of our minds as we're exploring and connecting with experience.

So that's the kind of delusion related to mindfulness being lost—and ways to explore a little bit there, particularly that moment of waking up. This is what it feels like to be aware right now. And a moment before, there was a flavor or feeling of what it was like to not be aware.

The second kind of delusion I'd like to talk about this evening is delusion connected to our personal conditioning, that soup we've been raised in. Some of this has to do with things we experienced personally—how other kids treated you on the playground, or just ways there was engagement with you in your life. Some has to do with familial patterns and habits. We all have our own conditioning from our families.

Some of my friends and I sometimes talk about differences here. In my family, teasing was not a loving thing. And one of my close friends came from a family where teasing was a very loving thing. So there's a little bit of a disconnect between us sometimes around teasing. This is just our own conditioning.

This kind of conditioning can come from family, from our own experience, and also from cultural conditioning, our culture's ways. There's so much of this that we're simply not aware of how we've been conditioned, how we've been shaped. The practice really helps us to uncover these patterns, these habits, and to see that they have been conditioned.

But when we don't see them, they're basically operating underground. These habits, patterns, and conditions are operating beneath the surface. And we often just take them to be the baseline of reality. We

don't see that they're a perspective on reality—we take them to be reality. We think we're perceiving things accurately, but we're seeing them from a particular lens, a particular view.

It can be hard to see that we're having this kind of perspective, and very hard at times even to see evidence to the contrary—evidence that it is a perspective. This is well documented in the psychological world, in a field that studies confirmation bias. These studies show over and over again that we tend to take in information that agrees with what we believe, and we tend to actively ignore or simply not recognize information that does not agree with what we believe. We can actively discount information that disagrees with what we believe.

In fact, some studies examining the divisions so apparent in our country right now, particularly around politics, have shown that if you give people evidence to support the other side's perspective—in a reasoned, rational approach using just evidence and facts—people tend to get more entrenched in their views. It's very difficult to shake ourselves out of these perspectives. This is how delusion works so powerfully.

I want to give some examples of this kind of delusion. There are many, but I'll offer a selected set. One kind of views we hold are views about ourselves and others. We have beliefs about who we are, what we're capable of. We have beliefs about other people. This one is really quite easy to start seeing.

Many of you, most of you—I'd say probably all of you—most of the people here you do not know. You don't know much about them. You don't know what they think. But that doesn't stop us from having all kinds of views and opinions about them. On that first day of the retreat, we talked about Vipassana romance and Vipassana vendetta. These things tend to spring out of this kind of delusion—views and opinions about someone based on very little information. We think we know who someone is, what they are, how they are, what they're capable of.

We can begin to recognize that our thoughts and ideas here, especially because we don't know people, are just that—ideas. This is harder to see when we know people well. We categorize people; they do something repeatedly, or even just once or twice, and we think, "Well, that's who they are." We can recognize when we're doing this with others, especially when we don't know them. We can recognize when other people are doing it to us. But it's so hard to recognize when we do this to ourselves.

We have ideas, views, and opinions about ourselves that are deeply embedded. Many of our challenges in life stem from some kind of belief we hold about ourselves, our capabilities. My own pattern of self-hatred—a pattern I worked with for many years—was deeply conditioned. Beliefs like "I'm a failure," "I'm no good," "I can't do things right." It shocked me, actually shocked me, when I began to see that this was a pattern in my life, because until I came to meditation and started looking at my mind, I thought I was very competent. I would not have said self-hatred was part of my equation.

But then I started looking at what my mind was telling me in the practice. It was very challenging. This

was a perspective operating under the surface—this perspective of "you're no good, you can't do things right"—propelling me to try to prove myself wrong, to do everything competently and well and right, to prove that all those imagined people in my mind who thought I couldn't do things were wrong. But all of that activity of accomplishment was really rooted in this belief, this delusion that I was a failure somehow.

So it's hard to see sometimes what beliefs are operating in our own minds. I mentioned this exploration around thoughts—to check in when there's a struggle happening, when there's a lot of thoughts going on—"What's being believed?" This can be a useful exploration at times. If there's even just something that seems really confusing, like the mind is spinning and whirling and you think, "What's going on? I have no idea"—well, what's being believed? Perhaps "I should know what's going on." Maybe it's that simple. So that question—"What's being believed?"—can be very powerful in supporting a seeing through of the delusion that's operating.

Views and beliefs about ourselves are one form. Cultural views, the perspectives of our culture—how those come in—are another. These are often not spoken. They are perspectives that we absorb simply because we are so deeply swimming in the soup of our culture that we take things in without question. Simple things, for instance, like how close you stand to a stranger when you're talking to them. Whether or not you make physical contact with someone when you're talking to them. How close do you need to be to make physical contact with somebody? These are things nobody sits down and tells you. These are things we absorb.

So this is a lot of how these cultural perspectives come in—just through living, swimming in the soup of our culture. And sometimes we can notice that these perspectives are operating when we find somebody behaving differently than the norm. We might feel really uncomfortable if somebody comes up and stands right next to us while we're talking to them. It's like, "That's not right. That's not how we do this here." But it's just a perspective. It's just a convention, really.

And so we can start to see some of these perspectives, these cultural perspectives, conventions. Travel is a great way to see this. If you go spend some time in another culture, you'll get a taste of what your perspective is. Some of these simple, almost neutral perspectives, really. Standing three feet or five feet away from somebody—these are things we can begin to just see as almost neutral conditionings, what we've grown up with.

And then there are some other conditionings in culture that are way more insidious and way more harmful. In the culture of the United States, for instance—and I don't know that I really, I mean, I think I did hear this at times—but there's this idea: America is the land of opportunity. If you work hard enough, you can live your dream. That's a view that's embedded in the culture of the United States. Sometimes these perspectives come because we're immersed in it. We're immersed in it. We're told it repeatedly.

This particular view of the United States being a land of opportunity, that anyone who works hard enough can fulfill their dream, ignores—is not really taking in—the inherent advantages of being born with a

certain gender, a certain skin color, with parents who have a certain economic status. There's a kind of privilege that some people have that others don't have, and there's not an equal footing, really, of opportunity for everyone.

So not recognizing that this is a view, a perspective, not seeing how some advantages are conveyed on some and not others, can lead to a kind of denial around this privilege of being in a white body, in a socioeconomic status that has more resources at their disposal. And there's that saying some of you may recognize: that some of us are born on third base and think we're hitting a home run.

So just that—this perspective or view that there's equal opportunity without seeing the varieties of experience that come in, that opportunities are not all equal—this kind of thing creates so much suffering. Delusion is not a small thing. When we're acting from delusion, it can have major ramifications. Now standing two feet or five feet away—maybe not major ramifications. But there are many perspectives that we do not see, these views that we grow up in, that are so damaging. And if we are here to see suffering and find ways to let go of it, this is an area that we need to look at. How is our delusion working?

Another example of perspective that creates a lot of suffering: sometimes views can be created not just from swimming in the soup, but from our own personal experience—yet without getting complete information. One teaching story from the time of the Buddha, which many of you may be familiar with, is the story of the blind people and the elephant. In this teaching story, the Buddha tells of a king who asked the blind people in the kingdom to be shown an elephant. And so some of the people were touching the elephant in various parts—some touching the trunk, some touching the feet, the legs, some the side of the elephant, some the tail, some the ears.

And then when they were asked, "What is an elephant like?" some said, "Well, an elephant is like a post." And some said, "An elephant is like a broom"—those who touched the tuft of the tail. Some said, "Like a wall of a storeroom"—those who touched the side. And none of that was—I mean, that experience itself was not delusion. That's what they experienced. But what happens is that we tend to, getting information, we get partial information about something, and then we create a view: this is what this thing is.

And this teaching story says that the people were comparing their views. "Well, an elephant's like this." "Well, that's not right. An elephant is like this."

"No, you're wrong. An elephant is like this." It's the holding to the view, holding to the perspective, not admitting that there may be a different perspective or a broader perspective that can encompass all of them—that's where the delusion is. That's the delusion. Believing the perspective.

Even here, and this is the confirmation bias at work, somebody says, "Well, to me it felt like a wall of a storeroom." "Well, that can't be right because it sure felt like a post to me." The belief in our own experience—and I think this is even more insidious when we have had direct experience. We had direct experience of something, and then we create a view: "This is what the experience is like."

In one teaching, a deep teaching on views found in the first sutta in the Dīgha Nikāya called the All-Embracing Net of Views, the Buddha describes a whole range of different views and perspectives that people hold to. These are speculative views about the nature of reality. He described how many of these views come to be, different perspectives, and points out that some people say the world is infinite, others say the world is finite. There were ten—I can't remember them all, and it's not important that I give you all ten. What matters is that people were asserting all these different perspectives of what the world was like.

And then the Buddha explained how these views get formed. He said what happens is they go into meditation and have an experience of the world being infinite. They come out of that meditation and say, "I've touched reality. This is it. The world is infinite." Somebody else goes into meditation and sees this really infinite, vast space and then bumps up against something that feels finite on the outside of that and says, "Oh, that's wrong. It's actually finite."

The Buddha actually cautioned us in that particular sutta about views that arise based on deep meditation experience. He said those are some of the most sticky views that we have. Based on direct experience we can really cling. This happens in daily life where we have direct experience, and it happens in spades in meditation practice. We think we found it, and then we try to recreate it, and we suffer. And we argue with people about it.

That was the whole point in the sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya—how much people argued about these different perspectives. They would just contradict each other: "You're wrong, this is not—I found this from my direct experience." "Well, you're wrong, I found this from my direct experience." Where does that go?

So the Buddha encouraged us not to cling to views at all. Now, views can be useful. Right view, for instance, is a useful view. And it can be potentially helpful, like the simile of the raft where we float across a flood using a raft, using the effort of our hands and feet to get across. In that example, the Eightfold Path is equated with the raft. The Buddha talks about putting the raft down when you get on the other side of the flood—it's not so useful to you there. So not to cling to it once you've crossed the flood. But while you're in the middle of the flood, you have to hold on to the raft, understanding this is skillful means, this is useful now—not somehow inherently true for all time.

In the simile of the raft, the Buddha asked: once you've crossed the flood, is it useful to pick up that raft and carry it around with you on your head? No, it's not. Put it down. Put it down. He's really encouraging us not to cling to views. We can use views in our practice.

We use views in our practice. We use views in our lives. They're helpful in our lives. There are many other examples of this kind of delusion, but I want to move on to the most insidious form of delusion—what I sometimes call human delusion. These are delusions we all share, views that cloud our perception of experience at a very fundamental level, distortions of reality itself.

There are three basic distortions, and these will be familiar to you. We tend to take what is impermanent to be permanent. We tend to take what is unreliable as a source of lasting happiness to be reliable as a source of lasting happiness. And we tend to take what is not self to be self.

This kind of delusion operates and functions even when we are aware. My teacher Sayadaw U Tejaniya says that delusion does not mask the object—it doesn't mask the experience. It masks the nature of the experience. So we may be aware of an experience and not be aware of its impermanent nature. This is the direction Vipassana practice moves us, helping us to begin seeing through these fundamental distortions.

These delusions, these mistaken perceptions, seem to happen often based simply on the way our bodies and minds work. The mistakes around these three areas occur because of how our bodies and minds are put together.

Take, for instance, perceiving what is impermanent to be permanent. Some of this happens because we tend to relate to experience through ideas about experience rather than through the direct meeting of what's actually happening. Concept can mask change.

Perhaps we can see this in terms of what we hold on to at a more ordinary level. We have an idea or a view about who someone is, and we hold on to that. It stays with us, and we don't tend to see when they change. We have an idea about them, and that concept masks that they can change.

This happens at other levels too. An example from my own practice: I was practicing at Shwe U Min monastery in Burma with Sayadaw U Tejaniya. Most evenings, as it was getting a little bit dark, I was meditating in my room, and I often heard this squealing sound. The squealing sounded like a pig to me. So I was noticing the squealing and seeing an image of a pig in my mind. This was a concept. Also, the sound seemed distressed to me. And so—pig, distressed—my mind leapt to create this idea that on the other side of the monastery wall was the local butcher, and that what I was hearing every evening was pigs being slaughtered for the market the next day. There was a lot of compassion, a lot of sadness.

Now, I knew that the idea about pigs being slaughtered was a story. I knew that I did not know that's what was happening. But I was not prepared for what I discovered one night when I was taking a walk instead of meditating in my room. I was walking up and down in the middle of the monastery, and there were all these bats flying around, and they were squealing.

The whole idea—not only the story about the slaughterhouse on the other side, but that it was even a pig—I knew that the idea about the slaughterhouse was a story. I did not have a clue that the idea of it being a pig was also a story. That one I believed until, fortunately, evidence to the contrary appeared. Seeing the bats and hearing them squeal, I actually believed that was what was happening.

This is how concept, when we glom onto it, obscures what's actually happening, and that can often obscure the changing nature of experience. Concepts are useful, and it's useful to recognize them as concepts. We're not going to live our lives, we're not going to be able to navigate even walking through

this room, without concepts. If everything were just form and color, we wouldn't do a very good job of walking through the room. So concepts help us navigate the world, but we need to recognize them for what they are.

Concepts also come with baggage. Concepts often come with ideas, views, opinions.

So recognizing concept as concept is important. Concepts can mask change. Another thing that can mask change is simply that change happens so fast. Our system creates a continuity, puts things together so that it feels more stable and solid.

Sayadaw U Pandita used to talk about the fire stick. If you have a stick with a fire burning on the end of it and you whirl it in the air, you'll see a circle. It looks like that circle exists, but it's an illusion. It's an image that's created because our vision has a persistence—it holds on. And that persistence through our sense bases is one of the reasons that it's hard to see impermanence.

So the rapidity of change, that fast moving fire stick, is an example of how rapidity of change creates the illusion of stability. But this is happening all the time—this belief in stability, belief in solidity. We actually know through particle physics that there's way more empty space than there is solidity. It's really about how fast things are moving that things feel solid. And in our minds, when we look at our minds, we can start to see the rapidity with which things happen, the conditioned nature of what's arising, and how our minds put things together and then put a concept on top of it.

So the rapidity of change can mask change, and concepts can mask change. As we begin to meet experience directly—I heard that Annie talked about the Bahiya Sutta, the sutta of "just in the seen is only the seen, in the heard is only the heard, the sensed is only the sensed"—that meeting of experience begins to take us below the level of concept and toward meeting the direct changing nature of experience. This is a main encouragement in our mindfulness practice: to begin to be curious about the impermanent nature of experience. We can begin to become aware of this by looking deeply at what seems to be solid. Look at what seems to be stable, what seems to be permanent. You'll find that it's not. It may not show itself as impermanent quickly, but it will reveal itself to be impermanent.

We also take what is unreliable to be reliable as a source of happiness. We take sense pleasure—our minds basically work this way. We get something we like, it feels good. Not only does it feel good to get the thing that we want, it feels good to have the wanting go away. So there's this double hit of happiness in the split second moment that we get something. And our minds don't quite understand that this is just a fleeting moment of happiness. We glom onto it, we create the idea, a concept arises around it, and we believe that this is where I get my happiness. Maybe it stays for a little while, maybe. But mostly what happens is that we are holding on to an idea, and it's the idea that is giving us that happiness—because reality does not hang around for very long.

We believe in some ways that sense pleasure is as good as it gets. But sense pleasure is so unreliable, so

fleeting. Getting what we want, we get a moment of that, and it further conditions the idea that getting what I want is where I'll be happy. Our minds are really short-sighted, basically. We're designed to go for the quickest hit of pleasure. And then when that fades, we think: when was the last time I was happy? Well, when I got something that I wanted. So let me find something else that I want. And then I'll get that. And then I'll be happy again. And we're essentially in this cycle.

So this is greed at work. I talked about greed at the beginning. It's that leaning towards, that wanting. That wanting itself is the greed. That leaning towards is the greed. The delusion embedded in greed is that having the thing will make me happy. That's pure delusion—the belief that there is some reliable happiness to be had by getting that sense pleasure. Likewise with aversion; it's very similar.

We want to get rid of something unpleasant, something we don't like. The idea that separating myself from something unpleasant will make me happy—that is the delusion underlying aversion. The aversion itself is that wanting to separate, that pulling away. The delusion is the belief that forms its foundation. This is just useful information to know. Really useful to know. It's hard to take in, and yet we can start to see these patterns at work and recognize the unreliability of sense pleasure.

The Buddha gave us a simple teaching on this. He said, yes, getting what you want feels good—that's the gratification of sense pleasure. But notice how long it lasts. That simple teaching, noticing the impermanence of sense pleasure, begins to point to that underlying delusion. The belief that having the thing will make me happy is not a reliable way to move towards happiness.

So becoming aware: Where am I looking for happiness? Do I think that having that third dessert will make me happy? It's amazing to me sometimes when I look at this, really look in the moment. I mean, I know in my intellect that having chocolate is not going to make me ultimately happy. But in the moment of eating that chocolate—oh, does the mind believe it. Look at it. It's stunning how deluded our minds are, even when we know intellectually.

We begin to understand delusion by looking at these ways the mind does these things. We begin to move in the direction of non-delusion by understanding the delusion. So these various things I've pointed to: look at the views. What views are you holding? What beliefs are happening? What feels like it's permanent right now? How is a sense of self showing up? Get familiar with these perspectives that the Buddha pointed to as places of delusion. Start being curious.

Non-delusion is not something we can do. It's an insight. When we understand—when we understand—oh, the mind was clinging to that because it thought it was happiness, and it lets go. Insight is not something we can make happen, but we can incline our minds in the direction of curiosity for seeing delusion.

Another important piece is that sometimes we see through delusion. That experience of something falling away, a veil falling away, and it's so clear. I understand that clinging is suffering, and why would I ever

cling again? It just doesn't make any sense. It seems so clear. And then, twenty minutes later, it's not so clear. We're clinging again. And it's like, wait, what? Didn't I know this?

When that happens, don't second-guess that understanding. It's not as obvious as it looks when the insight is happening. If it were, we would just live there. We would understand that and be living in that. We have to meet these truths over and over again. It's a slow process of unwinding.

And yet one of the beauties of that is this: if you can trust those insights, trust that understanding of yeah, clinging is not helpful, clinging to something that's impermanent is not helpful—when we see that and feel that directly and know that as a direct experience—then when we are clinging to something, we can know. This is the deluded mind working. We can directly recognize. We've known the clarity, and we can see: yep, this is confusion, the mind is just confused right now. We don't have to beat ourselves up for it, but simply recognize: okay, delusion is here, and I know delusion is here.

I'm aware that delusion is working.

Let's just sit for a moment.

I'll leave you with a quote from Nisargadatta: "Do not try to understand. It's enough if you do not misunderstand."

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