Wisdom is Happening

Andrea Fella · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Andrea Fella · 59:50

It is so delightful to have this privilege to serve you, to sit here now just looking out and seeing your faces and feeling the collective momentum of practice that's in the room. The other night I explored the topic of delusion for a good part of the talk, and tonight I'd like to explore the other side—that quality of mind that we are cultivating here with the practice of Satipaṭṭhāna. The quality that dispels delusion. A quality that really does the work of letting go. And that is wisdom.

Whether you know it or not, whether you feel it or not, wisdom is growing in you. One of my teachers, Sayadaw U Tejaniya, says that the whole purpose of our practice is to cultivate this quality of wisdom, because it is wisdom that frees the mind. Sometimes we might feel like we do something that allows us to let go, but what we're exploring here are practices that support a perspective of mindfulness that creates the conditions for wisdom to blossom.

When I first started practicing with Sayadaw U Tejaniya, he used this word wisdom a lot. At one point he said to me, "Notice when wisdom is happening." And I thought, how do I do that? What does that even mean? Over the course of my time with him, I've developed an understanding through experience of what it means when wisdom is working. He would say, what does it mean for wisdom to be at work? This talk has really grown out of that exploration, and so I'd like to talk about wisdom in a very practical way tonight—to point to ways that you may already be experiencing this quality, seeing its growth, seeing its blossoming.

The word wisdom perhaps has some connotations in our language that may not necessarily connect with what it means in the sense of paññā, the Pali word usually translated as wisdom. We can have knowledge and wisdom about many things in our lives, but the wisdom of the Buddha, the wisdom that the Buddha was pointing to, the wisdom that frees our mind, is a particular kind of wisdom. It's related to dukkha. It's related to how we suffer, why we suffer. The understanding that we're cultivating here is the understanding around suffering.

This points to one of the great teachings from Joseph Goldstein. I love this one. He says we want to understand dukkha, we want wisdom in dukkha, about dukkha, without experiencing dukkha. And it doesn't work that way. So it's not a mistake in your practice if you're meeting dukkha. That's where wisdom grows.

When I first thought about this word wisdom, I thought of it as something really grand, big. I kind of thought, well, if I work and practice really hard, if I really pay attention to my experience, maybe someday I'll have that big bang wisdom. And then I'll be floating down the streets and people will know that she's

enlightened or something—some silly image like that. That's what wisdom was, some big bang kind of experience. And yet what we come to understand with this practice is that there's an incremental development of wisdom. We can begin to recognize this incremental development and take some confidence in that, recognizing, "Oh, this is wisdom." That's what Sayadaw pointed me to—noticing when there's wisdom in the mind.

There are some classic definitions of wisdom in the Pali canon. The most common, perhaps, or most cited definition of what it means to have wisdom is to understand the Four Noble Truths. This is not an intellectual understanding but a deep practice understanding—that understanding of the Four Noble Truths that frees the mind. Understanding suffering, understanding that suffering arises, understanding that it's possible for suffering to cease, and understanding that there's a path of practice leading to the cessation of suffering.

There are some other definitions of wisdom I'll mention as well, other aspects of the practice and kinds of wisdom that relate to this waking up and freedom. Embedded in the Four Noble Truths is an understanding that there are certain actions of mind, certain qualities of mind that will keep us caught in suffering, and certain qualities of mind that will begin to loosen the clinging and craving, loosen suffering. There's an understanding of which states—those states that are keeping us caught in suffering—are often called unwholesome, unskillful states, and those states that help to move us in the direction of freedom are wholesome, skillful states. The path of practice can also be understood as expressed in the Eightfold Path of Wise Effort.

Finding ways to let go, exploring letting go, abandoning the unwholesome states and exploring the cultivation of the wholesome states.

When we follow through on a mind that is filled with wholesome qualities, it leads us towards more and more freedom, more and more happiness. If we follow through on those states of mind that are connected to greed, aversion, and delusion—those unwholesome states of mind—then that will create the conditions for us to suffer more. This is a very simple understanding about what qualities of mind are helpful to cultivate and what qualities of mind are not so helpful to cultivate. This too is an expression of wisdom in the Buddhist teaching.

Connected to this is an understanding that acting on wholesome states will lead in a certain direction, while following through on unwholesome states will lead in another direction. This is an expression of the lawfulness of the way our experience unfolds. Anushka talked about this lawful quality to our experience, and coming into alignment with this lawfulness helps us to relax. When we're fighting that lawfulness, we struggle.

There are these kinds of what we can think of as almost intellectual definitions of wisdom that we can talk about. We can talk about cause and effect. We can talk about the conditioned nature of experience. We can talk about greed, aversion, and delusion, and how acting on those leads to suffering. We can then start

to explore this in our experience and start to find that it's not just a good idea, but that our practice, our experience, begins to bear out these teachings.

There's an understanding of wisdom as having multiple levels to it. What we could call the first level of wisdom is the level where we hear information, where we take in teachings of the Dharma. This is called *sutamayā paññā—suta* meaning hearing and *paññā* meaning wisdom. The wisdom connected with hearing the Dharma.

This is what we're doing here together—sharing the teachings, orienting the mind in the direction of noticing with mindfulness that experience is simply an arising in the present moment. The practices that we are exploring here, and all of the teaching that we're doing, but the simplicity of the practices already embeds a perspective that encourages us to move in the direction of wisdom. That simple practice of noticing in this moment what's present and knowing it as something that's present. A thought arising in the present moment. Knowing it as a thought arising in the present moment, as opposed to believing it.

We will believe our thoughts, we will follow through on thoughts, but there's a big difference between blindly following through on a thought because we take it to have a reality and understanding that a thought is arising in the present moment and then being able to have some discernment about whether it's a useful thought or an unuseful thought. Huge difference there.

That very simple practice around thoughts, around mind states, around bodily experience—right there, that practice includes a direction that heads us towards the cultivation of wisdom. Because we are curious about our minds, curious about what's going on in here, rather than simply blindly reacting to what's going on.

So there's this hearing the teachings, and then beginning to put them into practice. This is a second level of wisdom. It's called *cintāmayā paññā*—the wisdom related to or connected with reflection, or thinking about.

We hear the teachings. We take them in. This practice would never start—the likelihood that you ever would have discovered something in this direction without having heard something first is so small. And so the condition of your hearing the teaching already puts you on the path. That's a condition. Think back: how did you hear about this in the first place?

For me, it was somebody who sent me a book. I was suffering, and somebody said, "Hey, do you mind if I send you a book about something I've been finding really useful?" That was a condition that entered this mind stream and altered the course of my life. I'm forever grateful to that friend who sent me that book. It was just the right medicine at the right time.

So we hear the teachings. We take them in and start reflecting about them. Does this make sense?

Is this something to engage in? Because the invitation of these teachings is not simply to sit there and

learn all the lists and memorize all the different factors of the Eightfold Path and be able to give a Dharma talk on the twelve parts of dependent origination. That's not what this teaching points to. The teaching points to: come and see. Try it for yourself. Engage.

And so the first place of that engagement is in reflecting about what you've heard. Is this something that makes sense to me?

Sometimes, in my own experience when I got that book—people often ask, and the book that the person sent me was *Everyday Zen* by Joko Beck, my first real entry into the Dharma. I read the book, and a lot of it didn't make much sense. I was not interested in meditating. She talked a lot about meditating in that book, and I thought, "I don't know, my friend's gone off the deep end here." She talked about going on daylong retreats and meditating for a whole day. I was sure she was in a cult of some kind.

So I didn't really trust the meditation side. But fortunately, the book was also exploring and interested in looking at: well, why does your mind do what it does? That I was interested in, because I felt like I'd hit bottom in my life—so much reactivity, so much just being whipped around by my mind states. I would find myself frozen in front of my computer, unable to function. Really pretty strong states of mind that were uncontrollable.

And the one bit of wisdom that I pulled out of that book, which actually didn't make any sense to me at the time, was: try knowing that a mind state is. Knowing that anger is arising and being aware of what that feels like. Just be aware that this is happening. Know what that's like. I read that and thought, "What good is that going to do? Be aware of my anger—isn't that just going to make it worse?"

But in this case, I heard this teaching, and I had hit bottom. Nothing else I had tried had worked. So it was kind of like, okay, my friend says this works, this book says it's a good idea, I have no idea how it's going to work, but I'm willing to try. And even that little bit of taking in the information and saying, "Okay, I'll try this"—that's what set me on the path, that willingness to try.

Hearing the information and then starting to engage, starting to explore, actually beginning to practice with the teachings—that's the second kind of wisdom. We start to pick up the tools of the practice and apply them to our experience.

This cintāmayā paññā can be in this terrain of willingness to engage and just beginning to explore the practice. It can also serve us—all of us here having done quite a bit of practice—this wisdom of reflection can serve us a lot of times on our path. We can use Dharma reflection as a skillful means, as Dharma wisdom when we feel at times that we're struggling or caught or confused, and yet we have enough presence of mind to recognize that. When we're caught in the midst of something, we can sometimes bring in some wisdom, some of the classic forms of wisdom that can support us in this way, as a reflection, actually dropping it into the mind.

"This is impermanent"—when you're caught in a kind of storm, just reminding yourself: this is

impermanent. Or "this is unreliable." Or "this is nature." That's one of my favorite wisdom reflections to drop in, from Sayadaw U Tejaniya. He uses this one a lot. As he talked about this reflection—"Oh, it's all just nature"—what that began to point to was the understanding or the reflection that everything happening right now is just conditions tumbling on.

A tree grows because an acorn has fallen on the ground and the conditions have been right for that acorn—not eaten by a squirrel, not rotting out because it's gotten too much rain. Just right, just the conditions, just right. That acorn has the nature to become an oak tree.

But it won't necessarily become that oak tree unless other conditions are present. It needs to have soil and water and be protected from animals that want to eat the shoots—or just be lucky enough not to be eaten by an animal. So there, it's just conditions. It's conditions coming together for this tree to grow.

And whatever mind state is arising in this moment, whatever experience is arising in this moment—sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, states of mind—whatever is arising in this moment is conditioned. That being caught frozen by anger in front of my computer, that was conditioned. I had practiced anger so much in my life.

So the reflection "this is nature"—to me, it brings that whole understanding of almost like, *of course* this is what's happening. These are the conditions that are unfolding, the conditions that are ripening in this moment. And just reminding oneself that the conditions unfolding are not self. They may create a feeling of self in that moment, but in and of themselves, they are just unfolding. That reminder—"this is nature"—I used that reflection a lot when I was practicing in Burma. So helpful.

So we can bring in wisdom reflections. Sometimes we have our own understandings. In talking with all of you, I've seen that you've had many understandings developing. And sometimes if we can articulate our understanding to ourselves, just that simple recognition—"Oh, it's helpful to just notice this is what's arising right now. It's just this, just this"—if we can find our own way to articulate the wisdom that we have known.

I think I said the other day that delusion falls away sometimes. And when delusion falls away, wisdom is present. Then conditions change and delusion re-arises. Wisdom diminishes. This quality of wisdom is a conditioned phenomenon too. It's a conditioned mind state. It comes and goes.

When wisdom is present—and I'm going to talk in a few minutes about different ways we might experience that—this third kind of wisdom, bhavana maya pañña, the wisdom of insight, the wisdom of direct understanding. That wisdom comes and goes. But when it's not there, sometimes it's kind of amazing. It's like we see something so clearly, and it's just so obvious. How can I not see this? And when you're in that space of seeing, that wisdom is so obvious and so clear, the mind just cannot even fathom not understanding it. Because it's so obvious.

And yet, the nature of delusion is that it comes back, wisdom diminishes, and then it's like, "What was it?

What was it that I thought I knew?" And I guess maybe it wasn't so obvious after all.

So sometimes when wisdom falls away, one of the tricks, one of the things we have to encourage ourselves about, is to not doubt that wisdom was present. Not to doubt that we had that experience, but to understand these cycles of wisdom appearing and falling apart, delusion arising, delusion passing away. If we can understand this as cycles, then rather than feeling like we've done something wrong or made a mistake when wisdom goes away, we can draw on that wisdom through reflecting. "Oh, I understood. It was all conditioned. It was all just nature. Just things tumbling on." And as we're feeling ourselves caught in these conditions, we can remind ourselves, "Okay, that was an understanding. It's just conditioned."

Sometimes if we bring those thoughts in, those dharma understandings into our minds, it can create a little bit of space for the mind to be less reactive about that presence of delusion again, about that reactive mind state. So I encourage this use of wisdom consciously—consciously using wisdom to support a kind of relaxing with whatever is, whatever you might be struggling with.

So this third kind of wisdom, bhavana maya pañña, wisdom at work in the mind—this is when wisdom is arising and there's a direct experiential understanding of something. There are so many ways this happens. I'm just going to describe some that I've experienced. You may recognize some of these. And this is part of my hope—that you recognize these descriptions, some of them at least, and recognize that wisdom is already taking root, already growing.

I think one of the first kinds of wisdom to appear is

when we, through this curiosity, this practice of mindfulness—of just asking, what is this right now? What is the experience? What is the human experience of frustration arising? What is the human experience of wanting arising?

As we start to turn and meet that experience with mindfulness, one of the shifts we can see is a dropping of resistance to a state toward which we've had some reactivity. Frustration, for instance—we don't like frustration. We want it to go away. It doesn't feel good. Frustration is unpleasant vedana, and we tend not to like unpleasant vedana. So we resist it.

But as we turn toward it, we recognize, "Oh, there's frustration and resistance." We might start to see, "Oh, it's just frustration." And there's some space. A little bit of space, and it's kind of like, "Wow. It's not a problem. It's just frustration." That feeling of "this is just some state of mind"—that's wisdom at work. Wisdom actually allowing the release of the resistance, opening to "this is what's happening."

Or it might also be, "Oh, there's frustration and there's resistance, and—oh, that's what's happening. There's frustration and I don't like it. Oh, that's what's happening." Again, some space around it.

I sometimes liken this to being in a car that's going really fast. You're in the driver's seat, your foot on the gas pedal, speeding down the freeway. That kind of momentum is what our minds do when they're caught

in some state. And if we want to slow down, one of the most organic ways to do so—especially if we're on a freeway with other cars around us—isn't to slam on the brake. Someone would slam into us from behind. A safer way might be to simply take your foot off the gas pedal, put the car into neutral, and then steer, hopefully steering the car to a stop.

Sometimes wisdom functions in just this way—it puts the mind into neutral. Instead of keeping the foot on the gas pedal of frustration's momentum, where the gas pedal is all the thoughts about that frustration—"That person shouldn't have done that, and I'd better figure out how to tell them what to do and why they need to do it this way and not that way"—we can recognize it, step back, and know: "Ah, this experience here and now, this is frustration."

Taking the foot off the gas pedal doesn't mean that experience of frustration will just come to a stop—like taking your foot off the gas pedal in a moving car. But if you don't keep putting your foot back on the gas pedal, it will come to a stop. Just watching the momentum with this sense of "this is just"—the wisdom of "this is just"—can witness a pattern weaken, slowly fall apart, and maybe even end.

Another kind of wisdom we might experience is when we truly begin to recognize that something arising—a thought, perhaps—is just a thought happening in the present moment. Many of our thoughts, as Philip mentioned last night and this morning, relate to past and future.

The difference between recognizing a thought as just a thought is profound. A thought about the past—the past doesn't exist. All there is, is now. Our minds create the past by creating these thoughts and believing them. Our minds create the future by creating these thoughts and believing them. There's no more past. Now, there were conditions that led here, so certainly we're not living in an isolated moment. But the past doesn't exist anymore. It's gone. Those thoughts arising about the past are arising now. That's what's happening in the present moment—a thought of the past arising now. Or a thought of the future arising now.

So we see, we begin to see that what's going on—the only thing that's going on—is something that's happening now. This is kind of a mind-blowing version of reality. That is the truth. Wisdom helps us to see this.

And again, it helps us to then have a skillful relationship. Not to say that we're not supposed to think about the past and remember what happened, but that we recognize it's a thought happening now. That's the wisdom piece of it. When we recognize the experience as something happening now, there can be a more skillful relationship with it. There's some level of choice we have about how or whether to engage with that thought. So wisdom creates that space for us to know: this is just happening now.

And with that we also can start to see not only a thought happening now, but that a whole complex of stuff often arises based on something like a thought happening now—that creates whole patterns of suffering.

I had an example of this in my early days of practice, in my early months of practice. I don't think I was

doing much in the way of meditating, but when I first started practicing I was interested in exploring the patterns of my mind, and so I started doing that in daily life. I started watching anger come and go in daily life. That was my very first mindfulness practice. And I started being curious about states of mind that were pretty habitual. Loneliness was a really powerful one for me.

So I noticed at one point that loneliness was arising every night as I went to bed. And I just got curious about it, just noticing it—okay, loneliness, that's what's happening now. After some nights of that, I began to recognize, to my surprise, one night I noticed when I picked up my alarm clock to set it, that's when the loneliness started. I was like, what does that have to do with anything? I just kept noticing. This pattern continued for a few more nights.

And then one night, while I was setting the alarm clock, I had a memory of my ex-partner who had broken up with me. This was the source of this anger—this ex-partner had broken up with me. I had a memory of being together with my partner at Disneyland, looking up at a marquee that had a digital clock on it in Tomorrowland. So there was a connection. I could see a connection between what I was doing, the physical experience of setting the alarm clock, and the memory that arose about being in Disneyland with my partner. And then I saw that the loneliness was arising in dependence on that memory. "Oh, I'm going to be lonely forever, the rest of my life. I'm never going to get to do fun things like that again. Nobody's ever going to love me again." The loneliness was coming up based on that thought.

So this is what we start to see—and actually that was mind-blowing to me, just to see that. But what was even more amazing was the next night when I set the alarm clock. I of course remembered that thought. It had been clearly seen. But the loneliness didn't come up anymore. It was like seeing that the mind had constructed the loneliness out of a thought that arose. The mind just stopped doing that. I didn't have to do anything. I didn't have to say, "Oh, I'm not going to be lonely," or "I'm going to try to let go of loneliness." That was wisdom. That's wisdom that does that. Wisdom had seen that the mind was reacting to a thought, constructing something based on a thought, and then feeling bad about what had been constructed.

This kind of thing happens all over the place. And we can start to see it. When we can start to see a thought arising—we're walking down the hill, we see somebody, we see a thought about that person—we might see that thought and then realize we get all kinds of views and opinions and agendas and ideas about that person based on that thought. When we see that, we can recognize: wow, maybe we're thinking that that person is thinking something about us. And we see, wow, that's all just constructed in the mind. We have no idea what's going on in their mind.

So seeing that—a moment of a thought arising and how our mind constructs things based on just arisings—that too is wisdom. We see the way human minds work. It's awesome. And it's humbling.

Sometimes wisdom operates in a really startling way. When mindfulness is particularly clear, or there's a certain momentum of mindfulness, we're present for something and we get curious.

I had this happen at one point. I was feeling abandoned by my teachers between part one and part two of the three-month retreat. My first-half teachers left, much as they do here, and the second-half teachers were arriving. I felt completely abandoned by my teachers from the first part.

So I was feeling that abandonment and noticing it, and I'd been taught that you can hold yourself with compassion for these feelings. I was envisioning myself as a four-year-old because it felt like a four-year-old kind of abandoned energy. I was holding myself in my mind with this energy, and at some point this curiosity arose: What is this feeling of abandonment anyway? I turned to look at it—and it was gone. It had just vanished.

When I went to describe this to my new teacher who had arrived, I said, "I don't know how to investigate emotions because here's what happened. I was holding myself with compassion and feeling that abandonment, and then I got curious, and I couldn't find it. So I must not know how to investigate emotions."

And she said, "Does that feel like you don't know how to investigate emotions? Or was that just what happened?"

I said, "Well, that's what happened."

She said, "Trust your experience."

That was a great lesson for me. Trust your experience. That was wisdom—the kind of mind that gets curious. *What's this?* Some of you may have experienced that. *Wow, what's this?* And suddenly it's not even there to look at anymore. That's wisdom at work. Unwholesome states of mind, met with strong wisdom, can simply vanish.

And yet I want to say, it's not that you're doing anything wrong if when you turn to investigate something—turn to investigate abandonment—it doesn't just vanish. There are many, many times when that happens too. I'm just describing some of the ways this can be felt, can be experienced.

Another way that wisdom functions, that wisdom operates in our mind, is by being present such that unwholesome states don't arise at all. We've talked about paying attention to the presence and absence of our states of mind. In the fourth foundation of mindfulness in the Satipatthana Sutta, particularly in the exploration of the hindrances, it talks about noticing when the hindrances are not arising. So not only the absence—it says something like noticing the non-arising of the un-arisen state of ill will. Something like that. It's that quality of the state simply not arising. When wisdom is present, some of these unwholesome states don't arise, and we can begin to recognize the non-arising of these reactive states of mind.

So what are some ways that we can notice that? Sometimes the recognition of a reactive state not arising is more of an understanding than an actual experience. Keep that in mind here.

Sometimes we understand that a reactive state is not arising because we see conditions happening in our

life—and some of you have talked about this. Conditions happen on retreat where, in a previous retreat or if this thing were happening in our daily lives, we know that we would be reactive. But it's not happening. It's that space of, *Wow, this feels different. I know that if somebody had jumped in front of me in the lunch line last week, that would have been a problem. There would have been a lot of aversion. But now it's just—seeing is happening.*

That too is wisdom at work. The wisdom is present, supporting the non-arising of reactivity.

defilement of that reactive state.

Sometimes we can also see more directly a kind of momentum towards a familiar habitual pattern, and then watch that momentum simply wither.

An example might make this easier to describe. This practice of watching my anger, noticing it early in my practice—I was spending a lot of time simply noticing the presence of anger, noticing when it arose. One day I was doing something quite ordinary. I wasn't even particularly trying to be mindful. I was in my kitchen preparing a meal, cutting an apple. At some point while cutting the apple, I noticed a thought about my ex-partner—being with my ex-partner at a fruit stand.

Again, noticing this connection, seeing the conditioned nature of experience, seeing that this thought was dependent on the fact that I was seeing an apple while cutting it. And when that thought arose in the mind, there was this urge to jump on it, to think more thoughts, to get angry. It felt like momentum, this force of habit—whenever my ex-partner had arisen in my mind, anger had been so close on the heels. There was so much connection that it was like a force of habit.

But the mind was pretty present, and it saw this momentum. In that moment there was a recognition: anger's not present, but there's this urge to get angry.

That itself was a kind of mind-blowing moment. Why on earth would the mind *want* to get angry? Because having understood, in the previous several months of noticing anger, wisdom had begun to recognize that anger doesn't feel very good. Anger is suffering.

So in that moment when the mind saw the momentum to get angry, and knew very deeply from all those months of paying attention to anger and feeling the suffering of it, the mind recognized: that way lies suffering. And it just let go. It was like reaching for a pot, feeling the heat, and withdrawing because you know it's dangerous. The body just knows. The body does that automatically. It was that kind of letting go. That way lies suffering. Don't go there.

Again, it wasn't something I had to try—"Oh, let go of that thought." It was wisdom itself that said, "That way lies suffering. Don't go there."

That was a very direct recognition of the non-arising of anger. That moment I just described—that was the moment I got hooked on this practice. That was a faith moment. Actually, I kind of sank to my knees. The

mind can see that happen and let go, not be whipped around by that pain of anger? This practice can do that?

I'm in. I'm in. I'm in.

So again, that's wisdom. That's wisdom at work. Wisdom saw the anger not arise, very directly saw the anger not arise.

Wisdom can operate in these obvious ways—seeing something and watching it fall apart, or seeing and feeling space around it. And sometimes wisdom operates more slowly, in the background.

I've had experiences of simply working with a pattern. Again, anger—I worked with anger for years at the beginning of my practice. Years of noticing it. And for a period of time, I recognized that trying to bring mindfulness to that anger was actually sinking me into the quicksand of the anger. At some point I recognized: this isn't helpful, trying to be mindful of the anger. So I see you, anger, and I bow to you, but I'm going to put my attention somewhere else. You can stay in the room with me, but I'm going to put my attention on my feet.

I'm going to notice my hands, I'm going to notice here—just something to step aside from the anger.

I did that for a couple of years with this particular pattern, this anger toward a particular person. Very strong anger. And over those couple of years, that pattern just grew weaker and weaker and weaker. Every now and then the anger would come, and I'd notice it: "Oh, I see that anger." Okay, just set it aside. I did that over and over again for a long time.

And then one day I thought, "Wow, I haven't experienced that in a long time. I wonder what happened to it." And I couldn't find it. Even reflecting on the person I had been so angry with—it was gone. I could not even conjure it up anymore. It disappeared when I wasn't looking.

This too is a way that wisdom can work—this very gradual, almost in-the-background kind of wisdom. We don't have to bore into all of our patterns, figure them out, pull them apart. Sometimes we can just let them be, and wisdom can do its work that way too.

So these moments, these small moments of seeing, of wisdom—as we recognize them, they're a pointer for us. They're a pointer to the possibility of freedom. They're heading us in that direction. So let yourself acknowledge them. Acknowledge these patterns, these little moments of freedom. Appreciate them.

As we see this, it can begin to inspire a sense of confidence that yes, there is value to this practice. Recognizing the value of the practice is probably the single most important quality that will help you stay on the path. It can serve you when it feels like nothing's happening. Remembering, reflecting back—how was it five years ago, and how is it now? Wisdom has changed things.

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