Three Jobs Of The Yogi

Carol Wilson · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Carol Wilson · 1:01:38

So tonight what I want to talk about is, hopefully, a way of simplifying things, which isn't really the way my mind works. But we give so many different instructions. So I'm borrowing from one of the ways that one of my teachers, Sayadaw Utejania, talks. I find he has a very pithy and, to me, amusing way of putting things. And so what I want to talk about, borrowing from him, is the three jobs of a yogi. That's you, and me, and all of us—the three jobs—which is hopefully to simplify.

So of course, all beginning by recognizing, which hopefully we do, that meditation is the work of the mind. The three jobs are the work of the mind.

The first one, the first job, our job, is to begin not only our meditation but our whole spiritual practice with some form of right view. Now, right view in the way that the Buddha speaks about it in the suttas is a vast topic, encompassing so many different things. And just for this beginning way of our first job, I want to talk about it very simply, not complex—all the ways you have to understand what's wholesome action and what's unwholesome action. You could go on and on, and we probably will over the next few weeks because it's fascinating.

But this beginning aspect, our first job, is simply having some sense of knowing why we're doing this. That there's a possibility for less suffering, if you just want to put it that simply. To have some basic understanding that what we're doing is in a good cause, that there's something behind it. We're not just kind of sitting and walking and following the breath and being aware. You know how sometimes you're just doing it without really any sense of why. So right view is just knowing that it's possible to come to a different way of relating to our life. It's possible to have—not that we know it yet for ourselves—but this sense of a direction or the sense of a potential to live with more peace and ease. That's my language. You find your own.

That's why, for myself, I think I've always loved and why I spend my life sharing the teachings from the Buddha. I mean, there's so many different ways in this world to practice for awakening, to understand our life better. But I've always loved the way the Buddha describes things. His teachings are complex, but at the core, at the heart, I feel—this is me now—he's just taking us into the core of life, the core of experience.

What he says is that he started his own journey by just seeing how this life is. Why do we suffer? This life with all its beauty and all its marvels and so much sorrow. Why is there this suffering? Why do beings, starting with himself, suffer? Why are we unhappy? Why are we discontented? And then his whole trajectory of practice was not sitting and railing against it or trying to think about it, but setting out in an exploration of his own experience, his own mind and body, to really look into, to really explore and see.

Does it have to be this way, that there's so much discontent, dis-ease, suffering? Is there another way? Is there a cause? Is there an end of it? What is it?

So you can hear the whole Buddha's teaching in that. And I'm staying simple tonight with that sense of not just going out and following the stream or going by what was taught before, but looking for himself.

And so what he offers—all the Buddha's teachings—are a path: what he discovered, what he shared, what he can offer us. But in the end, as I think someone has already said on this retreat, one of the core ways he teaches is the word in Pali, *ehipassiko*, which is lovely. It means "come and see for yourself." You too, come and see. He's saying, "I can see this. I know for myself that it's possible to awaken from this dream of confusion and delusion. This is how I did it. This is what I understand. Come and see for yourself." It's an invitation to explore, an invitation to really make good use of this precious life. And as he said in many different places, "If it were not possible, I would not ask you to do so."

So that's what I've always loved, what I continue to love—this invitation. Because it's necessary that we look and see for ourselves at this very salient point of life.

And the most essential thing, again, that I really love is that when, as far as we can tell from reading, when the Buddha awakened and claimed his full awakening, he did not awaken into a different world. He awoke into the same body, the same physical conditions. People didn't start suddenly behaving better. There were still wars, there were still famines, there was still stupidity, there was still all the stuff that we experience.

And this was like a "duh" moment for me, somewhere way, way into my practice, where I thought, "Oh, the Buddha's life after he awakened still had all this stuff happening." It wasn't like floating on a cloud somewhere of everything lovely.

So what was different?

And of course, as we hopefully have some trust and faith in—or you wouldn't still be sitting here, I'm pretty sure—is the sense that the seed, the core of suffering, and the seed, the core of freedom from suffering, of peace, of ease, arises in the mind and the heart in any particular moment. And so this freedom that he is inviting us to come and explore is not in having the world change, but in our understanding of what's happening changes, so that the way our heart and mind relates to experience is completely different. And this is really the freedom he talks about.

So the first aspect of right view I want to say as our job is this: just having some sense—of course not complete, but some sense—of why we're doing it. And this gives us some energy, some motivation to get us on the path, to keep us on the path.

Let me read you this little story I just read that I enjoyed. It sort of fits in. Lama Surya Das spent a lot of time with Nyoshul Khen Rinpoche, the great Tibetan Dzogchen master—Joseph mentioned him the other

night. So Surya Das tells this story of being in France. Khenpo was in France, and he was an older man at this time, having lived all his life in Tibet and India. He was traveling in France, and at some point he ended up at a beach along the French coast. He'd never been at a beach—they don't have beaches in Tibet—or seen how Westerners behave on a beach.

So he came back and he was describing his trip. But then all of a sudden he started talking about the beach, how they'd gone to the edge of the ocean. At first he said, "Wow, it's so big!" Can you imagine never having seen the ocean? It's huge. And then he described what he had seen. He said, "There were these people there, and instead of sitting and meditating or doing yoga, these people were just lying there, almost naked, doing nothing. And when they were tired of lying there, instead of doing something, they just turned over. Then they lay there again for another few hours."

Khenpo was truly, genuinely perplexed. It was sort of like *Third Rock from the Sun*, that TV show about aliens coming to Earth. He said, "Why were they doing that?" He asked over and over. He couldn't understand it. He had so much compassion for them. How could they waste their precious human existence? This life that is so short, so tenuous, so precious, so valuable, so necessary. A life to be used impeccably and usefully for our own welfare and the benefit of all—not just to lounge around all day in the hot sun like a big sleeping lizard.

He was impassioned now. "I just wanted to go wake them up." And he had noticed a big white chair, probably the lifeguard's chair. He said, "But there were two young people sitting there, so I couldn't go up. But I wanted to badly, because I wanted to climb up there and announce to everybody that it was time to wake up."

So in our own way, that's a sense of right view—something. It's time to wake up. And the Buddha's having followed a path and saying, "Yes, it's possible" is really helpful to keep going.

The second aspect of right view—and I just want to talk a little about it because this is again vast—is another reason I love "right view" actually as a translation of *sammā diṭṭhi*, as a literal translation of viewing rightly, or recognizing accurately, accurate perception. What actually serves as the mode, the catalyst, of insight—of freeing insight, the insight that even just for a moment releases the habit of the mind and heart of clinging or confusion or aversion, just in a moment—it's not like some willpower: "Now I will stop this." It's a sudden shift of perception where we recognize things as they are accurately. And when we recognize accurately, the response is appropriate.

And this, again, is a vast topic. But recognizing accurately—seeing that one way you can say that everything is natural. I think Guy, or someone, said this the other night: that basically everything's a process.

Causes and conditions lead to a lawful effect. We're not going to see all of the causes and conditions and all of the effects, but there's a lawfulness. It isn't random. For example, if you plant a mango seed, we

know we're not going to get an apple tree. It's not a random thing. Or the so-called law of gravity—that's what I mean. It's not like if we wish hard enough, if I throw this up, it won't fall back down again. We'd say, well, that's stupid, right?

Well, the way things work—cause and effect in our mind and body—is just the same. But until we see this, we kind of just keep wishing it would be different. "I just wish that I didn't have these unpleasant habits of mind. I wish I wasn't sixty-one years old." That will change, but not in the direction I wish. And that will also be natural cause and effect. But it's not personal.

So just in a nutshell, when we recognize accurately that everything is causes and conditions, there's a word for it: *yathā bhūta*—recognizing things as they have come to be in this moment. It's a phrase often used in the suttas, sometimes translated as "things as they are," but more accurate is "things as they have come to be." You get a sense of how that's process-oriented.

So in this moment, however it is for you sitting there, is how things have come to be in this moment—as this momentary result of infinite past causes and conditions that you actually couldn't separate. If you start trying to list all the causes and conditions for your being sitting here right now, well, it goes back to your birth and your parents and the universe and the food and the farmers and the weather. You can't separate anything out. Just in this moment, things are as they have come to be. *Yathā bhūta*. This moment couldn't be different. How could it? It is as it is. Next moment will be different—the causes and conditions change again.

Right view on this aspect of recognizing things as they are, as they have come to be in this moment—it's a huge shift. It's the seed of insight. It's not so much about having some amazing experience and living in some other realm of reality. It's like waking up to what's actually going on now.

I'm simplifying, okay? Just know I'm simplifying. But the reason the seeds of suffering and confusion—of clinging, of grasping, of resistance, of delusion—keep arising in our mind is that we don't recognize what's happening in the moment just as it is. And then our response isn't really aligned with reality.

I'll give some examples as I go along, but as you know, take clinging. Clinging to something that's already changed. Why does it not work? When we see it, it's so obvious that we don't have to groan and grunt and give up clinging to that thing. The clinging doesn't arise anymore because it so obviously doesn't make sense. We say, do you cling to the sunset as the sun's going down? "Oh please, sun, don't go down." Maybe if something really bad is going to happen when the sun goes down. But you know what I mean? We don't. It doesn't make sense.

So in this way, the sense of ease, of freedom of heart and mind, is truly natural and normal. It's not like some amazing thing we have to create through willpower. It's the natural effect of the cause of right view, of accurate recognition.

And so this shift that hopefully our formal practice helps us with is this shift from putting so much of our

attention, so much of our looking to experience and objects for meaning and fulfillment, for the source of suffering and for the ending of suffering—change the object, change the experience. Our shift here, our second job, is that of simple awareness of what's happening now. And I'll talk more about that. So the second job is *sati*.

awareness, mindfulness, interest in how this mind is working in the moment, rather than how can I manipulate and fix what's going on so everything's a little bit better. But that's our habit.

So another aspect of this, another way of describing this right view, what helps interest in the process arise, is just starting to see, just for a moment, how maybe our strategies haven't quite been working. We know it on one level, or you wouldn't be here. Because this is, as someone said, no one's idea of a vacation—maybe some people's, but not most people's idea of a vacation. So you're here for some reason.

This is from Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche. He talks about three attitudes of practice, the first one being renunciation, but he means it in a different way. Renunciation, kind of the root of all the subsequent stages of the path—he's using it to imply the strong wish, the strong motivation to free oneself, not only from life's immediate sorrows, but from the seemingly unending sufferings of samsara. Samsara being that seemingly unending cycle of conditioned existence. There's this cycle of wanting and needing and getting and wanting and needing and becoming.

When we start to just see that, with that comes a heartfelt weariness, a heartfelt disillusionment, disenchantment with our endless quest for gratification, for approval, for profit, for status. It's not like we're saying, "Oh, these things are bad, and I'm bad for wanting them." It's not going from one extreme to the other, but seeing through the process itself.

And this doesn't have to be some incredibly esoteric experience. I'll give you an example that was another "duh" experience for me recently. It's a little embarrassing, but I think it's a good example. Samsara, just this endless wanting—get it a little bit better, a little bit better. There's some Tibetan teacher, I think it's Trungpa, I'm not sure who, defining samsara as "the urge to correct." I could really relate to that.

So anyway, it doesn't have to be esoteric. I noticed this: I happen to be, I don't know why, a tennis fan, a real fan of professional tennis. I don't know why because I'm so non-sports oriented, but I really love following professional tennis. I just enjoy watching the people play, I follow the tournaments, and of course, if you do that, you end up having particular players that you root for. Mine's Federer—someone who wins a lot, me and ten million other people.

But when I'm watching a tournament and he's playing, it's so much suffering for me. I'm so stressed. Sometimes when I can see he's making a lot of unforced errors, he's not getting in his first serves, I can see this is not going in a good direction—sometimes I have to stop and go take a walk. Sometimes I can't even watch and I'll get Joseph to record it on his TV. And then I check who won. I know you shouldn't do this. And then if he won, I'll go watch it. Other guys I can watch and just really appreciate, even if I have a

slight preference. And it's just wanting. I mean, it's all made up. I don't know this guy from anybody. And I probably wouldn't like him. And why do I care? What's happening? They're hitting the ball back and forth, making a million dollars whether they win or lose.

But anyway, I think I'm enjoying it. That's the point—no one's making me do this. So this summer, this was the "duh" moment. This has been going on for a few years, this is not new, but this summer—

So it was Wimbledon, which if you don't follow tennis, that's one of the biggest tournaments, one of the most prestigious. Roger had been number one for many years, but he hadn't held that position for a while, and he hadn't won a major in a couple of years. He's thirty, now thirty-one, so everyone was writing the death sentence.

Anyway, he's playing Wimbledon, and again, the whole thing—so tense. And he won it, which was amazing. He won Wimbledon. He set a new record for the most tournaments ever won. He got back to being number one, which no one ever thought he could do.

So long story short, in terms of that world, in terms of my wanting it, that's the best that could possibly happen. It couldn't be any better.

How long does one stay happy from that? A day? Two days? Then you've got to start worrying about the Olympics. Well, they're over—he didn't win that. Then you've got to start worrying about the US Open, which just finished. And I'm even seeing, okay, he got to the quarters. First I'm disappointed. And then it's like, well, thank god. I don't have to worry. The next three days I can just relax and watch the tennis and not suffer.

Now, when I say it like that, it's obviously really stupid that you get so caught up. And the samsaric part is that without really looking, that passes for enjoyment, that passes for excitement, that passes for something that's really worth doing with one's time. And I'm only talking about me—I'm not talking about the tennis players or anyone else.

When I start to see how that is, it's such a perfect example of samsara. There's the lure of the next thing, the next thing. This is good; the next will be better. This isn't good enough—never mind, there's another chance. This was great, this was fantastic. Oh, now it's over. So we've got to look to the next. Always looking out, always looking next, never just really present and content with what is—not for more than a few moments. This is samsara.

It's not a matter of saying it's good or bad. What makes the shift is mindfulness. My habit kicked in a little late, but my habit of just paying attention to what's going on in my mind—I mean, it wasn't so subtle, but actually really paying attention: I'm really not enjoying this very much.

So it's not saying tennis is bad or good, or watching is bad or good, or I should stop, or anything like that. Just the simple awareness of what's actually going on. Wisdom reveals itself. Wisdom comes just from the

awareness.

So I'm maybe watching a little less. Okay, not much. A little less. I'm noticing when I'm not enjoying and just turning it off or not following—not because I should or shouldn't, but because when we really see what's happening, the appropriate response that leads to ease and freedom arises.

That can be applied anywhere. So this is our second job: simple awareness of what's happening now.

Of course, we've been talking about this the whole time—simple and easy, and yet not, right? Just simple awareness of what's happening now. So why do we lose it so much?

I've been talking for about twenty minutes now. Have you been aware of hearing? I mean, you're hearing—you know you're hearing—but have you been aware of the hearing process? Probably not. But probably as soon as I said it, right? It didn't take a lot of effort, did it? "Oh yeah, right—hearing." Are you aware of seeing? You've been seeing. Most of you have your eyes open. When I said "see"—oh yeah, seeing, right? It's not rocket science, but we just forget over and over and over.

One of the really simple reasons why we forget is the ordinariness—just the ongoing repetition, which is another aspect of samsara, of our experience. You're sitting here seeing, seeing, seeing, seeing—every second that your eyes are open. I'm not saying you need to catch it every second, but it's happening over and over. Hearing is happening over and over and over. Sensations in your body. Different thoughts coming and going, or moods, when you're sitting and walking and doing walking meditation.

Why do you sometimes find walking meditation so boring? Oh, another step, another sensation. Lifting, pressure, tingling, burning. Lifting, pressure, tingling, burning. Lifting, pressure, tingling—please, God, stop. And then we just zone out.

And so it's not even in formal practice, but just in our life going through it. It isn't hard, but we just—through the mundanity, the ordinariness—we somehow stop paying attention, waiting for something worth paying attention to. Have you noticed that at all? We're looking for something that's more interesting, that's more worth our time here, that offers the potential of some insight. Not just seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching—but something juicy.

But this is it, folks. What is life? What is it we experience? I mean, someone said this over and over—the six things, right? The six sense doors, the six sense objects, consciousness coming together. All that's happening: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, sensing in the body, and mental experience. We can give all kinds of different meanings and labels and interpretations, which is mental experience. But that's all that's happening, over and over. And so much of it seems so ordinary that the habit of this interest quality that comes with mindfulness, with awareness, tends to drop out.

Again, it's kind of like back to the tennis—that's how samsara works. It has to be worth paying attention to, so the interest, the worth, we place in the experience, in the object. And the shift of refuge, the real

radical shift that this second job of ours of mindfulness brings up, is this shift to just the interest in that moment of awareness—the mind itself. The aliveness, the interest, the curiosity, the sense of totality of life—it's not about the experience being better.

Because just like I said, sometimes in walking you're so bored. Other times in walking, it's just amazing, right? Is your walking better then? Just we're present. Not "we," but there's that mindfulness, that interest, that aliveness, that the mind isn't fragmented. It's not waiting, trying to correct, needing something.

This sense of simplicity of awareness—that's our second yogi job. Just simple mindfulness. Not to make things better or different, but to recognize accurately what's already happening right now. And not even to recognize—that's already a doing. The only way of recognizing accurately is by this moment, just pure, simple awareness. It's like this right now. Nothing's too mundane. Nothing's too ordinary.

Dōgen, the great Japanese Zen master, said one time, "If you cannot discover the truth right where you are, where do you expect to find it?" The mundane, the ordinary—this is where the most profound aspects of reality are revealed, because this is it. There is nowhere else. Like I said, the Buddha awoke into this world.

There's another aspect that really helps to keep mindfulness complicated. Well, not mindfulness itself, but how we get so sidetracked, how it seems to move from the simplicity I just described. "Just be with what is." And we all go, "Yeah, right. How come we can't do it?" Besides the habit of checking out when it's not interesting enough, there's another complication we've talked about a lot and will again.

Another way of describing experience is that in every moment there's an object arising and a mind, an awareness of it. This is a simple way of describing it—again, it's the way the teachings often speak. In any moment of mindfulness, we might say: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, mental experience—some object arising. And with awareness, there's the knowing of it. These happen together, like two sides of the same experience, but with different functions. You could say anything that can be known is an object—smelling, hearing, tasting, thinking, unpleasant experience, whatever. And the mind, the consciousness, that recognition and awareness, the factor of mindfulness, knows: "Oh, that's just what's happening." It comes together.

Again, our tendency is to always be looking toward what's happening, the object, and assessing: Is it good? Is it bad? Is it this? Is it that? What does it mean about me? Endless stuff. That keeps us going in samsara forever. What we're doing with mindfulness, with our practice, is expanding—I don't want to say turning around, but expanding—the awareness to also recognize and be interested in the process in the mind.

Here's how we get confused, what obstructs accurate recognition. In a moment of what we think is mindfulness, or in a moment of knowing—say there's a sound and the knowing of sound, hearing, very simple—when in that moment of conscious knowing the awareness is colored by wanting something, by dislike, fear, aversion, dosa, or by confusion, delusion, and we don't recognize it, there's not an awareness

of those, it's like that distorts our perception, our assessment. It can distort the whole way we experience things, and we don't see that's what's happening. That's what keeps us bound. It arises and passes, arises and passes. But this is such a deep habit, just habits of mind.

A sound—all day long, the six sense experiences arising—say a sound arises. Over and over and over, just with habit without awareness, as you know, it might be felt in the mind as pleasant, unpleasant, or neither one. We're not labeling it that. We're not even aware of it; it just has that kind of subtle resonance in the mind. And it doesn't have to be the same for everyone. Say some of the loud sudden sounds outside with the guys working—for one person they might not notice it much at all, it's just kind of neither pleasant nor unpleasant. For someone else it's really jarring, and the mind just has this registering of it as unpleasant. Just the habit.

And as you know how fast our minds are working—so fast—it goes into a liking or a disliking, it goes into a thought about it, an assessment about it, and what does it mean about me, about them, or what can we do about it, or whatever. I don't have to tell you how far and fast that stuff goes. If mindfulness just starts to notice those thoughts, the pleasant, the unpleasant, the aversion—fine. Those are simply the next arising objects. Then it's not a problem. We may not like it, and then we're back into not liking. When we're not recognizing it, that's what we call identified.

So the habit—all day long: I like this, I don't like this. What does this mean? How can I fix it? How can I get something different? No wonder we're exhausted. This is how our lives are lived, not just here. When we're not practicing with awareness, we don't even notice that's how our lives are lived. It's almost like that way of reacting and describing and defining things—that almost becomes our refuge. You know what I mean? When something really nice happens, the natural thing is to want more.

When there's some pain, some discomfort in the body, the natural thing is to want to get the hell out of here. And we try to say, no, why don't you stay and look at it? The response comes, why should I stay and look at it if I can move? That doesn't make any sense at all. And on that level, it doesn't. But we never really learn what's going on.

So that becomes our refuge. We cannot recognize accurately because we're overlooking. We're so focused on the object and how to fix it and what does it mean about me that we're overlooking how the mind is working. The fact that the seed of the suffering, the discontent, isn't about that sound being too rough or at the wrong time, or that I'm too sensitive, or whatever. It's the reactivity in the mind—unrecognized, identified with, and persistent. This is our habit.

And these states—greed, confusion, aversion, delusion, called the *kilesas* or torments of mind—I would say they're louder. They're more obnoxious, you could say, than the wholesome states of mind, such as mindfulness, such as interest, such as faith, such as calm, such as *mettā*. Although any of these can be strong and beautiful, and we really can recognize them as well. It's not only torments arising in the mind. But the *kilesas* make a big fuss. They get our attention. And our habit is to really believe the story they're

telling, which is why our habit of mindfulness gets derailed. But it's also why mindfulness is so powerful.

Like with my tennis story, when I started with awareness, it was no big deal—no "now I'm going to be aware." It was just kind of sitting there watching. And instead of just being so focused on the game, I was noticing what was going on in my mind and just noticing it with no assumption of what should happen. And again, it was not subtle. It was like, whoa, this is really actually unpleasant. This is suffering. This is stress. And then just starting to observe the whole process. Not saying it should stop or it's bad, but getting interested. Okay, this is stress. What keeps it going? If the thought comes up in my mind, "Oh, I want this to happen," the stress goes up. If it doesn't matter, if whatever happens happens, the stress goes down. I mean, not just saying it and pretending, but really seeing—okay, I can be with things as they are.

Just that exploring, it's a shift of refuge. It's much more radical. And what helps us to explore is, again, the aspect of right view—realizing none of this is personal. It's just nature. Just like if I throw this up, it's going to come back down. And it'll probably make a sound. It's just nature. And wanting it to be otherwise doesn't change that. And blaming myself for it doesn't change that. Just exploring—steady, steady, steady—seeing.

So what we do and continue to do here, and I'll talk more about this or one of us will later, I can only mention it now, is to explore, to get really interested in the nature of wanting or greed when it's arising. Not hating it. Somehow we think that's better. "There's so much craving in my mind—that just shows what a bad person I am, what a bad meditator, how hopeless." As if somehow substituting hatred for greed is good. Yeah, we believe that. "Oh yeah, now I'm doing good. I'm beating myself up. I'm seeing everything I'm doing wrong, so I'm on the right track." And you see, we believe it.

Or sometimes when it's just interested. You see, sometimes you start to see a lot of wanting coming up. And people will come and say, "Oh, I just see so much wanting." And I'll say, "Great." Because it's coming up. There's some reason the Buddha picked craving as the second noble truth, as the cause of suffering. I don't think he just pulled it out of the air. And I don't think it's because it only happens once in a while in really bad people. I think it's pretty much a really subtle and ongoing, easily arising aspect of experience. So great. Mindfulness doesn't judge. Mindfulness gets interested in exploring it.

So when we see wanting come up, don't believe that it's what obstructs clear seeing. Don't believe me. Explore and see what happens.

I'm just going to give a couple of simple examples. You're walking in walking meditation, and the bell rings for lunch. You're still walking to lunch—what's the quality in the mind, especially if you're hungry? Is the quality in the mind any different? It's not going to always be, but sometimes it is. Explore and see, especially if it smelled good before. Just that kind of narrowing of our field. Before, just being present, walking, whatever's arising, arising. If there's some mindfulness, just being with what is. And suddenly, "Ah, got to get there." Or you want to get to the sitting. Or you want to get to your room. Or you want to get to bed. For me on retreat, that's a big one. Please, let me get to bed.

But noticing. It's not a good or bad about the thing wanted, but what's the quality in the mind? How it goes from just being at ease and relaxed to narrow, restricted, me and other. The Buddha said that wanting and aversion and delusion are makers of measurement in the mind. They limit. They constrict and make the sense of me and other—something needed with wanting, or something that must go away with unpleasant, a sense of problem. Without that, it's just what is. Explore and see, that's all.

And when there is wanting—again, look and see if this is true for you—and we're not recognizing it, in the beginning it may be a little bit in retrospect. But then you can kind of see it happening as it's happening. Notice how, especially if it's a strong wanting—maybe you're having a strong, pleasant fantasy about what's going to happen in the future, or your next vacation, or how great your next sitting is going to be, or whatever. It doesn't matter. You're really in it. There's a little modicum of mindfulness, awareness that at least you sort of know there's a fantasy happening. You kind of vaguely know it's pleasant. Every once in a while you can pull out, but then boom, back in.

Exploring that pleasant, explore how the story of it is, "This is going to be so wonderful, so amazing." I used to plan dinner parties, or you're planning a vacation, and very conveniently, all the kind of difficult, grunt stuff that has to go on—that isn't part of the fantasy, is it? It's going to be amazing. "I'm going to have this dinner party and have this food." You forget about the shopping and the cooking and the food burns and the people can't come and you get nervous and it's so much work and you have a headache. None of that stuff. It's just going to be fantastic, because wanting just shows us how wonderful something is. So we don't see the wanted object accurately. And anything else that's kind of in the way—that's what everything else is. It's in the way. So we're also not recognizing that accurately. It skews our perception. Things as they have come to be—accurate recognition is impossible.

Same with aversion. Same with when an unpleasant, uncomfortable experience arises.

And right away, it seems unnatural. Let's get rid of it. And as we know, it can lead to annoyance, blame—the whole story can unfold. It can go on for weeks. It can run our lives sometimes.

But here, just explore. First, it's more obvious, usually, that aversion, dislike, fear, unpleasant experience—it's more obvious that it's unpleasant. I have friends who are self-identified so-called "greed types," meaning that's kind of the first movement of mind for them, seeing the pleasant and moving toward it, and they try to pretend that's not really suffering. But on the aversive side, you can't really pretend. Occasionally, you can have some good righteous anger, and that feels good. But basically, you can feel the burning. And anyone else around is quite happy to tell you, "Yes, this is bad, and you're suffering."

But explore it for yourself and see: does it obstruct clear seeing? How is it suffering? How does aversion and dislike work? Not just saying it's bad—explore it. See the nature of it. It's fascinating.

And it is personal. We're making it personal. Then right away, it's really hard. As soon as it's there: "Oh, I'm so bad. I shouldn't be like this." And we're sucked into the story. That's just story too. Pull out and

recognize, "Oh yeah, that's just aversion." Aversion is coloring the consciousness. It's coloring the perception. And at that moment, any thought that comes up is going to be seen through the filter of aversion.

This is the reason why, in terms of practice, if you're in a real doubting or self-aversive phase—have you ever experienced that?—and then you're trying to remember all the different techniques and skillful means. You're thinking, "Well, I'm too sleepy, or I'm too dull, or I'm too tight, or I'm too loose, or there's not enough breath, or there's too much breath," or whatever you're choosing. And you're trying to think, "What can I do to fix it?" But you're not quite saying that. You're saying, "Hmm, I'm a little bit off. How do I fix it?" Meanwhile, the coloring in the mind is: "I'm worthless, no good. This stinks. I stink. This is wrong. How can I fix it?"

And any fixing thought that arises at that moment, when you're not recognizing that aversion is coloring perception—any fixing thought is going to be colored by aversion. Completely unreliable. Completely. "Oh, I should take a walk. That'll be it." Then you realize, "Oh, I should just practice harder." That's usually the way it goes. "I'll just stay with the breath until..." And we somehow miss the aversion. Why doesn't that work? We don't see it. Explore, explore.

And the third aspect: delusion. Of course, both of those are delusions. One way delusion shows is just: I don't know what's happening. That's the obvious one. We don't have to take that so personally.

The other way—and this is one of the ways Sayadaw U Tejaniya talks about it—one of the ways delusion shows up is in making assumptions and believing those assumptions as descriptions, as accurate descriptions of what's going on. We don't even recognize we're doing this.

So he gives an example, again, a simple example of someone you've just met. And here, you can kind of notice this with people you've seen but don't really know. Our mind makes up all kinds of stuff about them, assumptions, which sometimes we know we're making up, and sometimes we don't. You think, "Oh, that poor person. They're just such a sad person. I really feel so much compassion." You have no clue. Or you pass someone on the street and go, "Wow, he's an angry person. I'm glad I don't have to have anything to do with him." Or you see someone and think, "Oh, she looks a little crazy." And we're doing this all the time. We talk about judgments. Sometimes it's obvious, and that's great, but sometimes it's not. And we just quite believe it.

Well, in our practice here, we can explore that. It's the same thing. And it can get quite subtle. It's probably happening for most of you. It happens for me a lot. I'm mindful. I think I'm mindful of what's happening. And there's kind of a subtle, sometimes it's just a subtle commentary. Or it's a kind of description: "Oh, this is what's happening. And this is why it's happening. And this is what this means," right? We kind of think it's true. It's not when it's a big thing, but just a little. We think it's true. We think it's mindfulness. And it's actually thinking, describing, assuming. The thoughts can be subtle, and we can easily mistake them for simple mindfulness. That's all. Just noticing that. That's a form of delusion. A subtle one.

And usually, this isn't so subtle—it's all about me, me, me. Just notice how long it takes for any of the sixth sense experiences that arise in known to somehow have something to do with me. What does it mean about me? Or what do they think about me? Or what is this going to look like? How do I look? It's endless. Explore it. It's not personal either.

Oh, just an example of a little thing that happened to me—a difference between assumptions, not quite seeing, and thinking it's mindfulness. Not so long ago, after some conversation I'd had with somebody, not any big deal conversation, but somehow I felt in myself later like an uncomfortable residue. And you can relate to that, right? Not some big fight or anything, but just kind of an uncomfortable residue left. And when a memory of the conversation would just pop up, I would just feel this kind of... I remember it wasn't quite shame, embarrassment, discomfort, sadness—I mean, quite what? But I'd feel stuff here, so I was feeling that. It would come, and I thought I was being quite mindful, not investigating what does it mean in my past, but just feeling it. That's what I thought. And just going about my day whenever it would come up. I'd be aware of the visual memory—that's how stuff comes up, as visual memory. And I wasn't noting.

I'm going through the day, aware of the unpleasant residue. And then there'd be a thought: "Well, I wonder, what's the hook here? Because it keeps coming, so there's a hook." I wasn't analyzing a lot, but I'd notice that thought: "What's the hook?" And you feel like you have to figure it out. It keeps coming, so I must be wanting something from that person.

I was really thinking that was mindfulness. I mean, I was aware, but it wasn't the clear awareness of mindfulness.

Then at some point I thought, "Why does this keep coming up?" This was a little thing—it wasn't some big suffering. But through the day, why does this keep coming up, this little thing?

Finally, I was just sitting there or lying there or something. Oh, unpleasant, uncomfortable feeling. Try feeling it. Just feeling it. Not all of "what does it mean?" or "I'm connected with this." Oh yeah, uncomfortable feels like this. With no "so that"—not to get rid of it, not to understand it, just because that's what's happening.

That's the simplicity of mindfulness.

So I was just feeling it. And then—this is the steadiness of awareness, our third job, the steadiness of mindfulness, the willingness to remember, to try and remember moment after moment, the perseverance—the steadiness is what allows wisdom to come.

Just feeling unpleasant, like, "Oh." The whole sense of struggle around it was gone in that moment. And then the understanding came just from being with it. Oh. It wasn't all about "what's the hook" and "I want something" and yada, yada, yada. It was just simple aversion—subtle aversion to just feeling the unpleasant, uncomfortable feeling. As simple as that.

I can't tell you how often it's as simple as that. But our "it's all about me" doesn't quite trust that it could be so simple.

Even now, if you're thinking, "But maybe it was important that she knew what it was about, right? Well, it was really important. If she wants something from that person..." You know what? If I'm working with steady awareness, if wanting something from that person arises, guess what? I'll notice it—instead of trying to go and figure it out.

This is subtle. I don't know if I'm quite making it clear, but this is really where it's a radical shift—to just trusting the simplicity of awareness of what's happening now. Not for anything else, but simply trusting the simplicity of mindfulness itself.

Our third job, and this is essential, is the willingness—of course we can't stay continuous—but the willingness, the understanding of the power of the moment to moment to moment steadiness of the simplicity of mindfulness. Without that, it's not meaningless. But where the reality, the profound and the mundane, where the wisdom can grow, the conditions for wisdom to arise, is through the momentum of steady awareness.

Because that's where we really see what's what, where we can really see how the causes and conditions come to be. Without the steadiness, we see something happen, then we pull away. Then we go, "Oh, every time I'm walking, this happens. I don't know why. I better do something else." But if we just pay attention, we start to see.

Let me read a little example Sayadaw U Tejaniya gave. Very basic, but it's probably clearer than if I tried to make one up.

So, only with steady awareness: you might, for example, feel quite relaxed and calm while walking to the meditation hall, and then you notice a subtle restlessness during the sitting. The mind is now aware of the restlessness, accepts the experience, and starts getting interested.

This is the key to all of it. We're interested. How does nature work? It isn't personal.

The question may come up, "Why is there restlessness?" But then the mind, the awareness, simply stays with this question, with the interest in the experience. At the same time, the mind also notices and feels the physical tension, which you know is somehow connected to the feeling of restlessness—for example, a tightness in the stomach. Then suddenly, there might be the understanding that there's an accumulation of small incidences of stress, frustration, or feelings of elation that lies behind this restlessness and the physical tension. In other words, wisdom starts sorting things out.

Do you get how that wasn't thinking about what this could be? It was just: this restlessness is like this. Feeling the restlessness, getting interested. How does it feel? I wonder why it's here. How does it feel? Feeling the body. Steady, steady, steady. Simple mindfulness is the condition that allows for clear seeing of

the whole cause and effect process. Wisdom starts sorting things out.

And that's so hard for us to trust, because we feel like we have to cultivate the wisdom, don't we? One of the reasons we talk about all the right views—and if I'd gone into it, we'd think, "Well, I have to somehow start seeing all this in my practice." And right there, there's the wanting. We miss the wanting in trying to see the right thing. But steadiness of mindfulness isn't choosing what's better to pay attention to. It's just choosing what's here now. Steady, steady, steady. But relaxed. Aware—Guy said "aware" like a verb. And perseverance. Steadiness. Or as Tejaniya says, "Never give up." Which means when we space out: "Oh yeah, am I aware?" You're here again. What's going on? Seeing. We're here again. That simple, that relaxed, that mundane, over and over and over.

Really starting to trust that we don't—we can't—make wisdom arise. That's just some thought. We don't even know. We can't make accurate recognition or clear seeing happen, because that wanting is exactly the thing that distorts perception.

This is so obvious, but I found it really helpful. In practice, when you're really trying to be calm, or really with sincere intention trying to keep coming back and stay with the breath, or you're really trying to have your awareness stay steady through the whole walking period—somehow, back there, we think (we wouldn't put it this way) that if we want it hard enough, it's going to happen. And when it doesn't happen, it's like somehow we didn't want it hard enough.

Instead, with a steady awareness, we see: what are the causes and conditions that allow this to happen? What are the conditions that bring calm to the mind? Wanting harder? I don't think so. But we have to look and see. The more I want, the more restless the mind gets. Just keep watching. That's fascinating. It doesn't matter what's happening—it's going to reveal the profound truth if we cultivate steadiness.

So two last things. One is a tip from Joseph that he came up with at the last retreat we were teaching, which might help with this sense of continuity. He told me to say this. But it's a good one—people really liked it. Notice in practice how we may tend to have this subtle sense of priority, even though we all say there's not.

The priority being that the sitting is really the most important, where it's at. And if you can only do one thing, you do the sitting. The walking—okay, some people are learning to like it, and we do it maybe a little bit grudgingly, but we know that's not quite the whole thing. And the daily activities, the work meditation, the taking a shower, the eating, the going to the toilet—yeah, okay, that's third. When the rest of our practice is going okay, then maybe we can really give some attention to that.

So Joseph's tip is: reverse all of that. Turn it on its head. Make the most important priority the daily activities. Not to do them right, but to just remember this simple awareness. So you're scrubbing the floor, right? Do I know I'm scrubbing? That's all. It doesn't have to be feeling every molecule in your pinky as you're scrubbing and being aware of pleasant, unpleasant. It could just be really broad. Scrubbing feels

like this. That's mindfulness. And mindfulness is what we love.

Just this simple awareness, learning to love it. Not knowing what's going to happen, what's going to happen next, but having that openness to discover, that openness to explore. Not having to have an explanation and a description that defines our world, but just being willing to see: oh, uncomfortable feeling feels like this—without needing to know what's going to happen next. And then we're present for what happens next.

So the three jobs: right view, simple awareness, never give up. But only moment by moment. You can't never give up tomorrow—only this morning.

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