Patience and Mindfulness

Carol Wilson · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Carol Wilson · 56:18

It looks a little bit from here like the honeymoon is over. Starting to look a little serious.

I want to talk tonight, in a kind of general way, about mindfulness and patience.

You may know that one of the translations of the word "Buddha" means "one who is awake." And that is appropriate since this practice is a practice of awakening. Awakening, in the first place, to simply being awake in this particular moment of our life. To start really being here—vital, alive, not sleepwalking through our lives. And on another level, awakening to the potential for profound inner contentment. To awaken to our essential nature, that of completion: nothing needed, nothing can be taken away. To awaken to that reality here and now, in this moment—always and only in this moment, nowhere else.

And in that recognition of our essential completeness, the natural manifestation in our speech and actions, in our intentions in the world, is that of compassion, of love, of manifesting a recognition of our interconnectedness.

Mindfulness is, in a way, our doorway in—our beloved friend, in a way, to this recognition, over and over and over. I deliberately say "recognition." We're not creating some state of peace brought about by certain conditions, because when those conditions change, that peace would also change. So we're not trying to get to some certain pinnacle. What we're practicing here is a way to help us really land fully present, open and wide awake, here and now in this moment, no matter what's happening. And whatever it is that's arising in our experience in this moment—that experience thus becomes our doorway into that recognition, or perception, or resting in our inner unity and completeness.

So you might, over the days, have even had a moment of mindfulness already since you've been here. It's possible. It doesn't matter what's happening. Maybe you're just putting your foot down and really feeling those sensations. Or maybe you're hearing the rustle of leaves or the sound of the rain on the roof. Or maybe you're drinking a cup of tea. Maybe you're just stretching out to go to sleep but you're really still aware. It doesn't matter what's happening. But in that moment of mindfulness, of deep connection with whatever experience is arising—without interpretation about it, without pushing into the next experience, without somehow holding back—take a moment of stepping. Just that clear, full presence of sensations, without story, without resistance. It can be so exquisite, so alive.

And in that is a glimpse, an intimation of what the Buddha called the radiant nature of our mind. It might not seem like anything so special, and we tend to then think, "Wow, walking is so great. I'm gonna walk for hours now and forget the sitting." Of course the next minute that's gone. Or you think, "The rain is so

wonderful. I hope it rains the whole retreat because the sound of it really wakes me." Some of you have the reverse: "The sun is so beautiful. If only the sun would come out, my heart would open up and I would be able to experience the true unity of myself and all life."

In that moment, though, without the story I just put around it, in that moment is the glimpse of what the Buddha called the radiant nature of our mind—potential for real peace, for true happiness within present moment experience, not in spite of present moment experience. In this way, we could say that this is a practice of freedom. We're not creating it, but we're recognizing, over and over and over.

But just as the Buddha said the mind is naturally radiant and pure, the next line of that particular quotation is that it is obscured by temporary obscurations from time to time. You may also have had a glimpse of that over these few days. Both of these are the nature of our life and the nature of our practice.

The Tibetan teacher Nyoshul Khenpo said once that the main purpose of these dharma teachings is to find out what is the nature of the non-deluded mind, as well as how the deluded mind works. You see, we're doing both of those. When we are talking up here, we talk about both of those—both equally important aspects. It's actually easier to talk about how the deluded mind works, because it's hard to put words on the nature of the non-deluded mind. We can only sort of point.

So what happens? There's that vivid, wakeful clarity, pure presence, no sense of conflict or struggle. And the next moment it's gone. We become distracted. There's a sense of struggle with our experience, a sense of conflict with what's going on—with ourselves, with others, with the environment. Something seems to have changed. This radiance is hidden.

It's so hidden, it's like we can't even believe it ever existed. And then we become lost in this struggle to somehow make it come back again and stay here—for the rest of the retreat, if not the rest of our lives.

There are many different ways to talk about what happens as we move into this sense of conflict and struggle. I can really just talk a little bit about one way tonight; this is really what we talk about for three months.

One thing that's happening here goes back to what Steve was speaking about last night—the different types of happiness. I feel that basically, until we really begin to look at and be with our experience with mindfulness, being with what is without trying to interpret and analyze it all the time, until we really are investigating our experience, we don't really know what happiness is. And so we continue to look for peace, look for happiness—in my mind I put it in the wrong direction. We keep looking where happiness, true peace, cannot be found: in changing temporal conditions. Over and over we get caught in it. We're looking to pleasure for happiness, which again is one of many changing conditions. So we put our attention on the wrong aspect, the unhelpful aspect of experience.

When we have that moment of clarity, so easily we look to the circumstances, to what the particular sense experience was, and look to that as the source of that sense of peace in the moment. Whether it's the

weather, whether it's the food, we look to having the proper room, the proper sitting, the proper schedule. We are affected by other people's behavior. If we could only get everybody else in line, then this retreat would go like cake. And pretty soon, we're just moving into the real potential for the hindrances to get out of control.

I just want to mention that this tends to come up on retreat. We start to get notes—total love notes, total hate notes—usually signed "Metta." I'm not kidding. "If the person next to me doesn't stop breathing so loud, I'm going to strangle them. Metta." We get notes like this. And in that moment, the suffering in that is genuine. We acknowledge the suffering. But the source of the suffering is not being seen clearly at all. And that's where we get so lost, where we get so into a sense of conflict with what's arising—external, like other people, or internal.

The sitting has pain in it. The last sitting, the thoughts were kind of quiet and wispy, and now they're like a freight train and I don't like it. Or there's pain in the body. Or I think the breath should be really smooth and light and yogic and sattvic, and instead I'm gasping here like I'm strangling. I don't like it. This again, internal or external—whatever it might be, it may be a really unpleasant experience, but none of this is going to last longer than that. It's all in constant flux, and we keep focusing on the outer or inner, on the changing experience. We're looking in the wrong direction. We have a mistaken idea of happiness, of peace, and that mistaken idea can keep us spinning in suffering and confusion. It has kept us spinning in suffering and confusion for a long time.

The conditions, the arising experience, are not the problem, not the source of the distraction or the real confusion. The radiant nature, our real nature of completion, is not affected one whit by whatever condition happens to arise. But what is affected is our ability to remember this, to recognize it. That is affected really strongly by arising conditions. We get so engrossed in struggle with what's happening that we simply forget that peace is accessible even within this experience.

My favorite simile for this is like being in prison. You have a room, you have some furniture, and you're so busy trying to make it as comfortable as possible—it might be a little bit like here, getting the right blanket, getting the right window, getting a little flower for your windowsill, setting up your little altar—you get so engrossed in that, that you don't notice the prison door has been open all the time. You could just walk out. It's sort of like that in any particular moment.

Two of our allies, the ones I want to talk about tonight, in helping us cut through this confusion and land again back in the potential for peace, in awakeness here and now, are of course the tool of mindfulness, but also the attitude of patience. I want to talk a little bit about patience later. By patience, I also mean open-hearted acceptance.

Now I want to talk about one of the many ways—but one of the ways—that we get so entangled in what's arising, in our reactions to it, without noticing. Michelle spoke briefly about this, and we'll certainly be talking about it more: the root obscurations, you could say, the root torments that arise from moment to

moment in our experience—the experiences of greed, desire, clinging; hatred, aversion, pushing away, fear; and delusion, basic confusion, not knowing what's going on and not really recognizing anything very clearly. Rather than thinking of this abstractly or conceptually, what we begin to notice through the tool of mindfulness is how these root obscurations manifest in our experience on a moment-to-moment level.

These three responses—liking or not liking or just plain ignoring—then become a sort of filter. We're so habituated to respond in this way that, without mindfulness, without attention, when we're not really paying attention to what's going on, the mind responds automatically. And when we don't notice, that response becomes a filter, quite easily, as if you're looking at the world through blue glasses and everything looks blue and you don't know it. You just think that's how everything is.

So if you begin to notice when you're evaluating your sittings or your walkings or your retreat or your life or what happened at work three weeks ago—whatever you're evaluating—we tend to think that if it's pleasant, it's right, it's good, it's the direction to go in, we're doing well. If it's unpleasant, it's so easy to think, "This is a mistake, this shouldn't be happening, I've got to fix it somehow, I've got to try harder, I've got to practice harder," whatever way your mind goes. And if it's neutral—well, as Steve said last night, the different experiences of happiness get more and more subtle. At first we often experience them as being neutral, so boring, like nothing's happening. So we have two choices: fall asleep or make something happen. Because mostly this culture is so intense, and we're getting more and more used to needing really intense sensory stimulation to even notice something. So if it gets more intense, then maybe we'll wake up and maybe something will really be happening.

Notice this in your practice, because often what we do is make something intense but unpleasant happen. During the last three-month course I taught, I had a whole string of people come in one day, halfway through the course, reporting that they had become aware they'd been experiencing calm and peace but it was boring and they didn't like it. Their minds then created whole scenarios of suffering and unpleasantness—bad memories, imagining unpleasantness in the future—in order to sort of feel alive again. It's interesting.

So when not noticed, these biases or habits of mind really filter how we evaluate experience, what our expectations are, how we're judging what's going on today. And it keeps us looking in the wrong way for peace. Because generally—well, for me anyway, I can't say for anyone else—when my mind's working this way, peace generally means pleasant, absence of pain, absence of restlessness or anything that I don't particularly like. Or it can mean meeting my expectations. And what are expectations based on? Something we've read, something we've heard, something we've experienced before and decided is generally pleasant or good. Only based on the past. Only on the known. Incredibly limiting.

But anyway, generally, when I've decided this is happiness, this is peace—have you ever thought "this is happiness" when there was something really unpleasant going on? So it becomes the filter, the definition for the peace, the sense of inner completion, whatever we're looking for. And it's not so. It keeps us

looking in the wrong direction.

Nisargadatta Maharaj, an Indian teacher, said once that what you are calling peace is only absence of disturbance. Real peace cannot be disturbed. Not by the rain, not by someone coughing.

Not even by snoring. Not even by pain in our knees. Not even by the thought arising, "Oh no, I could never do this. I'm doing it wrong. I'm so worthless." Real peace cannot be disturbed. And it cannot be created. We simply learn how to recognize it over and over and over.

This is where the tool of mindfulness—*sati* in the Pali language—is really going to be the main tool of our practice here together. This is where it really shows its power and its strength. Any moment of pure mindfulness cuts through all these habits of interpretation and storytelling and looking in the wrong direction, and brings us right here, recognizing what's happening just as it is.

By mindfulness, I mean clear connection with whatever is arising—whatever of the six sense experiences, thought, emotion, whatever is arising. A clear connection without interpretation, without a story, without analysis. We call that aspect bare attention: just as it is. But also a clear, open-hearted, accepting connection. Not judging it, not wishing it were different. Simply being fully present because this is so in this moment. Recognizing and knowing it clearly just as it is.

I want to give a couple of examples because this is what, moment by moment, cuts through all the layers and layers of obscuration that can arise like this over the simplest experience. And actually, to me it becomes fascinating to watch how these obscurations, these levels of complexity, can arise like that from a simple sense experience.

Hearing. There's just hearing. It's unpleasant. We don't notice it. It becomes, in the identification, "That's a person coughing." We don't like that. There's a sense of contraction in the body, a startling, a pulling away. The thought comes up, "If they have a cold, why don't they sit in their room? Don't they know how close we all are in here?" That leads into a sense of remembering how you had pneumonia when you were four and a half, and what if it happens again, and how sick you can get, and more anger at the insensitivity of all these other people. And besides, they're all sitting so still—don't they even hear it? What's the matter with them? And on and on. "I'm so bad. They're so peaceful. Why can't I just..." And it goes on forever. Then you're anticipating the next cough. It doesn't even happen, but you're just in a frenzy of tightness waiting for it. You see, you know what I mean.

What's actually happening in that moment? And that's where we learn to bring this cutting-through clarity of mindfulness. In that moment of hearing, can we bring the attention right to hearing? Just hearing. Mindfulness doesn't hesitate and moves right into the bare experience of hearing. And that's all that's happening.

If it's unpleasant, if you're right there, you might notice the unpleasantness. Or if it's gone way too far and it's murderous rage, well then, at that moment what you notice is the actual experience of murderous rage

as it's arising here and now in this moment. Not the story and all the other people, but simply mindfulness cuts through to here and now. And there can actually be a moment—of course the coughing can just be sound—but there can even be a moment where murderous rage is just emotion and sensation. A moment. I'm not saying that's easy, and I'm not saying it lasts. But you get a sense of the difference between being so convinced in our rightness or our wrongness, either way, and the difference between that and simply being with what is so.

Another good example, and one that comes up a lot and has already been coming up today for people, is pain in the body. This happens all the time. People will come and say, "I have this tension in my shoulders and in my head. I'm contracted, and it's a result of the way I've been relating to my practice, or to my life, or it's the way I've been ever since I was two years old. It shows I'm uptight, I'm type A, I can't learn how to be flexible. I came here to learn openness and all I'm doing is getting more contracted. This noting and this mindfulness is only increasing it." You know, just this. And every time the pain arises, it's treated as a confirmation of the sad deficiencies in our character. And it gets really concretized, really locked in.

If you say that to any of us, we might nod, and after a while we'll say, "Well, what are you really feeling?" And the answer comes: "Oh, there's tension and pain, and I'm type A."

What are you really feeling? Well, there's tension. There's pressure. And when you really look at it, what happens? Well, it might get stronger. Maybe it changes to tingling, or maybe it kind of fades away. Or, you know, I didn't even notice it after a while, and then I was just hearing the rain. It's just what it is.

And even if it's accurate that the pressure, the tension, the constriction is a result—because everything's a result of conditions—even if it's accurate that it's a result of the way we've been relating in our life, here and now in this moment we're not back in the office. We're not back at two years old. In this moment, we're right here. And what's happening now is tension, pressure, here and now in this moment.

Our mindfulness gives us a chance, over and over and over, to simply rest in that. Because it is so, but recognizing it as it is, without all the extra. Even a moment of that can be so illuminating, because then we begin to feel, to know, the difference between being really here and being here through the veil of our interpretations and filters. And it's really different.

It's not easy. I don't mean to imply that it's easy. And I don't mean to imply that we can just dismiss all our interpretations and our memories and our conditioning like that. That's certainly not the case. There will be times when the memories or the interpretation or the persona of how we present ourselves in our life will be what's really arising strongly to pay attention to. But then we'll know that that's so. We won't be being led by the nose by it.

I've found that the mind is incredibly good at picking the interpretation or the story that's going to really hook us about any particular experience—the one where you say, "Yeah, but this is really true." It's amazing that way.

I remember one time—for me, the hook of not being good enough, of self-blame and judgment, is quite strong—I was doing walking meditation, pretty aware. I wasn't spacing out; I was present, but mostly noticing thoughts and emotions. I wasn't really noticing physical sensations. Walking and present and noticing thoughts, and suddenly I realized that the thoughts had taken a turn for the unpleasant. They were getting more and more unpleasant. In fact, I was running through every selfish and horrible thing I'd ever done. I was back to the third grade by the time I kind of caught the drift. I said, "Hmm, something's going on here."

And just for a moment—the tendency would be to try and stop it, or say, "Oh no, you're so good," or something—but just stop. Okay, what's going on here? Sort of widen the field of attention and notice. And this is really true: there was a little sharp stabbing pain in my big toe. That was all. But I wasn't noticing it. And so every time I stepped, the stabbing pain would come—sharp, unpleasant—and I didn't notice it. I would recoil sort of internally, rather than mindfully just meeting it. I'd recoil with attention away from what was happening, and that aversion would then get the hook that works so well in my mind—"I'm no good"—and just take it and go for a really long ride.

As soon as I could bring my attention—oh yeah, pain in the—I mean, it was funny. I just started laughing when I saw that. But as soon as I could bring the attention—oh right, sharp pain, unpleasant—that was it. Just present with what was happening.

And even a pain in the toe can be the avenue in to serenity, to peace, to completion. It doesn't matter what it is. What does matter is the presence and the attitude of presence. The mindfulness and this attitude of real open-hearted acceptance, of patience. It's like another possibility entirely of relating to life presents itself to us in every moment. And that's the possibility of simply being with things just as they are.

It's so simple. It's so peaceful. It's so un-effortful. It's so impossible so much of the time. I mean, I know what it's like. Last year I was sitting out there in your place, and it was great. I'm envying all of you.

But in that moment that it is possible—to be with what is just as it is—it transforms everything. It doesn't transform what's happening, but the relationship to what's happening transforms experience entirely. It transforms our life. It transforms our understanding. It's incredibly powerful.

Notice it when it happens, instead of waiting for the big lights to go off. Notice those moments when you're totally present and really accepting. We stop looking in the wrong direction then.

But it takes a real commitment and a real sense of integrity with ourselves, because it is really hard. The mind is really tricky. And there are many, many difficult experiences that will arise over the course of this time, and pleasant ones that will go away over the course of this time.

So mindfulness is the tool, and the attitude of patience is so vital. Patience is one of the ten perfections spoken of by the Buddha. Before he became, in that particular lifetime, the fully enlightened Buddha, it's said that he spent many, many previous lifetimes in all different types of roles, perfecting these ten

qualities of heart and mind. I'm not even going to name all ten because I don't have time tonight, but one of them is patience. And by patience, I mean a much broader description than I would think of normally in day-to-day usage.

We tend to think of patience as the last thing to do when something's going on we don't like and nothing else has worked to get rid of it. Then we say, okay, it's time to be patient. But what does that mean? It's time to passively endure with gritted teeth, saying, "Yes, I'm being mindful and patient and I know it will change because everything does. Thank God for impermanence." That's not what I mean by patience. That kind of patience is tinged with aversion, with this pushing away.

True patience is very active, and it's an aspect of metta, of loving-kindness. With patience, there's actually an active engagement with whatever is happening—open-hearted acceptance, but really connected and engaged. It's not like the acceptance of something unpleasant happening over there on the other side of the trees. It's really engaging with that unpleasant sound, that real meeting of it wholeheartedly, just as it is. In that moment, there's no fear and there's no clinging.

Patience with the desirable as well as the undesirable. Meeting what we like equally open-heartedly, without that little tug of "let's make it stay." So patience has an alert and very spacious quality, yet at the same time is very connected and nonjudgmental. You can see how it's really the attitude that goes with mindfulness.

It's not passive submission to abuse. Patience doesn't mean not knowing what's going on. "Oh, that guy can be patient because he's totally deluded and doesn't see how much suffering is being inflicted on him"—that's not patience, that is delusion. Patience is actively engaging, but out of an open-hearted acceptance. It's accompanied by compassion.

In the commentaries which speak of these different qualities, they talk about what's called the proximate cause—the conditions that need to be there for this quality of mind or heart to arise. And this I find really interesting: the proximate cause of patience is seeing things as they really are. It's not being deluded, so you're patient until things change. It's seeing very clearly just how things are. And in this, it gives rise to the potential, the possibility to open-heartedly engage with and meet with acceptance whatever's happening, because we really, as Joseph put it the other night, begin to know what's what.

So it's transformative again, this quality of patience. Seeing things as they really are.

One of the main characteristics that we see as it really is, is this one of impermanence that Joseph spoke of the other night. And as he said, we intellectually know that things are impermanent. But the next time you're really struggling with your experience—whether it's wanting something to come back or wanting something to go away—in that moment of struggle, just check in. Are we acting from the heart's knowing of impermanence in that moment? Or have we again started treating that experience as permanent?

Whenever I'm in some emotional state, I mean—how many emotions have I seen come and go in my

meditation, in my life? Millions! How many have you seen come and go since you've been here?

Or how many thoughts? Next time you're feeling angry or sad or bored or restless, just check in. Is there some little current under there that thinks this is how it's going to be for the next three months, just like this, and I can't bear it?

Not seeing things as they really are makes it hard to bring this open-hearted acceptance to the experience. We start to struggle. What I mentioned earlier—the filters on our experience of judging pleasant, evaluating pleasant as good, not wanting the unpleasant, thinking it's bad—this of course figures in quite strongly in our difficulty in truly living from the understanding of impermanence. Because you see, we open to the truth of change from time to time, and sometimes it's really sad. And sometimes it's really scary. And that's hard. First, because we just don't know how yet to be with the difficult. Patience and mindfulness will teach us that. But also because there's this judgment: if it's sad, it's wrong. It is sad. Sometimes it really is sad. Can that be okay? Can that even be beautiful?

This is a Chinese poem:

Green leaves that dawn after dawn grow yellow,
Red cheeks that fade with the passing days—
If our world is made up of such changes as these,
Is it strange that my heart is so sad?

Sadness is okay. Let it in. It's not the only experience of impermanence, but if we judge that or think that it's wrong or evaluate it as incorrect or as too hard to feel, we deny ourselves so much else. We deny ourselves the real beauty and connectedness and love of ourselves and others and appreciation of the moment that can come through our life when we're not trying to block out the fact that this too is rapidly changing.

In fact, opening to another being or to ourselves with a real care, with a real connection, with a real love is often the experience that paradoxically leads again into opening to the impermanence. It works both ways. You can't just block out what's sad or scary and then have this really connected, vital relationship to life, because your relationship is trying to be with something that isn't true. So sometimes it's real caring that opens us into impermanence. And that's okay too.

This is one of my favorite poems, from Galway Kinnell. Just part of it I'm going to read. The same subject:

You cry, waking from a nightmare.
When I sleepwalk into your room and pick you up
and hold you up in the moonlight,
you cling to me hard, as if clinging could save us.
I think you think I will never die.
I think I exude to you the permanence of smoke or stars,

even as my broken arms heal themselves around you.
I have heard you tell the sun, don't go down.
I have stood by as you told the flower, don't grow old, don't die.
Little Maud, and yet perhaps this is the reason you cry,
this the nightmare you wake crying from:
being forever in the pre-trembling of a house that falls.

We have to at times recognize that that's what it's like—being in the pre-trembling of a house that falls. And sometimes it's scary and sometimes it's sad. And sometimes it opens us to such connectedness and potential for joy and serenity and real peace in our life that it's wonderful beyond anything we could imagine.

And often it's that connection—like the love of the man for his little child—that can open one to the realities of life, both the scary and sad and the wondrous and the magical. It takes both sides.

And this quality of mindfulness and patience, open-hearted willingness to be with whatever is without putting on top of it the overview of how we think things are or how we want things to be—just meeting moment by moment by moment. We don't have to think about it. The whole world opens up. It doesn't stay sad. It doesn't stay scary all the time. Yes, there's that insecurity, that pre-trembling. We never know when the house is going to fall. But when we know that we never know and stop trying to figure it out, then all of that energy is released for appreciation and real presence of being here and now. Our energy is withdrawn from attachment and fear and can move into connection and aliveness. We can find a real serenity even in the midst of not knowing, even in the midst of pleasure and pain. We can even relate to the not knowing

in a way that's humorous, that's filled with lightness because we're not holding on.

So this willingness to meet both sides of experience—the scary, the beautiful, the pleasant, the painful, the boring—this lets us see things as they really are. And when we deeply see things as they really are, that's when we have the potential to open into the vivid wakefulness of freedom, of peace.

So in our time here, can we remember, if we don't recognize it in a live way in the moment, that life is change? Life is filled with cycles of expansion and contraction, with beautiful, with ugly, with whatever. Meet each one.

A symbol of that to me is a story from Germany, in a cathedral town. It was one of these stores with a door, and on each side of the door was a big picture window filled with what they sell. I was walking with my friend and we came to the first one—it was all statues and pictures of the Madonna, of Mary, and trinkets and all kinds of things. We thought, "Oh, that's nice, a religious store." Then we walked to the other window and it was all beer steins and guns. I thought, "Oh, that's interesting. Kind of an interesting store here." You know, both sides are there, right together.

Or as a friend of mine said last year—I asked how she'd been doing and she said, "Oh, I've just been so happy for the last two months. I've just been so happy. I wonder what's going to happen to make a change." Quite realistic. That wasn't depressing. That was like, "Oh yeah, something's going to happen. It is going to change. I wonder what it'll be." Can we relate in that way? There's so much freedom in that. There's so much potential for aliveness and appreciation.

Can we do that here? Next time you're really spacious and your breath is so calm and you're really focused and the thought comes in, "Wow, now I'm really doing it right"—see if the next thought can be, "Oh, I wonder when it'll change." Without a lot of hating of that thought. Without a lot of holding on.

When your knee is killing you, when it feels like you just sat down and there's that twinge and it's, "Oh no, I can't bear it"—see if you can, first of all, notice what's really happening. Are you in the hospital yet? Are you on crutches? Does it even hurt or is it just a little twinge? You know, that's one thing. Bring the mindfulness to what's actually happening. And see if there can be that moment of patience. "Yeah, this is unpleasant." Be fully there and know it will change too. But not rushing to "it will change too." Yes, it will change, and while it's here, can I experiment with being fully here for it?

Another aspect of patience is how it really does open us into the ability to perceive what is truly so. This is from Ajahn Sumedho, an American monk in the Thai tradition who has a monastery in England. He's talking about patience. He's talking about knowing the unconditioned, which is different ways of saying the radiant nature of mind, or freedom, or liberation:

"Buddha wisdom is very humbling because it knows that whatever arises passes away and is not self. Whatever condition of the body and mind arises, it is conditioned, and so whatever arises passes away. And Buddha wisdom knows the unconditioned as the unconditioned.

"But is the unconditioned very interesting or fascinating? You might think, 'I'd like to know God or Dhamma. It's going to be incredibly fascinating, something blissful and ecstatic.' Do you have that thought sometimes? So you look in your meditation for that kind of experience. You think that getting high is getting close. But the unconditioned is as interesting as the space in this room. Look at the space in this room. Is it very interesting to look at? It's not to me. The space in this room is like the space in the other room."

The things in this room might be interesting—good, bad, ugly, or whatever. But the space, what is it? There's nothing you can really say or think about it. It has no quality except being spacious.

And to be able to be really spacious, one has to be patient. As there is nothing that one can grasp or hold onto, one recognizes space only by not clinging to the objects in the room. When you let go, when you stop your absorptions, your judgments, your criticisms and evaluations of the people and the things in this room, then you begin to experience the space of it. But that takes a lot of patience and humility.

Buddha wisdom is just that much: knowing the conditioned as the conditioned—the people and the things

in this room—and the unconditioned as the unconditioned—the space. Buddhas are no longer deluded by any conditions, and they incline to the spaciousness, the emptiness, rather than towards the changing conditions within the space.

So we investigate the nature, the workings of the deluded mind. We investigate the nature and conditions of the people and the things in this room as they arise. We investigate the nature of the clinging and the aversion and the pushing away and the judgments and the absorptions. And we begin to notice how much suffering and confusion comes from all of that.

And then, just maybe, there will be a moment when we can simply stop—all of that absorption in the people and the things and the space and the thoughts—and we get a glimpse of the spaciousness.

That's all it takes. It's not so complicated.

So let's just sit for a few minutes.

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