Mindfulness of Body

Chas DiCapua · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Three-Month Retreat (IMS 2012) · 1:00:05

So tonight we have a little Dharma talk within a Dharma talk.

Maybe twenty minutes ago I was just finishing up a few things with the talk. Okay, let's print it. I'm walking down the hallway and I don't hear the printer. It's all jammed up, and then the printer in the front office isn't taking it either. It's not possible to print it. And the mind just went, "No." It was so great to see—just "no." But clearly, yes. So we have an old version here. We'll see how it goes.

The talk tonight is going to be on the body. And I want to pause there because I want to ask you: when you heard that, what was the response, the reaction? Would there have been a more favorable or excited reaction if I had said the talk tonight is comparing how equanimity as it manifests in the fourth jhāna compares to equanimity from seeing arising and passing?

I think it's important to understand the paradigm that we're in when we talk about the body as a meditation subject, to be clear about the world that we're living in and its relationship to the body. Not to go on a big soapbox treatise about history, but just an overview of where we're at and how we got here.

At some point later in the Roman Empire, the church came to prominence and power. At about that time, all things feminine were squashed and pathologized, ridiculed, persecuted. Since then, we've been living in a world increasingly dominated by patriarchy and by an increasing fascination with the intellect. They tend to go hand in hand, and there are ramifications of this.

Without thinking, just the very first hit—ready? It's going to be a physical movement. Point to heaven. Yes. This is one of the ramifications: spirituality became completely disembodied.

What institution has the largest endowment by far of any institution in the world? Harvard. The scientists and the intellects are our demigods. When the scientists say the food pyramid is like this and you should eat this way, we believe it wholeheartedly and do it. And when they change it, we believe it wholeheartedly and do that.

The outcome, the legacy of at least two thousand years of patriarchy and an increasing dominance of the intellect really has some strong ramifications. One being that we've become increasingly cut off from nature and from our bodies. I'm going to use these three perhaps interchangeably: the feminine, nature, and the body. They are all of the same ilk.

And of course, we are destroying nature—the big body, earth, that which is feminine. We're literally destroying it. You don't harm what you hold dear, unless there's some kind of intense pathological thing

going on. But in general, you don't harm what you hold dear. And we're not holding nature dear. We're not holding the body, the big body, dear. It's been cut off. We're not connected to it. And what we're not connected to is what we can harm. Those two go hand in hand: disconnection and the ability to harm.

But to bring it back to something really practical, this is all the legacy of these past two thousand years.

I was talking with a friend on the phone about practice, about how to bring the practice more and more into daily life. Actually, no, it was about formal practice. I forget the exact details, but I mentioned, "Well, you might try being with the body with that."

And what he said was, "Yeah, I know. And when I do that, it really works well, it's good. But part of me thinks I'm missing something if I do that. Part of me thinks I need to do something else."

It was such a clear moment. It's not that the body can't be trusted, but it's not elevated enough. Even though when he connected with it, with that particular part of meditation, it really did what he was trying to do—he couldn't trust it. "Nah, it's just the body. There's got to be something better." It was such a clear moment of how stratified the intellect and the body were in his experience. Even though he knew it worked, he couldn't do it. He wouldn't allow himself to do it.

So that's just the paradigm we all live in. We all live in it. And regardless of whether you hear these words I've been saying and really resonate with them or not—even if you do resonate with them—we're still in this paradigm. We're still fish swimming in water, and it's just not possible not to be wet. We were brought up in it. Our views were formed by it. We are so much a part of it, and it absolutely impacts our view of body.

So I just wanted to start with that—some words on the body.

Now, some words from the Buddha on the body. This is a simile he gave to the monks about balancing a pot of oil on one's head:

"Suppose, monks, that a large crowd of people comes thronging together saying, 'The beauty queen! The beauty queen!' And suppose that beauty queen is highly accomplished in singing and dancing so that an even greater crowd comes through saying, 'The beauty queen is singing! The beauty queen is dancing!' Then a man comes along, desiring life and shrinking from death, desiring pleasure and abhorring pain. They say to him, 'Now look here, mister. You must take this bowl filled to the brim with oil and carry it on your head in between the great crowd and the beauty queen. A man with a raised sword will follow right behind you, and wherever you spill even a drop of oil, right there he will cut off your head.' Now what do you think, monks? Will that man, not paying attention to the bowl of oil, let himself get distracted outside?"

"No, Lord."

"I have given you this parable to convey a meaning. The meaning is this: the bowl filled to the brim with

oil stands for mindfulness immersed in the body. Thus you should train yourselves: 'We will develop mindfulness immersed in the body. We will pursue it, hand it the reins, and take it as a basis, give it grounding, steady it, consolidate it, and undertake it well.' That is how you should train yourselves."

Very clear, direct words from the Buddha about the importance of practicing with the body.

The Buddha taught the four foundations of mindfulness in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. And these are the Buddha's words for the ending of suffering. Right from the beginning of the sutta:

"Bhikkhus, this is the direct path for the purification of beings, for the surmounting of sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of pain and grief, for the attainment of the true way, for the realization of nibbāna—namely, the four foundations of mindfulness."

So again, if you want to be free, this is how you do it. And the first of those four foundations is the body.

Let me talk a little bit about that first foundation, mindfulness of the body. There are six meditations in it. The first three have to do directly with apprehending the body; the other three are more contemplative. The first three are mindfulness of breath, mindfulness of postures, and mindfulness of changing postures. In the Chinese canon, the order is changed. Anālayo talks about this in the book *Satipaṭṭhāna*, if you've ever read it. The breath is first in the Pali Canon, and then postures and changing postures. I always thought that was a bit odd—the breath is more subtle than postures. Why would postures come after?

Analayo talks about how in the Chinese Canon the breath is third. It goes from postures to changing postures to breath, which seems to be a better progression as far as subtlety goes.

But in either case, if we want to discover the freedom that the Satipatthana points to, what the Buddha was saying by following the Satipatthana, it's of utmost importance that we begin with and establish an intimate relationship with the body.

I think Pascal may have given this quote before, but it's a good one. Ajahn Mun, Ajahn Chah's teacher, the grandfather of the Thai forest tradition, said: "In your exploration of the Dharma, never let your attention leave the body." This is a person considered completely enlightened, and that's what he had to say about exploring the Dharma. Never let your attention leave the body.

Now why would we have to establish an intimate relationship with our bodies? We have one, right? We have a body. Don't we already have an intimate relationship with it? Well, in a way yes, and in a way actually no.

The body, of course, is here all the time, so it's always there to be known. But for many, many reasons that I touched upon at the very beginning of the talk—ranging from the personal to the collective—we have exiled the body from awareness. That is the baseline. Before we practice, before we learn about mindfulness, before we've taken up particular body-centered practices like yoga or tai chi, pretty much the state of the human being is not to be aware of their bodies in any given moment, not to know that they

have one directly. Of course, if you ask someone whether they have a body, they'd say yes. But I'm talking about that immediate knowing. We've become disembodied.

Reginald Ray, a meditation teacher more in the Tibetan tradition, says: "We are attempting to practice meditation and to follow a spiritual path in a disembodied state. And our practice is therefore doomed to failure." He's speaking to this importance of establishing an awareness that's embodied as the ground for practice.

One fun way to investigate this directly: when you have the wake-up moment and the bubble pops, and the mind-made or thought-made world is just vanishing but still kind of there, you can get a little peek at it. Notice how there was no awareness of body in that world. There were no physical sensations. There was no awareness that there was a body in that world. Check it out. It was completely a mind-made thing. And then notice: what is it like to come back into the body? What is it like to go from being disembodied to embodied? What is that experience?

You may be saying, "But I thought the heart and mind is what's most important. Aren't we here to free the heart and mind?" Yes, that's true. And as we walk this path, what we find is that there's no separating the body and the heart-mind. The more we practice, the more intimate we get with our experience, the more we see how connected they are.

The body is an excellent subject matter in which to study the heart and mind. Everything that goes on in the heart and mind is reflected in the body. It manifests in the body. It shows up somewhere in the body.

The body is also an excellent subject matter for meditation because it's very truthful. It's always going to tell us exactly what's going on. It won't deceive us. If you stub your toe, it doesn't feel nice—the body won't manufacture pleasant feelings. It will have unpleasant feelings. It's always truthful that way. The body cannot go into the past or the future. It doesn't have that ability. It's always here. It's always now. And if we're looking correctly, it's always truthfully registering what's happening.

Can't say that for the mind, right? The mind has incredible potential to be deceptive, hanging out in past and future all the time.

So I just want to talk a little bit now about these first three meditations of mindfulness of body.

This is the Buddha talking about the breath: "Mindfulness of in and out breathing, when developed and pursued, is of great fruit, of great benefit."

So we begin our meditation practice with mindfulness of the body, mindfulness of the breath. Now remember, they're not different. The way we talk, we speak about them as different, like I just did in that sentence. But breath *is* body. It's just a subset of bodily sensations. Don't disembody your breath. It is body. It's just a particular set of this field of sensations that we call body—a particular set of sensations within that larger field that we can pick out, bring to the foreground, and pay attention to if we want. But

it's still body.

And we start there because they're always present. The breath and the body are always, always present and here. No matter how far we go or for how long—have you noticed?—when we come back, there's the body, patiently waiting.

And what's great about the breath is that as we relax, remain still, and attend to the breath, the body becomes more calm. The breath becomes more calm and subtle. And therefore, it demands closer attention, because our object of meditation just got subtler. It's like when someone's talking and they start to whisper—you have to pay attention. And that's why the breath is an amazing meditation object. The better we get with it, the harder we have to try with it, in a way. It gets subtler. It demands a stiller, more refined attention.

I loved the first instructions. What were the first instructions? "There is a body." Before that, silent: don't forget, *there is a body*. And then from that place: there is a body that's breathing. Natural and present.

Now you might be asking, why is he talking about the breath? This is supposed to be a dharma talk on the body. Well, again, just to say: the breath *is* the body. Separating them does something that's not helpful. When you're with the breath, you are with your body.

So after breath comes postures—the four postures. You simply become aware of what posture you're in. That's what I love about breath and body. It is so uncomplicated. It's not rocket science. And the Buddha said mindfulness of the body will take you all the way to nibbāna.

That's why I asked that question: What did you feel when I said this talk is going to be about the body? Was there a slight, "Oh geez, are we going back to the basics? This isn't really going to get me where I want to go"? The Buddha said mindfulness of the body will lead to complete enlightenment.

So, postures. You simply become aware of what posture you're in. You're here in the hall sitting. Body sitting. What is that experience like? How does it feel to be in that posture? Not a thought, but a direct somatic experience of body sitting.

You're standing in the lunch line. "Oh, I'm standing. I'm in the standing posture." What is that experience like? Not the experience of all the rest of the stuff that's going on in the dining hall, but just standing. What is that experience like? What does the body feel like in this posture?

You're lying down in bed. One can know they're lying down. When you lie down in bed, are you aware you're in the lying posture? Aware that you're aware you're in the lying posture. "Oh, the body is lying down now." What does that feel like in the body? What is that experience like?

Walking, and you know you're walking. And then maybe you stop and stand, and now you're in a standing posture. That's what's great about retreat—you can just stop and stand somewhere anytime you want. You just stand there as long as you want, and no one's going to look at you funny. You have full reign to just

stand there.

Here's a good one as far as postures go—one way to work with it: when you're doing your yogi job, notice if you are in the most advantageous posture you can be for doing whatever it is you're doing. Just check. Or could there be a subtle shift, a weight shift, a slight movement of the body that would take strain off the back or whatever? This can be a really neat lens. You could try this just for maybe one day or part of a yogi job, where your awareness is: "Is my body in the most advantageous position to do this job?" What I find out is often it's not. There could be a little adjustment, a little shift that would make things a lot easier on the body.

So we start very simply by noticing what position the body's in and noticing that experience right then and there. Breath, and then postures, and then changing postures is the third meditation in mindfulness of body. We start with the grossest changes and then progressively notice subtler and subtler ones as mindfulness grows during the retreat.

I'm sure you've noticed this. You might have started by noticing going from sitting to standing in the hall, or vice versa, or in the dining room—those kind of things, getting in and out of bed. And then as the retreat goes on, you just naturally start to notice subtler movements, maybe not whole body movements—the hand reaching for the spigot on the tea urn, the hand reaching for the door to your room. And then mindfulness grows and even subtler body movements come into awareness. I'm sure you've noticed the subtle movements that you do when you're sitting that maybe you weren't aware of before—very slight, subtle movements of the head or shifting of the weight. Sitting in the dining hall and just moving a leg, slightly changing the way your legs are positioned under the table. These are all changing postures. And as mindfulness grows, we notice them on subtler and subtler levels.

A really interesting way to work with this changing posture is when you're sitting—to notice the movements, notice the changing of that posture. Again, even the most subtle ones. Not because you should never move. It's just a way to refine the awareness of the body as it moves.

Speaking of moving, this brings us to another kind of lens that we can look at the body through. And that's vedanā with the body. A great teacher. This is one of the places that the body really excels as teacher.

What about unpleasant body sensations? Pema Chödrön says that as a species, we should never underestimate our low tolerance for discomfort. So we're all included in that—we're all in the same species. We can see the truth of that, can't we? When unpleasant sensations come up when we're sitting,

Very, very easy to see the no. I don't want this. I want it to go away. Even with very minor unpleasant sensations, we can see, I don't want this. That second noble truth just rises to the surface so clearly. It's so easy to see. The body is such a great place to observe this.

And of course, this doesn't mean we never move. I'm not advocating that we sit still and sit through pain no matter what. But that laboratory of the still body shows us very clearly the habit pattern to move away,

push away, try to keep away the unpleasant. And this is the core. This is the core of what we want to see in our practice that will free the mind.

And then pleasant body sensations. This is one that you can probably notice, or it's easy to notice. You're paying attention to the breath, and things are getting calm. The breath is slowing down. It's getting a little silky, a little pleasant. And all of a sudden, the in-breath gets just a little longer than it was. Let's just feel that for a millisecond longer if we can. Have you noticed? Check it out. When the breath gets pleasant, see if there's a tendency to want that experience or try to make that experience last a little bit longer. Or maybe it's with the out-breath too. Again, these are very direct, in-the-moment, tactile ways that we can learn about clinging.

Some other ways to use the body during formal practice: when mindfulness arises and awareness transitions from the mind-made world to present-time awareness, it's really helpful to consciously relax the body before you do anything else. No matter what you're doing—whether you're doing open awareness, working with the anchor, whatever—it can be helpful to just check in with the body and relax, for a couple of reasons. I've really found this helpful in my practice.

One is that, by definition, during the time awareness was in the mind-made world, there was identification. And whenever there's identification, there's going to be contraction. There's a contracting around the content of the mind. That's what happens. We're sitting there, things are going by, no problem, and then something occurs that manifests in the body. Somewhere there's going to be—remember I talked about the body always manifesting what happens in the mind? Well, while we're lost in thought, there's identification going on, and there will be contraction somewhere in the body, even if it's subtle. It could be like the eyes are slightly squinted, or the thumbs are pushing against one another a little bit, just some subtle thing. But we can release that. We can consciously relax the body and release that, which is a good thing to do—to have a very nice baseline of relaxation in the body.

But the other thing that happens whenever we relax our body—think about it. Do it right now. Just relax your body. Where did your attention just go? Into the body. Remember, it was disembodied during being lost in thought. Through the process of relaxing the body, it re-embodies the attention. It just naturally brings it into the body. And that's a great place to have the attention, regardless of whether you're working with an anchor or open awareness or doing metta. As Ajahn Mun said, that's where we want it.

And then lastly, there can be—especially when we're working with breath as anchor or trying to develop some samadhi, some steadiness in the mind using the breath—a way that the wake-up moment can happen and, if we're not aware of it, there can be a little bit of aversion to that. It can get very subtle: I shouldn't be thinking, or I did it wrong. And based on that, it's like, well, that over there was wrong, but the breath is what's right and that's what I should be doing. So we kind of jump on the breath because that's better. And of course, going to the object with that attitude and with that energy, you're going to bounce right off it. And then thinking, and then it's like ping-ponging. Have you noticed when that

ping-pong match starts?

So wake up, and then the wonderful way to short-circuit that ping pong match is the moment you take to relax. It keeps you from diving back onto the object. It's like, "Oh, no, wait—I don't have to rush so much." Just a moment of ease. And then into the body, and you don't have to jump on the breath because you're in the body already, and there it is.

So that's the third reason for relaxing the body at the wake-up moment: it can short-circuit the ping pong match.

And of course, if you want to be really embodied, being with the breath in the chest or abdomen will be a more embodied experience than at the nostrils. I'm not saying you shouldn't be with the breath at the nostrils—just that it will tend to be a more embodied experience if you're feeling it lower down, in the chest or the abdomen.

The last thing to remind you about using the body during formal practice is when there are those protracted or looping thoughts, stories that are replaying, or strong emotions. One way to actually be with that experience without pushing it away but without getting lost in it—a kind of middle path—is to find that experience in the body and ground the attention in how it's manifesting physically.

Now, using the body during the non-formal sitting and walking times. Sometimes it can be fun to pick little things and make it like a game to try to be mindful of them. You might say, "I'm going to try to be really aware every time I go up or down those two steps from the coat room to the walking room. I'm just going to be present." Or you might say, "I'm going to notice what foot I cross the threshold to the Dharma Hall with—is it my left foot or my right foot?" You can use any number of things, how the body is simply moving throughout the day. Pick little things and make it your intention to be present when they're happening, because they're always happening. Slowly, we can have our day peppered with these automatic moments of mindfulness once we've worked with them for a while.

And I know it's been said many, many times, but just as a general way to work with the body during the non-sitting and non-walking times, ask yourself the question many times during the day: What would it be like to relax my body a little more right now? Could I just be more at ease? Could I just drop into the body in a more relaxed way—not jamming it in there, but just inviting that? Could it be more relaxed right now, more at ease?

Thich Nhat Hanh has a quote that really speaks to this feeling, this way of being in the body and doing things: "Drink your tea slowly and reverently, as if it is the axis on which the whole earth revolves—slowly, evenly, without rushing toward the future. Live the actual moment. Only this moment is life."

And the body is such a great vehicle to connect to that. We can feel it. We can have a somatic experience of what Thich Nhat Hanh is talking about. It's not an intellectual experience—we can feel it. We can feel that

level of being embodied and being in the moment.

And as you know, I'm sure you've all had these experiences—usually they don't happen during formal practice. You're just standing in the lunch line and you take a step forward, completely right there with it, not trying to be, just relaxed and taking this step. And how fresh and wonderful life is at that moment, the complete contentment that can arise from being embodied in that way.

Just a couple of words about meditating with the body or being with the body outside of retreat practice. A quick story: one time, some number of years ago, I was in a very difficult place in my life. Really hard circumstances coming together, things about myself being shown to me that were hard to face, not feeling good about myself—just very turbulent and difficult. I just kind of naturally said—and I had never done this before—"I'm going to go on a retreat in the mountains for a month." Something took me there. I went out and was by myself in the mountains, in the forest for a month.

It was incredibly healing. I didn't know it was healing at the time; I was just doing a retreat. But it was a really good thing. I tell that story to say that

When we feel isolated, cut off from life, alone, disconnected—and we will all go through this at times—the body can be a great place where we find solace. When we're connected to the body, we're connected. You're not disconnected. You're with life as it is right here, right now, manifesting in the body.

Now of course, this body is not ours. It's not me or my or mine. But instead of that being something disconnecting and lonely, something to fight against, it's actually a good thing. Because this body is connected to all of life. You've heard the famous simile: the breath you're breathing has the exhale of every human being that's ever lived in it. Our bodies have the same atoms as the sun and the stars in the universe. It's that connected.

When we connect to the body in this way, intuitively and deeply, we might get a sense of what D.H. Lawrence said when he wrote: "I am part of the sun as my eye is part of me. That I am part of the earth, my feet know perfectly, and my blood is part of the sea. There is nothing of me that is alone and absolute."

So yes, the body is not me, not mine. And one way that we can know or understand that is through this sensing, this feeling, this relating to the body that is connected with everything that ever was.

Another way of working with the body outside of retreat is to let it be your anchor. We have an anchor in formal practice—we start with it, we return to it. Let your body be your anchor for awareness during your daily life. What could be a better anchor than that?

As Eckhart Tolle writes: "As much as possible in everyday life, use awareness of the body to create space. Whenever you inhabit your body in this way, it serves as an anchor for staying present in the now."

We can build on that. We can notice our body throughout the day and have the intention to notice whether there are any places of holding or tension, and let those go. We'll benefit from that. When we're

walking, we can know we're walking.

Often at the end of a retreat, students ask me how they can bring their practice into their life, how they can be aware during the day. The first thing I always say is: just remember you have a body. Let that be the foundation for how you are in the world.

This is an equation that I know you know, but it's good to remember: when you're aware of your body, that equals being present. Those two are never separated. You're never aware of your body and not present. You can be aware of your body and go off into thought the next moment about the body or whatever and not be present. But in the moment of connecting with your body, you're present. That's a for sure equation.

Lastly, as a way to deepen connection with the body, put the small body in the big body—meaning, go out in nature. Being in nature is simply a very good place for most human beings to be.

For some people, nature doesn't feel like a safe place, for different reasons. It could be someone grew up in the city all their life and nature feels like the unknown. Or it could be more concrete. For people of color, nature cannot always be a safe place because of the atrocities that happened there—the lynchings and all that followed. The legacy of that is devastating and can make nature carry that weight for some people. So for different reasons, nature isn't always a great place for everyone.

But for most people, it's a really helpful place to be—from being a reminder of the interconnectedness of things, to being a wonderful place of solace when things are difficult, to being an environment where, if we feel safe, there's a sense that we can really deeply rest.

This is by Shabkar, a Tibetan yogi: "In wild places where no one lives are pleasant caves in which to dwell and practice. In wild places where no one lives, one's consoling friends will be wild animals and birds."

In wild places where no one lives, one's nourishment will be wild roots and berries. In wild places where no one lives is the market where samsara is traded for nirvana. In wild places where no one lives are the conditions favorable for realization. In the wild places where no one lives is natural beauty delightful to behold. There is no possible way to express the many virtues of staying in remote and lonely places far removed from human habitation. Therefore, heir of the victorious ones, go to a secluded place and practice.

When we go into nature, our bodies are connected with the larger body. Our senses, the sense doors, are very naturally being contacted. For some reason, it's just a very conducive place for wisdom to arise. It's a great place to practice the Dharma.

Albert Einstein wrote, "Look deeply into nature and then you will understand everything better." Looking deeply into nature is looking deeply into our bodies, and vice versa. They're the same. And when we look, we see. This is vipassana. And what do we see when we look closely at anything? That things are

constantly changing.

One time, I was out in the woods just standing there, seeing what would show up—not animal-wise, but experience-wise. Just being there for whatever happens. It was wintertime, and you know how you can hear the gusts of wind coming, that sound? I heard that, and then I saw it passing through the trees as they swayed. Then it passed through, and the trees stopped swaying. And it was like, "Well, okay. Thank you for that." How clear. How clear could cause and effect be? How clear could change be? It was just manifesting right there. Ah, here it is.

The Buddha said, "In this fathom-long body, I declare, is the world, the origin of the world, the cessation of the world, and the path leading to the cessation of the world." He's saying that the noble truths can be apprehended in the body. The body as teacher.

You may have heard the quip that health is merely the slowest possible rate at which to die. Old age, sickness, and death are the three things we can count on most in this life. And they were, of course, three of the four heavenly messengers that woke the Buddha up to his quest for enlightenment. Think about that. What woke the Bodhisattva up to his desire to be enlightened? It wasn't the intellect. It was the body. It was seeing, with his body, with his eyes—seeing a sick person, an old person, and a corpse. The body was the heavenly messenger that woke the Bodhisattva up.

When we get sick, how do we respond? Is there a sense that something is wrong, or can we recognize this as a natural and inevitable thing that happens to the body? Of course we know that intellectually, but what's actually happening in the moment? What actually happens when the copier doesn't work? We want to look. What's our relationship to the body getting sick?

When we notice the gray hairs, aching bodies, declining physical abilities—do we try not to notice them, try to mask them or pretend they're not happening in some way? Or can we see it as a teaching into the nature of the body, which is its impermanence? Can we see the body as ultimately out of control and therefore not ourselves?

Think about it. Do you decide, "I think I'll get Lyme disease now"? "I think I'll start losing my sight now"? When the eyes start to decline, I remember when I first noticed I was having problems seeing. It was so interesting. It was like, "Wow, I really can't see."

This really works. That was the feeling. I must say, there wasn't a no to that one. It was very interesting. Like, wow, aging really works. I never thought I would not be able to see. And then one day I realized, this is really blurry. Now the font has gone from 12 to 14.

So if we can cultivate wisdom through the body in these ways, old age, sickness, and death don't have to be such a bummer. They can bring us to deep understanding.

I was thinking about it. It's kind of like the body is our safety net—our wisdom safety net. If we go through

life not learning anything, not developing any wisdom and compassion, just completely bumbling along, and if we're lucky enough to live long enough, guess what's going to happen? Old age, sickness, and death. It's like the body saying, "Hey, here's your last chance. I'm going to give you one last chance to wake up to how it is." It's really our good friend that way.

I'll end with that thought—that ultimately the body can be seen as such a good friend that even if we don't find a way to cultivate wisdom and compassion along the way, it gives us one last chance.

So let's feel our bodies for a moment.

Thank you for listening.

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