Speech - Wise And Not So Wise

Pascal Auclair · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Three-Month Retreat (IMS 2012) · 1:02:54

I remember for many years at the end of retreats, at the closing circle or the closing ritual or whatever closing moment was there, I would cry so much. I would usually go out and hide in the woods somewhere, in some parking lot or some place, and just cry and cry. The thought was always pretty much the same: do not release me yet. Do not let me loose in the world.

There was a recognition that there was still so much confusion and so many patterns in this being that could be harmful for oneself and for others. I really felt—I think there was some discernment in there—a recognition that the job was really not done.

After a few years of practice, I would end the retreat and be okay with the fact that it was time to go home. And even nowadays, I definitely have confidence, but there's another quality present: I'm curious. I want to go see how, as the expression says, the rubber will meet the road—the Eightfold Path in action.

I remember one long retreat here particularly. There were, as there will be in the next few days, little groups happening around different things. You might have seen them—practice in Asia, or the over-35 group, things like this. I was in a circle group. There was a first statement made by the host of the group, the person leading it, and then it was followed by Pascal uttering this completely sarcastic joke.

This was not at the beginning of practice. This was well into the practice. And I just remember sitting there thinking, wow, this is so unuseful. This is so off the mark. This is so off what I've been trying to do for the last weeks. But at that point, there was recognition: yes, this is harmful, and this is probably going to happen again. So it's better to be present with it, be engaged with it, and do what's appropriate to do.

After the meeting, I went to see the person and said, "Oh, that was sarcastic and probably not right." The person responded, "Oh, no, no, I thought it was funny."

But I don't know if you can see the difference. In one version, I would have hated myself. In this new version, there was simply recognition: I actually really want to release that kind of pattern. Not helpful. And it has momentum. I have to be realistic. I've trained that for years—to be intelligent and sharp and destroy an idea with a few words. That's not how I want to live anymore. Yet conditioning, being as it is, it's going to take time to unwind this. I have to be responsible.

So tonight I want to talk about speech, because I want to include more in the field of our practice. We've practiced being aware of body, being aware of breath, being aware of sensations, being aware of emotions, being aware of perceptions, feeling tone. We've tried in our practice to include all experiences.

Tonight I want to talk about speech a little bit more because that's the field that's going to get bigger starting tomorrow. It's not like we haven't been speaking—we've been babbling the whole time, inwardly certainly, many of us, a lot of the time. But tomorrow there will be the encounter with the other, and that field of practice of being in relationship and exchanging ideas a bit. We'll do this very progressively. But that's the new kind of phenomenon that we will welcome in a big way, in a bigger way, certainly.

I think it's a beautiful field to play in. There can be a lot revealed about—well, certainly about our views, the way we see the world and our beliefs when we speak. It's being revealed.

You might notice after the periods of talking tomorrow that sometimes when we go back to silence, the effect, the power of speech—something you'll have said maybe will resonate, echo, reverberate. "Cannot believe I said that. That was so big self." Or "Cannot believe I heard that." We are impacted by speech, the one we utter and what we receive.

But also deeply touched by it. Having a conversation with somebody and something is offered of personal experience, or something will be said, and you'll sit back in the silence and it will come: wow, how beautiful was this thing that this person said in the group or in the conversation, in the dining hall.

It is said that for animals, action is very central in their life.

We can consider this: for human beings, speech is where a lot of the beauty can reside—a lot of the opening, sustaining, supporting, freeing oneself and others. And yet a lot of damage can be created through speech as well. I'll include in this the written form, which is very prevalent and active these days: texting, emailing, and all the speech that we receive and offer through that medium.

Bhante Gunaratana says that he considers the computer the equivalent of the ax in the old days. What he says about the ax is that in the old days, you could do a lot with an ax, including very, very refined work. It was not just to chop trees, but also to make wood very even and soft. You would use the ax to do this. And he says computers do the same thing. You can create beauty with it, but you can also break with communication on that level.

Another image of the ax came again today. I was reading and ran into this from the text. It says, "Every person who is born is born with an ax in their mouth. A fool who uses abusive language cuts themselves and others with that ax."

So speech has the power to liberate. We just have to think of this retreat and how the words were used here, and how you might recall hearing something that really opened your mind—the power of speech in this way.

I'm not sure, we'll see how it goes, but it might be that my talk is naming a lot of the wrong, unwise, unbeneficial speech. The idea, perhaps, is that if we want to cultivate a really beautiful field and grow whatever we want in it that would be sustaining for our community and for ourselves, we might have to

first remove all the rocks and stumps and roots that are in the ground that are keeping us from growing and harvesting beautiful vegetables and fruits.

One thing I like about speech is that it reveals. Speech, like any action, comes from intention. So when we speak, it can reveal our intentions. It can also reveal externally—in talking with somebody, we can do a beautiful exploration of the Dhamma, of what's happening for the other person, through speech. And intention comes from view, from the understanding that we have of the world.

A definition that I read about wrong view—I've been talking about this a lot—was that view is described as a decision that consciously or unconsciously we make about what is real. This is a view. And wrong view or unwise view is what takes what is unreal for real. It deviates from the real and confirms instead what is false.

I see these three being very much related: the views we have, wise or unwise—or you could think about it as liberating or entangling—the intention that comes out of this, and then the speech that is uttered.

The four classic kinds of speech that I'll be talking about tonight, you might know them: false speech, divisive speech, harsh speech, and idle speech—empty speech.

All these four kinds of speech, it says, are led or rooted in one of the three poisons. When there is this kind of speech happening, there is something about gain. I want to gain something by using that speech—either something material for myself or somebody close to me, or I want to gain some status or admiration, wanting to promote myself in a certain way. If it's not led by greed and gain of something, then it's led by hatred. There's either a wanting to break, to bring down, or this aspect that we don't like to talk about so much: cruelty. The way I understand it is the pleasure derived from the suffering of somebody else.

We don't like to think about this so much because it's very ugly. It's one of the ugliest things, in my mind—having pleasure for the suffering of somebody else. Disliking it so much, I didn't think this was possible in this being. And then one time on retreat—this is not about speech, but I think it can say something—I was moving slowly, going towards outside in the foyer there. Just as I came to open the door, I saw that outside, because of the little window on the side—you must have noticed this over the weeks—somebody was coming to enter. They were not seeing me, but I was seeing them. And what I saw myself doing was not opening the door so they could get in. I knew they would reach for the door, and I just went like this, and they just went like this.

Nothing happened. Nobody was hurt. But I was pleased. And I saw that. And I thought, why would one being do this? What kind of crazy confusion would lead to this?

That was a very small move, but it was cruel. And for me, at that moment when I saw that, I was afraid. I got afraid and I thought, wow, I really want to see this if it happens again—anything of that nature—because I don't want to cultivate this.

This has to be seen, although it might create some cognitive dissonance. We think, "I don't like that, I don't want to see myself like that, I don't want to describe myself like that." But it's of great importance that it is seen and recognized. For it to be abandoned, that's the only way. Cruelty—just to bring it into the field of things that can be recognized. And hopefully not in you, just in me then, you know. But maybe not.

So just a few words on false speech, or lying, and on the societal level. It's so important that we can trust each other. That's a really great need that we have. And when there are lies going around, it can really break the social fabric. It's good to see this movement on a big scale. Often we can see this in the political realm—how much there can be telling of lies, and the effect it has on us, on our society. We think, "I don't want to go vote anymore because it's all BS anyway." How disruptive it can be on a big scale.

Then on a more personal, relational level—I won't talk about everything about it, but just a few little bits here and there. One effect of lying that I've seen in people a few times now is how it can remove in somebody else their access to their intuition. They'll feel that something is going on. And when they ask questions, if they're told, "No, everything is fine, everything is normal," then it starts to undermine their trust in themselves, their capacity to read what is happening.

This I find very sad—that a person, when suddenly the truth is revealed, will say, "I knew this was going on. I knew it, and I blamed myself and I distrusted myself."

For me, I want to reflect on this because this is something I would so not want to take from somebody: their capacity to read a situation, to intuit, without information, to be able to feel. I find this worth stopping and thinking about—the effect of a lie in this way. And it can be a long, deep lie, I could say, but it could also be just a little something that is not recognized and should be.

We come here and we're interested in the nature of reality. We want to see things as they are. It's very interesting to watch how the mind often actually does not want to see things or talk about things as they are—will correct a little bit, hide a little bit.

It's very telling that the Buddha-to-be—and most of you must know this—lifetimes before he was to be a Buddha, well, all the lifetimes before being a Buddha, from the moment he decided that he would one day be a Buddha, a first one to reveal the teachings, to discover the teachings... and it took apparently lifetimes and lifetimes. In that story, it says that he never lied because he was committed to truth.

Sometimes it's interesting when I look at what I said in a conversation and I ask myself, "Am I actually interested in truth, or am I interested in something else—looking good, or what?" It can be a good question we can bring as spiritual seekers, seekers of truth. It demands a certain integrity that is of a pretty high level. You can check it out for yourself around this.

The thing that the teachings say about lying is that when we lie, a lie doesn't come alone. Often it takes another one to cover for the first. And so we build an architecture of lies to sustain the first one. This is stressful in and of itself. But also we find ourselves at some point in a cage of lies.

This is so not unlike the cage we are in right now, the one we come to retreat to examine and dismantle—this mental cage of lies, of wrong understanding, of wrong conceptualizing of what is what. We could say that these false perceptions are mirage-like, that we want to clean our perception of these lies, and yet we're stuck.

And we felt it, I think I can say safely, all of us, in these last weeks—how painful it is to be caught in confusion, not truth, not rightly comprehending what is happening. And so we can appreciate maybe the entangling nature of a lie.

This is a beautiful thing to take on, to just examine. And you know, for some of us it's not going to resonate because there's already cleanliness in there. But I would bet that for many of us, to a certain degree, at a certain level of subtlety, there is some richness to explore.

So maybe just a quote here:

Herein, someone avoids false speech and abstains from it. He speaks the truth, is devoted to truth, reliable, worthy of confidence, not a deceiver of people. Being at a meeting or amongst people or in the midst of her relatives or in society or in the king's court, when called upon and asked as a witness to tell what she knows, she answers: if she knows nothing, "I know nothing." If she knows, she answers, "I know." If he's seen something, he answers, "I've seen something." If he hasn't seen something, he answers, "I've seen nothing."

Thus, she never knowingly speaks a lie, either for the sake of her own advantage or for the sake of another person's advantage or for the sake of any advantage whatsoever.

A small note here: in lying, there is an intention to deceive. If there is not the intention to deceive, even though what is said might not be true, then this is something else. We are not in the realm of breaking an ethical precept because the intention was not there.

The second aspect is divisive or slanderous speech. When we engage in this, usually there is an intention—to destroy, to divide people. Or sometimes, in a very twisted way, it becomes a means to either promote oneself or to get closer to others, to create connection. This is a twisted dynamic that I have seen so many times in groups.

And by the way, another small thing—I think you might have gotten this by now, but for me, this is a particular kind of talk to give because I feel a lot of heat when I work on this, as I have been doing in the last few days. I have a lot of work to do here. I sit there thinking, "Oh, yeah, yeah." It is very humbling to actually revisit this teaching and work with it again. And probably many of us will feel this too. I hope so—it feels good to think that I am not alone in this realm. And that might be confirmed in the next few hours. But yes, I think it was important to name that.

So, this twisted way to find affection by putting somebody down. And again, there is this beauty—I keep coming back to this word. I have to start using other words, but I use the word "beauty" a lot when I talk

about the Dharma these days. To actually see this pattern in action brings heat. It is difficult. But to actually recognize it, or even afterwards to say, "Really, this is what happened"—to be clear about this, to acknowledge that this was not helpful speech—this is important.

So perhaps a story here about divisive speech, just to release some of the tension that could be there.

There was the king Ajātasattu—a king who was known to often walk the wrong path. He was one of the devotees, one of the main supporters of Devadatta, who was the archetypal enemy cousin of the Buddha, the one who wanted the Buddha to fail with his sangha. At some point, this king was talking to the Buddha, telling him about his desire and his plan to destroy a confederacy that included the Licchavi people. The Licchavi were known to be very powerful, very harmonious. They had a good community going, we could say. And the king wanted their territory. He was telling the Buddha about this plan.

The Buddha said, "As long as they live in harmony and they are unified, it will not be possible to destroy them and take over the land. It is not a possibility for you."

So the king had this really sick idea. He thought, "If I divide them, then there will be chaos, and I will come in and be able to conquer. I will follow what the Buddha said, but in the opposite direction."

And so he sent his prime minister into a meeting where many clansmen were gathered together, including the Licchavi. The prime minister, in the meeting with everybody there, did this very simple thing that the king had asked him to do. He went to one of the Licchavi and whispered in his ear, "There is rice in a paddy seed." Everyone knows there is rice in a paddy seed. "Did you know? There is rice in a paddy seed." It is that kind of obvious statement, like saying the sky is blue.

Now, there was another Licchavi who saw this—that the prime minister of the king had murmured something in this man's ear. And he asked him, "What did he say to you earlier when he leaned in like that?"

The man replied, "Oh, he told me that there was rice in the paddy seeds."

And the other one thought, "That is certainly not what he said to him. We all know this. In an important meeting like this, that explanation is too lame. It does not make sense." And he told another person of the clan, "Did you see when they were talking together?"

I saw it. I was wondering why the prime minister was talking to this man, and I asked him what he was saying.

"What was he saying?"

"Well, he was saying that there was rice in the paddy seed."

"No, no, no—that's probably a spy. That's probably what's happening. They're fermenting something."

And so this whole thing started. There was disruption, and it created a big chaos, fighting over this and that. When the king came in with his armies, the Licchavis were so disorganized that he could easily take over the capital city and the whole land.

So this whole story starts with divisive speech—a very simple little sentence. "The sky is blue." But the intention behind it was clearly to divide, and it worked really well.

"He avoids slanderous speech and abstains from it. What he has heard here, he does not repeat there, so as to cause dissension there. And what she has heard there, she does not repeat here, so as to cause dissension here. Thus, he unites those that are divided, and those that are united, she encourages. Concord gladdens her. He delights and rejoices in concord, and it is concord that he and she spread by their words."

I'm doing a little adaptation there—having my own personal fun.

So, harsh speech. There was one monk who was a—hold on, how do you say that in English?—he was a foodie in the time of the Buddha. He really delighted in good curries and papadum and samosas and the good stuff. And he was always on the lookout for which monk was invited where for which meal, and where he could get a good, delightful meal going.

Now, Devadatta, the enemy cousin of the Buddha, had a little group of unwholesome monks. They were often invited to houses where people would make great meals for them. So this monk was hanging out with them a lot—not because of the company, really, but because of the food.

The Buddha wanted to help him understand that it was very dangerous to hang out with people who had harsh speech and slanderous speech. And so he told this monk of one of his prior lives.

He said, "I don't know if you remember—you probably don't. It's not an easy thing to do, to remember your past lives—but in a prior life, long, long time ago, you actually were a beautiful, powerful elephant that belonged to a king. You were known to be very noble and faithful, a soft-hearted elephant that the king loved very, very much.

"What happened in that life of yours as an elephant is that at some point, a group of burglars started to meet every night to plot their bad deeds right by your stable where you lived. They would spend the night devising plans to hurt people and steal things. They were getting drunk and using abusive, harsh speech.

"What happened to you over time is that you became conditioned by that kind of attitude and speech. You became a very dangerous elephant and couldn't work with anybody. Every time somebody new was hired to take care of you, you would kill them.

"The king was devastated. He didn't know what was going on with his elephant. At some point, he asked one of his wise attendants to investigate."

The Buddha said, "I was the attendant of that king, in a former life, and he asked me to go find out what was going on. So I went at night, and I discovered the burglars meeting just by your stable. I could see how it was influencing you.

"I went back to the king and told him what was happening—that we should get rid of these men and instead bring wise people to discuss wise matters near you every evening. In this way, you were able to regain your sanity and your noble heart as an elephant.

"So this happened to you once when you were an elephant. Be careful with your obsession with food, because that might lead you into trouble a second time."

So that was the Buddha's story about harsh and slanderous speech.

There is a quote I want to read you here. This one is about receiving harsh speech—not uttering it and being influenced by it, but the reactivity that we can have.

So this is the Buddha again. He says, "When others address you, their speech may be timely or untimely..."

When others address you, their speech may be true or false. When others address you, their speech may be gentle or harsh. When they address you, their speech may be connected with good or with harm. When others address you, their speech may be spoken with loving kindness or in inner hate. Herein, you should train thus: our minds will be unaffected, and we will utter no evil words. We will abide compassionate for their welfare, with a mind of loving kindness, without inner hate. We shall abide pervading that person with a mind imbued with loving kindness. And starting with that person, we shall abide pervading the all-encompassing world with a mind imbued with loving kindness—abundant, exalted, immeasurable, without hostility or ill will. That's how you should train yourself, bhikkhus.

I love the first part where the Buddha is simply so straightforward. When people talk to you, sometimes it will be the right timing, sometimes it won't. When people talk to you, sometimes they will want to hurt you, sometimes not. When people talk to you, sometimes their speech will be beneficial, sometimes not.

To me, when I talk about making the field of our practice bigger, this is partly what I mean. Is it okay that I'll be with people who will talk to me when it's not time to talk to me, who will want to hurt me when they speak? Can I engage fully in samsara, in a way? Can I totally be there for it and use this as practice? Can I remember sati—mindfulness—but also remember my values of respect? Here's a beautiful challenge.

I think Pema Chödrön somewhere was saying, you know these people who confront us or make our life miserable? She describes it like somebody who knocks on the door. You open the door, and the person passes right by you. They go straight into the basement of your house without asking anything, and they make a lot of noise, and then they come out holding something, and they say, "Is this yours?" Showing you the most ugly thing you have hidden in your house.

And what do these people get, these people who do that for you? Your friends won't do that for you. Unless

you have a really good teacher, but often it's the enemy who will do that for you, who will show you your reactivity hidden. What do they get? They get misery. They get hated. They get nothing. All the praise goes to the Buddha and to your teacher. That's who gets the praise. These people do tremendous things for you. They reveal your stuff, but they won't get anything. At least, can you offer them compassion?

So that's harsh speech. And the last one is empty speech, or idle speech, or empty chatter. This is another one that we can become more aware of.

Would you be interested, curious to hear the list of the kinds of speech to be avoided by contemplatives? Any contemplatives around?

Here's the list. Whereas some priests and contemplatives living off food given in faith—so here we're talking about monks and nuns, but it's interesting to consider—some of them are addicted to talking about lowly topics such as these. I think there are thirty of them; I didn't count again.

Talking about kings, robbers, ministers of state, armies, alarms and battles, food and drink, clothing, furniture, garlands and scents, relatives, vehicles, villages, towns, cities, countryside, people, heroes, gossip of the street, gossip of the well, tales of the dead, tales of diversity—meaning philosophical discussions about the past and the future—the creation of the world and the sea, and talk of whether things exist or not. The contemplative abstains from talking about lowly topics such as these. This, too, is part of virtue.

Interesting, no?

The list gets very short.

I'll continue with a few more of these because they're quite interesting. "Whereas some priests and contemplatives living off food given in faith are addicted to debates such as these: 'You don't understand this doctrine and discipline? I'm the one who understands this doctrine and discipline. How could you understand this doctrine and discipline? You're practicing wrongly. I'm practicing rightly. I'm being consistent. You're not. What should be said first, you said last. What should be said last, you said first. What you took so long to think out has been refuted. Your doctrine has been overthrown. You're talking rubbish. You're defeated. Go try and salvage your doctrine. Extricate yourself if you can.' He or she abstains from debates such as these. This too is part of virtue."

You have to adapt this to see if you're engaging in this kind of thing about your own doctrine and practice. It's interesting.

So perhaps we should consider what we ought to talk about. Are you interested in that one? "Why should you not do this? Such talk, monks, is not related to the goal, is not fundamental to the holy life, does not conduce to disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, tranquility, higher knowledge, enlightenment, or nibbāna. When you have discussions, monks and nuns, contemplatives, you should discuss suffering.

Period. You should discuss suffering, the arising of suffering, its cessation, and the path that leads to the cessation of suffering. Why is that? Because such talk is related to the goal. It conduces to disenchantment, to nibbāna. This is the task you must accomplish."

What I appreciate about this teaching is that it's saying wise speech is not just for community harmony—which alone would be amazing—not just for interrelational harmony, not just for personal well-being, not just for personal well-being in the future, but it is actually a tool to wake up. A very powerful tool to wake up.

Let me name a few other patterns that we might notice with our speech. These patterns relate to the way we speak, but also to our intentions, and again, to the way we understand life and how it can become entangled. I want to be careful with that word, but we need very strong words here too.

All-or-nothing talk. "You're always late." I want to get specific about how we use speech in this way. "You're never like this." "I'm so stupid." The nuances disappear entirely. There are many patterns of speech that tend to exaggerate in this manner, and it's not onward leading. We can do this habitually without seeing it, and we have to bring attention to this.

Presenting somebody as completely compassionate—they're completely compassionate—or as having no compassion whatsoever. This way we sometimes talk about people being good or bad, wonderful or terrible. And magnifying also: "I will never get over this."

There's a friend I was having a conversation with, and I found myself saying—I don't know how it came to be—"I love this person so much, I want to be with them always." And I reflected, "Oh, so you love them a lot right now. And the feeling you have now makes you project into the future." But anicca—can you make a statement that is true, that acknowledges you feel very strongly right now about this person, without the exaggeration?

Part of this exaggeration, this all-or-nothing quality, includes selective memory and the way we use speech in this manner.

We'll remember just the bad things of that weekend, that person, or ourselves. Here we are very strong on this, many of us—self-hatred, using selective recall. We use our mind, but also our speech. When we speak, we can notice what we're saying to correct the vision. Or correcting the vision and then speaking accordingly—whichever way it goes, to be attentive to these patterns of speech.

Another pattern is a kind of mind reading, where because you feel something, it becomes truth and is presented as that. This is about speech. "They wanted to harm me." The vision there contains a mistake. It might be true, but it might not be. And so the description using speech is not accurate. It's not "I felt defended" or "I felt fear"—it's a claim about another's intentions. The way we use speech can distort stories for ourselves and others.

Another pattern is the "should" statements. "They should be like that." "It should not have happened." Suddenly the beautiful practice we do here—of really considering how things come together, that they're conditional—is abandoned. The conditions were such that this is what happened. Not "it should not have happened." It should have happened, because it did. So we stop and start with this: "Oh, this is what happened. This is what was said. This is what was understood. This is what was misleadingly understood—or misunderstood, rather." And then we work with the conditions.

In our habitual way of speaking, we'll just kick the wisdom out. The wisdom of causality will be kicked out. The wisdom of selflessness, too, in the way we use "I." Is the "I" that I'm using conventional, or is it magnificently attached, totally identified? We can see this.

Think of the power of speech. Think of the inner speech of the last weeks. Was it truthful, factual, or could there have been here and there a little exaggeration? Was it kind or harsh, the language, the inner language? Was it divisive or more harmonizing? Just the inner speech. Was it always beneficial, timely, useful, or was it sometimes idle and empty?

Just asking the question. It's amazing—when you look at the tons of words that were said, piles of words in this mind, how much of it was useful, beneficial, timely, kind. Wow. Reality check.

So perhaps take a moment. I'll ask you a few questions for reflection. You can close your eyes if you wish.

Of these unwise speech patterns I named—harsh speech, untrue speech, idle speech, gossip, divisive speech—which one is your more habitual pattern, if there is any, that you've seen here on retreat or in your life?

It might be important to reflect on the gratification aspect of these patterns. For example, what's good about putting somebody down? What feels good? How does it feel good, if it does for you? What would it feel like to always protect someone else's reputation?

What feels good about putting myself down, if that's a pattern of mine? What would it be like to always bring great respect for this being, in my inner speech or outer speech?

What feels good about presenting myself in my best angle, or embellishing a bit? What feels good about harsh speech? How would it feel to abandon that?

A few different questions here. How do you think this retreat could influence your use of speech? What has changed in you that could positively affect how you communicate?

And how do you feel about giving speech more space in your life again, starting tomorrow? How do you feel about that?

Is there something you fear about this? How do you think you could possibly create trouble for yourself and others in the next few days around speech? What kind of mistakes do you think you could make? And

lastly, what could help you in bringing healthy speech into your practice in the next few days?

Thank you for your reflection.

So just in conclusion, being aware of the body can be a great way to support speaking and listening. Being aware of mind states, of intentions—this is very central. All the tools we've been exploring, all the ways we've been cultivating mindfulness, are welcome in speaking and listening. Attention to the body, attention to the breath, attention to mind states, intentions, feeling tones. *This is unpleasant. It's very unpleasant.* So that I don't speak to avoid that, run away from that, deny that—but rather it can be included in the feeling tone that I feel.

I'll finish with six little instructions from Gregory Kramer, who teaches Insight Dialogue—a beautiful practice that you might want to research or read about or experience in retreats where you learn to do a Dhamma practice while dialoguing. I could talk about it the whole evening probably, but I'm just going to offer them to inspire you.

The six instructions are: pause, relax, open, trust emergence, listen deeply, speak the truth.

Pause—to come back to the body, to bring mindfulness. Relax—to bring ease, receptivity. Open—perhaps to bring inclusion, opening to the other, to the field, to the space of being with somebody else. Trust emergence—acknowledging the unknown, the creative process, that things can emerge, that I don't have to know everything. Listen deeply and speak the truth—the courage that is in there, the honesty.

So: pause, relax, open, trust emergence, listen deeply, speak the truth.

We'll talk more about speech again tomorrow. Perhaps we can stay here in silence for a few moments.

Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful speech and the inability to listen to others, I am committed to cultivating loving speech and deep listening in order to bring joy and happiness to others and relieve others of their suffering.
—Thich Nhat Hanh

Thank you.

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