Q&A: Integrating Practice, Right Speech, and Love No Matter What

Joseph Goldstein · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Joseph Goldstein · 1:03:59

So tonight, only easy questions.

Tara and Walt will be having microphones to hand to you when you ask a question so that way everyone can hear it and I won't need to repeat.

Anybody?

Question: This is my first retreat, so just a little context. I was wondering if you could offer some advice as far as what may work and what wouldn't, if I plan to integrate these teachings into a more general context—maybe a science-forward mindfulness practice post-retreat. I think I first learned of you and got some of your energy from the 10% Happier route. I'm kind of concerned with how all-encompassing this practice seems here, with the long sits and so many levels and such a rich history. How do I not water that down so that it's useless, but incorporate it into shorter practices?

First, I should say that some of that will be addressed tomorrow night because my four colleagues are going to be speaking, each one about a particular *pāramī*. The *pāramīs* are the perfections that the Buddha developed to become a Buddha. It's a whole list, and they're really qualities that can and should be brought into our lives. So there'll be more of that tomorrow evening.

But just briefly: there are a few things that are really important in terms of carrying the practice forward. One is a daily sitting practice. The regularity is more important than the length. That being said, you want to sit longer than five minutes. If you can sit an hour a day, that would be great. If you can sit two hours a day, that would be great. Maybe it's half an hour. But really try to establish a routine and a rhythm where that just becomes part of your life. It's really important because it sets the day up. There's more of a chance of carrying mindfulness throughout all the busyness of the day. And it's a touchstone each day into the depths and the fullness of whatever you experienced here.

Another huge arena of practice would be really undertaking the practice of right speech, because we speak a lot. It's a major use of our energy in the course of our lives, in the course of a day. And mostly—I'm sure you recognize this—mostly in our speech, the words just come tumbling out. It's not that often much attention is paid to the motivation behind what we're saying. So somebody came up with this acronym: WAIT. W-A-I-T. Why Am I Talking? Before we speak, wait—even if it's just for a moment. Instead of just being on the forward momentum of that energy tumbling out.

The Buddha talked about four different kinds of wrong speech. I'll just back up a minute. There's one list of ten wholesome and ten unwholesome actions. Obviously the wholesome are to be cultivated and the unwholesome to be avoided. Four of the ten are about speech. So this is not insignificant. This is a core part of our practice, which obviously can be undertaken more effectively out of retreat than in retreat, since you don't talk that much here.

Some kinds of wrong speech are obvious: not lying, not harsh speech, not slander, gossip, things like that. But there's one category which I love to practice with. The Pāli word for its English translation is *samphap palāpa*. The English translation is "useless talk." I mean, it sounds just like what it is: *samphappalāpa*.

I find it so interesting, just in our social interactions. I can be hanging out with friends, and so often the conversation will be going on and I'll see this impulse to say something totally useless. Basically, it's just a way of saying, "Here I am." That's the only point of those particular words.

So I really try to keep an eye out for the impulse to *samphappalāpa*. And in those moments when I'm successful, I say, "No, I don't have to say this." First, it feels like a great victory over Māra. Māra is the embodiment of delusion in the Buddhist texts, trying to keep us ensnared in unwholesome activities. Defeated Māra in this moment! But even more than that, the felt sense of that restraint is a conservation of energy, and you can feel it. Instead of just our energy spilling out in a useless way—we're about to do it, then no, I don't have to do it—there's more integrity in the being.

So right speech, and just paying attention to that. When you go home, if you want to do some reading about it, you might explore different books about Buddhism, even books on the basic Eightfold Path. Right speech is one of them, and you might explore in greater depth just through some reading all the various aspects of it. That would be a big area.

I think that's enough for now because tomorrow night people are going to be speaking about other kinds of practices to do in our lives outside. Daily sitting, right speech...

A question from a participant: What can one expect if they go on a one-month or a three-month retreat like the ones offered here? Or perhaps what should one consider before committing to such a long retreat?

You can expect more of the same—which should be encouraging, because if you made it this far in this retreat, you'll be fine. Especially if you don't have expectations of anything else. That being said, over time and over a longer period, there's a chance to strengthen the concentration. Often people will see a deepening of the concentration, a greater continuity of practice, all the things we've been talking about here. But there's just a longer time to cultivate them, and because of that, they get stronger.

It's very valuable. If there's an interest and an opportunity in your lives, as you can imagine, I'm a big fan of intensive practice, just because it's so rare to have the opportunity to investigate this mind-body in this way. It's a really precious opportunity, and the long retreats—they're great, not always happy. It's really just like this, the same ups and downs. Some sittings will be really clear and calm and quiet, and others

will be turbulent and restless. But over time, day after day after day, we really learn a balance behind all those changes. Instead of being whipsawed, thrown about by all the changes and the ups and downs, we develop quite a stability in being with those changes.

There's a book about the Buddha's life written by Joseph Campbell, the great scholar of world myths. He wrote this book called *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, and he used the Buddha's life as the archetype of the journey towards awakening. In this book there's a very beautiful, mythopoetic description of the night of the Buddha's enlightenment, as he was sitting under the tree, assailed by all the forces of Māra—both the seductions, the sense delights, and also the fearsome aspects. All of these energies came to assail the Bodhisattva. And there's one line that Joseph Campbell wrote in describing that scene. This one line has really stuck with me in terms of being a beautiful expression of what our practice is actually about.

As the Bodhisattva, as he was known before his enlightenment, was assailed by all of these forces, Joseph Campbell wrote: "And the mind of the great being was not moved."

I love that. The mind of the great being was not moved. Can you imagine the beauty and the power and the steadiness and the openness of a heart-mind like that? Whatever life presents—stillness, peace, openness.

So that's really the direction we're going in—we learn to be less and less moved, less reactive, one could say, to the events, whether in meditation or in our lives.

A question came about the nature of thought. Several times I've mentioned how thoughts are empty, and how cutting at the root of them is simply recognizing that thought has no true nature. Throughout this week in dealing with thoughts, one person found that some thoughts can simply be labeled—planning, fantasy—and they're very easy to let go. In those thoughts, one can see, "Oh, okay, empty." The content carries no meaning or significance. But then there are other thoughts where the content, usually with an emotional charge, seems much more evidently meaningful or relevant to one's life. When those arise, one might either sit with them and try to feel into them, or make a note that this is something to meditate on at a later time. For some thoughts, the content seems evidently meaningful and worth pondering—perhaps past actions, how to make them right, or something of that sort. Can I speak to the emptiness of thoughts in this way?

This really points to one framework of understanding experience. I can't remember whether we've spoken about this explicitly, but it's the framework of relative truth and more ultimate truth. On the relative level, the contents of thoughts are worth paying attention to—in both ways. Either because they're meaningful and worth pursuing in one way or another, or we see the content as meaningless and let them go. But we're actually attending to the content. So that, we could say, is on the relative level. On the more ultimate level, it's there that we're seeing the momentariness, the insubstantiality, the ephemeral nature of thoughts. From that perspective, the content is irrelevant. We're just seeing the thought as a phenomenon that comes and goes.

Our practice is the union of the relative and the ultimate. It's not like they're two separate things. It's the same phenomena seen from different levels. And in our practice—and I think it can become quite intuitive—we sense when it's appropriate to pay attention to the relative level, and when it's appropriate to really stay on the more ultimate level of just seeing the momentary change.

Just as an example of the importance of the relative: in the years I was practicing in India, it was in Bodh Gaya, which is a small village but the place where the Buddha was enlightened, so it's a significant spiritual site. In the village, one of the big landowners had a working elephant, as you can sometimes see in India. So sometimes I'd be walking into the village, and the elephant would be walking the other way. I always stepped out of its path. I did not just say "seeing, seeing, seeing." Sometimes the application of the relative is absolutely appropriate.

It gets a little trickier in the examples that were given, in terms of when we're sitting and different thoughts come and the content does seem meaningful in some way. There are a variety of ways to handle it. One approach is to simply make a note, mark it, and say, "Okay, I'm going to really reflect on this later." If it feels very compelling in the moment—and sometimes it's so compelling we don't really have a choice—we get involved in some reflection about it, and that would be okay. I would just be watchful that it's very time-limited while we're sitting, because it would be easy to spend the hour just in reverie about it. But if you spend five minutes or so, some brief amount of time just trying to highlight the main points of its significance, which could then be taken up later, I think that would be fine.

Very often, certain kinds of thoughts become seductive—not only the personal thoughts arising from our own lives, but a very seductive thought pattern consists of Dharma thoughts. I've spent hours sitting just reflecting on Dharma thoughts. And I justified it to myself by saying, "Well, this is the Dharma." But it was really just thinking. Sometimes those kinds of thoughts happen when we have a certain insight. In our meditation we're going along and we see something really interesting, or clearly perceive some aspect of the teaching that becomes very obvious. The insight then becomes the initiative for thinking about it.

I've mentioned in a couple of my groups: have you ever chewed sugar cane? When you're in the tropics, they'll often sell little stalks of sugar cane on the streets, and you chew them, and the first few chews are very juicy and sweet. But after three or four chews, it becomes dry pulp, and then you spit it out and take another piece. So with these Dharma thoughts, where we're really reflecting on maybe an insight or an understanding—we can generally extract the juice of the insight in the first few minutes. And then it becomes a lot of repetitive thinking about it.

That's the dry pulp. And so we don't want to spend time in that.

In your personal practice, do you have an intention for every time you sit?

Sometimes. And it really covers the range.

For example, there was a time in my practice where I spent a year just doing metta practice. That was my

intention for each sit, and that's what I did. At other times, I had an intention that I really wanted to work on concentration and one-pointedness. So the intention for that sit would be to up the intentionality dial, just with the breath—just do that. Sometimes the intention has been to sit in an open awareness, a more choiceless awareness, so the sitting would then follow that.

But perhaps most often—and those are specific examples—what I find is that I sit and really trust the intuition of the movement between a directed awareness, for example on the breath or some other single object, and a more open, choiceless awareness. So even within one sitting, I may start with really attending to the breath, and then at a certain point—and it's very intuitive, there's not a formula for it—but after some time, it just feels like, "Oh, this is the moment to open up." And then it becomes more choiceless. And then at a certain point, that intuition might suggest it's good to refocus just on the breath. So there's a very easeful interweaving of the two. The sitting is often like that.

Can you talk more about compassion practice?

The metta practice and compassion practice are related, but they have a slightly different flavor and a slightly different phraseology. And also a different field of beings.

When we're doing metta, we start out with the individual categories, and then finally we move up to all beings. Metta really is for all beings, that well-wishing. Compassion is addressed primarily to the suffering of beings. Metta is just the feeling of goodwill for everybody, whether they may be in a happy state—we're just wishing well to all.

The phrase for compassion that we use is a single phrase, rather than three or four phrases. And the phrase is simply, "May you be free of suffering."

We start with a first category where we visualize somebody either known to us personally or maybe just from the news—someone who's in a lot of suffering. That's what we're visualizing because with that person, in this framework, it's easy to feel compassion. We can intuit or feel or see the actual suffering that's there. And so the wish, "May you be free of suffering," really has a deep meaning.

Generally, compassion practice is addressed to those suffering beings. In one way it also becomes universal, because on one level we're all suffering. So in that sense, it could be extended to anybody. But it particularly highlights beings who are in a situation of particular suffering.

What's really interesting about doing this practice—one might think that visualizing beings really in a lot of pain or difficulty or perhaps terrible circumstances, and expressing this wish, "May you be free of suffering"—it might sound like, even though it's a good thing to do, it's a downer because we're filling our heart and mind with the suffering of other beings. But it's quite extraordinary.

When we actually do the practice, even though it's all about suffering and the wish to be free of it, the practice is hugely uplifting. There's a certain kind of—joy is not the right word, but it's not a downer, it's

an upper. Because compassion is such a beautiful quality. When we tune into it, it's an ennobling quality. And to cultivate that for over an hour at a time, or sometimes people do intensive metta or compassion retreats where that's all they're doing all day long—it really opens the heart a lot. So it's a little different than metta, although you can see that it's related, but it's quite specifically oriented towards the suffering, either our own or others, and that wish: may you be free of it.

Can you talk a little bit about the difference between wanting things in your life and pursuing them, and craving?

One of the problems is that in English, the word wanting—or desire—can have a wide range of meanings. It covers a lot of different mind states. It's not a single mind state. We might say, "I want to get enlightened," or "I want to be more compassionate," or "I want that second scoop of ice cream." Those are very different mind states. One is a little more tinged with greed, and the other may be a really beautiful aspiration. So the mind state is very different even though the word we use is the same. I think you need to look in each of those situations where you're using the word "I want" to say, okay, what is the quality in the mind that this word is expressing?

Let me back up a minute. Living as lay people in the world, we live in the world of sense pleasures, and that's totally fine. We haven't chosen to live monastic lives with that level of renunciation. So we shouldn't hold that model up necessarily for how we should be living as lay people. We could, but it's not necessary.

When we look at the wants we have as lay people in the world, some will be of the non-greed variety—like coming here, or a noble aspiration of desire. But others will have some degree of greed in them. So I think what we want to do in this situation is really monitor the degree of greed. Are we really obsessing about this thing?

There's a little sequence of phrases that might help illuminate this. This came in a very specific example for one of my wants: "I want, I need, I must have." That's going to the greed side, where it just becomes so intense. The basic want for a basically innocuous pleasure—I don't see that as being a big problem.

Although, even in that, as lay people, it is interesting at least to practice—more for the fun of it or the game of it—moments of renunciation, just to see what it's like. We have a desire for a cup of tea or something. It's not that there's anything wrong with having a cup of tea, so it's not about that. It's just about exercising that renunciation muscle—the ability, when we see a wanting that doesn't particularly serve us, to not be compelled to act on it. We actually have some inner space to see: do I really want this or not? Do I need it? It just opens up a lot more space.

So it's about monitoring, even in those situations when the greed factor is present—which is going to be there in our lives until we are at the third stage of enlightenment. That's when desire is uprooted. All the time before that, it's going to be there. And it's not a question of having some ideal that it shouldn't arise. It is going to arise. But can we sort of keep it in balance? That's how I see it.

Of course, are you familiar with the Buddhist personality types? There are three personality types—it's a personality map within the Buddhist teachings. There's the greed type, the aversive type, and the deluded type. We all have the mix, but for many of us, one or another is predominant.

I'm firmly in the greed type. "Oh, I like that. Oh, that's nice. Oh, that would be good." Whereas the aversive type sees things differently: "Oh, that's no good. That's no good. That's no good." They're more prone to anger, while the greed type is more prone to desire. And the deluded type doesn't quite know what's going on.

I find this framework useful, though you want to hold it lightly. There's a certain value in it, both in seeing oneself and others, because it depersonalizes things. "Oh yeah, that's just this personality tendency showing itself."

We have a guiding teacher council here at IMS—I think there are about ten teachers. And the mix of those three types is a riot. The meetings are genuinely entertaining. We're each like a cartoon figure of these types. I'll come into a discussion thinking, "This is going to be fine. It's going to work out. No problem." And then the aversive type responds, "What do you mean no problem? This, this, this, and this is going to go wrong." And the deluded type asks, "What?" Seen in that light, it's all held much lighter.

A question came about how important it is to meditate with other people—whether you can practice alone all the time, or if joining a sangha and practicing in a group is essential.

I would say it depends a little bit on where one is on the path. For people beginning, group support would probably be quite helpful for most. As you know, practice is challenging. If one is just starting and not quite sure or stabilized in the path, the group support can be hugely beneficial.

But after that, once one is established in the practice to some extent, then I think it's really about whatever motivates you to practice. If you're more motivated by sitting alone in that quiet, that's great. If being in a group motivates you more and gets you to actually sit, then that's better. The important thing is what gets us to sit.

Another question arose about understanding the notion of dispassion—why it's not at odds with compassion or metta. And also, while it makes sense to reduce one's suffering to whatever extent possible, what about the cost of losing things that are enjoyable?

I think so much of these questions have to do with linguistic confusions. The words "passion" and "dispassion" in English carry many different connotations. It would be easy to interpret dispassion, or to feel into it, as being disinterested, just not engaged. But that's not what's meant by dispassion in this Buddhist sense.

An example I've given in some of the groups comes from a sutta where the Buddha uses a particular image. He talks about sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and mind-heart experience as the terrible bait of

the world.

Mara is the embodiment of delusion or ignorance, a figure who appears often in Buddhist texts. Sometimes I think of Mara as the fisherman with his fishing pole and a hook, and we are the fish. All these experiences of sights and sounds and smells and tastes and touch come along, and we the fish bite. We get hooked.

Dispassion would mean not getting hooked. Now we have to leave the metaphor of the fish, but not getting hooked doesn't mean not being responsive. It means not being hooked in identifying with what's going on. Instead of "I'm thinking, I'm wanting, I'm whatever"—adding the I or the self to the experience, which is our usual way of being in the world—dispassion means not being identified with all of these passing phenomena, but still being engaged and responsive in an appropriate way to what's arising.

In the face of suffering, compassion is almost the natural response if people have somewhat of an open heart. I remember one time I was doing a retreat where there was a lot of teaching about bodhichitta. Bodhichitta, particularly in the Tibetan tradition though it's embedded in other traditions as well, is that aspiration to get enlightened or awakened for the benefit of all. It becomes our motivation to practice.

For me, this has been a very interesting development in my own practice. For the first many years, I would be practicing with an aspiration to awaken. That was a strong aspiration. And I understood that the freer I was, it would inevitably be of help to others. If we're less judgmental and less angry and less greedy, of course it's going to be a positive influence on everyone we meet.

But when I started hearing the teachings of bodhichitta, instead of seeing the benefit of others as the inevitable byproduct of awakening, I put it at the beginning as the motivation to awaken. Do you see the difference? It will inevitably help beings, the clearer we get. But to actually make the benefit of beings the motive for practice—I felt that as a huge energizing influence, because in a way it took the practice out of a more narrow personal endeavor and put it in this vast context of all beings. We're practicing with that motivation or aspiration that we're doing this for the benefit of all. It was an infusion of energy into my practice.

So that's the kind of responsiveness I'm talking about. Dispassion is not about disengaging. It's just about not getting hooked in this self-identity, the identification with experience, which is a limitation, a contraction, the creation of the sense of self. I think it's important to see how the word dispassion is used in this context.

Someone asked about when wonder and gratitude arise for the practice and it's followed by a longing to share it with others—aside from noticing that and not clinging to it, how might we work with that skillfully over time?

I have plenty of thoughts about everything. You name it, I have a thought about it.

First, I'll suggest how not to share when you leave here and go home. "Hey, mom, you know, there's really no self." I wouldn't do that.

Fundamentally, the most essential sharing, and we can build on it, is how we are rather than what we say. If you go back to family and friends and work and you're more calm, less judgmental, less reactive—that's the most meaningful sharing because people will feel it and see it. That's the main thing, and that's why just doing the practice inevitably helps people around us, because it transforms the way we are. So that should be the priority.

In terms of actual verbal sharing, I think it's really important to learn how to listen carefully, because we have to listen to where people are at. Over time, and this is its own practice, we can share what's appropriate to them in that moment. But if we have some preconception of what we want to share and we're speaking with somebody who's not in that space at all, it's not going to be very meaningful. So listening, a careful listening to the other person and feeling into them, is really important.

Those are the two main things. And then sharing from your own experience.

You might feel into where a person's at and share something like, "I had a similar experience and I worked with it in this way," or "this is what I understood." That becomes a meaningful communication.

So my question is about the term heart-mind, because I think it's the word mind that's confusing for me. I feel like the body has a mind, the heart has a mind, then there's the brain. Can you explain what you mean by that?

It's kind of interesting that in many Asian languages, the word for heart and mind is the same. In English, we've made that distinction, which is interesting in and of itself. The phrase heart-mind is trying to collapse them into one rather than keeping them separate. It really means every aspect of our awareness—from thoughts and intellectual activity and concepts to feelings and emotions to awareness itself. Heart-mind is inclusive of it all rather than bifurcating, mind up here, heart here.

In the practice, maybe you've had the sense it's not like that at all. There's just a kind of open space and different things are arising within—some are thoughts and some are feelings and some are emotions. It's all of that.

There were a couple of other questions that people had left, and in a way they're related. One was: how do you forgive someone who has hurt you many times? The other was: you mentioned asking the question "what is a thought?" but you said this was not a metaphysical question—but isn't it? Also, it's one thing to not be consumed by your thoughts, but how do you avoid being consumed by negative thoughts and expressions that someone says of you? How do you relate to that?

I thought these were really interesting, very practical questions, because we face these situations. When somebody has done us a lot of harm, how do we forgive them? And how do we relate if people are expressing a lot of negativity toward us?

When I read these questions, I reflected on situations I've been in like that, where certain people did things I felt were really harmful, both to me and to others, and were saying a lot of not such nice things. At one point I was on retreat, right in the midst of this whole story that had been going on for quite a while. It was very up in my mind. I would be going over and over the situation and the story, and I became a very good lawyer for arguing my case—going through what they had done, thinking, "Here are these five points where you're so wrong."

Right around that time, I was reading this quite amazing book, which maybe some of you have read. It's called *Tattoos on the Heart* by Father Gregory Boyle. He's a Jesuit priest working in L.A. with gang kids, living right in the middle of it—a huge amount of violence, a lot of killing, both stray and intentional. A violent, violent situation. And he's there, working with these kids and trying to find some way to bring them out of that milieu.

One line in the book really stuck with me. Or we could say the theme of the book: love no matter what. Love no matter what. This is not love meaning condoning those actions—he was right in the middle of it and seeing the violence of it. But even underneath all that, his vehicle for connecting with the kids was love no matter what. The book was really a kind of transmission of that theme, and it was really powerful.

It had a powerful impact on me.

So in the middle of this dukkha, this situation that I was in, I was going on and on justifying my own point of view—which of course was the right one, just so you're clear. But then I tried to bring in that theme, and it was really revelatory. There were some moments when I could actually let go of being the lawyer for my side and say, underneath all of that, love no matter what.

There was an interesting piece of this for me. Father Boyle is a Jesuit, so he was using a lot of God language, which is not my language. It's not the language I resonate to particularly. But there was something in the way he was talking about it—it actually served me at that particular time. As he was speaking, I could just imagine using the concept of God as he was using it. I got a very strong feeling of what it might be like: the love of God looking down on all of us beings, struggling in all the ways we're struggling, caught up in everything we're caught up in—the fights and the struggles and the loves and everything. And then just... God loving everyone, independent of their particular activity. It gave me a window into that possibility. Love no matter what.

What was so striking was when I contrasted what it felt like when I was caught in being right to what it felt like when I was in the space of love no matter what. The first was a prison. It was a contracted space. And love no matter what was just open and spacious.

This illustrated to me that even when people are being hugely difficult and even harmful, we still respond in a way that seems most appropriate to the situation—we do respond. But the response is very different energetically, and in many ways, if we're coming from that space of love no matter what rather than "I'm right and you're wrong," it's a whole different experience.

I think there is a way to hold this, and it's not to say that even from that space the situation will be resolved, because sometimes it's not. Sometimes, for whatever reason, there's a stuckness involved that is not getting resolved, and it could even be ongoing. But still, even with all of that, I've seen the possibility of just resting and saying, okay, all of that stuff is happening, and I'll do what I need to do in response to it. But underneath all of that, not harbor any ill feeling. It's like, all of that's going on—it's not good, whatever—but love no matter what. For me, that was a really powerful learning.

Did that seem clear to you? It was really quite impactful.

So "Love No Matter What" is a beautiful aspiration.

Someone asked: How do you take that wider lens? What skillful means takes you out of that contracted space when you have less practice at it?

First, I want to add a postscript that I forgot: in certain situations that continue to be harmful in one way or another, sometimes the appropriate move is simply to remove oneself. I don't mean to suggest that love no matter what means we necessarily have to stay entangled in the conflict. Sometimes removing oneself is exactly the right thing to do. But can we remove ourselves maintaining the love no matter what, rather than out of anger? That's the key piece.

I'm not sure there's any one answer to your question. Clearly, practicing mettā or compassion as a practice in that specific situation might open the doorway to at least a glimpse of, okay, we're just all these suffering beings trying to do our best. Sometimes it's working and sometimes we're just spiraling down. But we see that bigger picture of suffering beings.

Why do people do harmful things? Do you think happy people go around and do really harmful things? I don't think so. Usually people are acting out in unskillful ways because of their own suffering, and they don't know how to deal with it. So it just spills out into these unskillful, unwholesome patterns. When we see the suffering underneath the action, I think that actually is the key.

It's interesting—in these situations, even one-on-one, if somebody is being really difficult in one way or another, whether we're staying on the level of difficulty or it could be the level of harm, it's very interesting, and I've done this, to actually look at them. Not look at our idea of them, but actually just to open our eyes and look.

And when I've done that, the suffering is so obvious. But most of the time, or often, we are reactive to the personality expression, because that's the most apparent. If somebody's acting out—it's kind of weird

behavior, unskillful behavior—we just react to that and we don't look. We're not actually looking at the person. We're reacting to the behavior.

And when I've looked, as I said, the suffering is so apparent. And in seeing the suffering, it's much easier to drop to this level where we really feel compassion. Again, it doesn't mean not engaging. We take whatever response is appropriate and helpful, as best we can. But our hearts are really open to that person. It's a whole other way of relating to difficulties.

So let's just sit for a few minutes in the space of love, no matter what. And you might just extend this feeling—underneath everything, underneath all of our interactions, people we love, people we don't love, people we dislike—but underneath it all, can we hold ourselves and everybody else in that space?

It's really beautiful. It's a beautiful way of being in the world.

May all beings be at ease.

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