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Carrying Practice: *clearly seeing and awareness as antidote to our reactive patterns, developing beneficial reactive patterns*

[00:03:50] So normally, and as we go about our business, as human beings... we experience, more or less continuous... things. And... more or less continuously, we react in some way to the experience we have just had. And then reaction spawns another experience. Or flavors an experience that we're already having. And so, if we think about it from the standpoint of our life... it's not so difficult to see, though, we might not be particularly willing to see it... [laughs] to see that we are a kind of continuous chain of reactivity. One thing occurs. And that becomes a cause for another thing to occur. Not to say that these things are negative or unpleasant, but clearly, they're not *all* pleasant and they're not *all* neutral.

[00:05:28] And as we go through our lives... each day, each week, even each minute, each hour... we can see that we're engaged in this process of, we have an experience, we react to it. The reaction becomes a cause for another experience. We react to that. And many of these things are very subtle. But they often also lead to a rather large reactive patterns in our lives. ... Most of us could see that it's inappropriate to call that freedom. That is really the definition of bondage. Even though we are both the prisoner and the jailer in a certain way. [laughs] Nonetheless... being a continuous chain of reactivity is hard to describe as something... positive.

[00:06:40] So the nice thing about calm abiding is it provides us with a means, a tool, for stepping outside of that continuous reactivity. ... But before we can step outside of that continuous reactivity, we have to see it. And that part is hard. Because when we see it, we're in the middle of the reactive pattern. So the reactive pattern plays out and we get the reaction. We get all the pieces of it, just like we normally do. So... if you engage in the practice of calm abiding... there is a method that you can use... than can become very effective... in stepping outside of the reactive pattern. And that is that... exactly what it is that we're doing sitting on the cushion, we make an effort to carry... with us, all the time. And, of course, even just sitting still getting up, moving around, there's always some kind of reactive pattern going. *all* the time. It's happening.

[00:08:06] The first thing that we want to do is, in order to step outside the prison of this thing... is to see it... clearly. Seeing it clearly is 50 percent of the entire job. So seeing it clearly is actually *really* beneficial. Once we see it clearly, in the process that we're just doing now, it's like no more or less advanced than what we're just working on today... seeing it clearly provides us with a relief in and of itself. Soon as we see it... and we see that we did *not* react to it... we immediately have a kind of an 'aha!'. "Okay. I see how this could work. I could actually just remain present with the reactive pattern."

[00:09:00] So the problem is not the reactive pattern. The problem is that we are identified with the reactive pattern. That's *my* pattern. That's my pattern and therefore it's good. Or it's my pattern and it's really bad. So each of those things, we see... just another reactive pattern. It just keeps going like that. So it's *simple* to understand. Simple to understand and simple to witness. If we can *witness* it, then we're right on the edge of working with it in a positive way. And as the awareness improves and we become more kind of stable in our ability to see the pattern as it unfolds... we, at the same time, develop kind of critical awareness of that. And that awareness itself becomes an antidote to the pattern.

[00:10:03] So we could approach this from 20 different perspectives and it would sound like it was really complex. But actually, it's just what we've been doing this morning. Just more of it. Not any more complex. The trick is, can we get up from here... on the lunch break and walk out... and see things? Just see things. Oh, there's that person I don't like. And I see that 'I don't like that' and then not beat ourselves up, not praise ourselves. Just see it and move on to the next thing. That in itself is an antidote to the reactive pattern. Almost nothing else has to be done. If we can stabilize that level of awareness, see the reactive pattern, step outside of it, which is actually happens in the moment that you see it, if you don't encourage it, you're already out of it.

[00:11:12] Of all of the practices that we do, the calm abiding is the most straightforward, the most easy to understand. So you always know when you've done it. When you've seen something and you just let it go, you always know that. And when you latched on to it and identified with it, you always know that too. But in the moment that you even see that you've identified with it... in that moment, all you have to do is drop, just let go. Don't pursue it. And it's done. That's the nature of every thought, every experience is fresh.

[00:11:51] It's fresh because... it's impossible for two experiences to occur twice. They cannot occur twice. We could talk about that later. But for now, let's just say it never occurs twice. When you recognize that it never occurs twice. It's much easier to let go of really seductive patterns. It's just easier. Because it's not going to be there anyway in a moment and it will never return. ... You have to get the experience of that. So I'm wanting to just encourage us today to stay with the simplicity of the calm abiding practice. And as we move through it, to recognize the little patterns that we have.

[00:12:41] So one more piece in this. We want to... this will sound contradictory... we want to develop the ability to build reactive patterns. [laughs] But there are certain kinds of reactive patterns that actually *benefit* ourselves and others. So we might just call those, in a kind of judgmental way, positive habits. But they're really reactive patterns. So once we have the reactive pattern and we can recognize it, we then know how to do more of those things. And we can see how it benefits us and how it benefits others when we meet other people. The more of those positive patterns that we can develop and the more that we see them, the more likely we are to come to see how it is that the mind itself works and functions. So during this day, every chance you get to experience something and see what you've experienced... just to see it and let go of it... I just want to encourage you to do that for the entire day and beyond that. Because the benefit that comes back from it is so enormous. Okay?

[00:15:10] When you recite the Refuge & Bodhicitta Prayer, which we're now going to do again... it's helpful when you're alone... to recite the prayer quite slowly and just let your mind rest with the meaning behind it as much as you understand it. In other words, you don't need to get a book on the philosophical underpinnings of the bodhicitta prayer. Just read it and relate to it. And think of it as something that... you know you take a vitamin in the morning or something, you think of it as... this is something that seeds, that builds the reactive patterns, which are actually helpful.

[00:16:01] So we start out with 'Until the summit of enlightenment is reached.' So we don't know what enlightenment is maybe yet, but by the end of the day, maybe. [laughter] I think it's actually important to say yes to that. Because actually it can be summarized into one simple statement. We know something about the mind every time we recognize an experience that we've had. *Any*

experience, negative or positive. We see the experience. We know something about the mind. Because *that's* where the experience occurred. It never occurs anywhere else. It never occurs on the balcony, out on the street. It always occurs *in* the mind. Every experience. There are no exceptions. So every time we recognize an experience, we know something more about the mind. If we could stop and just be present with every experience that arises, we would know something about the awakened mind. And the awakened mind is right on the edge of full enlightenment.

[00:17:25] So there's that story that many of you have heard, but I'll say it again, because it's sooo good. When a man approaches the Buddha in the marketplace and asks, "What is the difference between you and me?" He responds, "There is no difference. You are fully endowed with an awakened mind as I am. The *only* thing that we could call a difference is... I recognize that. You don't, yet." Simple. So every time that you see an experience, you are recognizing, in a way, the nature of mind. So we'll recite this prayer now three times together, and then we'll just move directly into the shamatha, calm abiding up until the lunch break.

sangha [00:18:26] *reciting Refuge & Bodhicitta Prayer*

[00:18:26] *period of meditation*

sangha [00:40:46] *dedicating the merit*