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Carrying Practice: train by resting in very short sessions on experience, precious human existence as critical reminder, bodhicitta and nature of mind

[00:02:10] Yesterday, we... amongst other things, talked about the importance of... holding the view that... our existence as a human being is precious. It's interesting to ponder... the result of holding that view. In the context of our... meditation practice and the Dharma in general... we sometimes trick ourselves into... not *doing* what we're capable of. And one of the ways that we do that is that we are our own worst critics. We can't quite... give ourselves permission, in a sense... to accomplish... the result of the practices.

[00:04:03] So it's my *personal* opinion that that's because... we also mix up... our *actual* accomplishments... with our sense of the goodness of being hard on ourselves. And one of the ways to get around that... or you could call it an antidote to that fault... is very short sessions. ... n a very short session of a few *seconds*... most everyone can allow themselves the luxury of admitting... that they actually *had* the experience they were looking for. So if you engage in the short sessions... of 3 to 10 seconds, let's say... you're almost *certain* to experience what we were talking about yesterday. That sense of... the union of appearance and emptiness.

[00:05:59] But there is another benefit to the short sessions, which... can easily be forgotten. And that is that, in contrast to... the idea that whenever we sit down to meditate, it *has* to be... 20 minutes, half an hour, an hour. ... But *actually*, what do we want to do is we want to blend our meditation practice with every experience we have. That's difficult to do... if we call 20 minutes a short session. So what are we doing then when we're getting up and walking to the bathroom? [laughs] We have the sense that you can't meditate in that time because it's too short. You walked by the window... you stop... you look out the window... but since you're not sitting down, with your legs crossed... can't be meditation. So this is a *trick* that we play on ourselves, actually.

[00:07:33] It's very useful to engage in those few seconds... very *short* meditation session where you bring your awareness to an experience. Which... unless you're dead, you're always having... some experience. So we can bring our awareness to whatever that experience is, whether it's a physical sensation, a mental sensation, an emotional sensation, whatever it is... for just a *few* seconds. You pass by the window; you look out the window. And you just rest your awareness on the experience, that's happening in *that* moment for just a few seconds and then you let it go. Take a few more steps. Engage in whatever you're doing. Try to find... three or four *dozen* times in the day when you can stop... for just a few seconds.

[00:08:41] Three seconds is pretty easy. Almost everyone can be successful at a stable three-second meditation. It's just a *winner*. [laughs] It's almost difficult to *not* succeed. The problem then is... we don't believe it. We don't give it any credibility. It was too short somehow... when actually, we're looking for an experience that does not have a time frame. And you're as likely to have it in a three-second period as you are in a 30-minute period, in fact, *more* in a three-second period.

[00:09:24] So gradually then we get used to that little short session. And gradually then we also have the experience of... I only *intended* for 3 to 10 seconds, but actually it was 20 seconds. And then sometimes it's half a minute. So gradually we see that it's like... it just comes naturally.

It's not something that we accomplish through effort. Because effort actually doesn't pay... a dividend... in this case. We need to put the effort into... getting to the place where we're willing to do... a very short session. But during this session, it really *must* be effortless. There is no benefit to the effort. It's kind of like if you ski, you know, you make a lot of effort climb up the hill. But once you go over the top of the hill, it's not *effort* that makes it work. It's something else. Which is not the same as the effort of climbing the hill. So in this case, we're *always* in a place... you're talking to somebody, when you're talking to somebody... there is a moment when you're talking... and then there's a moment when they're talking. When *they're* talking... you can do a 3 or 4 second meditation. You're far less likely to have... a contrary opinion to what they're expressing. Far more... *interesting* to hear their opinion, which otherwise would be totally boring. [laughter] They think you're really interested... which is really helpful. [more laughter]

[00:11:21] Our experience when we take it into chunks like that, we can see that actually that's *how* our experience normally unfolds anyway. In very short little chunks. And we, kind of like weave them together... during the day... into something which is a larger *story* at some point during the day. Then we run into somebody... and we have a long story to tell, but it's actually a series of very short, almost irrelevant scenarios. It's *extremely* helpful... beyond the boundaries of just simple shamatha, the ability to... place our awareness on our *experience*, not just our inanimate object, but our experience... is so helpful... and so *easy* to do.

[00:12:18] There's a saying that you can find in almost any authentic Dharma book... it's called One of the Four Faults of Mahamudra. So Mahamudra, which is the highest teaching and the highest accomplishment... is somewhat humorously... often described as the four *faults* of Mahamudra. It's *not* that the Mahamudra has a fault, it's that... we cannot quite *allow* ourselves... to understand it. Because if we understand it, then we think that we've misunderstood it. And then we've misunderstood it, we feel like we've missed it and we can't quite find what it was we were supposed to get... because we already *got* it. And the result is, is that we put the book aside and decided this is too much for me. When, *fundamentally*... one of the primary four faults is... it was so *easy* you couldn't believe it. That *is*... in the Shangpa tradition... one of the four highest, most important teachings. It was so easy... you couldn't believe it. And so you just put it aside. ... Which is unfortunate.

[00:13:47] So I think it's really important to work with these small chunks over and over... until it becomes automatic. If you sit down to eat, you immediately find that there is a moment to rest your awareness on an experience. You eat your food. There is a dozen moments to rest your awareness on that. You're in the middle of a conversation. The other person is talking. You're just present. And when it's done, you may not have so much to say. So... rather than think that it's *important* to have... the long periods and be able to sit for long periods of time... it actually isn't like that. You're more likely to reach the place where you're more commonly just... present... with whatever is happening... by engaging in many short sessions. So it's really not something to consider... that's a beginning baby kind of training. Because I can't do the long session, I do the short session. Then you trick yourself into feeling like you can never do the long session. And this short session actually isn't worth much.

[00:15:10] And we have the thing of our precious human existence, which is *absolutely* critical. So in addition to the short sessions, you can also take the... intention... to remind yourself... that you're alive, you're a human being, you have more than enough intelligence, more than enough awareness to engage in the Dharma. And that provides you with the precious opportunity. And then the good news *is*... break it up into really short sessions, which is *actually* how we experience things... if you look. You don't experience a 20-minute thing when you stand by the

window and look out... and gaze at the... tent outside or something. This is *not* a 20-minute event. This is usually a 20-second event. And we had an opportunity to just rest our awareness there on the experience of looking at the white tent. Watching our mind raise questions and opinions and judgments and all of that and... it's actually glorious.

[00:16:39] So let's have another session and we'll start again with the Refuge & Bodhicitta Prayer together. Let's *also* just for a moment... think about that bodhicitta. ... Bodhicitta can also be reduced to something which is... profound and *easy* to grasp. Bodhicitta is... you know, we normally call it awakening mind. Most minds are *not* awakening. We might just start with that point. Most of them are sleeping ... sleepwalking you might say. We want to wake up and the waking up in this case means recognizing the nature of mind itself. That's all. Just recognize the single most important thing that you have. And it's the mind. But it's not awake. We don't recognize the nature of that mind. And so we live in a state of confusion. So what we want to do is... bodhicitta... is the aspiration to wake up. But not just to wake up so that *I'll* be awake. It's to wake up so that *I'll* be able to bring benefit to others, because without *that* wish, the whole thing has no benefit, even to the person who has the awakening mind. If you look at it long enough and hard enough, that all becomes clear.

[00:18:31] And the original... recognition... that having a precious human existence, is absolutely critical. We all *have* it. So when we... give rise to the aspiration to benefit others, we're aspiring not only to wake up but to wake up *in order*... to bring benefit to others. You could recite that to yourself... every time you stop and do... a three to ten second meditation. Just remind yourself... what's *precious* is... that I am able to aspire to attain enlightenment, to wake up... and I am able to hold the aspiration to benefit others. Finished.

[00:19:29] You know, it's like conversations. We often have conversations that are 10 times longer than they need to be. Because we can't stop. And in this case, it's important, at the end of a meditation session to know when to end it. Because we want to end it on a good note. So if we were able to be present... while we were thinking about... waking up the awakening mind, the aspiration to wake up, and then we have this aspiration to bring benefit to others... in that moment, it's time... just let go. Let it go. The more you elaborate it... the worse it gets.

[00:20:16] Okay? We'll start with a Refuge & Bodhicitta three times together and then take the meditation where you can.

sangha [00:20:33] *reciting Refuge & Bodhicitta Prayer*
period of meditation