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[empowerment discussion not included] new practices - growing familiarity and working with boredom, thoroughly imbuing the Dharma in our mindstream, how to skillfully share the Dharma, how vices can be virtues, bodhicitta intention is also for ourselves

Student 1 [00:30:52] So this is just a... sort of a comment and a question about, uh... shamatha, zhinay based on this morning. I thought I would just bring up something that occurred to me. When you directed, as I understood it, a suggestion, of kind of focusing on... aversion or attraction of whatever was going on... at least that was part of what I understood you to say. I was experiencing this... dull... pain in the middle of my back, which is very familiar to me. And... so, what I did differently than I usually do with that pain in my back... was I focused on my own... aversive reaction to it instead of just on the pain. And I found that it was, very clarifying. And that it felt like a very productive... meditation in that I felt like my focus was very strong on that pain. It was very easy... to stay focused on it. And then I transferred that also to some itches and things in my face, and rather than scratch them, just... sat with a feeling of... aversion to them and surprised when I thought about aversion... how strong that feeling of aversion was... anyway. So then what happened was the pain went away. ... And I found that... as I was trying to focus on positive and negative reactions to everything going on... a lot of things I had... they were neutral. And then I found my mind started to wander more, once... that stimulus of a pain, as a focus, disappeared. So I'm just throwing this out as sort of an interesting experience, but wondering if you have any... comments about that. I mean, one of the things that occurs to me that I have actually found at times useful... is the helpfulness of adverse conditions in my life. And this was kind of an example of that. But it also made me wonder about... what seemed like happened to my mind, the sort of maybe the boredom... of the neutral.

LMC [00:33:56] The boredom is neutral?

Student 1 [00:33:58] Well, instead, I wasn't identifying any particular adverse reactions or positive reactions to anything going on. It was like, okay, this is happening. This is happening. This is happening. ... So, do you have some comments or clarification about any of that?

LMC [00:34:26] Well, it sounds right, from what you said. ... Sometimes when you engage in that kind of a new practice like that, and it feels an inspiration... then the next thing is, is it doesn't work. That's pretty much *my* history... [laughs] in a nutshell. Today's, today's inspiration is tomorrow's... 'I don't know what was so great yesterday.' [laughter] But... it's also partly because over time, I would say that... if we continue to work with those things, we find the way that it, that it works. In other words, it's an issue of deeper familiarity. So, we're really working with our own minds, whether it's in a shallow way or a deep way, an interesting way or a boring way. You know, that famous teacher, Chögyam Trungpa... he used to talk about boredom a lot! He had like different categories of boredom. How important they were. And because... he was so good at talking about them... people worked a lot with boredom. And the boredom became interesting. Which is not, of course, a statement about the *boredom*, as if it was something *separate* from the meditator. When we make discoveries about our own mind, it invariably feels interesting. At the least, has to be interesting!

[00:36:31] So, I think what you're talking about... is kind of on the money. And I would say that the reason why... looking at something... which is... an active aversion... and *feeling* interested in that, or inspired by that... it's because normally we don't look at that. So we're like maybe

scanning the mind to see where we can put our mind, that *would* be interesting, because of course we want to be interested. But we just skip over the stuff that looks hard. Like the negative feeling or the argument that we had yesterday or... trying to in my own mind, just work with it... somehow. That doesn't look interesting. But that's where we should be... actually, really thinking like, wait a minute, there's something wrong when I am looking at an aversion and thinking, nah, that doesn't look interesting. [laughs] I mean, there should be a red flag there. Because what you just said is actually just... it's right.

[00:37:49] You put your awareness on... *any* strong... experience, whether it's physical, mental, even conceptual, it can be. But underlying the conceptual is an experience. It's not just a concept, it's an experience. You contemplate a concept that's interesting and you have an experience. And the experience is where... the energy is. It's where we can actually *get* something because... we're *into* it. So if you have pain of some kind and you put your awareness on the pain and you just rest your awareness there, people routinely have the experience of the pain went away. And then it came back. And then it went away.

[00:38:47] So, if we stay with that, at least we get the sense of... the pain is not *something*... independent from other things. It's connected to... if I put my awareness on it, the... experience of the pain changes. If I put my awareness on it with the *hope* that the pain goes away. Hard to say. It might get worse. It might get better. But at least, when we have... a strong sense of it, we have maybe, and we work with it in a way that you're just talking about... then we have a sense that... this is fruitful.

Student 1 [00:39:32] I actually started... really appreciating that pain because it was helping me focus. And then I was disappointed when it went away. [laughter]

LMC [00:39:41] Well, we can fix that. [laughing] Where's that ball-peen hammer? Yeah.

Student 1 [00:39:57] Thank you.

Student 2 [00:40:24] So this question isn't super well formulated yet, but it's one I've been turning over in my mind since... you talked last week, about interacting with the three-year retreatants and... about the responsibility that somebody who's a teacher has to their students. One of the things, my day job is... I'm a therapist and I use a lot of general Dharma things in my practice as a therapist with the... explicit... communication that I'm *not* a teacher.

LMC [00:41:03] You mean you say that?

Student 2 [00:41:05] I say, I'm not a meditation teacher. If this is something you want to pursue further, I can help you find one. But, things like... basic mindfulness and meditation loving kindness, I often do... with them in session. And... just your comment, what you said last week made me... think about that and *should* I be doing that and can I do that? If I did integrate Dharma into my work with people, how do I do that skillfully?

LMC [00:41:40] It's complicated, isn't it? It is for me; I can tell you that. [laughs] Sometimes it is, just for this thing... it's helpful to know where you are with all of this. I mean, you're sitting right in front here of some good examples... like Bill and Dora and I teach the Dharma and Zopa teaches the Dharma. We don't give empowerments. So, it's an interesting question as... why don't we give empowerments? And if we explored that, which we don't need to do now, but... there is, you discover why, there's a *reason* why you don't give empowerments. And one of the

reasons is... the *responsibility* to the people that you're giving the empowerment to... goes way up. And if you already feel like the level of responsibility is kind of like high... then smart people avoid... jacking it up... to a level which now it's like almost impossible to imagine that you can do it. And not only that, but the responsibility to the students also then, that's another thing.

[00:42:58] But what you're talking about... sounds really, just kind of in, in the genre of... wholesome work. You know, the Dharma... it doesn't need to be, shouldn't be excluded from... the rest of our life. Nobody would ever say that! I love coming here and practicing loving kindness and compassion and all. But I don't do that when I'm outside of here. [laughing] You know, I go and beat people up and yell at 'em and do all these other things... because I don't have any instruction for those things. Nobody showed me how to do the nasty things, so I feel like I'm empowered to do it. I mean, just the *confusion* around all of that should say... now, this is not right.

[00:43:47] We, we are actually thinking... *best case*... is we're interested... in *thoroughly imbuing* the Dharma in our stream of consciousness, in our minds. Thoroughly imbuing it *without* exception. And the easiest pieces of that, of course, are things like those Four Immeasurables, the loving kindness and compassion and all. If someone doesn't have the *interest* in manifesting those things, then we need to start at a different place. But, would we say, this person isn't worthy of loving kindness and compassion and sense of joy, and so on? We would never say that. So, I think it's good to keep separate... these pieces. The pieces that we easily understand... doesn't mean that we're able to... get people to practice them, always. But we understand what they are. And to include those... in your therapy work, or *whatever* kind of work you do... seems... good. Excellent, maybe.

[00:45:16] We *have* experienced some things along the way... with individuals sometimes, who do a very good job at one thing and they end up mixing their understanding of the Dharma, that maybe is not so deep, with some other thing... in order to deepen the other thing and there gets to be a confusion, in there. Then they're not getting the result. They're not seeing the result in their pupils or their patients, whatever... and now, now they're having a hard time like, kind of backing out of it, or fixing the situation. And I think that's where sometimes we get a confusion.

[00:46:01] And I think specifically, in the realm of therapy and the Dharma. I've seen that sometimes... where the one becomes the other and they're kind of mixed together, like... well, this is so good. And I'm pretty good at this. Must be good to mix the two together. Now... if you were a cook... that's how you would judge whether or not they're a good cook... by what they mixed together... and gave you. And sometimes we draw the conclusion... *not so good*. You're undermining your ability as a therapist *and*... getting confused about the Dharma, too. So I think your question around that is... is totally apropos... and something to watch and be clear about. It's not just for therapists. We all have to do that all the time. Be on guard for... trying to fix ourselves by fixing somebody else.

[00:47:07] Just as one example... I'm unhappy all the time. And so... I try to... make somebody else happy... by means that actually don't lead to their happiness, perhaps. But I hoped that it would. And then when it doesn't, I feel unhappy. And then I tend to blame them for their unhappiness, which makes me unhappy for failing. And it just kind of like twirls around. I mean, don't we all have that experience in some way or another? It's just normal human relationships.

[00:47:40] But what we would like to do with the Dharma... is present a very clear understanding of, let's just say for starters, something small. Like the ability to hold the *wish* that... confusion

would be *utterly* gone for everyone. And if I *could* do that for every being, whatever was necessary for *them* to be free of that confusion, I wish that I could deliver that. That's a totally fine aspiration. I look through that, I can't find any confusion at all. But if I find something that I think would *fix* their confusion... now, the first thing they have to be is suspicious. So it does get, you know, if you want it to be simple, you should go fishing. [laughter]

[00:48:46] Yeah, you know, when many of us were going annually, and some still do go annually, to see people like Bokar Rinpoche and Khenpo Rinpoche, even then we see... talking to them... publicly and privately, they will say it was really difficult. We're having a difficulty with *this* situation. Like we had early on... Bokar Rinpoche used to ask us to take on a certain level of commitment. And... because being with him was so exciting... and so inspiring... it just felt like whatever the commitment is, I'm taking it. It's almost like the confidence was there. But the underpinning of the confidence was not quite there yet. And so, sometimes people would fail at what they intended to do and what they committed to do. And after they failed, they were just utterly stop practicing the Dharma entirely and just disappear. And, it didn't take but... one or two times around, and pretty soon our teachers were looking at them saying, whoa, we've got to do some here. This is *not* working. So, I think we all have that... situation in some way or another. We try to be helpful and then we find.... well, this is not working. So we need to do something. It's not that... the great practitioners always get this right. Nor is it the case that those who are... kind of new at it, can't be helpful. They can be helpful.

Student 3 [00:52:40] So I'm kind of wondering about all the should's and the shouldn't's and the rights and the wrongs and the success and the failure and all the distinctions that come through... about that. It seems like... it's a little bit of a, a setup, psychologically speaking, if I can dare to say that. And, so I've been working with that. I'm not a very consistent... practitioner... and I haven't been a very consistent practitioner. I've been *consistently* inconsistent. And I used to struggle with that. Like, uhn, that needs to change, you know? That's something... now I'm kind of with... that's okay. That's, I mean, it's all ultimately... inseparable from... mind. Ultimately, I mean, as a concept. But as an experience it seems to be... for me... more helpful... for me to see... these things very closely. To see them, to be with them, to watch my reaction to them, to work with them, to kind of accept things as they are, as a... way of moving toward any kind of change. You know, ... and that's certainly something that comes through for me in working as a therapist, the should's or shouldn't's or you're broken you're fixed or you need or you don't need or any of that. It's more just... an experience, a connection... and noticing, noticing, noticing, noticing... without any of that judgment. So I don't know if that sounds like combining things which shouldn't be combined or a recipe that's got... I don't know. But experientially to me that... the experience of being with that experience... feels helpful.

LMC [00:55:28] Which experience?

Student 3 [00:55:30] Of noticing. And noticing... within the experience of connection.

LMC [00:55:46] Simple.

Student 3 [00:55:47] Simple. Simple.

LMC [00:56:00] Yeah, I kind of understand what you're saying. And I think that's what we... deal with all the time. I mean, whether it's therapy or Dharma... there's always a little bit of an issue... about how do you... get yourself to engage in something that will be helpful... for oneself... and stay with it... when, on any given weekend, it doesn't appear to be helpful. So how do you stay

with it, or skip that weekend, or what other thing might work... without setting yourself back by self-talk and all the things that go with it?

[00:56:54] I think those issues, those issues exist in, in therapy, of course. They exist in practicing the Dharma. They exist in teaching the Dharma and listening to the Dharma and practicing it. You get a practice; I certainly have received instructions for practices that... as soon as the practice was over... and the teacher got up and left... I'm wondering... what the hell was that? I don't know what that... do you know what? No. Really? So, how are we gonna do that? [laughs] And it's gone. And so now you're sitting there with a commitment, in this particular case that I'm recalling, and actually, no real way to do it. Like add sugar. But all you have is salt. Well, they're both white. Maybe it doesn't matter. [laughing]

[00:57:46] So I think we deal with that all the time. As human beings, I think we do. When we make a commitment, we want to *make* the commitment. We want to keep the commitment. And then we find that we *can't* keep the commitment. And then we feel like we're not worthy of the commitment. What to speak of the result of keeping the commitment, and all these things start coming around. And if not dealt with... *carefully*, they often end... in some significant personal harm. That's my experience within the context of the Dharma. So, I think it's within the context of being a human being with other humans... is that those things happen. And it really doesn't... in one sense, matter as much about whether we're... the most skillful person or not... but maybe more important is how much we care. ... Because we all seem to respond to that. ... What do you think?

Student 3 [00:59:12] Yes. Yes. And you know, I'm thinking I don't want to turn my vices into virtues at all.

LMC [00:59:21] Why not? [laughing]

Student 3 [00:59:21] Uh. Well, I guess I don't want to go in either direction. So... this is just where I'm kind of thinking at this time, but I'm not holding it as saying, uh, I've made some discovery. But there's a process here and I appreciate your feedback.

LMC [00:59:46] I'm, I'm *magnetized* by your comment.... "I don't want to turn my vices into virtues." I'm thinking to myself, well, hell, what have I been doing wrong?! [laughter] That's because in, in a certain way, just like... I don't know your name... [pointing toward the back, Student 1] what you were saying, I'm just suddenly recalling that piece. I'm going to be a little facetious about what you (Student 3) just said, just to clarify... I think what we would most like to have... is just virtues. Even the things that other people call vices; I wish they'd call them virtues. It would make me feel better. And... what I would like to do is take the *energy* of the vice... and my relationship with it... and work with it in such a way... that by virtue of seeing clearly what's there... I have insight into something that I didn't have insight into before. So that's what I think of when I think of turning vices into virtues. Because they're actually, there's nothing really there. There's no *thing* there that we can say, "This is a vice. This [holding leaf] is a virtue." Well, it has to be. It comes off a tree in India, so it must be a virtue. [laughter]

[01:01:13] I mean, we get confused like that. And I feel like I've got tons of vices, too many to work on in this life, so... I keep shoving them into drawers and thinking, next life, next life. And then at certain times I feel like, who cares? Let's just do the vices. [laughs] But when I'm practicing... I see the vices. I see the things that... are not in accordance with the Dharma. Because most of the things that I see in the Dharma, maybe 100 percent even, I feel like... that's

good. I'm happy to possess that... habit or that approach to things. But then there's all these other things. So, if I put my awareness on... *my reaction*... to what I might call a negative emotion, and... when I put my attention on that negative emotion, it usually has a context. Like something happened. And so there's a context for it. And the context is there and my first thought is, I don't want to look at that. ... I don't have time. I have to be somewhere. I don't have time to look at it.

[01:02:30] But if I have the time and I'm looking at it... that thing, which I would say is a *vice*, is actually the most helpful thing that I could have. Because nothing has more energy than that. When I go to look at it, it is *really* magnetizing. Especially if I go into it from the perspective of... I know... that I *really* want to work on this. It's kind of like there's a monster in the basement and I really want to go down and see that monster, but I'm afraid it's going to eat me. And so, first, I have to figure out how I can go and see it without it eating me, somehow. So, I put my awareness on the *experience* of that thing I would call... not so good... a vice, let's say. Put my awareness *not* on the vice, but on the experience! The experience... is magnetizing. Because... there is nothing more that we identify with than our experience. I can say, I'm not bad. I don't identify with being bad. And that's totally true. But do I ever regret having done something? Every day. [laughs]

[01:03:44] So in the moment of putting my awareness on that *experience* as it is *occurring*... I see what it is. And most of the time, there's nothing needs to be done. It's done. And there's often some little movement of energy and things around it. And, you know, the confusion... coming and going a little bit... and then pretty soon it's kind of like... the wind dies down and the water's smooth and it's like, it's just gone. And... the *big* mind knows... that's what we mean by emptiness. When we talk about emptiness... that's what we mean by the emptiness. ... You did it. You worked on it. You looked at it. You went around it. You looked at all the pieces. You enjoyed it. You hated it. All of that. And then suddenly it was just... it's just gone. ... So, is that okay? Thank you.

Student 4 [01:05:16] It's just a comment, I think, about your what you just... this dialog. It just kind of had a light bulb in my head... and so I wanted to share.

LMC [01:05:24] Oooh, did that hurt? [laughter]

Student 4 [01:05:24] It was really bright. No, what I was thinking about, you know, my work in addictions, as a therapist and from my own personal life, that vice, you know. So in this example, vice would be addiction to drugs or alcohol, right. And folks come in... and that's what the problem is, right. But... that ends up opening this gate of like... what is this... empty void or this wound or this, you know, all this like hunger that I have. It's the thing that often gets people even... *looking*... at their experience... and their mind. I mean, that's how it was for me. I mean, I think that's why I... found the Dharma. So, I don't know, I just wanted to share that. Cause... just kind of like popped in my head about that... how the vice, the pain in the back or whatever can really be a gateway to... opening a door of awareness... in that way. That I've seen that, you know.

[01:06:48] And then the other thing, too, when you're talking about consistency... and I see this with my own... battle with, my commitments to Maha mahamudra program and ngöndro and all this. And that feeling of... guilt or whatever it is, like unfinished business because I'm not, you know, doing it and stuff. And also thinking about like... my clients who come back sometimes and say, "Oh, I drank alcohol." And they're so ashamed and they don't want to like... and

sometimes they *don't* come back. I mean, sometimes that shame... it's done. Like they just... you know. So those parallels are just popping in my head and thinking about how even if I'm, have been inconsistent to my commitments... just like to being sober or something, but my commitment to the Dharma, to doing my Mahamudra program. The worst thing that I could do would be to just... feel like I'm not worthy of picking it up again. Like... I don't know. I don't really have a question. I just wanted to say that.

LMC [01:08:10] Who else is not worthy?

Student 4 [01:08:15] What did you say?

LMC [01:08:16] Who else is not worthy? Do you know anyone else other than yourself?

Student 4 [01:08:22] Everybody's worthy.

LMC [01:08:26] Well, what happened to [you]?

Student 4 [01:08:29] Well, no. I mean, I think, I am, but I just... yeah. I mean, it's just something that... it's easy, I think, for us to fall into that trap, you know?

LMC [01:08:42] Yeah! Yeah. So what do you do? How do you get around it?

Student 4 [01:08:48] Well, I mean, what I've *been* doing, although this conversation has made me like make another appointment with you, but... [laughs] to clarify. What I've been doing is just like, saying, Okay, like just rejoicing when I do practice, when I do do it. Like, I don't do it... like the way I'm supposed to be doing it right now.

LMC [01:09:11] What's that?

Student 4 [01:09:11] A certain number... per year, you know, the whole ngöndro thing, right. But I do the practices and then I try to rejoice in that. I try to like, just...

LMC [01:09:21] You *try* to rejoice.

Student 4 [01:09:24] Well, I *do*.

LMC [01:09:26] You do rejoice.

Student 4 [01:09:26] But I have to make the intention to... not see it as some... it's not...

LMC [01:09:31] Yes.

Student 4 [01:09:31] I guess I'm saying is, it's become something... that I don't... it's not because I have to do it. I'm doing it because I want to do it. I'm just... not doing it like I'm supposed to be doing it. But when I do it, it's because I *want* to do it. ...And that feels better.

LMC [01:09:51] We do things all the time for... for reasons other than what we started out... thinking would be the reason, right. And then sometimes we like what we're doing and sometimes we don't like. I mean that's... just kind of... being a human being is like that. ... If your attention is focused on the bodhicitta aspect, for example... and you carry that... *a lot* during the

day, which is I think... it's almost a necessity in order to... kind of *soak* in it. You have to kind of be in it as much as you possibly can. So you develop the habit, the *strong* habit, if possible, giving rise to... that wish to benefit all beings. So that it's there! So then... it becomes more and more difficult to challenge your own worthiness at *any* level because of two things. One is... you can say... with some confidence... that there's no such thing as another being who is not worthy of this loving kindness and caring and so on. But then you have to see... I should be even *more* worthy of it... in the sense that... my *intention*... is to benefit all sentient beings. So, I should have a sense of... this loving kindness and caring, etc. Because if I *don't* have that... how do I touch others with it?

[01:11:59] When we meet... our *great* practitioners, whether they're teachers or not, we meet great practitioners... and they *are* our teachers... because we witness that loving kindness and caring and insight. Just being with them feels helpful and all. Of course, we want to do that. We *have* to do it also for ourselves because, it's kind of like the flashlight. If you don't have batteries, it doesn't light. So, the batteries are like this sense that... I'm worthy of it. More than, for any other reason, I'm worthy of it because my *intention*... is this bodhicitta. So, it keeps the light on... in a certain way. You can *fail*... as long as you don't lose that intention. Then it's not a failure. Then it's just a part of the process that's unfolding.

[01:13:17] That's my... experience of it anyway. I mean, I think these things all take time. Again, like we were talking about earlier, whether it's in the Dharma or whether it's therapy, whether it's some other thing, whether you're a Sufi or Muslim or whatever it is, the *intention*... has to be focused... as much as possible. You know, if you can intentionally give rise to it 10 times a day... that's enormous, in comparison to... just kind of holding the conceptual view of bodhicitta. Trying to meet people during the day when you see them and holding that view and giving rise to it. Like if you meet a client or a patient... and the moment you see them, you can remember and you give rise to bodhicitta, it *affects*... what follows. So, the more times you do it, the more it affects what follows. And the more it affects you, which makes it easier to raise it and it follows. And I think those are really important for us as beginners, and I include myself in that place, the more I do it, the more... I can see that... it goes out. Doesn't just stay in here. [gesturing toward's his heart] It's not magic. We all know that. That's just ordinary... the way of relating. It's our interdependence with all beings, all phenomena, everything. I think when we notice it... we see it. We're *plenty* skillful enough to know its value and to know how important it is, like... just keep raising it.

Student 1 [01:19:07] I want to ask Lama Michael for, possibly a bit of an expansion on one of your instructions this morning. You talked about seeing all the people... all sentient beings... and also, I think your words were kind of imagining them... drawn to you and attracted... I can't quite remember the words, but it was intriguing and I hadn't heard that instruction and I wondered if you might just talk about that part of the instruction more fully.

LMC [01:19:52] All right. Yeah, that piece actually often befuddles us. And I don't know whether it's just my age or what, but I think that it should be actually really simple. Because we do this with everything we see. With everything we see, we add meaning to it. I mean, I see this microphone here and I add meaning to it instantly without thinking, right? I walk into here, I look around, I had meaning immediately. It changes every time I walk in. So, we all have relationships with other human beings. And, I think most people would say... those relationships play... a significant role in my life. Not always pleasant. Often very pleasant... and everything in between.

[01:20:45] And so, what we *do* here... because bodhicitta... is so important... and you know, that term, I'm assuming, okay. Then, what we want to do when we begin the practice is... we want to imagine... all of those beings for whom we wish... could be free of suffering and its causes. ... How many beings is that? It's uncountable. It's everyone who was ever your mother, ever. It's everyone who will *be* your mother in the future.

[01:21:30] And the point of that is not... that we are... challenging something that looks like a ridiculous proposition. But rather, that *we intend to hold that view...* of all sentient beings. Not that they were just our mother, but if we could imagine... the *kindest* mother possible, every one of them has been our mother. We go into it with that perspective. And over time, it naturally like kind of... boils to the surface... and we feel that sense... with other beings. And then, the bodhicitta... is *much* easier.

[01:22:14] So, we *visualize* those sentient beings... unlimited in number, like not just an *enormous* number. Uncountable, not in the sense that, well, if you had a fast enough computer, you could count them, but it's literally... beyond infinity. It's like just... uncountable. They *fill* all of space. And we... make the wish and the aspiration... to benefit all of them. It is a very important piece of practice. ... Go ahead.

Student 1 [01:22:54] I actually had heard that part of it before.

LMC [01:22:58] Well, what else do you need? [laughing]

Student 1 [01:23:00] But I was wondering about the, the being drawn to you and attracted to you... for relief... or something like that. That aspect of it.

Zopa [01:23:11] [addressing Lama Michael] You used the word magnetized. Once we have that Bodhicitta then they become magnetized. He wants you to talk about how the magnetizing works.

Student 1 [01:23:37] Right. Well, you kind of talked like imagining... all these... limitless sentient beings being drawn to you.

LMC [01:23:48] Because of previous connection. Not because they love me or they like me or I look good or something. It's because... that's the nature of interconnectedness. We are drawn to our friends like we're drawn to our enemies... with different intentions and motivations and all. [laughs] But... we are drawn to, to things. So what we're trying to do is just... add this meaning to our experience, which we're going to do *anyway*. It's like I said. We walk in here, we immediately add meaning to the experience of this room. If there's people in it, we had different meaning. If somebody is missing that we thought was here, we add different meaning. We're *continually* adding meaning to our experience. Day and night, all the time. So, the Dharma is a lot about... Okay, so since *that's* the case... let's add the meaning we want to add. And work with it just from that place. And from *that* place, we easily step into the bodhicitta. It's a snap!

[01:25:02] I was going to say, No it's not. Right? It's easier when we imagine that we're surrounded by the very people that we're aspiring bodhicitta with. And I think it's important to notice and occasionally mention it again... that... on the *surface* of the practice of bodhicitta... ostensibly it looks like... we are practicing strictly 100 percent for the benefit of others. Our own benefit? Well... it'll take care of itself. However... when we look at it closer, not even with... an altruistic point of view... we see that you cannot accomplish your own benefit... without the

aspiration to benefit all sentient beings. It's not possible. Even if we look at our own lives, you will see that... the points of greatest happiness in our own life was when we... we're benefiting somebody else. ... And I don't know, there may be some exceptions along that... certain kinds of sociopaths and other things, but I'm not even sure in that case.

Student 1 [01:26:29] All right. It...

LMC [01:26:33] You surrender.

Student 1 [01:26:33] There was... and I think it it sounds like maybe this goes without saying... but it's almost like you had also included... imagining a positive response to our radiation of bodhicitta on the part of other people... as part of doing it. And that's the part, that was intriguing to me.

LMC [01:26:59] That's there too. Well, I mean... part of it is... imagining that our *intention* is bearing fruit. And so there is something... positive that's happening. And I've never heard that there was a necessity to... I don't know if I want to go down this path. ... I think we can each discover this... in our own, histories and experience, that... when we *really do* hold that, that view... we personally feel like... that's the best thing that I can do with my life. Because when I hold that view, I *act* from that view. When I *really* hold it. If I just hold it, kind of putting sunglasses on, then I take them off and then it's too shiny outside. Then I have to put them back on again... that's not the view. This is the view is... you put their view on and it just *functions* from there. Which is to say... we hold the view that we would... do anything... to eradicate... suffering and its causes.

Student 1 [01:28:30] Thank you.

LMC [01:28:33] It's so easy to do that and feel like a phony. Feel like, I can't really do this. I can barely... even *think* about all sentient beings being here. Let alone imagine them being here. Let alone see them and all of that, and... especially my evil Uncle or whatever. I don't have an evil Uncle, so I feel okay about saying that. But... that's what we do all the time. We constantly... impose our own vision. We might say our own vision on reality, but the truth is that's not what we feel or experience. What we experience is that that *is* the reality. What I experience is the reality. If you don't experience what I experience, there's something wrong with *you*. That's our norm, isn't it? But I'm really big minded. I can admit that your experience is not in accordance with my experience, but yours is at least as good as mine. But mostly that's not where we go. No, you got a problem. [laughter] We're trying to *open*...like as *big* as we can possibly get with it. ...Well... shall we surrender?

sangha [01:30:26] *dedicating the merit*