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when conceptual is or isn't awareness as an experience, why feelings of conflict are valuable, relaxing undistracted doesn't mean empty of experiences, **Carrying Practice**: how training with movies is similar to vajrayana practice, learning to stabilize insight and be capable to take it off cushion, we can't accomplish our own benefit, the Thomas Merton story, **Carrying Practice**: training with difficult emotions e.g. anger

Student 1 [00:02:01] You gave us a huge variety... or huge permission... to focus on our experience. I believe you said focus on the experience. And... I found myself making *lots* of things.

LMC [00:02:38] Experiences.

Student 1 [00:02:38] No. Creating in my mind, the possibilities of, and arranging for, making paintings, making clothing, you know, that's where my mind went. I pulled it back in and decided to do breath. Because that's more stable for me. But I did find that I was doing this 'making thing' and I think maybe you gave us a little too much latitude. But, maybe that's okay. So, I would like your comments on what I was focusing on. I don't know what other people did with their minds and what they were focusing on. Am I indulging myself in some way or am I actually doing some practice?

LMC [00:03:54] Well, the... the issue of whether or not it's practice is... that's a pretty large scope. So, we don't actually need to... decide whether or not it's '*practice*', but rather to look at... what would make it practice? Or what you would do in any situation to make it into practice. And... I think, because we often ask that question, is this authentic? Or am I just spinning my wheels kind of... what am I doing here? It's helpful to get... so, mostly I like to talk about our *experience*, but I think it's also helpful to get a conceptual framework of what it is... that you're doing and what is contained in that conceptual framework.

[00:05:06] So, for example... and then you might have something to say to this, but if you find yourself, using what *you* just said... imagining that you're making things, making physical things. Then a large component of that *is*... conceptual. Almost of necessity, a large component of it is conceptual. But if our primary purpose is to put our awareness on our experience, then we can also say that even though it's conceptual, that itself is *also* an experience. So, for example, if you come to the place of, well, here I am. I'm wasting my time. I'm thinking about making things when I should be doing something else, that's *real* practice. That's a conceptual foray into... fantasy, confusion of some kind or another. But *still*, if you just put your awareness on the experience... of the making of things... that's practice. But if you *talk* to your self about it, like, should I make something blue or something green? Now you're like completely in a conceptual framework. Even though... blue and green can be, of course, experiences. But if you, if you, if you talk about moving the labels around, we're just moving the conceptual components around. Which is why... earlier today, in the morning, we talked about... what we have talked about a lot in the last few weeks. And that is that... the most valuable experiences, from a Dharma perspective, are the experiences that we hoped we'd never have.

Student 1 [00:07:29] Getting run over by a car.

LMC [00:07:32] Well, it doesn't have to be like you're tortured... or in enormous pain or you're dying. It doesn't have to be like that. But... rather it *can* be, and often it takes the form of... some kind of a conflict. A conflict with another person, for example. A conflict in our own minds about, you know, it's like... here I am, I'm coming here to engage in... to learn how to do these meditation practices and... I just feel like it's not working. So, that feeling is an experience. That *feeling* of it's not working, is a valuable experience. Mostly, we throw that experience away. Rather than actually... mine it for the value, we throw it away. And when it's gone, we feel relieved.

[00:08:27] Unfortunately, because... the angst and the *power* of that experience is actually the gold. Because let's say, I mean, the things that drive us more than anything else, I think generally speaking, maybe a hundred percent, but at least generally, are... our interpersonal connections. Generally speaking, those are the things that make us happy and miserable. [laughs] And when we're happy with it, we want to do whatever is necessary to make it more pleasant. And when we're unhappy... we want to do whatever is necessary to end the unhappiness. And... we're not generally very functional in an ordinary human way. We kind of bumble around in that context.

[00:09:37] But from a meditation perspective... we're going to put our awareness onto something. And... so these days we're talking about... let's put our awareness on an experience. But just any old experience is actually not going to be that good. It's just like... the example I like to say was when somebody said, we'll put our awareness on a nickel. You put a little coin on the table and you put your awareness there and you let it settle and that's fine. But what do you get from that? ... You get bored. It doesn't usually... transfer into your other interpersonal relationships. So, therefore... you feel disappointed. And instead of trying to deal with the disappointment or the grief or whatever the emotion is... we often look to other places. Well, I'll call so-and-so. They'll make me feel good. And there's nothing wrong with calling so-and-so and there's nothing wrong with feeling good. But the gold of the really difficult situation... we have not grasped.

Student 1 [00:11:06] Well, here we are in this room and we've taken time to look at our experience. But... you mentioned like a difficult experience, a relationship that's very contentious or something. And it's almost impossible to *just look* at it. One wants to touch it and make decisions about it and have feelings about it that change. And then as you look at it, more and more things come up around it that are variations on the theme. So, is that focusing on the experience or are we on some kind of a ramble?

LMC [00:11:57] Yes.

Student 1 [00:11:59] The ramble on yes, on an experience?

LMC [00:12:02] You're the only person who can actually come to this and know what it actually is. So, on this evening, the schedule says... we're practicing shamatha, calm abiding. And calm abiding is the meditation which helps us to... train the mind, to... *relax* undistracted. But we also make a mistake with that. We think that undistracted means that the mind is empty, like nothing's going on there. ... Right? You can say yes. There won't be any penalty. [laughter]

[00:13:01] The mind is never empty... of experience. Ever. The nature of mind is that... it generates experiences... physical experiences, mental experiences. All kinds of experiences. Interpersonal connections with people experiences. Love and hate. Hot and cold. Experiences

are coming continuously. They have no beginning and they have no end. Which is the classic teaching. They're *always* there. So, if we go into our meditation thinking that... settling the mind means that the mind becomes *empty*. Empty of *experience!* So, empty here is a trick word in a way, because it's used for a lot of things. But if we say empty, just completely empty... you'll never find that 'cause... it doesn't exist. The mind is continual. It's like the ocean. You're out at the ocean and you're seeing waves and waves are coming and going all the time and you're thinking... how can I get rid of these waves? That would be a nice, calm ocean. That then there would be... no turmoil. I wouldn't get seasick and throw up and all of those things. Which is *true*. And the ocean sometimes does become very calm. But... it also can suddenly get lots of waves.

[00:14:54] When we do our meditation, it's better to recognize that the mind is filled with experiences always. It's *always* going on. Now, that's not the same as being distracted. So that's another mistake that we can make... is that when I sit and practice calm abiding, I need to... not be distracted. And that's a good thing to remind ourselves of. But... does that mean that we won't be distracted? No. It's quite possible we'll be distracted. Likely we'll be distracted anyway, because... the mind is not *empty* of experiences. It is... a *powerhouse* of experience that never ends. If you just sit down somewhere under a tree and watch, you'll see that... experiences are *continually* coming all the time. And if you watch them, you'll find yourself labeling them and, and generating certain opinions and experiences around them. And when we talk about shamatha, calm abiding, what we mean is, before you generate all those experiences, when the mind is just *still* but not empty of experience... that's shamatha. Often when we talk about shamatha, we're talking about a mind which is completely, utterly still. And we make the added mistake that it is empty of experience, but it is not. The experiences *never* stop. So, that's important in our meditation. It's important in our practice of shamatha to understand that the meaning of stillness does not mean that the mind has no experiences. We would even say, *dead or alive, the mind never stops*.

[00:17:08] Sometimes we refer to the mind by the technical term of the dharmakaya. It's what we mean. And that dharmakaya *aspect* of the mind, which we often referred to as the 'empty' aspect. The empty aspect in this case means that anything can and will occur. It's kind of like, you have a jar and it's empty. You can put anything in it. So, we often refer to the mind as empty. It doesn't mean that nothing's going on. It means that it is... *empty of any specific thing*. It can and does hold the potential to immediately become anything. To immediately fill us with kind of blissful experiences and disappointment and misery and grief and all sorts of things. Those things all come out of that same place.

[00:18:12] So, it's better not focus too much on *that*, but just have a kind of light understanding of it. And then... when you're engaging in the meditation, you just put your awareness on the experience, *any* experience that arises. Like, I'm sitting here... and I suddenly, I'm just like trying to remain aware of whatever experience I have. So, one thing maybe I feel is... my clothing against my skin. Which is kind of very subtle. But you can feel it. Especially if you just move a little bit, you feel the clothing against your skin. And so, you can put your awareness on that experience... without a desire for it to be different, it's just... an awareness of the experience. That's all. You sit for a while and suddenly your leg hurts. Then we can go into this mode of... aw, my leg hurts. Now I can't meditate. But... if we watch that very carefully, the clothing did its job. It rubbed the skin. So, we felt it. Now... what's happening is we're having another experience. We just want to put our awareness on that experience. Not... with the wish that it would last a long time. Not with the wish that it would go away. Nothing. Just the awareness on that experience. The awareness on that experience is *not* hard. If you try it, you'll find that actually it's... easy.

[00:20:02] *Mostly*, we are not aware of our experiences. So that's also kind of an interesting thing. It's good to be curious with these things. Because what arises in the mind is, generally speaking, if you note it, it's a curiosity. Because so many things arise there, seemingly with no cause and condition. It's just suddenly there. You're having an experience. So, it's totally good in the meditation context, to take a moment, just a moment of curiosity... like you just notice, suddenly the mind is filled with *things*... happening. Waves arising and falling, like the ocean. You can just place your awareness on that... experience. Rest with that. And pretty soon, *whatever* the experience is... it will disappear. And if you wait just a little bit longer, like seconds, usually... there is another experience. Maybe it's very subtle, can barely feel it. Then you can notice... what you want to do is label it. So, we get into that, we label the experience. This experience is grief carried over from this event 10 years ago. This experience is from yesterday's experience of this. This experience... is because yesterday was too hot. And so now I'm feeling just normal and warm and nice. But now I have a little fear that it will be too hot. So then... this is like a *fishing* expedition in a certain way. So, now you see the *fear*. You see the fear. Best if you don't call it fear. You just see the experience. Immediately put your awareness on that, like you've just caught a fish. Out of the soup of your awareness... arises an experience of... fear... the day is gonna be hot, for example. So, you just put your awareness on the fear. Which is actually a very pure emotion. It's one of our most common emotions, right. Attachment and aversion. Aversion and fear being really the same.

Student 1 [00:22:47] Does it make any difference if... your experience of the unfolding of experiences is so multi... blossomed, so to speak, that, uh... it's a *constantly* changing river... of all sorts of things, which would really describe my mind quite well. That it doesn't settle any one place very long. It's a river that's so fast moving... I'm shocked by what goes through my mind. I am never bored. That's not true. Boredom does enter, but it's usually supplanted very quickly by something. And it's always been like that. And I don't know how many other people share that kind of mind. But I think a fair few of us do share that kind of mind. And I think that even people who have a slower travel in their mind of experience... must wonder... where you stop and look?

LMC [00:24:14] You mean, at what experience? Which of the myriad of experience? You know... it doesn't matter. But you said, for example, that 'I feel shocked at my experience.'

Student 1 [00:24:33] Well, not really shocked at it. But it's so multitudinous that it's kind of amazing.

LMC [00:24:41] It's okay. You don't have to have precise label for it. In fact, if you have no label, that's the best. So, it's totally okay to say, I'm shocked. I'm surprised. Surprised by how quickly... these things can suddenly unfold. So, what we tend to do is not what's functional. We tend to kind of tidy up the mess... a little bit. And... maybe we feel like... I'm shocked. And my mind is too busy. And that's not what meditation is about. But actually, *none* of that is about what meditation is about. Meditation is about... of the many ways you could describe it... resting your awareness on the experience that is present. So you have a feeling that you call shock. Calling it shock is not helpful in this case. We want to place our awareness on *any* experience that we're having. The more stable, the more long lasting the experience is, the better. The more disagreeable the experience is, the better. And the reason for that is... disagreeable experiences have a lot of energy. We'd like to be rid of them. When you feel a little breeze from the fan go by, you don't have this sense of... I need to be rid of that. Nor do you feel the sense of, wow, that is just fantastic. I hope it never goes away. No! It has no power. It has no power.

[00:26:15] But when you feel like I'm shocked that my meditation is so poor that... I didn't even notice that I've gone into this state. *That* is the gold. You place your awareness on the *feeling*, whatever it might be, a kind of, a kind of disappointment, a kind of self-aggrandizement, if it's pretty good. A wish that it would... level out sooner and not be so troublesome. I mean, all of these things... you don't want to say them. You just want to look at the experience. And that's very hard to do! It's very hard to do. But just about every meditation system... in this tradition, *begins* with placing your awareness on the experience that you're having. I remember somebody once said like, I feel like I never have experiences because I'm continually on long retreat, continually manifesting visions and all of these things. And I said, so ah.... when you do that, you don't have any experience at all? Well... I guess I do!

[00:27:39] That's the point of all of those visualizations and all of those mantras and all of those liturgies that we recite *is*... it provides you with an experience. And the experience has to be strong enough. If the experience is too weak... will you place your awareness on this little thing that I ring the bell with? You know, your mind's not going to rest there. As soon as you put it there, it's going to wander off somewhere else. But if you have something really strong, like... you just heard that someone close to you, is very sick and possibly going to die. That... magnetizes you. ... Unfortunately, we usually do... the exact opposite in that moment. We go for the grief and decide that we'll meditate later. When actually... the gold was just put in our hands.

Student 2 [00:29:17] I think I heard a week or so ago... some difference between the words conceptual and experience. That somehow it was okay, or better... in meditation to have an experience, but not to have conceptions. Do we have experiential conceptions and conceptual experiences or are we dividing these two separately and is one better than the other? Or can you clarify that.

LMC [00:30:03] Neither one is better than the other. It's a difficult... cut to make because... especially in our culture, we're very highly conceptual. Being conceptual is what we get rewarded for, you know, in this culture, more than almost anything else. Like you invent something or you can fix something or you can write a nice poem or a paper or something. All of these things contain large conceptual elements. And so, we're pretty good at that. And there's nothing really wrong with that. There's nothing wrong with that at all, in fact. But... it is often the case for us in this culture that... certain experiences are far more powerful than our conceptual understanding of them. ... So, the conceptual understanding itself, when we're looking at it... maybe and pondering the conceptual understanding, that's an active experience. So, we can use that in our meditation. But... just referencing a few minutes ago how we have so many complex practices in this tradition that... it takes a lot of conceptual work to do many of those practices. It takes a long time to engage in that conceptual work, to get to a place where... *the practice itself* generates the experience that we want to work with.

[00:32:04] So, in the meantime, my own opinion of this whole thing is, is that we need to work with the experiences that we have. So, we *get used* to understanding that... the most potent piece of our Dharma practice *is* our experiences. I mean, this is one of the most... potent things to understand is how we benefit ourselves from our experiences, from our meditation. Many people will say, I don't know what the benefit is of meditation.

[00:32:45] And on inquiry, it's fairly clear, most often, that it's because... their conceptual understanding has replaced their experience. So, their experience is kind of flat. Even though... their understanding conceptually maybe has improved by virtue of study... and practicing certain meditation. But they haven't gone far enough with it to have the direct experience. The direct

experience is what we're looking for. Like you have a pain in your leg. You have a pain in your leg because you've been sitting cross-legged for too long. So, as soon as we recognize the pain, we have kind of a conceptual and a non-conceptual possibility. The conceptual response is... aw, I need to move my leg and get away from the pain. Or I need to get up and walk out of the room. Or I need to rub my leg. I need to do something here with this thing. That's one. The *other* one is you just put your awareness on that experience. Abandon... hope that there will be some kind of... grand solution to the pain in your, in your leg.

[00:34:17] If you have an argument with somebody that is a really strong one, we often feel bad. And we often are unwilling to give up that bad feeling. We become attached to the bad feeling. [laughs] And we can't give it up. But again, one of the most profound ways... to give that up... is to put your awareness on the feeling, on the disappointment, on the anger, whatever it is, and not the *label*, but the *feeling* of it. Even it can be like a gut-grinder. But the feeling is actually precious. It's precious, partly because if we can abandon... really negative things by virtue of putting our awareness on it, then that's a level of... profoundly positive meditation. And most of us, I think, could be capable of doing that on a regular basis if we just practiced it more often. Or even reminded each other of how important it is... to not try and get rid of strong experiences, but try to integrate them into your practice by *simply* putting your awareness on that experience. It doesn't require anything else. In fact, anything else dilutes it.

Student 2 [00:35:59] I have a further question. If you have a, let's say maybe a spiritual experience or a... let's say experience of interconnection. It's not a conceptual experience, it's an actual... feeling of being connected to everyone. Then that's experiential. And if that's really true, then maybe it's kind of a non-dual experience.

LMC [00:36:39] How would it be non-dual?

Student 2 [00:36:40] Well, because we're all together.

LMC [00:36:42] What's together?

Student 2 [00:36:45] The interconnection of all beings.

LMC [00:36:47] Oh, yeah. You mean like the truth of vast interconnectedness, right? But that's conceptual.

Student 2 [00:36:59] What about if you feel it rather than think it.

LMC [00:37:01] Then it's not conceptual.

Student 2 [00:37:03] Okay. Thank you. That's it. [laughter]

LMC [00:37:08] You know, these two things are there. But... we often will engage in the meditation and have a *good* meditation and then we'll describe it to ourselves. What we did. Which is... better not to do, better not to do, because the conceptual relative to the experience is just... it's a wimp. It's powerless... in comparison. I mean, it's so easy. You can experiment with it and see. You've heard about death. So, you know... you feel... *confident* that you will die. On the other hand, you have no sense that you're going to die soon. And then you get... clear evidence that you are going to die soon. What's the difference between the conceptual understanding that death is certain and the experience that you're about to have, that you're

probably going to die? Two totally different situations. Often, that's how we make the mistake in our meditation practice. We have... delivered to us, you might say these profound experiences... or weak experiences, but the profound ones really magnetize us.

[00:38:38] I think, the more important thing is to work on... developing the ability to place our awareness on experience. The best way to do that, in my own personal experience is, you routinely go somewhere where the experiences are big. Like, for example, Kalu Rinpoche once... you may have been there for this... when somebody asked him, is there ever any benefit to going to a movie? And I remember I was surprised. He said, *Oh, yeah*, oh yeah. You go to a movie and what do you see? You see pain. You see suffering. You see cruelty. You see *all* these things in modern day movies. So, when you see those things, you have *big* feeling when you see them. You become afraid. You want to leave the theater. Maybe you do. It's like the *big* experiences. And, the same time you know that it's not real. So, there's the benefit... is that you already *know* that it's not actually happening, but you are definitely... having the experience. So... it's a *great* opportunity... to put your awareness on that experience. No risk. No fear. Is like... it's just delivered to you. You might say it was worth the price of admission.

[00:40:10] I remember him also joking that he thought it was weird that in the West, people paid money to scare themselves. [laughter] But later he said this *other* thing, which was... like, you pay money to go see a movie because somebody says, is there a value to seeing the movie? And the value was exactly what we're talking about, that you go and you see these things... and you are deeply impressed. A really *good* movie deeply impresses us, not necessarily scares us, but we feel *deeply* impressed by it in some way. Some big emotion is instilled in us. And that emotion is really handy.

[00:40:56] So you can go to the theater and, and *train* yourself to work with deep emotional states, because you already know that it's empty. It's not real. But you can train yourself by imagining that it's real. Because that's also a large part of the Vajrayana tradition, is training yourself to experience things that are real that, you know, aren't. So, you learn to place your awareness on the experience as part of the practice. This is really worth pondering and worth working on. If you get into the habit of seeing your experience... and not just having the experience and knowing that you're having the experience... that's got a big conceptual component. 'Oh, I'm so tired today.' That's just the big conceptual overlay. But if you *feel* the fatigue and you just put your awareness on the fatigue... now you have a totally different thing. If you train yourself to do that, it becomes automatic. And it's really valuable.

Student 3 [00:42:16] Actually, it follows perfectly because instead of going to the movies, you just have to go to work... [laughter] and have that awful experience and you might have it every day.

LMC [00:42:31] Here we are!

Student 3 [00:42:32] Yeah. So, what I wanted to say was that we you started off tonight and you said we're all here. Put aside whatever your problems are, issues, and be here and meditate. And then you said... focus on an experience without judgment, hope or fear. And I've talked to you about the terrible work experience that I'm having right now. So, I decided to focus on that and put it on the image of Green Tara. And what I did was I actually visualize the physical workplace, because that's *where* the issues are happening between... about three people. And so, that was really helpful for me to really just focus on that. And, you know, it's a live experience, I mean, the emotions are intense. So, the question that I have is... for the

practice of meditation, for the practice of calm abiding, I can do that. But I'm wondering if the practice itself will eventually lead me to being able to go into the workplace and treat the contentious situation there in the same way. So, that I'm actually looking at it, that I'm aware of it, and that I not become attached to the many negative emotions that are produced from being in that environment. I mean, I don't know whether to call it a goal of doing that or whether it's simply, you know, as part of my practice... of eventually after doing this sort of calm abiding practice, will I be able to have that kind of experience where, you know, I'm in it. I'm not dreading going to work. I'm just like going to work. No judgment, no hope, no fear. And then being in the experience.

LMC [00:44:24] Sounds really dull, doesn't it? [laughter]

Student 3 [00:44:27] I don't know. No, I'd rather have dull than the fireworks, but anyway.

LMC [00:44:32] It's a great question. You know, we're really just talking about how do you stabilize the insight? Because... like the wave on the ocean, when you have an emotion arise, if you look at the emotion, it's like the wave on the ocean. It kind of rises up and then disappears. And we trick ourselves with that. It *actually* disappeared. But we bring it back for a replay. And when we bring it back, we're, generally... we will label it as... here is that emotion again that I'm trying to get rid of. When actually... what we really don't want to do, from a practice perspective is... get rid of that emotion. ... You can't get rid of it anyway, so you may as well... love it. Because you got it. And furthermore... the power of the emotion, which is unrivaled amongst human beings, I mean, our emotional states are more powerful than anything. When they get really hot... we don't have anything to work with. We feel overwhelmed by it. And we can often do really negative things to ourselves and others under the influence of that thing. But if you have developed the ability... to place your awareness on that emotion, what you get instead... is profound and deep insight. But you have to be willing... to appreciate... the benefit of that emotion. Which often means appreciating someone else who drove the stake into your heart. [laughs] So, you have to be able to do that. You can't do that to yourself. It's not possible.

[00:46:40] Some weeks ago, we were talking about how... within the context of vajrayana practice, it's not possible for you to accomplish your own benefit. It is utterly impossible. You might think that you're accomplishing your own benefit, but probably... if you look close, you'll witness your growing self-aggrandizement. I'm becoming somebody. I can be in a place that is a... a *pit* of anger and greed and jealousy and pride and all of these things. And I can stand up in it. That will be a cause of misery. To identify with that. So, it's one of those things where... if we can see that we cannot accomplish our own benefit, then we look, at least experientially and with some curiosity, at what is generally considered to be the cause of your own benefit, and that *is* to devote... I'm just gonna put it in the most... stringent, profound way... that cause is to devote entirely, your entire life... to the benefit of others and *forget* yourself. Completely.

[00:48:09] This was a great meeting between Thomas Merton, the old Catholic, when a young monk went to him for an interview. And so, Merton asks him, "So, what are we here for? What's on your mind?" And he says, "Father Merton. I want to know what is the best thing to do with my life?" And Merton... in the book, laughs and he says, "Oh, I thought you were coming with something... serious." So, it just kind of puts that joke out there. And then he says, "Actually this is easy. This is a totally easy question to answer. You should spend your entire life becoming a saint." So, he doesn't say... that if you *fail* to become a saint, you have failed. He just says you, that's how you should spend your *life*... is doing *that*... *however far* you go with it. And there's a certain way in which that translates into our own tradition. Because we have this thing which we

have as part of every practice that we do... bodhicitta. Which is the aspiration that everything that we think and do and say will become... a benefit for others... until the entire world is filled with it. So, I think... Merton's advice and bodhicitta look to me like they're just two sides of the same coin. ... So... that probably brings us to a close, but somebody had a question.

Student 4 [00:50:39] How do you define a distraction? You know, meditation, you always have an object... where you place your awareness. So, if I'm placing the awareness of my experience, how do I define when I'm distracted from it?

LMC [00:50:56] So, do you mind if I say something funny?

Student 4 [00:50:58] Yeah. [laughter]

LMC [00:51:03] It gets me excited when you say yes, you know. So, when you say... shamatha, normally the way we do it is... we have an object, an inanimate object usually... and we set it in front of ourselves like this clock. And since it doesn't tick, I can just put my awareness on it. ... That's classic shamatha, right? So, after you've done that for... [pointing to her asks] how many years?

Student 4 [00:51:39] 20 years.

LMC [00:51:41] 20 years. Then... you know, a jerk like me comes in and says, "How's it working? [she laughs] How's it working for you?" Because I think, you know, that's a serious... I'm joking in a certain way, because I think that you can't practice shamatha for 20 years... even occasionally, ineptly, done well, whatever it is, you will benefit from it. At the very least, you will understand... how crazy we are! It's like we put our energy into things that don't count, that don't help us, that don't make us happy, that don't improve things... a lot. ... Shamatha, if you put this clock or this coaster in front of you, that coaster is so dead, it couldn't be more dead. Right? And yet we can put our awareness there and what is our experience when we put our awareness there? What?

Student 4 [00:52:46] Boring.

LMC [00:52:48] Boring... is... Chogyam Trungpa was famous... for using the word boring. And he had two kinds of boredom that he talked about. One was cool boredom and one was *hot* boredom. Do you know the difference? You do! You just don't know; you just don't know where to put that label. ... I want to put that aside. You can investigate that in his... in fact you can even you can even find his teaching on that on the web. Because virtually everything he ever said is on the web. Which is very nice, if you ever appreciated some of his stuff.

[00:53:40] This clock is totally... not exciting. It's a nice clock. I'm glad it doesn't tick during the meditation. It keeps good time. So, it's a nice clock to have here. But it is not particularly useful as an object of meditation... because... I don't care... if it breaks. I don't care, actually, if it ticks. I don't care if it keeps time, right or not. There's another clock. It's like I have so many ways to do what this clock does, I don't need this clock. If I really needed this clock, like if it was... a chunk of gold that weighed two pounds, I'd be very interested in it. But that isn't what it is.

[00:54:26] So... we actually need as part of our meditation paraphernalia... a state that... kind of organically, from the inside out in us, *demand*s attention. That's what we need. [picking up the clock] This does not demand. It doesn't care whether I look at the time or not. Whether I keep it

wound or a battery, it doesn't care. And I don't care. That juncture is a terrible juncture... to put your awareness on. It will roll off like you putting one marble on top of another one. It won't stay. So we need something, that will actually... every time that we invoke it, we will see... insight. That's what we really need. Because when you see insight, the first thing you want is more of it. Or you want to go deeper... somehow. And what usually happens is... if I say, when was the last time that you actually had the experience of insight? Most people will say, I can't remember. ... Now *that* is boredom. It's boredom with the very thing that we want to do. Not enough energy. We can't just make energy. We make energy by...really difficult things.

[00:56:01] Another quote, from Kalu Rinpoche was along the lines of working with really difficult situations. Which of course, we all would like to do. We all would like our meditation to give us the ability to work with terrible situations, death and jealousy and pride and anger. All of these things. We would love a meditation that addresses all of these things and more. And the reason why we're not enthusiastically engaged in the practices that do that is because... we haven't put the energy ourselves into that garden. And so, the vegetables and the things that might grow there are not growing there. What we need is... experiences that demand to be noticed. And then we need to... invoke the tools that we've learned to use... at that very moment.

[00:57:24] Anger is a great one. ... Anger is a great one. Because you can feel it. It's a visceral. So it's not too subtle. It's not so subtle that we don't care. We care. When we're angry, we care. And that caring creates the energy so that if we can bring our awareness and put it there, we will find one of two things happens. Either it's like the proverbial marble on top of another marble. Both of them perfectly round. It just doesn't stay there or... we're magnetized by it. We see it. We put our awareness on it, when the awareness goes on it, it almost feels like we're fanning the flames. And so, we put our awareness on more and more flames come. And it's not clear where the flames are coming from or why we're having that experience. But the experience grows and we just keep putting the awareness on the experience. It will come... to closure.

[00:58:27] And when it comes to closure, then we have the sense of... *I now know what this is*. It's kind of like... we meet the thing. We know what it is. As long as we're just talking about it, we don't know what it is. It's just talk. We need to actually encounter it. And it's helpful... so, this is really important, because we often cannot do this by ourselves. As good a practice, as powerful a practice as it is, we can't do it. So, it's important to have somebody... who can make us angry. ... So, sometimes we care enough about each other, we love each other enough, and we actually know that that's the game. I need somebody to get a cattle prod, stick it in my side sometimes. I need to feel my kleshas, my emotions. When I put my awareness on an emotional state... it sticks like a magnet to a refrigerator that's so strong you can't get it off. The awareness just stays there.

[00:59:45] And so you witness, you witness it rising and falling like waves on the ocean. We just witness it and gradually over time it gets smaller and smaller and then... the miracle happens. It's gone. And you want more. Because you saw how it worked. But you can't have more. It has to come in a way that feels... like it's genuine. Like, you and I can have this conversation and then I could think like, I'll show you what you need to have. And then I could insult you. But you see, you already know. We need somebody who you don't know, who needs to come in... and cause you to feel insulted. And then you need somebody to say, you see, this is what we're looking for. Somebody who you trust, who will say, this what we're looking for. Then you try it.

[01:00:42] It is hard to bring these pieces together, like this. It's kind of like... a nuclear reaction. You have to bring these things together in close proximity and then they get hot. And when they

get hot, you know exactly *why* they're hot. That's what we need to know in our emotional state. We need to know why it gets hot. And then we can put our awareness on it and actually enjoy the process.

[01:01:12] But I think we've done enough yak for this evening. So you should go home and tangle with your dog. [laughter] Get it to bite you. ...Okay? Are we done? ... I'll take that as yes. So, let's generate and dedicate the merit of our evening.

sangha [01:01:53] *dedicating the merit*