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*acknowledging interdependence changes our relationships, subjective & objective and opening to unbounded equanimity and interdependence, **Carrying Practice:** aspirations for and practicing the 4 Immeasurables for difficult beings, the great value of aspirations, dreams as part of cause and effect's influence*

Student 1 [00:01:13] Lama Michael... it was interesting... your instruction tonight before we started meditating, because it touched on part of what I've been... noodling about lately. So, I'm gaining some ability to look, see and just let be... my own stuff. And just be aware of it. If it's the oh, I'm distracted or oh I'm frustrated or oh... joy... whatever... look, see, let be. But then... I can do it sitting and I can do it... when things are kind of calm, but when I'm in a group or a large activity, there's all this other energy and other... things to notice. And I notice that if I have something... essentially expected of me... say to respond... or to do... it's very easy to fall back into my reactive habits instead of my awareness. It's as if I'm learning how to read... and okay I can read when the room is quiet. But it's as if I'm being asked to read a foreign film. But the words are going by too fast and there's other things happening and I can't keep up. And I lose my awareness and I fall into old habits. So, other than telling me to practice more [laughs] do you have some tips for how to bring the awareness to... like a suggestion about how to work with it when... there's a lot going on instead, and it's harder to bring the awareness... to it.

LMC [00:03:27] If it wasn't hard... dot, dot, dot... dot! [laughs] You know, the rest.

Student 1 [00:03:35] Well, I was born in New England. If it wasn't hard, it's not... [left unspoken: worth much]

LMC [00:03:39] Oh, I'm so sorry. [laughter]

Student 1 [00:03:42] It sounds like part of the work ethic.

LMC [00:03:46] You're easy. I got to just say, you are really easy. Don't put up with this. So, you're talking about the obstacles that occur during the meditation. If five people... in separate rooms, unknown to each other, were asked, what are the obstacles to meditation? They would all pretty much say the same thing. Unless they were brand new or they'd been doing it for 50 years. Otherwise, they'll say almost the same thing. It really comes down to, it's kind of, in a way, a joke that, if that were *not* the case, we would not be talking about samsara. We would not be talking about the way that we get distracted when we don't want to be distracted. We would instead be just engaging in the practice with it.

[00:04:55] Sometimes, if the distractions are too many, and too... powerful, too interesting or too dangerous, [laughs] then we get carried away by that and we can't come back to the point for very long. It's kind of like a ball just kind of bouncing there all the time. But if we can be in a place that feels safe, that's very important, I think, for a long time in meditation... it has to feel safe. Whatever safety means to *you*, it has to feel that way. So, that you have *less* things that are impinging on your practice. So, that more likely you'll be able to, more often, put your awareness on the experience that you're looking at.

[00:05:55] And the experience is always a little bit difficult... to keep your awareness on because it has a name. It has a personality. I mean, it's *you*... really. It's not somebody else's experience.

If it was, it would be easier. So, we're constantly being... shuffled around... physically, too, as we know, like the body gets restless. We have to move and do things. So, whatever the body is doing, the mind is three times that. Hundred times that. So, we keep coming back. Another way to keep coming back, by the way, is... *just stop following it*. Which is kind of the opposite of keep going back. Like, okay, that one's done. ... Do you see the difference? Instead of keep coming back to the same thing and falling off that one again... just let the whole thing go. That's fundamentally the acknowledgment of the truth of interdependence. Which is conceptually like a snap... to understand. Everything is interdependent. At some level... it's interdependent.

[00:07:19] So, the easiest ones to get are things that we do ourselves. Like... I *hate* going to meditation in the afternoon. I hate it. And after a while, if we say it enough times, it changes our relationship with the practice that we're doing. And if I say, I only like it when this person's here, when that person is here. But when that person's there, I don't like it. Every time that we put those kinds of things in there... it fundamentally changes everything. So, we may not *notice* that it's changed, but it is. It's almost like... if I breathe out in this room, of course, the air is totally different. It might take it five minutes, but it's different. But no one will notice! But it is. So, if I say... I love everyone who is here. And I know so-and-so is having a lot of trouble. So, I think about that person. It changes my relationship to them and it changes my relationship to myself, which in turn... changes my relationship to this person and that person and that person, and so on. So, that fundamentally is a very *deep* practice if we can do that.

[00:08:34] And hold... another view, which is... that whatever experience I'm having now, it has never occurred before and will never occur again. For some reason, we find that difficult... to hold. Whereas when you think about it for a moment, it just makes total sense. The experience I had a little while ago, which felt like X, Y, Z... and now... it looks almost the same... so, I'm inclined to call it X, Y, Z. But if I'm just careful and just not try to manipulate it, I see that actually it's an experience I haven't had before. And that's very helpful. We can put our awareness on that experience over and over and over and over again. We'll begin to see that... every experience I have is fresh. So even disappointment, even depression, even excitement... all of those things then become just the natural flow of interdependence. ... So, do you want to report back in now or wait a minute? ... You want to scratch your head? [laughter].

Student 1 [00:10:00] I already did. Thank you for *that* teaching. If it answered my direct, specific question, it answered it from an oblique way... but there's still stuff there to work with. And so, that, that I'll sit with. Thank you.

Student 2 [00:10:47] I had a thought about that... that you might have another thought about... this thought. [laughter] If I know anything about thoughts.

LMC [00:11:01] That's not a surprising comment from you.

Student 2 [00:11:08] So, this had more to do with the earlier part of the the question about... going into situations which are complex with lots of people, a lot of moving... tongues and bodies... and finding my attention... snapped away once and for all.

LMC [00:11:33] How is that?

Student 2 [00:11:33] Well, you know, until I get home and realize.... oh! So, all of a sudden, I remembered, a few minutes ago... years and years ago, in a room with a few people and we were talking with one of the people, was a manager in a.... in a sort of dynamic, tense office. And she had to fire people or hire them or fire them. Someone asked her... what do you do

when you have to fire someone? And her answer really stuck with me. She said, I put a pebble in my shoe.

LMC [00:12:13] Wow. Just to be just... to put her discomfort to remind her?

Student 2 [00:12:18] Exactly! The discomfort would keep her present... with the firing. And it just came to me... as, as you were answering that question, that... next time I want to try this, I go into a room of, you know, a busy... complicated environment... I might put a pebble in my shoe... and see if every time I step, I'm reminded... to remind myself to be present, to go back to shamatha... in a caring shamatha.

LMC [00:12:56] Thank you. That is good.

Student 3 [00:13:33] So, this is just kind of a facetious answer. You can, like me, grow up with seven siblings and... yeah, the house I grew up in was chaotic enough for me to feel very comfortable in that kind of situation. ... So, my question is about internal and external. These are words that I try to pay attention, or the meaning that I try to pay attention to. I've decided that subjective and objective experience is probably better... you know, more to the point. So, like when I turn my attention to the experience... before turning my attention, that experience might be subjective, you know, or entirely subjective. But when I look at it, it becomes, becomes objectified. The experience becomes objectified. Becomes more objective... and less subjective. And I'm just going to throw out one more thing and then just ask for... your general impressions. There's a benefit for all beings. You know, this intention to benefit all beings. When I first heard, you know, tried to play with those words, it seemed like, like an objective... task that was impossible. But when I made it subjective, it became not only possible, but very... worthwhile and immediate. So, these are just comments for me to hear what, how you play with these words, if you do - subjective and objective.

LMC [00:15:35] All the time.

Student 3 [00:15:36] Yeah. So, and then how does... like what, like maybe you have some guidance or teaching around that.

LMC [00:16:01] There's a... there is a teaching that we have... about... going for refuge. That before going for refuge, we imagine that all sentient beings are in front of us. Which for many of us, myself included... in the beginning, the first time I heard that... it fell into a large bucket called the 'silly bucket'. [laughs] It's like I just couldn't make any sense out of it at all. And first of all, because it was totally objective and therefore nonsensical. I had no way to relate to all sentient beings. And of course, that's what I thought I was supposed to do... was relate to all sentient beings. And to have this wish for all sentient beings. Which is kind of easy to recite. As someone gives you a short liturgy, you can recite it. But it doesn't necessarily bring you to tears, which is actually more appropriate... [laughs] if it does. And, and so, little by little, we got more instruction on it. And I think that one of the... additional layers of understanding had to do with what you just mentioned. The difference between the objective and the subjective. So, if I could, I would say the objective, another way of... reframing that would be... the objective is a little more on the conceptual side and the subjective is a little more on the experiential side.

[00:17:57] First of all, we had the objective. That is to say the conceptual thing. Imagine like *layers* of sentient beings extending to the limits of space and time. Like it's just like *forever*. And your job is to relieve them of all their suffering. So, that's the conceptual thing, and the

conceptual thing presents itself first as... Ha! [laughs] You know, it's like there is no way. Like, why would I even *bother* thinking about that? That's just not possible. So, over many years then... it became clear that, that the understanding was wrong. The *understanding* was objective. Which is to say, all Sentient beings are in front of you, which objectively is easy to *think*. Well, it's *like* they're all in front of me. I suppose they're behind me, too, and everywhere. But it doesn't give you... a reference point that... *makes you bleed*. That makes you cry. Because... it's just a name. And it's just a word. And so, it doesn't do the job. But if you have five people... who are all really in serious, terrible suffering and you're sitting with them... this thing works great. You don't even need an instruction.

[00:19:39] So, the purpose of that practice is to open yourself to unbounded equanimity. Where you feel like whether I know this person or not, they deserve happiness. They deserve loving kindness. They deserve joy. They deserve all the things that make us the *best* human being we could be. And therefore, because we actually have them in front of us, we have a *feeling* around it. In other words, the experiential side rises up. And then... visualizing all sentient beings in front of you, you understand that actually all sentient beings *are* in front of you. They're behind you, too, which is also in front of you. You know, all you need to do is turn around. That's the same thing.

[00:20:34] So, we keep doing that partly because of two things. One is... this is how we accomplish the benefit of ourselves... is by focusing on the benefit of others. ... Because those are the things that lead us to happiness. Those are the things that make us feel like we're being fulfilled. They make us feel like we are genuine beings. Kind of like when Thomas Merton said to the young monk who asked him what he should do in order to... be a good... religious person. And Merton says, oh, that's easy. You practice in order to become a saint. So, he didn't say that your life was worthless if you didn't become a saint. He was just saying, like, spend your life... moving in that direction. And the rest will take care of itself. And by virtue of continually making an effort to benefit others, we gradually discover loving kindness, compassion, joy and equanimity in our own stream of being... by virtue of interdependence. By virtue of making that wish over and over and over again, we *experience* it almost like we're looking in a mirror. By virtue of my *own* ability to experience loving kindness and compassion, I therefore feel like I can give it to someone else. But before we experience that, we don't feel that way. We feel locked up. Like we can't do it. So, again, I think the objective and subjective thing is not a bad... thing to it. The one downside of it is... it's thoroughly objective. [laughs] You know, you split it into two and concretized them. So that's not actually what it is. But as long as we understand that's not what it is, it's okay. Okay?

Student 6 [00:28:20] My question is about loving kindness, kind of, I think. It's not fully formed. And empathy. We're trained to have a lot of it. And I feel sometimes that we're prone... or we're vulnerable to people that *don't* have empathy. I mean, like... ewe. There are those people that *don't*. And actually, want to harm you. And... how do you send loving kindness and... want to help them when they want to harm you? It's really difficult because... it's almost like, for me, it's like I feel like prey. And they're just kind of sussing me out, like, how kind are you? Let's see.

LMC [00:29:21] Well you check them out first, huh. [laughs] Yeah.

Student 6 [00:29:26] Yeah. They check *me* out. Yeah.

LMC [00:29:32] Yeah. World's a dangerous place sometimes. ... We could say... that... in developing any of the Four Immeasurables like loving kindness, compassion, joy, like that, and

equanimity... that the most *effective*... practice in our meditation is to focus on those who are the most difficult. And that's not always *practical*. So... it's not difficult in this world to find... historically, or just in our own memory, individuals who make it really difficult to imagine feeling compassion or joy or any of those things. So, the reason for working with people who are really difficult on that score is that... it more quickly makes the change within *our* mindstream. But there is a certain limit to that. So, if someone, for example, *routinely* hurts you, there is no obligation there to engage in a meditation to benefit them or to make wishes for them in a certain way. *But*... at some point, if you can just like... dip your finger into it, you know, and just taste it a little bit. What does it taste like to make the wish that they also deserve to be free of suffering?

[00:31:49] So, one way to do that in a way which can be very effective is imagine that in the realm that we generally work with, we're generally dealing with a relatively small physical space and a fairly small number of individuals who we know. So, in that way, we can think of... I had a fascination when I was in high school in reading about terrible things that certain individuals had done. Like the, the criminals of the world, you know, in retrospect. And I was fascinated and somewhat *terrified* by some of the things that people *did* to other people. And I'd have nightmares at night. And later, growing up, the fascination kind of continued. It was not a healthy fascination and it was not like I wanted to *do* any of those things. It was more like I was afraid they'd be done to me. [laughs] So, I was afraid. I had nightmares about it.

[00:33:07] Coming then many years later to meet the old man Kalu Rinpoche. His thing was... bring to mind the most scary individuals you can think of. Like, to pull them out of history and remember them and think... they actually are just like you. If you *could*... bring them to the place of... *not* doing those things... how long would you hold against them what they did before? And I think probably some people thought a *really* long time. And other people thought, well, he was suggesting, anyway, that... if you could turn the world around... and have everyone be free of the causes of those kinds of activities, would you not do it?! Or would you say, no, actually, I have to hang around a while because they really deserve something really bad. And that puzzled me for a long time.

[00:34:19] It became clear at a certain point that... our *own* personal happiness rests upon holding that view. The view that *they also* deserve this. And it's easy to deserve being free of all of that. And the easy way to kind of conceptualize that first, because the conceptual is always easier than the experiential. So, you conceptualize it by imagining... each of those beings, in a situation, that is *more* horrific than what we experience ourselves. So, it's easier to kind of forgive them. Easier to wish that they would be free of that suffering. If there was a way that I *could* free them, would I actually *do* it? And so, then he would say, like practice that. Like make that aspiration that I might be able to free... those individuals from those activities. Because according to the truth of interdependence, those activities are going to come back and haunt them. They will be part of the future. And the *worst* thing of all is, is that they won't even know where it's coming from.

[00:35:37] So, in the moment that we know where it's coming from, we have a certain advantage. Knowing where it's coming from, we have some understanding of what *freedom* from that would look like. So, it isn't too difficult. You put yourself in a *safe* environment and imagine that you are *capable* of removing that suffering by whatever means. Whether you're practicing loving kindness and compassion, or you're engaging in a more elaborate practice like the tantric practices, which really come down to the same thing... to a significant degree. Can you sit and make the *wish* for these individuals who have done so many negative things? Just

making the wish... that they might be free of it... plants a seed. And if you nurture that seed, it gradually becomes something else.

[00:36:42] You can do it out on the street. You know, you're walking. You see somebody. You meet them. You imagine that... maybe they suffer from the things that they have done... in this life and previous lives. Again, due to the truth of interdependence, I had a *lot* of trouble with this business of... something that *I* may have done, many lifetimes ago would cause me a problem in this life. As a good scientist... it just didn't add up. [laughs] And after some time, it became really clear. It doesn't add up because you're using the wrong formula. So, you come to the wrong conclusion with this thing. It's *functional*... when we *imagine* that it adds up. That's what's important. And if we imagine enough, we get really good at imagining. And pretty soon we can imagine all sorts of things that we couldn't imagine before. And, at some point, you come to the place of *recognizing*... oh, I *knew* that person a long time ago and they were *really* awful. And now I see... that that's not who they are. So, you really only need one of those... as proof of the pudding, so to speak. I see it, I saw it. I see that it happens. And therefore, I see that *I* can do that, too. And I can encourage that in others. And oftentimes you encounter remarkable things in other people when they're encouraged to move from where they are to another place. ... And still keep your friends around you.

Student 7 [00:38:55] I was thinking about the same thing on a different level. I don't have so much trouble... wishing better circumstances or happiness or lack of suffering on people who I find to be evil or challenging to me. I don't have trouble offering that to them. But I wonder about the possibility of people who don't have compassionate attitudes or motives, like protecting yourself and others *from* them... while also practicing compassion for them. You know, so, it seems like on some level... us and those around us need to be protected from the actions of people who are not compassionate. And that seems like a different practice than wishing that they would be free from suffering.

LMC [00:39:59] I don't think it's different. Because... you can still make the wish that they give up the negative things that they're doing because you recognize that doing those negative things actually causes *them* suffering. They end up getting themselves into situations where they get harmed, they get killed. All these things happen. And it's not all about... well, this is your karma. You did this, so now this is going to happen. I personally tend to avoid that kind of conceptual understanding. Because it's easy to understand without going to that extreme. It's like we all know... someone who *embodies*... loving kindness, compassion and joy and equanimity. You meet that person. And it doesn't take very many minutes, or seconds even, to have a sense that... I'm drawn to this person. I like this person. I would like to *be* like this person. You have that experience.

[00:41:13] And... when you have that experience, you're making the *wish* that you would be *like* that. And so just having that wish... plants a seed. You can *feel* it. That I would like to be that. And even just *wanting* to be like that, I already feel something from it. So, we're driven to it. We don't actually need to go to the place, which can be a little complicated and sometimes confusing, that if I do this, the karma will be bad. Though... I go there as a last resort... [laughs] you know. Because it's better... *avoid the karma and do great things*.

Student 7 [00:41:56] That makes sense.

LMC [00:41:59] Okay, you can go now. [laughter] Just kidding.

Student 7 [00:42:04] That makes sense. But then it seems like when there's these *really* bad people... in the world, you know that... the harm they can do to so many people... is it compassionate to stop them from doing it?

LMC [00:42:25] Yeah... and?

Student 7 [00:42:27] You know, so there seems to be a point at which you need to... in a compassionate way, somehow actually use some sort of intervention... to prevent the karma that's going to befall *them* for doing it. And the suffering that it's going to cause other people. So, that's the kind of crux that I come to.

LMC [00:42:54] Yeah, and... we like to get even with people. [laughs]

Student 7 [00:42:59] It feels that... there's a secondary gain to it too.

LMC [00:43:05] The evildoer. We like to get them. Yeah. I think that is one of the ways in which we double-cross ourselves. And... I'm always remembering this... I think it was one of the Jataka Tales where the Buddha, *before* he was the Buddha, when he was just like... quite highly realized, but not the Buddha. And he was in a camel train in the desert. And all these merchants were going to this other town. And they were going to sell their things there and, you know, move on. And so, the would-be Buddha comes to recognize that the lead person who is leading all these camels and all these people to this town, that this one person, it is going to kill all of them. He's decided I'm gonna kill all of them and take their stuff. I can easily get away with that. And so, again, the would-be Buddha decides... since he's *not* the Buddha, he's not using the same kinds of things that as a good Buddhist we talk about it like this and that. So, we just have this sense that... this person feels some deep pain for this person who's going to do that. And of course, the people who he's gonna kill are going to suffer. But even more so, the person who kills will suffer far more than the person who was killed. And so... he kills the guy. He kills the guy.

[00:44:56] And when he kills him, he also recognizes that this is going to hurt *him* deeply. And so, he fully takes it on like it's okay. Like I'll be caught. I'll be caught. I'll probably be killed... for having murdered this guy. Because there's no apparent reason why I would have killed him. And so, I just accept the consequences. And if we imagine that... he really *fully* accepted the consequences without any excuses whatsoever... and maybe he was murdered for it as a penalty... the fact that he *fully* accepted... all the consequences... resulted in his realization exceeding what it had been before. So, the story is interesting, I think... only interesting, really, from *my* perspective, that... our aspirations and efforts in that direction and in the consequences of those aspirations, often they are far more than what we might have expected. And so, I think that aspirations are a really big deal in all of our Buddhist practice. It's a *huge* thing. We don't talk about it nearly as much as we probably should. The aspiration to do something is often like the majority of the value of doing it... is the aspiration. Just even having the aspiration and *failing*... still, the majority of the benefit is there.

[00:46:46] You know, like somebody who is dying and suffering and you really don't know what to do. Perhaps it's an animal who's dying and suffering and, and you realize the animal's gonna die. And you don't know what to do to... ease the pain of the animal when they're dying or anything. But... on the one hand, you can just say, well there's nothing I can do and you could walk away from it. Or you could just *sit* there and kind of hold a view of... in the context maybe of the mind training teachings, I will just sit here and on every breath, I'll imagine I'm taking in the

suffering of this being. So, the *aspiration* to take the suffering in because we know that only great beings can actually take in that suffering. But *we...* can hold the aspiration that we would be successful. And *that's* how the great being came to be great. So, even though the animal died and maybe the suffering was not ameliorated at all, but the aspiration was great.

Student 7 [00:47:58] That's helpful. Thank you.

Student 8 [00:48:12] Lama Michael, you said, experience happens, the mind generates experience, whether we're asleep or awake or even after we die. So, my question is about that. If I'm sleeping and I'm not consciously aware of any experience at all... how is the mind generating experience when one is sleeping?

LMC [00:48:51] Oh. Well, maybe you're... confusing the mind with the brain?

Student 8 [00:48:56] Does the mind have anything to do with what the brain is doing?

LMC [00:49:08] That's very hard to document. [laughter] So, I think is, the *view* there is helpful. If I understand... and I think we can understand this experientially... because we sit down to meditate and our intention is to still the mind. And it's often the case that actually the more we make an effort to still it, the more wild it gets. Right? It's not always like that. But it's not exactly predictable... what's going to happen.

LMC [00:50:01] And again, just to fill in the kind of the foundation of this... we generally think of... well, let me just put it in what, what science is clear about.... I think this is changing, but up until rather recently... it's been clear that the position is... the mind is an epiphenomena of the brain. That is to say, the brain is actually the king, or the thing that really generates the experiences and the talk about the mind is... a kind of spin-off... from the other thing. Whereas... we would normally say, from the Buddhist perspective... I think we would go as far as to say the brain is actually an epiphenomena of the mind. Like without that, there wouldn't, there wouldn't be a you. There wouldn't be a... anything... there. So, now, where were we? Or, where were you? That would be good enough. [laughs]

Student 8 [00:51:16] So, when I'm sleeping and my brain is... it might be doing things, but I don't know if that just goes in the 'so what bucket.' I mean, who cares what my brain is doing when I'm sleeping? You know, some residual of the day, maybe some dreams are occurring that I don't remember when I wake up because they're occurring in deep sleep da da da. I guess the question I have is about the responsibility that we have for the experiences that the mind is generating when we are asleep.

LMC [00:51:50] Responsibility? Did you say that? Really? [laughs] I'm in real trouble. I can see. If I have to take responsibility of my dreams. Ergh. I'll try. ...Can you, like, say, the question again exactly. I'm not exactly clear on it.

Student 8 [00:52:30] I know, I know we're running out of time, so maybe it's rhetorical.

LMC [00:52:34] It's okay. We have days.

Student 8 [00:52:37] So, I'm wondering... when we are asleep. Just take when we're asleep instead of when we're dead, right. When we're asleep, does it *matter*... what the brain is doing?

And do we have a way to take responsibility for... the mind generating experiences when we are asleep?

LMC [00:53:06] Yeah. ... Are you worried? [laughs] I think this is not really a problem at all. Just speaking from a Buddhist position... I don't think there's a problem here. But there is an interesting kind of corollary to the conversation, which is... yes, it's true. In one way, we would say... you're sound asleep. And what goes on then... you're kind of not responsible for it. Aside from the fact that you may have walked in your sleep and killed someone and therefore you're being executed for having killed that person. But we're really going back to the place of... how much responsibility do I get for what happens in my dreams? And if I do really fantastically wonderful things... what benefit comes from that? Isn't that the same? Even though I didn't know I did it?

Student 8 [00:54:22] So, if... given what you've taught, which is that they mind is generating experiences when we're asleep or, or when we're dead, right? Is there a way, maybe responsibility is not the right word... is there *influence*... that we can have?

LMC [00:54:39] Yeah, I think that's... I think that's it. So now we're talking... cause and effect. Which is code for karma. Right? So, cause and effect, rather... and the only reason I said that is because... I prefer... the word interdependence. Which is *no* different from karma. You can put karma there or interdependence, as long as... you hold the view that interdependence is *unbounded* in its connectedness. It's like it has no limit to it at all. There is nothing which is not a cause and effect of something. And it's also interesting that our science would also say exactly that. Nothing occurs without something... somewhere.

[00:55:32] So, in that way, whether we're Buddhists or not, we're on the same place there, whether we know it or not. And it's the most interesting spot to work from. Precisely from what you just said, I think. Whether we're talking about being asleep or being awake... we end up working with our experiences. The ones that we recognize. By recognize here, I don't mean we recognize the *name*. Like ohhh, I'm having an experience of remembering my brother Jim or something like that. No, I mean, just like... recognize that there *is* an experience that's occurring. And I can see it. And I'm not naming it and I'm not calling it better or worse. I'm just seeing it. So, the reason that I'm saying it this way is because this is *actually* the practice of shamatha. What we want is, we want to *see* the experience. So, when we put our awareness on... a cup of water, we actually don't... excuse me, give a damn about the cup of water. But if a cup of water is hot and I put my hand on it and I go, oh! hot. That's what we want. Because *that*... actually triggers something.

[00:57:11] And when it's triggered, an experience occurs. And the experience is... the heat, and my aversion to the heat, and my cursing the cup because it burned me. And then cursing the person who made me the tea... because they didn't let it cool long enough and I'm going to get even. It's *that* kind of thing... in a kind of gross form where we... go through our days and nights, and we end up engaged in things that we often can't remember. And the *trick* with the shamatha is, can you *allow* your brain... and your mind, to engage in these things in such a way that you can sit so still that you can see these things occurring as they occur. And ideally, you have no... attachment or aversion to them. You just see them. No matter how good they are. No matter how bad they are. No matter how pleasant they are. No matter how painful they are. They're just experiences coming. And of course, we're talking about a situation *where*... the environment is 100 percent actually... safe. There's nobody else around. Or only your best friends are around. So, that environment is really the place where we can work with the most difficult things. So, if I

have to scream, I can scream and nobody's going to come running. You know, it's just everything is... okay. And therefore, I can work with *all* the things that are there... that I, maybe haven't worked with before or more likely... I've worked with a lot... but the job's not done. ... Now, I don't actually know... did I even come close to hitting the mark?

Student 8 [00:59:18] If one does that kind of work and makes some progress in doing that kind of work... when they're awake... does the same thing continue when they're asleep?

LMC [00:59:32] Yeah. What's the difference? Yeah. I'm saying that because... I walk in my sleep almost every night... since I was 12 years old. She [my wife] will attest to it. Yeah... it's just been like that forever. So, I'm often doing things *in* my sleep. Often not knowing that I'm asleep until I wake up and then I just know that I *was* asleep. But sometimes... I'm asleep and awake at the same time. That is not so often, but occasionally it's there. So then you get this sense of... a kind of a deeper thing. But I have to confess it... I rarely make use of it because I'm bewildered in that kind of state. It's kind of 'frizzed,' you know.

[01:00:30] But I think... well, we're talking about cause and effect and interdependence. The interdependence is still functional. It's still functional. It's still there. So, if in that state, if I'm dreaming and I encounter another person who is suffering or somebody maybe I've hurt and now... I have an opportunity to help them. And if I help them and do something, it is *no* different at all than if I met them on the street and did it. It's exactly the same thing. ... It's not reduced or increased by virtue of it having occurred during an illusory moment or two... or longer. Because *that's* how... it's in those moments that we build the ability to actually generate loving kindness and compassion for people we *didn't* like. And after we work with loving kindness and compassion, we come to realize that... I'm happier because of that loving kindness and compassion. And... I have to give credit to the persons that I *didn't* like, who brought me to the place of the aspiration for loving kindness and compassion. So, the circle comes all the way around. And then we realize... whew, this is actually the *tools* that we were *meant to use* when we came here in the first place.

sangha [01:02:24] *dedicating the merit*