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what arises in mindstream is not the problem and using the fish tank instructions, bringing awareness to experience is tool to recognize nature of mind, working with grief

LMC [00:02:00] I appreciate coming here today and seeing all of you after some... two or three months. And especially that the majority of you seem to be utterly not serious. [laughter] That's really important... especially important in our practice. So, we have time now to do absolutely anything you want or don't want. So, we normally have this as a... kind of *stodgy* question and answer kind of thing and... so, it is open for anything that you would like to... discuss or any complaints you would like to levy. And I mean, if you don't have some, I do! [laughter] Unfortunately, the culprit is not in this room. [laughs] So, if you have things that you would like to open conversations about here, this is a good time. And we will *not* take it too seriously.

Student 1 [00:03:53] Over the last week or so, I've been doing a lot of thinking, especially after all of these mass shootings and violent events that have occurred. And my mind keeps going back to a quote attributed to the Buddha. That hate cannot conquer hate. Only through non-hate is hate vanquished. This is ancient wisdom. And I find a lot of comfort in those words. But I also have a hard time trying to keep all of the negative emotions out of my responses to these events. And, you know, I really find myself trying to avoid getting into arguments on Facebook or just hollering at someone or just expressing myself in a loud and obnoxious manner. Which does not seem to follow the non-hate idea. So, that seems, I'm having trouble between the theory and the practice of non-hate conquering hate. And if you could provide any advice, it would be appreciated.

LMC [00:05:14] You could try a different method. Don't try to conquer it. ... It's kind of a high standard to step up to. But in our meditation practice... if you haven't noticed, and I'm sure you have, that... you don't get to choose what arises in your mindstream. And if you manage to *undermine*... the tendencies you'd like to be rid of... you still don't get to choose. And even if you *do*... get to choose... it's often the case that you find yourself... in another place that is... just as... dysfunctional.

[00:06:48] So, I made a... resolution for myself... which I'm sure I won't keep. I can't remember having kept a resolution, probably this one won't. But just the idea that what arises in the mind... is *never* a problem. Even whether it's love, hatred... desire, aversion to things, all sorts of things, I'm not sure that's the problem. ... When I try to fix... the experiences that I have, that I think I shouldn't have. Or try to grasp the things that I think I should have... it always... at this point has a bit of a patina of fake. It's like I can't. If I'm angry, then I'm angry. It's not what I wanted to do, but since I'm angry... and I'm not feeling particularly good, I'll put my awareness on the anger. ... When I can do that... then I start seeing other things going on. And pretty soon... the mind is filled with a myriad of experiences. And just paying attention to those experiences seems to be the most effective method to... discover yourself.

[00:09:01] It gets a little tricky, you know, because we often talk about *there is no self*. But I think that's kind of... for most of us, for most of the time, that is strictly a conceptual understanding. There is no self. As soon as we say that, we know that it's my sense of self that says that. [laughter] So, it's like it's not so easy to recognize the *absence* of self. Maybe it's better to... put up with a bad neighbor. You know? Like, okay, I actually don't know whether you're... the self or not. But... I'm also not required... to return the favor or do anything about it. Primarily what I'm

interested in is... discovering what being here means. Like being alive in this world, in a body and just... moving through the things that we do... as human beings. Or for that matter, as dogs and cats.

[00:10:29] Much of our instructions in the practice are about... things that we actually *can* do. Like, when we talk about the practice of shamatha or calm abiding... the instruction always seems super simple. And yet it's one of the most difficult practices to engage in. All you need to do is put your awareness on the feelings that arise. And since we have feelings all the time, that instruction just seems like... this is a snap. ... We are the ones that snap. [laughter] I think the instruction, the advice to... rest your awareness, not on the *individual* things that arise in the mind... like, for example, the experience of breathing and feeling your breath coming and going. But while your breath is coming and going, you're trying to develop a better argument against somebody who you were fighting with earlier. [laughter] And maybe it's better to not feel like there's anything wrong with that. But to rest your awareness on the *totality* of the experiences you're having... rather than the individual ones that you think need to be fixed.

[00:12:04] Nobody ever said, in this tradition, that anything about the mind needed to be fixed. No one has ever said... it needs to be fixed. And we tend to pick and choose. Well, I think I'll rest my awareness on the fact that I feel cold or the fact that I feel this or that. It's really important to rest your awareness on experiences because the experiences are actually where we live. And so, if we don't rest our awareness on experiences, then we're resting our awareness on our conceptual understanding, which is utterly without authority. ... It doesn't move us. It doesn't fix anything.

[00:12:55] So, resting our awareness... I think learning to rest it on the totality of things... it's kind of like a fish tank filled with 100 fish. Any of us can sit in front of that fish tank and watch all of the fish at once. We don't have to like, oh, I'm watching that one now. I'm watching this one now. We can actually understand the nature of the fish tank and the fish in it by just being aware of the whole thing that's going on. And our mind is often like that. And when we try to weed out the bad ones, the dead fish [laughs] and the other things, it just doesn't work. So, I think the instruction to rest your awareness on... try to get *all* of these things, not to *put* them in place, but to bring your awareness to *all* of the things that we're experiencing... at once... is actually not that difficult.

[00:14:00] And it also... in my own experience, provides a sense of... satisfaction at the level of... feeling like... I'm learning something about myself at a deeper level by resting my awareness on *all* of the things that are occurring at any time. Because if I have an argument with someone... it might also be someone that I really care about and don't want to argue with. And there isn't necessarily a contradiction there. Those two things are just side by side. If I want to separate them and work on one t a time... as if that was more functional... it doesn't seem to me like that works better. ... What do you think?

Student 1 [00:15:08] Thank you.

LMC [00:15:09] It's okay to think. [laughter]

Student 2 [00:15:29] Good morning. Hi, um, I have a question about the practice that you just talked about, because I thought the fish tank analogy fit really well for me. Because I was trying to think in my mind... a metaphor, and that was really good. So... what I notice is that occasionally I can... have the spaciousness of the tank and the fish. But what happens is... all of

a sudden... my attention is on a fish, a particular fish, and I don't know how it got there. I did not see it coming into my vision. Like, I *never* see it coming.

LMC [00:16:13] Probably didn't see you either. [laughter]

Student 2 [00:16:20] It just feels really subtle. And it's not like this is the first time I've done that practice. Like, I've done that quite a bit. And it just is so sneaky. Like I just don't like...

LMC [00:16:30] It's what?

Student 2 [00:16:31] It's so sneaky.

LMC [00:16:32] Kinky?

Student 2 [00:16:33] Sneaky!

LMC [00:16:35] I guess kinky too isn't it. [laughter]

Student 2 [00:16:38] Don't go there. ... I don't know, I just feel like maybe I'm missing some element or is it just a gradual refinement of attention that's... going to happen with practice?

LMC [00:17:35] I'm not sure how to respond here. I do think that... bringing whatever... meditation methods that we have, that we feel like they're helpful for us... and working with them... and trying to use them for *all* of our experiences is really more helpful than trying to fix this thing over here... this bugs me. So, I want to get something to *fix* that thing. And I think there's a lot of teachings on *doing* that. But I'm just saying that in this moment, that doesn't work for me. I would prefer... to familiarize myself with the totality of my experience. And it doesn't feel more difficult than dealing with individual pieces of it, which never quite add up.

[00:18:40] And I can't get away from the sense that... if I have attachment to something, it's okay to have the attachment. I know what it is. I know what it does. I know what it doesn't do. It's just... an attachment. So, I put my awareness on that attachment, the experience of it. And it kind of rides around for a while and pretty soon it just falls off the cart. ... It's not real.

[00:19:22] There's a certain... sense... that I think is important, that we can embrace the totality of our own experience. Not in the sense of, of wanting it or not wanting it, but just of all of the experience that we have... is... or that contains... all of the tools necessary to recognize our nature and the nature of mind. It's all there. It always was there. It's not like we made something and put it there. And there is no teaching that says anything else. It's always there. It's always been there. The issue is not that! We don't practice to *install* the nature of mind in our bodies or in our minds. We practice to recognize what's there. ... So if you if you feel like you're doing that... and you *can* do it, then, then I would think the best thing to do is just try to do more of it. And when you fail at that, embrace the failure. You know, because that's another step in recognizing the nature of mind. Failure is important. If we reject failure, we just stop learning. I mean, that's kind of synonymous. [laughs] You know. I can't afford to fail. Well, then you can't afford to move here. You're finished.

[00:21:16] How many times have we thought that it would be great if we could experience loving kindness for all sentient beings. And sometime in the future, after having *that* experience, we had the sense that we fundamentally didn't like anybody. [laughter] And it seemed like an

improvement at the same time. [more laughter] Maybe it is an improvement. I mean, I don't know. But there's a certain sense that if my mind is capable... of so many different experiences, then why would I need to weed out some of those and think that some of them I should have or not have? I mean, I think... doing really serious harm to other people and to ourselves is not good. But... if we embrace everything truly, all of the experiences we have as *experiences*, not as the truth. I don't like that person. So, if I think therefore the truth is, is I could hurt that person. Well, we just haven't discovered that, that's the way we secretly really hurt ourselves. So, it feels to me like if we follow it far enough, we actually come to the place of having a deeper experience of ourselves and an understanding of what we are and who we are. Not in the sense of what our name is and what we do with our lives and all. But just the sense that... the experiences that we have are the things that are the *tools* that allow us to recognize the nature of our minds. It's not something else. ... Anyway, that's what I say today, and I'm sticking to it until 1:00 PM. [laughter]

Student 2 [00:23:27] Thank you.

Student 3 [00:23:34] I have never been here before, but it's beautiful. Hi. And I would like to keep this light, but my topic's pretty deep, so. I'd like to know more about the process of grief. I lost my daughter and her best friend in a tragic... my daughter died 90 days ago in a tragic accident with her best friend. It was over a thousand-foot cliff. And I've got a little PTSD and I'm dealing with grief. ... and I would like some help.

LMC [00:24:18] Yeah, I'm really sorry to hear that.

Student 3 [00:24:26] I'm trying to forgive. I'm sorry, I'm really going the path of forgiveness because there's a lawsuit against the boyfriend who was driving. He survived without a scratch. And the other family is really angry and horribly... really dark. It's dark. So we've chosen the path of forgiveness. And they've chosen... they're going to sue him. And it's horrible. It's horrible. Horrible. Yeah. It's like a dark I've never seen. Ever! You see it in movies, but you never think it's real. ... I'm determined to forgive... but it's hard and I'd like to know if there's any meditational practices, um, that can help.

LMC [00:25:33] I never think with these things that there is.... some... kind of book that you can open and find... what you need in there... though there are many inspirational things. Really difficult situations, like what you're talking about... my experience with it, which is not vast, but some... is that... it's best not to push it away. It's helpful to do what comes natural. Spend a lot of time crying.

[00:26:49] If you can get people who are kind and will sit with you and cry with you, it's also helpful. Because it feels like a certain sense of... I don't mean to trivialize it, but a certain sense of camaraderie. Like we're in the same boat. And because we're in the same boat, we have a sense of... something we can do... together. And even the grief can be something which is helpful. Because anyone who is as old as you are and I am and so on, you don't escape grief in this life. And in an effort to... cut it short, sometimes all it does is... plant something worse. ... So I'm not a psychologist. And I don't have any complaint about psychologists, [laughs] so I just want to say that... my sole effort in working with grief has been... to actually shed tears with someone.

[00:28:41] These things, of course, come to pass... in a way which... I know when we're looking in the rearview mirror, we've seen it happen. And we can still see it, but it's disappearing. We

have a sense of some wisdom that can arise there. But not until... the grief of our connections with others... shrinks enough for us to investigate our experiences without consistently triggering more grief. ... You can't laugh it away. You know, you just can't. So sometimes just crying it away is the way to do it. Spend your time with people who empathize and sympathize with the situation. And don't hold back the feelings, just let them ride out. Not in order to get rid of them. But because the most profound experiences, the most intense experiences are the ones that provide us with the door to understanding things that before we never understood.

[00:30:55] Would you like to pursue that more or is that enough for now?

Student 3 [00:31:00] Thank you

[omitted the many sangha responses]

LMC [00:39:24] So is there more this morning, any one... have something to add or... ponder?

sangha [00:39:59] *dedicating the merit*