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Dharma Talk at Buddha Center, Second Life
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“The Shadow”

How did you find our little A-B-C Mindfulness exercise? Any comments?
Relaxing, refreshing, back into the now. So Lynd, are you now back into the now? But where were you before? Were you in the now back then? Scattered? Yes, scattered, fragmented – those are the words, that's how we go thru our days when we spend our time listening to that voice in our heads that's based upon a premise of separation and directed towards controlling everything that we think is happening outside of us so we can get our needs met. Or, at the very least, avoid unpleasantness. And that's why we practice, that's why we listen to dharma talks, sit in meditation or chant or work with various releasing techniques. Because our job here is to wake up.

Delani mentioned to me that there was someone who recently asked her the question “What's the payoff for enlightenment?” What's the payoff for enlightenment? Is there a payoff? Lynd says peace, Mimi says no payoff, Crystalina says enlightenment, Delani says release from suffering, Mimi says just peace and love, Rubicundo says enlightenment is not idea. And Rubicundo you are absolutely right. It is not an idea; it is what we were experiencing during our mindfulness exercise just before, when you shift your attention away from the thoughts. I would answer that question by asking another question. Which kind of ties into the answers that a number of you gave.

And that is - if you are asleep and you're in the middle of a nightmare, what's the payoff for waking up? I think you all gave the answers. Delani says release from suffering. That's right. The nightmare stops. And you realize I'm here and I'm ok. Everything is fine. The Buddha himself said, when he was asked what is enlightenment – he simply said the end of suffering. He gave a kind of negative response. And the suffering that the Buddha was talking about was the daymare as opposed to a nightmare. But the daymare that we all walk around immersed in even as we are engaging in our daily activities, routines, relationships.

If you're not experiencing any suffering then there is no payoff for enlightenment. You're already here. No need to practice. But if you are in the midst of a life where there are issues that are troubling you then it makes sense to at least try to figure out how you can get out of trouble. Because the typical solutions that most people give you to getting out of trouble involve having or getting things from the outside that ultimately are not going to get you out of trouble. They are just going to reinforce your feeling of being in trouble and temporarily palliate that feeling. Mimi says Dok, pay off implies receiving some thing for services

rendered. This is not the case here.

And yes Mimi you're absolutely right. There is no payoff to enlightenment. We're talking about semantics here. And using that word payoff-- I don't know who asked the question and what's this person's intention was in asking this question. But to answer the question in a way that implies that there is a pay off in a sense of some "thing", meaning some objective material thing or activity to be gained by enlightenment, that's clearly not the case.

In previous dharma talks I've talked about what happens when you're in a state of enlightenment. When you are experiencing enlightenment either as state enlightenment meaning that you had an enlightenment experience which then fades and then you go back to your normal everyday routine level of consciousness but you have been moved and so you know that there is a higher level that you can attend for like of a better word. Or if you experience what's called trait enlightenment which means that you totally dropped all of the blocks to your awareness of who and what you truly are.

Like Eckhart Tolle did that night 30 years ago or however long it was when he had his enlightenment experience. Just spontaneously and instantaneously. But there is no "thing" to be gained. Enlightenment is not going to make you richer, smarter, more handsome or attractive; it's not going to improve your sex life or bankroll. However it does not mean that you will not have all of the things that all those different conditions imply. The only thing is that you will realize that you are not getting them from the outside. You realize that you are feeling who and what you truly are from the inside. Which really isn't inside, but it feels that way.

So there really is no payoff for practice in terms of getting something. Actually enlightenment is getting rid of stuff. Swami Muktananda put it very humorously once when he said enlightenment is getting rid of what you haven't got. But the problem is we *think* we've got it, namely the ego and all of the tricks and strategies and belief systems and negative behavior patterns that are part of parcel the ego that we hold on to it.

So practice is learning to become comfortable about letting go of those things so that we can really see who and what we are. And that we have everything because we are everything. So enlightenment does not makes you richer, but you feel richer with what ever you have at that moment, and it does not mean that you become more attractive to other people but it does mean that you become magnetic in a way because of the loving energy that you are putting out.

I wanted to talk a little bit as I often do about something that just recently happened. This is something that happened about an hour ago. I got a call from a friend of mine, a woman who I know from the Zen temple where I practice. She called me for some advice. She knows that besides a dharma teacher I'm also a psychologist and psychotherapist. She told me something that I did not know,

she said “I'm going to be getting married in two weeks”. And apparently this has been an on and off relationship that she's had over a year.

She was worried, because the way she approached her question was to ask me how I fielded questions about my wife Sveta who I met on the internet and then went to Russia to meet. And there were a number of people who were telling me to be cautious, to be careful or warning me that this is not a good idea, etc. And yet I went ahead with what I thought was the best thing for me to do at the time. And it turned out fine.

And my friend was asking me “How did you handle it because I'm going to tell my mother?” She said that if she'll tell her mother, she's going to catch hell. She's going to have all kinds of grief or criticism and trying to persuade her not to do it. So she said “What do I say to my mother?” So I said well there is two ways that you can approach it. And you can do both of them. One is to simply tell who ever what is going on and that you appreciate their comments, their concern, opinions and advice and that you've been intimately involved in this situation and from the best of your knowledge and your best judgment this is what feels to be the right thing for me to do at this time.

It does not mean that I may not change my mind in a week; it does not mean that we are going to get married and live happily ever after. All it means that this is the decision that feels right to me where I am in my life, in my consciousness, at my level of awareness. This is what feels right at this time. So she reacted very positively to that. She said that she can do that. And then I said “And the other thing to do is to look at the person in your mind who is giving you this grief before it actually happens, and consider the kinds of responses and the kinds of reactions you going to get from that person. But instead of looking at those responses and reactions as attacks, look at them rather as something that this person is saying because they love you very much and they concerned about your safety, peace of mind, happiness, life. And even though these opinions and those reactions may be misguided, they may be off the mark, they may be based on this person's opinion of you from another day and age, especially when we're dealing with parents. How many of you have parents who are still around and they still treat you as though you were still ten years old.

Emotional Aikido

The point is, look at this reaction that's coming from this person with love. As a loving response. No matter how it may sound, how rough and abrasive it may be on the outside, that is coming from the love heart. And appreciate it as such. And if you do that, if you don't set up barriers or set up defenses against what you think is going to be coming, then you can practice, what I'd like to call, “Emotional Aikido”. Those of you who are familiar with the Japanese martial art Aikido, which emphasizes blending with the attack instead of opposing an attack. Moving with that energy, harmonizing with the energy and then redirecting it. Instead of trying

to stop and then counterattacking.

So that was the advice that I gave to my friend. And she seemed to be pretty happy with that. And I also told her one more thing. That you can use in this process. It's just a principle that I use in terms of dealing with emotional conflicts or any kinds of disagreements. How many of you were here when I did a dharma talk and I went thru the procedure called E.F.T. or Emotional Freedom Technique? The other advice that I gave to my friend was to use this E.F.T. It's a technique where you tap on acupuncture points and that releases emotional issues, upsets, energy imbalances of your body so that you can let go of them and move on.

What I told my friend to do was before she spoke to her mother, just imagine the conversation run in through her mind as though it were movie and then go thru what she is going to say to her mother. And what her mother is going to say, etc. And come up with all the objections that the mother may come up with. Then see what kind of emotion comes up. And see how much upset she has when she goes thru this imaginary argument with her mother. And then start to do the tapping procedure. And tap on that until she gets the level of upset down to a zero. And then she can go to the real meeting with her mother, knowing that she'll be able to maintain her calmness, centeredness, balance and to respond in a peaceful and a helpful, and a loving way as opposed to feeling the need to defend herself and counterattack.

That's what integral practice is all about. It's about using all of the techniques in all of the four major modalities of our consciousness: body, mind, spirit and shadow/emotions. Then using all the powers and skills that you have to release the blocks to your inner peace, to your inner balance, to your awakened state. I've placed a tutorial sheet for E.F.T. on my website. I want to ask people who were at the last dharma talk when we did E.F.T. Have you tried on anything else?

I remember that we went thru a round for everybody's issue and we came up with some really significant changes. Delani said she uses it all the time. How is it working for you? Great! For those of you who have not been here before, my whole focus in my dharma talks, in my teachings is on integrative transformational practice. Meaning that I teach techniques for people to create a spiritual practice or practices that will help to accelerate their spiritual growth. But one which addresses all of the four major components of human consciousness. I teach techniques that work with the body; with the mind, like teaching the theoretical frame work for understanding what human consciousness and what this universe is all about; techniques for the spirit, like the a b c mindfulness exercise or meditations; and then techniques to deal with the emotional blocks and our shadow issues that are keeping us from being awakened all the time. And that's what E.F.T. is designed to address.

E.F.T. is an emotional or shadow releasing technique. It's to be used when

meditation is not enough to let go of whatever issue it is that's gripping us at the moment. When you try it and you actually use it and see how simple and how powerful it is, it will make so much sense that you'll wonder how you got along without it before.

And it will definitely accelerate your progress towards waking up. Balancing yourself, feeling less fragmented, less scattered and more integrated, and more whole. I've been threatening for a long time to do dharma talks here where we will do a segment and devote a portion of the talk to each of the four core modules. We can spend whole hour to do our together going thru an integrative round of practices – a b c meditation, our mind food the theoretical, we can do some releasing with E.F.T. and we can also do a physical exercise like a simple Qi gong together.

Mimi asks what the shadow is.

The Shadow

The shadow is a part of the ego that contains all of the negative belief systems and negative behavior patterns that are part of our personality but that we have suppressed because when we were kids expressing these behaviors and these belief we were punished for doing so. So we pushed them down into our unconscious mind but they are still down there and they still contaminate our consciousness, our thinking process, our emotions and the way we relate to other people. And they contaminate our sense of balance. An integral part of every spiritual practice in my humble opinion needs to be work on the shadow elements of your personality.

Whether you do it by going to psychotherapy or you do it by doing some kind of shadow work technique, dream work, active imagination or something like E.F.T. which brings these feelings to the surface. People ask me: how do I know what's in my shadow? And the answer to that is easy: where are your hot buttons? What really ticks you off? Whatever it is that ticks you off when somebody else does it is something that's in you that you don't want to confront, you don't want to acknowledge, you don't want to admit to. But it's there. And unless you bring it to the light, it will be a problem, because all shadow work is bringing the shadow into the light so that you can see it for what it truly is. And embrace it, because it really developed to help defend you against some kind of unpleasant situation or trauma that you experienced when you were very young, you just haven't gotten rid of it yet, you haven't let it go. I hope it's clear to everybody, just what the shadow is. Eckhart Tolle talks about the pain body. The pain body resides in the shadow. The pain body is that part of the ego that is holding on to beliefs and negative behavior patterns that are actually desiring pain, desiring drama, desiring distress. Because that's what you are used to from your very early days and that was the only form of attention that you got. And understand in principle that any attention at all, even negative attention is better then no attention. The

pain body continues to exist, continues to look for and place you in situations where you are going to get more of the same crap that you got when you were a kid. And it does not care whether your conscious mind likes it or not, it's always going to do what it's comfortable with, what it's habituated to, what it's used to. Because it can't admit to the possibility that there could be something better out there. It would have to dissolve itself, it would have to self destruct in order for you to open up to the possibility that there could be some good attention out there, that there could be some love, some caring, some nurturance. Not the drama or the baggage that we continue to draw in to our lives. The problem with the shadow is that it will do everything, it will beg, lie, steal, cheat and resist to its last ounce of breath your attempts to let go of it. As I know from my own life and practice. Every time I come up with a behavior or thought pattern or an emotional reaction to an event in my life that I immediately say to myself: that's some shadow stuff and I need to let go of it and I can just feel that resistance. That tightening up inside, saying "No, but you're right this time!" That's another hallmark of the ego. The ego always wants to be right and justified. It's a tough and slippery customer. And that's why we're here. To bring a context of mutual support to each other in moving toward being able to let go of all of the illusions that we're holding on to, that keep us from realizing who and what we truly are and that we are all truly one.