

10_21_26 Talk*

*This is an automatically generated transcript, so there are errors.

Stephanie Noble [00:00:01] When I was here last, it was last February, and those of you who were attending heard about my experience with writing my book, my latest book, and my only novel. But it's not just any old novel, it's a teaching novel, which is a novel idea. Yeah The book that I told you about, if you were here, was published in late May, early June, and it's been a very, very interesting time getting out in the world and sharing it. I've been guest teaching at many sanghas, I've had several launch events, et cetera. I'm just gonna write, I mean, not gonna write it, I'm going to read. What Rick wrote on the back about it. Rick said, Augusto-filled journey through the heart of Buddhist wisdom. Into the Hills is a great refuge and guide for anyone from any background, a page-turning plot with heart-centered helpfulness sinking in along the way, a pleasure to read with echoes that linger. Rick Hansen, PhD, New York Times best-selling author. Yeah, and Most of you familiar with Mark Coleman Mark Coleman, okay. Mark Coleman is a wonderful teacher who really Gets out in nature and much of this Takes place in nature. It's on a nature retreat.

Stephanie Noble [00:01:50] So I reached out to him and he said of it a fresh and deeply creative approach to the Dharma weaving the teachings through the arc of a compelling story. The eightfold path comes alive in a way that is intimate, accessible, and profoundly human. A wise and imaginative offering that engages the heart and illuminates the path of practice. Mark Coleman, author of Awake in the Wild and other books. So yeah, so it's fully launched and I've been enjoying meeting people and. I did have a little problem. I noticed when I was looking at the video of the last time I was here, I had a brace on my wrist because I had carpal tunnel syndrome, and I've since had surgery. But there was a real question, would I get the surgery done and healed in time to sign my books? And I did, fortunately.

Stephanie Noble [00:02:54] But it was, it was a little, that was one little glitch that. Could have been a problem, but wasn't. And it's been reviewed in the Buddhist fiction blog and the Marin Sangha newsletter, both really lovely. But what's interesting to me is that it, It is well received by long-time practitioners, but also by people that are absolutely new to the Dharma, because the main character really doesn't know anything about Buddhism to speak of, and she's coming upon this in a way. So it's really something you could give as a gift to somebody who said, I don't Buddhism, I don't know. And they could get into it and come upon it in this really sweet way that is very gentle.

Stephanie Noble [00:03:55] So, yeah, so you can look on my website. It's stephanienobel.com in the book section. I have links to any place you'd wanna buy it, including the Spirit Rock Bookstore. It's just easier than going on Amazon, although you can. There is a link to Amazon, and if you're in Australia, of course, you can also get it on Amazon, but you can get it from IngramSpark. So that's my big sales pitch about it. But it's really just an update. My main concern, it's not a concern, my main reason for doing it was to really emphasize the importance. Of the Eightfold Path and to make it easy for people to understand it and incorporate it into their lives. If you were here last time, you may remember, it was a long time ago, so you might not remember, but there's a cooking pot and it's the cooking pot analogy. And I did talk about it last time. But I don't want to go all into it again. If you're interested, you can get the book or look on my website. Whatever you want to do.

Stephanie Noble [00:05:16] But it's a very good way to really remember and incorporate the Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path into your life, which since it is the recipe, his recipe for the end of suffering, it is The Fourth of the Four Noble Truths. I think it's a must do. So, but my theme today, not that I have a really big theme because this is suddenly, suddenly I'm teaching. But what came to me was this sense of coming home, just coming home. It's really coming home to the felt sense of being alive in this moment. And so throughout the meditation, I was offering that as guidance, but I want to explore it a little more in terms of what does it really mean to come home to the Dharma, to the Buddha, to the teachings, to practice, and to come to the Sangha. You know, many of you feel very at home in the sangha, and that's what a sangha is for. Of the three parts of the Triple Gem, the Sangha is the one that most supports the other two. So I want to really, because I don't have a prepared talk, I'd really like to open it up to a conversation and perhaps to questions to explore what it means to come home to the practice, what it mean to come to the teachings, and what it means to you come home, to each other, to the Sangha, to feel supported by each other. So if something that just strikes something, perhaps from your meditation or just now, as I'm saying, if something comes up, feel free to push the hands up. Yeah, so the title of the book is Into the Hills, an inner adventure novel exploring the noble eightfold path. And it's all on my website, StephanieNobel.com. Yeah, so coming home, what does that mean?

Speaker 2 [00:07:54] That's right. I have a question for you, Stephanie, if I could start things. You have a lot of experience with the sanghas and I find that people, I and others, can really come home in sangha together with each other and inside ourselves. So what have you found about songa and how it helps people come home.

Stephanie Noble [00:08:24] Well, the original purpose of sangha, from the Buddhist point of view, was so that students would feel supported. So say the monks, they have a sangha and they feel supported in the teachings, oh, I forget that part, and somebody says, oh that part is this. And so it's supportive in learning. But... From my experience, and I was part of the Friday morning sangha at Spirit Rock for like 18 years, and I as a class manager and substitute teacher at one point, but. That sense of just, especially when you can be physically together, that does help, of creating community. Almost all spiritual traditions have a strong sense of community mutual support. That's an important part of it. But from the Buddhist standpoint, it was really, is my understanding, for saying, oh well, I don't know, I don't think that's what he meant. Maybe he meant this or something, or this sutta really says that.

Stephanie Noble [00:09:55] Now this can really become a problem you may be a part of or have visited online communities of Buddhist. Practitioners saying, no, no no, that's not right, this is right, and blah blah blah. And I remember back in the 90s when online actually became a thing and I had a group that I called, back then it was called an AOL folder. And. I had one called Meditation Tips and Techniques, which was pretty nervy of me. I wasn't offering meditation tips and techniques, but I was offering a space for people to share their experiences with meditation tips and techniques. I formed it because I happened upon a Buddhist one and they were just arguing incessantly about, no, this form of Buddhism is better and no, that form of Buddhist is better. No, no, no. This is not for me. I don't want to be duking it out over who said what when 2,600 years ago. That's just not my thing. So for me, Sangha really is that sense of community and also not just any community but a community that will step up and say, hey, how's your meditation going? Or, oh, you know, I'm sorry you're going through that. Is there any way the sangha can help? Is there anyway the practice can help?"

Stephanie Noble [00:11:29] Or I just heard this really good dharma talk that addresses exactly what you're going through. Not in a prescriptive way so much as a mutual support way. Just really being there for each other and also just sharing that love of the dharma. And when you're with other communities, say your family, sometimes there's just things that you just don't feel comfortable talking about, but here's a sangha. And you can talk about, oh, Metta, don't you just love Metta? I mean, it's just, you know, we wax philosophical, but we're more just really in love with the Dharma and the brilliant teachings that are such a gift and how fortunate we are that they have been passed down and that we are the recipients of them and to whatever degree we're able that we can share them and pass them along. And keep them as alive and rich as they are. So that's my take, George. So we've got a couple of raised hands. So Asholo Piltzi.

Speaker 3 [00:12:37] Hi, good evening. Sorry, I won't have my camera on, I don't want to lose the sound, but I do have a question about when you say coming home, this week in particular has been like interesting for me, like I've been noticing, like, I've really been really absorbed with witnessing other people's struggles, and then I end up struggling. And I know with... You're muted.

Stephanie Noble [00:13:16] Can you unmute yourself and finish what you were saying?

Speaker 3 [00:13:23] Yes, sorry, let me push something. Sometimes I wonder what would Buddha say to me other than what I heard in many sanghas. Yeah, I'm not alone. To be in community, I do practice the breathing. I notice I end up with somatic symptoms in my body. I do end up just noticing that. And then I'm like, OK, I need to go. I'm not trying to avoid the feeling or the tension, but it's pretty tense. There's a lot of tension there. And then, I go on a walk. I put a come home to my body, to nature. I do. Go look at the sunset walks and then sometimes I cry because it's needed uh as well and sometimes I wonder what would Buddha say to me to do am I just um trying too hard or I'm just trying to do my best or my um just being too over carrying of other people's struggles because knowing me I am a caring person but I can also carry other people struggles and that is not helpful I know that and I do try to do my self-care and come home like you say come home to to my love to my self care to me to to own to nourish me so I can continue.

Stephanie Noble [00:15:03] Well, thank you for that. I think you speak for a lot of people, and I just read something recently that stayed with me. It was just the briefest thing it was, and I can't remember who to attribute it to, but it addresses that same thing of, you know, having this very strong empathetic reaction to the suffering in the world, and... It's to imagine in a, just close your eyes and imagine, oh, there's just a place full of rubble, something terrible has happened there, there's been some suffering. But in amongst all that rubble there's a little yellow flower growing. There's a little yellow flower blooming. And that little yellow flower has not only the right to bloom, but the obligation to bloom to be well. So maybe you can hold that image, that when other people are suffering, certainly if there's a personal way that you can help, reach out and help, certainly do that. But... We weren't meant to take on each other's suffering. There's a big distinction between true compassion, which is active, recognizing suffering, seeing what we can do, and that kind of empathy that brings us down into the rubble and turns us into rubble. The rubble can't help the rubble, but that little flower. Blooming amidst the rubble. So can you, does that speak to you at all? It really spoke to me. Thank you.

Speaker 3 [00:17:12] For that because I enjoy flowers. I love flowers. In fact, during COVID, that's the one thing I did. I took a lot of pictures of flowers. And this vision, this

visual exercise, I can see it creating more of a soothing sensation in my body, more of forming a natural way to heal that. Situation I'm dealing with.

Stephanie Noble [00:17:43] Yeah, good. Good. Well, you just bloom on girl you bloom Thank you. Yeah. Thank you All right, Elaine

Speaker 4 [00:17:54] Elaine?

Speaker 5 [00:17:57] Thank you so much, Stephanie. I don't have such a beautiful photo. It's lovely. My question is about the sangha. So let's say your experience is this is coming home Wednesday night. This is my sangha, this is our sangha? How do you carry that sangha with you during the

Stephanie Noble [00:18:23] Interesting question. So, how do you carry it? I'm not sure exactly.

Speaker 5 [00:18:29] Well, I look forward to Wednesday. I know Wednesday is going to come. And also just, you know, when I have the opportunity to sit, it also brings back that feeling that I'm not sitting alone, that there are other people sitting all the time, whether this sangha or But even not in person, because a lot of us are just on Zoom, how would you say what other ways to carry that with you to know that you are always connected?

Stephanie Noble [00:19:13] Well, there's this particular sangha, meets particularly on Wednesdays. If there's anyone in this sangha that is physically close to you, you could set up a buddy system. I remember Sylvia Borstein saying that she took some course a long time ago and they were told to buddy up and to... It was sort of like an end of the day, gratitude check-in with somebody. And so that's something that you could do. You can create sangha out of other people in your community. They don't necessarily have to be Buddhist, but I think you hit on it very clearly, carrying it within yourself, in your meditation, and just imagining all the people around the world who are not only meditating, but they're sending metta, and they're to all beings, and you're one of those all beings. And so you can just feel and receive that infinite quality of matter just pouring through you. So I would say that the practice and also there are so many apps and

Speaker 5 [00:20:38] So, yeah.

Stephanie Noble [00:20:39] Other things available that you can find guidance. You can find community in many places. But I think that buddy system is a good idea. If there's anybody within this very large community who says, hey, Elaine, I'd really like to buddy up with you. And we can just do a text once a day, check in or something to say, I'm here for you. I'm meditating. I'm gonna meditate right now. You meditating or something? Probably gonna be in the same time zone, but there's a lot of ways you can just get creative with that.

Speaker 5 [00:21:22] Thank you, thank you so much. That's lovely. Thank you.

Speaker 2 [00:21:27] Also a point out, Sherry put in the chat there, DrDanSiegel.com addresses this problem.

Stephanie Noble [00:21:37] Ah, good.

Speaker 2 [00:21:38] DrDanSegel.com

Stephanie Noble [00:21:40] Okay, so you got that Elaine, Dr. Dan Siegel. All right, so it's 7.09 and we have about six minutes left. Who else has something? It doesn't have to be about coming home. It might be something that's just up for you that you just like to share. Maybe something that inspired you. Something from your meditation that

Speaker 4 [00:22:18] I don't know. Yeah, Jeffrey. Hi, thank you. I've really enjoyed the conversation so far, and I'm wondering same things. And in our football shopping center, Corporate America, and for me, in my walks, there aren't very many people, there's very, very, very few people that even wanna ask me when I say I've got sangha on Tuesday and Wednesday night, what the hell that is. I don't mean this in a put-down way, but the ignorance in my walk is widespread, and so it's going to be slow to allow or invite in or talk to those people on the paths that I'm on, what the hell I'm doing, what is that, you know? And it's, I'm really feeling passionate too, but I've been going, I started Spirit Rock in 2008, I think, or something like that. And I've gone from light and incidental to pretty heavy duty, I've retired, so I can now. And I'm really, really passionate about this. And I just have to, I have to tell myself, keep doing it. Be outspoken about it and gently outspoke about it. And watch for the opportunities to make, to be able to tell what the hell I'm doing. These people know me. They know me. Oh, he was a psych student at San Francisco State, right? They're just incorporating psychology, right. So now we're into the practices that's called Buddha, that's 2,500 years old. You know, what the hell is that? And so that's the stage I'm in right now.

Stephanie Noble [00:24:37] Where are you, Jess?

Speaker 4 [00:24:39] I'm in San Francisco.

Stephanie Noble [00:24:41] We're in San Francisco and people don't know what a sangha is?

Speaker 4 [00:24:44] I can tell you much, much more, you're right, but I can still tell you that in the past that I walk, it's more known, but still not that much.

Stephanie Noble [00:24:57] In the United States, there are 2% Buddhism, and that includes all the Vietnamese immigrants and immigrants from other Asian countries, that it's their tradition, it includes all of it, so it's unreasonable, your expectation is unreasonable and it's just going to make You're miserable. So I would say let it go. Let it go, let it be your path, but don't feel you need to educate anybody. Honor everyone's path.

Speaker 4 [00:25:35] Yeah Yeah, but you're right. I agree. I grew totally Yeah, just just to be just I also need to not mention it because they won't understand it also, right? Just there need to be out there

Stephanie Noble [00:25:48] Yeah, if you just if you greet them with loving kindness, and you are just living your life on the on the noble eightfold path, without ever using a single Buddhist word, people will say, Wow, that Jeffrey, what I'll have what he's having, you know, they'll come to you, you do not have to go to anybody. My family has never Well, my granddaughter did once ask me, please, when she was in high school, please grandma, teach me how to meditate because I'm having so much anxiety. And then when I gave her 10 minutes of meditation, she says, grandma, we have to bottle you.

Speaker 4 [00:26:28] Oh, wow, that's a good story.

Stephanie Noble [00:26:31] But, you know, meditation is not alien to anybody. So you can just say meditation, I enjoy meditation. If you're interested in my particular form of it, I'm happy to talk about it. But thank you for that and thank you for your practice, yeah.

Speaker 4 [00:26:46] Thank you, thanks, thanks. All right.

Stephanie Noble [00:26:49] We have time for Anastasia. Yeah

Speaker 2 [00:26:52] Before we go to her, I just wanted to correct that Dr. Dan Siegel, it may have been for the previous actual fields and talk, so I'm not sure, but it looks like it came in a little bit before, so it could be for that. And also just to share a personal story that somebody I talked to this week had a devastating loss of a husband and they kind of lost their. Warm-heartedness and had an experience at a post office, went out, cried in the car, decided to go to UPS, found two warm- hearted people that were just kind and opened the door and just cheerful and she caught that and she goes, it really made my day. Uh, so that's my thought is Rick talks about catching the good, you know, positive neuroplasticity and, and really being to hold that Songa energy, to catch the good in all the little things, uh, every day in the moment. Yeah. Uh, yeah. So Anastasia.

Speaker 6 [00:28:09] Hi there. Thank you so much for that, George. And thank you so much, Stephanie, for your beautiful meditation and your sharings. I am sure like so many of us, completely overwhelmed with challenge after challenge after challenge. I meditate frequently. My husband had a serious illness, and then back to back another one, and and family and. Issues. Is there a way? I just feel like I get up and I try and then you're hit again with another wave over and over. Can you recommend how to come back home even after feeling so defeated?

Stephanie Noble [00:28:55] I'm sorry for all you're going through. That's a lot. This life is not easy. It's suffering, as the Buddha defined. And sometimes, I mean, when you think about who we are, we're waves and the ocean. And sometimes those waves are huge. And sometimes they're very mild. Sometimes it's helpful to just relax. And say, I'm just part of the ocean. The ocean is full of all kinds of things. It's not something that you need to take on individually all the time. You need to step up and meet the practical matters, but there's a, whenever you have a portion of time, when you're in a waiting room or you're going to sleep at night or just any place that you can just. Relax into the ocean and not have to be that big wave that's carrying so much, you know? There's some way that you can do it and I think listening to meditations on Insight Timer, etc. I have some on there.

Stephanie Noble [00:30:17] But there's, you know, there's 20,000 teachers on Insights Timer and all you have to do is put in overwhelm or something like that. And I bet you'll find some things that will feel supportive. It might also be helpful to find other people who are also going through similar things or... Are meeting the, how are they meeting their challenges as well. But this is the nature of life, isn't it? And it, and there are periods where it's very calm. And then there are periods where you go, Oh my God, is this even happening? How is this event happening? And I've certainly had those moments myself, but not to the degree that you're talking about. So. I can't advise you because I haven't been through it to that degree. I've had major losses in my life. I can certainly talk to death and mourning, but I can talk to any specifics, but that's certainly my experience. When we go through things like that, it even more reminds us of the value of our practice and the value of the teachings. And the value of the sangha. So in that way, these major things

bring us home. They bring us home to the dharma, they bring us to the sangha, and they bring to the Buddha. So I

Speaker 7 [00:31:55] I actually had a question for Jeffrey. I was wanting to respond to him. I do have people when I tell them I can't do something on a Wednesday night because I have sangha. They will ask me, what is that? And I would like to know, Jeffrey, what would you tell them? What is Sangha, if someone who had no experience, what would you tell them?

Speaker 4 [00:32:27] I can do that in a common language to somebody who doesn't understand that, I'm okay doing that but the only reason I brought that up is that it's astonishing to me how many people in the past that I walk that don't, not knowing that sort of thing, don't know how to take care don't know how to take care of themselves, you know, it's except in the except in unplanned, explosive ways, not, not

Speaker 7 [00:33:03] But how would you describe Sangha to someone who really knew nothing about it and wanted to know what it is? Because I have a way that I do it, but I'm not sure that it's, I would like to know what other people say.

Speaker 4 [00:33:19] Good, yeah, yeah.

Speaker 7 [00:33:21] What would you say?

Speaker 4 [00:33:23] Well, I'll say a quick word, but then I'll listen to, I need to listen to the discussion about that, too. Really good question. It's a community taking care of each other on about those things that are important that don't get as easily addressed as they might get addressed. And then I'll bring in the word mindfulness meditation. That's pretty well assimilated now in many places, so I can bring that in, too. But not to the depth of the soothing, healing depth that we do. You know, it's new, it still, it is still new, newer I think, you know. I was, I was a, I a psych student at San Francisco State College in 1970, in the psych

Speaker 7 [00:34:26] I was also a psych student in 1970. You were? Yeah.

Speaker 4 [00:34:31] I'm a psychologist. Okay. There was one faculty member, there was one faculty member in the whole department that did anything with with meditation or or practice or practices from the East. And I was, you know, and we're.

Speaker 7 [00:34:51] Well, it's even in Ohio they're doing it even now. It's finally made its way. Things are changing so we can be grateful for that. Yeah, thank you for telling me what you would say. I'll tell you what I usually say. Okay. Which I feel it's not enough. But I say Asanga is a group of like-minded people who come together and commit to helping each other understand the Buddhist teachings and how to apply them to their lives. Okay, that's good. Good. But it doesn't feel like enough because it's so much more than that.

Stephanie Noble [00:35:38] It is so much more than that, but that's experiential and Jan, I think your wording works very well. And if they have more questions, they can join you. You know, you can say, feel free to come with me next time I go or something. I mean, it's on Zoom. So, yeah, here, I'll give you the link, you know.

Speaker 7 [00:35:57] Thank you. Thank you for listening to me and taking my question

Stephanie Noble [00:36:03] All right. So, Jane, I think I got.

Speaker 8 [00:36:09] It. I think I'm on. I just wanted to address something that I think has given us many more options. If you get a group of people that has like intentions to do good in the world, there are plenty of places you can go with that. But I think the reason I would suggest maybe Checking out some MBSR. Stuff, it's medical. And in a class like that, some people could probably get together to continue after the class is over with. And also, I think Dan Harris's work, what might be a good way for a lot of people who have other faith. Preferences, I would suggest those two people. And a lot of times when you have some of these online meditation groups, there are possibilities to get a buddy right built into the offering. So I'm hoping that if anybody here on the call needs to have support. They can start with at least one person by putting themselves into a situation where they could sort of assess whether someone there might meet their profile or whatever you want to call it and start your own. I guess my mother used to say, be a, be first person. So good luck all people that need to have their own, create their own support system.

Stephanie Noble [00:38:11] All right.

Speaker 9 [00:38:15] Hi, I'll just go if no one else is going. So I'm pretty new to meditation actually. As in, like, I almost never do it. I've been thinking about it for years, but just haven't got started. But I am, you know, taking courses by Rick now and kind of trying to start a practice like that. So anyway, I don't have a ton of experience, but I've wondering about, like... About negativity. I guess what the other person speaking earlier said, how, like things keep coming. But sometimes it's even In my case, sometimes it's even very small things. And still, it just feels like there's not, it's like, I feel like I don't have a storehouse of like, something that like feels a purpose and feels like a sense of like who I am and what I want, what I do. And even a little tiny negative thing, it feels just like, I can just like what is even the point? What am I doing? And just wonder about that. Okay.

Stephanie Noble [00:39:25] So Masha, what you're talking about, really, as you begin to meditate, especially if you are able to go on retreats, you may find that you will have insights that free you from feeling so like you're an individual defensive fortress of self that needs to be protected and you got to build. In my Into the Hills book, it comes with a downloadable PDF workbook. And one of the things that there is to work on is to just recognize how we're building these fortresses of self. And it's exhausting, but it's isolating. And what we do with meditation is we start really sensing into that infinite interconnection. And- Science is telling us all the same things, you know, we're all stardust. I mean, literally, we truly are all made of the same minerals and everything. It's just all this is life arising and this experience of being alive is this is life loving itself into being basically. So that's who you are. You are life loving yourself into being. And One of the insights that I had when I was on retreat at Spirit Rock was, huh. I have nothing to hide. I have nothing to prove. I have nothing to defend. I have nothing to fear. Now the nothing to fear, sometimes I go, well, wait a minute, wait a minute. You know, but the other ones, I really see that playing out, that when somebody's saying something to me, that's what they're working through. It's not about me It's not about me, it's what they're working through. And, you know, I mean, none of us are gonna be to everybody's taste. None of us, are gonna fulfill everybody's whatevers. That's not our role in life, is it? So I wish you a wonderful journey through the meditative experience and the insights that will come. I'm very excited for you to be at the beginning of that. So