11.18.26 Talk*

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

(0:00 - 5:58)

There were a couple of questions I noted. Oh, thank you. Thank you.

No problem. Pranav asked how long one might practice this. Elaine asked, is there a part of the body to focus on? Linda asked, what's the purpose and intention again of the contemplative practice? Okay, there's three questions there, so let me answer one at a time.

The first is, well, you want to have a deep awareness of the entire body. So sometimes as I'm chanting or doing a meditative practice, even walking or sitting practice, I will move my awareness to different parts of the body, kind of body scanning, and then focus the attention on areas that might need additional compassion, additional support. So let's say if you're doing the Nam Myoho Renge chant, and you're chanting for the well-being of your physical body, you might kind of scan it as you chant the words, noticing how your head feels, how your neck feels, how your shoulders feel, and kind of moving your awareness as you recite the mantra.

So that was one question. Can you tell me about that? Sorry about that. And how long would it be for one to practice? You know, my guideline around that is I keep doing it till I don't want to stop, because when I want to stop, that usually means that my anxious mind just wants to get to do something else, you know? But when I'm in the point where I'm like, oh, I could do this all day, it's an okay time to stop.

And it's a tough role, because, you know, sometimes you really feel uncomfortable. Like even with the sitting meditation, you know, I was at a retreat for, you know, scholars of mental health. And, you know, one guy came up with this song because we had a component where we stepped into our, you know, creativity as a practice.

And the song, the chorus of the song was, yoga hurts and meditation is boring, you know. And that was very useful to hear that song, because, you know, I think we approach meditative practice thinking it's all going to be fun and easy. And it isn't.

Sometimes it hurts. Sometimes it's boring. You know, it stimulates our feelings around boredom.

And that's part of what we get to work through. And I have some thoughts about how we work through that. But I want to keep answering questions for a little while, or until there aren't any more.

What was the next one, Kathleen? Linda asks, could you repeat the purpose and the intention of contemplative practice? The purpose is to have an integrated experience of awareness of body, mind, heart, and spirit, and our sense and an integrated sense of connection to all of life, all of life that is nurturing our life and all of life that we nurture. So it's kind of an inherently compassionate

experience to be awake, to be awake to the interdependent reality of our lives, and the interdependent experience of mind, body, heart, and spirit. Contemplative just means deeply thoughtful.

Don't get, you know, tripped up on that long word. It's just deeply thoughtful and deeply present and integrated. I think if we really reach for this integrated experience, like not totally focused only on the cerebral or the physical corporal aspect of our being, or solely absorbed with the emotional aspect of our being, or solely absorbed with the mind, but having an integrated awareness of and being in a place of leadership with regard to those aspects of your being, like that your life force is integrated in a way that it's infused with compassion.

That's what I think about when I think about contemplative practice. And now I'm going to say it a little bit more simply because I know that simple answers just work better. An integrated experience of mind, body, heart, and spirit where we're awakened to the compassion that's inherent in life.

Yeah, that's the simple way to put it. Can I answer any other questions, any other wonderings happening for folks? Yeah, and forgive me everybody if I missed yours. Zoom user at 645 says that this user was told that this was a controversial chant and an outlier in Buddhism.

Have you heard this? Any comment? No, I hadn't heard that it was controversial or an outlier. I know that, yeah, I think there's like 12 million people, at least, maybe more who use that. I'm not sure why it would be controversial, but that'd be an interesting thing to look up.

And I am going to give everyone my contact information at the end, so feel free to email me if you have some follow-up questions or thoughts. But no, I hadn't heard anything controversial about the chant. It's ancient.

So yeah, that's interesting. Any others? Any other questions before I go on? And Fran just wrote one and then maybe you could go on. Can I chant myself to staying asleep? So many people have sleep issues these days.

(5:59 - 6:24)

It's true, right? And I think probably for a good many of us, it's getting close to the hour where we want to go to sleep. Yes, absolutely. Sometimes I do.

When I can't sleep, I'll just get up and chant. Sometimes getting up is useful when you can't sleep too, like your body just has some cortisol or something it needs to burn off. But yes, the chant can be very helpful going to sleep.

(6:24 - 6:37)

Especially at a slow cadence, even slower than I was doing it. I think I was doing it a little fast for

a very first time. So feel free to slow that down even more so.

(6:40 - 11:39)

Nam Myoho Renge Kyo. Just bringing your mind back to a centered, integrated, peaceful experience of your being. Compassionate experience of your being.

You can slow it down even more than that. So if there's no other questions, oh, I see something. Do you know of a meditative practice or visualization to prevent chronic nightmares? That's a really good question.

I know that yes, in terms of visualizations, that can be really valuable. However, what's visually calming for one person might not be for another. So for example, I may find ocean scenes very calming, but if I'm scared of the ocean or I've had some bad experiences at the ocean or the beach, that won't be the best one for me.

What I would recommend around finding the visuals that support you in a meditative or relaxing way is to consider what kinds of beautiful things make me feel at ease, make me notice inner peace, make me notice myself as an integrated being. Because that's a wonderful thing about art. Art can just evoke so much in us.

So what kinds of images bring you peace? That's the question to ask yourself. And then to gather those types of images, I recommend, if possible, with a little kind of audio to complement it and to bring you into the meditative awareness. But sometimes just having the visual is enough.

And it may be... So for example, I have a statue of a weeping Buddha on my altar. And just that piece of statuary where the Buddha is fully bent over and obviously weeping reminds me about how the Buddha's joy was directly related to their capacity to face human suffering with the commitment to help humans transcend suffering. So my point is to find a visual that has a resonance for you.

And if it's to soothe yourself and get to sleep, then yeah, I would definitely recommend pairing it with maybe a little soothing sound, soft, soothing sounds that can accompany it. Because hopefully you will close your eyes and stop looking at the visual at some point, at which point the sound can be the bridge to the sleep. I hope that's helpful.

Okay. I'm going to take a look, see if there's any other questions. Yes, there is a long version of the chant on Tina Turner's website.

I think she also does a recitation of the full Lotus Sutra, which is beautiful. I also recite that in the morning and the evening. Okay.

So I can share a couple of more thoughts with you all and I'll pause again to see if there's other questions. And don't hesitate to ask a part two of a question if something comes up. All right.

So I left off talking about, sorry about this view. Let's get a slideshow. And I mentioned how it's not comfortable always.

And I really like to help people to separate the idea of comfort from the idea of compassion. Now, some of the things that you do for yourself out of compassion are going to be comfortable, right? You're going to be compassionate towards yourself by getting yourself a nice massage. But it is equally compassionate towards yourself to get that colonoscopy you've been needing, right? So we can move out of the idea of compassion as always being comfortable.

It's compassionate towards your children to buy them treats. It's also compassionate towards your children to not buy them treats with sugar, right? Because you don't want them to have too much of that, right? So we can think about where self-control and pushing ourselves to grow is what I'm talking about when I talk about fierce compassion in the book. So that when we think about compassion, both for ourselves and for others around us, we think about not just what's going to be comfortable in the moment, but what's going to help me grow, what's going to help that person grow.

(11:40 - 13:50)

Those of us who teach or do any kind of work with young people know that it's not always about, you know, just what's soothing. It's about what's challenging and what's going to help you to advance to the next level. But in order to really bear fierce compassion, right, we have to have some level of discomfort resilience.

And I talk about discomfort resilience as the capacity to lean into discomfort with an interest in the growth we can get from pain or difficulty. And I want you to hold on to that idea because I'm going to invite you to lean into some discomfort in a little bit. It takes courage to offer fierce compassion to ourselves, to other people, and it takes discomfort resilience to receive it.

So if I say to myself, Camila, you're going to be fiercely compassionate with yourself today, and you're going to, you know, go to the gym and, you know, get this workout in even though you're tired, right? I also have to have a level of discomfort resilience to receive that compassion and to act on that compassion. Because if I'm like, but I'm tired and I'm uncomfortable with the idea of going to the gym because my body already hurts and I don't want to go, right? So there's that, I have to push past that, not push past, but I have to work with that discomfort almost like it's my younger self and say, listen, we're going to do this in an effort to grow. And the same with our family members, our friends, right? You may have a partner and you really want your partner to grow in a particular kind of way, past a particular challenge.

So yes, it's good to be soothing and supportive of them. You know, maybe their challenge is they don't like to take care of the kids and they leave all that to you, right? That's too stressful for them. It's fiercely compassionate of you in that kind of circumstance to say, how can I support you in

growing into this, into this care of the young people? Because it's going to be a benefit to you as well.

(13:50 - 15:29)

So the goal is to grow resilient compassion so that we can consistently be fiercely compassionate towards ourselves and other people, right? So if somebody does something to harm someone, we intervene not out of, you know, anger, but out of fierce compassion for them. We say, please don't do that. That person is being harmed by what you're saying or doing.

And I know you don't mean to create harm, right? Again, it would take you having fierce compassion to say that, to interrupt someone who's doing harm. It's not the comforting compassion. You're not necessarily comforting the person.

You're interrupting something harmful that they're doing. So everything about it is uncomfortable, but it is an expression of compassion that is not conveyed when we just walk away from situations where we see or turn away from situations where we see harm being done. So with that in mind, I want us to just contemplate for a minute, where is a region or population in the world that you can notice they're suffering, right? We're a part of this kind of global compassion network, and we know they're suffering all over the world.

It may be in your house. There may be some in your house and you're right there with you in the living room. And there is also some suffering in the world that's been a part of your consciousness.

It's been on your mind today, recently. Notice that place. And I want to give us a chance to do the chant again.

(15:29 - 16:33)

If you would rather meditate in silence, lower your volume for 60 seconds, because I know we only did it for a minute last time and I promised you two minutes. So I'm going to give us a chance to do the chant again for another 60 seconds. And in so doing, I invite you to send compassion, send healing, send energetic resource to this troubled area of the world that you are concerned about.

So again, we're going to use the mantra for a minute. I'm going to chant for 60 seconds, but if you'd rather send your energy silent or use another practice, stand, walk, walk your compassion, you can do that. All right.

So I will start the timer. So I give you a full minute. Last time, I'm not sure I got a full minute before.

So we're going to get a full minute here. Okay. And I'll start now.

(17:17 - 20:19)

Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Thank you for sending compassion throughout the world with me.

I'm going to pause here for a minute and see what that was like for folks. Anyone want to share a thought on what that was like? And you can put that in the chat or you can raise your hand if you want. Yes.

Feel free. I'm going to keep going, but feel free to drop your... Because I'm interested and I care about how things are resonating with folks. So feel free to just keep sharing with me and I'll keep going.

Also, so yeah, what I'm thinking and what I'm hoping that everyone's getting out of our time together today is that your interior life, your inner life can really be this brave, safe space from which we enrich everyone and everything around us. And so I write about joy. I think about joy a lot, not as an escape.

A lot of people think, oh, I just want to do something joyful. But joy, I think, is a far more transient experience than pleasure. Pleasure comes from doing pleasurable things, but joy can emerge from facing deep suffering and making a commitment for compassionate action.

And it really grows when we act with integrity and address moral injuries. We often experience moral injury when we see harm happening to people. And that practice of intentionally cultivating compassion and sending compassion helps us to have a more spacious interior life and to participate in relationships in a way that strengthens us and helps us to reduce the harm that we see in the world.

Pause again here. Oh, Mary Lynn says she had tears while she chanted because, forgive me if I'm not using the right pronoun, Mary Lynn. I had tears while I chanted because I felt so powerless to stop the suffering.

I prayed for those in Gaza. Yes, I prayed for those in Gaza as well. And it's good.

(20:19 - 23:10)

The tears are good. The tears means your heart is alive, that you are awake emotionally and connected to your empathy. So as much as the tears reflect sorrow, they also reflect your awake connection and caring and compassion.

And the great thing about awakening our compassion is that we can then begin to think about how we channel that compassion, what kinds of actions we can take to have our compassion be filling the world with good action, right? Yes, tears are vital for processing grief. I think in the book I call tears the sweat of the heart as it does the emotional labor of healing. So you don't try to

keep in your sweat when you're working out at the gym.

You don't try to keep in your tears when you're living life because your heart is telling you, I feel this, I'm alive. And every time we tell our hearts, don't feel it, we're actually asking a piece of our functionality to shut down. Okay.

The cats were wide-eyed, intrigued. That happens a lot. I know a lot of Buddhists and whenever they're chanting at their altars, their cats come.

Help to redirect the focus and take the mind away from hurt, pain, and rumination. Found calm and sending wishes for compassion to one of our global leaders. Thank you for that, Ole.

I don't know which global leader, but they all need compassion. So yes, it is okay to chant it silently. I often do when I'm in meetings and the meeting is making me want to pull my remaining hair out.

So yes, you can absolutely use it. You can use it in silence as well. Marie said her husband and her chanted in the kitchen and that it was beautiful.

Yes. So we're all sending energy, healing energy to Gaza, to Sudan, to the places that we know are being the most exploited and harmed. And the exciting thing that we get to do is also to consider what compassionate action we might take.

So that will be the kind of final, yes, yes, please send the compassion to the detention centers. Chanted slowly. Yes.

The book of joy, lasting happiness. You all are such wonderfully, incredibly contemplative people. I'm learning so much just from looking at the chat.

But yes, we're sending the chance. We're sending healing energy. We're sending compassion to all the places where we know humans are being harmed.

(23:10 - 23:56)

I was thinking about and teaching about the statistics on violence against women and how bad things are happening every second so that every second and every step we can be sending compassionate, embodying compassionate healing energy for the world around us. So I wanted to give you an opportunity to kind of move meditation to kind of creative practice in action. So I want to try that before we say goodbye for today, if I can get to that screen.

(23:56 - 24:03)

And of course my computer doesn't want to do it now. All right, let's try it this way. Okay.

(24:04 - 25:06)

So yes, our inner life is the site of liberation. Liberation from negative thoughts about ourselves and other people as well. So one of the things people often ask me is how is it that injustice can be a catalyst for joy? And what I always say is if you work with it in your meditative practice, then that is exactly what it becomes.

It becomes a catalyst for joy. So here is how. Joy surfaces when we have some moral clarity and aligned action and when we're able to restore our sense of agency, connection, and dignity.

So for example, we're talking about Gaza. So we witness, we let the harm register. We refuse numbness.

We choose to be aware and awake. And then we align. We name what justice requires and locate the part of it that we can carry.

(25:07 - 26:18)

This is really an empowering way to face injustice and to use our compassion in the world. And then we act. We move not in isolation, but with others toward repair, protection, truth, or structural change.

And then return to feeling, right? Return to feeling that sense of and belonging, right? Notice that sense of feeling of agency and belonging and meaning and that shared freedom, that that is what happens when we engage with addressing injustice with intentionality towards applying our compassion, not just feeling it, but have it being something that we apply in the world. So I wanted to offer this joy and justice practice, right? For you to just keep working with. And in this practice, you notice, you know, where's the topic that I'm going to apply my compassion? What is the quality of your compassion, right? You feel your feelings, right? You feel anger.

(26:18 - 28:03)

You feel fear. You feel hope. You may feel a lot of things, but what does your compassion feel like, right? And does your compassion need an energy boost, right? Does it need an infusion? And then that's the case where you use the chanting practices and you use other practices that I reference in the book to bolster your compassion if it's kind of fledgling, right? And then reflect on an action.

What's an even small or meaningful action to imply your compassion to reduce harm? What's a tiny little thing you can do? And as I'm asking that question, I'm hoping that you're thinking of tiny little things you can do because these little drops in the bucket, you know, produce an ocean of compassion. You know, we can reflect on community partnership. What are some of the communities of people who also care about this issue that I can be in community with addressing it? And what's shifting even as I dialogue with myself about taking action based on compassion, right? Who do I want to continue to dialogue with about applied compassion? And now for the last

thing I'm going to ask you to do today before we say au revoir is to process what we've had today with a little poetry exercise.

Creativity comes forth from our contemplative mindful being very naturally. We're very naturally and inherently creative beings. I have a little template here.

(28:04 - 31:34)

You don't have to use it. If you were to write a little stanza, don't give yourself the pressure of the whole poem, but a couple of lines to articulate how you would apply your compassion to that concern that you focused on. How would you write that? What would you write? You could use a template like this to say, I noticed the suffering in Gaza.

Like I'm just going to fill it out as if I were doing it. So you can get an idea of what I'm proposing. I noticed this unnecessary, cruel experience of the people in Gaza and Palestine.

I felt hopeless and helpless. I want to do something to make it better. I want to see the people remaining in that region have food and water and safety.

I will send some resources today using a platform that I'm already connected to. And it's not poetry in the sense of floral or performative expression. When I'm talking about poetry, I'm talking about what comes from your compassionate essence, the compassionate essence of your life force.

So whether you use my very rudimentary template or let your creativity flow elsewise, just take a minute to create something that symbolizes how you would like to act and an action you could take, no matter how small. The action you could take, by the way, will be continuing to practice with this. That's a piece of the action that you can take as well.

It'll take about, I'm going to say about 30 seconds, because I don't want you to perform or try to make a quote-unquote good poem. That it's just about what's a creative, heartfelt outpouring that can express your compassionate intentions in this moment. All right, take about another 15 seconds just to kind of bring that thought to closer fullness.

(31:34 - 32:32)

All right. Well, by way of closing, if a couple of people wanted to share your poetic reflection, you'd be most welcome to. But if no one wants to, I understand.

I have a little closing quote I can share with you. We have a hand raised. Would you like to? Yes.

Awesome. Awesome. Awesome.

Please take it away. Can they unmute to share? I just asked that they have to unmute themselves and they can, but I just asked. There you go.

You're unmuted. 702. Please say your name.

(32:32 - 32:52)

Very simple. And it's my practice to see underneath people's persona and relate to them. And what I came up with is as I release our personas and we relate heart to heart, the world is a gentler place.

(32:54 - 34:23)

I love it. It's so specific. And, you know, it's good to have a specific one like that, because if it's too general, it's hard to kind of get your hands around it.

So I love that. Seeing past the persona, it reminds me, there is an activist by the name of Adrienne Marie Brown, who has this lovely song that is also kind of like a reflection to use in meditation, where she says, I treat everyone like they're grieving someone they can't live without. It's a beautiful song and it's also a beautiful reflection.

So it reminds, it reminded me of that when you said seeing past the persona, everyone is, you know, kind of conditioned to occupy these personas. And also everyone is to some degree in some way grieving someone or something. So noticing that and walking through the world with that awareness inherently makes us more compassionate.

Thank you so much for that. And before I let you go, because I know we're all going to have to jump off soon, I did want to share this quote with you. This is from Buddhist philosopher and educator Daisaku Ikeda.

And it says, life is painful. It has thorns like the stem of a rose. Culture and art are the roses that bloom on the stem.

(34:24 - 35:24)

The flower is you yourself, your humanity. Art is the liberation of the humanity inside yourself. And I wanted to share that quote in particular because so much of meditation, contemplative practice is really a creative practice in living.

And it is an effort to live with creativity in a way that allows all of our integrated experience of mind, body, heart, and spirit to be compassionately connected with all of life around us. So thank you everyone for today. There's a QR code here you can scan for the book and another QR code that tells you about some of the events that I'll have upcoming.

And yeah, feel free to be in touch with me in any of the ways here. I deeply appreciate being part of this community and being with you all today. Thank you.