

7_29_26 Talk*

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Rick Hanson: [00:00:00] Reflecting on that meditation, and as a way of bridging to my topic tonight, there's this lovely proverb in the Buddha Dharma from early Buddhism, which is our focus generally here, rather than Tibetan or Chan or Zen or Pure Land Buddhism, although all of them are appreciated and certainly welcome, and I've gotten a lot from them. In early Buddhism, there is this proverb that the mind takes its shape. From what it repeatedly rests upon, for better or worse. And the modern update with neuroscience is that since neurons which fire together wire together, or as someone said to me earlier today, neurons that play together stay together, the brain itself over time takes its shape from what our mind repeatedly rests on.

[00:01:01] So in meditation, as we rest in wholesome qualities, wholesome factors, such as steadiness of mind, or a growing sense of calming or easing, as we rest our mind on those things, they become gradually literally woven into the fabric of our service system. With physical changes of structure and function. And so increasingly those states of being that we rest our mind upon repeatedly become traits of being woven into the living body. And so it's lovely to use meditation as an opportunity to rest your mind on what draws your heart, to rest in what you are helping yourself grow into. And also to rest in various qualities of being that are typically quite emotional and somatic rather than, you know, airy-fairy and philosophical. Certainly that's the bulk of what the Buddha draws us toward are felt states, felt knowings. Even insight into something as central as impermanence is a feeling. A feeling of the endlessness of changing, right? A feeling of losiness in every moment of what's here and the arrivingness endlessly of what next. That becomes really quite felt.

[00:02:42] So you might want to ask yourself these days, what are you seeking to increasingly rest your mind upon? What are you increasingly encouraging as the habit of your heart? Would you like to feel a little calmer, would you like to feel more loved, would like to feel a bit more disengaged from the troubles of your adult children? That sounds like a good one. You know, what are you seeking to grow these days? So it doesn't mean that we get caught up in any kind of stressful craving or clinging or striving toward what we're trying to grow. Instead, we are opening to it, landing in it. And that goes to this phrase that's common in the Buddha Dharma to delight in, in two meanings. There's a fair amount of teaching. In which a word is used that is translated as delight in, but the word really implies craving and possessiveness, grasping. There's a recurrent teaching that's been really useful for me that has these three steps in which the Buddha talks about the gratification, the danger, and the escape. The gratification being a kind of delighting that has attachment in it. And craving and possessiveness and identification. That's the gratification. And the danger in that, of course, is it leads onward into personal suffering with the contraction altogether, as well as what do you do when you lose that, which you're trying to keep, and also you tend to create harms for others. That's another danger. The escape from that is through insight and release and being able to increasingly rest in a different kind of delighting end. Whose different meaning and different etymological roots in Pali, a key language of early Buddhism, is the delighting that's about a homecoming of a settling, a settling into like an oasis or settling into the shade on a hot and sunny day or settling in to knowing that you've done a good enough job today. That kind of delighting in. See the difference there? Really a crucial distinction.

[00:05:19] And if we don't have more of the latter kind of delighting that's healthy and wholesome, we will surely have more the former, which is a stressful, you know, grasping, possessive, cravingish, you know, delighting and things, gratification by things. So what does it mean then to delight in nonproliferation? So, what is proliferation? The word for it in Pali, P-A-L-I, that language of early Buddhism, is Papancha. And Papanca is one of those words that's just fun to say. You might even want to say it, Papanja. And the Papanca Express, you know, a typical mind cranked up on this or that, checking his phone, thinking about tomorrow, you know, resenting yesterday. Worrying, preoccupied, and so forth. That's proliferation, and you can just watch it. Proliferation also has very much a quality of mental time travel. It's interesting that one of the major neurological achievements of hominids and then humans, as we branched off from our common ancestor, which has now led to the chimpanzees and bonobos today, our nearest genetic relatives, as humans and as hominids, and then... Humans branched off, there was the development of these midline cortical networks which enable mental time travel.

[00:06:47] Really useful to reflect on what happened in the past and sometimes to identify what there might be to correct. We kind of started out in our initial get together before the formal start at 6 PM Pacific time by me just laughing about the importance of acknowledging errors and mistakes and what it's like to be with people who won't acknowledge their error even after you point it out or point being that you know it's useful to reflect on the past it's also useful to imagine different futures that's all really useful and we live in a time in which those adaptive neurological capabilities are being fed a high octane high sugar diet of media and multitasking and opportunities and shiny objects to want and you know all kinds of forecasting of a future and that's literally getting all those neurons to be firing together so they wire together or playing together so they stay together in those midline cortices, which then really feeds proliferation, mind-wandering, distractibility. Lost in thought you know there's studies in which people wear a smartphone or smartwatch and then they're randomly pinged in different moments and asked right now are you more or less in the present maybe getting something done or just abiding or is your mind wandering and i think something on average what's reported is 50 mind wandering i personally think it's probably higher than that people just didn't want to admit it but in any case that's proliferation The alternative to that is nonproliferation.

[00:08:41] But before going further, I wanna make a distinction about reflecting on the past. What's the difference between proliferation or rumination, rumination and just reminiscing about a lovely childhood or nice things that have happened in the past? Beautiful question. Rumination is a word, just a word. Describes a state of being that has qualities in it of negativity and kind of contraction, repetitiveness and productivity. It's not beneficial, it's repetitive. So we ruminate about our resentments, we just round and round the track, playing together, staying together, wiring, firing together, wiring together, reinforcing. Our resentments as we ruminate about them. Or we rinate about things that might happen that have not yet happened. We ruminated about our regrets and our remorse. That's not productive. Then there is definitely kind of basking in a lovely recollection or doing it with others as a form of reminiscing. These are both well-known methods in positive psychology. To promote positive experiences. It's fine. It is fine.

[00:10:12] Of course, we ask ourselves, you know, is a person reflecting on their beautiful childhood as a way to avoid, you know, dealing with things in the present? I'm not saying it is at all. Just be thoughtful about that. But on the whole, there's a great distinction between rumination, which is problematic, judge the tree by its fruits, as the biblical proverb puts it, or that's really different from positive reminiscences, including with other people. Okay So now we have non-proliferation. Why does the Buddha call out non- proliferation? It's simply

because as the mind proliferates, we are carried away by it. We're no longer in control, pretty much. We're swept along and we're not having insight into the nature of consciousness. We're just kind of lost, we're dispersed. And he points to these major sources of proliferation as craving, comparing. And conceptualizing endlessly, thinking, thinking thinking. All right. And then.

[00:11:21] Previously, I explored with you some beautiful feeling states that the Buddha talks about, which undermine craving and undermine comparing and undermine thinking, thinking, thinking. And these emotional states is a quick review and you might ask yourself, to what extent am I able to open to these experiences? First, a sense of gladness that has a lot of relief and reassurance in it, that you did okay today. Gladness which can even become quite joyful. So then we have joyfulness Which can lead onward to tranquility a deep settling which can then lead on where to contentment As my teacher Steven Snyder put said confident contentment, so I want to name them again These are places you can visit. These are channels you can tune into that are important to be able to access increasingly so that as you rest your mind on these four or five qualities of being, they become increasingly the inclination, the habit of your own heart. Gladness with a sense of relief and reassurance, joyfulness, tranquility, and contentment. A place for these. Now we can still be aware that bad things are happening in the world. We can still be mad about them. We could still do what we can about them, we can keep, you know, getting our job done, we could keep doggedly walking our path if that's what we got to do today.

[00:13:02] And to the extent that it's real for you, even in only one tile of the larger mosaic of the mind. Even in only one tile amidst 99 others, let's say. There can be a sense of gladness, maybe even a spike of joy. Certainly a finding of tranquility, and even a sense of contentment. All right? And those four qualities undermine the sources of mental proliferation and help us come home and rest in the present. Resting and being without stressful striving for becoming. And I want to repeat the key point that it's thoroughly possible to be high achieving, to be ambitious, to be higher accomplishing for your own sake or in service to others. It's thoroughly to do that while having some of the tiles in the mosaic of your mind some of the time, be rested in gladness, joyfulness, tranquility. Or contentment, or variations of those four words with other words that might be more resonant for you. That's remarkable, isn't it? It's not either or, we either sit on our tush, on the cushion, you know, marinating in bliss, or we get the job done. No, both and. Why not? Okay?

[00:14:47] Now, this is my main topic coming. That was kind of a quick review and an exploration for you. Okay, how am I doing with, you know, these things, right? And... What's been really striking to me is that woven into that sense of glad relief, also woven into joyfulness, definitely tranquility, and for sure contentment, is one thing. One thing. I've given you many clues as to what that one thing might be. It starts with, in English, an E. Enough! Enough enough oh enough just that word i wonder how it was for you in the last five minutes it was of the meditation in which i suggested that you could play around with arriving enough you know as you inhaled and exhaled what was it like to softly say in your mind or feel ah enough So... Let's be really clear. We can feel that there is enough so far while pursuing more from now on. Good, that's fine. We can also have a sense that with regard to certain qualities or skills or accomplishments or attainments, I have done enough already. While planning to add to your you know bucket tomorrow.

[00:16:34] Okay, and There's also a place for, especially as you age, and you know, we're aging here. You know, what's the median age in this group? You know? I bet it's over 50, might be over 60. And I don't know about you, but I think I've crossed the midline of my

lifespan, most likely. So as one, you know ages, time is unfolding, the temporal expansion of the universe. The 4D Big Bang universe is continuing. You look back and you kind of reflect and you know consider your life you can feel that yeah you know it's been enough it's been enough without you know planning on turning out the lights forever it's yeah enough a fullness of completion while delighting in the healthy sense Delighting in... What's continuing to arise, and the next new thing. Wow.

[00:17:50] So, how can we appreciate, and how can we open to what we appreciate? As I've said previously, about enoughness. And I really invite you into this consideration of enough. And as a quick little sidebar, this kind of not actually a sidebar. We live in a culture in which some of the greatest minds of our generation are continually figuring out how to make us feel like we're not enough. You're not if fill in the blank. You don't have the right lipstick. You don't have the right abdominals, you don't the right face, all these people doing all this facial stuff. You're not enough if you're not like these exemplary people on Instagram or Facebook or Twitter, just implicitly showing us like in advertising, these happy people who are on this medication, or whose babies have these special diapers. You know, there's implicitly you look at them and they're so good-looking and you know they have square jaws and clear complexions and nice bodies and nice tans and Good smiles white teeth and Wow. I don't have that. I guess Huh, I'm not enough. I'm like them right there We have what what do we have there one of the three roots of mental proliferation we have comparing Point being, I think it's rebellious. I think is feisty. An act of cultural disobedience to... Stand in the face of the oncoming whisperings and streams calling the seductions of Cersei, the sorceress, and her fellow buddy sorceresses, come hither, come, hither. You're not enough. There's enough over here. You don't have enough over there. Come over here, you know, to stand in face of all those cultural pressures and go, nope, I got enough already. I'm cool.

[00:20:13] You know, I think I quoted Henry David Thoreau in a previous talk who said, who wrote, I make myself rich by making my wants few. I got enough already. Enough, right? It's kind of good to also be aware of the people in your life, some of them well-intended, who are trying to get you to perform at a higher level. It's not enough. You need to fix that. You need improve. You know, you need to be more. You need be all you can be because you're not enough already. Oh, what are those voices in your mind that give you, you know, as my dad talked about the old fashioned term, inferiority complex. I'm less than. What makes you feel like you're less than others? Because obviously if you're less than them you're not enough already. You know, what what captures you in the striving to be one up? Whoa! Or as good as them. Well, if you're striving to be as good as them, you don't feel like you're enough as you are, right?

[00:21:19] So it's very helpful to just pay attention to those, you know, voices from childhood. Those parts in you today, recalling Richard Schwartz's advice and wonderful book from Internal Family Systems, No Bad Parts. Okay, not a bad part, but definitely a propaganda part. Definitely an inner ad agency part that's pitching you routinely that you gotta be more, you gotta to be different, you're not enough, you are not okay as you are, right? You're inadequate or inferior as you are. Well, and I've really grappled with that in my own life, coming out of nobody was abusive in my childhood, you know, I wasn't horribly bullied, but for all kinds of complicated reasons, including my own belief system. Acquired early on, that I had to, you know, et cetera, et cetera, that led me to feeling that I always had to do more to be enough. So I've been practicing with that what to do about this.

[00:22:24] One, recognize sources, both really, you know, external sources, cultural sources and psychological sources. And then I want to speak to three particular kinds of enoughness. Enough that you've done enough already in reference to something. In a Q&A I did yesterday related to the Foundations of Well-being program, someone talked about feeling like that that they were not doing enough for an aging parent who kept telling them that they weren't doing enough. What do you do about that, right? Well, it's really crucial when you think about doing enough related to a particular relationship or challenge or, you know, problem or opportunity in your work maybe, maybe related to your health.

[00:23:23] First of all, it's really important to identify, have I done enough so far? Because you might still do more in the future. So it's about so far. That has to be, it has to be a fair thing. Given the time that I've had Have I done a good enough, good enough job so far? Be honest with yourself. Two parts to that.

[00:23:47] One, what's a reasonable standard for enough? And a reasonable standards, I think, is the standard that you would consider reasonable for another person who's kinda sorta like you. Maybe with the same abilities or with the impairments or limitations. Or special issues. Some people have a really hard time focusing steadily for more than four hours a day. Their brain just, their basal ganglia, literally, key part of the brain just cracks up. Cracks out again. Hard to do, right? Have you done enough? You know, I'm moving a fair amount of objects in our garage these days, a lot of weight. Have I done enough given the nature of my body and my age, da da da. So what are your reasonable standards? Know what your standards are for enough. We're extremely important. You might even write them down. You might write down a little list with three columns in terms of what you say to yourself as, you know, okay, maybe, not okay, related to your standards for yourself. And green light, yellow light, red light, okay?

[00:25:02] Second, if you haven't done enough So far... Start again tomorrow, put in the correction, you know, the Buddha was very tough-minded while being very compassionate, and he was really clear with people, again and again and again, you have to make efforts, put into correction. And then tomorrow, when you've put into correction, so that you've met your reasonable standard tomorrow, know that you did enough tomorrow. Know that you did enough that day. In other words, in that relationship, with that project. With your body, with your inquiries, you put in a decent day's work. You did enough. And when you did enough, remind yourself and turn off the clock. That's extremely important. Really important. And... Be aware, of course, of other people who are telling you you didn't do enough or something or other. Well, is that actually really true?

[00:26:08] And just because they're unhappy does not mean it's your fault. And just, because they want more from you, does not itself necessarily put an obligation on you. That's really useful. In other words, to differentiate yourself from others or have boundaries. Their need is not necessarily your obligation. You get to decide for yourself what is enough in the meeting of your obliga... Of what is it enough in the meaning of your obligations to their needs. And... Frankly, some of the time you will make a judgment call for yourself when you think about the finite, limited amount of time, attention, money and energy you have in the remaining days of your life, and you will decide that enough is simply being compassionate. You're opening your heart, you're being empathic, you have a sense of their suffering, you wish them well. And you're not going to give them any money. You're not gonna run that errand for them. You're gonna listen to their complaints about life anymore. You're going to feel guilty, extremely important. You're just not, and because that's what your standard is and you know it, okay? So I've spoken there about being enough with regard to a particular relationship, situation or project. And you may

find, as I have found, that you're going to need to rest your mind repeatedly and repeatedly re-energize, reactivate, regenerate, reassuring voices inside yourself that say, you've done enough, it's okay. Clock out, plop on the sofa, hit the TV, noodle through YouTubes, my latest addiction, have some chocolate. You've done enough. Remind yourself of that, okay?

[00:28:20] Second category of enough. This has to do with being enough, yourself altogether. Are you educated enough? Are you skilled enough? Are you enlightened enough? Are you kind enough? Are you virtuous enough? In the development of the neurodharma, you know, is your... Seela enough, your restraint, your morality, is your wisdom enough, is your samadhi, your concentration enough, and so forth, so forth. What to do about that. Here too, I think it's really important to have a reasonable standard for yourself so that you are crediting the total package of who you are. And that's really hard for most people to do. I've had to really work at it and I'm determined and I've been to really worked at it because in the mosaic of who are the total packaged, the qualities in you, let's assume it's a 10 by 10 matrix, It's a hundred tiles in the mosaic. 80 at least already are exemplary. If you think about another person and the mosaic that they are and you were to say, well, what about this, this, and that? You would go bing, bing bing. I'll do green, gray, and yellow or red, right? Four colors. So you would just immediately see all kinds of green. Wow, yes, that too, that, too, really far out. Good, good, yep. Super excellent Honorable, reasonable, steady. Think about lists of virtues, like the whatever 10 Boy Scout thingamajiggers. Thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent, I only remember four. No, yeah, reasonably thrifty, brave and clean and reverend, maybe some more. Yeah, you'd give them credit for that. Well, can you do that with yourself? In your qualities.

[00:30:19] And then maybe there are qualities in them that are a work in progress, but you can see, okay, they have a learning curve. They're developing that. So they're good enough, you know? The green, good enough already, and the gray are under development. All right, good-enough development. You would see that. And then maybe they're a handful, where, you now, I'm really, that's a problem. But I'm working on it. I have a confession. I think it's fair to say that I have a really long fuse. I think people who know me well would go, wow, you know, really long fused, I'm chill for a long, long time. But then I get to a point where I'm fed up. Boom. And you probably know what that's like. Where I'm just fed up, I've kind of had it. I just see a pattern of mistreatment of others, pattern mistreating myself. You know, I'm like. Now it's understandable to be fed up. And maybe I should have spoken up sooner. I hear you, I get it. You therapists, you're writing me emails, you know. Fine, I hear. You don't need to write me the email. I know, I know. And part I'm working on is that when I do get fed up, there's a little part of me that can get kind of. About it that can kind of startle people sometimes. And me, I'm thinking, haven't you been paying attention to the previous 100 things that happened here that I finally got fed up enough about? But they're just not aware. But what they're aware of is the last 101st that I'm reacting to, and that's a little intense. So I'm working on that yellow, orange, red tile, and I've got a few others I'm sure. In fact, I am sure.

[00:32:09] Okay, when you look at the whole package... That's what we're judging. That's why we're evaluating. When you look at the whole package of who you are, what you've developed, your talents, your virtues, your skills, your good intentions, what you have overcome, the headwinds you've had to deal with, the other people. Can you look at that whole package for yourself and be with it and be yourself much as you would with that other person who has your mosaic and go, good on you. Good on you so far. Keep working on those grays that you're improving. And you know, you got a few yellow and red and good on. Bless you. Thank you. I'm glad to know you. Good for you. Can you give

yourself that? I think that's incredibly important. And it can be very formal and sacred, kind of ceremonial when you do this, to imagine even a ritual in which you would write out like a letter to yourself or a list. Or imagine communicating to yourself, or imagine, I call it the caring committee, other wise beings, even spiritual beings inside you who are addressing you over there in a chair, crying, get the Kleenex, as you really communicate it. This is the truth, this is not praise. It is kind of praiseworthy, but it's not about giving a compliment. It's definitely not flattery. And it's no arrogance or conceit. It's naming what's true.

[00:34:20] Like here, I have a little cup. Is this cup good enough already? As a cup, I think it is. Feels great in my hand. It's got a nice sort of frictiony thing. It looks pretty, it's peaceful. Holds my coffee really well. It's already enough. Can you see the factuality of your enough-ness as you are already? And what helps that really land is to also know the ways in which you've got a growth curve, you've a growth mindset, and a growth toolkit, and, yeah, you're a work in progress. And you're doing honorable work. And you are enough. Already. And a lot of that is dropping comparisons to those who somehow are even more spectacular. And I find that what's really important is to regard yourself like a Swiss Army knife, not a single blade. It's the whole package of you that we're talking about here. Any single tile in your mosaic, there might be somebody else in the world who's better at that particular thing than you. But it's the whole package of you, particularly given the challenges you've lived through and deal with currently. You are enough already. Okay?

[00:35:58] The third kind of enough-ness is really kind of existential. It's when you look at your life. And I think on this one... You may have a sense, particularly if you're younger, that you know, it doesn't feel like enough yet. Maybe you haven't, whatever your values are in life, I've named three central values of quality of life, service, and learning, including healing and awakening. You might have other values, great. In terms of those core values of your life, you may feel, you know, it's not yet enough. It doesn't land. It wouldn't be authentic to say that. On the other hand, I think it's really worth exploring. Whether there can be a real sense sinking into you of a kind of fullness of completion. So that now you're in the bonus round. You know, an enoughness of sight seen and sounds heard, you know, and enoughness of love given and received, and enough of accomplishing, given the hand you were dealt, and the things you've had to deal with. And I have experienced, and been experiencing, and I think many of you can too, a sense that, you know... This life has been enough. Now, it's important that this not become morbid or suicidal and I don't mean it whatsoever in that way. I mean it in a sense of deep contentment. Like, yeah, I'd like more. And yeah, discontent still arises sometimes in awareness. And... It's enough. That often will draw you into the present moment or what supports the sense of confident contentment is resting in being distinct from proliferating into becoming. This is enough already. I feel content, not discontent.

[00:38:23] And when that which is not contentment increasingly falls away, the drivenness, the comparing, the dissatisfaction, the habit of dissatisfactions, the habits of reproach, the habit of grievance, The habit of resentment, the habit of addiction, falls away. With practice, and training, and gatherings like this one, as those fall away, what remains? What's left? It's your home base. It's who you already are, underneath it all. Wakeful, peaceful, kind, and content. Already. Already home. Already enough. These practices that we're exploring here and offered to the extent they feel really right for you are for their own sake, factors of wellbeing. And also they strengthen us to deal with the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. They strengthen us to deal with a world that has some real problems. We can feel enough already as beings while looking at all kinds of things and saying to ourselves, no, it ain't enough already. The rule of law ain't Enough already, or

whatever. The healthcare system ain't enough already, or how my kid is being taught reading in this second grade ain't enough already. It's okay to, it doesn't take away. From your own sense of fullness and balance and an unshakable core of resilient wellbeing. It doesn't take away from that to be very aware of what could be better in the world.

[00:40:37] So, how about we just kind of take a breath for a minute or so and you can kind of let it reverberate in you. Opening into your own sense of enough. You know, perhaps enough so far in a particular situation. You've done enough dishes today. And perhaps... Healing enough as a person altogether. And even a sense that this great opportunity of your one wild and precious life. Has been enough. You don't need to contract and press and strain anymore.