

Anxiety and the Noble Truth of Craving (Talk from 5/26/21)

Rick Hanson [00:00:01] So, this year, I'm going to be exploring the heart of the Buddha's teachings: the four noble truths. And this is his very, very practical wisdom about why we suffer, why we become stressed and unhappy, and especially what we can do about it. To summarize, these four truths: there is suffering; our suffering has a deep cause, a deep source, which is our craving; we can end craving and thus and suffering; and there is a path, an eightfold path that leads to the end of craving and suffering. In future talks I'm going to get into the fundamentals of all this and the details which are so useful for everyday life. But over the next four weeks as an introduction to this, I'm going to explore in a summary way each of the four noble truths through the lens of anxiety. I think of these as anxiety provoking times. Maybe all times are anxiety provoking. But in any case, anxiety, apprehensiveness, uneasiness, nervousness, worry, panic, terror, trauma, great fear, whatever the range is, wherever one is in the range, it's a common experience.

[00:01:20] Two weeks ago, I looked at the first noble truth through the lens of anxiety. Yes, there is anxiety and there usually is suffering in it. I feel it. You feel it. We all feel it. And I covered various ways that simply understanding, which is what we're invited to do with regard to the first noble truth to understand our suffering, simply understanding anxiety in a deep way can actually help to relieve it. You might like to listen to the recording of that talk. As I said, also we're also going to be posting my detailed notes for that talk in the link in the chat that I put in at 6:45 p.m.. And you should be able to find it there.

[00:02:02] Now, tonight I'm going to focus on the second noble truth. And I'm going to look at the second noble truth of craving through the lens of anxiety so that we can aim to abandon the craving. That's what we're called to do with regard to craving, the second truth, to abandon the craving that creates the suffering and anxiety. Along the way I'll preview a number of important ideas and methods that will be exploring in greater depth later on that are at the heart of skillful practice of any kind. It'll help if you have a specific kind of anxiety you're dealing with. People have commented in the chat, for example, I can see it right, here about pain, a really intense pain which naturally promotes, you know, maybe a fearfulness about it, you know, a real worry about the future and where this is going. Whatever it might be, it will help you if you focus on, you know, one or two particular worries or concerns that you have. That will make this material, which might seem otherwise kind of abstract, it'll bring it down to earth for you. It will make it real and experiential for yourself. I'm going to cover a lot of ground directly and briskly in this talk, and I'm going to try to do it in a way that does leave some time for questions and discussion at the end. Remember, this is an overview. We'll be coming back to this stuff again and again. You can also go back and listen to the talk or read my notes. And I hope that you don't get anxious about potentially missing something in my focus on anxiety. OK. Vroom vroom. Let's go.

[00:03:38] So first off, what is craving? What is craving? The word in Pali, the original ancient language of the Buddha, the word for craving is Tanha in Pali. And the fundamental meaning of that word is thirst. Now it's typically translated as craving, but the meaning of Tanha is much broader than the image it might conjure up of a heroin addict, you know, desperate for a fix. For example, with regard to thirst, we thirst in the simplest sense when we don't have enough water. Something is missing. Something is wrong. Right there is the essence of craving. There is a deficit or disturbance in the meeting of an important need. Consequently, the body and mind move into a drive state of some kind to meet that need. This is the essence of craving, a perceived problem that matters enough to mobilize the body and mind in stressful, suffering, saturated ways. I'll come back to

these key ideas of needs, deficit or disturbance, mobilization saturated with stress and suffering. I'll come back to this a lot over the years.

[00:05:01] For example, a person who is craving water might crawl through burning sands to get to an oasis. A person drowning underwater and kelp, as I nearly did 50 some odd years ago in the Pacific Ocean, would crave air, understandably. But most of our craving, broadly defined, is subtler and milder. It often operates in the background, semi-consciously or even unconsciously. Broadly, we can crave something to start. We can also crave that something continue. Or we can even crave that something end. That we don't feel that pain in our body. That the estrangement with that other person really end. That that horrible noise that we keep hearing outside will finally go away. Whatever it might be, those are all aspects of craving.

[00:06:02] So, I invite you right now to consider: what is craving feel like? What does it feel like? I say that craving includes the sense of wanting, desiring, longing, needing, insisting, demanding, the feeling of must or insistence, got to have it, as craving. Craving is at work there. And see for yourself, was the Buddha right there? On the heels of that craving comes some form of unease, disease, unhappiness, dysphoria, suffering. Also, the sense of pressure. Pressure is a fantastic clue that there's some craving going on, a sense of drivenness or contraction, you know, forcing things, even forcing your point in a conversation, grabbing, pushing, grasping, you know, craving, resisting, withdrawing, contracting, craving, avoiding, even subtleties of procrastinating, some kind of drives state, some kind of drivenness, some kind of craving embedded in these. What does craving feel like for you, including subtleties of it, and it's milder forms, yearning compulsion, not enoughness—I'm seeing all these wonderful things—desperation—all these great words, yay—an ache, you know, fear? Yes. OK, great.

[00:07:41] And Briggan brings in a question at 6:52. Does this concept work for both things you crave that are good for you and things that aren't good for you? Definitely. We can value things that are good for us without craving them. And we can also crave things that are good for us. Really useful distinction there and to observe that and your own experience. OK.

[00:08:05] So, ask yourself what does craving feel like? You know, it sounds so exotic. You know, bring it down. Bring it down. You know, it shows up for me a lot interpersonally, you know, not that often, but a major form of craving for me personally is the feeling that I need to make my point, you know, I need to get my point across, into the space, on the record, into the mind, you know, insert point in mind of other person. And craving. Craving. OK.

[00:08:36] So, now what about anxiety and craving? How do those two work together? Well, first craving tends to make us anxious. For example, you can bring to mind a situation in the present or in the past in which you felt really driven, compelled. All right? Maybe you were intense or insistent, irritated maybe. Well, in that, can you find some anxiety? Some fear of not having what you need or losing what you've got or not getting something you want in the future? Maybe you're trying to get another person to see it your way kind of like I was talking about. Or maybe change their behavior about something that's important to you and you build up a head of steam about it, like momentum, you know, it's a lot of mass there. Well, what's the fear? What's the uneasiness? What's the concern that's implicit in all that, you know? Such as what will happen or what it will feel like if they don't make that shift you want them to make? You can see the ways in which craving often can foster some kind of anxiety. And what happens for you in your own

practice maybe when you recognize the fears they could be tangled up in your desires? Pick a desire of any kind. Maybe wanting other people to see you a certain way or act a certain way, even people that you're concerned about, maybe it's kind of a virtuous fear, but still, maybe you, you know, you want other people, maybe someone you love, to act a certain way. What's the fear that's mixed into that for you? Craving fostering anxiety.

[00:10:41] On the other hand, let's look at it another way. Imagine being worried about something, imagine ways in which anxiety can promote craving. So, let's say you're worried maybe about an illness, something in your body. What are the wants that are stimulated by that worry? Wanting perhaps to be healthy, wanting not to be in pain, maybe ultimately wanting not to die. How about being worried about not finishing some project, you know, something you're trying to produce or complete or attain, not finishing it on time. Well, what are the wants in this? Maybe wants related to getting approval from others if you complete it or making some money from doing it, or maybe wanting to avoid letting others down or getting, you know, them mad at you or upset with you. Speaking of, what if you're worried about somebody being mad at you or getting mad at you? What are the wants in that that are stimulated by that worry? Wants like wanting to be liked, maybe wanting to avoid conflict, or wanting to be praised instead of criticized.

[00:12:08] This is a key point from psychology, anxiety functions as a signal. It's designed by evolution to alert us to something missing. Something wrong. We might feel a pain which triggers a fear, which triggers some kind of craving, some kind of drive state. If you're anxious about something, then, it's very useful to inquire what is the anxiety signaling and is it actually a signal or just irrelevant noise? Wow. Think about something that you're worried about. You can ask the anxiety, you can interrogate the anxiety. What are you trying to tell me? What is the danger, supposedly? Maybe there's a real danger. What is it? How big a threat is it, actually? We can make two kinds of mistakes in life, right, with regard to threats. We can think they're bigger than they really are or smaller than they really are. We can over respond to them or we can under respond to them. So trying to get a sense, asking the question of the anxiety, how big an issue is this really? That can be really useful.

[00:13:38] What actions should I take? What should I do? You know, helpless anxiety is extremely uncomfortable, it's full of suffering, and it's ineffectual. It doesn't do anything. It's pain with no gain. Ineffectual anxiety. Like, I can't do anything about it, right? Well, what's the action you can take, including knowing that you've taken the actions you can take and, you know, not continually pressing yourself or putting pressure on yourself to do more somehow than you've already done? And you can ask yourself: if I take these actions, if I've done what I've done, you know, you can ask the anxiety, will you stop being so worried? Will you give me a break finally? Back off. All right. And here's where, also, it's important in psychology to make a distinction between what's called state anxiety and trait anxiety. What can happen, unfortunately, is we can develop a kind of nonspecific background hum of anxiety that is just humming away, trying to alert list of things. But there's really no problem or the problem it's signaling is not a real problem. For example, if anything goes wrong with the body, if the body gets at all disturbed, that tends to send alarm signals up into the brain, such as your digestion is disturbed or your hormones are wobbly or the immune system is reacting, there's some kind of inflammatory process, well, that's a bodily basis. OK. But often what'll happen is that that will promote a general sense of uneasiness that leads us then to look outside, including with other people, to try to find something wrong. When in fact, it's more of the body that's just sometimes even just a little, just a little disturbed. So, it can be very helpful to really start to sort out, all right, what is trait anxiety from state anxiety, and is it appropriate state anxiety? And then address it

as best you can. More background trait anxiety? Even if it's kind of understandable that maybe it arose due to trauma, it's understandable it's there, but it's not a signal any longer. It's just an unpleasant noise. Wow. We don't necessarily have to take it so personally, we don't have to feel so implicated by it. It's there. It's there, that uneasiness in your belly, that sinking feeling in your gut, that feeling of there's got to be, you know, what's wrong? Something's wrong. You know, you're looking around vigilantly. Something's wrong. But to really understand, no, no, when it's true, when it's true, there's actually no basis for that anxiety, that kind of trait anxiety. It's a relic of maybe previous experiences. Maybe it's an artifact of some disturbance in your physiology. It's there. It's unpleasant, but you don't have to crave in relationship to it. Wow. It doesn't have to mobilize a drive state. I'm not trying to diminish or dismiss anxiety that has an actual basis. When it's a useful signal it's incredibly important to pay attention to it. I'm speaking here about what's sometimes called inchoate or nonspecific anxiety, amorphous background anxiety that has no information value. It's not a signal. It's just an unpleasant noise. And making that distinction is really, really useful.

[00:17:20] So to continue the kind of thrust of my talk here, craving and anxiety can promote each other. That's the takeaway. Craving can foster anxiety and the suffering of anxiety. And meanwhile, you know, the suffering of anxiety can also promote craving. And this speaks to a broad general principle highlighted especially by Stephen Batchelor, which is that craving and suffering, the first two noble truths that are usually presented in the sequence. There is suffering due to craving. Well, there is also craving due to suffering. And they can reinforce each other in vicious cycles. This means something really important that's kind of controversial. This means that skillful efforts to reduce suffering, period, to reduce suffering directly, are in the service of the great matter, the great path of liberation from all craving. Wow. Reducing suffering can help us crave less, which helps us suffer less, certainly, and therefore rest in that highest happiness as the quotation has it, which is peace. In other words, improving worldly conditions, for starters, that, you know, create suffering, in other words, changing worldly conditions that create suffering so they create less suffering, like relieving poverty and injustice, is thoroughly supportive of the Buddha Way, not just running in parallel alongside it. It's on mission for Buddhist practice to help the world become better for all beings. It's directly on mission, not just a nice thing to do the sort of implied in parallel to the Eightfold Path.

[00:19:09] Similarly, this means that self-help practices, coaching, psychotherapy, et cetera, et cetera that directly relieve suffering are supportive of the Buddha Way and not in any sense at odds to it. All right. The implication, clearly, is that it's foolish to discount or dismiss psychological efforts to directly reduce suffering. And it's, I think, a mistake to do this in ways that frankly, I've encountered quite often from traditional teachers in particular, sometimes in the mindfulness world, some kind of dismissal or discounting of direct efforts to reduce human suffering as if that's somehow at odds with sustained, motivated, deep personal practice. Not true at all. Suffering fosters craving, which then leads to more suffering. So, directly addressing suffering reduces craving. Look here inside your own experience. What's one thing that you could change, even a small one, that would bring you more well-being and less anxiety, less suffering and therefore a small thing that would reduce your cravings? What's one little thing, one small thing you could start or stop, or be really careful or deliberate to continue? What's one thing, just one thing that could promote your well-being? One little thing for me would be to stay out of silly little wrangles with other people, even on email or in social media, just let it go. That would foster well-being for me. And I can see that in turn, yes, there would be fewer cravings of various kinds, including cravings related to being right, proving my point. What might be there for you?

What's a simple way you could increase your well-being and thereby reducing your cravings, which would foster even greater well-being?

[00:21:36] So, now I'm going to keep going. What causes craving? So, in addition to the ways that suffering itself and anxiety in particular can foster craving, I want to look more specifically at three key causes of craving, including ones that are identified in the Buddhist tradition. All right? I'm going to explore this in greater depth with you in the days to come, and in particular, you could take a look at my book *Neurodharma*, which I highly recommend for people in this meditation gathering. It's kind of a good foundational textbook for what we're exploring here. But right now, I'm just going to give you a quick summary.

[00:22:15] So, first off, the world definitely bears down upon us with challenges and disturbances. Poverty injustice, you know, the neighbor, just the leaking faucet in the middle of the night, all of this has effects. Similarly, things that happen just purely in the physical body. Its illnesses, its disabilities, its pains, its frailties, these have direct impact on us, to be sure. And then these environmental and bodily processes land on your mind. And in your mind, there are three broad causes of craving. First, conceptual. In particular, making one or more of three well-identified errors of thought in the Buddhist tradition. First, the conceptual error that leads to craving thinking that something will last when it's actually impermanent. Second error, thinking that something is I, me, or mine, when actually I, me and mine are all empty of substance. They're not solid. Another third error in the conceptual sources of craving is thinking that a particular pleasure will provide lasting fulfillment when actually that's impossible since everything is impermanent. So you see these three conceptual sources of craving? All right. Not recognizing impermanence, not recognizing interdependence, and, you know, taking things oh so personally, and third, not appreciating that any passing experience lacks a lasting, satisfactoryness. OK?

[00:24:12] This is not recognizing what are called the three marks of existence that I talked about, actually, when we had our informal start here. The marks of impermanence, Anicca. The mark of selflessness, Anatta. And the mark of the suffering that happens when we resist these first two, when we don't recognize these first two marks of existence, the suffering of Dukkha. Anicca, Anatta, and Dukkha in Pali. Impermanence, not self, and suffering. We miss those and then we crave as a result. It's kind of like we're ignorant or deluded as a basis of craving. OK. That's the first major kind of source of craving.

[00:25:00] The second is relational relation. In particular having a background frame of reference that you are isolated alone, separate, just operating in the background and kind of the wallpaper of your mind in the field. Or related to that, having an underlying sense of being unloved. These are deep relational sources of craving. Now, these relational issues might be implied a little bit in the conceptual error of thinking that you are a separate self. The error of not recognizing Anatta, not self. You know, not recognizing that. But they're not usually emphasized. These relational sources of craving are not usually emphasized in teachings about Anatta. Further, these relational sources of craving are so sweeping, I think, and so absolutely fundamental and consequential that they deserve highlighting in their own terms—the relational, social sources of our craving. OK?

[00:26:16] And then third—and this is the one I'm going to focus on tonight, in particular—the visceral sources of craving grounded in the needs and drives of the living body. What do we need, you know? So, we can have an invasive sense of deficit or disturbance in the meeting of our fundamental need, first, for safety, indicated by feelings of pain, threat, anger, helplessness, and especially anxiety. All right. There's a visceral sense of an unmet

need, first, for safety. Or an invasive sense of an unmet need for satisfaction, broadly defined, signaled or indicated by feelings of frustration, loss, disappointment, drivenness, maybe addiction, and often anxiety. And third, our third major need for connection, there can be an invasive sense of an unmet need for connection. Something missing, something wrong related to connection indicated by feelings of hurt, inadequacy, resentment, shame, loneliness, and often anxiety. OK. So, the third need, by the way, for connection—I'm saying there are different frameworks for needs. The one I'm going to emphasize here speaks of three needs summarized umbrella terms of safety, satisfaction, and connection. Interestingly, that third need is often not really spoken of. The third need for connection has often been de-emphasized in both Western and Buddhist psychology, which tend to reduce our complex motivations to a simple arithmetic, right, of avoiding pain, push it away, or approaching pleasure. But as we're going to see over the course of this year, we're a profoundly relational species, profoundly relational.

[00:28:23] One example of this, and this is material that's been very developed by Steve Porges in his polyvagal theory, one example of this is the ways in which there's been an evolution over the last 200 or so million years in the emergence of mammals and then primates and then hominids and then human beings. There's been an evolution of our capacities for relationship, have actually remodeled and altered and repurposed and re-engineered more ancient subcortical and brainstem regions of the brain that indeed those earlier regions, those more primitive regions, were indeed really focused on just pain or just pleasure. But they've been re-engineered to meet our social purposes. Wow. We don't just avoid or approach, we also attach. We attach to others of our kind. We attach to non-human animals, such as people speaking of the loss of losing a dear pet. And we can also attach to nature, to the forest, to the trees, to life altogether, and even to the whole wide world. I think it's really important to move beyond a simple arithmetic of pain and pleasure and to realize we also have an enormous need to attach to others in relationship.

[00:29:45] Further, the visceral sources of craving that I'm highlighting here are primary. They evolved long before our capacities to make conceptual errors. And they evolved long before we became increasingly social as we became particularly mammals, primates, hominids, and humans. It is animals that crave. Lizards crave. The goldfish in my pond, you know, in my backyard, they clearly crave the food that, to entertain myself, I toss on the surface of the pond and they rise to get and intensely want to have. Right? It is bodies that crave. The animal body craves. It's not out there somewhere in the æther. It's visceral, right? I think of the visceral nature of Tanha, of thirst.

[00:30:35] Further, in terms of the primacy of the visceral sources of craving that I'm really highlighting here and I have really focused on my own work, the effects of conceptual or relational—the first two kinds of factors—are usually routed through our viscera. In other words, they matter because of how they affect the body when we don't recognize impermanence, let's say, or when we feel isolated and alone. You know, just the abstract recognition of that or the knowing of that, eh. But it's how it affects us emotionally and somatically that really, really, really has consequence.

[00:31:11] Yet interestingly, in dharma circles, in Buddhist circles, there's been usually very little exploration of how unmet needs drive craving and what we can do about this. I think this is a really important aspect of craving, which is fundamental to the Buddha Way and yet has, in my view, been generally not looked into very much. Which to me is odd, given the emphasis in Buddhist practice and spiritual practice in general on mindfulness of the body. And yet so often the body is taken into account, certainly as an experience, in depth, even, as an experience, but not taken into account in far reaching ways as an objective

fact that is generating the primary causes of our craving and thus our suffering and thus the harms we do to ourselves and to other people. The body as a fact, as an objective generator of the craving that generates—that leads—to so much suffering and harm.

[00:32:22] This overlooking is also odd in light of the fact of all that we've learned over the past thousand years and especially the last hundred years about biology and evolution and the brain. Key causes and conditions of our minds are found in our bodies. And it seems foolish, misguided, as well as against the spirit of Buddhism, with its emphasis on dependent arising of all phenomena, they arise, they occur, including our experiences on underlying causes and conditions, and with the Buddhist emphasis on clear seeing. It seems at odds with all that—if I could kind of pound the pulpit one last time—not to take these into account.

[00:33:07] I'll say more as I finish up here about how to practice with craving in the days to come. For now, I'll just point out two major ways to practice with our visceral sources of craving. First, develop psychological resources like grit, gratitude, mindfulness, and compassion, factors of awakening, many strengths well-identified in the Buddhist tradition, as well as in other traditions, emotional intelligence, social intelligence, secure attachment, the executive functions. Develop these inner strengths to cope with challenges to the meeting of needs and become more able to meet your needs without feeling stressed and upset about it. Just because there's a challenge to a need doesn't mean necessarily that we need to mobilize into the drive state of craving to deal with it. And a major thing that helps us stay out of that trouble is to grow more psychological strengths inside. As I've written and taught you grow anything good inside yourself by first experiencing it. And second, internalizing it to hardwired into your brain. In other words, you grow the good of any kind in yourself and others in a two-step process that moves from states to traits, from experiencing to learning. And learning is always grounded in a physical change in the body, particularly in the brain.

[00:34:35] Second, we can help ourselves deal with this visceral sources of craving by repeatedly internalizing experiences that are authentic, often mild, often on the fly, experiences of needs met enough in the moment. Right? Need met enough in the moment so that we can gradually develop a background kind of mood of basic peacefulness, contentment, and love. In other words, to repeatedly internalize an appropriate sense of peacefulness when our need for safety is met enough, or an appropriate sense, broadly, of contentment when our need for satisfaction is met enough, or an underlying sense of love, broadly, when our need for connection is at least met enough in the moment. As we experience these and then learn from them through internalizing them in our own bodies, we gradually build up a background, mood of peacefulness, contentment, and love. And in this way, through developing these strengths inside ourselves and gradually cultivating a mood of peacefulness, contentment, and love, we can live in this world and meet our needs and help others meet their own needs with an unshakable core of resilient well-being. That's a wonderful opportunity. And we can understand it, and we can explore it with a deeper understanding of the basis for our own craving and the suffering that results. All right.

[00:36:11] So, questions or comments, questions or comments from the chat? Let's see here. I see lots of good questions. What do you—do you have any—I see a hand raised. I may be able to get to you, Nancy, I'm just going to see first—and also Nadjielli, maybe. We'll just see if we have time here. Key points, right? Craving and anxiety. Suffering and craving co-creating each other. Broadly, three sources of craving: conceptual sources, relational sources, and visceral sources. My view that it's really important to highlight

relational sources and visceral sources, certainly cultivate insight into our conceptual errors, but those rest on top of a much more embodied somatic and relational mode of practice. And when we understand finally, the more visceral sources of our craving as an invasive sense of a need unmet, that immediately takes us to two major things we could do to help ourselves: grow psychological resources, along with improving the world around us, but inside ourselves, grow psychological strengths to meet needs without getting all craving about it; and when your needs feel met enough in the moment, authentically who bring a big spoon, let it really sink in so more and more and more you build up this unconditional sense, this unshakable sense of well-being, which helps you become more resilient and less upset as you meet your needs in the future in a wonderful upward spiral. OK. Those are the big headlines. What do you make of all this? Any questions or comments? Good. I'm seeing useful things. Very good, very good. Good, good. Claire, lots to take in. I'm covering it, you know, this is—I'm also running through basic Buddhist themes. You know, I think there's a place for teaching them so, you know, kind of doing that as well. All right.

[00:38:35] So, really important question came in at 7:19 from Annie Davison to everyone. "What is my opinion regarding our Buddha nature? That is, we all have Buddha Nature, which allows us to be enlightened. When did this happen when the human species evolved?" Very complicated, deep, wonderful, profound, simple, but also a complicated question. In a way, I'll try to answer it in a general way. When a semi-mythical but still maybe historical character named Bodhidharma came from India into China, and through to Tibet and brought Buddhist teachings, this particular being or maybe around this particular being, among other deep matters taught, essentially, that practice is like a cart with two wheels. So in effect, there are two tracks for our practice. One track is the track that I have basically talked about tonight. It's the track set forth in what could be called original Buddhism, summarized in the Pali Canon as best we can gather, the teachings of the Buddha and his contemporaries, or those who live soon after him. So we have this analysis of suffering and its causes. We have practices that gradually train the mind, that gradually purify the heart, that gradually cultivate certain qualities, certain insights, certain faculties in a progressive way that can lead progressively to awakening, and enlightenment, and an unshakable liberation of the heart. OK, that's one track.

[00:40:25] The other track—Anny is pointing to it, or Annie is pointing to it—is the recognition of our true nature already. The first track is a progressive process of training and healing and purifying and developing. The second track is an ongoing knowing and a deepening in a felt way, a deepening knowing of the good news that is true already. The good news about your underlying nature as wakeful and pure, innocent and free, and the good news already of knowing that everything is connected to everything else. And at the level of the universe all together, there is no problem. It is simply what it is, and we can open out into the truth of all that and even experience, as Henry Shukman beautifully teaches about the original love, in effect, in the endless generosity, the endless bounty, the endless arising of all that is. These are the two tracks. Either without the other is incomplete. Arguably, while I believe that the Buddhist realization was complete, many interpretations of original Buddhism have kind of emphasized this progressive process without really acknowledging true nature already. On the other hand, perhaps in some Tibetan or Chan or Zen circles, there's an overemphasis on, or definitely in some non-dual circles or mindfulness, some mindfulness circles, there can be an overemphasis on, well, just be true nature already. Great if you can sustain that. Without really taking into account this gradual process of healing, cultivation, purification, and development. The cart needs two wheels, and it must run on two tracks. Both are really true. And the Buddha nature, the true nature is fundamentally true, even before humans evolved. And humans, perhaps,

unlike many other creatures, have the capacity to truly realize this true nature, to deeply realize this true nature, including through extraordinary experiences of self-transcendence, Kensho, liberation, Nibbanha, nirvana, remarkable experiences. And in so doing, internalize the access to, or sense of, your deep, true nature so it's increasingly stable with you wherever you go. And you can feel this with people who are really mature in their practice. There's a sparkle in them. There's a knowing in the background, not that they're putting on airs, but there's a knowing continuously of what's true.

[00:43:36] Maybe I'll just finish here with a quotation from Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj, who said, "Wisdom tells me I am nothing. Love tells me I am everything. And between these two banks, the river of my life flows." OK. Well, unfortunately, Nancy and Nadjelli, I'm just not going to be able to get to you. I apologize for that. How about we take a last minute to just sit together? To just let this land. Craving. Craving is real. Makes us suffer. Makes you suffer. How could you crave less? How might you help yourself, as we did in the meditation, increasingly find a sense, maybe underneath it all of nothing missing. Nothing wrong in the present. Even as you pursue your goals, even as you solve problems, even as you cope with losses, still, can you find gratitude, contentment, calming, love? And when you do, can you let it repeatedly sink in? And as you do this, notice that the causes of craving are being reduced and you're craving and suffering less.