

Dhamma talk – Cape Girdeau, Mo.

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8-Fold Path

BV: When the Buddha started giving talks about meditation, he talked about the 8-Fold Path, but he also talked about the Four Noble Truths – that was the first part of the talk.

The Four Noble Truths are – there is suffering. What's the definition of suffering? Not getting what you want, or getting what you don't want – that's basically what it comes down to.

The Second Noble Truth is – there is a cause of the suffering, and that cause is craving, and you'll get to hear a lot more about that in a little while.

The Third Noble Truth is – there is a cessation of suffering.

And the Fourth Noble Truth is – the way leading to the cessation of suffering.

What is suffering? Suffering is...it arises mostly because we want things to be the way we want them when we want them to be that way. (Sighs) Wow (laughs), that came out right even.

When you're sitting in meditation and a pain arises in your body, you don't want it to be there. You don't want to be disturbed by it. Who wants pain anyway? So how do you handle that? Well, there is a variety of ways of handling this, but the easiest is to follow the 8-Fold Path.

Now, the first step of the 8-Fold Path is...Let me explain a little bit. Now, in all of these in Pali, since these words are all in Pali, it starts out with "Sammā". "Sammā" has always been translated as Right, and I've never really liked that translation very much. "Sammā", when you get into it a little bit is – the word Harmonious is actually closer to the definition. When you are in harmony with what you're doing, that means you are in balance, you are not fighting anything,

you are just going with it very well. So instead of saying right this and right that, what I'm going to do is – I'll change the reading around and start talking about harmonious things.

The first step in the 8-Fold Path is called "Sammā Diṭṭhi". "Sammā Diṭṭhi" in Pali – in English it's always translated as Right Understanding or Right View, but I want to give you the definition of Harmonious Perspective. Now, what is a Harmonious Perspective? Any time you take any thought or feeling as being yours personally, you are out of harmony with that perspective. Example: you are sitting and a pain arises. Whose pains is it? Mine – "I don't want it to be there, I want it to be different than it is, I don't like that". Now, what happens is that we loose the perspective and take this feeling personally. And then we start fighting with the feeling and we are trying to control our feeling with the thought, and that's very much out of harmony with what's happening.

Now, when I gave you the instructions in the meditation, I told you that when a feeling or a sensation arises and your mind goes to that sensation, the first thing you'll notice is you start thinking about the sensation: "I wish it would stop, I wish it would go away, why does it have to bother me now, I don't like that feeling, I want it to just leave me alone". Every thought about the sensation causes that sensation to be bigger and more intense! So, the first part of the mediation is recognizing that you are thinking about a feeling. Now, in Buddhism, this psychophysical process is made up basically of five things. You have a physical body, you have feeling...Now every time anybody starts thinking about feeling, they are always thinking about feelings, emotions. Feeling, according to Buddhism, is either a pleasant feeling, or it's a painful feeling, or it's neither painful nor pleasant. So, it's not about emotions, it's about this feeling being a nice feeling, or a painful feeling, or a neutral feeling. You have perception – perception is the mind that puts names on things. When you see the flame, you say: "Oh, that's a candle". The thing that names that is perception. It also has memory involved with it. Now, you have thoughts, and then you have consciousness. So, that's what these five things are that make up this process right here.

When a sensation arises, the first thing we try to do is think the sensation away, but sensations are one thing and thoughts are something else. The more you fight with a sensation, the more you try to control that feeling with your thoughts – the more you suffer, the bigger and more intense that feeling becomes. That is being out of harmony with your perspective. Now, the instructions in the meditation, they say: let go of the thoughts and relax. Why are you relaxing after that? Every thought that arises, as soon as it arises, causes tension and tightness to arise in your mind and in your body.

And this is subtle, this is not some big gross thing, this is very subtle tightness. It's so subtle that an awful lot of people never really recognize this when they are meditating. Now, this tightness or tension is called craving. Craving always manifests as tightness or tension in your mind and in your body. Where you will see it the most is the tightness and tension in your head. But, say, you are sitting very nicely in meditation and you have a cough. All those muscles around your neck start tightening up. Why? "I don't want that feeling to be there, I don't want to disturb anybody else, I don't want to cough". That tickle is there, as soon as the tickle gets there, there is tightness. You let go of the thoughts about that and then you relax all of the muscles in your throat. Now, that tickle still might be there, it'll either be there or it won't, it'll go away by itself, it doesn't really matter. Every time your mind becomes distracted by anything, there is this tension and tightness. Now, this is the "I like it" or "I don't like it" mind – that's what craving is – "I like it, I want it more", "I don't like it, I want to push it away". As you start doing your meditation, you start to see every time your mind's attention moves from one thing to another, there is this subtle little tension and tightness that arises.

Now, I just got through telling you about the Noble Truths. The First Noble Truth is – there is suffering. The Second Noble Truth – there is a cause of suffering – craving. Craving is the "I like it, I don't like it" mind. It's the mind that grabs on and tries to control. So, what are you doing when you are relaxing? You are letting go of that craving, you are letting go of the tension and tightness caused by mind's attention moving from one thing to another.

As you start to recognize this and let it be, you let go of that tension or tightness. What do you experience right now? You've let go of the tension and tightness, you feel an expansion in your mind, you feel a relaxing in your body, and there is a clear spot right there – there is this pure kind of awareness. It's the one that observes what's happening without judging anything at all – it's just simple observation. This pure mind is – the Third Noble Truth. That's the cessation of the suffering. Now you are in harmony with your perspective, because you are not clouded by the craving. So, you bring that mind back to your object of meditation – back to the feeling of being happy, making a wish for your own happiness.

Now it's kind of funny, there was somebody that wrote to me today in our Yahoo group, and they said: "You know this loving kindness meditation is really great." Now she'd been practicing Tibetan Buddhism for about twenty years, and they are very much afraid of being attached to anything. They want their mind just to be peaceful and calm, that's all that they want. Now when you are practicing loving kindness meditation, it makes very pleasant feelings arise. And she wrote and she said: "You know, I get these feelings coming up and they are so nice, and my mind is so peaceful, and my mind is so alert. And then I remember I shouldn't be attached and I push that away."

And I wrote back and said: "Why in the world would you do that? It's OK to have pleasant feelings." There are these different stages of meditation – they are different levels of depth that you get into and the Buddha described them, he called them Jhānas. Now, these different stages of the meditation are called "a pleasant abiding here and now." That means there is not any pain arising in your mind, there is this pleasant feeling that's there and it's fine for it to be there – not all feeling is bad. But the way that the Tibetans are teaching, they tell you: "You don't want those feelings, you don't want any feelings, you want to be void of all of that." But, in fact, pleasant feeling is just pleasant feeling and it's wholesome as long as you are not trying to control it.

Now, when I'm showing you how to do the meditation, I tell you that this is a smiling meditation. And I'm not just talking about sitting and doing the practice, I'm talking about smiling all the time. Why? Because that helps your mind to be uplifted. When you have this uplifted mind, it's real easy to see when your mind starts to get pulled down into the gutter. And it's real easy to see when anger, depression, anxiety, fear, whatever the catch of the day is – I love that statement by the way – whatever the catch of the day is that's dictating how much you suffered that day. When that arises and your mind is uplifted, you'll be able to see it real easy.

Now, I'll give you an example. When one time, when I was a layman, I decided I was going to help a friend build his house. I didn't want any money to do it, I was just doing it out of the goodness of my heart. We were having fun. And all of a sudden he started thinking he was my boss. And I kind of took exception to that, I didn't like that idea very much at all. And I took it for a little while and then one day he really got to me. So, I'm walking away at the end of the day and I'm driving my heels into the ground, "that no good son of a gun..." and then a very peculiar thing happened. My mind said: "He thinks he is my boss", and I started to laugh. And as soon as I laughed, I went from "I'm angry and I don't like it" to "Oh, it's only this anger!" That was a change of perspective, that was a change of "I am..." whatever you put after that, to "It's only..." "I'm depressed, I'm anxious, I'm stressed, I'm afraid" – "Oh, it's only fear- phsst. It's nothing!"

When you are identifying with whatever arises in your mind in the present moment and you're taking it personally, that means that all the problems that you have in life are these huge mountains to overcome. When you change your perspective, then you start to see: "Oh, it's only this, what's the big deal?" It goes from this thing that's such a big problem, to this little bump in the road. Harmonious Perspective. When you practice smiling and laughing into things and having fun, it takes your perspective out of the personal and makes it impersonal. It takes your mind out of being pulled into heavy mental states, to being in the state of balance. That's the first part of the 8-Fold Path. As you start to take these emotional states and see them

for what they truly are, the balance that happens in your mind gets stronger and stronger and this leads to a very, very deep kind of contentment and happiness.

Now another thing that happened today – I was driving a truck, and I was going around the corner, and this guy thought that my side of the road should be his side of the road. And I kept on pulling over, a little bit further, and a little bit further, and a little bit further, and all of a sudden I'm in the grass and I'm going ..., doing all kinds of gyrations. And the whole time my mind was going: "Oh, got to move a little bit further, a little bit more, it's ok, no problem." I didn't get emotional, I didn't become afraid, my heart didn't even speed up, it was just: "Oh, this is what we are doing now, and now I'm in this ditch, and now I'm going out of this ditch, and now I have to put it in 4 wheel drive to get out and get back on the road." But there was no mental upset because of that. Can you do that?

S: ~

BV: (Laughs) Yeah, but that comes from a lot of practice of seeing things impersonally, not taking them and tightening my mind around them and trying to control them and trying to make them the way I want it to be. I was very much in the present moment and this is what had to happen so that I wouldn't hurt anybody else or hurt myself. I was careful enough, I wasn't going very fast and I missed an accident, because I didn't become upset, I didn't become irrational. That can quite often happen when a stressful situation arises. And when there's a stressful situation that arises and your mind gets irrational, that's when accidents happen. But, as your mind stays in balance, then you see what needs to be done and then you do it without worrying, without being anxious, without being mad, just: "Oh, Ok." We have this Harmonious Perspective of what's happening in the present moment. Piece of cake, right? Takes practice.

What's the easiest way to have a Harmonious Perspective? To laugh at how crazy your mind is for being serious. Sounds dumb! Sounds way too easy. Sounds like it doesn't work?! It does, I promise you it

does. Every time you see your mind getting serious, time to have a giggle with yourself. The more you laugh, the more you have a sense of fun, the more mental balance you have. And with that mental balance means that you see the situation without having colored glasses on. It's not colored by fear or anxiety or whatever... sadness. You're seeing things the way they truly are. And when craving arises, it always manifests as tension and tightness. Right after the craving, clinging arises.

Now, clinging is all of your thoughts, all of your opinions, all of your concepts, all of your views, all of your ideas, all of your stories about why you like or dislike that feeling when it comes up. Now what do the instructions in the meditation say? As soon as you notice that you are thinking about something, let go of that thought, and relax. What did you just do? You let go of the clinging, you let go of the craving – now you have the cessation of suffering right then and right there. It's all interconnected. The more you can develop a sense of fun and a sense of laughing at how crazy your mind is for wanting to take things seriously, the more you can laugh with that, the more mental balance you have. It really works that way. Promise.

OK, the next part of the 8-Fold Path is called "Sammā Sankappa". "Sankappa" means – it's always translated as Right Thought, but I translate it as Harmonious Imaging. Now, a harmonious image is when you're practicing loving kindness, and I tell you to make a wish and feel that wish – I'm telling you to image in a harmonious way. I'm telling you – wish peace and calm for somebody else, feel that peace and calm, bring that image up and put that image in your heart. That's the way that you practice your wisdom. It's with your Harmonious Perspective and your Harmonious Imaging. Now we bring images up in our mind all the time and quite often they are not such good images. You imagine that somebody is a certain way, you bring that image up and the dissatisfaction with it, the dislike, the clinging, concepts, the stories... So, bringing a harmonious image up means bringing a sense of fun into your practice, that image of fun, that image of laughing, that image of having a light mind, not being involved in taking what arises personally.

Now, sometimes, there's going to be pain. Welcome to the real world. I mean, somebody in your family dies – that's not a happy situation. That's going to be a painful situation. Now, what do you do with that? Do you start holding onto the image of how you don't like the situation and how you wish it wasn't like that and how you can change that? Are you taking all of those thoughts and feelings personally and identifying with them and trying to control your feelings with your thoughts? It's a natural thing, yeah, you are going to be doing that for a little while. As you learn to practice the meditation, you learn to allow the painful feeling to be there, without trying to control it with your thoughts: "Yeah, somebody died, yeah, it's painful, OK".

As you bring up an image of that person that just died in your mind that is a memory of something that they did that made you feel happy...Now I'll give you an example of something that just happened to me not too long ago, is one of my favourite people in the whole world died. He was a monk in Malaysia; he was an incredibly famous monk. He and I had been friends for a few years, he invited me to come to his monastery and live with him for a while, and every morning around 9 o'clock I would go down to his office and we would laugh for about a half an hour. About the dumbest stuff. It didn't matter what we were laughing at if we were just laughing. A great way to start the day. Really good. He was old, he was 87, he had cancer, and he died. And my mind could not be sad because of that, because every time I have that image of him in my mind of he and I having fun, he and I laughing with each other. And I truly loved him, he was a great man and I miss him and that's sad, but I'm not sad because he's gone, I'm sad because we can't laugh together anymore. So, I have to find somebody new (laughs).

You see how you hold the image of something – it can be a sad image, or it can be a happy image. It's up to you. You're the one that's in control. You're the one that's able to observe and let go of things that pull your mind down. You can do that. One of the things that the Buddha talked about quite often was that we all need to realize that death can take us away at any time. And that's OK. It can take anybody away at any time. I mean... OK. And if it's not OK, then

there are some major problems. As you let go of your attachments, as you let go of your identification with thoughts and feelings and bring up wholesome images into your mind, then when someone dies, there is acceptance of that, so that helps keep your mind in balance.

The next part of the 8-Fold Path is called Right Speech, and I don't like that, so I call that Harmonious Communication. Now, this Harmonious Communication is the communication you have with other people, but it's also the communication that you have with yourself. How many times you tell yourself you're stupid, how many times you get mad at yourself for not being able to do the things that you want to be able to do, and criticize yourself? Is that being in harmony? Is that being in balance? We have to learn to communicate with ourselves about our good qualities and like ourselves for having those qualities. It's way, way too much of a bad habit of criticizing ourselves. What's the fastest way to get over that one? Well, the more you laugh at how dumb your mind can be for trying to cause you pain, the faster you overcome that sort of thing. You have to forgive yourself for not being perfect, because everybody has their own ideas and their own "I should be like this." Everybody has one of those. The "shoulds" you got to get out of, you got to get away from the "shoulds".

Well, you have to forgive yourself for not understanding, you are not going to understand every situation that you get into, and that's OK. You can't criticise yourself because you don't understand, although your mind likes to do that, it likes to try to criticise that all the time. The more you communicate with yourself about being uplifted, about being happy, about how you truly appreciate other people and communicate that to them, and appreciate yourself. You're one of the good guys. You know?!

One of the neatest ways to communicate is to smile. Smile with yourself, smile with other people. Make it your task that who ever you see, you need to make them smile. You need to make them have an uplifted mind. You have to help them. One of the aspects of Buddhism is practising your generosity. O-o, everybody reaches for

their wallet...Generosity is giving – you give of your kind speech, you give of your kind actions, you give of your kind thoughts. And the more you give those away, the more you change the habit of criticising yourself and not liking situations, and the more you look at the positive aspects and give those observations away, the more happiness you will experience.

The next part of the 8-Fold Path – they call it Right Action, and again I don't like that, so I call that Harmonious Movement. Now, this is kind of tricky, what is Harmonious Movement? It is staying in harmony with the movement of mind's attention. It means not taking these jerks that your mind will go through, but being in harmony with that. Letting things be. Not coming down on yourself because there is some craving and clinging and all of this other stuff. Yeah, that's going to happen, but as soon as you let it be and you let go of that craving and you let go of that clinging, now that harmonious movement is coming back to a wholesome thing – coming back to a smile and giving your smile away.

The next part of the 8-Fold Path is called Right Livelihood, and I've always...I've loved this one, because the definitions in the text are: you don't sell any poisons, you don't sell any weapons and you don't take any slaves. That's the definition that they are talking about. Well, Right Livelihood – let's call it Harmonious Lifestyle. What are the things that you cultivate in your daily activity? Are you cultivating a life that's in harmony, that's uplifted, that is helpful to yourself and everybody else around you, or not? Are you smiling, are you helping other people have uplifted minds and smiling minds? If you are, that's Harmonious Lifestyle. It's the practice of your daily activity and keeping your mind uplifted, as much as you possibly can. That leads to true contentment in your life. You won't have the depressions, you won't have the sadnesses, you won't have this other stuff overwhelm you, because part of your Harmonious Lifestyle is giving, it's not taking.

Now, in this society right now, there's an awful lot of selfishness. There's an awful lot of "me, me, me, I want, this is for me, I have to have this all by myself". With Buddhism, it's the practice of giving –

giving of your mind, giving of your actions, giving of your speech, helping other people to be uplifted. As you do that, your mind, any... Let's put it this way: anything that you give comes back to you and it comes back multiplied. So the more you can practice giving an uplifted mind, the more you can practice smiling and helping other people to have an uplifted mind, the more other people will do that for you.

I mean, when I read emails, and I get quite a few emails in a day, I start smiling, because of the things that they are telling me that they are noticing with their practice of meditation. And I keep writing back to them saying: "Boy, you really make me happy", because they do. It's amazing. The more they practice being happy, the happier it makes me. Isn't that something? You want to affect the world around you? Be happy. "Oh, but we have all of these problems, this government is falling apart. Oh, there is this war that's happening" and you can worry about that all you want. Does that lead to your happiness and the happiness of the people around you, or not? At the Huna convention I started talking about the television, and there was a man – he's been around since the early 70's and he took the name Swami Beyond Ananda. Now, if you don't know what the word Ānanda means – "Ānanda" means joy, so he's talking about being beyond joy. And he started talking about the television and he said: "What you want to get is a good sized rock, and throw it through the television and then tell a vision".

S: (laugh)

BV: One of the things that's happening with the television right now, is they've developed it in such a way that it is physically addictive and it's mind-numbing. And it really is. They found out through tests that it kind of moves your attention from the left side over to the right side, and you just start numbing out. There's people that...there are certain states... I've had quite a lot to do with prisons and that sort of things, going to visit folks...And this one prison in particular in Florida, they were running out of money, but they went out and bought televisions. And they put them in all of the rec areas where the prisoners could go, because it numbs their mind out – makes

them manageable. It doesn't even matter what's being played. So, the more you can turn that off, the better off you are. We happen to be blessed by not having good TV reception, and we don't even have good radio reception.

And what does that do? We have a lot more time to be creative. So, that's something to consider. That's probably the thing that I object to most about the television, is that it's taking the creativity away from people and making them addicted. There's some people that both a restaurant in this little town of Lesterville, and we used to love to go in there, because there's all these old farmers that come in and they'd sit around and chit-chat and you could learn all kinds of neat stuff. And these people that bought this restaurant, the first thing they did was get a television and put it on, turn it on, and have it in the corner. And everybody stopped talking to each other. That's really not a good situation. But, your Harmonious Lifestyle means being creative and happy, and giving that creativity and happiness away.

Now, the next part of the 8-Fold Path – they call it Right Effort, which sounds a little bit hard and harsh. I call it Harmonious Practice. Now, there's four parts to this. You notice when your mind is being pulled down and becomes unwholesome. You let go of the unwholesome and relax, and smile. You bring up something that's wholesome and you stay with that. Sounds pretty easy, doesn't it? (laughs)

On our Yahoo group, we've developed a way of remembering how to practice this. We call the 6 R's. You Recognize when your mind has become distracted. You Release – let go that distraction. You Relax – let go of the tension caused by mind's movement. You Re-smile. You Return to your object of meditation, and you Repeat that process of staying with your object of meditation. So that's your 6 R's. I stress smiling a lot. I want to see everybody smile all the time, as much as you can remember. And then when you see you are not smiling, you cannot criticize yourself for it! No fair. You see yourself not smiling, just start smiling again! No biggie. The more you smile, the more uplifted your mind becomes. The more uplifted your mind becomes,

the more alert your awareness is – the more in the present moment you are, without having colored lenses to look through of emotions.

The next part of the 8 fold path is called...they call it the Right Mindfulness, but I don't know of too many people that really understand what the word mindfulness means, so I call this Harmonious Observation. Now, this observation is the part of the mind that sees what's happening – that's the recognizing. You are able to see what your mind is doing in the present moment, you are able to see it very clearly. And then you start the process of the 6 R's – you've already recognized, now you release, and relax, and then re-smile, return, repeat. But the recognizing is a very important aspect. And it's also being able to recognize when craving arises – recognizing when that tension and tightness first starts to come up. And as you are able to do that – recognize, and then release and relax – you are learning how to practice the cessation of suffering.

Now the last part of the 8-Fold Path is always called Right Concentration. "Concentration" is a dirty word, because it's not understood at all. When somebody is concentrating, the idea is that their mind is so focused on this one point that they don't know what else is happening around them. Have you been reading and really been absorbed in what you are reading, and somebody comes up and says something to you and you didn't even hear them? That's that kind of concentration. The kind of mind that we are developing with this meditation is a mind that's collected, a mind that's pulled together, it's unified, it's very alert, but it's also aware of other things around it. It's not so focused on JUST one thing that nothing else will disturb it. So, we call this Harmonious Collectedness.

Now, these eight different factors, they arise every time you smile. You're practicing the entire 8-Fold Path when you smile - when you laugh; you have the sense of balance in your mind and this is very necessary for a happy life. And this is the way that leads to the cessation of suffering. This directly leads to the way to the cessation of suffering. That is letting go of all the craving, all of the tension and tightness that arises in mind, and truly understanding how the process of mind works.

Now, an example: in order to see anything, you have to have eyes that are in good working order – makes sense. There has to be color and form. Good working eye hits colour and form, eye-consciousness arises. The meeting of these three things, the eye, color and form, and the consciousness is called contact. With contact as condition, feeling arises. Feeling is pleasant feeling, painful feeling, neither painful nor pleasant. Now, this arises at each one of the six sense-doors – eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, mind. A feeling arises – it's a pleasant feeling, painful feeling, neither painful nor pleasant. With feeling as condition, craving arises.

Craving is that "I like it, I don't like it" mind. Craving is that tension and tightness. This is the way you can recognize that craving. And this is the start of the identification with those thoughts and feelings when they arise: "I like it. I don't like it. I want it. I don't want it." And then right on its heels comes all of the thoughts, all of the concepts, all of the views, all of the opinions, all of the stories, all of the ideas, that will take you further, and further, and further, and further away from the present moment, and you'll get lost for long periods of time. You don't even know you have a body, because you are so caught up in your thoughts.

Now, let's see how that affects us. I come up to you early in the morning, you are having a great morning, and I read the riot act to you. I tell you: "You are no good, and you made so many mistakes, and I really don't like the way you do this and you should learn to change..." and all of this kind of things. What happens in your mind – "I don't like this." And you start to fight back. Now, you are taking my anger, making it YOUR anger, and then you are throwing your anger back at me.

Now we are at war! We are fighting, we are talking at the same time, we are not liking the situation at all. Now, I go away, what's happening in your mind? "Well that no good so and so, they said this and I said that, and oh, I should have said this. And I'm right and he's wrong." And then it happens over again, just like it's on a tape deck. Sounds familiar? (laughs) And the next person you see – "Did

you see what just happened, he came up and chewed me out, I didn't deserve that!" So, now you're giving your anger to somebody else.

You have a choice – you can either take my anger or not. You can either make it your own or not. But, if you take that anger and make it your own, and you start thinking about what a no good so and so, and how you didn't like that situation, and you get into the car, are you driving? Isn't that scary?! That's when accidents happen. See how the clinging really causes a lot of problems, the thinking? And the thinking is not necessarily a bad thing in itself, it's when you become so absorbed in making it personally your thoughts, your feelings, your likes, your dislikes. That's when we get a thousand miles away and we don't know what we are doing in the present moment, and that's incredibly dangerous.

So, there is a practical aspect to this, and the fastest way to overcome this kind of emotional upset is by laughing at how crazy your mind is. And it's not laughing at your mind, it's laughing with your mind for being so caught up! As you laugh, all of a sudden that perspective that's so heavy, that's been pulling your mind down into the mud, as you laugh, all of a sudden you see: "Oh, it's only this, it's nothing, it's just this anger - phsst." It takes that change in perspective.

When you're doing this, you are following the entire 8-Fold Path. When you forget – you are not. And that leads to suffering. So, it's your choice, what are you going to do? I'd like to get a hold of the guy that caught each one of us as we were growing up... Because when we were little kids, we were happy little kids, and we giggled and laughed, and we were very much in the present moment. And then, all of a sudden somebody came along and said: "Now you got to be serious." I'd like to catch a hold of that guy and beat him.

S: ~

BV: (laughs) We have this idea that when we are grown-ups, we cannot or not supposed to... "We are supposed to be serious, life is

serious, we got to do all of this in a serious way." Well, I'm here to tell you that that's not true. And it's OK to laugh, and it's OK to have fun, and it's OK to make other people see that that's OK. The more we practice, the easier it gets – just like anything.

The Buddha said: "What you think and ponder on, that is the inclination of your mind." You spend time disliking, you spend time being critical, being hard, what's your mind going to tend towards? It's going to tend towards being critical and hard. You spend time being happy, you spend time giving away that happiness as much as you can, then, what's your mind going to incline towards? Being happy, having this come up more often. That's the balance of mind that the Buddha was talking about. That's the balance of mind that this meditation leads to.

But it takes practice to sit every day. You don't have to sit long. Half an hour. Everybody has a half an hour, I don't care whether you say "I'm too busy". I recommend very strongly that when you do your meditation, you do it in the morning. Right after you get up, wash your face, do your morning things, get wide awake, and then sit for half an hour. Great way to start the day. Make sure you're smiling while you do it.

You know, I have this one student, and he's in Australia, and he was writing to me and he was really having a tough time with his meditation, ROUGH time. So, I told him to change his meditation and practice the loving kindness meditation. Oh, he had a really rough time. So finally, I kind of got fed up with him and I said "OK, I don't want you to sit and meditate at all. What I want you to do is: I want you to smile as often as you can remember - with your daily activities, when you are walking one place to another, I want you to smile. And any time you see your mind getting serious about anything, you have to laugh. Can't take anything seriously. I want you to do this for one week." Now, this is the guy that had been practicing every day for six years. And he had some resistance to this.

But finally he said: "OK, will try it." I didn't hear from him for a week. And he writes back and he said: "You know, I want to give you some of the interesting things that happened this week. Even though I didn't feel like it was a genuine smile, I found out that when I smiled, my mind got lighter anyway, even if it wasn't genuine. And after a while, it started to get genuine! And I used to walk around in a funk being depressed all the time, and I had my head down, and I just walked wherever I was going to, thinking this and that, depressed thoughts. And I started noticing that I started standing a little bit straighter, and I was smiling, and I'd smile to people as I saw them – and they smiled back. That NEVER happens to me! And I'd be waiting in line and I'd be smiling, and somebody would come up and they would start talking to me. THAT never happened to me! And I started noticing how my mind was uplifted all the time. And, this is great practice. It's fun!" And that was a shock to him, because he'd been told that this is serious stuff and you have to do it seriously.

Well, I say: "Yeah, it's serious stuff, and you have to do it seriously, so be seriously happy!"

S: (Laugh)

BV: The more you practice, the better you get. The better you get, the more uplifted your mind becomes. The more uplifted your mind becomes, the more alert your awareness is, of how your mind will grab onto an idea and start pulling you down.. And you can let go of that and have fun with it, instead of being serious with it. That's what the meditation is all about. That leads to true balance of mind, so that when you get in a stressful situation, like happened to me when I was driving today, my heart didn't even beat faster.

Now, there was another situation that happened a few years ago. I was staying at a monastery and every week we had a group meeting. Now, the head monk left, and this other monk, that was the second in seniority, took over. And he was...He was an odd duck. He had some real interesting observations about things, and he didn't like the way I was doing things and all he wanted to do was cause me problems. Now, before I went in, we just got a brand new blood

pressure machine, and I took my blood pressure, and it was 80 over 120? Or the other way around? 120 over 80, that's the way it was. Ok? Now, he went in and he started really trying to get to me, but I had an answer for everything that he said, and it was very reasonable what I was taking about, what I was doing. I was taking linseed oil and I was putting it on wood, and I wanted it to dry out of the sun so it would soak in. And he kept on pulling it out into the sun. And I'd put it back, and he decided that he was going to try to prove to me that that was a bad thing and he said: "This is cancer-causing odors" from linseed oil. And I said: "Have you ever smelled flaxseed?" – "You take flaxseed?" – "It's linseed oil, it's just refined."

So, every time he tried to say something like that, I came up with an answer that showed him that he was making a mistake. And we got done with that meeting thankfully after a while, and somebody came up and they said: "I really hate it when he is in charge, and I really don't like the way he does this stuff..." And I said: "Well, this will be interesting...", so I went to the new machine and I put it on, and my blood pressure was – 120 over 80.

And this is after an hour of somebody coming at me with their dislike and their dissatisfaction, but I didn't take theirs and make it mine, I didn't get caught up in it at all. And everybody that was around at that time, there was probably 12 or 15 of us, they all saw that my blood pressure hadn't changed after that kind of quote, pressure was put on me. They thought that that was really something special. I don't know whether it is or not, but I know that my mind was happy when I went in, I know it was happy when I went out, and my blood pressure said that, so, it all seemed to work out pretty well. So, does anybody have any questions? I've been talking for a real long time.

S: (silence)

BV: Great teacher, huh?

S: (Laugh)

BV: (Laughs) No questions? Umh. So, the last thing I do whenever I give a talk is share merit, so I'm going to do that right now.

*May suffering ones, be suffering free*

*And the fear struck, fearless be*

*May the grieving shed all grief*

*And may all beings find relief.*

*May all beings share this merit that we have thus acquired*

*For the acquisition of all kinds of happiness.*

*May beings inhabiting space and earth*

*Devas and nagas of mighty power*

*Share this merit of ours.*

*May they long protect the Buddha's dispensation.*

*Sadhu . . . Sadhu . . . Sadhu . . .*

Transcribed by Pete Argli,  24-Nov-06

