

Buddhism and Chocolate Cake: How to be Happy

Ven. Robina Courtin, Buddhist Nun

Well, you could say one way of approaching Buddhism is it's a method for getting happy. Another way of approaching it is a method of getting wisdom. So, maybe you think you want wisdom; I'm not so sure, you know. Happy, definitely, we all want that one, so let's take that approach, but actually it's related completely to the track of wisdom and I'll explain. This is how the Buddhist's deal, you know.

But before we talk, start anything, it's really important to remind any of us, any--whether you've never heard a Buddhist word in your life or whether you've been hearing it for 50 years – it's to remember certain things, you know. Because, okay, I'm religious, look, it looks like I'm a nun; that sounds like religion, right? And we tend to think Buddhism-religion. So, but what's interesting, Buddha's not a creator and Buddha was not at first a creator. So you can deduce from this maybe, that therefore it's not religion, so it gets to be a bit confusing to people. You ask any Tibetan, “Are you religious?” They'll say, “Of course I am.” And so maybe we've got to redefine, for this conversation, what it means, religious or spiritual, you know.

I think the default definition is you believe in a creator. Well there's no concept like that in Buddhism, so I suppose, therefore, the question should be, well, if he's not a creator, but he's got a bunch of ideas that sound like religion, where did these ideas come from? Which, I think is a really – it's a crucial point to get, you know. Well, I think part of the problem with the way we think of religion in the world is we tend to think everybody is allowed to believe in what you like. I'm allowed to believe in what I like. I might have had a vision yesterday, I have a vision somebody appears to me under a tree, so I write a book about it, and that's my religion and no one's supposed to question it. Well you can question it but you're not supposed to prove it. And this is an interesting point because Buddha, not being a creator, is a person who, more like Einstein actually, is more like a scientist, which is surprising. He's a person who from his own experience has found the world to be the way he presents it. So what's labeled Buddhism, and you know, you need to check on what's Buddhism because lots of people say Buddhism but they're just talking out there--you know, they're not talking sense. You know what it needs to be, you need to really check what's coming out of the mass assembly or the book that you read, it's actually valid Buddhism and that's not an easy thing in the world.

Which is like you would do with anybody. You go to a decent travel agent; you're going to check that they're valid. You listen--you read a cold science, you've got to check your sources. That very much is the approach in Buddhism. So Buddha then is not being a creator, he's--there's only two options, actually. He's either a person who had a dream or vision and wrote a book about it, and says, “Here is my religion and you believe it or not,” or, which is the surprising part, he's more like a scientist. So if I'm Einstein up here telling you about relativity, you know, it's not something I had a dream about. You know if someone had appeared in a vision yesterday, and you certainly know I'm not asking you to believe a single word I'm telling you and that's very much the approach in Buddhism. Buddha is a person who from his own direct experience found the world – finds the world to be the way that is calling, if it's presented as Buddhism. And so, then for Buddhist approach, if someone being a Buddhist, the way I prefer to say it. I don't use the word belief for myself actually. Buddhists do, but I prefer, I prefer to say – it sounds a bit wordy – but I'm taking Buddhism as my working hypothesis. So the implication here, and this is the point, is that when you work with something as your hypothesis, you're learning to experience it and verify it – or not, as the case may be. And that's the approach here.

So as the Dali Lama points out regularly to us, modern contemporary people, if through following the instructions of the Buddha, you come to discover that what he said would occur doesn't, the things don't appear to be the way he says they would, having done this and that, if you actually discover that, then he is wrong and you must reject the Buddha. So probably not, you say, the Buddhists do it on faith like most people in religion, like well, frankly, like most scientists. I mean, who here has proven that E equals MC squared, I don't think so, who has definitely proven relativity will go? Oh well, that's science, but it's not science to you until you've proven it. And this is a fact, but we tend to sort of say we're being scientific, Although we're just taking it all on belief, taking it on the faith. So that's the key point probably before I start telling you what a Buddhist is, how to get happy, how to get wise, is this point. You know, you listen to it with your intelligent hat on, you listen to it if you wish, with the intention to take the lit--to take it on board as the hypothesis and that's your call. Buddha is not the boss, he's not asking us to believe in it, he's not asking us to take it 100% and swallow it whole, reject it or except it. It's a question of taking what you want from it and you can be a 1% Buddhist and if there's something practical there that you can use in your life, then you go for it, you know. Because the--getting to--the other point is, whatever I'm saying in this room, if some of it, if any one of the concepts can't eventually be put into practice, then it's a complete waste of time. So, it has to be practical. It's as if this were a cooking class, if there's something in this room you don't--that doesn't help you make a slightly better cook, it's a complete waste of time, right? So they're the things to have in your mind.

Okay, so what is it that Buddhist says is happiness and how do you get it? Well, it's--okay, if I was a Catholic, all right, I was born as a Catholic and if I was asked is happiness possible? I would have said yes, and then I would have said that it would have been what I get when I go to heaven with God and I'm not complaining about that. That's one answer. If you're a materialist, which is probably most of us, even if we are Catholic or Buddhists, that's definitely our philosophy, you know. Is happiness--meaning a stable, stable happiness – happiness that doesn't go up and down, happiness that doesn't stop and become suffering again – is such a thing possible? We will laugh and say don't be ridiculous, you know, which seems to be the experience. If we look at the world I don't think we can see anybody who's stably happy, who's got everything the way they want and is stably, stably happy, and that never gets unhappy. So then we would tend to assume that seems to be the way the world is.

Okay, so therefore, let's say then – from the materialist point of view –what happiness would be, I think the simplified to find happiness for us in the ordinary world; is it's what you get when you get what you want. Isn't it? And suffering, by definition; is when you get what you don't want. Or don't get what you do want. So whether that means the red light, your husband leaving you for a younger version, you know. A war zone – really deadly serious suffering or just merely the mild things like the red light, you know. We would tend to define happiness in terms of stuff out there, and if it's what I want, we call it happiness and if it's not what I want, it's called suffering.

Now the Buddha would call that Sensoric philosophy. He say's we're all Sensoria's, he says we all live in sensoria, which is not some kind of sexy place that you've got to give up to go to boring old Nirvana, because these are words that are very familiar now in the world. Being "in sensoria" as far as Buddha's concerned is being caught up in a series of misconceptions in the mind, as having what he would suggest is mistaken philosophy about the way the world is. Because Buddha, like Jesus, like, you know, the Muslim's, like a Communist, has a view of the world. So, basically Buddhism is a view, is a way of seeing the world and seeing yourself, what is happiness, what are its causes, what is suffering, how do you get rid of it, blah, blah, blah. How do you get wisdom, and so on and so forth. Well, the key point for the Buddhists is the mind. It's consciousness, the mind. This is absolutely central to understanding Buddhism in any

way possible, it comes down to the mind. This in Buddhism is absolutely central, is the main player. It's even the way say in Buddhism, "everything comes from the mind," and it's not meant to be some cute cliché, you know. So therefore, for the Buddha, happiness – okay, I'll tell you in a second what it is, for him, but I'll supply something first. So to the Buddha, the mind is the point. So if that's true, we had better understand clearly what he means by the mind and you're going to hear is radically different from the way we think of the mind. So you--same word, so you know, if we're a materialist we assume the mind is here and it's called the brain. And, you know, having a decent working brain, a decent working nervous system you've got a reasonable mind. Well the Buddha, he uses the word "mind," but it's used synonymously with the word "consciousness." Mind, consciousness, these mean the same. And for him, the next point is it is not physical, big surprise, you know. Maybe you can say this is one thing he does share with our religions who do assert something that isn't physical; they would call it a spirit or a soul. No concept like that in Buddhism, he uses the word mind across the board, mind or consciousness.

But the third point about the mind and this is where you could say he's different, radically different, is in terms of its capacity for cognition, which is the job of the mind; to cognize. The Buddhist's got this view. The Buddhist view of the mind isn't, first of all, is not the brain. Therefore it's not nearly the conceptual process which is what we think our mind is. From the time we wake up in the morning and the time we go to sleep, we say that our mind is functioning, you know. And, of course during dreams, but that's kind of weird, we don't quite understand that in our models of the mind in the materialist world. But the mind for the Buddha is not physical, but it clearly exists in dependence upon a decent working brain. So there's no trouble with a brain, you know. You ask a Tibetan meditator, where's your brain, he probably wouldn't know. He doesn't study the brain, but he's definitely studying the mind, in depth, deeply, learning to transform this mind of ours because that's the job of being a Buddhist. You turn – you're learning to transform you mind, and I'll explain. Okay, so your mind is not physical, it's not your brain, and then again remember, you take this as your hypothesis, you don't have to swallow it whole. And you – obviously it's not evident to us, so it takes time to learn that, to actually learn to verify this and experience it directly.

So your mind is not your brain, but the other part is a bit shocking, both to a Christian and a Muslim, or to a materialist, is that it doesn't--it's not given to you by anybody else. It's your parents who very kindly offer you a body, they worked very hard to get that egg and sperm together, but they do not give you a mind as far as the Buddha's concerned. They give you the body, they give you the genes. And you can track your DNA, you can track all your chemicals, you can do amazing, you know, learn all about this body, not a problem. Buddhism has a very detailed description of the way the body functions as well, but it's a bit more like the way Galileo talked in the mediaeval days and bit similar to the Chinese model, you know. The different whole kettle of fish, there's a whole discussion, very different way of describing physical energy. They talk in terms of the four elements and things like this. So, we have a body, we have a brain, no problem. It needs to function well for your mind to function well because they exist interdependently. But the mind isn't the body, it doesn't come from your parents and it doesn't come from a creator. Buddha doesn't assert a creator, remember, so there's no concept like that in Buddhism.

Well, I suppose then the immediate question would have to be well, if you don't come from your parents, you don't come from creator, where do I come from? Or we would say where do I begin, you know? And this is where you're going to take your hypothesis, if Buddha would say that everything exists according to the law of cause and effect. We can see this and we're geniuses at knowing this in our material scientific world, but he deals with it more into the way the mind functions, how people work, and he calls it "karma," if we talk about cause and effect.

But basically Buddha's view of the mind, it's not physical, doesn't come from Mommy, Daddy, doesn't come from a creator, isn't merely a concept, but it's a word that's used to refer to your thoughts, feelings, emotions, unconscious, subconscious, instinct, intuition, this entire spectrum of your inner experiences, you know, even those deeply hidden to us. This entire spectrum inner experience is, all of this, is known as your mind or your consciousness. So, the two, the three ways he's radically different, it doesn't come from the parents, or God, it isn't physical and it's got this much more, as I said before. The capability of the mind as far as Buddha's concerned – is that one can plumb the depths of this mind to much more subtle, more refined levels, than we would ever ascertain even existing in any of our materialist models at all.

So there was a conference – different conferences – by an organization called Mind and Life, something like that. Mindlife.org, [inaudible] goes to 30-plus years and has been running conferences between the best brains in their culture that mind, you know, neuroscientists, psychologists, and so on, and the Buddhists Dali Lama and the various Buddhist scholars and practitioners. And the topic is about the mind and the way it functions. There've been marvelous books published, they've all been published, these conferences. And during one of these conferences, in 2003, I think it was in Harvard, yeah, the topic was, What is the Capacity of the Human Mind to Concentrate? Well then the materialists clearly taking as their basis that the mind is the brain or whatever we call it, you know, and and the conceptuality, which is how we function from day-to-day, that's the capacity of this mind of ours and that's the way it functions. They came out with their findings, of I think I forgot now--2 seconds, 6 seconds, I can't remember. I'm sorry, something like this, the capacity of the human mind to concentrate however they define concentrate.

The Buddhists – you know, Dali Lama, his model – came up with their findings, basing, of course, their view on the Buddhist view of the mind, which is in far more--goes to much more subtle levels of cognition. And this where all this business called meditation comes in, these marvelous, sophisticate, psychological techniques, many of which have been around pre-Buddha. He took them from the Hindus, you know. These, they're called broadly single-pointed concentration meditation techniques and they're techniques that enable a person, and every human being has this capacity, utilizing these techniques to, as I said before, plumb the depths of this mind to go way beyond what we would label mind or cognition at the conceptual level, to far more subtle levels. Far more refined levels that Buddha is asserting do exist. But even and if you were to see a person in this state of "meditation," where their mind is functioning at a certain level, you'd go look as if they were dead. There'd be no physical activity. And so, their findings were, basing on this idea that you can concentrate "for months on end". Clearly not working with our models, so you've got to take your mind to a different whole approach to even consider how this could be possible.

So the Buddhist's view of the mind, doesn't come from parents, is not physical, and goes to far more subtle and more refined depths in its capacity for cognition. This is a central point in Buddhism and the other point is, if I don't have a Mommy and Daddy and if I don't come from some creator, where do I begin, which would be our question. Well, basically, Buddha's saying, if you take the view that your consciousness – think of it more like a river of mental moments, this river of mental moments of cognition, this moment of cognition coming from the previous capacity for cognition, which is the way they define mind in Buddhism. You'd keep tracking it back, wouldn't you, in an unbroken chain of mental moments even though you don't remember most of this life – we don't remember this morning. I'm sorry, if you analyze it carefully and you try to, you know, you try to report everything you've thought since you woke up – we would be miserable failures, every one of us. So forget about remembering a past life. Is this not the capacity of the conceptual level of mind, you know? So the Buddha would say you keep tracking

back to your consciousness, and this is just an intellectual exercise, you know, you track back to your body, two separate entities, remember, the body and the mind for the Buddha. You track this body back, we know very well. They are like reverse evolution, isn't it, you go back to this old, middle-aged, small, baby, and you keep tracking back and you get back to the first moment of conception where the egg and the sperm came together and then you can track yourself back through the parents, which is the way we do it in the world, in the materialist world, we also track the mind back in that direction. Isn't it? But the Buddha would say you track your own consciousness back, it's yours, is uniquely yours. And remember, like I said, it doesn't come from a creator, doesn't come from your parents. So you track this, you know, moments of cognition back, back, back and you're going to get back also to the first moment of conception.

So where do you--where's the previous moment, before that? Before your mother, before you were even a twinkle in your mother's eye you know. Before the egg and sperm came together, your consciousness for the Buddha is this unbroken chain of mental moments in this logical cause and effect. You have to keep tracking back and back and back, so basically the Buddha would say, your consciousness, my consciousness and just humans don't have mind. By the way, the word mind is used as a term in Tibetan language for what we would say "living being" or "sentient being". It actually translates as mind possessor, but that includes the giraffes and the dogs and the ants and the fish and all sorts of disembodied beings and Buddha would assert, like, spirits and all kinds. He asserts a whole spectrum of possibilities of types of minds existing in the universe, you know, in many universes. So each of these individual minds goes back and back and back and back in an unbroken chain of mental moments, so basically Buddha say's your mind's beginning-less. He also says matter is beginning-less. You don't need a creator, he says, it's an unnecessary embellishment, you know. Matter's what is on [inaudible] and there's intimate relationship between the elements, how they describe matter in this model and the mind. And they kind of--and the mind runs the show, the mind is the boss. And this is what, broadly speaking, how Buddha talks about karma, I mean, the principal. We might go into that, depending what happens. Okay, okay, mind what is deal on mind?

So then the other part where he's radically different, this now back to the question, if you ask a Buddhist, "Is happiness possible?" Buddha would say "Yes." So let's define happiness for the Buddha, now that you have the idea of what Buddha says the mind is, not an unbroken chain of mental moment, there is consciousness of his mind, doesn't come from level, doesn't come from Mommy, Daddy, doesn't come from creator, and is beginning-less, broadly speaking, this. And we have a key point, and this where the whole point of being a Buddhist comes in, is that the Buddhist saying, and this is presented in one of these many packages of Buddhism.

One of them is called The Four Noble Truths; in the third one, the reference point of these four, is this idea of suffering, freedom from suffering. The word "nirvana" means freedom from suffering, you know. So the Buddhist view of what suffering is, it implies what his view of happiness is. And so, Buddha says, yep, happiness is possible, but it doesn't – it's not necessarily something you'd have to wait to die to get when you go to heaven with God and is-- it certainly it could easily be achieved in this body because your mind isn't the body. The mind is the brain; I mean the mind isn't the brain. So the job of being a Buddhist is to work on your mind because the Buddha's deal is that this consciousness, in every single living being's consciousness, naturally possesses the potential to be perfect, in goodness and utterly free of badness. It's a simple way of putting it. Simple way of saying it, you know. Now my Catholic mother was shocked by this idea. That you can become perfect. Give me a break, you know. But this is the Buddha's deal; this is what he means by nirvana. He is saying in the third noble truth, every mind naturally, just naturally by its very existence possesses the potential to be absolutely free of "suffering and its causes," and to be absolutely full of happiness. So what's

that?

Okay, the Buddha's model of the mind actually is really simple, it's deceptively simple, it's kind of embarrass – it seems embarrassingly simple. We've got sensory consciousness and we have mental consciousness. Both, being consciousness are not physical, of course your eye consciousness depends upon an eyeball to function nicely, but the consciousness part is not your body. This is, you remember the talk – consciousness mind, not physical – yet your senses function through the medium, the consciousness. The senses functions the medium of the senses, but your mental consciousness is the point. This is where one of my teacher's says, and this is where the workshop is, this is what we learn, need to learn to become familiar with this, where you learn to be your own therapist. This is the job of being a Buddhist, you're working with your mind, you're changing your mind, you're dealing with your mind. All for this purpose of freeing it of suffering and its causes. So what are they?

Well the key point that Buddha's making is that suffering is the result of a category of the states of mind in this mental consciousness. There's only three categories. There's a category called positive states, which are beneficial, appropriate, harmonious, connected to others, and are naturally the source of one's own happiness and pleasure. Happiness and the source of why one makes others happy. And the negative states of mind, which in their nature are the cause of suffering and are the source of why I suffer and the cause of why I harm others. And then there's a third category called neutral and they're neither here nor there, I mean, there's off states.

There's lots of states of mind in the Buddhist model. For example there's one state of mind called mindfulness, which some people tend to think is what being a Buddhist means, you know, but is Lama Zopa, one of my teachers, says there's nothing holy about mindfulness. Thieves need mindfulness. It's not innately virtuous, so it's neither good nor bad; it's a capacity to be focused on what you're doing without losing the plot. So whether you're killing somebody or whether you make me a cake, or whether you're meditating, you need that. But in this nature it's not a good, nor bad, you know, but it can be used for good or bad. So it's an example of neutral state of mind. So there's positive ones in their nature, according to Buddhist view, in their nature or the negative ones and these are the key, and so we can, by implication, we can understand the positive.

The negative states of mind have two main characteristics. One is they're disturbing in their nature. Just so you know, and the names of these are not complicated, Buddhist psychology is, like I said, is deceptively simple, the names of negative states of mind, which are the cause of our suffering and the cause of why we harm others and the Buddha says are. I had to look this one up in the dictionary, one doesn't use it, but in Buddha psychology it's used – they are adventitious. I think it means you can get rid of them. I forget. I can look up my iPad, I've got my dictionary somewhere. Okay, so these states of mind, the negative ones, these are the things that we've got to start honing in on. So, and they are very simple words, they're called attachment, anger, pride, jealousy, low self-esteem, depression, anxiety – we all know these.

So that one of the terms for negative state of mind in Buddhist psychology was synonymous with negative state of mind, there are various synonyms. One of them is “disturbing emotion.” Well check the last time you were jealous, check the last time you were depressed, check the last time you were anxious, I think we'll all agree it was extremely disturbing in its nature. Whatever caused it, doesn't matter, just the very having of it. This weekend I think pretty much proof, you know, from our own experience and this ought to be enough for us to never want to have it again. Actually it ought to be enough for us to go methods to get rid of it. Because if you

eat certain kinds of food and you keep vomiting every time you eat it, I think you'd get the message that that's extremely disturbing and you'll try to avoid it in the future. So, it's kind of interesting. We know anger's painful, although we defend our right to have it. We know jealousy is painful and we defend our right to have that too. And depression and these, but my way of saying it is, we tend, we know it's disturbing. So what is it, perhaps, you know, what is it that's-- why is it we don't think, oh my god, I can't stand this any longer. Please give me methods--we do have it for some and we think it's take a pill for your depression, because we assume this is the point. I think I'm saying that in our materialist world we have as our assumption, which we don't question, that we're all born this way. It's just natural, you know. Mommy and Daddy's fault, don't want to blame God, but it's Mommy and Daddy's fault. We're all born this way, it's natural and it's physical and what can I do about it? This is how we, I think these are assumptions in our mind, which is why we are so overwhelmed by this stuff, and why we don't single-pointedly try to find a method to rid my mind of anger? To rid my mind of jealousy, to rid my mind of the stuff that clearly causes me so much pain. But I think the other crucial point, which completely blocks out from asking that question, what can I do to change it, is because -- and this is the biggest problem perhaps -- is we think, "I know I'm disturbed, I'm angry, but guess what, it's his fault." I'm jealous because you sleep with my girlfriend, I'm depressed because things didn't go my way, I'm not trying to be cruel to us now, but this, I think is the logic, isn't it, that we use, because that's the materialist view.

The default mode is suffering comes from out there and happiness comes from out there. And that's something we don't question, I would suggest, that's why we live our lives default. So the Buddha's view here; he has this radically different view. He is saying, like I said, the main source of suffering is in your own mind. The sound of it is, depressing. It's kind of like saying you mean, I'm the blame. Well yeah, but you're also the blame for your good stuff, because he says happiness comes from your mind as well. So yes, you do deserve the happiness and you deserve the suffering because this is the deal of karma, but even -- never mind that for now. The whole approaching in Buddhism, that even though--what's your name?

Audience Member: Marcus

Robina Courtin: Marcus. Even though Marcus punched me in the nose, you can all prove he punched me in the nose, the usual logic in our world would be of course to being as angry; Marcus punched her in the nose. So Buddha's deal is, it's cool Robina, I understand Marcus punched you in the nose and it isn't appropriate to punch you, that's called immorality, not cool. But Ravenna, that's his business and yours is your mind. You can work on that. So he's sort of saying you can work on the anger. Of course, get out of his way, the man's a maniac, but he's set. All the key points of the Buddha is the mind is yours, your anger is yours, your love is yours, your kindness is yours, the depression, your psychosis, your bliss, your lust, whatever it is that you label, is ;your mental experience. The Buddha's saying it is yours, Robina. It also happens to come from previous habits of having it. This is the whole, this one of the main experiential implications of this idea in Buddhism, that your mind doesn't come from someone else. That it simply comes from its own river of mental moments, it's yours, you come -- we come fully programed with this stuff, the Buddha would suggest. So, the implication of this is that your mind is yours. If it's mine, then I can change it. It's mine, therefore I can do something about it. So the key point then, which is quite radically, radically different, I have to say, and you'll hear my point, from our usual view of the mind, like I said, you know, we assume it's normal, meaning you'd be abnormal if you didn't have it. Anger is normal, depression is normal, jealousy is normal, and anyway we're all born with it, and it's not my fault, so of course it's normal, I mean it's horrifying to us to think that it isn't normal and it's not my fault so how am I supposed to get rid of it? It's a

wee bit awful, you know. The Buddha's view is, you come fully program with it, all the goodness, all the badness.

Luckily it's changeable. If you look into your mind and have enough courage to own the pain, the depression, and anxiety and jealousy and low self-esteem and anger causes you, yourself, then you'll have--and knowing it's your mind, understanding that it is they're all adventitious and this is one – there's not time for that here, to look at Buddhist logic for why they can be removed from the mind. But there's some wishful thinking, but is quite logical according to the Buddhist why the negative states are not at the core of our being, because the Buddha doesn't give them equal status. In our culture, as long as you have a bit of love, a bit of kindness, a bit of generosity, a bit of depression, you're an okay person, kind of a rounded person. And the assumption, again, is you'd be abnormal if you didn't have any anger, any depression, any anxiety, any neurosis, any jealousy. This is what I think we think in our culture.

But this is the Buddhist point – he is saying this mind, the neuroses are not advantageous. You can get – you can rid the mind of them. And why you would want to my dear? It is because they break your heart and cause you intense suffering, cause you to harm others and then they program your mind with more suffering, and then you bring it with you when the body – when the mind leaves the body. Because the mind is not only beginning-less, but is also endless. This is Buddha's view.

So this is sort of the basis of the Buddha practice. Taking this on broadly as I said, this is my working hypothesis. I'm happy to use this view of the Buddhists. I can't say I've learned, I have no way experienced it directly yet, but that's why I've got it. Using it as my hypothesis, I'm prepared to be patient, and with anything that you're taking on board as your hypothesis, you're taking it one step at a time. All I can tell you is for myself, personally, so far, so good. It's a reasonable model, it works and that means I'm getting a little bit less neurotic, a little bit less angry, a little bit less jealous, so good enough, that's proof of the pudding for me as far as I'm concerned. So that's fine, until I prove Buddha wrong, or continue to verify what he says. This is very much the approach, okay.

So therefore, basically, happiness for the Buddha, which he would say is a natural potential for all minds, all beings, and that's what he labels nirvana; a state of mind or some place, is what you get when you give up the neuroses, that's it. So we say happiness is what you get when you get what you want. He says, no, happiness is what you get when you rid your mind of these disturbing emotions.

So the other characteristic, this is really getting to the key now, real Buddha's intent psychologically of the way the mind works, which is quite interesting, and this is indicated by another synonym for negative state of mind, “disturbing emotion,” is the term “delusion.” So basically if you're accused of being delusional, you'd be very offended because someone's suggesting you're not in touch with reality. But this is precisely, and I mean precisely, the point that Buddha psychology's making. That the extent to which we are caught-up in attachment, anger, depression, jealousy, pride, low self-esteem, anxiety, you name it, ordinary stuff, mixed in with we're caught-up in this stuff, is the extent to which, one we are disturbed, miserable, suffering, unhappy and cause other's suffering. And this crucial point, the extent of which we are not in touch with reality. And this is where the wisdom business comes to have that level of wisdom, to not have [inaudible] of neurosis in the mind where there's no longer any suffering and where you would be in sync with that which exists, be in sync with reality. Which seems kind of abstract to us, and we think of knowledge as a bunch of stuff you've got to squeeze into your brain, you know. It's, but it's not like that, not the Buddha's saying.

And so, to understand this point is to really, like I said, to be on track in understanding really the way Buddha psychology works and it's really the key to understanding his view of how we suffer, you know.

And before I go into that, do you have any questions? Because I speak three times the pace of everybody else, I'm told. So you just had an hour and a half of information in 45 minutes, so if you'd like to ask me some questions about these basic points first, then I can go into more depth about what happiness is and how you get it. Yep.

Audience member[Inaudible]

Robina Courtin: I'm talking about the chap who lived two and a half thousand years ago. Mr. Buddha.

Audience member: Okay, is there more than one person [inaudible] Buddha?

Robina Courtin: Well in general, where they talk about the teachings of the Buddha, they mean the Mr. Buddha who lived two and a half thousand years ago. You know, the Indian person. But the Buddhist's view, on one level of nirvana is known as Buddhahood, which is that lots of beings can accomplish a level of awareness, a level of wisdom, and happiness is called becoming a Buddha. Yeah. [Pause]--so everyone can become a Buddha. Yeah--someone else? Anything? Yes.

Audience member: I'm wondering how you approach the idea of rebirth, reincarnation with a rational hat on.

Robina Courtin: Well you can't, it's a lot of rubbish. Your rational head says you've got a brain, reincarnation's a complete fantasy, total nonsense, you can't consider it in any way, not possible. And so you take onboard the possibility of a consciousness that is not physical, clearly isn't it? It's a lot of rubbish. We know the brain doesn't go anywhere in terms of the yucky stuff. Isn't it?

Audience member: So we can't match it with your experience of the world as the theory of gravity or karma, [inaudible]?

Robina Courtin: What do you mean?

Audience member: Well the thing that karma--

Robina Courtin: Can you hear his question you people?

Audience: No.

Robina Courtin: Can you hear his question?

Audience: No.

Robina Courtin: Well ask a question Marcus--louder

Marcus: My question is, can we umm--the idea of--

Robina Courtin: The idea of reincarnation view that Marcus's consciousness was in another body before and when it leaves this one, it'll take another body after. That idea--

Marcus: That idea, can we examine that law of nature as we do--

Robina Courtin: Okay--

Marcus: Gravity or--

Robina Courtin: That is a different question and now the answer before, when you asked it was "no." Now the answer is "yes", because you asked it in a different way. Of course you can, that's the whole point. Buddha would say that anything he's saying, if you can't verify it and directly experience it, it does not exist.

Marcus: How do you figure?

Robina Courtin: Well that's the point. So remember I said before that your consciousness, to assert fully goes to much more subtle levels? Remember I said that? And that means levels to at which you, your brain is not needed. It doesn't function at all, which we know is positive and existing in our culture, right? This is why you can get to a level of concentration that can – you can function; you can exist at that level for months on end. Your body looks like your dead, so we don't [inaudible] any existing in our world, do we? So, if you take the possibility through accessing these more subtle levels, which don't depend upon a body, that's--at that level of consciousness you have, because it doesn't depend on our brain and this big bag of bones, basically, you know, doesn't have to filter through this stuff, your mind is clearer, and therefore can see past and future. Clairvoyance is a natural capacity for mind at a subtle level, naturally. And every being has the potential to accomplish that. So it's then when you'd prove it, that's experientially. But like any model, if it's coherent, you can learn intellectually first and look at the intellectual logic of the whole thing and see if coherently adds up, you know. Because Buddha would say this is just a natural law, just the way it is, and that's what a Buddhist is doing. Are you with me?

Audience member: [Inaudible] through your meditation and training do you--

Robina Courtin: First, intellectually, you need to have a coherent model, don't you?

Audience member: Yeah.

Robina Courtin: Like if you were an allopathic doctor and you'd never heard of such a weird thing as acupuncture but you decided you're going to look into it. It's a whole different model isn't it? I – my feeling is you can study intellectually quite well and intellectually every time you learn a little bit more, another piece of the puzzle fills in. It's a coherent system. If it is coherent, it should make sense intellectually. Do you agree with my point?

Audience Member: Yes.

Robina Courtin: Even before you put a single needle in somebody, the Buddhist view is to say, even as coherent model and this is not always the way it's studied, you know. A Zen Buddhist doesn't study this stuff. Many people just simply do a bit of meditation, do a bit of mindfulness, do a bit of, you know, mantras if you're a Tibetan Buddhist. Most people don't go

full-on. Like in the Tibetan mastic university model; they studied there for 20-30 years, the whole big deal, the big the whole thing, all this that I'm discussing here, which is the basis of my, how come I'm saying here is what I've studied intellectually. So it should be coherent first, shouldn't it? And then you've got more confidence in it as a map that you can then begin to experience. But you're doing the two together. You're intellectually taking it on board, listening to it, taking it in as your hypothesis and then through experience you're verifying it and validating it. That's the idea. So, are you with me?

Audience member: Yes.

Robina Curtain: That's the correct approach. Yeah, yes.

Audience Member: [inaudible] a good place for somebody who's, you know, maybe [inaudible] are materialistic, well viewed, you know, [inaudible] day-to-day. What's one thing that they, that we can do?

Robina Curtain: Can you hear his question?

Audience Member: What's a good thing a person, who's an ordinary Joe, like him--

Audience Member: What we just do--

Robina Curtain: Okay, start with the possibility that even if you still think your mind is your brain, I don't care. Start with the possibility that just guess what? That my anger, my fears, my depression, which you know break your heart, right? You're really sick of them and that you'd like to try and change them. Start with that possibility, I think you can get a long way. Start, instead of always thinking of someone else's problems – it's not fair, the victim mentality. It's my mommy's fault, daddy's fault, his fault, girlfriend's fault, which is the usual way we go, which gets us completely paralyzed. We know that, so have the courage to try and own your own stuff and know it's a cognitive of introspective process. It's nothing magical. One way Buddha talks, which sounds a little abstract to us, is that everything comes down to being thoughts, even all the deep emotions, anger, jealousy, all the stuff that we feel discord, and we feel in our body, we feel unbearable feeling, right? That's only because we familiarized our soul, we've become completely addicted to them; we're so deeply engrained with them. They are engrained in us, okay. We've practiced them so long and I'm talking now, bringing it with us from past, okay? So then that's why we take it as if "it's an absolute in me and I couldn't possibly change it." But if you, through meditation techniques, you learn to get more skill to look more deeply inside, you kind of get beneath, below the emotional component, the drama, the physical, the violent experience of those things. And you get to begin to hear how they're all based in stories, all really an elaborate conceptual story. When we can get to hear that in our mind, then you really have confidence and you can change those stories. I'm being quite literal here. Do you understand what I'm saying?

Audience member: I do.

Robina Courtin: It just takes time and humility and patience and perseverance, like anything. You understand?

Audience member: Yeah.

Robina Courtin: Yes.

Audience member: So say I'm really happy and my boyfriend cheats on me--

Robina Courtin: That's right.

Audience member: Then how can you not be even [inaudible] to upset--

Robin Courtin: I know, I know. I understand, darling. That's why it sounds, it sounds like you have to have Asperger's or beautiful, doesn't it? I know, I know that, exactly, I know. Okay this is for--I would suggest the assumption in what you're saying, there's an absolute assumption in your statement that we do not question. That angers natural, jealousy's natural and you wouldn't be human if you didn't have it.

I mean, one of my sisters, she's one of seven siblings. Seven of us, and we're really harmonious and good friends; yet we've made decisions not to talk about certain things and most of them are about Buddhism, so we don't go there, you know. So but we have fun together, we love each other, but when they get a little bit drunk they kind of take a few risks and so one of my sisters--[laughter]--which was slightly drunk suggested that she thinks maybe I'm Asperger's. Because I don't seem to get jealous, I don't seem to have too many close, attached friends, I don't need a boyfriend, I don't seem to know why that I don't have sex, I look like I'm a bit perky most of the time and she says she thinks maybe I'm a bit Asperger's. Now I mean, who knows, these dumb labels, thank you, I think that--never mind.

But there's an assumption that unless you have dramas and jealous that you'd be abnormal. Well the Buddha's suggesting we're mentally ill by having any jealousy, any anger at all. So let's imagine what it would be like because, as you said, you wouldn't even be human and that's my point again. There's an assumption what you are saying that are a regular human has a bit of anger, a bit jealousy and it's normal to have a breakdown if your boyfriend--do you understand? So we have to assume it's abnormal if you don't do it, therefore Asperger's. The Buddha's idea is, we are all mentally ill, we're all icebergs, we're all bipolar, we're all manic depressive, we're all up and down like yoyos, to the extent to which we have any attachment, anger, jealousy, pride, etcetera – which it sounds a bit shocking. So how would you be, if you had a boyfriend and he left you, okay? I'll tell you. You'd be a regular person, you look like a nice person, but you'd be--you'd look like right--you'd be like a really nice person. Not sort of excited, hyperventilating, over-the-top hysterical happy and not profoundly depressed. You'd be--but not--also not flat-lining, kind of boring. You'd be the personality that you are, you know? You'd be perky, you'd be crying, you'd be loving, but you would not be jealous. You'd be sad, but it'd be temporary. It's not because you don't care, which is how we think of being disconnected, you wouldn't be disconnected, you've got a big heart, you would love it, you'd be sad, because it's finished between you, and you'd understand where he's coming from and you would realize it's all over and you'd let him go. You wouldn't be jealous, you wouldn't hold on to it. Your fundamental core, which is, was it love, compassion, wisdom, joy? these are the natural states Buddha says. But when you rid the mind of all the other rubbish, this stuff can grow to an immense degree. So you'd be an incredibly good person, incredibly kind, incredibly funny, incredibly confident, you can be brilliant, could be a multimillionaire, it doesn't matter, but you'd be stable as a rock. You'd be wise, you'd be compassionate. You'd be those things that we'd all love to be eventually. But you'd care, you'd have a boyfriend, you'd really enjoy his sex, you'd enjoy chocolate cake, you wouldn't be boring, you know? Could you imagine being like that? Wouldn't that be sort of interesting, or would you rather be jealous and angry? [Pause] What do you think?

Audience member: So you're saying you still have like some sadness and feel some emotion, not just be like--

Robin Courtin: You're saying, wouldn't you hurt? I said you'd be you'd be happy, you'd be wise, you'd be funny, you'd be confident, you'd be strong, you'd be powerful, you'd be whatever you want to be. You'd be all the good qualities. Wouldn't you like to be all the good qualities? Stably? [Pause] Okay, it's hard to conceive, I agree with you, so one has to think about it.

Audience member: [Inaudible comment]

Robin Courtin: No she's not, she's just simply said it wouldn't be possible to be this way. And how you do it is the job I'm telling, by knowing your mind, like what he said. But ridding your mind of those neuroses, which is...I mean, don't hold your breath people! It's not going to take overnight, you know. You understand, hang on a second, down here, yes.

Audience member: After you realize that this--it is your life and these are your attachments, how do you rid yourself of the attachments?

Robin Courtin: Well this is what I'm saying. You learn these meditation techniques; you begin with the possibility that they are your states of mind, rather than everybody else's fault, which is easy words to say. And you learn these skillful meditation techniques. Number 1 and number 2, you need to learn the Buddhist model of the mind because it's a very specific description of what these states of mind--these words are common to all of us. But, like – and as she's saying, but her view of anger or jealousy or sadness are human qualities. They are indeed, but sort of get our head around how Buddha's saying they're mental illnesses, which sounds a bit cruel initially. One needs to know exactly what is that negative state, how is it defined, what are its characteristics, one has to be very precise. So then, through your meditation, where you're being your own therapist, you can identify these cognitive states and slowly unravel, because it's highly complicated way why our stories are in our heads. Really hear the stories, while you slowly unravel them and slowly argue with the neurotic views, and change them step-by-baby-step. Does that make sense? Does that make sense? That one – it makes sense – it's a long, slow, full-on job! It starts, like I said to him, with the possibility that I can do it. Even if you still think your mind's a brain, I don't care, you know, we know we can change our minds. You began knowing no mathematics and now you're a genius, well guess what, that's your mind, you know. So if you begin with no patience, guess what, you're going to learn patience, it's a sign of learning math, you're changing your mind, you know. Yes.

Audience member: [Inaudible]

Robin Courtin: [inaudible] is a [inaudible] where there's suffering, yeah, absolutely. Okay, this is Buddha's deal--one approach, really this is the key intent the way Buddha talks, okay, is this business of how we're out sync with reality, all right? And so, I'll just – so these different – he says we've got these different states of mind which we call natural. He says they're unnatural or abnormal, they're mental illnesses, all of them, and they have a very specific function, one particular function and this is the function of delusional. The extent of which you are caught up in, (I'll come to that, your business), it's just one of the states of mind, caught up in an attachment to something or anger about something, or jealousy about somebody, or depressed, the extent to which you have each of these states of mind, is the extent to which, one, like I said, you're suffering, they're distressing in their nature. And the extent to which you are not in sync with reality. So these, all these negative states of mind have this particular function, including the one that you refer to. It's, there's no one word for it, but it's a state of mind that

clings instinctively to a belief that things are permanent. Or that, what you really could say, it's a belief deeply inside us, like when you've got a beautiful antique cup belong to your great grandma that's up on the mantel piece there since you were a kid. So we build up this story about this cup, don't we? It's our grandma's cup and it's worth money, it's this and it's that. So what happens is, we become very attached to it. So attachment--is that a hand?

Audience member: Yeah, I can put it down. [Laughter]

Robin Courtin: Okay good, thank you. Attachment is, you know, everyone in this room will have a different definition so please chuck-them out and hear this definition because this is Buddha's. It's a neurotic state of mind; all of them particularly do have a function of over exaggerating certain aspects of an object. So when you are attached to your boyfriend, assuming you have one, he will look, probably, especially in the beginning, he will look divine to you, won't he? Isn't it, when you're in love, you can't believe this divine person from their head to their toenails. Of course, after a while when he, you know, farts between the blanket instead of in the toilet, [Laughter]--you slowly, you start going down here and your attachment kind of gets punctured a bit and isn't so handsome after all. We all know that one, when you're really hungry for the chocolate cake, this is a simple point, but profound, it looks divine doesn't it? It's like vibrating deliciousness. And this is the point the Buddha's making: we think it comes from the cake, we think the cake is divine, you think your boyfriend is divine until you start realizing his mistakes, because you're blinded, because attachment in the mind, it's like you've got honey, what do you call them, rose-colored spectacles on. Everything will look just hunky-dory, just gorgeous, which is an exaggeration of reality. It's an exaggeration of reality, when you don't like that boyfriend, after 6 months you can't stand the sight of him, every time you look at him now, nothing looks nice. He looks really ugly, that's because now you've got your angry glasses on. You're aversion glasses on. When you've stuffed so full four pieces of cake, the cake looks disgusting now.

So we just go, this is normal, but these, Buddha says are states of mind. Attachment exaggerates the deliciousness and then has the energy of hankering after it, believing when I get it, that I'll get happy, which is expectations, and then possessing it, especially if it's people and things, it's mine! All of these are function of this cute, simple word, "attachment." And it comes from the deepest and the most energetic level. It is the expression, this attachment, of a deep, deep primordial sense of dissatisfaction. An aching sense of I'm just never enough. I do not have enough, whatever I do is never enough, whatever I get is never enough. Check our lives. This is a deep disease we have and this is the deepest habitual expression of this label, "attachment," which seems so abstract to us.

Dissatisfaction, what do you mean, with what? Well with everything. You get up in the morning and you just, something's just not right, you know. We can have it, some people have it very deeply, always unhappy, always, no matter what they get, they can be multimillionaires and be the best body in the world, dissatisfied. Always unhappy and that gives rise to, therefore I must get this, and I must get that and when I get this it'll fill up the gaping hole. This is the way attachment works. And Buddha says it's the default road for life, it's what runs all of us, it's the motor that propels us from second to second of our experiences. This, and it gets down in the big bones, right down deep where we can only see it when we practice meditation and concentration and really be our own therapist, we get to hear the words how easily exaggeration, not just some physical feeling, you know. Anger's the same, depression the same, so because of this deep attachment that cultivated of that gorgeous grandma's cup or my handsome boyfriend, then desperately I don't want it to change. So we live in the fantasy world. We know very well intellectually things change, we think we're--we would never admit that they

don't, we know damn well they do! But, emotionally, experientially, we cling to everything as if it won't change.

So when you have finally found happiness. Look at the words. "I have finally found happiness," we say. And you've got this divine person, you've written the novel for the rest of your life. and it's like you locked it away in a cabinet and as far as you're concerned, it's permanent. And look at the devastation when it changes. I always remember reading an article in the "Vanity Fair." I like reading magazines, learn about human beings. And it was an interview with Nicole Kidman when she was with Tom Cruise. Now she's with that nasty Australian bloke, what's his name? Anyway, the singer, you know. And she has two children [inaudible], Faith and Sunday, that's right. I read the papers. So anyway, whatever. When she was being interviewed in Vanity Fair when she was with Tom Cruise still, she said at the end of the article, "We will be together until we're 80." [Pause] Of course, that's how we think isn't it? And then she covered herself and said, "Well, of course if we won't be, I will be devastated."

But you know, you check yourself. When things are going well, we feel "now I found it," because we often feel happiness is out of our grasp, but then we wake-up in the morning one day and things are all wrong even though the weather's the same, we don't know what. You know we believe, I've got the boyfriend, I've got the two and half this, and this and this and the job, and suddenly we all know everything changes. This, just alone, is massive, and I mean, that's why we go up and down like a yoyo, you know. We think we've found it and that those words, "finally I've found it" prove it. We instinctively believe it won't change, because we don't want it to change. And look when you go down, look when everything collapses, you don't believe that'll change either, which is why we kill ourselves; we can't see the light at the end of the tunnel. So this deep assumption, the things we do or don't want, they somehow feel like they are forever, you know. And then when they're up, it feels great, and when you're down, it's like a nightmare. So it's again one of the many misconceptions as Buddha says are deep in the bones of our minds. We need to unravel, identify and unpack and get to see how it is a misconception, and slowly at this more deep level, remove it from our mind. Which is the trickiest job because they're all the default mode right now. Does that answer? Yes, yep.

Audience member: I'd like to ask you about compassion.

Robina Courtin: Okay.

Audience member: It seems that in order to have a [inaudible] have compassion, you need to access negative emotions..

Robina Courtin: Oh, that's interesting, why is that?

Audience member: Sometimes we get caught up in other people's negative of emotions in the process, so I'd like to understand about compassion and--

Robina Courtin: I'd love to hear your logical reasoning for why you need to get in touch with negative states in order to feel compassion. Please explain.

Audience member: It seems that in witnessing negativity, it strikes a chord in people and motivates them to want to help--

Robina Courtin: Okay good, now I hear what you're saying--well, yeah, it's interesting. One time in an interview the Dali Lama was asked by a journalist, "It would seem," the journalist said,

"It would seem that anger, which is what you're suggesting, is a good thing because it causes you to act and it causes you to do things, you know." And the Dali Lama said, "I know what you mean. But," he said, "When it comes from compassion and not anger, you never give up, but anger, it doesn't last." So this is a really key point because this gets us to the real clear understanding and Buddha psychology of exactly what anger is and exactly what it's not. Okay, so, as Martin Luther King said, "It's okay to find fault." You've got to say, "Oh, my God look at the racism, oh my God look at the terrible world, look at the war." You've got to say that, but that doesn't mean it's anger, but what happens for us right now, the second we see something that we don't like, instantaneously, it arises, "How dare, who did it, why is it happening, this is wrong," and that's why we assume they go together. Do you understand what I'm saying? So okay, do you--I'm just expressing in words what you just said.

Audience member: I understand what is--

Robina Courtin: Well let's keep going.

Audience member: Anger, I understand, that's not necessarily what I'm referring to.

Robina Courtin: Oh it is though, you said when you see bad things, you--it triggers something and you and then you--

Audience member: Motivates people to have--

Robina Courtin: This is exactly what I'm saying, so how come you can't hear what I'm saying exactly the same thing? So where are we miscommunicating here?

Audience member: I'm referring to it as compassion.

Robina Courtin: I know darling, but I haven't got there, I haven't got there yet, so wait.

Audience member: Okay. [Laughter]

Robina Courtin: Right, I'm breaking down the anger part first.

Audience member: I guess I need to be patient then.

Robina Courtin: No, just, it's okay, you don't have to be patient, it's all right. [Laughter] Just let me finish the story first. So first of all, we see injustice in the world, right? Okay, but then, this is what's happening on the negative side – there's negative side and there's positive side and they're all working together, that's why it's so hard to separate them. On the negative side, it's like this, I was a leftist, first I was a hippie first, [audio issue] and then I became a bit of a radical lefty Communist and I blamed all the rich people. And then I kind of got into the black politics and the Black Panthers in the late 60s and early 70s in London, and I blamed all the white people, then I became a radical feminist and I blamed all the male people. And then I had no one left, that's why I got to being a Buddhist then. [Laughter] Okay, so listen, when I was a radical lefty, I had in my, okay, here we are, and the same with you, in our mind we have certain good qualities and one of those is, you know, compassion which is empathy when we see suffering. Fantastic, I have bucket loads of that, but I also had lots of attachment to having things the way wanted and then anger, when that didn't happen. As one Lama put it and it's a great phrase, anger is the response when attachment doesn't get what it wants. So here's the negative side of me working. So okay, here's the positive side, all my idealism, wanting to make

the world a better place. There's no doubt it was there and I rushed out and demonstrated, but then mixed with that was my massive attachment to get what I wanted, which happened to be at that time, which ever model it was, the Communist, the this, the that, that was my model. I thought is good, which is the good part, but I was attached to it. I wanted it to be this way and how dare anybody do anything that would give what I don't want and that's the anger part. So we see this as such a natural response. But all the Delia Lama in that conversation, or what we have to see here, you've got to see injustice, but there's no reason to go, how dare, who did this, whose fault is it, what, why, which, which is just impotent nonsense and makes you stamp up and down like an unhappy kid. It's natural to us now, but all the Buddha's saying is we can go beyond that and then you see, oh my God, look at the suffering and you go straight to compassion. You don't need to have the anger bit in the middle, because merely find fault is not anger, that's common sense. That's seeing what's what. You getting my point? Merely seeing these problems, we assume the next step is therefore angry. But seeing problems is intelligence. Then you go and as Martin Luther King said, "It's good to say there's bad things out there; but then you go, what can I do about it." That's the compassion part, just skip the anger bit. Of course it takes time, but that's the logic. Can you see now what I'm saying? Okie-doke, yes.

Audience member: [Inaudible]

Robina Courtin: Start, will you start again darling, I didn't quite hear the beginning.

Audience member: [Inaudible]

Robina Courtin: Okay, in one way you could say Buddha is saying exactly that, that anger, yes, anger is a story because of my habit to getting--wanting to get what I want. It's my habit, habitual response that I've trained my mind in that. I've got this as a default mode, that when I don't get it, I will go, how dare, who do you think you are, why, this, that and shout and yell and tears come out and spit and blood and everything else. That's what anger is, right? Yes it is a story my mind makes. So that doesn't mean there's not something there, it doesn't mean Marcus didn't punched me in the nose. It's the same as seeing injustice out there. So the anger is a story my mind has made up, yes! And that's why I can change it. Yes. [Pause] But it doesn't mean oh therefore it's all illusory, who cares. Don't get moralistic about it, the key to understanding how you can change your mind for the Buddha, is knowing it is your emotion and feeling coming from habit, but it comes down to be a conceptual story that we have made up, that we now totally believe in. Yes. Unless, it's easy to say those words, but it's primordially deep inside us. That is the way it's working, that's why we can change our minds. Do you understand what I'm saying?

Audience member: [inaudible]

Robina Courtin: Yes exactly. It's easy just to, sort of throw off and sell with all illusory, that's too cheap. I know you're not saying that, but it's got a profound kind of meaning because it, were not, you know I mean, what is it now, they're talking about new world plasticity and this result of, you know, them put and stick electrodes on meditator's brains. I'm not even talking about doing fancy stuff in your mind. This is people who simply do compassion meditation, thinking compassionate thoughts about people. They've reconfigured their brains for God's sake. I mean, one bloke said it was the greatest finding of the 20th Century. Oh, I'm happy we're catching up with Buddha, he's been telling us for two and a half thousand years that we're not stuck with what we've got. You understand what I'm saying?

Audience member: [Inaudible]

Robina Courtin: Precisely, darling, this is exactly--Okay to factor this in, you've got to assume reincarnation. Basically we come fully programed. Buddha says, your mother did not make you, you're not some blank slate that suddenly poor old Hitler's mother gets a psycho and Mozart's mother gets a genius. They both brought their own stuff with them and they happen to have the connection with those parents. Their mind went into that parent's egg and sperm. You've got to take this as your hypothesis here, because we can see from tiny children, we didn't, my mother didn't teach me to be angry, I was really good at it. I knew from the moment I came out the womb I knew how to be angry. And that was another – you know, example, a friend of mine, she's telling me this story how she was taking the lice out of the head of her little boy. He was 3. He was crying with compassion for the lice, spontaneously. She hadn't taught him. "Oh mommy, mommy, don't hurt them, it's their home." And he's now, you know, he's now 35, he's never killed a living being, so we can deduce taking this idea that he was programmed with compassion. We can clearly see that what Hitler was programmed with, we can suggest what Mozart was programed with. So this is sort of an assumption you can take, that we've got our habits deeply engrained since we were tiny, you know, and because we assume mommy and daddy made us, because we assume it's your brain and you're born with it and it's not your fault, of course we're going to feel, I'm stuck with it. But if you take this as your view, at least a possibility, you came with it from practice. Why are you good at piano is because you practiced for 10 years, honey. Well Mozart obviously had practiced piano, he came, he was given a piano, off he went writing a sonata at the age of 6, you know. That was his tendency. So we have all these tendencies, that we have brought with us. This is the Buddha's idea of karma. So the experience, the invocation of that is well, good, I can change them. They're just real deep, that's all, and everything in us doesn't want change anger and depressions, because we'd rather blame everybody else. It feels like that, too. So this idea of owning what's inside is quite profound actually, it stops us in our tracks, and really knowing that it's just a habit, a deep instinctive habit, and I can unpack it and change it slowly.

Audience member: [Inaudible]

Robina Courtin: No question, sure darling. It's not a question, sure, it just like losing your boyfriend. Because of the close connection with your beloved mommy or your baby or your boyfriend or someone whom you adored. dying. Of course there's sadness there. The tears will come, but there's a difference you know. If you can think of somebody you know – forget about yourself – who's always unhappy and miserable and roasts up a steam and negative and sad and wants to kill themselves every time something bad happens, that's because these unhappy emotions, they're not the voices of ego in Buddhism, they are what cause suffering and pain. You can also think of a person who is much more balanced and more kind, whose parents die, bad things happen, but they always find a way to deal with the optimistic. That's a person who doesn't have much attachment and anger and jealousy and depression. So, there's still a sadness there, because that's real. You're really human, but not in the neurotic ego-based sense. As far as, we find it hard to distinguish these because we just assume it's so normal to be I-based and miserable. Do you understand what I'm saying? It really needs real clarity to look inside our own minds to see the difference. Do you understand what I'm saying? You had a question.

Audience member: [Inaudible]

Robina Courtin: Join the club darling, it's okay.

Audience member: [Inaudible]

Robina Courtin: Yeah that's right I know exactly--this is—exactly. Like I said here, before you know what the first step is, it's possible to do it. And then you've got to have this long-term patience with it like any technique you learn, like anything you know, you've got to know it's possible and you get techniques, so the techniques are you'll do some kind of concentration focusing every day. Would you just, I mean, anyone can do it. It's not religious in its nature. Communists can do it, you know. It's just learning to have discipline, to focus the mind. I mean to do anything you've got to have decent concentration. To make a cake, to play basketball, you've got to have concentration. It needs a lot of discipline to do this, because we're so bored by sitting there for 5 minutes, even 5 minutes with ourselves; we'd rather be jumping around, you know. So you've got to have the discipline to get some focus and that just takes time. But then, using the Buddha's view, understanding all these different states of mind, because right now all we have is a big soup of emotion. We can't see one bit from another, it always seems to come out, you know, because we've never looked introspectively, it's not part of our education. I mean, we learn genius things. We learn how to use our intellect and how to change it in the most amazing way, we learn physical things. We don't learn this emotional stuff, because there's no one common view of what thoughts and feelings and emotions are. We've both got a different view. So it just knowing it's possible, learning some focus and then slowly, slowly, working on your mind every day, learning to see and then you're doing some analysis. You guys should be "being your own therapist." It's a good phrase, really. And that means after-thought happens because you've got a short fuse that blew again, afterwards you do your bit of analysis and you try not to do only the blaming and defending yourself and you try to be the brave and argue, you know. It's sort of like thinking with a head full of about 100 roommates, a bunch of good roommates and a bunch of nutty roommates. So sometimes the anger roommates and the jealous, all these voices and if they run the show, we believe what they say, we defend ourselves and all this rubbish. You've got to use the wise ones, and the brave ones, and the grown-up ones you argue sometimes and take responsibility, admit you did something wrong, and it is your habit and you'll try better next time. It's like learning anything. Honestly, I'm not kidding, you've got to talk to yourself be your own--this phrase of being your own therapist, is kind of interesting. Like if I've go to a therapist in our world here, normally what happens, because we believe our mommy made us, and because we believe it's a brain and the DNA, then the first place you look when you talk to your therapist for your problems, it's in the past, in the events. For the Buddhist, you look into your own mind, you go into the states of mind themselves. It's really direct and tasty. It's like, Buddha's like a cognitive therapy actually, but it just takes time because we're not used to it. Are you hearing me? Just takes time. Yes, hang on a second darling – yes, you sweetheart, yes.

Audience member: About grief.. [Inaudible]

Robina Courtin: Tell me what you mean by grief.

Audience member: [Inaudible]

Robina Courtin: Oh, Buddhist's – it's the same as everybody else's grief. There's a closeness there, a strong connection with this particular person whom you love and suddenly they're dead. So, the Buddhist explanation of it, it doesn't follow that every Buddhist would think of it this way because many people don't study the Buddha's view, even though they say they're Buddhists. It means, it's just the same as everyone else's, you know, there's a sadness, there's a loss of attachment, especially with your beloved and your baby, I mean, it's just must be such trauma. The attachment to their being, the sadness, the depression, all the same stuff is no difference.

But the Buddha's view, it depends on the person, they talk about reincarnation, impermanence, that kind of thing, you know. But it doesn't follow every Buddhist would talk that way. If I was a Zen Buddhist, I wouldn't discuss reincarnation. But a Ti Buddhist would, a Tibetan Buddhist would. I mean the idea of, you know, you then do prayers and things for that person's mind to help them take a new life and that kind of thing. Do you understand? Someone else, yes, yes.

Audience member: [Inaudible]

Robina Courtin: Well honey, that's way to go, that's quite advanced. You've got to start with the [inaudible], start with all the day-to-day chatter in that head, you know. And then, through concentration meditation and through subduing the craziness of our body, speech, and mind. The very first level of practice in Buddhism sounds almost embarrassing, doesn't even sound like practice, it means, do what grandma said, control your body and speech. Don't blurt out every word that you feel, don't punch when you feel like it, don't jump on every girl that looks kind of cute. Control your body and speech. Why, is because the delusions inside us are running that body and speech, so you know--you understand what I'm saying, so if you can, you discipline the body in speech first, you've got a bit of space now to go to a higher high school where you start looking inside your mind using concentration. And then, through this subduing your berserk behavior, beginning to subdue your crazy mind, slowly through these techniques you get to the second level which is highly advanced. Do you understand?

Audience member: [Inaudible]

Robina Courtin: Oh that's a good point, that's a point – it's the whole point sweetheart. We are looking at methods for identifying a state of mind called anger. Not just the physical feeling. This is our problem, if we think of it as just a physical feeling, there's nothing to analyze! You've got to get beyond the physical and the emotional and the visceral to get here. Okay, put it this way, if you have an angry fit and I have a tape recorder, you know, an MP3 player and then I transcribe it, what have you got on the piece of paper? [Pause] They're words aren't they, and what are words? [Pause] They're thoughts maybe. Just like, if you put 1 plus 1 equals 2, that's a thought isn't it? You put I hate you, you're the cause of all my suffering. Don't worry about the shouting and the spit coming out the mouth, which is what we think of as anger. You get it down to its barebones, honey, it's a bunch of thoughts. Do you hear me here? So, that is then what you then have to hear yourself and you analyze how they have no valid basis. It's deep analysis on the actual construction of all your stories. You learn to change the very story of anger, you learn to really reconfigure the very stories in your head that run the show right now. Does that make sense? [Pause] Okay, good, a bit closer. You see, our problem is we don't think we have stories in our head and we naturally have anger spontaneously. We just think Marcus did punch me, my anger's completely normal, what do you mean it's a story? Marcus punched me, that's all we can see is truth. We see a delicious chocolate cake, we think but it is delicious, what if it is good, of course I'm going to shove it in my mouth. We don't realize this whole novel we've written about cake, who I think I am, what the cake will do for me, it's going to bring me happiness, it's my cake, it's so spontaneous! We don't hear any story at all; we don't even think our minds playing a role. So we're talking really slowly here starting to realize that the way Marcus appears and cake appears is 99% -- you could almost say 100% -- coming from your mind. So to know deeply and hear it unravel these stories and realize we are making our life every second by the way perceive things and judge things and respond to things. Are you hearing me? It's quite profound, I'm not trying to say I'm smart, you know. You understand? Yes.

Audience member: [Inaudible]

Robina Courtin: Because it is practice for perfection. You know Buddha just suggests this idea, he says we come fully programmed with all these emotional habits of jealousy, the fears, the drama, the deeply, deeply, and see, what we would call subconscious, absolutely, but all I'm saying is the Buddhist techniques enable us to go that level to unravel it and hear it and reconfigure, reconstruct, change, the way we actually experience and see the world--cognitive therapy actually. Yes. Yes darling.

Audience member: [Inaudible]

Robina Courtin: I know it's difficult. It's like, if you want to play cricket and you live among baseball players it's going to be hard darling. You've got to find at least one other cricketer to help you, but if you've got a really strong mind and really determined you can do it, but you have to know what you need, what support you need. It's not easy, it's the whole, everybody's got one view, it's like hard, it's quite difficult. But you know, we do our best. There's more and more awareness these days of looking at our minds and working on our minds. I mean, so much more awareness now, you know, and we should use any tools we can, including getting good therapists, anything to help us see our minds better is great. Yes, darling.

Audience member: [Inaudible]

Robina Courtin: I understand. Yeah, I think it depends on the person. I frankly think some of these labels are so shocking these days it's a bit scary to me, you know. I know that in my family, for example, we were all considered what they called it then manic depressive, bipolar. And I remember, I mean, but--okay, so what, in my understanding using Buddha's view, what that means is extreme emotions up and down. Well the Buddha's view would call that attachment and aversion. You know, over excited, completely speedy, speedy, speedy, wanting everything you want it when you're in the up mode, to the point of course you if you get to start thinking like you're Mozart, then you're really in an up mode and that's a bit sort of dangerous, you know? And then you go crashing down when the bubble bursts. This is the up and down of every single person's mind in this room, but just varying degrees of it all. So the Buddhist view is that's how we all are, and if you happen--okay, put it like this, if you've got a head full of roommates who are only anger, depression, low self-esteem, jealousy, attachment, there's not much chance you can do anything. You've got to have some of the good roommates to call upon. You've got to have some wisdom and kindness and conviction in your own potential and ability to forgive others, you've got to have some good qualities as well. Are you with me here? Because that's the stuff that helps you transform the other rubbish. If you've mainly got the rubbish, then you'd need to be locked up and given pills and have people take care of you and love you, you know? Do you understand my point?

Audience member: [Inaudible]

Robina Courtin: That's what I just said. The second point I just made, that's what I said. If you have no access to any good parts of yourself, is what I'm sort of saying. What I'm saying broadly, we could see--I can use my example of my family. We had lots of crazy qualities, but we had lots of good qualities and that's the stuff that has helped us become reasonable human beings, using our own methods. Are you with me? But, if you don't have much of that good stuff to access -- are you understanding my point? Then most of the other stuff runs the show and they're the people you're talking about. There's not much a person can do. If you don't have the ability to be introspective, if you don't have the ability to not always be like a victim, if you always believe other people are to blame, if you really have hallucinations and believe that people are trying to kill you or whatever, darling, there's not much you can do. Just have to be just helped

and taken care of, you know. You've got to have access to these parts of yourself, this ability to see yourself, this ability to know you can change. That's pretty miraculous! Do you understand my point? Absolutely--yeah, yes darling.

Audience member: We were born with a mind that is capable for doing this work...[Inaudible]

Robina Courtin: Okay this is like getting into the business of karma okay. Buddha's deal, Buddha's philosophical explanation of the way the world is and why it is, based upon these minds. So that basically Buddha is saying there's trillions of mind streams, trillions of sentient beings, trillions of senchens [phonetic) – mind possessor's. Not just humans, animals, creatures, all kinds, and they're all basically—karma's a simple word that really, in the most simple way, is really what propels the mind from moment to moment. So you, if you're mainly propelled by anger or the wish to kill, and let's face it most humans kill something. Buddha would suggest try not to kill anything because every sense of you wants to be happy and doesn't want to suffer, you know, so didn't even try to kill an ant.

So here is what--we come into life, would you agree, with a bunch of habits, let's suggest that. So you know, you come into this life, you're kind and loving and wise and you also like to kill fish due to past karmas, they'd say due to a habit. Mozart liked to play piano, you know, my friend had compassion for lice. We come with our little personality sort of there and there are a bunch of tendencies that we brought with us from the past practice, whether it's music practice or killing practice and so then you see the condition again and you run like a magnet to it, you think it's cool and you keep doing it. Because it looks good, it gives you a good feeling. So the Buddha's idea is, one, is a bunch of tendencies, and because we're junkies for good feelings, which is really the way attachment works, because of a habit to kill--I think of another friend of mine, her little boy, from the moment he saw fishing, he ran like a magnet. It looked good to him, and all the time he went fishing, she said he was a professional fisherman until he died. He always saw it as good. She went fishing one time and she couldn't bear to look at it because all she saw was fish suffering. Because of his tendency to kill fish, because he thought it was nice and a story in his head, which is his attachment, he never could see suffering fish. He saw the suffering fish, he couldn't see suffering. Do you understand what I'm saying? So we follow our tendencies, we follow our--if you're really addicted to sex, you're going to jump on everybody, you're going to do what you can to jump on everybody you can, and you're not seeing the harm you're doing to other people. You know, you understand, attachment--we're all attached to eating food maybe, we don't see the harm we're doing to ourselves, the attachment level. So, you've got these attachments, you follow them because it looks good, then you put these new prints in your mind, new bunch of imprints. You program your mind and basically the Buddhist idea is every single microsecond of every thought is a karma in the sense of being an action or implying a reaction, okay? This is the meaning of karma and it's a natural law, like gravity is a natural law. It just, it runs minds. No one's up there judging, there's no concept of judgment or reward or punishment or anything like that in Buddhism, because there's no concept of a creator. But every action we do, every thought we have is an action, but then follows through with body and speech and then does its wishes. But this is programing our minds from second to second. In the same way that if you practice piano for 10 years, you're programing your mind with music, if you're angry, you're programming your mind with anger. This is how we are, you know? And so the idea is, the Buddhist view, the negative ones, the ones that are basically the voices of ego, the unhappy ones, the experientially painful ones for me that are delusional, they will program my mind in that direction and cause me more suffering in the future, and cause me to continue to harm others. So the job of seeing your mind is to observe the negative and the positive, have some introspective skills, recognize all the crazy roommates, see how they're causing me pain and try to refrain from them so that you don't create more "negatives", you

know? But once you're in the suffering, like if you're born with deep mental illness and you have no way you can change your mind, it's a bit difficult isn't it? But the goodness is all there, too. All the positive seeds are there. So, it's just a rough way of talking. Yeah.

Audience member: [Inaudible]

Robina Courtin: I understand your--if we unpack that, we can say there's a deep sense of attachment to believing that my being successful is this--okay, okay, the deepest attachment we have is how other people see us. The deepest attachment we have is to be approved of by others. You analyze what we mean by success in this life, it's other people seeing that we're this. So the devastation to us, we internalize that because we have so-called failed. But if you've got perseverance and confidence, you fail and you fail and you will eventually succeed. So you've got to--confidence has to--failing is part of the process if we can be brave enough. But if we beat ourselves up with it and are devastated at our failure, it's much the attachment to other people. We don't see it this way very often, but it's very profound inside us. Because what we mean by success -- we don't want to be successful in private, do we? We want to be successfully public. Do you understand what I'm saying? So it's attachment to what other people think, but also that implies no sense of confidence in who I am. Because if we were con--felt content, deeply content with who we were, we wouldn't mind, we wouldn't mind and then we'd be content with our own progress. Even if you came in sixth in the exams, you wouldn't mind. You'd be content with what you have achieved. Always so, again, is that dissatisfaction. We're thinking you should achieve more. So there's nothing wrong with wanting to achieve, but do it for the good reasons, to want to be a better person, so you can help others. Then, it's fantastic. But being content, being content doesn't mean you become lazy. You can be content with who you are, and still want to get to more but for more valid reasons than just--which is a very deep attachment we all have, I think, if we look inside us. You understand? And there's this negative voice all the time about ourselves--my mother used to say, "You're your own worst enemy." And it's kind of true, beating ourselves up all the time, you know. Yes.

Audience member: [Inaudible]

Robina Courtin: Why don't we just do a couple minutes, just a--We've got a half hour, did you say, Jason?

Audience member: [Inaudible]

Robina Courtin: Well, there's different kinds of meditation. I'll talk about it first, shall I? Okay, the basic one I've been referring to all the time is this capacity to be introspective in a very focused way, that's all. And it's just a, like I said, it's a skill you need whether you're going to cook a cake or watch your mind, same deal, you know? It's, like I said, came from the Hindus. I mean, Buddha comes from the Hindus, you know? It's okay, basically if we look--if we sit down to try to say the simple example of this type of meditation, you use something to focus on. You use something to focus--a really simple thing to focus on is the sensation of your breath. Breath happens naturally. Breathe in and out, you know, so the sensation is at your nostril. You sit down in the morning just for 3 or 4 minutes, don't think 20 minutes, that's ridiculous, you know? A good quality 4 minutes is better than 20 minutes of spacing out. So, sit down, be comfortable, you can be in a chair, whatever, have your back upright, it's sort of important not to slump, your eyes slight closed, attempt to be in a quiet place, I mean, like my friends in prison -- forget quiet place. They're amazing; they meditate in this insane asylums. But if you can't have a quiet place, then you just make a decision for 2 or 3 minutes that you're going to watch your breath, the sensation. And all that means is, you close your eyes, so what happens now, isn't.

Oka,y they say the 2 main obstacles in the mind to this ability to focus, the 2 main obstacles; 1 is your mind, as soon as you sort of sit to be quiet, your mind goes berserk, every story imaginable, you've thought about all the memories, you think into the future, you completely lose the blot, your mind just races. Doesn't it? That's the problem, we have that one. The other extreme is your mind becomes--as soon as you close your eyes, you go to sleep. So these 2 extremes, the over excited or the down, and what we're trying to do, this concentration is a kind of a--okay, it's a state of mind that is calm, but alert. So right now we have alert, but it's kind of berserk, sharp--you know, when you're in the busy life mode, you do many things, you've accomplish many things, but your mind is really busy, it's not calm, you know? And then you're in the calm mode and as soon as it becomes calm, you kind of space out. So we've got to get the calmness without the spaced out, and the clarity without the excitement. You kind of with me? And that's a really tricky place to find, it's sort of invisible to us, you either get excited or we get dull, you know, extremes, extremes--and it's even a little bit to accomplishment this where the mind can be as sharp and alert. And it's got to be sharp and alert--a common misconception of this kind of meditation is that when you sit down, you're going to feel good, and that's relaxed. Relaxation's great, but that's not meditation, it's got to have this clarity, a real sharpness about it. The mind's got to be sharp but calm.

And so the beginning stages, like trying to work on a tightrope, you're off the tightrope 99% of the time. You've got to keep picking yourself up and putting yourself back onto breath. So you just have to train to do it. It really does need discipline. It's not just a quest of sitting and spacing out. That's fine, but it's not meditation. You understand what I'm saying, and that's a crucial thing, to get the sharpness, to get the mind to be clear, but still clear, but calm. You know, there's something very marvelous about that because then whatever you want to do, you can do it better. And of course the job we're talking about here, which is the 2 modes of meditation, they call that insight meditation. There's different kinds existing in the world, but this particular one is where you try to be your own therapist. So you know, if you've just had an angry fit, your mind's racing and you hear all the voices, [inaudible] the guilty voice, you're depressed and angry and you're pissed off at this person and you can't get any--there's no clarity there you know. So it's like as if you did have a therapist. You'd speak your thoughts out to your therapist only because, not that they want to hear it, because they're a sounding board for you to hear your own thoughts. So that's what you're trying to do inside your own head, be your own therapist. You talk it through, you try to come to a clear conclusion, you're going to try to not get in the victim business and that's a very--just thinking through your problems. We do this all the time, you understand? Are you with me? So the concentration one is really excellent as a method to start your day with, 3 or 4 minutes, to really focus. End the day with it and then when you want looking into your own mind, you can then step back, you're kind of stepping back a bit. Not just immersing all the drama. You can step back a little bit and be a little bit more objective in analyzing what's going on inside your head, which roommate is prevalent, you know? Do you understand what I'm saying? This is the clarity we have to get and it's courageous because you've got to be responsible, you've got to own your own stuff. Not saying, oh I'm bad because I'm angry, just say, okay it's an old habit, I've got it, look at the pain it's causing me. And it's like coming out of kindness to yourself actually, not beating yourself up. That's a really big problem, you shouldn't do that one. Do you understand what I'm saying? It's like admitting anything, if you can't admit the mistake, you can't get better. You know, you've got to admit the mistake, but cool. Yes.

Audience member: [Inaudible]

Robina Courin: Well there's no happy medium there. You just--you mean all the animal world? You mean..

Audience member: Not in the animal world if you really think about, they have their own--

Robina Courtin: I see you. Now that's an interesting point, the way Buddha's saying, okay, he says okay, we're--just existing, is in the nature of suffering. Just existing, even if you--just existing, you're harming others. Just existing, by breathing you know, I mean, the Buddhists would say there's not an atom of space you won't find some human beings. I mean, I remember reading that under your armpits; it's like a zoo under there. All the creatures inside your body, you know. You forget even if you're eating vegetable that all the millions of beings who died for the vegetables, their little bodies cut in half and the ones that smashed against a wind screen when you took to the vegetable shop you know. Just by existing, we can't help but harm sentient beings. So at least to have an awareness of this, knowing that you can't exist without doing, but having intention--the key thing that drives the fundamental point for Buddhists is an intentional, clear intention not to harm living beings to the best of your ability. So if you see a living being, try not to harm it. That's the bottom line really, so you'll be more conscious and aware, you know? Hah?

Audience member: [Inaudible]

Robina Courtin: Well that's the point, 2 points. First of all because the most fundamental Buddhist view of karma is that whatever arrives in my mind, programs my mind. So if I observe in my mind I couldn't care about ants and stamp on them, don't care about those dogs and kick them, and don't care about the pigs and get them killed and eat my dinner, then what am I programming my mind with? Ignorance, just getting what I want and aversion and harming others it's kind of all for my sake, for my mind, forget about what I'm doing to others, look at what I'm doing to my mind. The first step for my sake, attempt not to harm living beings because that will program my mind with kindness and compassion and some awareness. I mean, not to mention the second part, but for the pigs and ants and the fish that don't want to die either. Do you see? Wonderful!

The key point first is found to be surprising to us in our culture. You see we know in our world when it comes to food and physical behavior and that whatever we do does bring consequences to us. We get this! But when it comes to our mind, we do not think this. We think, oh, it's only in the mind. It's my mind anyway; mind your own business I can think what I like. But all that Buddha's saying is every microsecond of every thought you have, every feeling. Forget what it does to others, you're programming yourself, you are literally your own creator. Every--like if you were studying math, you've got to think the right thoughts, baby. You can't just say I can think what I like. You won't get anywhere. You've got to know the theories, you've got to know the exact right thoughts, you've got to squeeze your brain to learn those correct thoughts. Buddha's view morality is just the same because everything you think, will bring consequences to you and there's quite--you think if we can have this, we've got to be pretty mature people, instead of being victims. It's not fair, you know, it's all mine, I can do what I like, it's really quite [inaudible]. And it's quite interesting awareness to be aware of every thought you have and every single thought you have is programming you. So you've got to check what kind of person you want to turn into honey. Do you understand my point? Then, not then--there's a nice analogy in Buddhism is that a bird needs wings; wisdom and compassion. So the compassion wing is really not the point, when you get out there and you make the world a better place. But you've got to do the wisdom wing first and this is this one, working on yourself. Do you understand? Yeah, yes.

Audience member: [Inaudible]

Robina Courtin: I understand, You know, the way I'm talking about it, I've got the Buddhist world view so I incorporate that into my whole deal, but you can be a 1% Buddhist, sweetheart, and lots of people are. You can simply take these techniques of concentration; you could be a Communist and do it. But your reason to do it is the key point and the reason has to be a live in a world view, it's the world view of karma which is whatever I think produces me and you don't have to be a Buddhist to think that, it's common sense. If you really can see that part, and I think that's quite a mature thing to see, that what I think produces, I better check what I want to think. You know? Maybe just saying what you think is what you become, what you become is blah, blah, blah, you know. It's logical actually, not religious. So, of course you'll have to take on the rest of the world view to see this one. Wouldn't you agree? Yeah, that's--you know, that's not ones that I'm [inaudible]. Someone else? Something--yes!

Audience member: You mean do we need suffering in order to... [Inaudible]

Robina Courtin: No, no. On the contrary, the Buddhist view would be--start again--

Audience member: [inaudible]

Robina Courtin: Start again--start again, say it again.

Audience member: [Inaudible]

Robina Courtin: Oh no, absolutely not. The Buddhist parts would be given of our end suffering, I could learn from it, and the real learning is not to have suffering again. Like it's good if I break my leg. I could learn a bunch of things about that, but what I'm going to learn most is to never break my leg again. But you don't have to break your leg to learn it. That would be dumb. Do you understand my point? Yeah. Often we're stupid enough--my friends in prison, almost their mantra is this has been my wakeup call, but they're going to learn never again do that thing because I don't want to go back to prison again. That's the real learning from it. Would it be more simple to learn it first.

Audience member: [Inaudible]

Robina Courtin: What darling?

Audience member: [Inaudible]

Robina Courtin: I can't hear you so well, so sorry.

Audience member [Inaudible]

Robina Courtin: I see your point now. Well it's a question of what you mean by suffering isn't it? You're fat and overweight and got sloppy muscles and you decide you're going to go to the gym, that's painful isn't it? But that's good pain, different pain, that's a good pain. Like you go on a diet because you're sick of you know, eating the wrong food, you've got to really suffer with it, but it's a good pain. Like you go to the gym and you discover muscles you didn't know you had, you come home exhausted, but if you are having those pains sitting watching television, you'd be in trouble. So it's a good pain, and that is difficult work. Working against your own delusions, giving up having humility, forgiving others, it's the most stupendous hard work, it surely is but it's

got a good end, it's like, you know, getting fit and handsome, mentally. Now I understand you, do you understand? Yes, yes--yep.

Audience member: [Inaudible]

Robina Courtin: This word in transcript, the word "Buddha," okay, Buddha--fully awake is one of the terms they use. It starts for this person, the first syllable--actually a Tibetan word--the equivalence, Songhay. The first syllable "song" is a word that infers the complete removal of all the neuroses from the mind and the second syllable, gay or Buddha, infers the complete development of all the good qualities, which essentially is what Buddha says is an [inaudible] mind. A Buddha, that's what we can all accomplish. So a person who's a body sufferer, an awakening person, is kind of at a certain stage of development on this map. You understand, it's on the way of becoming [inaudible] mind. So it's all here. It's already kind of mapped out, you know. Like an education course, this path to Buddhahood. Yes.

Audience member: [Inaudible]

Robina Courtin: No, okay that's not quite right, okay we put it like this--this could be time to get cosmic. The trillions of minds, mind streams, you know, you've got yours and your own past history what you put into your mind, you've become the person you've become because of what you've done the past. Everything you do now, you're going to be what you'll be in the future. We do our--that's karma, it sort of tracks our own individual mind, but the Buddhists would say in the long term. One of the deepest misconceptions in our mind, which is the result of ions of neurosis, is that we've got these individual separate cells. So when you have accomplished this potential for perfection and I have, let's say, it's as if we'll become one mind, because mind is not physical. So this--and when you're fully developed, your mind will be pervading the universe. it will come now as that which exists. There will be no mistake, it will see the minds of others, it will be, because the mind's not physical, so how can it finally be confined by space or time or matter? It's only because of neurosis and ego grasping, all these delusions in the mind, that our mind is sort of stuck in this body. So as you progress and as you develop your consciousness, you're literally expanding your consciousness. You see the minds of others, you can see the past, you see the future, until eventually, you've perfected your consciousness. It doesn't need a body, but it will take bodies for the sake of others. But your mind pervades wherever there is existence. So then when you're at that level and I'm there, we're not going to bump into each other in the sky. You could like say there's one Buddha mind, but there's millions of emanations millions of differences [inaudible]--does that make sense?

Audience member: [Inaudible]

Robina Courtin: You can say it like that. Yeah, yes.

Audience member: [Inaudible]

Robina Courtin: I suggest you learn the Theravadany interpretation. That's the Theravadany interpretation. The Mahayana has a different view. In Buddhism inevitably, there's lots of different schools of thought that have cultivated over the centuries. So the Buddhism that's in Thailand, in Burma, for example, is known as Theravadan Buddhism, and there the goal is only to achieve your own liberation and that's the wisdom wing. But the Mahayana, which is Tibetan and others, you've got the compassion wing as well, which is the body-suffer wing and you keep coming back and back and then mind is endless. And the others say the mind finishes. This school of thought, the one you're suggesting, when you've achieved your own liberation and

you've quit all the neuroses from your mind, then you have realized your own liberation, when you die you're gone, you're finished, nothing left. Whereas the Mahayan would suggest the mind goes on forever.

Audience member: [Inaudible]

Robina Courtin: In Buddhist--all of Buddhist teachings there are the different realms of existence which has a karmic result of actions. No one sends you there, so they talk about hell realms, God realms, spirit realms, human, animal, a whole spectrum of possibilities and types of sentient beings, all experiencing the fruits of their own past actions. There's no creator or punishment or reward. Karma like this natural, yeah, that's what Buddha's saying, in all the schools of thought. Yes.

Audience member: [Inaudible]

Rubina Courtin: Okay, I believe it's the fundamental point and you could say the final wisdom you got is when you removed all the pollution from your mind, you're going to have a--you've got to be in touch with reality, within the simple sense that everything is interconnected. It sounds kind of nice and cute to say it this way, but it's a very specific understanding and that also implies that connection is with others and harmony is no longer a sense of subject object in sense of separate self. The key result of delusion is a sense of a separate self. So when you really find when you're like them you are in touch with interdependence and interconnected with all beings, a sense of experiential interconnectedness, no longer a separate sense of ego, "I," or neurosis at all.

Audience member: [Inaudible]

Robina Courtin: Because of habit, that's all, that's all, it's not even a big capital "R" reason, it's a simple reason. If you look at the status quo of each person and you can see that, you know jealousy is easy and depression is easy and killing is easy, look at the world, it's just doing our research, we have to deduce that's that person's habit. That's all, and so why is it prevalent? Because they've practiced mostly that, Buddha would say we are in a very degenerate time right now, and there's bucket-loads of delusions and misery and suffering and--

Audience member: [Inaudible]

Robina Courtin: Yeah, eons. In different times Buddhism was well before this planet. This is one of many planets, Buddha says. The different times we're in – in a very degenerate time now, he says.

Audience member: [Inaudible]

Robina Courtin: They travel like that, they stay like that, yeah.

Audience member: [Inaudible]

Robina Courtin: [Inaudible] they've been vague about their numbers. They're very specific when it comes to definitions of states of mind, but--

Audience member: [inaudible]

Robina Courtin: What?

Audience member: [inaudible]

Robina Courtin: Eons, they talk about eons, yeah.

Audience member: [Inaudible]

Robina Courtin: No, no, this planet, this galaxy is--oh, we haven't talked about emptiness at all, have we? You see, Buddha's saying finally, Buddha's saying the [inaudible] of minds, is all beginning, is all endless, and every single one of them is constantly creating its own reality. So then we've got them bunched into sorts of groups called humans, and animals, and spirits and hell beings, all experiencing our own reality, every microsecond. We are our own creators Buddha says. But he--and that implies this final view of wisdom we haven't even talked about. But everything--okay, the deepest illusion of all in the mind, I haven't even mentioned, it's known as Coloquely [phonetic], is ego grasping, attachments, its main voice, the one beneath this is this primordial assumption of an inherent intrinsic eye. So when that's annihilated, that's what they mean by the realization of emptiness. That's what cuts sensara, that's what brings you your nirvana. It's a psychological state, okay. So the Buddha's saying that ultimately there's nothing--nothing has an inherent nature, nothing exists this way or that, they're all coming from the mind, we all make them, our minds create things. Which is not just oh, it's all made by the mind, who cares? Buddha says that's how things exist and so then as long as [inaudible] when we finally realize, when we are finally in sync with how things would be, in this way the Buddha's talking. When you finally realize the nature of the cups, the nature of the table, and the nature of yourself, it's as if there is no cup, but there is. But what does exist is so subtle; it is as if it is an illusion. This is how they talk. Now it's so cheap to talk this way, but the experience of that is what they mean by these realizations, you know. And the obstacles to our experiencing that (which would be the sense of interdependence of all beings and of all reality) is the delusions in the mind, this ego grasping that grasp primordially to a simple sense of self, so primordial it has actually created a separate sense of self. We can't get past our own noses. And the voices of this ego are attachment, anger, pride, and all of it. These are the pollutions; these are the things that are blocking us from becoming who we really are. And the Mahayana view would say, not the view you've got, the different one, would say that every living being, every mind possess just naturally the potential to be perfect, to be a Buddha, to be liberated, to see reality as it is, to have infinite empathy with all beings. It's what defines us. We all possess Buddha nature as they say.

Audience member: [Inaudible]

Robina Courtin: Yes, yes they do. The wisdom wing, which is the Theravadan teaching, says most beings can only achieve their own liberation. So when you finish, you go, you disappear into space, you're finished, you're gone. The Mahayana would say we've all got the potential to continue on and go into the compassion wing and become body sufferers, and work for the sake of others and then accomplish Buddha. Buddha never stopped working for the sake others. That's the Mahayana. They're all being possessed [inaudible]. So there's different views in Buddhist teachings, and adapt to each one and look into it.

Audience member: [Inaudible]

Robina Courtin: Okay, it's an easy question, a perfect question; it's a perfect question and an easy answer. Do you--you have to first understand intellectually a recipe before you get the

experience of the cake don't you? You must understand musical theory before you can experience Bach on the piano, would you agree? So what is the piece that has to be included to get from the theoretical to the experiential with Bach and cooking? Practice. Well honey, just keep practicing those thoughts and slowly the penny will drop, meditating every day, thinking about it every day, using it as your world view to interpret the world day. Slowly it becomes experiential. That's how come we're good at anger now, because we've made it experiential. So it's just first having the words, the theories, the world view to whatever degree, and then continuing to actually put it, put your money where your mouth is and eventually it becomes experiential, it's logical. Does that make sense? But if we keep the dust in our head and think "by now I'm a clever cook, I know all these recipes," then of course you're in big trouble. So it's really tricky because ego is trick. We have to distinguish between knowing it, and we're clever, you know, we're really clever in our culture. We've got brilliant intellectual minds. We have to distinguish between the intellectual and experiential, but to know it's a stepping stone; it's an amazing stepping stone. So it's always the humility not to think, "oh, now I know it." Always keep moving, keep moving with it, keep applying it and then you've got it, watching your mind like a hawk.

Audience member: [Inaudible]

Robina Courtin: Of course! If you don't, you haven't gotten there, have you? If you just played the piano and you got grade one, and you've got to know you've achieved, your teacher tells what you have, but you've got to know. If you don't, eventually then you haven't got there, have you? Therefore wisdom means you know where you're at. You've got to know where you're at, know where you come from, know where you're at and know where you're going, in anything. Don't we? Yeah. Yes.

Audience member: [Inaudible]

Robina Courtin: With practice, these things from the past, we've brought them with us. Yes.

Audience member: [Inaudible]

Robina Courtin: Yes. They're all in there already but they're kind of small voices. Love and compassion and wisdom are little baby voices. And the big roommates are the big bully anger and depression and low self-esteem – are running the show now. So you better speak up and then argue with these models over here until they get quiet and these ones be, just like that-- one way of approaching is like that. It's like cognitive therapy.

Audience member: And for me that compassion, compassion and happiness as separate being, really work so nicely together because once I--

Robina Courtin: Start again.

Audience member: Compassion and--

Robina Courtin: Yeah.

Audience member: Yes, living for other people, is a lot more--

Robina Courtin: Being that tough on yourself. You mean. Know it's true. You could say this, the only way to be compassionate to others is you start with yourself. In other words,

compassion is helping others, but if, you know, if I--how can I help you play piano until I've played it? So as is hard as this is, compassion's not enough, you need wisdom. You've got to learn it yourself, do the inner work. Then you qualify to help others because we're all in the same boat. So every time you practice the wisdom wing, it makes you get a bit more compassionate. But every time you practice compassion it chips away at ego, saying both help each other. Both help each other, definitely. [Pause] Time to go? Oh, 1:25, that's it, thank you everybody, happy you were here.

[Applause]

Robina Courtin: Let me finish with a little miniature of prayer. A little prayer in Tibetan, don't get all holy, it's all right. There's two little prayers, one is, okay, we'll call it dedication prayer, so thinking, you know, as moments as there have been since we started, and many thoughts each of us has had, is as many karmas we have planted in the mind. So we think how marvelous that we nourish these seeds so that they do manifest as an inner development of our incredible potential, no matter how long it takes, for our sake and the sake of others. And then the other little prayer is [inaudible] compassion, [inaudible] a little singing Tibetan. [Pause]

[Foreign Language]