

Plum Village 40 Tenets

Class #18: Free will is possible thanks to the Three Trainings

04:46

Maybe my Dad will come so maybe my maybe my father will come so I brought that chair but maybe he will rest so but no no say that just maybe push it back a little bit and yeah because you cannot sit down yeah that's good yeah my father just just arrived [Music] [Music] [Music] Dear respected that dear dear sisters their brothers I really appreciate that you come for this class when I was a novice this is the daknim and we had the we had this kind of constant immersion in the dharma right so Thay was teaching

09:26

Sometimes three four times a week and and we had a chance to to just bathe in the dharma sometimes in vietnamese sometimes in english sometimes in french and that is uh anyway I just when I see you know and now andrew just just coming to bathe in the teaching is really yeah it's kind of like we say walking through the meadow and then there's dew on the grass and it naturally acculates on your robe so the more dharma you immerse yourself in the easier it is to practice when difficulty arises

10:24

and then to be able to transmit the dharma we need so many dharma teachers the world needs so many dharma teachers and when I you know see brother man sitting at the bell every week you know I know he will be a great dharma teacher because he's just letting the dharma come in and so we need to look in a life in how we're consing things because uh even in the monastery there are a lot of distractions and I see here at deer park you know we have the internet we have you know different things that can pull

11:08

us away even in the monastery so we need to look and see you know how are we spending our time what are we consing in every moment in every hour and that is our our choice we make a choice as practitioners and so I know that by becoming a monastic we make the choice to come and live our whole life in the sangha and so we just have to look around and we have nourishing words nourishing thoughts nourishing actions and we can conse them just now I got back from driving on the freeway to pick up my father

11:58

in near San Diego and and I haven't been down driving a car in a few weeks that's what I love about being a monk I don't have to drive I don't have to go out of the monastery and the past two weeks I've been in a in a writing retreat so the sangha has been really compassionate to me I felt a little bit shy to ask but brother fab sal and I are working on a book on mindful walking in nature and now we have a bit of a deadline I mean we still have time but in our daily schedule in the

12:42

monastery it's not easy to find time to to write so I'm so happy that the sangha let me do this and I I had a you cannot hear can you come closer otherwise I i'll have to get the we turn on the sound system yeah yeah maybe you can ask candy and I I use the microphone but yeah we are so far away that yeah maybe I need to come closer yeah maybe i'll move closer here we go well kenny will adjust the camera thank you so I I've been in a like can you hear now so good okay so I've been in this writing retreat so

14:29

the sangha let me go camping up in the mountain so I had my hammock and I had a table and some water and gaiwan to make tea and brother peter kuhn the lay brother he brought me some lung jin tea very nice and yes and I just had a pad some legal pads and some a pen I had a red pen and a black pen and a highlighter like a you know yellow and I was reading through first I was reading through transcripts from when we led a trip on the appalachian trail in 2018 of the dharma talks and we gave dhamma

15:22

talks for each of the folds of the eightfold path so brother and myself and typhapka and brother at that time type of man and so I was reading through and I was highlighting it was very it was so nourishing because I have the internet parallax helped to transcribe the talks and so I just had to go through and on the paper and highlight all the the interesting bits I was having fun looking and seeing ah not usually I didn't highlight the bits that sound like that I highlighted the bits that sound more like

16:01

that brother the particular things that they were interested in or that they learned in their own practice to bring into the book and then I was spending the rest of the time writing and it's so nice to write on a piece of paper we I'm so used to typing since I was very young and to to write out by hand and just take time and lay in the hammock and as things come and memories come and then I reflect on how my practice has grown through that experience of going on walking in nature on the appalachian

Plum Village 40 Tenets

Class #18: Free will is possible thanks to the Three Trainings

16:41

trail yeah I just I'm able to write and and so actually my voice is not very strong because I haven't been talking for two weeks I've just been mostly well a little bit I came for some meetings for dharma teacher meetings and one morning the sisters came up and walked by walk by came up to the well with the others to the upper waterfall and that was like that was so nice to take a break from from the writing retreat and have tea so I felt a little bit like a forest monk for a week or two weeks

17:24

just like I live up in the mountain and then I would walk down and come to meals so I I didn't have my alms bowl but I had you know when I picked up the bowl I think I'm a monk I live up in the mountain and I come down to beg for food and so like thanks to brother andrew he joined my cooking team so I didn't have to cook and I just had a chance to eat and practice gratitude for the sangha I feel very grateful to I know we have so many things we're doing in the sangha and to have two

18:00

weeks like that is is very precious so I'm very grateful so that's been my my kind of past two weeks and then today to get in a car and drive into town and you know eight lane highway or six lane I don't know the 15 sometimes it seems like it has eight lanes with the hov lanes and on the way back here with my father I had to cross from the hov lane across I think about eight lanes to get off on the 70 was it the 78 yeah going towards ramona and I thought my goodness how many things I have to be aware of in

18:45

that moment and really be mindful I'm in this car in this hunk of metal that I'm directing with the steering and we know yeah I think recently there was an accident so we know how dangerous it can be to you know to drive like that so I'm very very so to be in the monastery and to be able to you know just listen to the coyotes calling in the night or listening to the owl hooting [Music] this morning I had a visitation or yesterday afternoon actually I had a visitation from the tarantula hawk

19:31

this is a well they are out at different times of the year but I remember seeing them a lot at this time of year when it gets really hot so the tarantula hawk is a kind of wasp and it's very big like about that big. it's the biggest wasp I've ever seen and it has this kind of floor kind of what's the word many colored wings depending on the light they shine but they look kind of orangish but they look different in different light and this uh this wasp it searches for the tarantula

20:13

and they say it has the most painful bite of any insect in the world so I was I was very attentive when I saw the trench hawk below my hammock kind of going around and he was going into holes and looking under the under the the leaves to try I think to try to find the tarantula when they find the tarantula they sting the tarantula and the tarantula doesn't die but it just the sting is so painful that it just becomes totally paralyzed and then the tarantula hawk starts to drag the tarantula I one brother told me he saw a tarantula

20:52

hawk flying carrying a tarantula but I think it must have been a very small tarantula because the big one is there's no way I can carry it but one time I saw the that tarantula hawk sting the tarantula and then I was up walking in daily ranch and it was dragging this big tarantula like this I just saw the big tarantula and it was kind of like moving very strangely in the dark it was kind of it didn't you know I'm used to tarantulas walking very quiet and very careful of their steps but this tarantula was

21:30

just kind of I saw this big black thing just kind of moving and then moving a little and I I thought the tarantula was dead because it was not moving at all and the tarantula hawk would bite the leg or kind of the the body the bottom of the tarantula and then it used its legs like this to to push in the sand and then slowly slowly it dragged this huge tarantula and then normally it brings it to a hole it finds a hole and it puts a translator in there and then it injects a larva into the body of the paralyzed

22:14

tarantula which must be pretty horrific and the larva then comes wakes up and starts to eat the tarantula from the inside this is nature right in our backyard happening so so this this was many I saw that but yeah so this is the first one I've seen in a while so I was in my my hammock and I saw the trend the hawk fly is so big it flies very lazily but it's very quick and it's I think it's one of the meanest the transfer the hawk even though when it bites you it cannot it doesn't harm you but it's very, very

Plum Village 40 Tenets

Class #18: Free will is possible thanks to the Three Trainings

23:07

painful is what they say I don't know but so when I saw the tarantula hawk I really sat up and I paid attention yeah you stay over there tarantula hawk i'll stay here we mind our own business I will not bother you yeah and then to come down and go into a car into the town and when I drove to pick up my father I saw the traffic coming out of San Diego everyone driving home from a day at work and yeah and because I'm a monk I see that I have this feeling of compassion in my heart because I just know

24:05

I think of the people who every day are driving back and forth back in and when I picked up my father and we were driving back you know he he is now in his almost 80 years old in fact next year he will turn 80. told me as we pulled into escondido he said do this actually he worked his whole life until he was 60 most of his life not his whole life he did take a break for a few years which was wonderful when I was a teenager but he older man do this he said if there's some alien life form looking down

25:04

at us going back and forth in our cars you would think like the ants when we look down at the ends I had you know a little bit some potato chips out at my uh where I sometimes I had some mainly for the salt because in the heat I needed something for salt so sometimes I would eat a few and I dropped one chip on the ground and this morning it was it was almost black I think it must be so exciting for the end of it way up there on the mountain you have a chip and so I saw them going back and forth

25:48

and then taking a little bit of the chip and then going back to their nests so this today apropos the topic for today which is free will so the 18th tenet it's amazing we got to 18. almost halfway free will will is possible wow that is a bold statement free will is possible freedom is possible so we are here we are students of the shakia muni buddha and we have experienced freedom a ourselves of freedom and so we've encountered the dharma and so we decide to give up our life chasing after sense pleasures driving around

27:18

from here to there to have a career to have a family to have a car to have a status to [Music] respect for a lot of us most of us our families don't I'm not so happy that we're monks and nuns a lot of us uh difficulty convincing ourselves why are we doing this why are we giving everything up most of the monks and nuns we had successful lives out in the world we were doing well but deep inside of us we felt that there was something missing and it's freedom we're not truly free and we know

28:03

because we've tasted the dharma that freedom is possible and so we cannot accept anything less than freedom and so we we get rid of all these material things but then when we come to the monastery if we're not careful we start to acculate material things again not not like cars and houses and things like that but maybe you know a tea set or a nice backpack or a sleeping bag or whatever not only material things but we like to listen to some famous singer from vietnam or western and so we

28:51

we have a little place where we listen to those that music so there are many ways we can still continue accumulating things in the monastery but the environment is designed in a way to help us to let go because we are not in fear that we are not going to have food not have a place to sleep there's one zen master he said when you become punk you get three million dollars one is that you don't have to worry about your health another million is you don't have to worry about having food

29:30

to eat and the third million is that you don't have to worry about having a place to sleep and that is true you know all of them as a monastic you we we no longer worry about those things well I have food oh I need to go to the store oh to go to the store I need money I need a car so like all the conditions that are required for us to have food to have a place to sleep I tried to leave very simply this week because I like to know I like to remind myself that I can just live with uh uh you know

30:09

it's very little this is a little hammock and some water okay and I can be happy in the forest so from time to time we need to get in touch with that route in the past at deer park Thay encouraged us to do arms around so we contacted the lay community and the whole sangha went down with our sangat and with our arms bowl to uh and the lay friends offered food and we went in order of ordination with our arms bowls food into our bowl and then we would sit down outside in the field and enjoy eating together

Plum Village 40 Tenets

Class #18: Free will is possible thanks to the Three Trainings

30:57

and I really hope we can we can do that I was thinking when we have the for those of you online we are having a great precepts transmission ceremony for many of the young brothers brother minhan and also sister tanduano become shikshamana and many of them full big shoes and I was thinking wow cliff is coming here magnolia we should do an arms round it would be so lovely because I love to from time to time to get in touch with our root tradition which is that we beg *bikshu* means to beg a beggar from the root form bik

31:43

and bikshunI as well right so so it's nice to get with our root teachers the things he like to do the shakymunI buddha he liked to live in the forest very simply he liked to go on arms around so he didn't have a refrigerator where there's food you can open it up and go inside anytime you want he knew that every day he didn't know what he would eat he would go on arms around sometimes his attendant would go on arms around and then bring food back for him and he didn't know

32:25

I know the monks and by aguirre like the abbot Ajampasano he told the story about how one time he went on pindapat which is when the monks oh sorry I think toodong but anyway when you go kind of long extended journey and you don't know where you're going you just go to that town and he was in thailand and he went to a place I think up near Laos in the very north uh east of thailand and he stayed there for for many weeks and every day when he went down for arms round they put white rice in his bowl

33:09

and a boiled frog and so every day because in that area it's quite poor and what they have is white rice and they have lots of frogs so you know he ate what the people ate and so every day he would wake up and maybe he would think oh i'd be so lovely today if I had something anything other than white rice and boiled frog but once again he went on arms around and they put in white rice and a frog and so every day he just ate like that and that is a it was very hard for his body and for his health but that is the spirit of our

33:48

practice we don't know what we're going to eat here we are in the land of milk and honey in southern California right and we have like jimpos and you know nice organic everything you know I I coming back from village I was quite oh wow in the cooler my goodness this is very nice what we we have here but for now then that becomes an attachment so this is the what that wants to remember that free will is possible we need to look at the ways in which we have developed habit energies around our ways of eating our ways of

34:31

walking our ways of talking our ways of interacting and so because if we're not careful the way we walk the way we drive the way we talk we're like automating automatons the plural is automata it's a latin word it means automata were machines developed in at least in europe in especially about back to the beginnings of I think the 16th century already there was scientists who created autn and they machinery that resembled in some way the actions of a han being and so they're not

35:42

really alive but their way of moving he's like a little bit like han so it gives the appearance of being alive and there are many traditions of this right and now we have artificial intelligence smart robots smartphones yeah and we have the we've we continue in this tradition of automata in the modern world to to make machines that can behave like han beings now even have conversations some of the chinese monks that came to pl village a few years ago the one of their monks was an engineer and software

36:32

designer before he became a monk and so he he developed software for a a robot monk and that monk can ask and ask answer questions about the dharma so it sits it looks like a little plastic kind of very cute monk you can put on your table and you can ask a question like what is the eightfold noble path and the monk will say the eightfold noble path is right view right view is letting go of all views something like that you know and it will go through and tell you about the eightfold noble path so you

37:10

don't need to have brother blue or you know to answer your questions but you just have a robot monk that sits on your table and he just answers all the questions very easy right so they developed this monk unfortunately it only answers questions in mandarin chinese but maybe in the future they'll have one that answers questions in english and then I don't have to give more I can just lay in my hammock and mountain and put the robot monk here and we just start the camera and we can hear the dharma from the robot

Plum Village 40 Tenets

Class #18: Free will is possible thanks to the Three Trainings

37:49

monk it's okay I'm not sure brother minan will come to hear the monk automata okay so a machine that stimulates the han being so Thay said we walk we talk we drive we eat like automata like an automaton yeah we our habit energies are carrying are driving us and without mindfulness we are not aware of what we are doing we are already like automata we have a program to tell us what we're going to do next we're in our brain we're already programming you know maybe our vacation

38:43

maybe how we're going to go see our daughter in a play that evening at her school and yet we're driving the car and we're not there physically with the car I mean we're there physically but we're our mind is not there it's somewhere else so in that way we we're actually like automata and so Thay said free will is possible thanks thanks to the three trainings we already talked about the three trainings also call them the three taintless trainings that we have on our in all of our centers on our stained

39:41

glass windows mindfulness so when we practice stopping when we hear the sound of the bell we become aware of what we are doing and that training then we carry with us throughout our day so we learn the capacity to stop and recognize what is going on in the present moment and not to continue to get carried away by like like an automaton by uh our thinking by our speaking by our acting when we hear the sound of the bell and listen to the five contemplation we are reminded to be aware of the of our food

40:37

and aware of the community to look deeply into the food and see every time not just once like oh I look at my carrot oh yeah the sun's in there the rain the earth yeah I know that and I'm already done with that I don't need to do that anymore that's not training that's knowledge is an obstacle at the beginning of the class I talked about the we talk about two kinds of obstacles or obstacle or obscuration something that darkens a part of our mind a part of our awareness anyone remember what they are

41:45

the two of ours knowledge is one right and the first one is afflictions so cliché you know so the obstacle of afflictions or sometimes defilement usually we say afflictions an obstacle of knowledge so this is fairly easy to understand the obstacle of our actions when we are angry we cannot see clearly it's like a whole area of our mind has become obscured blocked by our anger or our despair when we're in a state of despair then even our friend comes and tells us that we are so wonderful that this we are

43:53

they're so happy to be there with us but we are just lost in our despair we cannot we cannot generate a feeling of joy that is uh the obstacles when our gracia our fianna are strong then they block and even when they are weak they continue to block areas of our mind and so there are many areas of our mind in our body which do not access tyson is like a laptop nowadays even a an ipad a smartphone is a super computer from a few years ago 10 20 years ago it's like a super computer but have we realized everything that

44:41

that super computer can do probably not we just make a docent we send an email we use the web browser but actually if we really all of the things that that small computer in our pocket could do it can fly an airplane if we know how to harness its power and the same is true of our mind the mind has incredible capacities and that's what the buddha demonstrated he actually he realized this but at some point after his enlightenment he thought it was so tiring to try to transmit it to people because

45:20

then they get jealous with one another, my students will like become jealous one of the other they'll cause me all kinds of conflict problems so he just I don't want to teach the dharma because it's too tiring to teach people but then in the story the great one of the great devas brahma came and begged the brahma sahambatl beg the buddha please buddha teach the dharma there are those who have only a little bit of dust so a little bit of obscuration they are not so overwhelmed by the despair their anger

46:01

and their their knowledge if they hear just a little bit of the dharma they can their eyes their sight will become clear and they can be free they can touch freedom and so the buddha taught and so we have the buddha's teaching so we look and see in our own life how are these obstacles affected our ability to see our mind's own capacity so we find mindfulness trainings we know that we if we do not kill let others kill that we have less affliction it's for our own benefit of course it

Plum Village 40 Tenets

Class #18: Free will is possible thanks to the Three Trainings

46:46

benefits other living beings because we don't harm other living beings but it also it makes us suffer we don't want to hurt other living beings it's so painful even a small animal a small insect when you see it suffer because you hurt its leg or you do you know maybe you just turn on the water and there's an ant in the sink and it drowns and you know we feel the effect of that even we don't intend to harm yeah of course even more so if we intend much much more so but we we feel some

47:28

some effect in our mind but even the smallest and so those afflictions they create obstacles for us to see our mind's capacity so we practice the mindfulness trainings in order to open up our capacity so that we can overcome you know these things like anger despair and give rise to compassion and understanding if we are living our everyday life in anger and despair about the past and regrets and worries and so forth then it's very difficult to have compassion for ourselves or for others

48:12

so we have that capacity our mind has the capacity to be compassion compassionate but it's blocked by our afflictions so the practice is to how can we learn to reduce afflictions and so we we see that these things are not so important we don't need to get angry we don't need to get lost in despair we see we practice to see the phenomenal world as illusory it's not the sense that like this table is not there you know it's but in the sense that when we see that this physical table

48:59

is actually not what I get attached to but it's my idea about the table the feeling of the table the color I'm not too attached to tables but I might be attached to certain kinds of food I might be attached to certain kinds of sound and so because we take those things to be really real actually it's just our perception and so that leads to afflictions so one of the practices too is to see that this is only my perception it is not really the table that I'm attached to but actually my perception about it

49:41

is not really my loved one my beloved one that I love so deeply but it's the image I have of that person inside that I'm attached to and so when they leave and they go off with someone else I suffer much I have so much pain but it's not because the physical person is left it's because physical person now in conflict with our image of the person who loves us who cares about us who wants to stay with us and that dissonance that cognitive dissonance in buddhism we call that I cliché listen to the sound of the

50:48

breathe in breathe out nowhere to go and nothing to do so in the way out of this cycle of affliction which makes us live like automata we another way to talk about the obstacles is a cycle of reacting we call it samsara we just keep going around and around and around so in buddhism this cycle of birth and death in my birth and death we mean of things arising and passing away the same thoughts over and over rising passing away arising passing away our cycle of reaction we behave like in automata

52:29

so how do we get freedom so we need to work we need to train ourselves we need to recognize that even as I stand here giving the talk I know that I have I'm full of habit energies speaking in english is a habit using my hands like this is a habit right so everything there this habitual action there so of course the buddha recognized that that we we have habit energy so we learn to take on good habits right the kind of habits that will keep us free from the obstacle of affliction and also help us to let go of our

53:17

attachment to knowledge so the obstacle affliction that is more clear perhaps but the obstacle knowledge can be more subtle for example we can get very attached to the buddhist teachings that's what as buddhists maybe we think of ourselves as buddhist then that can be one of our struggles because we we like buddhism so we don't want to hear about anything else it's not buddhism but that asks us we need to see buddhism in non-buddhist teachings so we recognize that buddhism is made up

54:02

of only non-buddhist elements so that way we learn to overcome the obstacle of knowledge so we don't get caught in buddhist terms but we see them only as guiding means to help us to look deeply into life and it may be that from christianity or western philosophy or literature or islam or zoroastrianism whatever you can find buddhist elements there in the teachings in the teachings on love teachings on understanding even though they might not use those words but you can feel something we love something we can call

Plum Village 40 Tenets

Class #18: Free will is possible thanks to the Three Trainings

54:54

compassion in all these wisdom traditions so even we need to train ourselves to not be a mind to be blocked by being attached to buddhist teachings even though they give us so much freedom built into them is the letting go just like the story of the raft right the man builds a raft to cross to the other if he's attached to the raft then he wants to pick it up and carry it with him everywhere he goes so in case there's another river he can cross the river with that raft the buddhist teachings are like that we

55:35

need to not be like that man we leave the wrath there we let go so when the dharma helps us to be free we don't go need to go running back to the dharma and just get attached to it dogmatically but learn to to widen that freedom so when we touch freedom with mindfulness for example by eating our meal in mindfulness getting in touch with the flavors no two meals are the same every meal that I sit down to even every morning is we have oatmeal with the cinnamon right after the oatmeal there's usually

56:27

the cinnamon and then we have lots of boxes of american cereals which I usually don't touch I did a little bit because when I came back from france I was like wow you know I'm back in america we have box cereal I mean they have that in france but it's not such a big deal like in america and so I started having it but now I stopped I think I gained a little bit of weight and then I stopped doing that and then we have uh some nuts and raisins and then you have a choice of oat milk or soy milk or

57:00

almond milk and then maybe peanut butter or almond butter and oh of course there's bread and you can go toast the bread and yeah you can try different things on on your bread to change it every single day anyway you get the point so maybe every day we have the same breakfast but if you really eat it in mindfulness you see that the flavors that are you're experiencing are different with every meal there's something new you can learn from this meal with every bite you chew it in new ways you say I'm

57:40

chewing it on this side of my mouth and I move it to this side of my mouth yeah it will learn so that's a training for in for for free I talked about establishing sovereignty in ourselves we need to learn to establish sovereignty it's not automatic that we become free most people they're just caught in as an automaton because of fear traa yeah they live their lives and they don't want anything new they don't want to experience something different just creating the same the same thing

58:30

there's a place to feel safe but someday it breaks open right because there are all these parts of our mind that they we cannot see they're obscured by our afflictions of fear filled up with but when our mind and which has been tried we try to reduce our mind to an automata it doesn't like that because our mind is a living organism our body our mind body is alive and we want to be free it wants to be free but we because we stepped outside of that boundary in the past we had some kind of

59:14

painful feeling painful emotion some kind of traa we don't want to go there anymore we fear that space and so meditation is opening up that space again allowing us to create within ourselves a space of non-fear so that the true freedom can grow and we learn recently I wrote beginning a new letter to my sisters because some misunderstanding and wrong perception and after I wrote that letter I felt so free because I saw that I was his mind was just going around in samsara trying to say no but I meant this and

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I didn't mean that and why stand it like that and this and it's like arguing in my mind so I said okay so during my writing retreat I took one of my writing sessions to write a letter of beginning anew to water the flowers and all the good things in that sister and then also to share regrets my own conduct which I know has not had many comings and that's it I didn't make any excuse I just explained my admiration for many of the good qualities and then a regret from my own and even I didn't

01:00:51

I didn't give that letter in yet to that sister but I felt free right away I felt so much happier because I would I had brought mindfulness to the situation I didn't get just like an automata to end up in a cycle of anger of reaction of judgment and just because I know that that there's no way out of that I feel like I'm in a prison when we feel like we're imprisoned by our relationship with someone then we suffer so much we don't feel freedom so by sitting that down that is a that

Plum Village 40 Tenets

Class #18: Free will is possible thanks to the Three Trainings

01:01:32

is a practice for myself of course I give the letter to the sister but is primarily for myself to be able to do that and I practice that many times with my brothers and my sisters because I want to live in harmony I don't want to I don't want to live like an automaton in my daily life as a monk I want to be free and so I need to look and see ah is there pride there that is blocking me pride is a affliction what kind of things are blocking me from really community truly communicating with myself

01:02:10

well with my brothers and then also with myself and so writing a letter of beginning anew when we practice beginning a new we in the flowers of the other person and then we express a regret and then optionally we can express her but usually my practice is not to express a hurt in a letter if we need to express the hurt then we do that in person so that we really have water the person flowers and express the regret so we create an environment for for us to share with that person and we always share our hurt from our

01:02:55

own perception we don't try to make a claim to know absolute reality but we said I had this perception and this is why I was hurt and do it like that then the other person has the space to be able to share their own perception yeah but my own practice I I don't do that in a letter because usually I think if you like that then they forget everything about the flower watering and the expression and they only remember that you shared about your hurt and they have a kind of bitter aftertaste

01:03:30

so so my practice is just to and that's good enough usually because there's so many things happening in the world that we have to deal with go and revisit every single conflict down to every little detail right of things happened in the past we recognize that we are practitioners and we are all doing to try to practice so can we can we let go what happened and then we you know if someone sincerely shows us that they begin anew and they want to change their behavior they might not want to change their behavior in the way

01:04:06

that you want them to but at least they will try to do less harm in their way of acting so that is my approach very pragmatic to beginning a new is I I I because I had that tendency when I was a young person in my family and so forth we had to explain in every detail and because in my family we all have very good memory my mom my Dad my brother my sister and me we all so we remember in exquisite detail everything that happened some things we just have to let it go because yeah they're unskillful things

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but we have to give you know we yeah we allow the obstacle the compassion can arise and even we feel the other person is behaving like an automaton continuing to be in the cycle of reacting arguing saying the same things but we we are practitioners we want to we want to be free we want to practice mindfulness and so that is my my personal approach is like in the world we don't need to create more suffering in our way of being with each other so let us look for ways to let go of what has happened in the past

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yeah what has happened in the past still is having results in the future we're in a climate crisis we don't know if future generations will be able to live on the planet anyway like we have we are living today that is the the s we we should not think it is only because we are living selfishly today that is the actions of many generations of our ancestors many ancestors thankfully have learned the dharma and have lived simply on the planet thank goodness for what peace and happiness there is in

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the world I think a lot of it is somehow because our ancestors got in touch with the dharma or whatever we call it it doesn't have to be the word the dharma but the dharma we are living dharma thanks to those ancestors we have the happiness that we can touch today thanks to the as we have some peace on this planet some meaningful relationship to mother earth but not all of our ancestors got in touch with the dharma and they continued to extract resources from the earth violence towards the earth towards

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people using power systems of power racism as violence to extract more wealth and fame and power and because of that we have a crisis we are we are we have become addicted to ancient we are addicted to the ancient sunlight that is buried in under the surface of the earth and now we need to learn to come back to the present moment and enjoy the present moment sunlight like solar panels or the wind that is that is the wisdom of the dharma that we can already find enough conditions for happiness in the present moment

Plum Village 40 Tenets

Class #18: Free will is possible thanks to the Three Trainings

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but not all of our ancestors had that insight and so we are faced with this situation today of the climate crisis that is of past actions but we need to learn to let go and not dwell too much on that we need to be a shining light an example for the world to go forward of how to live our lives simply in community here at deer park we have solar panels you can find maybe something better than solar panels we can learn through electricity consumption do we really need or can I just put my hammock up

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on a tree and be happy with some water water is difficult in south carolina but luckily here in deer park we have a well and we have you know if need we have water we can use for the community so we try to learn how to live simply yeah so that we we can see that happiness is possible with this kind of living that is the wisdom of the dharma so and we do that because we want to be free so with mindfulness everything becomes a miracle every moment just being aware of the wonders of our body right here and right now

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coming back to our breathing it's a wonder I really love the practice of mindfulness concentration so with mindfulness we want to have more mindfulness luckily I don't know anyone who became addicted to mindfulness mindfulness is so wonderful maybe you think well somebody gets addicted to mindfulness but I didn't see that ever happen it's uh you can never have enough enough mindfulness I used to say so we can always increase our mindfulness and our relationships become our harmonious

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our capacity to see what is happening in the present moment grows greater so that our suffering becomes less because when we know what's happening in the present moment then we don't do or say things that cause harm or suffering that is our native nature it's only because we don't see what is going on that we call to ourselves and to others so so the more we want mindfulness the more we want it to be there in every moment so there that is concentration so learning to keep our mindfulness

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throughout the day throughout five seconds 10 seconds 30 seconds so ty used to use the marker and say oh so when we are breathing we keep our mind on our breath the whole length of the in-breath and then the whole length of the out breath that is concentration so keeping our attention completely on the object so subject and object become one a unification of body and mind yeah so our body might be our object of our mindfulness and our mind stays with the body so in relaxation we do a body scan so we

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stay with the body for half an hour or 40 minutes and the this brother or sister guiding us in the meditation voice is helping us to maintain our concentration there are many things that want to pull our attention away when we learn that our attention is one of our most valuable resources then we learn not to give our attention to that advertisement or even to read the news the newspapers are vying for your attention and there are some things we need to know but I always remember you know they asked Thay Thay you watch

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the news and Thay says I said Thay doesn't need to if something important happens one of that students will let him know so I always remember that when I get too much in like these two weeks I didn't I reduced to a minim like checking email I only came to the monastery a few days to check email and I I think I looked at the news maybe once or twice very briefly and I actually didn't miss very much and sometimes I can very easily get into just checking the headlines every single but what am I learning that is new

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am I checking in with my body that is much more important to my happiness than reading the news every day so learning how to let go of those actions and bring our attention to the present moment so in order to understand free will we need to understand the nature of our volition and the when we look with precision into every instant we see that there are certain factors that are always there in a moment of consciousness contact so when our when our attention comes in contact with our breathing that is

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awareness of breathing so that gives rise to a perception of the breath so we have contact attention if we attend to our thinking then we are not attending to our breathing so by bringing our attention back to the breath we are that is concentration our attention stays on the object of its of our meditation for for a long time yeah for even just a few seconds that is concentration and the object of our attention can be it can be our body it can be our thinking it can be the bug flying around my face

Plum Village 40 Tenets

Class #18: Free will is possible thanks to the Three Trainings

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yeah these are so and when we get down into the neuroscience of attention we see that actually our attention is just clusters patterns of firing simultaneously and at any given moment our brain through the sense inputs is modeling the world outside through patterns of neurons firing and so our tension all these patterns of neuro sometimes hundreds of neurons firing at the same time they're all vying for and so when the bug comes and almost gets in my eye then suddenly my attention shifts very quickly there

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because there's some this might become dangerous this is flying around it's okay I don't pay much attention it's it's not become alert but when it comes so close to my eye and I feel it then suddenly my attention quickly shifts there because I know that I can it's very painful to get something in my eye and so my body knows that and so suddenly that becomes the primary object of my attention but when the bug goes away then I I bring my attention back to my worst what I'm saying

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it's just concentration or speech so that's why I always say dharma sharing is just like any other practice mindful breathing mindful walking mindful eating in dharma sharing we become aware of our the words that we're saying and the words and what we're hearing and also what we are seeing in the person but that becomes the object of our attention so we just bring that same mindfulness that we brought to our step or to her to the speaking or the listening if we're just listening

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it's not that complicated everything we've been doing in the rest of the retreat we just bring it to our speech in our and people learn and they say things they never imagined they would say in dharma sharing just by bringing mindfulness to their speaking and automata I keep coming back to the automaton not there anymore see I that's an automata I had a I conditioned myself to see the word automata in here on the board and now I was not mindful that it's not when I thought oh it's not there anymore

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it's a different word it's a tension so I have to change so this is so our speaking can be dramatic but with mindfulness it becomes free and concentration insight of the training so insight is like with attention seeing that certain factors are always there in a moment of consciousness there's the contact like our attention is directing our what we are looking at to use the term look it's not eyes right it's it's actually our mind it's attending to something and then it comes

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in contact with the object and that gives rise to a feeling be a pleasant feeling painful feeling mixed feeling neutral feeling but with every moment of attention there's a feeling that arises some sort and so we learn to recognize that because actually we live our lives according to our feeling so and usually we're trying to go in the direction of pleasant feelings and try to avoid painful feelings but as meditation practitioners we learn to to also allow painful feelings to happen we want to be free we don't want to be

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an automaton who is just like everyone just trying to painful feelings and get closer to the pleasant feelings we want to understand our mind and we don't want we want our mind to become imperturbable so we no longer run away from painful feelings we allow them to come up of course we don't create painful unnecessarily but when painful feelings arise we practice to look at them with mindfulness and concentration then we get an insight into the nature of that painful feeling and as we've already been learning we

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know that suffering and happiness are of the same nature by understanding our suffering we also create the possibility for happiness to happen so understanding this these this happening very quickly in our mind is so important we attend to something but we come in contact with the feeling arises as well as perception so we might have the perception ah that's pleasant oh that's painful just very minimally but we also might note the color if we're looking at something like that I have a pleasant feeling when i

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look at the orchid and so I want to not only is this an orchid but because I think like brother man anne or somebody else has prepared the space so they care so that caring gives me so it's not just the beautiful form of the orchid but it's also the care these these things are all happening very very quickly and so in the future when I see an orchid I think of that usually because that always brothers and sisters love to put orchids and fertilizers not always orchids but very often orchids for that zama talk

Plum Village 40 Tenets

Class #18: Free will is possible thanks to the Three Trainings

01:20:58

and so I think of that so it's a very pleasant feeling but I can get caught in that I think that is oh for that it has to be an orchid and then I get caught in the obstacle of knowledge so we start to think oh for that we always have to have an orchid or o for that we always have to do it like this or like that and we are caught we don't see that's freedom because that also sometimes had to give dharma talks in very difficult situations I saw in vietnam sometimes the sound system was a mess

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and people could not go that in 2005 when we went back to vietnam sometimes Thay had to give dharma talks in the most difficult situation and so we know that also is embracing those difficult painful feelings of having to give a dharma talk when people cannot hear you and by embracing not getting caught in obstacle of knowledge things have to be always like that and then volition the fifth of the universal mental factors and this is related here with the topic of today free will so we need to understand our volition

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because that is what is causing us to behave like an automaton in our daily life are reacting so ty shared the story and I in one of his books of a young man who every time he went to meetings he would react and get angry at what happened in the meeting and so one of his friends came along and said dear brother I see that you get very angry when you come to the meetings so I see such a dark name smiling because sometimes our monastic meanings are like that and we know someone who always reacts maybe

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sometimes we are that person we always you know react in the same way in uh in a talk or a meeting so that friend to help he had come for this friend it's always reacting because same the attention the contact is coming in contact with the object but it's it's stuck we have an attachment in our mind already when we came to the meeting we already knew we were going to get angry sometimes it's like that we know we're going to get angry and so maybe we better stay home right so

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because actually we're not mindful of what's happening in the meeting we already have an idea and we're creating the conditions in our mind for our suffering to happen because we think that sister is going to say that that brother's going to say that and I'm going I don't agree with that and so that friend he came to his friend he said dear friend I see that you get angry often in meetings what if I held your hand and I squeezed your hand when I notice you reacting and you just take some

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a breath a few breaths before you say or do anything and so he did that for that friend and he squeezed his hand and so instead of reacting in the habitual way like an automaton he actually was able to breathe and recognize what was going on that he was very quickly these universal factors were operating his attention was going to that same part of his mind the same percep same reaction become anger yeah that's abolition to release those hormones in our body which give rise to anger and if that

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teaching in a book but in 2013 when I had written to the then the president of the world bank and I asked him if ty could come and speak to the staff of the world bank at the time I had known him before he became the president of the world bank and jim kim dr jim kim and and so I knew that he practiced mindfulness and meditation I thought that I knew that he he he loved a teacher's book the miracle of mindfulness anyway we were invited to go the whole sangha with Thay to to the world bank and

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and that gave [Music] to the world bank behind the door and anyway when we were preparing for that and Thay also taught the world bank staff he did a day of mindfulness and also did a panel presentation in uh september 2013 and uh we went a few weeks before to prepare because this was I felt very important and I you know I was the main organizer I I wanted everything to go certainly and when uh we came to the place that was being set up for the day of mindfulness actually it was not this a few weeks before we went and this was

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actually when the day before the day of mindfulness and I saw that they had that on the podi I they had a higher and they had a screen on the side and all these people would be sitting in chairs behind high looking screen of that teaching and when I saw that I thought oh my gosh we cannot do that people cannot tie like that and they're not even looking at that they have their shoulder to tie and it's oh my gosh this is so disrespectful we cannot do the day of mindfulness like that and

Plum Village 40 Tenets

Class #18: Free will is possible thanks to the Three Trainings

01:27:37

typhobyung was there with me thankfully and he had told me a couple days before but I didn't know that it came from a story from he said I know this is a very stressful situation you're the main organizer of this and sometimes you have a tendency to and so you know that if I see that happening I'm going to squeeze your hand and so I remember we were walking into that the place where the the the atri of the world bank where the day of mindfulness would happen and I saw the chairs like that

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and right away I started to breathe in deeply and I thought you know I was going to the organizer the world bank piece of my mind about this setup and type of young took my hand and squeezed my hand and I stopped and it really worked breathe because it using my hand it overrode just like the moth my eye right that close and then that I felt you know have a second body like that and an older brother who can take my hand and squeeze my hand and I was able to stop and breathe and give space to the moment

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and not react in the same way that is freedom that is free will that is mindfulness concentration and insight and it is we can do it with a good spiritual friend helping us that is also possible we don't have to pretend we have to save the world by ourself but we can reach for our brother or sister's hand maybe squeeze it just to help them to come back to their body back to their breathing and then and then we were able to work it out very harmoniously nope it was not a problem at all to have the people like that and

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but what would have been a problem was my reaction but because thanks to a good spiritual friend I came back to the three trainings of mindfulness concentration and insight and and didn't react and didn't get angry and so isn't it don't we all wish we had a friend like that in certain moments of our life when we we didn't have anyone there to remind us not to get caught and be an automaton just reacting to our in the same way so we need to look deeply into our volition it is behind our volition all of the

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firing happening very quickly our contact attention field which is firing are we going to get angry or are we going to put our volition in mindful breathing stopping coming back to our body and the possibility of freedom thank you thank you all it's a very free will and I think that taisha many more much many more things about this and i'll try to put it into the future talks so we'll have a I think this is the 18th and we'll have another class next week 19th so [Music] you...
