

THERAPY AND BUDDHISM

- 134.** In my experience as a therapist, I have seen that the practice of meditation can help those who are troubled and lost. It can help them to separate out from their habitual sense of being helplessly merged in the flow of experience. Developing calmness and clarity lets us sit on the bank of the river observing the flow without being pulled in to it. With some direction and support we can all learn to be attentive to, yet not involved in, whatever is occurring. This is a huge relief! I am not my symptom nor my diagnosis. I am the one who can start to see what is going on and what I am up to.
- 135.** Our meditation is based on emptiness, the emptiness of our mind and the emptiness of all phenomena. Awakening to the illusory nature of existence allows us to not take ourselves too seriously. Impermanent experiences arise and pass and so we learn to participate without reification, releasing the limiting seductions of hopes and fears. Working as a therapist, whether having good sessions or bad sessions, positive transference or negative transference, whatever arises is the play of emptiness. Then there is nothing much to say about our work just, *"Oh yes, another busy day*
- 136.** Nothing lasts forever. When the spring is here, the flowers come out. When autumn comes, the flowers die, and then in winter little is left above ground. When I began work as a therapist, I didn't know very much but it was spring-time and fresh ideas popped up like flowers. After a while the garden of my practice was blooming. But the years go by and now, although I know a lot more, it's almost winter for me and my professional life will soon end. That's life. So many of the things I could do then, I can't do now. It is time to let go. We take our place in the world according to our seasons. When winter comes enthusiasm declines and our mood is more calm. Knowing the fact of loss, knowing how to let go and experience less than we once did—these poignant experiences can deepen our empathy and allow a deeper acceptance of life. So much therapy theory is focussed on the nature of psychological change, as if change won't happen unless we make it happen. Yet reflecting on our own impermanence reminds us that change is the heart of all experience and the power of our agency is not so great. Change occurs in patients when they open to the ever-changing rhythms of life
- 137.** In having our story we need to hold in mind the ingredients that have gone into it. This is easy if you are making a salad, because the ingredients put together in a salad can be quite easily identified. If you're baking something in the oven, like lasagna, then it's not so easy because the heat brings about a transformation. The various flavours run together to create a composite taste. The function of the therapist being mindful in the clinical setting is to help the client eat the raw food of direct experience. Every time you cook experience by putting it in the oven of habit and assumption you kill off a lot of its vitamins. Help the client stay close to the freshness of their experience and support them in seeing the processes through which they construct their composite story. Yes, we do need to have our stories if we are going to function in the world, for this world is largely composed of stories, yet we also need to see that each story we

tell is just a story, just one version, just one pattern of what we might present. If we get caught in the story and take it to be the truth then we will lose our clarity

- 138.** At the end of the therapy the patient, having been freed from the transference, can now see that the therapist is an ordinary person. That dream of the specialness of this particular other is over. However, that doesn't stop the dreaming. Dreams go on. You end the dream of analysis and you might pick up another dream, perhaps the dream of 'buddhism'. Dream follows dream, each one appearing to be real and true. Lucid dreaming, being awake in the dream, offers the chance to participate without solidification or grasping
- 139.** The idea of a divided self can be quite shocking since it puts in question our familiar sense that, 'I'm just me'. In fact we are not divided nor are we unitary. We are multiple, we are myriad energetic forms. Our multiplicity sometimes appears coherent and sometimes appears incoherent. Rather than treating our variety as an orchestra requiring scores and a conductor, we might simply allow our diversity to show itself and collaborate respectfully. Our self is dynamic and relational and so every description we give of ourselves is contextually valid and not intrinsically so. To be a balanced person is to be skilled in facilitating group therapy for our own many different aspects!

Excerpts from Transcript