



The following talk is given by Tara Brach, meditation teacher, psychologist and author.

Namaste and welcome. In Buddhist cosmology, there's a term that I think's really powerful and it's called the Realm of the Hungry Ghosts. And it's a psychic realm and it's a description really of us and certain states and it's the beings in it are depicted with these narrow narrow necks and these huge bellies which really are reflecting this endless desire for satisfaction and this incapacity to ever really be satisfied, the grasping and addiction that we get caught up in. So, it's really that space of living in that chronic sense of, something's missing, I need something more to be OK.

And I was reminded of this term because last weekend on Saturday night I spent about 15 or 20 minutes walking through a Sands Casino in Pennsylvania and you might wonder what was I doing at a casino? I was at a wedding and a lot of the guests were in that hotel. So, Jonathan and I decided we'd just have a sociological experience of our culture. So, we wandered through and the most notable thing to me, and it was packed Saturday night, was that nobody was happy. There was this sense of, there was either this intense focus and being pumped up and this wanting you could feel or this kind of deflation or angry or in some way defeated. There was very little eye contact possible. I mean even couples were there, they weren't there together, really. You know, one of them was on the machines. It was the Land of Hungry Ghosts and it sounds extreme but when we're honest we realize that for many of us, we live with a kind of gnawing dissatisfaction, a kind of a disappointment that our lives aren't turning out the way we wanted. There's a sense of never arriving like we're trying to get somewhere or not and we're not there.

So, this hungry ghost can have a whole range of degree. But along with that is that we have then patterns, again chronic patterns, on how we are trying to meet our needs. And we use all these different substitute gratifications whether it's sugar or approval seeking or our possessions and as we know, when we're doing that, it's temporary fixes. You know, we feel we're on a roller coaster. We feel better for a little bit but then the need is back there again. So, we have a lot of this hungry ghost energy that runs through many of us.

Some of you might remember one of my favorite little essays on this kind of thing is, I called, Inner Peace. If you want to achieve inner peace you need to finish all the things you started. So, I looked around seeing all the things I had started and hadn't finished. So, today I finished one bottle of gin, a bottle of red wine, a pint of Ben and Jerry's, my Prozac, and a large box of chocolates. You have no idea how good I feel and how short lived that will be. So, this hungry ghost energy, it fixates on substitutes but it can be really tenacious. I remember a line from Woody Allen where he says, "I love this old watch. You know, it was my grandfather's when he was on his deathbed he sold it to me."

I've shared that when I was in high school, my introduction to Buddhism was basically, you need to let go of your attachments and not be caught in desire. And I thought that



meant that desire was bad and it was quite a number of years till I came back around to Buddhism but it was a misunderstanding. And it's one that I see in a lot of people because the teachings are not that desires are bad. In fact, desire goes hand in hand with existing. There's no existence without desire. You wouldn't be here if it weren't for desire, really. And filling desire can be temporarily pleasant and not having it filled can be temporarily unpleasant but it's being caught that's the suffering. OK? It's the caught part of it. It's where there's a hook where, and we're going to look in our lives, where we have that hook, where there's a sense of, I have to have this to be happy. I have to have this to feel OK. If it doesn't, if life doesn't cooperate in this way, it's really not OK. OK?

When Tai Forest Monk Arjun Cha, very very well known, inspired a lot of this generation's teachers in Western Buddhism, it was known that he'd walk around his monastery and when he'd see one of the monastics looking like they're having a hard time, he'd go up to them and say, "You must be very attached." And that was his comment, "You must be very attached." And then the invitation would be, OK where's the hook?

So, I do think of our attachments and addictions when they reach the very strong locked in way as a flag. And as a flag, it's really a flag that we've left home. It's a flag that our attention's energies are fixated outside ourselves and in some way we've pulled away from our own awareness in our own heart. And if we can pay attention to where we're stuck, where we're most stuck, if you can like really get it, this is where I'm hooked and if we're willing to pay attention to deepen our attention, then that very place of stuckness, the hook, actually becomes a portal to a very profound transformation and freedom and that's the promise.

So, this class, what we'll do is we'll, there will be an inquiry into where our attachments or addictions constricting our life force, where for each of us. And again, it can get very very subtle. The more you've been working on the spiritual path and deepening attention, the more you find more and more very very subtle hard to detect places where there are some holding on. I think the best nutshell summary that was given of freedom is that to cling to nothing, nothing at all whatsoever, as mine, as me or mine. So, it's a non clinging.

It's a very alive one for me, the particulars of talking about attachment addiction because my mother was an alcoholic and she stopped drinking when I was, I think 18, and then that became her life work, working in the field of alcoholism. I had an eating disorder when I was younger. I've had siblings and friends having every kind of possible addiction we can think of. Through the years working with students and as a therapist, most people when they start getting real with themselves find that they're hooked on something. So, it becomes part of our honesty and our self awakening to get, "Well, what is that? What's going on?" Just out of curiosity, I'm going to do a hand raise thing, how many of you feel like you kind of know your primary areas of attachment or addiction, you're kind of onto yourself on that? Can I see by hands? For those that are listening, four fifths. I'd like to share this with those that aren't in the room. How many feel like you're consciously



working in this area? Like you're really kind of trying to undo and loosen up? Yeah. Okay that's interesting.

So, as I mentioned there's different degrees. And so the first question, let's just to ask is, what actually is desire because it's considered this universal energy that all life desires to exist to flourish. And I remember some years ago probably about four or five years ago, I read a really interesting article in New York Times science section that described how a mathematically perfectly balanced universe couldn't exist. In other words, a matter and antimatter where exactly equal, they'd cancel each other out. But, and this is there was one of those demonstrations in the Fermi National Accelerator Lab where they created a little mini universe and show what happened right after the Big Bang. And they show in collisions that there is a slight bias of certain elements in the electron to it's charged opposite. So, there's this cosmically miniscular leaning towards attraction. So, that rather than cancelling each other out, existence happens.

Now my understanding doesn't go any deeper than that, but it's to me what the intuition is is that formless being wants to manifest. It's like the ocean wants to have waves and that the ocean knows itself through the appearance of waves. That's my favorite way of describing it to myself. That it's an intricate part of this whole universe that we awaken through perceiving, form perceive. Then the ocean perceives itself through the waves. We perceive what we or this awareness and love through forms.

So, it's an organizing principle and desire takes on different dimensions of aliveness. It takes on the dimension of the desire for food, to connect with food and the material plane to be alive and sex and self-esteem and feeling safe and feeling bonded and self realization and awareness itself. There are different dimensions of desire, what we yearn for. So, what turns desire into attachment? In other words, where do we get some hooks and stickiness in here? The Latin word for desire is desiderare and it means, away from your star. So, when there's desire there's some sense of being away from home and a longing for home coming and that feels kind of intuitively true. That, I think of it that, our star is the energetic source of our being, the awareness that's the source of our being. And we have a longing to come home to our true nature, to really rest in our wholeness. So, each dimension of desire, the expressions of aliveness from the [00:11:59] **grow** [0.3] to the more and more subtle, from wanting food, to wanting the light and experience of awareness itself.

Now, the hook. If our basic needs are not met, if our basic needs for food for security for bonding are not met, then our attention narrows and fixates. Desire becomes fixated. Desire intensifies and the more unmet needs, the more we get fixated until we call it attachment or addiction. And some examples are this: That they've seen with chimps that when there's poor bonding, then the young chimp grows up not only to be very aggressive but to be a binge eater. OK? Just that's what it is. That's the substitute gratification. That's a primitive reward system. And then with fruit flies, and I found this from an article



called Sex and Alcohol in a very small scale, male fruit flies deprived of sex may turn to alcohol as a source of pleasure. They did an experiment where they had two groups of male fruit flies and one had sex the other was deprived of sex. It's a cruel cruel experiment and the sexually deprived males overwhelmingly selected the boozy brew they were given to, either a normal mush or a boozy mush, and they drank four times as much as their sexually satisfied brethren. I love the way they write these articles that I know. But you get the idea.

And so you say, "Okay so, unmet need. So, what are the characteristics of attachment or suffering?" And there's a feeling of lack, something's unmet, that something's missing. Then there is a mental delusion as to what will actually bring you satisfaction and happiness. That's where we hook onto substitutes that give temporary relief or pleasure but don't really solve the problem. Okay? And we grasp. OK? So, there's a feeling of need, a misperception of what's going to work and then a grasping onto the substitute. Just to comment on this delusion because it's really a pervasive feature of our psyche that we have ideas about what will bring us happiness and we're regularly wrong. It's really interesting. Lottery winners are ultimately no happier than non winners. Does everybody at that Sands casino, it really didn't matter whether they're going to win or lose in terms of their happiness quotient. It's not right away. It takes some months to come back to your happiness set point as they describe it. Paraplegics are usually as content as people who can walk. We anticipate good things happening like a job offer or a raise or even having a child will make us happier and that bad things will make us more miserable and it's true we have spikes but it evens out.

So, what are our common substitutes? What are the things that most of us get hooked on? And I won't spent a long time on it because you know them mostly that when we're missing some sense of security or bonding maybe we'll go for accumulating wealth or overwork and proving ourselves or maybe you know, it will be on physical beauty or social status or power. There's a little line that says, "When women get depressed they eat or shop and when men are depressed they attack another country." So, one of the most pervasive false refuges or substitute gratifications, I think of them as the same thing, is this never ending effort to try to improve ourselves. And it's not the kind of improve ourselves of you know, really sensing the creativity and the knowledge we long for but really a kind of like from a deficit, I need to be a better person kind of striving.

There's a cartoon I've always loved that has a dog on the psychiatrist couch and he's saying to the psychiatrist, "It's always good dog this and good dog that, but is it ever a great dog?" And that's what goes on in us. This is part of the hungry ghost, that so wanting to feel like we're good enough. I mean if we're honest, how many of us are really content and feel good enough? And again, I'm not talking about the kind of impulse to manifest our true potential. That's not what I'm talking about. Talking about the kind of internalized standards we have that make us think we should always look better, do more, be more.



Now, I've been naming socially condoned substitutes. And of course, we all know that the more there's unmet needs, the more we get hooked on substitutes that are really really quite harmful in an overt way. Whether that is binge eating or drugs, alcohol, sexual compulsions, gambling. OK? They're really difficult to work with and they there's genetic tendencies towards some of these because the more we do it, the more they create a whole psycho biology in us that keeps them going and some are purely biologically addictive. So, again, but they're all unmet needs. And like the chimps and like the fruit flies we can blame ourselves, but it's conditioning. We can say I lack willpower and I'm a bad person. And we're going to talk about how we do that. But it's conditioning.

So, let's look at the suffering that comes from attachment because some of it's really obvious like the suffering of losing a job and a marriage because you've been drinking too much or using cocaine. But there's all different levels. One level of the suffering is that we really don't get satisfied. That there's never that sense of enough and you might ask yourself how many moments in your life there's really that feeling like, "Well, you know, I could die right now. I mean this is the fullness and the enoughness. This is it." There's not that sense. So, there's that, we can't get no satisfaction thing. That it's like always wanting more.

Story of a man on a California beach in deep prayer and says out loud, "Lord please grant me one wish." And the sky clouds over and the booming voice comes, "Well, because you've tried to be faithful I'll grant you one wish." So, the man says, "Please Lord, build me a bridge to Hawaii so I can drive over any time I need to see the beautiful sights and alleviate the stress in my life." The Lord said, "You know, that's a very materialistic kind of request. Think of the logistics, you know? To go over the Pacific, the concrete and steel it would take and so on. Very resource intensive. Anyway, just take some time. Think of another wish." So, the man thought about it for a long time finally said, "Lord, I wish that I could understand women. I want to know what women really want. How women can really be made happy." And after a few moments God said, "You want two lanes on that or four lanes on that bridge?" You know the AA saying that one drink may make you feel like a new person than the new person has to have a drink, right? So, it's like that. Wanting begets wanting is the idea and the typical metaphor is it's like drinking salt water to satisfy thirst. So, that's one level of suffering. We don't get satisfied.

The second I alluded to a little bit before which is that along with the hungry ghost energy of wanting, we have an aversion towards ourselves for that. How many of you have noticed the shame or self-hatred that comes along with the wanting mind? How many of you have noticed that? OK. It's a little harder to raise your hand for. In the Buddhist tradition we call it the second arrow. The first arrow is I want, I need, I'm not satisfied and the second arrow is I'm a bad person for wanting and needing and feeling I'm not satisfied. It's the self aversion we pile on. Very very notable as part of the addiction cycle. Eat too much. Feel really really bad about yourself, feel like such a bad person and feel so



miserable that you eat more and then feel bad about yourself and it just keeps fueling the cycle. Okay?

So, that's one other level of the suffering is the self aversion and then the last level I'll name is when we're at our casino and we're really wanting to win or wanting to win and not quite there yet and it might be because we are seeking the approval or we're trying to in some way get something we don't have, a job or whatever. We're not present. It's kind of like we're leaning forward wanting the next moment to contain what this moment does not. And this is the heart of the suffering that comes with the hungry ghosts with wanting mind, with addiction, with attachment. That we can't be present we're on our way somewhere else. And how many moments of our life is there some sense we're on our way to something rather than this moment counts. It's like in this, right now, listening to this talk, are we on our way to the hub of the talk or to the end of the talk or to what we're doing later tonight or to the weekend? It's such a deeply grooved habit to have some discontent and feel something's missing and that we need something more, that we can skim over the surface and not really arrive and take in the sunshine or feel the wind on our cheek or see the gleam in a child's eyes or hear the child's laugh. We're not able to connect, be right here which is ultimately what desire's wanting. It's like we're away from our star. Can we come back?

So, we can't be happy. And the deep teaching here is that our real, the real way we meet desire, the real way we find happiness, it arises from presence. The only place you can really be happy is when there's an openness and a wakefulness and a tenderness right here. So, the pursuit of the hungry ghosts actually blocks presence. It blocks us from you feeling the light of our own spirit, the light of that star. The word desire, away from our star, the satisfaction of desire is recognizing that our star, the light and love we seek, is here. It's in this moment. And as long as we fixate outside ourselves, we can experience that.

At a MIT conference, there was a room full of scientists and addiction researchers and this is Bill Moyers who writes this, he's there and he's been asked to speak and he says, "I have an illness with origins in the brain but I also suffer the other component of this illness as alcoholism." He told the gathered researchers and scientists, "I was born with what I like to call a hole in my soul, a pain that came from the reality that I just wasn't good enough, that I wasn't deserving enough, that if you weren't paying attention to me all the time, that maybe you didn't like me enough." The conference room was as quiet as it had been all day. "For us addicts," he continued, "recovery is more than just taking a pill or maybe getting a shot. Recovery is also about the spirit, about dealing with that hole in the soul."

So, this is key that the healing from attachment or addiction is really discovering how to find the spirit that's always been here but feels like it's been draining out or empty. How to discover that star that's inside us, the light in our own heart. Because when we do,



when there's a sense that it's right here, there's still a natural play of desires and we can enjoy it when those particular focused desires are met and we can not enjoy it when they're not. But there's a basic sense of contentment. There's not craving. I love, there's a cartoon that has a picture of a dog who's having a dream and it says, "Zen dog: dreaming of a medium sized bone."

So, the last part of our exploration really is how do we shift when our attention's been fixated, as for most of us we have our fixations whether more money, more food, more approval, how do we shift from that outward fixation to really that light and warmth of awareness that's right here? How do we undo the conditioning to fixate outward? And there's two steps that we have to repeat 10,000 times. You know that any mastery of anything takes many repetitions and one is to keep pausing in the midst so that whenever you sense that the hungry ghost energy whenever your sense, OK. Going after approval here or OK, I'm fixating on more money or status or prestige or different body or whatever it is, pause.

There's a AA sponsor who describes the sacred pause, he says that, "It's worth two years of meetings that just a pause of ten seconds, the amount of freedom that's possible." And of course, it's not either or because we need both. But that's the first step is that we need to have that kind of commitment, that getting, "Well, these attachments are running my life, are keeping me from my full life, keeping me from feeling that light and that soul force that's here." Pause. Be willing to pause. Now, sometimes you'll pause and then the next step is deep in your attention. Pause and deepen your attention. That means awaken these two wings. We talk about regularly of mindfulness and harmfulness. We pause and we say, "So, what's really happening here?" And we bring a kind attention. And sometimes it'll work so powerfully that we can absolutely change our patterning in that moment and sometimes we go back to the old patterning, but each time we repeat it we're on some level deconditioning the habit.

So, let me give you an example of a woman I worked with that that came in who was very much that kind of sense of a hole in my soul that something's really wrong with me. And she's basically, "So, everything I do I fail at and I hate myself and I'm ashamed of myself and then I end up smoking too much weed and drinking too much alcohol." And drinking was the worst problem. She said she'd gone to AA, knew she needed to go back. Her closest friends were really encouraging her to go back but it was really, she just couldn't convince her to stop using.

So, I asked her to get right into it like, "Okay, in the moments when you have to have," and this is a really important inquiry to go right into, "Alright in the moments when I'm really, it really matters what another person's thinking or I have to have that bowl of ice cream or whatever the false refuge is, what's going on inside you?" And when I asked her, she said it was kind of like this heart pounding, like she was about to get something she really wanted, like the anticipation of the satisfaction. There was a shortness of breath but



along with that there was also kind of a scared feeling, like I might not get it. And then I asked her to keep investigating because part of mindfulness, the wing of mindfulness is to really investigate.

And I said, "You know, the part that's compelling you, what is it? So, it feels like this clutch and this heart pounding, what does it look like?" And she said, "It has a black piercing evil eye and it's in the middle of this dark shadowy shape." Ok, so that's what she had. So, I said, "OK. Go inside that and sense what is that part really wanting?" Because asking that question is part of a mindful investigation. What is this compelling place really want? And she asked and said, "It wants me to drink and drink and drink." And then I said, "Well, what will that do? What is it really wanting? What does it want the drinking to do?" "Well, then I'll feel relief. Then I'll feel better. It wants relief." And I said, "Well, OK. What will that do, if you feel relief? And then she said, "Ah, then that part will feel loveable. If I can really relax and feel relief, I'll feel loveable."

So, I asked her, "Can you give that part some love right now?" Heartfulness. Remember? Mindfulness and heartfulness. And she said, "I don't feel like I have any love to give." So, I asked her, the next step to heartfulness is, "Well, if you don't have the love to offer yourself and we often put our hand on our heart and sense loving ourselves, who might or what might in the universe?" And she said, "Well, my two friends that keep trying to get me to go to AA and also my mom." So, I said, "Okay, put your hand on your heart and let their love come in."

So, she did that for a while and I said, "Let their love go right to where that creature." It's kind of like her version of the hungry ghost. "Let it let it go right in there to that part of you that doesn't feel lovable." And after a while she said, "Okay now I'm feeling more loving." And I said, "What's the creature like now?" She said, "Well, it's shrunken and it's black eye is sad, it's glistening tears." I said, "Give it more then. Let it have even more love." And she said, "Ah, my stomach's loosening. I can breathe. Real relief." And then she kept going a bit more. But this is what she did many rounds of. I'm giving you an example of what she did. Every time she'd feel the urge to drink, she would pause and she would feel her body and feel those feelings and sense that kind of compulsion part in her and sense what it wanted and offer love. And she said that sometimes it was enough that the craving would kind of come because cravings have a kind of, you can chart them. There's a vector, they rise, they have a peak and then they fall away. If you can wait long enough you can wait them out. Most of us can't. But so sometimes the craving would come and go and she could actually make a healthier choice. And other times she couldn't. But over time she started beginning to loosen the grip. Also, I want to say she needed AA so it wasn't--I'm describing the inner work of bringing the two wings but we also need that relational feel to support us and for her it was quite important.

I remember her describing in our last time we got together, at this point she was a sponsor, and she said she understood spirits. She said that she was driven to it to have



an experience. She was driven to the alcohol to have an experience that's driven to spirits. But the real spirit she needed was what she found when she brought presence to her own heart and that that evil eye, that gleaming spirit eye was really her source of wisdom and love. This was her experience and not all of us have such the kind of imagination that can feel what kind of a creature is represented, some of us do, but what we all have, and this is where the deep invitation is, is that our attachment and addiction can be a flag to pause and deepen our attention to what's here. And if we're willing, if there's willingness we can't will it, you cannot will yourself out of an addiction, but if there's a willingness to pause and deepen your attention, you can begin to discover that rather than the addictive habit that you were hitched to, you can begin to discover that that star you felt away from, really is here. It's in the presence. It's right here, right here.

I began describing my little adventure in the casino and I wanted to acknowledge with you that when I first went in there and was watching people it was, again this like sociological experiment, and I had a whole layer of judgment. And you might have picked that up. It just felt like it was kind of like, "Oh, you poor things." But it was from a kind of superior like, "Ugh, all this smoking and alcohol and stuff I don't do," you know. And I realize, OK so this is a second arrow. I'm seeing suffering and I'm having an aversion to this suffering and judging it. And then I started sensing, wow this is in most of us, you know. That most of us have whether it's the most overt like gambling and slot machine or something else, we'll keep trying to do the achievement that will finally make us feel like we're okay whatever it is we have stuff. And I could so easily see in myself through my life, whether it's how I've used food or have in some way sought to prove myself or accomplish or be good and get approval, all the different ways, I've been hooked and that shifted.

So, somewhere after the first few minutes, I got this realization I really want to have contact. So, I tried to--I kind of resolved to have some contact. And there was a few eyes that I could have contact with but mostly I just sent Metta and I sent Metta to all of us, not like this high being floating through sending Metta, but it's like to all of us that are hooked on something, we feel away from our star, we're hooked on something, may we all trust the goodness and the love and the aliveness and creativity of our own beings. May we turn to presence not to something outside ourselves. So, maybe as a way of closing of just to say that we have a habit beyond just the addictions and attachments of not noticing what's already here. We're so on our way that we really don't see that what we're longing for is right here and we're going to explore that in a bit, but I thought maybe you could try just a little bit of bringing the two wings to your own attachments and see how that works for you. Take a moment to find a way to sit because this is the key reflection we'll be doing tonight that I think will be useful. And keep in mind that that example I gave you with this woman, it took a while like it was probably 45 minutes and we're going to do something in maybe four minutes. So, this is a template for you to explore, pausing and deepening attention in the face of an attachment. So, let your eyes close and sense, if you know already maybe you do maybe you don't, some area that you feel that you're hooked.



Some area of attachment that you kind of can tell keeps you from being as spontaneous as relaxed as really trusting yourself and living from your potential and it might be something in relationships where you are hooked on getting approval or hooked on being in control. Being the best might be something at work or you're really looking for fame or attention or might be something to do with substances, to do with accumulating more money, more possessions, might be something to do with your appearance, could be the overt behaviors like gambling or shopping or sex, where there's an obsessiveness around, choosing one area. And see if you can focus on a situation that illustrates that attachment that lets you know you're hooked.

And for the sake of exploring and investigating, you might exaggerate so that you really feel into the situation how it is to really want what you're wanting. How much it matters to you whether it's the wanting to be in control or the wanting for approval or whether it's a wanting for chocolate, whatever it is, what's it like when you're wanting and as an experiment right now, let your body actually take the position of wanting, like play with it a little. You might find you're leaning forward, maybe your fist tighten, let your face's expression be. What is it when you're really wanting something to be a certain way and it's not okay if it's not that way. So, give yourself permission to like really inhabit that. Find out what it's like. You might feel where the wanting is most in your body. Is there a tightening in the throat or chest or maybe the belly. Just feel your wanting self and notice if there's a second arrow, if there's also a part of yourself that's judging your wanting self, whether you don't like your wanting self, just include that and what you're aware of and sense how that impacts the wanting. Now, imagine that you could step away, that you're wanting self whatever that experience is is here, but you could kind of step away and you can call on your high self right now. This is really like calling on the wings of wisdom and heart. Calling on that in you which sees through clear eyes and has a forgiving and kind heart. So, you can look through those eyes at the wanting self. Give yourself a little distance, a little space. So, just looking through the eyes of kindness and understanding, what does the wanting part of you really want or need?

If you could get that approval or have that ice cream or be in control or have your body the way you want it. What would you really get? Sense that you're really trying to experience through the particular attachment and sometimes you have to ask again, like well if I got that then what would I really be getting? See how deep you go. How are you away from your star? How are you really wanting to come home? What is it you're really wanting to come home to? For these last few moments from your highest self, the wings of wisdom and love, how might you communicate to the part of you that's been stuck? Your understanding your forgiveness your care, what in this moment will most address the unmet need that's there? And you might experiment also, as we often do, with touch because that brings a more energetic intimacy in relating to your inner life. Can you communicate the forgiveness, that understanding of, OK this is coming from an unmet need? Letting go of all blame. That is a necessary precursor to healing any addiction, is to let go of blame. From your highest self, can you let go of blame? Can you offer a very pure



care and understanding? To the place in you that's been attached and addicted to the wanting self. And as you offer your presence and your kindness and your understanding, just sense your own experience of your being right now. Can you sense that star that light and tenderness right here? Can you sense how this presence heals that whole of the soul? Allows you to come home to what's really the source of what you long for? The happiness we seek is available in the moments when there's really no clinging.

There's simply openness and presence and ease. Just feel as you imagine into the next days and weeks to come, this invitation to let the flag of attachment call you to pause, to deepen your attention and a shift from that outward focus, the substitute gratifications to discovering the presence that's always and already here.

We'll close with a verse from the Zen poet Ryokan, "Without desire, everything is sufficient. With seeking myriad things are impoverished. Plain vegetables can soothe hunger. A patched robe is enough to cover this bent old body. Alone I hike with a deer. Cheerfully I sing with village children. The stream under the cliff cleanses my ears. The pine on the mountain top fits my heart. Cheerfully I sing with the village children. The stream under the cliff cleanses my ears. The pine on the mountain top fits my heart."

And thank you for your beautiful attention. Many blessings.

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