

Nowhere to Go, Nothing to Do

Brother Phap Luu talks about having mastery over our lives. Our thoughts, speech and actions are what we send out into the universe. Thinking is a kind of becoming, every thought has a tone, and is nourished by some condition. What sort of path are our thoughts taking us down on? We may be cultivating our own suffering through our expectations and ideas of how things should be. Can we let them go if that is the case? Br. Phap Luu talks about creating a business that is wholesome and healthy for oneself and one's employees in the light of the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path and the Five Powers. He gives examples of individuals who have been able to have sovereignty over their work and time, and have managed to create healthy environments for their business and family.

The final Dharma Talk from the International Business Retreat 2019 in Plum Village, given on the 7th of June, 2019.

Dear respected teacher, dear noble community!

Today is the 7th of June in the year 2019 and we're in the Stillwater Meditation Hall of the Upper Hamlet of Plum village on the last day of our international busyness retreat.

One of our ancestral teachers - Min-chi - taught about the business lessness person. Is that correct? Business, busyness or business-less now businessless - without busy - busy lessness.

How can we practice to become a busy business person with nowhere to go and nothing to do?

And I want to share a little bit today about this practice of 'nowhere to go, nothing to do'. And also 'somewhere to go, something to do'. And I'll share a little bit about my father, something very inspiring that my father did as a businessman. That's part of the reason, why I'm sitting here as a monk today.

When I was around 11 or 12 my father was traveling for his business very often, flying to the west coast of the United States. And as a family we had gotten used to that. Dad would be away for maybe a whole week out of every two weeks.

He had grown up in a business as a young person. So he was 5 or 6 years old and he lived in a tiny little house, that my grandfather built on the shore of a pond in Connecticut in the US. And my dad had a little boat. He could take it out in the lake. He could take his friends out, even when he was that young. That was a different time. We didn't have so much fear about letting the children go off. There weren't so many helicopters and there weren't helicopter parents yet. And so he touched this freedom of being able to get in his boat and go wherever he wanted.

Because my grandfather had a business to sell boats. He saw that in order to grow his business he needed to have more exposure. So he took all his savings and bought a new storefront on the main road in Bristol Connecticut and put his name on the front: 'FC Bachman'. And there was a big glass window. So he could put the boats in the window and so people drove by on the main road. They could see. And then they saw the boats. And then they drove by it the next day and they thought: 'It would be very nice to have that boat'.

This is the 1950s and after the war in America and many people for the first time had disposable income. And they could have a boat to go fishing with their son on Sunday. And then people started putting wooden pieces of wooden skis on their feet and going behind the boat. Kind of like flying on the water. Our master Vinci said the miracle is not to walk on water but to walk on the earth. But I think when people learn to ski behind the boat they felt a little bit like Jesus. Walking on water, going fast.

And when my grandfather bought that new storefront suddenly my father's dream evaporated, because they moved from the little house, the quiet house on the side of the pond to this new storefront, where they lived upstairs. And almost every day in the week customers would come by, wanting to buy boats, to have their boat fixed and suddenly the kind of quiet idyllic life of my father changed drastically.

It was difficult to find silence, difficult to have - you had to make an effort to go to the lake, to the pond, to go in the boat. And so he made the determination as a young man that he wanted to not continue in his father's footsteps exactly, but to educate himself, learn well, so he could get a good degree, so he could get a good job, and he wouldn't be living in the kind of day-to-day situation of just getting enough money to live of my grandfather.

So he studied hard, he was the top of his class in chemistry at the State University, went to Harvard Business School and thanks to that he got a good job. And when I and my sister came along we got to live his dream, because he bought another house on a lake in the forest, where it was quiet - kind of like a Pure Land.

But as we grew up in that Pure Land, my father saw that in order to have the money for our family to live, he was missing our childhood. He was not present for my sister, for me. And one day when he came home from a trip, he looked at us, he saw us growing up - I was around eleven, twelve - and he made the determination.

And he quit his job for about almost four years. And suddenly my father was there. We built a tree house together. We built the - mostly he built, but we helped. Building a beautiful waterfront. On the lake we got to a waterskiing, to walk on the water. And he took me out in nature for long walks.

So I have a lot of gratitude to my father. for all these things. Not only my father, but also my mother. My father could not quit his job, if my mother quit her job. So let's not forget to look at the whole picture. But he had the power to stop, to stop the running. To establish some mastery over his life. Do I want to be number one or do I want to be happy?

And I feel very grateful to inherit that, those aspects of my father, that determination. So even as a young man I didn't bother to get any very serious job - except this one. Because somehow he transmitted to me that determination, that sense of freedom, a sense of standing on our own two feet on Mother Earth, and being able to decide, what we want to really do with our life? What is our deep aspiration?

So maybe we can take a moment and maybe if you'd like to close your eyes and see if we can get in touch. Just look inside and see, what is my deep aspiration? And listen to the sound of the Bell and see if there's something there. Maybe we don't have an aspiration. But I think if you look deeply you might see, there's something that we deeply, deeply want to realize.

[Bell]

We've listened to a number of beautiful teachings. About the practice of stopping and looking deeply. About possessing the present moment.

What does it mean to have a corporation that - Do you want a company that is happy? Do you want a company that is profitable? Maybe we'd like both.

And we looked into the practice of seeing the impermanence in ourselves and in others. And how to practice letting go?

So today I'd like to share a little bit about the practice that my brother mentioned yesterday in the Q&A of what we call '**Right View**'.

So when Thay Phap Dung mentioned the practice of the Four Noble Truths, we learned that being aware of suffering, helps us to understand the causes of suffering.

And when we understand the causes of suffering - the nutriment 'what nourishes suffering' - we can remove that nourishment. And that is happiness.

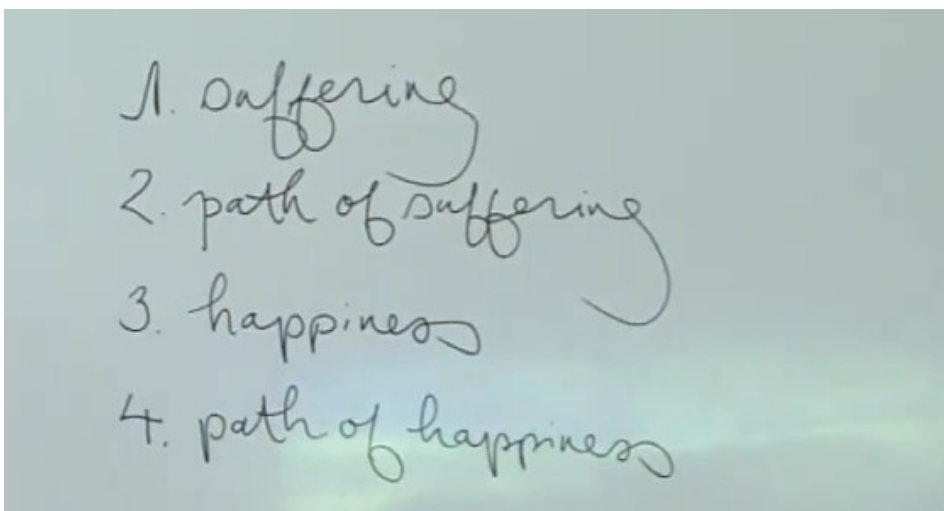
So suffering and happiness are like the two sides of a coin, they are intimately connected. If you remove suffering, you reduce suffering, then happiness is there.

It's like the light.

The light is the absence of darkness. If there's darkness, it means there is not light. But as soon as you shine the light in, the darkness disappears.

So when suffering ceases to manifest, then happiness is there right away.

So we can say that the Four Noble Truths: (1) '1. suffering' - (2) the cause of suffering, we can call it the '2. path of suffering', because there is a path of suffering. Sometimes we walk down the path of suffering. When we nourish our anger, our fear. (3) But when we see the causes of suffering and we stop nourishing them, then happiness is there. So we can say the third noble truth, 'the cessation of suffering', is also '3. happiness'. (4) And the '4. path of happiness'.



So maybe if we look deeply at our aspiration, we find out that we do in fact want to walk on the path of happiness. Maybe. We don't force anyone.

But at least we can ask you to look and see, whether you're walking on the path of suffering. Whether this thought, whether this speech, whether this action is taking you down the path of suffering or the path of happiness?

So this morning we took, many of us, the five mindfulness trainings. This is a kind of ethical way of living, that is not just only the five precepts of Buddhism.

It is a product of the deep looking of a community of practice, the plum village community of practice. And it is the form that you heard it, the form in which you heard it this morning is not the original form, and it's not the final form.

Because deep looking is something that is also impermanent. Our insight is changing according to the circumstances in which we find ourselves. When the five mindfulness trainings were first proposed, there was not yet the internet, there was not yet an iPhone. And so we need to always make the trainings more relevant for what is going on in the present moment. So it is a living text, a living group of trainings, that continue to evolve along with our insight.

But it does a fairly good job of describing the path of happiness. And in there you can find what we call the Noble Eightfold Path. It is the path of happiness. So you've touched a little bit on the Noble Eightfold Path.

Yesterday we talked about actions of mind, actions of speech, actions of the body as our true possession, our true continuation.

It's not our capital that is our true possession, our house, our car, our company.
It's very interesting.

Recently we watched a documentary called *'The Blue Planet'* and they showed these crabs that gather in a spot on the bottom of the ocean, I think once a year. And they shed their hard outer shell and so that they can grow and their new inner shell can come out. And at that time they're very vulnerable. Because we built up the shell over a whole year to protect ourselves from the fish and predators that want to eat us. And so the crabs come together as a Sangha. Maybe they won't all get eaten, when they have only the soft outer shell.

~~and when we look at the~~

Recently I just came back from Italy and so I saw many ruins. The ruins from the Roman time, from early maybe Etruscan times - and it reminded me of the shells of those crabs. Kind of how they're the outer skeleton, that we leave behind.

Maybe I invite you. When you go home and you look at your apartment, you look at your house and you remember those crabs, letting go of their outer shell. See if maybe there's some things we can practice letting go of. Some of our possessions that we still hold onto, as a form of keeping fear away, keeping uncertainty away. If you really touch deeply this teaching on actions of body, speech and mind as our true continuation, you realize you actually don't need so much of that anymore. It can be a joy to give it to someone else. Let it go away.

And then you can really see what I think, what I say, what I do - that is my true continuation.
It's very beautiful.

You begin to see how you are going out, you are not just this body. You're actually going out into the universe.

When you're a happy and free person, then people are curious about what you think. They're curious about what you say, what you do. You don't have to scream at them.

Yesterday we had a workshop on taking care of anger. And there was a question: *'But when I see a man throwing his cigarette butt on the floor, on the ground. And he is damaging Mother Earth. And I want to tell him: 'Don't throw your cigarette butt!!'*

But I noticed that in my own practice, when I was young, I was an activist for the environment, for changing, upending the capitalist society. And so I had my share of yelling and screaming. And somehow it didn't work. Something I noticed.

But when I started to focus more on taking care of my anger, learning how to generate joy and happiness and freedom, people got curious, my family got curious. When I was yelling at them they were not very curious. They just see an unhappy person yelling and they don't want to be an unhappy person yelling. So why should they do what I tell them to do?

It takes a lot of patience. But with practice and mindfulness, you learn to generate joy, to be free and happy yourself. Maybe not all the time, but for longer periods of time. And when you get angry, you're more mindful of it.

And so people look at you and they say: "That person - he's not throwing his cigarette butt on the floor. He's living simply. He has very little and yet he's happy. Maybe I could do that, maybe I could try that."

That's a little bit understanding human beings. We want to look for someone who is inspiring. We want to see someone who is really a model of what we can realize. And when we see that person, then we do like them, we act like them. That is the insight the Buddha had. To stop the yelling and the screaming. It doesn't mean we're not aware that he's throwing the cigarette butt on the ground, but we don't allow it to water our seed of anger, so that it paralyzes us.

We see that what we think, what we say, what we do, will continue not only in the present moment, but well into the future. Even until now we are still receiving benefit from what the Buddha thought, what the Buddha said, what he did. What Jesus thought, what Jesus said, what Jesus did. We don't know exactly what robe the Buddha wore and I actually I don't really care. We don't know what he ate on that day, before he passed away. We don't know many things about the Buddha. But somehow through the time the words, the thoughts, through the words, through the community, the living community, the Sangha, the Buddha has transmitted this Noble Eightfold Path.

So it's not just a theory when we talk about our actions of thought, speech and body as our true continuation, you can see it!

So that is why these are three aspects of the Noble Eightfold Path: right thinking, right speech and right action.

In dharma sharing we talk about deep listening and loving speech. When we listen deeply to ourselves, when we learn to stop and look deeply what's going on inside of ourselves, then that is kind of deep listening and then it's not so difficult to listen to somebody else sharing their suffering, somebody else who's sharing about their joy, somebody who is sharing about their despair.

And when we listen deeply to ourselves we see that our thoughts have an effect. You might think that your thoughts are just neutral. But every thought has a tone, it has a kind of a kind of fragrance. And when you are able to stop and look deeply and listen deeply, you see that that thought is actually a kind of nutriment. It can nourish suffering, it can nourish happiness, it can nourish mindfulness or it can nourish anger. Everything needs nutriment.

And if we know how to give nutriment or remove it, then we have a lot of power.

And that is a real power, a kind of spiritual power.

It's a little bit different from the kind of power we usually think of in business, in politics. It's the power of understanding our mind.

And as a young man I moved by the action of my father to quit his job. I wanted to understand how to look deeply into my mind, because I saw that so much suffering came from not understanding my mind.

How could I have that kind of confidence, that kind of non-fear to be a really happy and free person, because I wanted to go deeper, because I felt like having money is not enough. My parents also in that time had difficulty to keep their marriage together. And a lot of anger also manifested. So there was beautiful aspects, but that I can also see painful aspects. It's not totally one or the other.

And because of not understanding the nourishment and what way they were nourishing anger, it got out of control. It became a fire that burned down the whole house. It's a kind of misunderstanding of true power.

I think my dad was very skillful using his anger to good profit in his work. To create fear. One time he told me: "You swim with the sharks, you become like a shark." Maybe you've heard that before.

So I had this insight. I had also the pain in my heart of my parents and their anger towards each other. So I knew somehow there was something not quite ... I didn't quite understand yet, my parents maybe didn't understand yet. And I needed to look deeper.

And when I found this mindfulness practice, suddenly it all opened up. Ah!

Looking at my mind directly! Not reading about it in a book. Looking at my mind directly in every moment, seeing what is going on, **being curious** about my mind:

What's coming up, like what is that anger? I know it's unpleasant, but what is it, what's going on? Am I sure that I know why it's there? Am I sure that I understand this anger? Am I sure that I understand my despair?

Maybe we can listen to the sound of the Bell and you can ask yourself:

"Am I sure about what's going on inside of me right now?"

[Bell]

And we've also learned about mindfulness, concentration and insight.

By being aware of our breathing, being aware of our body, we cultivate right mindfulness. It means we cultivate what we call 'appropriate attention'.

When our attention goes towards objects of craving - power - fame - sex - money - even maybe sleep ... You're very lazy, very tired ... "Oh, if I could just lay down ..."

We can be aware that we're tired, we can be aware that we have sexual desire, but we continue to water that and give all our attention to those things.

We can call that 'inappropriate attention'.

Because those things start to take over our mind.

Our thinking becomes wrong thinking. We want to just find ways to obtain more. More sex, more power, more money. And so that radio non-stop thinking gets a direction. And when we don't get more power, more money, more sex, more food, we become angry.

We despair.

That is the insight the Buddha had about the mind.

What we are thinking is what we become. So that thinking is not neutral, but it is a kind of becoming.

When we go deeply into this insight of non-self - we usually think: 'I am this person, I am born from this family, I am working in this field of engineering or business or whatever ...'

And because we are caught by that idea about ourselves, we don't pay attention to all the ways in which maybe we're behaving other than the way we think we are. So mindfulness allows us to let go of our idea about ourselves and see what is actually going on.

And every thought and every moment is a kind of becoming.

There's a kind of either we want more of that thing or we want to push it away.

And inside of us there's this it's like a hand that's grasping out, pulling onto those objects - power - recognition - appreciation ...

The expectations we put on our partner, on our family, on our colleagues - it may be that those expectations are the source of our anger and not the action of our colleague, not the action of our loved ones.

We've created an idea of how they can get us more power, more fame, more sex, more money - all these things - more sleep ...

And because we expect them to play a role in our project of obtaining these things, we suffer when they don't act according to our wishes.

I suffered a lot as a young Dharma teacher (I'm still a young Dharma teacher) – but I suffered also as a young Dharma teacher, because when I came to Plum Village I received this kind of training.

And so when Thay asked me: “Brother Phap Luu, can you teach the young brothers? Brother Phap Luu should teach the young brothers the fine manners.” So fine manners are a kind of a way of holding our body, how we hold things, how we do things as a monk. And I felt ‘Oh my goodness! I have to teach now. I have to be the one who sits up there and tells them how to hold their alms bowl, how to put on the robes, scold them when they walk around in the T-shirt outside.’ That's what I thought. I thought this is what Thay is telling me to do. I have to go around doing that and then I suffered a lot. And my younger brothers also suffered a lot.

Because of my expectation. Because of how I was trained, I had a kind of expectation. And I didn't realize it, because I thought that's what Thay means. The way I was trained I need to do that to my brothers. And so I wouldn't listen very deeply to their needs, to what's going on inside of them.

Maybe I'm a little bit better now. I don't know. I won't be the one to judge. But I think I know inside of myself I practiced to lower my expectations. To see that there was some desire there: to be recognized, to be a good older brother, who trains the young brothers.

All kinds of desires about ... caught up in my idea about myself. And so I have to practice letting go of those ideas too.

So maybe in the business world you find yourself in a similar situation. You're a manager, you're maybe the president of a corporation, or maybe you're a coach working with business people.

There's a phrase I heard from a Buddhist practitioner and business coach in the U.S. that I like very much, which was: ‘*What got you there, won't help you now.*’ I don't know if you've ever heard that. What got you to be in your position is not what will help you now.

Marshall Goldsmith.

Thank you.

And I found that very very helpful. Sometimes we don't realize where we are. We're not aware of where we are in our relationships. We don't need to fight and struggle, to try to get ahead. [We need to learn a new kind of spiritual power that is opening, that is helping us to have understanding and compassion.](#)

In Buddhism we talk about five kinds of power. Kind of spiritual power, power of the mind.

And the first one is faith or trust.

When I am aware of my breathing and my body becomes calm, I gain some faith in the practice of mindful breathing. It's not faith based on a belief. It's faith based on experience. It's empirical faith. I have tested this and it works. It's not a theory anymore. When I walk

mindfully aware of each step, I can allow my anger to calm down. I've experienced that. I have faith in that. I know what to come back to. In a situation of anger, I stop what I'm doing, what I'm saying, maybe I go outside and I enjoy mindful walking to allow my anger time to calm down. I don't want to contribute to the collective anger, that I know will burn through the community if I continue to say or think those things. So the practice of the fourth mindfulness training is for you to get faith in your own capacity to practice mindfulness, to calm your emotion. That's empirically based faith, it's scientific and its peer-reviewed. Because you have your brother your sister next to you and they also practice to come back to their breathing, come back to their steps. And their brother and their sister, the community practices it.

And if we see that it doesn't work, we need to change it. That is why Thay said the five mindfulness trainings have to be updated. Because they're based on not just a belief, but on empirical evidence. First person applied neuroscience. Don't let the word neuroscience scare you. You can be a neuroscientist. You just practice on yourself. Practice being aware of your mind and understanding how anger is nourished and how you can invite it to go back down.

So faith is the first power.

The second is diligence or effort.

But if we are diligent, we don't say effort, because effort implies you have to force yourself. But more precisely it's being diligent about what kind of seeds we water in our mind. In our mind there are the potentialities of anger, fear, also of mindfulness, concentration, insight. And we are like a farmer who is taking good care to allow the positive seeds to come up in our consciousness. By nourishing them well, by watering those seeds, by making sure they have enough sunlight, enough compost, that it's the right time of year to plant those tomato seeds. We're a skillful gardener, because we've learned appropriate attention. We learn to practice gratitude, kind of right-thinking.

Gratitude for the fact that I have a body.

Gratitude for the fact that I have two eyes, which can see all the colors and the faces in this room. It's like flowers in the garden of humanity.

Actually you all have to train to do this kind of talk, so you can stand here and see all the smiling faces. It's very beautiful. It really is like walking through the garden of humanity.

So diligence here means learning how to selectively water the good seeds in our consciousness; in our consciousness and in the consciousness of others. It's a kind of spiritual power and it's also part of the Eightfold Path: right diligence.

A few weeks ago we were invited to dinner with a fashion designer called the Brunello Cucinelli in Italy. And he was the son of a farmer in Perugia in Italy, in the countryside near Perugia.

But after a few years he similarly lost - like my father - lost the idyllic farm of his youth - where he would climb to the end of the olive branches, because he was very light and nimble - and had to move to the city to Perugia.

And as a young man he never forgot that his father would come home from the new job he had in the city, with his face in humiliation. Because of the way he was treated by his boss.

He never forgot that seeing his father humiliated like that. And so he made the determination as a young man to create the kind of work environment, where human beings would have dignity, where they would be able to see the sky.

And when we were having dinner with him, it was quite impressive. First we went on a tour of his factory. He resisted the tendency to move towards the urban center and instead built a factory in an old castle in the country side in a town called Sol de Maio. And he wanted people to be able to live, to want to live in the place where they work. So half of the people in the town work for the company. And he wanted to have reasonable hours and not have people working outside of the official work hours. No phone, no email - nothing. So from 9 o'clock you start to work until I think maybe 1 o'clock, I think. And then you get an hour and a half lunch - pretty good! That's like the monks and nuns, we have time for a noble nap. And then 2.30 you start again until 5:30. And then when you leave you are done. You don't carry your work home with you. So people can have time to be with their family.

And I was very impressed walking through the clothing factory. All of the factory has big windows. You can see the sky, you can see the garden. And there's a very warm energy.

I don't know very much about his business, so I cannot, you know ... This is not a testimony, but it's just an experience of a way that we can try to realize an aspiration. When we get an insight like that.

We come on a retreat here in Plum Village and we want to find a way to make a kind of dignity, a dignified way of living, to water the good seeds in ourselves and others in our place of work. And diligence is the power that helps us to do that.

When we talk about the mind - we talked about seeds in the store consciousness of our mind, kind of the part that we don't see directly, that manifests in our mind consciousness. There are seeds of mindfulness, seeds of compassion, seeds of anger, seeds of despair.

And depending on how we think, how we speak, how we act, we water the seeds in our store consciousness, so that they come up like a flower into mind consciousness.

So if I continue my thinking about that colleague, who was speaking behind my back. And he took the idea that I had told him about and claimed it as his own to the boss. And I think about how I'm gonna get back at him - rrrrr - and I can't get out of that thinking, then the seed of anger will come up and manifests in mind consciousness.

This is a this is like the display of our laptop. Mind consciousness - we practice mindfulness to be able to see what is going on in our mind, in every moment. It's like seeing - it's just a metaphor - it's like seeing what's on the screen of your computer. We know down in the hard drive somewhere, there are many files, many potentialities.

But we need to click in order to call them up, so we can see them and look inside, see where they are. Or we can think about store consciousness - this is the lower part of our consciousness - as the earth. In the earth there are many seeds. And when we dig the earth and plant tomato seeds, we know that maybe not only tomato seeds will come up. If you are a gardener, you know that many other things will also come up, because the seeds of those plants are already there in the earth.

So we as human beings already inherit from our parents, from our ancestors, the seeds of anger, of fear, but also the seeds of mindfulness, of concentration. They're already there, but you can't see them necessarily, until they manifest in mind consciousness.

We use the example of a fire, that is hidden by a wall: you see the smoke, but you can't see the fire. But when you see the smoke, you know there's a fire.

So when you see anger manifesting in your mind consciousness, you know that that's coming from the seed of anger. And when it's very strong that means that the seed of anger maybe has been watered, became very strong in your store consciousness.

And maybe I need to practice with that seed of anger.

I think I became a monk because I knew how long it would take to practice with that seed of anger. And that seed is not only from within us, but also from our ancestors. The store consciousness also has a collective aspect, so we can have patience and understanding for ourselves. And I say: "Why am I getting angry?" You say: "Why am I and my father and my mother and my grandparents and all my ancestors getting angry right now?"

Because they are all in you.

And then you have more patience, because you're transforming the seed of anger which has been transmitted for many generations.

And you can touch the seed of gratitude. You have a practice, you have a path of happiness to walk on, a way of transforming that seed.

So the power of diligence has four aspects.

We learn to how to invite the difficult mental formations, that have manifested in our mind consciousness to go back down into the store. The difficult ones, they go back down. We know that - as my brother Phap Lai showed yesterday and as we read in the fifth mindfulness training this morning - that our mental formations or our emotions, they need nutriment. And our body is nourished by an edible food, but our emotions are nourished by also our sense impressions: what we see, what we hear, what we smell, taste, touch and also what we have in our consciousness.

When we come in contact with these things than we are nourishing emotions.

And so, if we live in an environment, where we see violence. When we watch a film. When we read news full of hatred and violence. If we are not careful, we can allow those sense impressions to nourish the seed of anger in our consciousness. If we are not mindful, we don't interrupt the channel of nourishment, we allow it to bring about thoughts of anger, bring about words full up anger, and actions full of anger, we are just continuing the pattern of anger. We are touching the source of nutriment that is already there and maybe we are even in our business, by the products we produce, contributing to nourishing that hatred, that violence in the world.

That is an invitation to look deeply.

Because right thinking, right speech, right action also includes the products that we produce as a business. Are we producing the kind of toxins that nourish the seeds of anger of despair and others? Or are we creating the kind of nourishment for happiness, for joy?

Sister dedication shared the other day about the company that has a lot of happiness, but little profit.

May be Plum Village? We try to produce only the best products. Not just in the bookshop, but through our thinking, through our speech, through our action.

All the monks and nuns, we also suffer. And we all have anger, we all have sadness, we all have violence in our hearts. But we do our best to practice, to look at those seeds. And transform them, so that the fruit of our practice can have wholesome nutrients. They can water the seeds of joy, of happiness, of peace. That is our practice.

We say the fragrance of our practice - like an orange tree, which gives wonderful flowers and fruits. When we take good care of the compost around the tree and watering it in the sun, then the resulting flower and fragrance and fruit will be delicious and wholesome. But if we have the kind of sense impressions that nourish our anger and our violence, then the product will also have anger and violence in the product. And by selling it, we transmit it. By offering it to others, we transmit it.

And the second aspect of right diligence is: those negative seeds, we learn not to allow them to come up.

It doesn't mean that we repress our emotions.
It means we remove the nutriment.

You can think of the image of a fire. When the fire is burning strong, we can try to throw a blanket over it, try to smother the fire. But underneath the embers are still hot, just waiting for a little bit of oxygen to burst into flame again. That is usually how we deal with our emotions, we just try to push them down. But they are still there, burning. They still have the nutriment.

But if we know skillfully how to remove the wood, the dry fuel, so that the fire can no longer manifest, there are no longer sufficient conditions for the fire to manifest, then there's a cooling down. The fire can become ash that is cool.

And that is what we call Nirvana. Nirvana is not complicated. It is just the cooling, the cool ashes after the fire. When we've learned to remove the nutriment to our anger, to our sadness, to our fear, we no longer have sufficient conditions for that emotion to continue to manifest. we have looked deeply into the sense impressions coming in through our eye, our ear or nose, and we learn how to be a good farmer. Or in this case, maybe a good fire warden.

To no longer allow the nutriment to manifest, no longer allow that thinking to manifest, we shift our attention, we bring our attention back to our breathing, to our body, into the present moment to touch all the good conditions for our happiness, which are already there, but we just can't see, because we're so caught in our anger.

Anger has this tendency to limit our vision and we only see that one colleague. We forget about everything else, only that one person, who we feel is the source of our anger. And so we forget about all the good conditions - in them as well. That is the nature of our anger.

So when we remove the nutriment, then the emotion which has manifested in mind consciousness goes back down into its seed form in the store.

And when we learn to invite the good seeds, the wholesome seeds up - like mindfulness - that can help to embrace the difficult emotions. That is the third aspect of right diligence.

We know how to water the seed of mindfulness, which has the capacity to embrace our difficult emotions. It's like a light, that we can take a bath in.

We shine the light of mindfulness on our anger. It means we're no longer caught in our angry thinking, just following and nourishing that emotion of anger, but instead we're looking at it, like an old friend, kind of curious:

"Hello, my anger ... I know you are there. I'm listening now. I want to learn from you.

I want to understand you. Why did you manifest? Why are you crying like this?

What have I been looking at, what have I been listening to, that has caused you to come up and yell and scream like you are doing right now?"

As a practitioner we no longer can pretend like we don't understand what's going on. We've come on a retreat we've learned to be mindful of our breathing, mindful of our body, and so now we are able to direct that light of mindfulness to our difficult emotions. It doesn't mean they will completely stop manifesting in mind consciousness, but it's like the difference between these big oak trees you see around Upper Hamlet and an acorn which is just starting to put out its roots. It's very difficult to move an oak tree. Maybe you need a big machine and you dig up the roots and ... very difficult! But any one of us could just bend down and pick up an acorn which is putting out his roots and easily move it across Upper Hamlet or even take it to across the world, to California, and plant it and allow it to grow.

So anger can be helpful, sadness can be helpful, but in its seed form. And we recognize it just as it begins to manifest. You become skillful with your attention to recognize these emotions before they become a big oak tree. It is very difficult to invite to go back down into the form of an acorn. I've never tried to invite an oak tree to go down and be an acorn, but sometimes when I'm very angry that's what it feels like I'm doing. I'm trying to invite a giant oak tree to go back to its form as an acorn. Because I'm a mindfulness practitioner!! And I should be able to do these things!!

But anger is very powerful. Sadness, despair is very powerful.

We may not have been aware of all the ways in which we were nourishing our sadness, and our anger. And we may have missed many opportunities to water the seeds of happiness and joy in every moment.

So when anger comes up, it's a bell of mindfulness.

How can I change my daily life in the way I think, the way I speak with my colleagues, the way I speak with my family, so that I water seeds of joy, water seeds of happiness, of mindfulness, of concentration, of insight?

This is a true spiritual power.

Diligence.

And the last of the four aspects of right diligence, which is to invite these positive seeds to come up for a long time - in every moment.

A true practitioner knows how to generate a feeling of joy, a feeling of happiness, wherever they are, whenever. It's called Dwelling happily in the present moment. Wherever we are, we're happy. Not because we just smile - although it's nice to smile. But because we know how to touch, to nourish the seed of joy.

To look and see all the good conditions that we have within us and around us in the present moment. We've trained to do it during this week together.

And so when we go back into our companies, back out into our families, we can be a true representative of Plum Village. That is our homework or our workwork. To go to our workplace and see if we can water the seeds of joy in our colleagues, find skillful ways to water the seeds of happiness in our boss, find skillful ways to bring up the seed of happiness, of joy, of freedom, so they stay for a long time in the collective consciousness of our enterprise.

And maybe put a little bit less attention on profit. Because if we are wise, if we have insight, we know that the real value is not in money. It is in living a fulfilled life, a happy life, a free life.

And when you are in the kind of business with employees that are happy, that are free, that are trying to get their friends to come work for that company, that are giving their services for free to your company, because they believe in it, because they see the deep aspiration, the deep nourishment that comes from what you're producing, your thinking, your speech, your action, that is a true profit.

So actually happiness and profit are not separate. What we think of as profit is only a poor approximation of true happiness. That is what everyone is looking for. And if you and your colleagues can provide true happiness, that is all you need. You don't have to have a beautiful logo or a good website, because you have what everyone is looking for.

We can listen to a sound of the bell.

And when we learn to generate thoughts that nourish our joy, speech that nourishes our happiness, actions that generate compassion, it is not difficult to find Right Livelihood.

It has the taste, a flavor.

And you know right away when you walk into that workplace, whether they are learning to water the seeds of joy and happiness in their employees, or whether they're operating based on fear, on division, hatred and violence. You know it right away.

Right Livelihood means we live in such a way, that we generate freedom in ourselves and we create spaces of freedom for those around us, those who are our employees, those who are our managers, because we don't have to be at the top, we don't have to wait until we get to the top. Right away we can generate joy and happiness. Real joy! We don't do it just to impress people or try to flatter people, but it's really coming from our heart, from our mindfulness, from our understanding of our mind. That's Right Livelihood.

So Right View touches on all aspects of the Eightfold Path Right Thinking, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Diligence, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration.

Right View is the abandoning of all ideas and concepts. The cooling of the flame. When you take a step in mindfulness, you don't need any idea, you don't need any thinking, you don't need to know where you're going.

You can take your two feet and stand on the earth in freedom. As a breathing person, a living person. You just are aware of your breath, aware of your body.

You have nowhere to go, nothing to do.

And when you experience that, when you taste that freedom, you realize that all this running after all of these objects - my position, my house, my car - that's not true freedom.

It's okay to have a house, it's okay to have a car, but if you know how to stand on your two feet with - nowhere to go, nothing to do - and breathe in and out mindfully in freedom, with no expectation.

And then all of the things that you have - your house, your car - you're not attached to it anymore, because you know where your true freedom lies.

So Thay Phap Dung shared the other day about the concentration on 'letting go'. That is a true virtue, to be able to let go of our most precious concepts, our most precious ideas, those ones we staked out and claimed for ourselves, our intellectual property: Let it go!

Because ideas are not happiness.

And your idea of happiness could be the source of your suffering.

So let it go and just breathe.

Let it go and just stand on the earth, walk on the earth in freedom.

Train yourself to do that and you will no longer have a fear.

You won't fear your business failing.

You won't fear getting fired.

You won't fear dying, pain, suffering.

You'll be able to walk in freedom as an awakened person on this earth, with 'nowhere to go, nothing to do'.

That is the power of 'letting go'.

Letting go of all your expectations.

That is Right View.

It's the kind of view that's not based on a concept or an idea.

And even these words are not enough for us to touch Right View.

It requires us to practice.

It's not just something you can receive in a dharma talk, because ultimately it's beyond words. It cannot be put into concepts. It is so vast. It's where we touch the very nature of things as they are. And so our insight is based on a vision of things as they are in the present moment, rather than our idea about how they are. Or our idea about how we are.

That is Right View.

It blows everything open.

It's wonderful, its wondrous existence.

Right View.

And when we touch it, we know how to think in such a way, how to speak in such a way, act, live in such a way, that we can continue beautifully into the future. We can possess the 'now', knowing what our true possessions are: our thinking, our speech, our action.

And our business - what we produce - will be continued beautifully into the future, we have no need to fear.

So I wish you a wonderful continuation, as you go out to walking meditation, as we continue to cultivate these spiritual powers. We've already learned the other three of the five spiritual powers: mindfulness, concentration, and insight or Right View.

So we can take the Eightfold Path in our personal life, take these five powers - you see they inter-are, they overlap - and these five mindfulness trainings home with us. And I wish you much joy and happiness on your path as an ambassador to Plum Village into the business world.

Let us know how you're doing, let us know how we can help.

We're happy to be there for you.

If you want us to come and do mindful walking in your company.

We get a lot of requests.

Sometimes we have to practice 'saying No'.

But we are always here for you.

This is your spiritual home.

And I wish you a joyful walking meditation and please bring peace and joy into the world around you. It can change your business and change your life.

We can finish with three sounds of the bell.