

Turning Compassion into Practice

慈悲化爲修行

A Talk Given by Aaron Friedman at City of Ten Thousand Buddhas on February 16, 2020

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My talk is about turning compassion into practice. I'm going to talk about health issues that I've had over the course of my life to give people a better feel of where that is for me personally but also where that is for the community.

I think there are many people with health issues, and it's important to include everybody in some way, especially those in our community, and that's not just a message for us, but it's also a message for all Buddhist communities and all good communities.

I have had multiple illnesses over the course of my life from when I was ten to twenty-four years old. Several illnesses have gone away through the practice of Buddhism, and I ended up with getting good grades in college.

My health has been pretty good since I've been at CTTB. I've actually been able to go on a lower dosage of one of the medicines multiple times through a doctor's advice. I think in terms of someone living here with some illness, it's a very good experience with very high hopes. I think people are very respectful of privacy as well as compassion toward people who suffer from whatever

今天講的是怎樣把慈悲化爲自己修行之路。我想跟大家分享的是，我一生所遭遇的健康問題。也讓大家更好地了解這些問題對我個人，和對我們的團體意味著什麼。

其實很多人在這個世界上都有健康上的一些困難。如何包容這些人，特別是像在我們這樣的一個宗教修行的團體，能給這樣的人機會。並不光是指我們這個團體，也包括其他的佛教團體，其他好的社區團體等等。

從十歲到二十四歲這段人生歷程中，我實際經歷了一些不同的疾病。有好幾種病症通過學佛已經消失了。到了我讀大學的時候，我的成績就還不錯。

來到聖城以後，我的健康目前為止都還不錯。能夠根據醫生的建議，將我服用藥物中的一種，多次降低劑量。所以我的經驗發現，有健康問題的人住在聖城的話，是很好的經驗，而且能寄予厚望。我認為這個環境對在生活中遭遇各種困難的人們非常的慈悲，而且對人們的隱私非常尊重。

接下來我想談談，作為帶病修行的人，在佛教的修行方面以及醫藥治療之外是什麼體驗，只是為了讓人們更多地瞭解我的觀點。我會談談自己的大學時代，然後分享一下我在這裡的歷程。

kind of difficulty they have in life.

I am going to next talk about what it's like for someone who practices or cultivates the Way, the Buddha's path to have those illnesses, as well as beyond the medicine, just to give people a little bit more of a picture of my perspective, and I'll start with the university and then my time here.

I first introduced myself to Buddhism when I was around maybe eighteen-year-old. But I realized that my life of studying Buddhism was completely different from before I was eighteen, so it was a very new challenge for me, and I was willing to give it a try. I've taken different medications over many years, so I feel that it is very difficult for my mind to concentrate. My mind was, in a secular sense, just occupied with timeless cultivation. In college, if I tried to read a book, my mind sometimes was there and sometimes it was not, and when I tried to listen to a lecture, it was as if I was listening, but not listening. So I felt that I was doing some patchwork cultivation, as if wearing a dress full of patches, making up for it everywhere.

Anyway, I didn't give up trying and kept doing it, and I feel that I had made progress and improved as a person as well as portrayed in my goals in the Buddhist faith. It was not easy for me for there's just a lot of stuff going on in my head. I had too much medicine for many years; my newer doctor told me that I had been overmedicated for a long time. I think the way I liken that to the Buddhist practice is like my investigating a Chan topic or reciting the Buddha's name. It's hard reciting Buddha's names through arising afflictions, trying to recite and concentrate one's mind through having illnesses, or reading some Dharma words, but being unable to interpret it right—these can be challenging.

Before I talk about why I came to a community like this and its rewards, I want to rewind a little bit and talk about the title: turning compassion into practice. Compassion is good; it can be given to all living beings. When I first encountered Buddhism, I read many fancy terms and stuff that would strike a young westerner. But then I was relating it subjectively to my health, how do those connect it, and if someone has very serious illness, what would their response to Buddhism be, what's there for them? How do they challenge that, or how does that challenge them to face themselves? Are you going to try, test challenge it, and go after that or dismiss it? Can you actually get better through a Buddhist faith?

What I found was that therapy differs a little bit for different people. Some people may make a gradual progress with the therapy,

大約在我十八歲的時候，我開始接觸佛教。然後我意識到自己學佛後的人生和我十八歲之前是完全不同的。學佛對我而言是一個全新的挑戰，但我很願意試試看。多年來我陸續服用了各種不同的藥物，以致我精神上很難集中。從世俗角度而言，我的心裡裝滿了永不過時的修行。可是在大學時代，雖然我想看一本書，但我的心有時在看這本書，有時又心不在焉。我要聽課的時候，往往聽而不聞。所以我感覺自己的修行好像在打補丁，到處補來補去。

但是不管怎麼說，我沒有放棄，還是堅持了下去，我覺得自己還是有一些進步，也達到了一些佛教修行的目標。但是非常的不容易，因為太多東西堵塞在我的腦袋裡面。同時，多年來我服用了太多藥物。我的新醫生也跟我說，我長期服用的藥物太多，劑量太重了。所以在我學佛的過程，比如說像參話頭，或者一心念佛，講起來是這樣，可是煩惱叢生、人在病中時，很難專心。就算看經或閱讀法語，往往也無法正確理解，這些都是挑戰。

在我談到為什麼我來到這樣的社區及其收穫到的利益之前，我再拉回到我本來要講的主題，就是將這個慈悲心轉為自己修行的方法。慈悲是好的，可以對所有眾生是一如平等的慈悲。當我第一次遇到佛教，我讀到很多新奇的名相和經文，這些都觸動著一個年輕的西方人。但後來我主觀地把學佛與我的

but the therapist outside his or her clinic does not carry too much responsibility. However, I think having a Buddhist community that you can go to is another step: in addition to responsibility, there is vulnerability. And the result is that you get something you don't necessarily have so much of in the western world, which is a very strong and kind of cohesive social fabric that really makes all the difference in a sick person's life. I dream of a day when the general public is such that when you have some mental or physical difficulties in your life, you can just go to a Way-place for a day or a week, and it's such a nice place that individual struggle just disappears. It's not direct therapy, but the power of people in that community in their way of life is enough to just remove the karmic obstacles. How powerful a statement that would be to the western world! I don't sense that this would be happening soon, I think there would be such an interesting goal to shoot for. But getting better from illnesses is definitely not the only reason to practice Buddhism.

I went home for about three and half weeks in January, and I had an incredible feeling occur. I was in my backyard, which slopes down a bit, and there's a completely flat little stump there from a very tall pine tree. I got to do meditation in my backyard and I had a good feeling that Buddhism is spreading in America.

I felt really cool that I've brought my knowledge to a transcendental place, but this time around, I felt that I was taking what I had learned and done here at CTTB into the secular life. I came to CTTB and brought with me what I learned in college, and now I can take what I also learned from here out and go somewhere with it for like a small period of time. I've felt as if I was doing my own part to spread Buddhism outside CTTB on my own. Even though it may not be very significant, every small thing was very meaningful for me, metaphorically. Maybe in the future there will be many people, maybe a hundred or two hundred million, who are ordinary in current present America who can just go out and interact with each other [in meaningful and beneficial ways]. Buddhism will be a more well-known religion in the US, and that makes me really happy inside. ❀

健康聯繫起來，這些是如何聯接的？如果有人得了非常重的病，他們對佛教的反應會是什麼？學佛對他們意味著什麼？他們如何經過挑戰？或者如何面對自己？你會不斷的嘗試、挑戰，然後跟隨它？或是放棄它？你真的可以通過佛教信仰變得更好嗎？

我發現治療也是因人而異的。一些人通過治療會逐漸恢復，治療對有的人很有幫助。但治療師往往在診所以外的時間就不會對病人負太多責任。然而，我覺得如果有一個佛教社區可以去，會是很好的下一個治療步驟：（佛教社區）除了負責任之外，還有接納包容的特性。這樣你經歷了在西方世界不容易經歷的事情，這是一種非常強大又有凝聚力的社會結構，它真的能改變病人的生活。我夢想有一天，普通大眾可以有這樣的生活，當你在生活中遇到一些身心上的困難時，你可以去道場生活一天或一周。道場是一個非常好的地方，自我的掙扎就不見了。這不是直接的治療，而是那個社區中的人，以他們生活方式的力量，足以消除若干業力障礙。這對西方世界來說是多麼有力的聲明！我不覺得這個夢想會很快實現，我認為這是一個可以為之努力的有趣的目標。但是，為了病癒肯定不是來修行的唯一原因。

一月份我回家大約三個半星期，我有一種不可思議的感覺。當時我在我家略為斜坡式的後院，那裡有一個很平坦的小樹樁，它原來是一棵很高的松樹（但是被砍掉了）。我在後院打坐，覺得佛教在美國正在發展中，那種感覺很好。

之前我有一種很棒的感受，因為我把我的知識帶到了一個脫俗出塵的地方。但這一次，我覺得我把我在萬佛城所學、所做帶入了世俗的生活。來聖城的時候，我是帶著自己在大學裡學到的知識；現在我可以帶著我從聖城所學，去世俗某個地方住一小段時間。我覺得我好像在盡自己的一份力量，在聖城之外傳播佛法。儘管可能不是那麼重要，但每一件小事對我來說都非常有意義。也許未來會有很多人，也許是一兩億的一般美國人，他們可以走出去[以有意義和有益的方式]相互交流。佛教在美國將更加廣為人知，這讓我內心真的很開心。 ❀