

Linda Clair
Five-day Meditation Retreat
Kallara Conference Center, November-December 2021
Transcription from Audio Recordings

File 1A – Saturday afternoon discussion

Linda: So this is the time when you can ask a question, and no question is too basic or silly or whatever. If you have a question don't be scared to ask it.

Question: It's good to back after a few years away from the retreats. I've meditated every day so a lot has been happening and dropping away, in different ways and different levels. It's good to come back into this beautiful, peaceful energy that we have here. A lot has dropped away, to the point where I feel my availability to be here is much more profound – this experience of being here – than I can ever remember. And at the same time, it's innocent, like the first day I sat with you. It's still same the same space and innocence and potential to let go and be here. But the difference is that now I can do it, I can be here. I'm not floating away like a butterfly all over the place. And I want to say I'm so grateful for that, that I can still come back and sit with you. I felt like you were always sitting with me too, all those years I was doing it on my own – it wasn't a gap. The feeling to come back, this opportunity to come here, I just wanted to grab it. Like, to hell with Covid, let's go and be there and sit.

This let-go that's happened the last couple of months for me is, it's a point of sitting really with the body, watching the body and being with the body. And understanding that I'm getting older, I've had a cancer operation, and I've recovered completely, I've lost some teeth, I've got some skin issues, so the body is winding down but that's okay, it's the body, I let it do its thing. But somehow when I'm sitting now I'm seeing that yes, I'm completely with the body, but somehow it's turned and the body is in me. To recognise that presence, that awareness, that watcher, is more real now than even the body being here doing its thing. And it's to recognise that I'm becoming much less personal, not taking things personally anymore. There's no person to take it personally it seems to me. So, yes, that's been going on for a little while now, so just to come into this space with you and to have this opportunity is beautiful.

Linda: Thank you, and it's great to hear. And I feel the same about Covid. What it's done is make us realise we've got to grab something like this when it happens. Because we've got all these retreats planned for next year – I feel most of them will happen – but... You *never* know really but now it's even more uncertain. You realise everything is uncertain, so yes, grab this opportunity. It's great to hear how you're feeling.

Question: The world has become so fragile, uncertain.

Linda: Well, it's always been like that, but it's just we realise now that it's like that.

And the first day or so can be a bit rocky, so if you're feeling a bit resistant to being here try not to worry about that.

You made it.

Question: I'm very glad to be here too. I had to get out of a flood to get here. It's flooding in Temora. So I had to leave a few days ago to get out.

Linda: Good on you!

Question: What I notice about my practice, and it's quieting down all the time, and I feel like things are dropping away a lot. But I had a lot of melancholy coming up, like the summer, and missing my things, and just old feelings. And there's a part of me that always scrambles to make it okay, inside, like that part of your mind that thinks, "I've got to sort this." You've got to let that go too? Is that intelligence or is that just the mind? If I feel melancholy or something comes up it tends to come up with the scenario – it's trying to work out how to let it go, I guess.

Linda: Yes, well, don't try and work out how to let it go. Feel it – so if you feel that melancholy, or maybe it's more a sensation, just feel it as a sensation. Accepting something like that and not judging it as good or bad, going, "I feel melancholy, I shouldn't feel like that." Just accepting it and being able to be with it for a while is letting go. Trust your intelligence, never trust your mind.

Question: Does it even need to be fixed?

Linda: Nothing needs to be fixed. There's nothing to be fixed, nothing needs to be fixed. We just think that we shouldn't be feeling this, we should be feeling whatever – but really, you've got no idea. It doesn't really matter how you're feeling. It's your judgement of it that says, "This needs to be different in some way." Things come and go.

Question: They sure do. It feels quite deep here; I'm looking forward to it.

Linda: Me too. I'm really glad you made the effort to get here. So use this time.

Question: I have a question about thoughts. It feels different when thoughts are there and I'm in the story of the thoughts and then I know, "Come back to the breath, come back to the practice, and start counting." But there's other times when I'm not thinking but there's such a strong change in the breathing, like there's a real contraction or heat, or there's some sort of spasm around the breathing – it feels like there must be a thought there, but it's not a thought. I'm wondering, with those changes in breathing that are quite intense, is that some sort of resistance to thinking? Or is that just a natural breathing thing?

Linda: Not necessarily. The breathing is going to naturally change, and you become more aware of it when you're sitting like this. It can be a number of things, it can be energy, more energy coming in and – a bit like when you're exerting yourself physically – and your breathing changes. When you're sitting

like this you can get surges of energy coming into your body, and so your body's breathing adjusts to that to be able to cope and ground that energy as it's coming in. So it's a different form of energy and a different form of exertion to physically exerting yourself.

Question: Yes, it does feel very different to what you'd call a normal experience.

Linda: It's so different, and this whole thing affects your body so deeply, so much, and your body is adjusting and absorbing all this energy that is non-physical. But the body of course is this physical organism. And during this practice your body does become not as purely physical. It starts to become – it's hard to explain – more real, which is not a solid physical thing. It becomes much more affected by certain things, and you never really know how it's going to react, how the breathing is going to change, how your body is going to feel. Whereas I know for me, before I stated this, I felt I was very much in control of my body, where I would say what happened – I thought it was me, it was just my mind usually – where I would say what would happen and I would do this and that. And I wouldn't consider whether my body felt like doing that or not. I would override the body, often.

Whereas this – the whole way the body functions, the way you function, changes where the body starts to take over and you don't have a say in it. Your breathing naturally changes at certain times. You feel certain things that aren't related to what you're doing physically. In fact, you never know how you're going to feel, and the body takes over more and more, and you realise you're not in control at all. And it can be a bit disconcerting when you're used to putting everything in boxes, and saying, "I'm going to do this," and there's this progression – cause and effect, "I do this and then feel that." When that stops happening it can be a bit strange. So just let your breath change when it needs to. Sometimes it might be a bit of resistance, and bit of contraction. A bit of fear usually affects the breath – it can be that or it can be something else – so as much as possible just allow your breath and your body to take over.

Question: Thank you.

Question: What about when you get that sloth-y thing, when you're about to pass out?

Linda: When you're sitting? (Yes) Don't push against it. Persevere if you can, and if you fall asleep don't worry about it. But everyone, at certain stages, at certain times during their sitting, whether it's at retreat or not, will feel that. It can be a form of resistance, it can be a bit of tiredness, it doesn't really matter what it is, it's going to happen at times. The same with the melancholy. Don't fight it, don't go, "This shouldn't be here, this means I can't sit properly." This is just part of what you need to accept and put up with. And it's a very difficult thing to put up with because you want to be alert, you want to be sitting here.

Question: It's like you fall into the unconscious psychic well. It's like you're dreaming but sitting up.

Linda: Well, that's how most people live their life, that's what thinking is all about. It just becomes more obvious when you're doing this. That is really how most people are living their lives – in this dream. I'm sort of here but I'm not here, sloth.

Question: I seem to have been quite alert for a long time but just in the last few weeks I've been like that. I don't know whether I'm tired.

Linda: Could be. Just try and accept it like everything else. What it can do is make you more appreciative of when it's very uncomfortable but you're very alert. And if you're feeling pain, it is of course very uncomfortable, but you can't go to sleep when the pain is really intense – it forces you to stay awake. So then, because of the slothful periods, you can appreciate the other periods where it's sometimes extremely uncomfortable.

It's like an endurance test where you go over one hurdle, and then have a bit of a breather, and then something else comes up.

Question: But I do feel better in other times when I'm not meditating, like my life seems to be changing a bit. It's like the world's changing.

Linda: The world's always changing, and it always has been changing. Maybe people are becoming more appreciative of now, and not futurizing as much, because if this, but the world's always been in flux. But as you become stiller you do see that more clearly.