

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

File 5B – Wednesday afternoon discussion

Linda: Have I talked to you yet D.?

Question: It's been very painful, all the time.

Linda: Every sit has been painful?

Question: Every sit until lunchtime – and then a lot of the pain just disappeared – and I haven't gone close in to it in the way I could before. So it's been very painful, in places I'm not used to having pain: round my pelvis, and more shooting pain rather than constant pain, and in my back, shoulder blades, knees, brain. So it's been very painful and I feel I've just been plodding away.

Linda: Good, that's all you can do, just plod away.

Question: So nothing big to report, just working away.

Linda: Often after a painful retreat you do feel quite good. Whether you do or not I'm not sure, but I'd say you will feel a bit lighter.

Question: I do feel a bit lighter already actually, in a very ordinary way. It's been such a different retreat.

(Chat about retreat themes not transcribed; Linda calling this one the birdsong retreat.)

Question: I just thought I talk about what's been happening on this retreat. I've had some still, quiet sits, and some where the tremoring has come back with a vengeance, and also the yawns. But when you spoke about accepting everything, I thought, "Okay, I'm going to accept this tremoring," whereas before it's always been going round in my head, "Should I stop it? How can I stop it?" I thought, "No, I'm just going to let it go and see what happens." And it's gradually faded away. But I've had incredible pain across my back and shoulder blades, and in the middle of my chest. Today I opened-up to the pain in my back at the beginning of the sit, and this last sit I really went into it and it lessened and almost disappeared. And also, I could sit up straight and still. It's been very up and down.

Linda: Good. But you've worked with it, and you've worked with whatever is happening. Your intelligence usually figures out a way to deal with things eventually.

Question: Yes, and I realised, when the pain came round to the front, that there was a feeling of lightness to it.

Linda: So you weren't scared of the pain?

Question: No, but I wished it would stop, and I did wonder how long it was going to go on for. It wasn't severe enough to be afraid of. [Some editing down here] I've been sticking with it and doing long sits. Once I stopped and did the walking, but I feel such a chicken when I stop.

Linda: You heard what I said before though didn't you?

Question: Yes, I did.

Linda: So, I'd say take notice of that, and break it up. Don't always do it.

Question: (New questioner without microphone speaks about looking away from Linda's gaze.)

Linda: Why do you look away?

Question: I don't know why I can't do it? I think it's too powerful.

Linda: I'm not thinking anything.

Question: I feels like you can look into my soul.

Linda: And what's wrong with your soul – nothing.

Question: I don't know. I've been thinking about it this retreat and a lot of the fear that I have is that maybe I'm not worthy of enlightenment, or worthy to be practicing, and worthy to be here. I don't really know what to do with that.

Linda: A lot of people feel that, you'd be surprised how many people feel that. They just feel like they're not worthy, it's not for them, it's never going to happen. But anyone who wants this enough *can* do it. And of course you're worthy.

Question: All emotional now.

Linda: I won't embarrass you anymore.

Question: Thoughts aren't in the body are they? They've been feeling like they're *in* my body, really heavy, really dense, as if it's part of my body.

Linda: Well, I feel they do get stored in your body. Your body is essentially a thought, this idea of the body. So every time you feel emotional and repress it, it's like your body tenses up, and that

accumulates over your life, and your body ends up – especially your brain – filled with thoughts, and it clouds your intelligence, clouds everything.

So when we're doing this, a lot of the sensations and the pain that we're feeling in our bodies are the thoughts manifesting as that sensation. That's why your body is such a great thing to use, because it's almost like you can feel the thoughts, like you were saying. And just feeling them and staying with them – not trying to get rid of them, manipulate them, do anything with the sensation, especially if it's uncomfortable – is the way to really free your body, your soul, free yourself from your past, because all your thoughts are of your past. Your personal past, it's all stored in here. And what we're doing is freeing ourselves from our past by using the sensations in our body.

Question: When you said to make space, I'd been thinking about, "What is spaciousness?" just before that, and I was trying to look at how that would feel and trying to feel it. It felt like I had to forcefully push the thoughts away to make space, and then I could feel in here better. Then they just keep coming back, but is that anything like the space?

Linda: I'd say don't push them away because that will just give them more strength in a strange way and they will come back with even more force. Because you pushing them away is repressing them, to a degree, which is what we've been doing. Using whatever we can, most people for most of their lives, using things to repress their emotions and thoughts.

Question: Yes, I can see it's not permanent but it's a reprieve for a millisecond.

Linda: Yes. This is a long-term solution, it's not a short-term thing. It's not about stopping the thoughts and feeling good necessarily – it's not that you won't feel good at times, you will – but it's getting down to the source of the *desire* to think. And that is different to just pushing the thoughts away. I'd say most people can have periods doing certain things where they do forget about themselves and don't think for a short period. But this is going into, "Why do I think?" It's not that you ask that every time you sit, but you see, not the subject of your thoughts, but that movement away from your body. And the thing is, wherever you are you're in your body, you're here in your body. So it's crazy to always be thinking about not being in your body, being somewhere else, when this is where I am. Doesn't matter what time it is, where you are in the world, asleep or awake, you're in your body.

And people get obsessed with these out-of-body experiences because they're scared of being in their body, there is this deep fear of being in the body. So I would say don't push them away, see them, and use all your strength to come back to where you are. I know it's tempting sometimes to push them away, just so you can have a break, but try and resist that temptation.

It's a very difficult thing to do the opposite to what we've been taught to do, what we've learned to do, and what's acceptable in the world. The world is based on memories. You look at advertising, it's all about memories, creating new memories, remember this, remember that. "We're doing this so we can remember it later" – it's ridiculous. And it is separating you from really connecting with people. If you meet someone who you haven't seen for a long time and then relate to them based on how they used

to be ten years ago it's really going to get in the way, you're not going to be completely open. They might have changed completely; you might have changed completely.

Question: Yes, that's the tendency, to see them as they used to be.

Linda: Yes. So you see everything fresh. It's not like you don't recognise someone who you might have known – that's still there.

Question: I can see how that can be but it's only a theory for me at this stage.

Linda: Well, practice it, because that's the only way it's going to become real for you.

Question: I'm almost embarrassed to say it but this afternoon was the first time I was able to stay with the physical pain. There was so much talk of it this morning and yesterday that I thought, "Surely if people with serious injuries can do it then I can give it a go." It seemed to be a bit of an eccentric practice to me, and I once talked to my daughter, who is an osteopath, about it and she said, "But you could really injure your joints!" And I thought, "Okay, that's enough, I'm never going to do it." But I thought, "Maybe I'm being a bit of wuss so I'm going to give it a go," and then I had the best two meditations of the whole retreat by doing that.

Linda: Good. Don't tell your daughter. (laughter)

Question: I have been shifting my position, subtly, whenever I needed to and felt like I was cheating. I have chronic neck pain, which gives me debilitating headaches at times, so I have fear around it. That's what I was mostly worried about. But when I resolved to stay with it, there was some burning, stuff, but I felt disengaged from it. I feel the resolve was the main thing, and it allowed my body to relax. With what I was doing before there was always fear and some sort of tension, and the body didn't relax into the pain. I found myself at the end of the sits in a state that was unaffected by the pain. So I'm inspired and I will try and do that now, because those two meditations were the deepest. I'm grateful to the people who brought it up before and inspired me to try.

Linda: That's really good. And as I said, it's not all pain, but people don't talk about this part of meditation all that much; I suppose in some circles they might a bit. It's not about self-flagellation or anything like that, it's about seeing deeply: what is pain? And when does something start to become painful, what is that point? That point gradually changes, until it sort of dissolves the judgement of it as pain. You can feel something and it feels now to me almost theoretical, most of the time, that it is pain. There might be pain there, and if it's severe it might shock the body, but there's not the emotional connection to it anymore.

Question: I realised that it's not a new experience for me. At the dentist – I'm always terrified – so I've got this mantra that I use that disengages me from it, and that takes an edge off it, and that felt the same.

Linda: Got time for one more.

Question: In the past on retreats I've had really powerful dreams that signify some big shift has happened for me – a judgement or decision or letting go. This morning I realised not a single dream of anything. My sleeping hasn't been consistent, and there's been thoughts arising before I go to sleep. I remembered you saying one time, "I shut my eyes and then I sleep, and then I open them and there's the day." I thought, "What a wonderful way to spend your night!" There was nothing that I noted then except to realise then that there'd been no dream at all. I wondered if you could comment on that because it seemed quite odd, and hopefully significant. (laughing)

Linda: Everything is significant. Well, you had no need to dream. I've had a few dreams this retreat – I think I have but I've forgotten about them. But yes, it's a good thing to just close your eyes. You said you had thoughts before you fell asleep?

Question: (Not all transcribed.) I thought I'd meditate at night if I can't sleep.

Linda: Sounds good to me.