

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

**File 6A – Thursday morning discussion**

Question: I found it very useful when you said it's not progressive, it's not linear, it's not one thing that you do or another, or that you take a step and then another step and you get there. That it's...

Linda: Chaotic.

Question: Yes, it seems random, chaotic, not sequential.

Linda: We're very used to things being sequential and a progression in time, and this is not that progression in time, it's breaking that down. So things appear sometimes very haphazard and chaotic. And that's why you need to stay so grounded, before and after.

Question: Because sometimes it seems like one step forward, two back, or this worked one day but it didn't the next. As you say sometimes when it feels euphoric or pleasant you search for that in the next sitting but that's a false errand. It's useful, it's supportive of letting go that expectation or hope.

Linda: And using your body as the ground. In this state you never know what you're going to say or do – you can say very inappropriate things at times and you just don't know why. You get carried away – sorry about the noise before, it just happens – you really know how you're going to be. People tend to think that an enlightened being is supposed to be this person, still in this box – you behave this way and that way. But the thing about it is you never know how you're going to behave, you never know what you're going to do. And it can be a bit disconcerting sometimes because you say things and they just come out, a bit like when you were a kid, you just say totally ridiculous stuff. You don't regret them but usually you go, "Okay, I'm getting a bit out of hand now, I've got to rein it in a bit." So it's one of the reasons you still have to stay grounded because there is all this energy coming in, particularly in a situation like this. For me, for everyone else, and it can get a bit out of hand.

Question: Like being overexcited as a kid? I've been a bit that this morning.

Linda: I didn't meet Peter first, my ex-partner did, and he said at first, "I don't know about him, he doesn't behave how he is supposed to behave," because he spoke really quickly, he wasn't all calm and how he thought someone was supposed to behave. Then he said, "After a while I realised he was just being authentic." He didn't have any idea really how he was behaving, what he was doing; like he'd say, "I want to get home because I want to watch *Hey, Hey It's Saturday* on TV." (laughing) And things like that, that some people would say, "But you're not supposed to do that because you're all spiritual and enlightened." He really didn't care, he didn't care who he said it to. He had no filter at all.

Question: That's the authenticity you say happens, you just become yourself, your natural self?

Linda: Yes, you just become real and authentic and spontaneous, and it can get you into trouble sometimes but so what, that's how it is.

Question: Yes, I've heard you say that's okay, that you feel okay. You don't go into guilt or thinking about it, it's just the way it is.

Linda: Yes, because you don't do anything to hurt someone. There's not this intention to defend yourself or hurt someone.

Question: Well, often that's in the other person anyway, isn't it?

Linda: And it doesn't mean that sometimes you don't apologise, but you can't really regret things because then that can spiral, because that can spiral and you spend your life regretting things.

Question: I've got two things. One is that during this retreat, at night, I tended to wake up and then my mind was racing, all over the place, just garble. I tried to focus on my sensations and at some times I thought I was going back to sleep but then the same thing would start, and it lingered on into the morning meditations. So they were really hard because I couldn't focus, and I tried counting and you wouldn't believe how many thoughts I can have between one and two. It seems as if I haven't got any will power in the morning, then it get better during the day. I'm wondering if this is a natural process?

Linda: Yes.

Question: It's almost as if the mind had to be quiet during the day and at so night, "Here I am!"

Linda: It might be that. It can get you when you're asleep, when you're sleeping it creeps into your subconscious and gets you that way if it can't get you in the day so much. Especially during retreats sleeps can be very different – great one night, not so good another night, or very disturbed – you don't know. It is part of this, you can never rely on the sleep anymore. I have pretty good sleeps most of the time now but sometimes still it's all over the place and I wake up every couple of hours. But I remember during my practice at times I could hardly sleep and was just so energised.

You feel stiller in the afternoon?

Question: Yes, after the first morning sit, then at this time of day it's no problem. And back home I don't feel that sitting in the morning is any good to me because of the same thing.

Linda: It's a really good time to sit though, and again, don't judge your sitting by what's happening. When you're having to really work to come back, that's when you're making inroads. When it feels good and comfortable, fine, that's good too, but the work is in working. See it as work and try not to expect it to be a certain way. Really watch the way you judge a sit. You have a good sit and you go,

“Oh, great, the next one will be good.” Or just saying, “That was a good sit.” That’s fine, but it’s also a great sit when your mind is going crazy and you’re reining it in. Whereas there is this very strong perception that meditating properly is when you sit there and nothing is happening.

Question: No, I don’t do that. When I talk of the other sits it’s not as if they were all glorious and wonderful, there’s a lot to deal with. It’s just the mind being out-of-control in the mornings that makes it really so difficult.

Linda: It’s going to put you off sitting but it’s a really good time to sit and just work. So see it as work, and start off counting and try not to be put off by the number of thoughts between because most people do have them. One of the reasons you count is that you do see that a bit more clearly, you see how strong this thinking process is and how you can just get lost between counting from three to four – suddenly you’re lost and in some deep thought.

Question: So you recommend I try to sit in the morning?

Linda: Yes, do it and keep doing it. Otherwise this is going to keep happening and it will really put you off. Don’t worry about how often you allow yourself to go away, just keep bringing yourself back. No need to sit for an hour, maybe sit for forty minutes. It’s like you’re saying, “I’m not going to let this put me off, I’ll keep going.” Treat it like work, your work before you go out to work.

Question: I’ve been fairly emotional this retreat. I don’t know how to describe it, but I think one of the main keys has been that it’s a safe place to see a lot of stuff. Like you said, I think yesterday, about how everything has got to come up, and it’s been sitting there waiting to happen for a couple of years if not most of my life. Just old patterns that I feel have been there since I was a young kid, and have changed over my lifetime but have always ended up with me being pretty paralysed and depressed.

So I suppose I’ve just been seeing a lot of that and feeling a lot of that, but in the context of feeling like there is no judgement here and it’s safe. Even in the safest therapeutic situations there’s not anybody there who is completely without judgement. So I feel that’s the space that you create here. Also, it’s not like a whole lot of stuff that I’ve got to fix or manage or repair, it’s seeing that all of that emotional stuff and hurt and projections and memories, it’s all not real. It really comes from something that I’m making up in my head, and I don’t have to do anything about that except just keep on going. The way out of that in a way is just sitting and coming back to the body and feeling, just for moments, that stuff doesn’t exist, it’s just not there. But I feel like it’s been something that’s so embedded in my head and my body even that it’s very persistent.

Linda: It is, so you have to be persistent, just seeing it and coming back. The freedom of this is realising your own mortality, realising that you could die any time – on the way home, tomorrow. With that comes this freedom where you don’t take the worldly stuff so seriously. It’s like someone who is dying saying, “Why did I spend my life worrying?” It’s a bit like that. It’s not that you want to die, it’s not that at all, but there is this freedom of accepting that one day you are going to die, and it’s going to be now, so there is no point wasting your time. But you do need to do what you were saying – keep going, keep

seeing that very deep, past, emotional stuff that is *in* your body and releasing it by simply sitting with it, being with it, taking responsibility for it.

Do you feel a bit less anxious? I had no idea how anxious you felt because you just don't show it, you seem to be going along relaxed, I didn't realise how anxious you were.

Question: That's one of the patterns that's got me in really deep shit in the past. I've let it go too long without – well, I never felt I could do anything about it – that was one of the problems. But in the past it's gone on for a year or two or three or four, and then there is a sort of total collapse. But this time, I've learnt to handle it in slightly different ways as I've got older.

Linda: You don't show it outwardly though.

Question: It's just something in the body. I don't know. I've been trying, when I've felt some strong emotion when I'm sitting, when I could I've been trying to just feel it in the body, see if it's a real physical sensation in the body. That also has helped me, it's coming back to the body in a way, a part of the body.

Linda: Just keep going. And on the way home just take your time, don't hurry. Take it one step at a time. Don't go, "I've got to get home." What are you going home to? There is no huge hurry, so just watch that. When you're doing anything that momentum of, "I've got to do this and that." You could die tomorrow, and what does it matter, so don't waste your time. And I'm not saying that in a morbid way, but it's true, any of us could. We go, "If someone is ninety-five they're more likely to die first. They're old, they'll die," but it can happen any time. So make use of this life to keep doing this, to keep freeing that fear from your body, because that's all it is, just fear that is stored in your body.

Question: I don't do longer sits at home to the point of pain, so I did some longer sits during this retreat and it was really valuable, obviously. One was, I had very sharp shoulder pain that I'd aggravated some injury and that sit I couldn't follow the breathing, I could only try and be as still as possible for the whole sit, but that was very valuable. Another one I had intense pain in my hips and buttocks, and the breathing just intensified it and it was so hard, but it was so good to come out the other end of that after the sit finished, and of course the pain's not there. I mean I haven't done one as long since then, but perhaps when I get home I should do some longer sits and just see.

Linda: How long do you sit at home?

Question: The most I sit is an hour and a quarter.

Linda: You'll feel it more here in this environment. As I've said before, that's why I used to crave sitting with my teachers because it would accentuate that. But at the end of sit like that you do feel, "Oh my god, I've done it, I put up with that." There's this incredible clarity at times, and strength, and you start to feel more empowered. And as you said, as soon as you open your eyes it's gone. It's a very strange thing.

Question: Well, I feel it's such a valuable thing, retreat, to challenge myself in this way because at home I just might be going round and round in my own mind, but here with your presence, there's a possibility for something else to happen.

Linda: Deep change, deep empowerment, seeing things more deeply. It's the whole thing combined: sitting with me, sitting with others, leading up to something like that you pace yourself so you warm up to it and feel, "I'll try it this time." Being in a safe environment like this where everyone is doing the same thing. You hear people talking and most people feel similarly at certain times – nobody does this easily. It's not like it's easy, it's just not. So it's a combination of all those things, the support that you feel when you're sitting in an environment like this gives you the confidence to try things.

It can be good to have that competitive thing too. Someone was saying the other day, "Well, if they can do it, I can do it too." I used to feel like that. I was pretty competitive, and I went, "I want to do this." It's like you're competitive with yourself, your mind, and that can really motivate you too. So try a few longer sits at home as well, and you do start to see the value of the pain that people are talking about. And the pain eventually goes. You don't need the pain to be present, but it can help, it can act as a catalyst for this. So that's great.

Question: One thing I've thought a few times which I'd like clarification on is this concept of personal responsibility, and that we need to take one hundred percent responsibility for how we're feeling at any given time. And I appreciate that but part of me also thinks, like a simple analogy, if someone slams my finger in the car door and it's completely beyond my control, and they have done it. And the next morning I wake up and my finger is sore, and I'm in discomfort, am I responsible for that or is someone else responsible?

Linda: Well, they are responsible for doing that, but you are responsible for how you feel. I did that to someone once accidentally, and he was actually a really well-known guitarist too, it was terrible. I felt terrible, and apologised, it was accidental. But feeling anger towards them – what good is that going to do?

Question: But more the analogy of, say, anxiety and feeling intense anxiety in certain situations, and thinking that is because of situations in my childhood that were completely beyond my control. So there's this issue of taking personal responsibility for it, but also understanding that the situations that have led to me feeling this anxiety or anger or whatever now – I can take responsibility for it, but in a way there is an element of it that is beyond my responsibility, in that I had the behaviour and modelling of parents that I had no control over that actually lead me to feel this way.

Linda: We've all been in that position.

Question: But I'm curious about this thing about taking personal responsibility versus understanding why it is that I'm feeling whatever I'm feeling.

Linda: You don't need to know why though, that's the thing. We're obsessed with knowing why, "Why do I feel like this? Because my mother hit me when I was five," or something, or there was some

trauma. That has contributed to it, but the only way you're going to be free from that is by saying, "Right now I am responsible for how I feel." Of course, everyone's had traumas, unfair things happen in their life, and they'll keep happening. But if you keep saying, "I'm like this because of that," you're subtly blaming that for how you feel right now.

So with this practice, gradually, all that past trauma does leave. The thing is to stop thinking about it; that's what eventually happens. It doesn't mean it hasn't contributed to who you are right now. When you realise the truth, this, eternity, you realise *everything*. Not in an intellectual way but you totally accept everything that has ever happened in your life, everything that you felt was done to you, everything that you felt you did to other people, there is this total realisation of the truth of now. And it includes everything, and you totally accept everything.

But it's not in an intellectual way. Before that you do tend to go, "Why do I feel this? It's because of this," this cause-and-effect thing. And that goes totally so there is only now. It doesn't mean that you forget everything totally but there's not the emotional attachment to it anymore. So it becomes more a theory rather than what you feel is a reality, reality is something totally different, it's not what you think it is. It's impossible to describe the relief of that where there's this total acceptance of all this, of everything that has ever happened. It's almost like how people say when they're dying their life flashes before them – it's a little bit like, that but it's just now. Everything did happen now, and now is now, you're here now when you were five years old, it was still now. That's why this thing is so huge because it includes all of time, but you are free from time.

Question: So it seems like a big part of it is just dropping the blame and the explanation for how you're feeling as well. Even if there is a clear understanding of "this has done this, like, my finger was slammed in the door," it doesn't change that my finger is hurting now, or that I'm feeling angry or anxious or whatever.

Linda: Yes, your finger is still going to hurt, but there's not going to be this intense anger about it. Just, "My finger hurts. What will I do about it?"

Question: So in some ways the intellectual understanding can get in the way?

Linda: Definitely.

Question: I can see at certain times it's enlightening on a superficial level to make connections but on a deeper level just to acknowledge how you are feeling and accept it.

Linda: I think most of us have done enough therapy, talking about things, understanding intellectually. I know for me it hadn't worked, so when I was presented with this possibility of a way out, I thought what have I got to lose, I'll try it." The intellectual stuff does get in the way, the knowing why, how – it just is. Our parents did the best they could whatever happened.

Question: They were brought up in more trying circumstances than we were.

Linda: Yes, and how far back does the blame go? You've got to stop that cycle of blaming. This is so radical because it's breaking that chain of blame and taking responsibility, going, "No more, I'm going to take responsibility now." Because if you start blaming or regretting anything how far back does it go? We're not victims, we don't need to be victims, so this is empowerment, not being a victim of our past anymore.

Question: There's been times in my sitting years back where it almost felt like I was taking on my whole family's trauma for things that happened in my childhood, so it's almost like you chose to accept it, or take it on and process it, so it isn't passed on.

Linda: You are responsible for how you feel. You're not even responsible for how your son feels, and that's a hard thing too because we do feel responsible, "Oh, they're not happy, it's my fault." You've got to stop that at some time and go, "You're on your own, take responsibility." They have to find their own way. The best thing you can do for anyone is to do this, to start taking responsibility for how you feel and not blame someone else. Which of course I know I did for years, and it's toxic. You don't want to end up a bitter, resentful old person.

Question: So it's accepting yourself for who you are?

Linda: And who you're not. I'm not this person I've created. You never find out who you are, and that's the uncertainty, you can't put yourself in a box, you can't self-reflect anymore. There's no one there to do that, and that is why you have to stay grounded.

Question: When you're everything you can't blame anything.

Linda: No, so you do things and other people might blame you but you don't blame yourself anymore, or anyone else.

Oh, we haven't got much time to sit now. I'm in trouble. (laughing) We'll sit for eleven minutes.