

Linda Clair
Ten-day Meditation Retreat
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Transcription from Audio Recordings

FILE 5C – Afternoon discussion

Question: I've got lots but I'll limit it to one. So what's been happening for me since Crafers days is, I'll arrive, and within half a day usually – this time it's taken two – my gut just seizes up, clenches up. So every breath, it's like having an enormous rubber band across my abdomen, and that goes every breath for the whole retreat. I've been reflecting on the practice a bit and I want to check it with you, because that feels like it's going nowhere at all for years really. So it's abdomen?

Linda: Describe in detail what happens.

Question: I breathe in to my abdomen, down the bottom, and across the top that puts pressure, so pain. Then breathe out, and what I've just been playing with a bit – not playing with, but usually I'm also trying for a whole-body awareness.

Linda: Don't try that, I'd say. Don't try and feel anything in particular. When you feel that tension in your guts, what's your reaction to that?

Question: It varies from acceptance to, eventually, "I'm going to have to call an ambulance."

Linda: But you keep coming back to retreat, you keep coming back to sitting. Why do you keep coming back?

Question: Because there is a truth in it.

Linda: Yes. Well, I can say persevere. Do you sit at home?

Question: Yes, it doesn't happen there; it happens when I come to retreat with you. And I know it's not the food because when I come to a weekend one, it will start there before I've eaten anything, and I've brought my own food. It's an energetic thing, and I guess it's the intensity of the energy or being around you. I don't know.

Linda: Yes, a combination. People often feel a bit sick around me. (Laughing)

Question: Well, I'm assuming it's not wanting to let go. But it's pretty determined not to let go.

Linda: Yes, it's very determined. Different people will get it in different spots in their body. Do you get pain in other parts of your body?

Question: Yes, knees and bum and all of that, and that's different. I have different reactions to that and that's been interesting. After speaking to you earlier in the retreat I had a real clearing up mentally around knee pain where it was really intense. Usually what that does is I'm going, "Oh, this is good – I'm not thinking," kind of thing. Whereas this one I didn't have the choice about thinking. It had a different quality. I've never had that happen before when the choice just isn't there, but that was before this happened again. I get all sorts of pain.

Linda: All I can say is keep going, but don't hope it's going to go away, and try not to expect it either, or hope it's not going to be there. I'd say it is an energetic thing and probably a few people feel that to a degree at different times. But feeling it that strongly – at least you're in your body. It is something that is part of this. It's going to be very uncomfortable, and you can never say how long that is going to happen, you really can't. Different things like that happen as you are coming into your body that are very uncomfortable – different forms of resistance. And that's what it is. So all I can say is persevere and don't hope that it's going to go away or get better. Sometimes people feel a lot of pressure up here. It's probably better that you're feeling it further down. It doesn't feel good but it's just part of this, and if you are being affected by the energy – great. Do you often feel different after a retreat?

Question: In terms of that pain, that will disappear within a day or less. I haven't been on a long retreat for quite a while, and it will vary. Sometimes I will feel quite emotional and raw, and sometimes I will feel clean and clear and light. The last one I came to, which was a few years ago, was four months of really dark stuff.

Linda: Yes, but it lifted after that?

Question: Yes.

Linda: Well, you never know how you're going to feel after a retreat and it does churn up stuff, and sometimes if you feel those emotions during a retreat you'll feel lighter afterwards. Other times you'll feel emotional for a while afterwards, you just can never tell. That's the hard bit about it – you can't predict how you're going to feel, what's going to happen. But you do know that things are shifting, something is happening. And even feeling that pain or the discomfort in your stomach is a sign that something is happening, something is being stirred up.

You can ask one more question if you want.

Question: Well, I was interested in the relationship between – you were talking about how tiring the pursuit of personhood is, being a person – and I was interested in the relationship between depression and that.

Linda: Well, depression is a mind state, it's just a very, very heavy mind state. And it's tiring. One of the symptoms of being depressed is tiredness, fatigue, you can't do anything. It's like the emotions on overload and it's incredibly tiring. I remember when I'd have fight with someone, say my partner, and

there'd be a lot of emotions involved – it would be so tiring and I'd feel so tired for, sometimes, days afterwards.

But I didn't realise how tiring it was being a person until most of that stuff went. And then I was amazed that I'd kept it together, that I survived. How could someone live in a state of such tension, emotion? I was just amazed that I held it all together, or I seemed to hold it all together. But I didn't realise until I let go, my whole body just softened. There was this incredible feeling of relief and softness. You're scared that if you let go of control you're just going to collapse and die. It's like you're being held by all these strings and someone is manipulating you – do this and move this way and do this. That all goes. It's like the strings are cut. And you don't collapse in a heap on the floor, you suddenly just feel alive and free from that incredible tension.

It's not like I never feel tension anymore but that deep tension that I used to feel is not there anymore. But I had to go through a lot of discomfort, a lot of pain, a lot of emotion. Everything that everyone has been talking about I've been through. But you do come out the other side, you do have to persevere and keep on to it. And everyone does it whenever they feel to do it. But towards the end I did need to make it a priority, and it did become a priority. But I didn't have any choice by then, and a few people have been talking about that, like there's no choice. There's a real freedom in not having any choice.

[A section edited out.]

Linda: D. hello! (Some joking)

Question: Like B. earlier on, you told me to do something the other day. You told me to self-contain for twenty-four hours.

Linda: And did you? (Yes, absolutely.) I thought you did. I was watching you.

Question: It was very profound, very profound. So thank you.

Linda: Good.

Question: I could describe it but it took twenty-four hours so I won't.

Linda: You feel more settled?

Question: I feel very settled, in a different way completely. So much happened. One of the things that is still happening is that I recognised a layer of thought that I'd allowed to completely go on and on, because I can't catch it. It's music and it's what you call an ear-worm, and it's such a low level that I only just hear it, but it's almost continuous. So that's been interesting to really give myself the space to hear that, and count. I've done a lot of counting.

Linda: Funny thing is I've done a lot of counting the last twenty-four hours too. Specially after a phone call with my sister. (Lots of laughter.) But before that I was counting, maybe in preparation – I didn't

know I was going to call her. But I have been, when I've been walking, sitting, anything. It's a very profound practice and if you start to do it when you're not actually sitting you do start to see how much is there.

And you might all be thinking, "You're enlightened so you've got no thinking, no thoughts at all." But it's not true. It can start to start up if you let it, you have to keep your eye on it, never assume.

Question: I started hearing it when I would go to the toilet in the night, months and months ago. It was the first thing that happened as my feet hit the floor, music. I could manage to breathe but I've never really got a handle on it, so I'm grateful for that. That twenty-four hours was so much what I wanted.

Linda: Well, that's what you needed. It's what you needed because I could see you were looking for anything to do, to – well, I didn't know what was happening in you, but I could sense something was.

Question: It's been very tumultuous – that twenty-four hours has shown me a level of disturbance in me that I wasn't really wanting to see.

Linda: Well, who wants to see disturbance?

Linda: So anyone who is going tomorrow has the priority. F. is going tonight.

Question: Yes, I am going tonight – I decided at lunchtime – because I don't want to get caught by WA border closures because of the Covid situation. It's totally stirred me up around the decision, so I've booked a flight and I'm going. Then this sit, sitting with you, has really been settling that energy. I feel like more than ever that the coming was a practice, managing and practicing in the coming, and I feel like I'll take the practice with me. It's been a different retreat – it started before I left home and I imagine it will go on after I leave home.

Linda: After you leave here, which is your home?

Question: Yes, after I get home, I mean. I can feel emotion now. I think I'm sad to be leaving, but yet again, grateful. Grateful for the practice, and even though I feel kind of messy and stressed, I couldn't have handled it as well as I am – never – until I've been sitting with you. Those things, I keep finding I can do things that I never could have done. So just huge gratitude really, and gratitude for everyone, as always.

Linda: So I'm doing your breakfast job tomorrow. (Laughter.)

Question: It was interesting you were talking, to D. I think, saying, go and have a cry if you're feeling emotional. And for the first time ever on a retreat, I could feel some stuff coming up in me as well and I ended up going to my room and having a good bawl for the first time.

Linda: Really? That was the first time?

Question: Yes, it showed me how constricted emotionally – I noticed I have a lot of constriction in my chest. I've been noticing over the last six months, even my voice and the way I talk, and everything, I feel there are these subtle levels of constriction in me that I'm noticing, and occasionally ease off a little bit as well. So it was nice to have that seed planted and then just to allow it to have that release. It was a beautiful and profound thing as well. I was talking the other day about emotionally triggering thoughts coming up and coming back to the body. Even how there's been almost a clinging to the body, and sometimes when the thoughts are quite emotional it's almost like I need to cling to the body to pull away from them. And then I find that I have this clinging to the body, and it can be quite nice, but it's almost like I'm holding on to it to stop the thoughts.

Linda: Well, it's tricky. Because when you're feeling like that, if you go off with the thoughts – it's a bit like Covid – it just takes over. It does feel like you're doing that – and it's not repressing the thoughts because you can see them and you can still feel it – but it's more that you're standing your ground and going, "No, if I start to get into it that will be it." And it's so tempting to do that because it's hard to just stand your ground and be here and not be swept away. You get very tempted to do that – "Oh, I just want to go in and get upset and blame this person and get angry at them." And you go, "But that's not what I want to do." But it's really hard not to.

So do that, that's okay, it's not repressing the thoughts.

Question: And there's been times where I've felt I could then just relax back and feel the body without clinging to it, once I'm in a calmer state where the thoughts aren't churning. Then it's a subtle shift from clinging to the body sensation to stop these thoughts coming, to just relaxing and being with it.

Linda: Yes, so do both. Don't cling on to it forever, but for periods you do need to be firmer with your breath sometimes. And then soften and allow them to come up when you're feeling a bit stronger and you can see them, and you've got the energy and the stability to be in your body, see them, but not go with them. Because if you get too focused on the body then a different sort of fear will arise – the fear of being disturbed – "If I let it in, I'll go off with it." It is a tricky thing where you do that for a short time but then you do have to open up again and see them, acknowledge they're there, but have the strength to not go with them. Whereas if you go with them when you're feeling incredibly emotional, it does weaken you, and it's harder to get back to that stable place. But it's a fine line and it's difficult.

Question: It feels like my ability to cling onto the body has increased so I can pull myself out of that emotional rut that can come up with thinking, and that feels nice. And then it is that balance.

Linda: Your body is much more real – tangible, real, you can feel it, it's here. What are all these emotions and thoughts? You look at them, what's it all about, all this stuff going on? It's not real, you can never touch it, put it in a jar and say, "That's a thought." You can with a body – it's here. And it's not real because one day it is going to die, and that's where all the fear comes from, and that's why you cling to it. But it's also why you want to do anything to get out of it, because you know it is going to die one day. What thinking is doing is pretending that that's not going to happen, it's never going to happen to me. But of course, it's going to happen to all of us, at some time. So to be able to live your

life in your body, without that fear of the death of the body but acknowledging that it could happen any time, is the most amazing way to live. The only way to really live – to accept your mortality. That's what this is about.

Question: And isn't that also the deep realisation that you aren't your body?

Linda: Yes, you are not your body. I am not my body. My body is here, it's doing stuff, it's in existence, but it's not me. Because the great fear is that I am my body; and the belief is that I am my body, so when my body dies I'm gone, that's it, it's the end. And I don't want it to end, I want something that lasts forever. Something real. And the only thing that is always here is now. It is everything, you become everything. So you could say you become god, but of course if you say that you'll get burned at the stake – or crucified!

Question: But if you say god is the fundamental, absolute ground of awareness that permeates everything.

Linda: I never use the word god because I feel like it's too loaded. I prefer to use universal intelligence, the intelligence that D. was talking about where she didn't think, it just happened. It's the same intelligence that makes the trees grow, you watch a baby growing – it's the same intelligence. But it's become warped by the mind. All of us have that potential, because when you look at babies for example and watch them as they use their intelligence to learn to walk, to crawl, to do different things, it's this incredibly basic, spontaneous primal intelligence. But it gets corrupted by the mind, and then it's not pure anymore. But we've all got that in us, we're all born with this incredible potential and intelligence. And through nobody's fault it just becomes corrupted.

Question: It's like society and the mind are a reflection of each other and we're born into this society.

Linda: That's why it's so hard doing this because most of society is against it. Most of society would freak out if they saw what we were doing, and think it's weird and awful. Most of society would, because we are separating ourselves from that, and people see that as a threat and as an attack on them. But of course it is not, it's just saying, "I want this, there is something else. I'm not satisfied with this."

Question: I found it interesting to think this is a way of living together as well that is so different from the norms of society and it's quite beautiful. And everyone has a much lower environmental input spending their week here than in their normal lives. It's this beautiful thing doing this practice and working towards dropping the ego, and at the same time living with a lighter footprint. It's like the two go together.

Linda: And the retreat finishes and everyone disperses into society and affects everyone around them. Like you said last time, when you were in Euroa and saw people from (the first five days of the March retreat). And the people you saw who had been sitting were...

Question: Noticeably calm – it was amazing. I think it was L. at the gate when I arrived, radiating peace and calm.

Linda: With his Hi-Viz jacket. (Laughing.)