

David Kaczynski on Emotional Healing from a Buddhist Perspective (Excerpts)

David Kaczynski

March 13th, 2013

Sandy Hook Promise presents a presentation exploring the intersection between Eastern mind training and Western psychology to address the problem of violence and to promote healing from the emotional trauma caused by violence. Lama Kathy Wesley, James L. Knoll, Tsultrim Yeshe and David Kaczynski.

The mission of Sandy Hook Promise is to end school shootings and create a culture change that prevents violence and other harmful acts that hurt children. Through our proven, evidence-informed Know the Signs programs and sensible, bipartisan school and gun safety legislation, we teach young people and adults to recognize, intervene, and get help for individuals who may be socially isolated and/or at risk of hurting themselves or others.

My name is David Kaczynski. I was born in Chicago but now live in upstate New York, and I'm currently the executive director of Karma Trianna. Dharmachakra Monastery in Woodstock, NY, which is a Tibetan Buddhist mystery.

Prior to that, I was executive director of New Yorkers for alternatives to the death penalty.

Prior to that I was a social worker, working with kids, teenagers and a runaway homeless youth shelter, I'll probably be forever remembered unfortunately as the brother of Theodore Kaczynski, also known as the Unabomber.

Unlike the other panelists here, I'm not an expert in mental health. I'm not an expert in Buddhism. What I have to tell you are my personal story snippets of my personal story.

About the time I was first getting interested in Buddhism and beginning to take teachings and Buddhism, I was serving as a assistant director of a runaway homeless youth shelter in Albany, NY and I actually got a great deal of satisfaction out of trying to help troubled kids and their families.

Also, some sense of helplessness, like I can't always help them in the way they won't listen to my good advice and so forth. Sometimes they did, sometimes they didn't.

But I was really struck by the commonality between a kind of Buddhist approach to people and best practices in social work. It seemed like there was a real clear sense that you treat people with compassion, with respect...

And I think part of what I really understood and picked up is the idea of Journey in Buddhism. Wealth and call it a path. But a sense that everyone is on a path they're not necessarily going to be where you want them to be, or where you think they should be, and that every pet buddies pet is is unique and individual.

And certainly that sense of journey was to become more important for me as I as I went through my own life trauma.

In 1990 I had the good fortune to marry a woman I'd adored for years had met in the 7th grade. And she ultimately said, yeah Dave, I kind of like you too and her name is Linda, a huge important part of this story. I think the important thing maybe is to maybe look at this from a family members perspective.

Linda was actually the first person to help me understand after we were married that my brother Ted wasn't just a little different, just wasn't eccentric, but that there was actual mental illness there.

We consulted with a psychiatrist. We asked for help and how we could help Ted, but Ted had by this time isolated himself out in the woods in Montana.

He basically had cut off from us about the time I was married. He'd cut off from our parents some years before, so again, there was this sense of helplessness. I'd like to help my Brother, but I don't know how. But you know, in some ways the family is the last to know.

It was about five years later that Linda came to me and said, David, do you think it any possibility you know, don't get angry at me, but do you think any possibility that your brother could be this Unabomber that everybody is talking about.

And my first reaction was absolutely no way, I mean Ted had never been violent, I never remembered him being violent. Sure, he's mentally ill, but you gotta understand most people with mental illness are not at all violent. No more violent than the rest of us and I was actually a little offended.

But as time went on and Linda was persistent and ultimately the Unabomber's Manifesto was published in the Washington Post and I read it and all of a sudden I got this horrible chill and began to feel my gosh. This sounds like my brother's voice.

And in those early days I I still thought it was only a slim possibility, but I sort of opened the door a crack and was beginning to understand that it might be real.

As we studied as we investigated, the time went on and you know at one point I remember lying in bed with my wife and saying, you know Hon.

I think it might be a 5050 chance and this was really the first time I'd acknowledged to Linda.

Linda ironically had never met Ted, so it was kind of like I I was.

I was the sort of reality check for her for her suspicions, and ultimately we got to the point where we felt.

We were facing a choice and if you think about it, it was an extraordinarily dramatic choice that seemed like a no win situation.

Whatever choice we made could lead to somebody.

Nine, if we did nothing and my brother was indeed the Unabomber, some other person innocent person might die.

On the other hand, if we went to the authorities, turned Ted in, if we stopped the Unabomber.

He could, well.

Be subject to the death penalty or killed when he was being arrested.

At this point I actually agonized and decided not to tell our mother. At this point she was 79 years. She had worried about Ted for years because of his estrangement from the family. Believe me, Mom's worst nightmare didn't come close to.

This this.

Possibility that my brother might be.

The most wanted person in America a serial killer.

You know, I think whether whether you're a family member of a victim of homicide or you're a family member of a murderer.

Well, you're the last to think.

That this was going to happen in your.

Family you don't.

Imagine that your family is going to be.

Affected in this way.

Ultimately, I think Linda and I felt we really had no choice.

I mean, we could not live with each other with with ourselves.

If we did nothing and another innocent person died, we'd we'd have to go through the rest of our lives with blood on our hands.

And in some ways that I really need to, you know, my story has been told plenty.

This story has not been told, you know, and yet it's an absolute essential key.

It's that bystander who sees something.

And has the courage.

Maybe take a risk and depress little farther and to say what needs to be said.

Not to bury that uncomfortable thought, but to pursue it in the interests of protecting other people.

Even when we went to the FBI, you know, I thought it might be 5050 at that point, and so we hoped and prayed that I'd never have to tell Mom that they would investigate and find out that Ted was completely innocent.

Unfortunately, that didn't happen and the day came when one of the FBI agents called me and said, David, I'm sorry to have to tell you this, but your brother has actually moved to the top of our suspect list.

We really need to speak with your mom.

Think maybe you could go to your mom, tell her kind of what's going on, and try to persuade her to meet with us.

So this meant going to my mom.

Telling her something that was going to end her happiness and possibly make her very angry at me when I told her what I had done, I was afraid that I would lose her love that day.

I remember I went to the my mom's apartment. She lived about 3 miles from us. At that point, I knocked.

On her door.

She opens her door.

At first she's happy because her son is standing there and then within a few seconds she she gets his worried look on her face and she says, David, you look terrible.

You know what's the matter?

Did something happen?

And I said, Mama, I think you better sit down and guess what Mom said.

Oh my God, did something happen to Ted?

She just worried for so many years.

You know she somehow knew it was about Ted.

But I persuaded her to go back into the apartment and she sat down.

I was kind of pacing the floor thinking how can I share this news with my mother in a way that doesn't absolutely crush her?

And you know, we start talking about in places the Unabomber had been, and ideas, philosophies, the Unabomber had written in his manifesto and then.

Pointed out, the commonality is with her other son.

And Mom is a, you know was a bright woman.

She was connecting the dots very quickly and she's sitting there just looking at me with this look of horror and disbelief on her face.

And I knew my mother loved me with all her heart.

I knew she loved Ted.

With all her.

Heart I had no idea how a mother would, kind of.

Put this together.

One son suspected of horrible crimes, the other son, perhaps haven't handed him over to the executioner, and I started crying a little bit, and at this point I just really had to lay all the cards out and I said, you know, mom, I think there's a possibility Ted might be the unit bomber and.

Mum, I've actually gone to the FBI.

I've shared my suspicions.

Let's let's let's hope I'm completely wrong, but Ted is currently under investigation.

I lost mine about a year and a half ago, but so, but this is the memory of my mother that I'll always carry with me till my dying day.

At that point, she was quiet for a moment.

That was kind of like a stunned silence, and then she got up out of her chair.

She very short little woman under 5 feet tall.

I'm a little over 6 feet tall and without saying a word, she just walked up to me. She reached her arms up around my neck. She pulled me down and she put a kiss in my cheek. It's like a mother's blessing.

And the first thing she said was David.

I can't imagine what you've been going through, what you've been struggling.

Had it been the worst day of her life where she is concerned about my feelings and the next thing she said was the most comforting thing I could have heard, she said David.

Headed universal

I know that you loved him.

I know that you wouldn't have done this unless you truly felt that you had to.

And in that moment I realized I hadn't lost moms.

Love that Linda mom and I would be in this face this ordeal together.

Ted was actually arrested about a week later, maybe 10 days later, and it was all over the national news.

'cause we'd actually received a promise of confidentiality.

I was told by the government nobody will ever know how we caught your brother.

Well, you know how that turned out.

Here I am watching the TV and not only is my brother being arrested and there's one of the evening anchors saying, well, you know another interesting sidelight.

Apparently Kaczynski was turned in by his own brother David, who lives in's connected in New York and you know within minutes, like in Mom's parking lot they were.

Satellite trucks and cameras and satellite dishes.

And you know all of a sudden this sort of very personal private.

Ethical decision family tragedy was it was all public and people wondering.

You know what kind of a brother would turn in a brother?

What kind of a family could possibly produce someone this deranged in this violence?

I know at one point I think that this was when the government decided did announce that they would seek the death penalty against my brother.

I was feeling.

I was feeling like a victim now.

Nobody had hurt me.

Nobody had hurt any.

Of my loved

Ones, but I felt look, I did this this difficult thing, and here's how I'm repaid.

They break a promise to me.

When government and.

I were working together was to save.

Lives, but now that the government wants to kill someone, we're on different sides.

I don't want my brother to die.

And I think you know I would, I.

Would come home.

From work and I would rant and be angry.

And I felt you know this sort of despair and anger, and felt like a victim.

And, you know, at one point Linda just heard a little bit too much of it and she said, David, you know, if you think this is about you, you got another thing coming.

You know this this is sure you know this is.

This is really awful stuff, but there are real victims out there are people who've been named their people who've been killed, their families that will never ever be the same, and I said oh, but but my pain is different.

Last year

I I've built on top of all of that.

You know, maybe you can imagine the rest.

The conversation, but it kind of ended like.

With me thinking.

Maybe I need to reframe this and the next morning Linda and I have been Buddhist.

We do a morning meditation when we went into our meditation room in the morning.

I saw that she had put up 3 candles on the altar and I didn't have to ask who those candles represented.

They represented the three people that my brother had killed and their families, and so for the next three or four years we meditated.

I'm trying to understand and grasp some element of the harm that my brother had done.

My brother was.

Lucky, unlike a lot of people who commit serious crimes, my brother had great attorneys.

Our family really went to bat for him trying to explain to people that this was seriously mentally ill.

This case was different.

In any case, his is, the case, was resolved, the legal case was resolved with life.

My brother was given life.

My mother and I attended the trial in Sacramento, CA and on the day that the trial ended, Mom and I were in the apartment we had rented.

Obviously not celebrating.

Actually kind of wondering.

They're quiet like how are we going to go on?

What are we going to do with this for?

The rest of our lives.

When the telephone rang and we were contacted by a chaplain.

Who identified herself as working with law enforcement in Sacramento and she was calling to let us know that there was a victim family that wanted to meet with us.

I actually wanted to protect Mom, I thought.

Gee, these folks are probably.

Going to be really angry, you know.

Mom, why don't you stay stay here, I'll go and.

Meet with the victims and.

Uh, my mom wouldn't hear of it.

She said if they want to talk to me, how could I possibly say no so?

The chaplain came and picked us up, drove us back to the Federal building where the trial had been held, but this time she took us into an upper floor.

Let us out of an elevator ushered us into a conference room, and his mom and I walked into this room.

We saw that there were five chairs arranged in a circle.

Three of the chairs held.

The wife of somebody my brother had killed her sister and her late husband said.

Mr The two vacant chairs were obviously waiting for for me and mom to sit down.

And, you know, as we walked in, there was only one thing we could be saying, which is, we're sorry.

We're so sorry I saw trigger tear trickling down moms face, and as we sat down I was kind of almost prepared, you know?

For a blast of anger hostility, I really didn't know why they wanted to see us.

And the widow spoke for the family.

The first thing she said was.

That they had talked about this during the trial.

They had decided that if there was ever an opportunity to do it in person, they wanted to thank us for turning into, so they hadn't called us there to yell at us.

They called us there to thank us and that seemed to me, under the circumstances, extraordinarily. Moving and graceful.

She said she couldn't imagine what it would be like to turn in a family member in a like a death penalty case, and I'm thinking I can't imagine what it would be like to lose my spouse to some maniacs bomb.

We actually ended up, you know.

Crying altogether.

It's like for all the therapy I've received, and I've received plenty over these times.

The counseling and the friendship and the hugging from friends and neighbors.

Nothing was more meaningful for me than this opportunity to meet with a family of victims, and I think.

For me, what was so meaningful about it is that it hit a little a promise, like if not a promise like a sub.

Question that maybe healing could begin.

If these two families could talk to each other, if they could be decent, if they could recognize each others pain, maybe the world could be healed the world.

So many worlds blown about by my brother could begin to grow together.

Mom was in remember she's she's his mother and she had something that she needed to say, and it probably wasn't the right time in place.

If you think about it, but what she said was.

You know, I want you to understand my.

My son isn't an evil person.

He's very, very sick.

He's not a monster, he's just he's just really mentally ill.

And she started talking about schizophrenia and I happened to be looking into the faces of the three women.

I realized they didn't like what they.

Were hearing it's like.

Mom was trying.

To tell them something what they heard was somebody making excuses.

And I almost wish there was somewhere I could gesture to my mom to get her to change the subject, but she kept going on and at one point she really did cross the line.

She said, you know it.

It really isn't my son that we should blame.

It's his illness.

And the widow at that point just blurted out, she said he knew what he was doing.

And all of a sudden it's like the room was frozen in silence, like we'd felt so close to this family and.

Now put Ted in the mix and it's like the Grand Canyon is between us and I'm thinking maybe we tried too much.

Maybe it was too soon.

Maybe we just.

To leave and.

Somehow do it gracefully.

At that point I saw my I'm just sort of scrunched up almost into a ball like almost.

Trying to hide right in.

The middle of the room and looking down at her shoes.

She said I really wish he had killed me instead of your husband.

I think that was the truth.

If Mom could have laid down her life to erase any of this pain, she would have done so.
So, but when she said that I happened to be looking at the widow space and you know, I saw that some of the hardness melts and some tears begin to well up.

Right?

She had children too.

She could identify with mom as a mother to a mother and she said.

Oh Mrs Kozinski.

She got up.

Out of her chair, she knelt right down in front of my mom.

Put her hand up on my shoulder.

And said almost this instant.

None of this is your fault.

You're not to blame.

Don't ever, ever think that we blame you for this.

It was really.

In some ways it was was the most memorable thing that happened for me because I saw a human being in pain trying to comfort another human being in pain.

This is this is.

It was like there was some possibility that this practice of compassion could actually transform everything you know.

None of our lives will be the same.

You know our journeys were changed.

This community will never be the same.

Clearly, people directly impacted and their families will never be the same.

I think we do have.

If I think we can work with the emotions, I think we can take them toward a place of compassion and love.

Seal my way forward.

QUESTIONER: When Adam Adam Lanza did what he did, especially involving children. Just strikes me that there's a component of his. I guess I'd say his humanity that had been switched off. Almost like he became. Non human or subhuman or inhuman at a minimum. A parallel that. The gentleman on the left had mentioned earlier parallel in in very brief fashion. His actions with those of Hitler. And perhaps there would be a similar parallel with Mr. Pasinski brother.

My question is. Why does that happen? What causes humans? To switch it off. This love I I don't know that you'll have. An answer, but it's been. And memory.

DAVID: You know when when something like what happened here, happens people all over the world question, how could any human being do this?

And you know the Committee for the Community.

That is a more intense question.

How could one of us do this and?

You know when somebody likes my brother does this from our family.

The question becomes extraordinarily like existentially intense, like how could my own brother do this.

Someone I love someone I felt close to someone who I know is capable of compassion.

I don't know the whole answer.

Certainly don't begin.

I have some thoughts about it and that one is.

Damn it.

It's connected to hatred.

It's like hatred and self and hatred of other really do go together.
And so my biggest fear for many years.
Actually, after a friend's brother committed suicide was that Ted seemed so miserable I was afraid.
Someday I'd hear that he had committed suicide and.
I, I think that was likely in his Diaries.
He actually had some sort of scenario that involved murder suicide.
I think some of his aggression toward our family, our parents, at which I really couldn't understand,
was emotionally violent in some sense.
Metaphorically, it was killing the woman dead, but it, you know, it had some of that flight.
I also think we're not being honest with ourselves.
If we don't look at human history and say there's something somewhat normal about violence than
human beings like, how does this happen?
I mean we have murders.
We have genocides, we have wars.
I remember my father telling a story from.
His father, who had been born in Poland and pressed into the Polish army, and he said, well, we
went to fight this battle and I I don't know what happened, but we started killing everybody in the
town and then men started ***** women and these were like normal family man.
How did this?
Happen, you know, we know.
Of that part of the training of soldiers is to desensitize to the humanity of the enemy.
So it's it's true we can be trained for compassion.
You know we can be trained to shut down the compassion.
So I I think the highest teachings of all religious.
Traditions is to try to create an antidote to this knee, holistic.
Possibility that probably lives.
To some extent, in all of us to smaller.
When I ultimately ended up reading my brother's Diaries, I was like opening a window on hell, like
I had no idea he was suffering to this extent. So part of his dynamic and maybe with other.
Mass murderers? There's this this.
Incredible intense psychological isolation.
So then I think.
Well, with only.
Ted at a friend, a mentor and then.
Of course I.
Realized many people could have been, but he pushed them away, you know, but how?
Do you reach that person?
That's really, really hard to reach.
Certainly we see some correlation like with bullying in the schools.
So the kid is isolated.
The kid feels absolutely powerless.
This is not to excuse violent acting out, but.
It strikes me we have to really.
I think it's I actually agree with Doctor Noel, but I also think it's creating a different kind of
communal consciousness as well.
It's not just our individual minds, it's the candle lighting. The candle 1000 times that somehow we
have to make this idea of compassion.
We have to find a way to spread it and not give up and not fail to spread it with people who seem
resistant to it.

You know, and and you know, we can't blame them for their resistance is like I, I don't know, but I do believe that.

That communities can actually have a collective kind of consciousness.

So much.

And I have to.

Say I'm incredibly impressed by what I've seen and read about this community in terms of your commitment, your devotion to say the victims will be remembered and positive change is going to come out of this tragedy.

I think it's possible.

That's what keeps me going.

It's also why I practice meditation.

I want to say something.

Just one more thing really quickly and.

Then I'll be quiet.

But I want to just talk a little bit.

About the can.

What would I?

Say that the weight contagiousness of compassion, my wife and I have, and I have quite a connection with the state of Connecticut.

We we actually have an apartment.

That we keep in Bloomfield in case they fire us at the monastery.

But but it goes.

Back before that.

Shortly after my brother's trial, I received a phone call from a man in Connecticut who's actually sitting right here.

His name is Doctor Sam Rigor and Sam Rigor, and his wife Wanda invited me to a conference called the Melanie Eileen Rigor Conference against Violence, and I have gone.

14 or 15 years in a row.

Now I'll be going again this year, and these are folks and and their all the folks that work with them are people who've lost loved ones to homicide.

Who have decided made the decision?

Think of the title of a conference against violence and it was there.

I really began first to build a bridge, really, to the sense that you know.

Victims, families and offenders families have a lot in common in certain ways, and we have a common cause to prevent violence and to work on healing.

A question for Mr Kuczenski.

On that day here in Newtown, as we started realizing what was happening, I know probably most of us thought of who we know.

That works in the building.

What children we knew who might go to Sandy Hook or you know what our connections might be and worrying about?

Those people.

I'm I'm someone along with quite a few others who found out later that day that I actually had a connection with the shooters family.

No the shooter himself.

With his brother.

And so I just wonder what we would say to those of us who have that connection, just in terms of.

If we have to reach out, I guess.

Yeah, it's a real tough one, you know, because people in my position are very, you know, we're sort of torn because you love your family member, but you hate what they've done.
 So you don't want to disown them, but you want to decide what they did.
 Which is what most people remember them for.
 You know, I think most of us.
 Carry some element of guilt.
 So if there's a way.
 To sell it?
 That doesn't sound patronizing or.
 You know?
 It's not their fault, don't I said, because sometimes if you don't know what to say, you sort of order the person and that's not good.
 And of course there's wrong.
 Things to say and that's
 Not good either, so we're in a double.
 Bind, what do you do?
 But I I think you know find a way to show just kindness and decency.
 And sympathy and listen.
 Maybe listen more than you.
 When you talk to.
 The person it's not so much.
 What you say to them, but how?
 Open your heart is.
 And thanks for asking that question 'cause.
 It's a tough one.
 In a community like this, to ask that question.
 I just want to mention we've left some Flyers website which is not too far away.
 If someone would like.
 To hear more of the source of the workshop of June 14 through 16 and.
 We're offering that program for charge to anyone from Newtown and police at a fee for lodging or and rules that would also count that to anybody who's a victim family member.
 Again, it's June 14th to 16th and Doctor Maryland.
 Normal issue will be here and we also have a couple of people who've been affected by violence.
 So so please.
 Take that if you want more information.
 Our phone numbers you can give us a call too, so.
 If there's something that you think is.
 Valuable about this approach.
 Come come join us and find out more.
 Is there a culminating activity that you wanted?
 Second OK thanks yeah.
 Where the brief meditation and it will be brief is it's called developing love.
 A meditation practice from his homeless diorama.
 The Dalai Lama was asked how can we address the problems in our world?
 How can we address the many, many difficulties that are in our world?
 The inequality.
 How can we protect the earth?
 How can we take care of nurture our children?
 How can we help the people who are oppressed in the world?
 And how can we bring deep spirituality to everyone?

And he said that all of these can be resolved by the.

Very last one.

If we can bring love and true compassion in our hearts, then our children will be cared for and nurtured.

We will care for the earth.

We will take care of those who have not.

So someone asked a dialogue with is the planet increasing in love or are things getting worse and he said no, my experience listening to believe that love is increasing in this world.

He shared a simple practice that will increase love and compassion in the world and he asked everyone to share it as widely as possible.

And as you breathe out to yourself, think that you fill yourself with the greatest of love.

You breathe in.

And love yourself and breathe out and love others.

Breathe in and love yourself and breathe out and love others.

Again, leaving you love yourself and heal yourself and breathing out.

Benefit and cherish others.

The Dalai Lama said.

If you think.

About people that you have difficulty cherishing extend.

Your love to them anyway.

During the day after you have done this brief exercise, extend that attitude to everyone you meet.

Practice cherishing even the simplest people that you need.

Clerks and the store people you pass on the street, as well as all of the important.

People in your.

Life cherish the people you love and the people you dislike.

Continue this practice no matter what happens or what anyone does to you.

These thoughts are very simple and sorry and helpful.

The practice of cherishing and loving others can be taken very deeply if it is done without words alone yourself.

The Ted K Archive

A critique of his ideas & actions



David Kaczynski
David Kaczynski on Emotional Healing from a Buddhist Perspective (Excerpts)
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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ik8kq4GMiAI>

www.thetedkarchive.com