



Who's Listening

Jay Andrews

A talk, 7 September 2026

Reading edition

About this edition

A talk by Jay Andrews, recorded at his satsang on 7 September 2026.

This reading edition follows the complete talk in its original order. Light editing joins run-on speech into sentences, adds punctuation and paragraph breaks, corrects clear transcription spellings, and removes spoken fillers and repeated words. Nothing is added. The section headings are reading aids drawn from the talk.

Talk and ideas

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Listening and self-inquiry

I've had some people ask me about this before, and when it comes to listening and self-inquiry, one of the big struggles of my life, let's say, especially in addiction, but even in recovery, so even when I wasn't using, is depression, and depression then always led to suicide. That was always the answer, let's say. The last answer was that the mental system always brought me to the same point, which was: this is never going to end, and everything was my fault, and it'll always be this way.

When I got into recovery, obviously I had to get sober first, but then I had to start looking at this solution of some sort. So when I came across self-inquiry and non-duality and Chan and stuff, there were very interesting ideas, like the idea of anatta, or no-self, non-self, that there is no thing inside of Jay which is separate from all other perceived things.

When it came to thoughts like "everything is my fault", if there is no "my", that puts that whole thought in question, but when it comes to "I want to kill myself", the same thing is put into question.

When the head is thinking, it's either thinking from itself or at itself in a way, through the "I" thought. So, if I'm identified with the head, I'm either thinking from it or at it. So really the mental system is talking about itself. Who's the one who wants to kill themselves? I do. And then who's going

to kill myself is me. So obviously, me, the idea of me or I, is in the center.

So the idea of anatta being that there is no individual me or I puts this thing into question in any way.



The me is an idea

Because the mental system is dualistic, it's seeing these two ways. So it's talking from itself or about itself in many ways. Like the idea that I am a piece of shit. If "I" is a thought that comes and goes, it's no different than the thoughts "I", "piece of shit".

“I” and “piece of shit” present as two different things, as if there’s a me who is worthless. But the me who seems to be separate from worthless, these are both ideas. The me is an idea, and the worthlessness, who’s a piece of shit, is an idea. So in a way they present, like there’s a point that the rest of the thoughts are talking about me.

Well, in anatta there is no me. It is a thought. Me is also conditioned, it comes and goes. So all these other thoughts and this thought “me” or “I” are the same thing. It’s one thought. So really “I am worthless” or “I am a piece of shit” is thought talking about itself.

Now if it’s not seen that way, at least to me, then what happens is all these other thoughts, which are presenting worthlessness, etc., are talking about a me that’s taken to be an individual thing, which is what I am. In that case they’re going to torture that thing of what I am, being the me or the “I” thought, which is worthless according to all the other thoughts. In that case this is very uncomfortable, but the head has the conditioned view of itself that way.

So no matter what happens, everything’s my fault and I’m a piece of shit. It doesn’t matter what happened; that’s exactly the case of my life. It didn’t matter what happened; my head would always end up in that position. “Yes, but this happened, and it’s worthless, and because of that you’re worthless.”

And then depression, of course, follows that, and then, to get out of the depression, the drinking. But the drinking

wouldn't stop it. So essentially the drinking failed, and the only answer after that is "I have to kill myself. It's the only way I'm getting out of this mental mayhem."



You are not it

Well, Advaita Vedanta and Buddhism presented a different option, in a sense: that the one who the head is talking about, so all these other thoughts and then the thought "me", these are all thoughts. And because of that it's called not two, or non-duality.

I'm not the thoughts nor am I the one they're talking about. And then even more so, the one that the thoughts are talking

about isn't there. It's one of the thoughts. So that put this thing, specifically ideas of suicide, into question.

Who wants to die is me. Who wanted to die? This doesn't happen in a long time, but who wanted to die is me, and who is going to kill me is me. So this "me" thought was obviously a pivot point. It was the one that was going to die, and it was the one that was going to do the action.

Now if I'm identified as the thought "me", all the other thoughts are like hammers to the head of me, and all those other thoughts held me in the position of worthless, everything's my fault.

If everybody around you is talking about you, and you're taking yourself to be the one they're talking about, and they're all saying that you're worthless, you're going to feel pretty bad. It's like that, but it was internal.

It's like all the other thoughts were telling me how worthless I was and everything's my fault, and then they're saying, "You should kill yourself." It's like the idea of killing myself was the way to get out of this circle, which is folding on itself. The thought "me" and then all the other thoughts, which are telling me I'm horrible, are wrapping around itself because it's one system. There is no me separate from the thoughts.

So when my head says "I am worthless", it's talking about itself. The mental system is, like Ramana would say, a bundle of thoughts. The mental system is talking about itself. The beauty of Buddhism and Advaita is you're not that.

So the mental system had me in a position of constant failure. It's conditioned that way probably because I was abused, at least as far as I could tell. Because I was abused, everything seems to be my fault. That's the position that the head has me in as a body. And it doesn't seem to budge from that. No matter what happened in life, it would hold me in that position. "Everything is your fault, and you're going to be worthless no matter what." That is the way that the head sees.

Now I tried to change that and it just failed and failed. And actually, those failures of trying to change it were, in a way, more evidence you should kill yourself.

So the head has the me in that position no matter what. Now it's taking the me and the other thoughts, worthlessness, to be separate, but they're not separate. The two-ness of the mental system is an illusion. The head is talking about itself, and it's folding over itself.

I tried to fix it. I tried to get out of it as it. I tried to change it. I tried to drink it, and none of that worked until I heard that you are not it.

And then when you see that you are not it, you're not all of the thoughts nor the one they're talking about. So when my head says "I'm going to kill myself", it's talking about itself. It's thoughts talking about thoughts, which are taking themselves to be a permanent thing, except there is no permanent thing. So even the idea that I'm going to kill

myself is completely ridiculous, because there is no “I” which is a separate thing.



A great relief

This is all conditioning, and it gave us a chance for a solution, and then there was searching for a long time to see if that was true. Searching for the “I” thought. Searching for the one who’s going to kill themselves. Is that thing there? When my head says “I am worthless”, what is it talking about? Is it talking about a thing inside of this body which is “I”, or is the “I” just one of the thoughts? And it’s just one of the thoughts.

And so, with that comes a great relief. You do not need to obey the thoughts even if they seem to be from or about you. You don't need to obey them.

And in that is a great relief. The want to end my own life ended there. It stopped because you see the ridiculousness of that idea. You see that the thought "me" and all the other thoughts are not two separate things. There are no two separate things. It's one system rolling around itself, and in a way it thinks that it is worthless.

And if I'm identified as the "I" thought, I'm identified as the rest of them, and then, as Paul Hedderman would say, those thoughts have an ass to bite, and when they bite, I want to get out of the pain of the bite, and that is drinking or suicide.

The only thing that dropped for me was to see that what all those thoughts were talking about wasn't there. The me that all those thoughts were talking about wasn't there. The me is another idea which is part of the thoughts.



Who is that you?

I get relief just talking about it. Oh my god, and it goes far beyond that, but I want to share this part of it because I see this happening to so many people. People I've known and people I don't know, they end up taking the final solution to their own disaster, which is to end the body.

But they're not the thought system nor the one the thought system's talking about, and if that's put into question, there's relief there, and then the idea of that solution is not even looked upon, because you see how ridiculous it is.

And it's nobody's fault of what's happening because you're identified with the mental system that's just the mechanical movement of this thing. There's an identification with the mental system as the one who owns it and it's talking about.

And unless you would hear something like this or investigate it, it wouldn't rise, because if you're identified as the mental system, it sees it's got you as a thing, essentially, and when it talks all this craziness, it's talking about you, if you're identified.

It's got you in the position of being a thing that it's talking about. "You're worthless, remember that. This is all never going to end, remember that. Everything is your fault." Well, who's this one that it's talking to you? Who's that one? Because if that one's not there, then I don't want to kill anything. You just see that it's talking about itself, in a way.

You lose faith in it very quickly because you essentially see through it's presenting like a permanent thing, and there's nothing there. There's nowhere where those thoughts land unless you're identified with the one that they land on. And through that message of Advaita, and through the method of listening, you can see that pretty clear, I feel.



Something's hearing all of this

It just gets investigated through the listening. You can hear your head talking about you. And when you ask “who is that you”, you can hear your head say “me”. Something's hearing all of this. And if you can hear it, there's a hearing from before it.

And I feel driven to share about self-harm specifically, because I feel like people don't share about it very much because we're scared of it. But I lived so long in the idea of it that it actually became kind of interesting. The investigation became interesting, in a way, and it gave a chance for a solution with this body staying alive.

So here we are, in many ways, I guess. There is a solution to that conundrum. There's a solution to alcoholism, but there

is a solution to this thing that was happening, which was essentially an incessant obsession with harming myself, because the head saw it as the only way out of itself, based on a me that's not really there in the way that it's taken to be there. And maybe the solution can ring some other bells somewhere, I don't know.

But the thing about Advaita and listening and Chan and non-duality is just good news. The big book says self-reliance will fail you. The thoughts, and the me who's thinking, and both the thinker and the one who's being thought about, that's all self. If I rely on that, it's going to take me down the same way it always took me down. But there is a solution which is not relying on self.

And then Buddhism says, well, there is no self, so when your head's talking, who's it talking about? Because it ain't talking about me. That would be really good to know, because then the option of suicide is nil, essentially.

I only wanted to kill myself because what my head was killing me. But I'm not the me the head was killing. The head's talking about itself, and in that case the idea of killing myself goes very quickly because it's talking about itself. There is no me for it to talk about.

If you and I are what's aware of the whole movement, you can't kill awareness.



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