

# 2002-01-10 Introduction to Meditation: Posture & Breath (Week 1)

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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## SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

To the first introductory series that we'll be teaching here, and our new center in Redwood City. And it's a five week series. And the series builds on itself, where I will be giving the basic instructions for mindfulness meditation in our particular tradition. And it starts the first day today talking about meditation posture, and the basic meditation on breath and breathing. And that then is the foundation for next week talking about mindfulness of the body. And in fact, mindfulness of the breath is a subset in Buddhism of mindfulness of the body. And mindfulness of the body being embodied in our experience of an embodied awareness is maybe unparalleled and importance. For the rest of the Buddhist spirituality. Everything else kind of builds in a healthy way, being discovering how to live through an inner body. And then the following third week is mindfulness. have emotions important part of everyone's lives, and how to bring that into the field of mindful awareness. And then the fourth week we'll be talking about our cognitive world of thoughts and how to include thoughts as part of our meditative experience meditative engagement with life. And then the fifth week, we'll talk about how to integrate the mindfulness practice into the rest of our lives, how it all comes together. I'll be teaching the first four weeks, and then in February, I go away to teach a month long retreat. And so the fifth week will be taught by one of our most senior students here, who's taught these kind of courses by yourself. Carolyn deli will come up and do that. And that's the plan the these talks to get taped by Allison, because some people like if they miss a class, they like to get a copy of the class they missed, or just like to have a series or whatever, and you can talk to Allison Up here if you'd like to, at some point to get copies of them the classes offered on a donation basis. And in fact, part of the religious or spiritual values of the Buddhist tradition, the Theravada Buddhist tradition that we teach within one of the most important values is that of generosity and offering the teachings and the practice opportunity freely to people. And letting the teachings unfold in a field of generosity with things are freely given. And so what so as we've, as we've moved into this building, one of the decisions that we as a group has made is that no activity be offered here, that there's ever a fee for everything in this building will be

offered in that our traditional spiritual sense of everything we offer on a donation basis. And occasionally we might some of some events, we have suggested amount by this feels the spirit is out of donation. And people who come here can freely participate in that in that as they wish. What it means is that for this introductory course, or for most of our activities will have two baskets by the door. One basket says teacher donation or teacher dāna. Dāna means donation in Pali. And you can and that's a donation to me and my livelihood comes from, that's how I'm that's my livelihood is from the donations I get this way. And then the other donation basket is for our operating expenses for now we have a center we have a building and, and various things we have to pay for. And, and that's the same system we've had in the past. In the past, we had to pay for rent the places were used, and here we have to pay for our own place. So there's just two donation baskets. If everyone donated \$1, or two for the operations, I think that would be Comfortable amount for our group. So that's kind of more or less a suggested amount, you're welcome to do more. And the suggested amount for the teacher dāna would be \$10 each class. And that's for you to do as you wish without that just ballpark, you know, just get to know your ballpark, just whatever it is.

So I think that's all I have to say, logistically. So my name is Gil Fronsda. And I've been a teacher for our group for 11 years since 1990, when I came to Stanford to be a graduate student in Buddhist studies. And I spent many years as a Buddhist monk, here in this country and in Japan, and in Southeast Asia, Thailand and Burma. And then was trained extensively in the Zen tradition to Buddhism. And then when I went to Southeast Asia was trained in in the Paragon tradition, which is the tradition of this center here and how we teach here And in 1989, I was invited to become to train with jack kornfield to become a Vipassana teacher. And so then I went through four years of training with him, at the same time that I was beginning to teach for the sitting group in Palo Alto, which is slowly grew over the years. And now we're here in our own place. So I think that's what I have to say for introduction. Maybe I should ask you all, how many of you are new to meditation? Who came here tonight? And how many of you, how many are new to mindfulness meditation, have some meditation background but not insight meditation. So welcome to all of you. The word the Pali Buddhist word for what we teach here is be positive. And Vipassana literally means something like clear seeing to see clearly you're seeing especially way. And so we get the word insight. It's an insight practice. Many Westerners are then confused because many of us think of insight as being psychological insight. If I somehow do some kind of introspection I'll discover you know that the reason why I always slur my SS is because when I was three years old, I saw a snake You know, that's the reason I got this insight into why I'm why I'm doing certain things. And that kind of insight is very important. And that kind of insight can come from insight meditation. In fact, it often you can expect that any kind of effort any any attend any any practice of paying attention carefully to yourself will reveal any of the patterns that govern our lives and run us and cause our stress and many things. From a Buddhist point of view. The insight of insight meditation is not into what's personal, the personal nature of our biography and what influenced us, but his insight into what's universal. The Universal aspects Some people call it transpersonal. Or that which is spiritual opposed to, for example, what's personal if you can just do, I don't want to make a sharp distinction, but so it's the ability to be able to sit still and quiet and train the mind or cultivate the mind. So the mind can be used to do to develop a contemplative or insightful or

meditative receptive mode of being of what our experience is in the present moment. Most of us will find if you pay attention, don't spend much time in the present moment at all, unless we're really forced to because events are quite dramatic. Or we're in the present moment because sometimes it's very easy to be in present moment if you're watching television. If you can have the same attention for your meditation as you do like watching television, we all be enlightened pretty quickly. But you know, you're very focused and relaxed and your mind doesn't wander too much, I suppose. But to sit down and have a The mind pay attention to be alert, relaxed, open, and in the present moment without some thing out there, which has captivated our attention is unusual for most people. It's almost as if our growing up in our experience of society has trained us not to be that way. And the mindfulness practice is a retraining of ourselves or our capacity to be alert and relaxed and present receptive of what's actually happening in the present moment. So a lot of what happens in most spiritual life I think a lot of especially meditative one is very similar whether you do mindfulness or Zen or prayer or other things. Initially, a lot of it is just working with our own tendencies, for them to get caught up in thinking about the past about the future about fantasy to get lost in our desires to get lost in our aversions and angers. It's for the mind to be anywhere which says settle in a relaxed, open way to what's happening in the present. So coming to terms of dealing with that is a common spiritual issue in many traditions. And it's an issue for us as we do mindfulness practice, what does it take to learn to let go or not be captivated by all the places the mind goes, so that the mind can, in a sense, rest or be settled or be strong, be present for life as it's actually lived?

I was some about a year ago, I realized that, that I become very fond of looking at old photographs. And the older the better in terms of photographs, but photographs of people, so 100 years old, 120 years old or something. And I'd always go look really closely at the faces of these old photographs. And after I got interested, why am I so interested in these photographs of old old photographs, and I realized that I was most interested in looking at their facial expressions, and especially Their eyes. Because every once in a while I come across a photograph from 100 hundred 50 to 120 years ago, whatever a long photograph, and it'd be a kind of a glimmer in the eyes of life of alertness of consciousness. And often I'd look at the face and be all kinds of different expressions. Some people do look happy. Some people are sad. Some people looked resigned to their a lot, some people looked optimistic. Some people were sometimes like this kind of cocky, good for luck, good for bicycle, good, happy go lucky kind of face. And all these kind of like emotional expressions, they're, you know, highlighting some little glint in some people's eyes. And, of course, the backdrop for this was that these people are long dead. And so I look at these photographs. And I would realize that was their moment. To be alive. That was their moment of being with our lived experience. And the reason I was here interest in these photographs is that it became a mirror for me to remind me to take conscious interest in my lived experience right now, because this is my moment, right now is our moment, your moment, you have certain lot of time to be alive. And it's something very special and precious the glint in your eyes or the expression, the emotional expression you have or your attitude towards life and your lived experience. And it's all too easy to lose track of our lived experience. By wandering off into fantasy or being in the past or being caught up in what if only my favorite expression, my favorite, my favorite definition of forgiveness is giving up all hope for a better past. So we spend a lot of time

hoping for a better pass maybe and then or hoping for a better future. But there's something very precious about that. Live moment right now. And this is something that contemplative monastics spiritual people down through the ages have appreciated a lot. And why sometimes they go off and spend time in nature, why they go spend time in monasteries go on retreats, is to really highlight something very simple, but something which is often lost to us as we run around living busy lives or preoccupied lives caught up in our concerns. And that is his simplicity, and the delight of this very moment. When we've entered into a mindful living of it, we're living it mindfully consciously. contemplative living when the fullness of who we are right now reveals itself. So mindfulness Vipassana is a very simple practice. There's nothing that's particularly Buddhist about it, even though Buddhists like to do it. It's a capacity, it's developing a capacity we all have and that's the capacity to pay attention. To be aware, and rather than taking awareness as just a kind of given that can't be changed, or from a Buddhist point of view or awareness to something like a muscle that can be developed and strengthened. And what's interesting about developing and strengthening a muscle is that I don't know so much about physiology and how these things work. But so maybe I'm wrong here. But sometimes, if you really want to have a muscle be deeply relaxed, and at ease, it's really good for it to be well toned. You need to have certain strength of an a muscle, to let it also to relax. And so whether that's true or not, is that's the principle with awareness. We want to both develop it as the capacity, the strength, like a muscle, but also we want to discover a capacity to have it very relaxed and at ease. And there's a play in Buddhist spirituality, between between developing these two and A balanced way, developing a strength of mind of heart. And also develop a very relaxed receptive mode of being. So it's a capacity we all have just to be pay attention to, in our practice, you want to develop that capacity and make it more useful part of our lives. And

so I hope you understand that we're not so what I'm going to offer here for these five weeks is a Buddhist practice offered to you, without any necessity to accept any of the Buddhist part of it. You don't have to be, you don't have to, you can just let that you can just go right in here, one ear and out the other. You know that anytime you hear the word Buddhism, you can just, you know, it's unnecessary. I'm saying that's not necessary for the practice itself. You might appreciate what Buddhism has to say. But really what we're doing here is learning how to cultivate awareness of our lived experience. Moment by moment. The Buddhist point of view about this is you little wiser, more compassionate, more loving, less conflicted, alive. If you've learned how to be, and remain in the present moment in our lived experience, if you live in the past the future and fantasy it's much more easy, much easier to get caught up in conflict with ourselves and the world around us. So it's very simple, simply capacity to pay attention. So if you're not even moving your posture right now, just saying as you are, if you just closed your eyes What was the first thing you become aware of?

You simply become aware of your experience right now.

Then as you're aware of your own experience, is their judgement about it. interpretation. Is there any attitude about it?

Is it possible to just leave your experience alone as it is, with no judgment, no interpretation, no attitude

keeping your eyes Closed. I want to say that attention awareness of our experience is very very simple. And maybe this next exercise will point to this as you're sitting here, stop, stop paying attention no more paying attention please stop being aware.

Okay, so you can open your eyes. So what happened?

Could you stop paying attention? What happened to me you try to sorry. You like some good were you succeed not paying attention Oh, well, yeah, you ready to fall asleep?

We are aware that you were doing that

where I try to point in the secretaries to both these exercises, how simple awarenesses and, and it's helpful to be reminded of the simplicity of this practice. One of my teachers in India, he was fond of saying, you know, be simple, simple, simple, simple. Until my my traveler's checks were stolen for Qatar. And then he said, Yes, but don't be a simpleton. So

The other thing I want to say about mindfulness practice is that it's a it's a practice which applies to formal meditation practice, as well as applies to everyday activity, to be mindful as we go about in our activity. And as I do this five weeks, probably what will happen is a slide back and forth, and won't always be obvious when I'm still talking about meditation, like formal meditation, sitting meditation, or talking about mindfulness in daily life. And that's because for me, there is no sharp divide between those two worlds. And I would feel very feel like I hadn't done my job. Well, if the end of this five weeks you thought mindfulness was only something to be done in medicine as a meditation practice itself, even though it's quite powerful there. But as a meditation practice, it helps to have a good upright posture. posture is very helpful. It's not a necessary foundation for meditation, but it's very helpful one And so I want to spend a few minutes talking about a basic meditation posture that will help you find one that maybe works for you. Classically, the idea is to sit cross legged on the floor. You don't have to sit in the floor, there's some pragmatic benefits to being on the floor. One of them is that having your center of gravity really low to the floor, seems to make it easier for the body to relax. Also sitting on the floor, cross legged, gives you a tripod tripod effect to the two knees in the butt. And so it's more stable than sitting in a chair for example, you don't have that tripod kind of effect, and the degree of stability for holding yourself upright for the duration of the sitting. One of the more universal principles of posture is it's very helpful if you can to avoid using a backrest when you're meditating. Some people have to use it and it's fine in that case, but even if you're sitting in a chair, if your back allows for it to sit away from the backrest, so you're Back is self supporting. important part of developing this muscle of mindfulness is to become self reliant in an inner way some kind of inner self reliance is part of the

process, it's easier to discover that if the body is also self reliant, the body and the mind are very closely connected. So to sit, sit out from the chair. So I'll first say a few words about sitting on the floor. And then I'll talk about the chair. I actually recommend that people don't sit cross legged in the sense of crossing the legs, when they sit, sit with one leg to sit so called cross legged, sit the Burmese fashion or tailor fashion with one leg in front of the other. So both feet are on the floor, not crossing at all like this. Kind of get the idea. And that puts the least amount of torque on the knees and the ankles and the hips, and it's a little bit easier for people to sit then and then especially to sit on to elevate yourself you're sitting. And if you sit elevated by sitting, sitting on a cushion, then it helps get the knees down it, hips, the pelvis forward a little bit so that you can get your knees down. Because some people are really tight in their hips, it's hard to get their knees down unless they sit up right little bit. Also sitting up on something helps create little bit of a guarantee that you have a little bit of maintain the natural curve or little bit of an extra curve, teeny bit in the lower part of your back, because you want to maintain the natural curve there because then it's a lot easier to keep your back upright for the duration. If your back is flat, your lower back or it's caving out, you'll strain your back over time. So there's a variety of ways of sitting on a cushion. There's two extra cushions and the fact platform in the corner I believe, and if anyone wants it doesn't have one wants to try them. There's a couple of there. So in the round cushions The idea is to sit on the front third or so front half so he kind of is there's kind of a slope on it's kind of the front slope. And but you can also sit on these half moons. Some people find these more comfortable because they spread out the weight of the body for some people better and also and you can also sit on a bench like this. Sit down on the bench like this. And this is not cross legged, but some people find that nice, they get really low to the floor, and they can sit this way sitting on their knees with a bench above their heels. And then sitting on top of this bench is quite comfortable to sit this way. And know you can get kind of the same effect by taking some of these around cushions cords off hose and put it upright like this and then put it between your ankles and then sit down on it like that. This is also a pretty comfortable way of sitting. Allison here. She sells these kinds of things. So if anyone wants to buy questions or maths she makes them available.

Sitting cross legged, one foot in front of the other. If you do this, you want to experiment with how high you hit how high you sit. Some people find a sitting higher is helpful, maybe getting into cushions or getting a blanket to get more height. If you're really tight in your hips, the higher you want to go. If you're really loose, then the lower you want to go. You want to find what helps you the most ideally what the height that allows you to get your heels your your knees down to the floor. If your knees are up in the air like this, then it's nice to get a cushion or something pillow to put underneath them so they're supported. Otherwise they might get strained over time.

So the reason for this emphasis is so that you can sit upright with a straight spine. One way to help To get a good aligned straight spine is take your two hands on either side of your hips onto the mat. And you can do this on the chair too. And push yourself almost off the cushion that you just come up, out. One on the floor and the amount of floor Yeah. And so your chest comes up as you lift yourself up like this. You see, okay, you get the idea. And then as you let go of your hands, you let your shoulders roll back. And probably many of you found yourself sitting a little bit straighter this way. And perhaps your



thoughts, your shoulders to relax a little more if they're hanging more this way. So the case for some of you to this get a little more aligned. And then with your alignment, your spine aligned. You can do anything with your hands that symmetrical both hands are doing the same thing. Some people like having their hands on their knees or their thighs, downs PAMA, some people the classic way in Buddhist Mr. Heavy hands together are one in front, just arms and one in the palm of the other. If you have your hands resting on your heels or your ankles, sometimes it pulls the shoulders forward. And so if you get a sweater or a pillow or something and make a little bit height so that your hands are held higher, they can take some strain away that the shoulders or the back of the neck that some people feel sometimes get some height here. We sit with our eyes closed in our tradition. There's nothing sacred about that. It's okay, so for the eyes open, but generally we recommend sitting with the eyes closed, just gently closed. And many people find they have some tension in their eyelids. And that's okay. Just don't worry about it. Just let it be there and look, your eyes rest best you can. And it's nice to have your tongue resting against the roof of the mouth. And also it said that if you took Your chin down back a little bit, that that controls the tendency for the mind to wander off in thought, though you might not believe that, if you try. If you're sitting in a chair, the recommendation there is that you don't sit cross legged at all, but you should vote with both feet. Going straight out with your knees at a right angle. What you don't want to have is your knees higher than your hips, because that tends to make it difficult for your lower back. If anything, you want to have your knees slightly lower than your hips. And some people actually like to get little cushions to sit on the chair. So you have a slope is goes down to towards the front of the chair to get a little bit extra support for the lower back. That's the basics about posture. That makes sense or do you have any you have any questions about that but how to sit? We should With the eyes closed Some people prefer to keep their eyes open, in which case the instruction is to keep your eyes kind of half open, pointed down at 45 degrees. The kind of focus as if you're looking at a mouth and find the distance. If you're really sleepy in meditation, sometimes it's nice to open your eyes. Stay awake. Any questions about the posture? Some people's legs fall asleep when they sit personally people who are new and if legs fall asleep, then usually within a few weeks or a couple of months of regular sitting, the blood seems to find other circular other routes through the legs and the numbness stops. If small movements or small changes in posture sometimes can alleviate that if you can change where the pressure is happening sit higher up on your cushion or further forward on the cushion or thereabout Thing small things you can do. Yeah.

It's not weird. There are people who occasionally will rock when they meditate. But the, if you're doing it intentionally because you're trying to avoid stiffening up or getting hurt, it might help in some ways, but it will keep you from really getting deeply settled. The more steel the body can be, the easier it is for the mind to get really still. So but you don't want to also don't want your back to seize up. So there we must look at your posture together with the end of the class or something, it might be that finding just the right posture can help and then learning what muscles can be relaxed. I had for a period of my meditation career very bad back and sitting actually helped it because we get in a very good upright line posture. And then I would relax the muscle all around my waist, stomach and the top of my I mentor back. And by the end of the sitting, the pain had been relieved. There was different ways in

which back, Baxter, troubled, troubled people, but my back, that's what helped. So maybe I can look at your posture and see.

So if that's all clear, then we're going to start our first meditation is by doing standing meditation. After all that talked about sitting right. And, and partly because I want to make the point, that meditation can be done in any posture. And standing is one of the classic postures in Buddhism for meditation. And you must find lots of opportunities in your life to be standing and standing in line. And you might be very interesting to know that this is a lot you're, you're standing in a classic meditation posture when you're standing and maybe you could use it A little bit of mindfulness practice, so why don't you all stand

then place your feet carefully under your, your hips to their feet about hips, hips distance apart, feel stable, and then close your eyes. Take a few moments to feel the contact of your feet to the ground.

And then very slowly kind of lean forward with your weight and then lean backwards. We're waiting on your heel. And then try to find a place where the weight is balanced on the foot.

And if you're very sensitive to your body as you're standing here, you might find that the body is constantly in motion. Very small movements. Very small corrections happening almost automatically. That's completely fine.

in a very simple way, become aware of what is happening in your body and what it feels like to be in a body. As you're standing here

If you're late if your knees are locked, you can relax your nice little bit.

And then standing here, take two or three slow, long deep breaths is a way of connecting to your breathing Getting to know it.

Then let your breathing return to normal and continue to be aware of your breathing. Be aware of your body. Feeling what happened, what affects the breathing, as in your body as you breathe, your body moves changes

See if it's possible to relax the thinking mind. the thinking mind is at ease. Or at least so it's in the background. So in the foreground you staying with your body and your breathing

It's perhaps helpful to think of mindfulness as a process of discovery as opposed to the process of attaining something or getting something or going somewhere with a meditation. Simply discovering what your experience is like discovering who you are in this lived moment right now



You can open your eyes and very quietly take your sitting posture, take a good comfortable aligned posture

And then gently close your eyes.

Once again, take a few moments now feel your bodily experience how does your body experience itself right now?

And then within the body as part of the body, become aware of your breathing.

It can be helpful in the beginning of a session of meditation to take two or three long slow, deep breaths. Help using the breathing to help you connect with your body. And as you exhale, I think that help you relax, let go. Tension goes

Unless you're breathing returned to normal, there's no right or wrong way to breathe and mindfulness. Just breathe whatever way it's happening. It's also helpful at the beginning of a sitting, to take a few moments to scan your body to see if you can, any obvious places of holding that you can let go of. Sometimes a forehead can be relaxed

the eyes can be softened.

Some people carry a lot of tension in their jaws

can be helpful to soften the shoulders. Maybe next time you exhale, the shoulders soften a little bit.

It can be particularly useful to relax the belly muscles. Your stomach hang forward might help you Breathing kind of drops a little bit deeper into your torso

and then within your body as part of your body. Become aware of your breathing. Become aware of how your body experiences the breathing.

If you have trouble being aware finding your breathing sensations of breathing, you can put your hands on your belly or your chest and feel the move. meant there.

Now our thinking mind often has a lot of momentum, a lot of strong habit of galloping off, thinking about whatever it wants. It takes a while in meditation, to retrain the mind, to not be so always so interested to run off with every thought that arises. To let the thoughts go by themselves When you find yourself lost or caught up in your thinking,

gently let go that relaxed the thinking mind

and begin again with your breathing. Again with your breathing. And since the thinking mind is so strong for many of us there's a little way of helping the mindfulness by using the thinking mind in our favor. And that is very softly, gently, so whisper in the mind. name or label each breath Breath can be labeled with a word in the mouth breath out. Or perhaps some people prefer rising as the chest a belly rise, falling as it lets go and releases. Very gentle whisper in the mind to help you stay focused and pointing the mind to stay with each breath one after the other.

There's absolutely no need to judge your meditation practice. To say whenever your mind has wandered away, and you notice it, relax the thinking mind and begin again with your breathing and the idea is to hang in there with the breath. sustain the attention, one breath after the other. Feeling how the breathing affects your body. Okay, changes occur in your body as you breathe

can relax into the breath with the breath Staying conscious of each breath, one breath after the other the rhythm of breathing over time. The breathing can have a wonderful effect on you. You hang in there with each breath and allow it to affect you. It'll probably be for the better.

Yes, x relations are partly Letting Go. Letting Go letting go of the pool extended in breath. Each time you exhale, Miss letting go. Let go of any thoughts and concerns you might have. Just be there with a breathing as simply as you can. trusting the breath

at the beginning of a session of meditation, so often often helpful To have a little settling in procedure, it'd be like how I described earlier, take a few deep breaths and scan through your body and relax, whatever tension you can. It's equally useful to have a little procedure away to come out of meditation so that you don't just simply pop out of it when it's over. And one of the things that's useful to do is to take a few moments to be conscious of what this meditation meditation session has been like to bring to a greater awareness what the city for the last few minutes has been for you, hopefully without any judgment. kind of process of discovery or recognition. Oh, I was sleepy, mostly. Or Oh, I was I was concentrated on the breath, or Oh, I was not so concentrated.

And then once you've done that, then in your own way you can take a couple of deep breaths and when you're ready, open your eyes.

So the most basic foundation for Buddhist meditation, or mindfulness practice is to begin with the breathing. And even though it's the foundation practice, it's also understood in Buddhism to be very profound practices. Right. And some people, some Buddhists will make it, their only meditation practice is just meditate on the breath. Even though we'll continue and talk about other forms of meta mindfulness next week. Some people find that it's really helpful for months and years, just to cultivate a very strong stable mindfulness of the breathing. And some of you might want to choose to do that for

a while before moving on too quickly to other aspects of mindfulness. It's very profound. The breath is a great opportunity in your spiritual life, to connect to the breathing. The connection between the breath and spiritual life is seen in the very word spiritual, which spirit comes from Latin spirit is one of the meanings of which means breath, like to fire is comes from to breathe again. Inspiration comes from the same root, spiritual, spiritual inspiration, as breath in both words. Nice Britain, the breathing is very important. So how was that for some of you? Or would you like to say about that a little frustrating, say more.

So two things is backup tiredness mind wouldn't show up shut up. The, it's important to develop a good sitting posture, equity sitting habits, postural habits, and maybe we could work on your posture and find a better way of sitting. But also, some people spend a lot of their time not sitting in a very balanced aligned way. And if you try to do that sit up right by yourself for a while. You have to deal with weak muscles who get tired by holding yourself up, or chronically tense or held muscles, which get revealed in this process of sitting up. So sometimes there's a period of adjustment was about as the body adjust to this new Foster and hopefully you stay encouraged. That process and don't realize it's part it's part of the process, you can always sit in the chair if you need to. And then mine was, he said the mind was out of control. How many of you thought your mind was out of control? That's all. The it's pretty common. And it said that the first stage of meditation is the stage of realizing the mind is out of control. So some of you already reached that stage, congratulations. Some of you're still catching up. Or we are beyond that. In Buddhism, it said, it's much better to know that your mind is out of control, that they have an out of control mind and not know it. So your mind just is out of control before coming here and before but there's, there's some tendency when you sit down and be quiet, that this becomes a ref and trying to be in the present moment. It becomes a reference for noticing how busy the mind is. And so to realize how busy and active the monkey mind is, is part of the process of waking up, rather than judging that and saying, Oh, I can't meditate on material duties, terrible thing, you're actually getting to discover something about yourself. The analogy I like to use for this, if you go up to maybe a mountain Brook a little stream that's flowing along very quietly, it's a very shallow perhaps, and you look at it, and you're looking at you can't tell whether the rivers flowing or not, maybe the water sitting still is not flowing at all. So clear and but then if you take a stick, and you put that stick into the river, upright, straight straight into the water, and a little wake is formed at the edge of the stick, and you can see all in fact, the stream is flowing. And until you have that reference of the stick, you it's hard to see where the stream is flowing. Our life works in the same way, unless we have some kind of reference for the momentum and movements of our minds and hearts and our emotions and feelings. Sometimes is very hard to see what's actually going on for us. And part of the function of something as simple as breathing, sitting quiet and being still and being with the breath, is it becomes that stick in the middle of our busy stream of our life. And if we're caught up in being busy and doing 10,000 things at once, sometimes we don't even know we're so busy. We don't know the mind so preoccupied and concerned with 10,000 things until we try to stop it or Be quiet. And the meditation is working. If you see the momentum, if you see the current that's gets created, as much as I say, it's much better to see that and let it continue and not be seen. So welcome to the first stage. Any other comments or reflections or questions please?

So I contacted

Yes. So she found that she tends to slouch when she sits for a while and she's constantly making adjustments. And it's best not to be in to make a lot of adjustments with your posture. Once you started the session, maybe two or three times is okay but to make a lot of them, keeps your your mind is kind of active then if you want your mind to really get still, it helps keep the body still. So it's okay to slouch. And in Burma, meditators get fully enlightened, sitting meditating like this, you know, you know, so it's fine to do that. It's just not good for your back. And the Buddha had a bad back, so maybe no one told him how to sit properly. Didn't have an ergonomic specialist. And the there is a balance between having some strength in postures. And, and having being relaxed. And finding that balance sometimes takes a while. And it takes some effort to maintain an upright posture. And some people associate meditation with getting relaxed, so I can make an effort to relax. But actually, you need to find the right balance between relaxation and effort or kind of a tone, you know. So don't be afraid of holding yourself up. Even though it might feel a little bit awkward at first. It doesn't concern kind of inner strength gets born from that. But do you find yourself collapsing a lot? After a while just just collapse and just hanging out meditate that way?

Yeah, I think it's best if If the lower legs are perpendicular to the floor coming straight up and classically the instructions to have your your legs parallel to each other, though I like when I sit and meditate enough to to have my legs out a little bit I feel more stable that way. But yeah yes, when I concentrate on my breathing, I have a tendency to wander free correctly, meaning that the stomach come in and then it collapses and exhale. And sometimes when other takes away from the relaxation or just really be natural you can be so the clearly the kind of pure instructions for mindfulness meditation is for you to make no effort specialists It all in how you breathe, don't matter. Don't try to breathe in the right way. Don't try to avoid the wrong way, just breathe. And we're cultivating here is not a particular way of breathing, but rather are cultivating the awareness of breath. We're using the breath as a vehicle to develop our awareness. And that development of awareness can happen with the most control breath in the world. So that so usually don't worry about don't make any special effort. Some people however, more pragmatically, will find they spend a lifetime with certain unhealthy habits around their breath, a lifetime of holding their stomach tense. And then sometimes it's useful as a little pragmatic aid to spend a few weeks trying to intentionally change that habit and relaxing into the breathing. But you don't have to make a big deal of it. You don't have to you don't want to hold on correct. Yeah. Oh, yeah, yeah, and here in California, I mean, California's but there are people in California supposed to have a long, deep breath, right? I mean, if you ever, ever cool you have to have a long deep breath. I mean, who wants to have a shallow breath in California. But there's no you know, for mindfulness point of view, just breathe away your breathing, and, and just become used as a vehicle to become aware of your breathing. Don't get caught up in how you know. And if you do control your breath, some people do it automatically. They can't help it. And they think oh, I can never do meditation. I can't be spiritual person because I'm controlling their breath. Mindfulness, we couldn't

care less if you control your breath. It's I know it's uncomfortable. It just then you become the world class expert at what control breath feels like. It's mindfulness. We're trying to become aware of how things are and how things are as you're controlling your breath. You get to know that and it will change with time. They'll change faster, if you're unconcerned about it. But if you get uptight about having a controlled breath yes

The goal itself and

finally, great, beautiful, great.

Are there questions or concerns or

it's very common, and the monkey mind has a lot of momentum to it. So if we spend a lot of time and daily life, chasing after thoughts or obsessing about things, then it's very hard to stop that cold, that momentum still continues. And part of what we have to confront in meditation is the fact of this momentum. And then to not to try to add more momentum. Come to it, if we get angry for having a monkey mind, we've just kind of fed the monkey, another banana. Just Oh, it's a monkey mind. And the best, the best thing is not to be bothered by it to be very accepting and very compassionate though. This is what's going on. It's a moment of momentum, and the best that you can right now. Just relax and come back to your breathing. company just changes over 10,000 times in the setting, your mind wanders off, the only thing that matters is 10,000 times you come back to your breath. And every time you come back to your breathing, it's a little training in learning how to let go of obsession. And with enough drops, the bathtub is filled with enough little drops of little Tiki letting go. You're developing that capacity not to be so obsessed with your thoughts. And don't underestimate the value it might not seem like it's very much, but the mind is actually quite malleable. Amazingly malleable. If you consider a lifetime of a mind, doing whatever it wants, out of control the monkey mind How quickly mindfulness actually can turn all around. Given the number of moments you've, you know, been lost. If I said this, but the fourth week of the course, we'll talk about mindfulness of thoughts. So they will, they will address that much more directly thinking. I saw another hand. Yes.

Right. Yeah, some people have that experience and some people find it massively irritating if someone is speaking during meditation. So it can be very helpful to have some guidance, some people listen to tapes. Meditation tapes in some I've listened like they're like guided meditations for that reason. But it's kind of like meditating with training wheels. because someone's prompting you to stay focused and really nervous, become free, develop a meditation to its full potential, you have to be able to do this for yourself. And you have enough interest and dedication and presence is strength of mind. Not to have to rely on anything external to keep you focused. So you have to use music or nothing, just just you you can do it on your own. And so right now today was training wheels and hopefully at some point you can, so it is harder at home. That doesn't mean that it's worse it comes probably more useful for you to develop your your strength without me even though your meditation is not so focused. To make

sense. So this five week course, works best if you meditate at home and the week in between. Are meetings. And I think it'll make a lot more sense the instructions in the way it builds, if you actually trying this out at home. And what I recommend, if you're new to meditation is that you meditate at home for this week, 15 minutes a day and find 15 minutes you can do the classic time most classic time for meditation is first thing in the morning after you get up. There's some idea that that the day is fresh and you're coming to refresh yourself from from having slept, and the phone's less likely to ring and get busy and so some people find that it's better they prefer to sit in the afternoon or the evening are programmed to bed doesn't really matter as long as you sit there every day for 15 minutes. And it's also helpful if you choose a place in your house where in your home where that's your meditation spot. So like maybe it's the only thing that happens there like a little corner of your bedroom perhaps or something If you can close the door, so when you come to that place it has it associated with your meditation have all associations are there. So it's easier to kind of enter into that mode because of that association. And it's best to wear loose clothing when you sit. It's nice to have a timer of some sort to tell you when 15 minutes is up, because some people will find that after 10 minutes think she feels like an hour, I can't stand it. And some people will say after 15 minutes, you know, wow, just like was a minute, you know, I'll think I'll sit here for another, you know, I can't possibly over yet. We'll have a timer, so you don't have to think about it anymore. And find some timer that's innocuous doesn't bother you. That doesn't tick tick tick or something. Some people I know have like to have meditation bells, you know, at the end the meditation session, so they will get a tape recorder and tape 15 minutes of silence. At the end of the 15 minutes. They'll bring it back And then when they meditate, they stick their meditation tape in, then stereo, blast, self silence 15 minutes, and then you hear thing at the end. So there's various ways of doing it. The other thing I'd like to encourage you to do during the week in between is not only used to the breath meditation during the 15 minutes sitting, but began in some interesting, some curious way to discover what your breathing is like in different daily circumstances. What is your breathing like when you're driving? Or if you're driving in a hurry some time? How's your breathing? Then when you're driving in a hurry? How does it change? What's the difference between breathing your breath when you're in a hurry driving versus when you're relaxed driving? What is your breathing like, when you're sitting at your desk if you are sitting at the Escalade or something, how does your breathing change in the course of the day? How does it change when you know you're going to be talking to someone or standing in front of a group of people to give a talk? Or, or if someone is angry with you, how does that affect your breathing if you're angry, I was effective breathing. The breath is a phenomenally useful door into understanding something about the depth of who we are our intentions, our reactions, our motivations, our emotions, even our thoughts. And as you become more sensitive, aware of the range of things happening with your breathing, you also become aware of how the breath is held at different times of the day. And if you can become aware of how it's held, then you have the option perhaps not to hold it anymore. And as the breathing becomes more conscious and more kind of

fluid, you'll find that and lubricate your day. It's a lot harder to stay angry in some unhealthy way. If you let your breath relax and breathe in a fluid conscious way, but if your breath is held when you're angry, that's more likely to fuel you stay kind of caught up in your anger. I just used as one example, but it



could be anything My suggestion is is 30 minutes next week, your homework is to get interested a little bit in your breathing in different circumstances and kind of see what that's like and see what you can discover, and all that.

So, I think that's all I have to say. You have any questions? We have a couple of minutes before the end. And what I'd like to do if you're a little bit patient here is the end with a short city and a little guided sitting for those people who like it. And those who don't. Yes.

Yeah. Right. We switched. It used to be for many years at seven, we were in Palo Alto, but it Moving here, Redwood City, we switched it to 730. So that's, that's why people are still confused. So I apologize for the confusion. So it's 730 to nine. And we'll just do a very short sitting. So sit upright and alert posture. It also maybe feels relaxed it

softly Close your eyes

and take a couple of long slow, deep breaths.

Let your breathing returned to normal

and then pay careful attention to the difference between how your inhalation feels in your body compared to the exhalation. There are different sensations that make it up different kinds of movements.

And then see if you can notice, which is least clear to awareness, the in breath of the out breath, which is least distinct term, which is more difficult to stay aware of the in breath of the opera

If either the in breath or the out breath is less distinct, or more, more difficult to pay attention to, it's possible that that's the most likely place where your mind will wander off into thought. an idle mind will get lost in thought. And if you know this, if you notice this pattern, if there's separate research in place in your breathing, your mind tends to wander off. Then you have to remind yourself when you come to that point in your breathing, to hang in there with a breathing, to get through that part in a mindful, connected way.

And then finally, the practice of mindfulness is very closely related to the practice of acceptance, certainly of accepting yourself as you are. And as we end this sitting, see if you can extend to yourself as thorough and complete acceptance of yourself as you are right now.

A friendly acceptance of yourself

if you're your own best friend You're so happy to see yourself

and then take a deep breath or two and when you're ready, you can open your eyes.

Thank you all very much. Good night.