So, welcome to our five week introductory course in concentration. It's a new thing. It's a new kind of thing to me to do. I've done the intro to mindfulness class for many years now and have enjoyed that a lot. And now, I felt it was time to offer something in concentration. Partly because my overall sense my general sense generalization doesn't apply to everyone is that the Vipassana students in the West, some of them are very good at mindfulness. But often with our lagging in is concentration, and concentration and mindfulness need to be our partners for the purposes of mindfulness. In order to really let the mindfulness practice go deep. It needs to be coupled together with a strong concentration. And whenever their partner is especially an equal partners, you can't have too much concentration. But you can have too little. And so, by focusing on concentration, it hopefully will begin encouraging the cultivation of this very important factor. The idea in this intro class is hopefully somewhat modest in that I'm thinking of, it's kind of in parallel to the intro, the mindfulness classes I teach. So we're kind of at that level, kind of real basic kind of level of information and instructions. And I'm not expecting any of you to have retained the fourth jhana by by the second class or the third by the end even. That's for concentration one or two, concentration 101 today. So, what I my hope is that by giving some of the basic ideas the Basic Elements of concentration, the teachings instructions around them, that can help a lot in you appreciating both the value and the beauty and the joy of concentration. And also in doing that, letting that factor become stronger in your life for all the benefits you can get from it, and including the benefit of supporting your mindfulness practice. So that's the kind of general very general idea of what I have in mind. As I said, I've never done this before. I've never taken a five week introductory course in concentration before. So it's kind of an experiment to see how anyone would do something like this. I, you know, I'm just I sat down with myself and, you know, try to review all the different things that I might want to teach and, and, you know, came together with a number of different things that I thought were important. So bear with me is kind of an experiment as you do this, and I hope it's an experiment which is very useful for all of you, otherwise it wouldn't do it. And also something then as useful enough that we'll want to keep doing it maybe on a yearly basis, just like we do the regular regular intro to mindfulness.
When I was practicing in Burma, there was a Vipassana center. And every morning I would go to breakfast. And the monastery was Meditation Center was kind of like, look like kind of a sprawling junior college campus built in the 1950s. That's what I thought of when I was there. And except there no cars on it to just always be large walkways. And every morning, I'd walk to the dining room for the monks in the western men. And I had to walk by often we went by in a single file the monks first and then the western Westerners we follow. I'd walk by the one woman's meditation hall. And the woman's meditation hall would have 500 women in there. They'd be meditating when we were going to breakfast. And because it was Burma, these big halls be air conditioned, they had two sides, the two long sides of the building, were just a whole series of open doors, two very big arch doors. So you can kind of see right through right in through the will use mutation. And sitting there, row after row, very straight rows, for 500 women meditating. And it was a powerhouse is one of the great sites My life is to see every morning these women meditating. And because there was this tremendous power, of, of stillness and power of dignity and concentration in the way they were burying themselves and engaged in what they were doing. They were engaged in something very dignified, very serious, very engaging, and something very still very intent. And I was inspired by both the attentiveness the dignity. And the sense of concentrated power, powerful concentration that emanated from that, as you know, phenomenally still rum. There's a story in the sutras, the discourses of the Buddha, of a king who decides to go visit the Buddha. And the king was a little bit afraid. I think of his life. He wasn't necessarily a really good guy had enemies. And he came to visit the Buddha and the Buddha was staying in a grove someplace. And he had to kind of travel to get there in a respectful way. He got off his elephants, as you know, outside the grove, and then he walked in by foot into the grove. And when he got kind of into close to the middle of the grove, he got really nervous. I think they sukha says that he's here. Stan stood on end, because he'd been told that there was a large group of monks, monastics monks and nuns. Together with the Buddha, the entourage, maybe 500 people in this Grove with the Buddha And he got spooked because there was no sound was this this the forest was completely still and tranquil. And he thought, Oh, it's an ambush, you know? And in fact, it was 500 people The story goes, who are meditating? And the meditative stillness, you know, was so palpable for him, that it spooked him.

Is it kind of kind of introductory kind of idea of concentration? I think of concentration as a kind of a clarity, of focus and a peace, clear, focused, peaceful thing that reminds me sometimes it's, it's like into clear water. But I think of it as like into clear, clear, clear, I live up in the mountains up there and sometimes when I come down the hill, I look to see what the air quality is like. With the air quality is like, and sometimes it's phenomenally clear to look across the day you see the hills there. And sometimes I can't even, you know, see down to the bottom of the of the hill to the town below here because of the haze or the smaller or whatever it might be. But there are times when it's really clear. And there's you know, after a rain or something like that, this stillness and Christmas to the year, great clarity. And the thing about that kind of clarity and stillness, it's very easy to miss it to lose track of it. Because we tend to focus on the things of the world we look at the billboards is we're driving or the houses or listening to the radio or listening to our minds or focusing obsessed by something. It's not
that often that we actually appreciate the clear stillness of the air when it's clear and still. So concentration is like that. It's a factor of the mind. It's a quality of the mind, and we can learn to appreciate and we can strengthen develop, we can clarify the mind, so the mind becomes clear and Clear and the mind becomes clearer and clearer, then is a useful mind that can be put to certain kinds of uses. And in Buddhist, the Buddhist path, concentration and clarity and stability of mind is not for its own purpose, but rather is for the purpose of supporting insight meditation, mindfulness practice, and leading to liberation. So, concentration is sometimes likened to an unflattering candle flame and flickering candle flame. It's a very ancient and simile and a candle flame is very dynamic. You know, it's, it's very bright, it's dynamic, it's active, you know, it's, it's hot. And you can flicker in the wind back and forth and be kind of unstable, or there's no wind at all. It's just very can be very straight and still just kind of float, you know, straight up. And I love that metaphor because The combination of a stillness of an unflattering flame and the sense of something dynamic and vital and vitality in that flame at the same time. So concentration is like that. There's something unfuckin agitated about it and very still on flickering, the mind is very, very focused and stable. But it's also very alert and very vital, very dynamic in its own way. And that's a very important principle to keep in mind, when you look at concentration is that balance or that combination of being in a sense, kind of unmoving or sense kind of still, while being very dynamic at the same time. The alternative would be to have a very calm, stable, still mind, but in mind that's really dull and falling asleep and seeing the difference between a mind which is very calm, but though and the mind which is calm, but very alert is very important for finding your way to concentrated state into Samadhi. So the word the Buddhist word for concentration, or the Buddhist word is usually translated to English as concentration is called Samadhi. It's a well known word it's so used to Sanskrit and Pali word both. It's used in Hinduism and yoga traditions and all over and, but as the word Samadhi itself, as a broader meaning meaning than our English word concentration, the English word concentration, it has the implication, I believe, of Khan centering of centering oneself on something centering and your focus, which is centered on something kind of a one pointed focus. That's an important element of of Samadhi. But Samadhi includes a lot of other factors besides one pointedness. So much so that it's probably better to think of Samadhi as a state than a particular mental function is a state that we enter into, or sometimes in a suit that is described as a state we abide in, we live in. So it's something you enter into, there's something that envelopes you or something, it's broader than just a one particular function of the mind. That's why in order to enter Samadhi, it's not just a matter of having a one pointed focus, whether it's willful or winning or any other way, it's a matter of accommodating including a gathering together, a lot of other factors, mental factors, psychological factors, together with the one pointedness. Samadhi is a very key element in the traditional Buddhist notion of the path, the Buddhist path. And the most famous formulation of this, I believe, is what's called the three trainings. All of Buddhism can be subsumed under what's called three trainings. The first training is a training in sila, an ethics or integrity virtue, the second trainings, it's In Samadhi, and the third training is a training and insight or wisdom. Sila, samadhi, paññā, virtue, concentration and wisdom or insight. There's a famous there's a book by Dalai Lama. We translate this in his book,
There's a lot of different practices for developing sila. There's a wide range of practices for developing Samadhi. And there's a number range of practices for developing insight. There's a big repertoire a big toolbox that the Buddha's Buddhist tradition has classically material on tradition. They say that there are 40 different meditation practices for developing Samadhi And different personality types will choose different kinds of somebody practices that are most suited for them. And a good teacher and the classic texts that talk about good teacher would kind of ascertain what kind of personality you are, and then assigned to you the meditation that's appropriate for you. So future studies how you walk and how you eat and how you talk and, you know, all the different, you know, whether you're agreed type or hate type, or diluted type or faith type or, you know, you know, intellectual type or whatever. And then, you know, I've very rarely known any teachers to do this. They just most teachers have no one practice fits all. But, but classically, that was kind of the idea you'd work with, with a person's character and disposition. Choose something that works for them. But there's a lot of different forms of Samadhi practices. Now, as I said, Samadhi isn't, is not an end in itself, usually But is a means to another end. And is the mean means to developing insight support for the possibility of insight. It's a means to purification, purification of all that kind of was accumulates in our system and our psychophysical system through a lifetime, every activity. We activity reactivity, if it's strong enough or chronic enough, gets stored somewhere in the psychophysical being and state gets in the way of settling deep, quiet, peace, peace, and part of the function of concentration practices help with that purification practice, somehow dislodge these things which are held in the system. It's also for the purposes of becoming more independent. A concentration practice helps the mind become more and more independent from the obsessions of the mind. The kind of things that the mind is so quick to cling to hold on to obsess about. Be afraid of whatever it might be. So the word, the Pali word is the veca. Very important word. And the veca is usually translated into English as either detachment, or seclusion or solitude. And I'll give a talk on that when Sunday or Monday, next month or so. But for I think it's better in English probably translated as independence, the sense of the mind becomes independent from the usual things and it's stuck stuck in or caught by. And then concentration also is his means towards liberation, becoming fully liberated. As Tanisha Bhikkhu likes to say, we develop our concentration which belongs to the conditioned world, that part of the world that it's created and formed and manipulated and constructed, because concentration, it belongs to the constructed where it's something that comes together because it causes and conditions and you bring it to the pinnacle of the possibility of the constructed world. So that you can jump off that edge of the pinnacle into the unconstructed the unconditioned, the unmade, the on formed that what you can't create, but you have to get to the edge of that Pinnacle the edge of that diving board in order to jump into the pool. Now the Buddha emphasized, or when we're reading the Buddhist teachings, there's a strong emphasis that the mind can be changed the mind the heart, that the mind is malleable. And the mind is not a thing. The mind is an activity or a composite of many different activities. And because it's an activity, it's very susceptible to be changed and affected by all kinds of conditions around it. And if you're not taking some responsibility for this, what how your mind is being shaped, then your mind can be shaped by
The circumstances you find yourself in, it certainly be shaped by the experiences you have growing up and your family environment. But it's also gonna be continued to be shaped by the influences in the present moment. And some people lock into a certain kind of mindset and don't allow for any possible change. But that becomes very brittle and very painful after a while if you kind of hold it tight in one way, and if you're more open and fluid with the environment, but you're not taking some responsibility for how the mind changes, then

advertisers and media will have their say on you were popular fashions and popular culture and all your friends and all your enemies and you know your colleagues and all all these forces in society will actually shift and change your, your mind in ways that are sometimes very gross and very subtle. I mean, a very simple example which is not very noble in my mind. Was that I noticed that after I moved to this area in the early 90s, I was mostly going to school Stanford and we taught our sitting group met in Palo Alto. And before that had lived in Berkeley, I'd been a student and lived in Asia and all kinds of places. And I never been in a community that had so many new cars. And I noticed that that in my my thoughts were, what kind of car I should be driving was being kind of moving in the direction of thinking I should have a new car. I know that if I'd stayed in San Francisco, where I was living, it probably wouldn't have occurred to me. But somehow it's being shaped but by the local kind of culture in mind was being changed by that. So the mind is malleable and if you don't take some responsibility for what shapes that the activity of the mind, then other things will so part of what we're doing Buddhism is beginning take responsibility for what shapes the mind. Now, this is an very important teaching because I believe and I could be wrong here maybe doesn't apply to many of you. But I believe is a very strong emphasis in western American Buddhism, to be focusing on having an experience. There's a really good experience when a good meditative experience and you focusing on a certain kind of, you know, bliss or joy or concentration or something. But Traditionally, the, the Buddhist teachings of the Buddha were not very experienced, directed. That wasn't that important. There's a lot more to be said about that. But what is important is how you shape your mind. That's really important. You take this malleable capacity of the mind, and it's activity which we call the mind and being in reorganizing it. so that it becomes more useful, becomes a developed kind of skill set. To the mind, so that the mind can be used for further purposes along the path. So there is no word in Pali for meditation. We think of Buddhism as meditative tradition. But there is actually no real word you can't hard to kind of find something that's equivalent to the word meditation. The word that's most commonly used in Pali is Bhavana. And Bhavana means cultivation or development, that the Buddhist practice is a practice of cultivating something, or developing something. And, as opposed to, you know, whatever we think meditation might be, and what that means is that Bhavana the practices of cultivation include much more than just meditation. The word Baba knows much broader includes practices in ethics in generosity and it includes you know, how you your livelihood, how you live your life and you know how you kind of speech you cultivate many, many things. So Samadhi is much broader than our English notion of one pointedness. It's a state of being a state of mind and includes many mental factors. And one pointedness is just one of them. And so we can look at some of the other factors that come into play when we enter into Samadhi. That's one of the things we'll do in the course of this class. The Buddhist tradition distinguishes between right and wrong somebody one of
the one of the factors of the Eightfold Path is right Samadhi so it distinguish between right and wrong Samadhi and it's possible to get into concentrated state. Can it be wrong concentrated states concentrated state which is not useful? For being on the path if you you know if you want to go out and rob banks, I suspect that you know your case the bank and midnight you decide to go down to the local bank and do your job, you might be really concentrated. But that concentration comes together with greed and other factors a soldier might be really concentrated, a boxer might be really concentrated. But that concentration comes together with other factors. There’s other factors or unwholesome factors that actually may be fueling that wrong concentration that unskillful concentration. When when concentration when one pointedness is joined together with obsessive thinking obsessive preoccupation with greed or hate, then it's considered the wrong concentration or useful concentration. Right concentration as the absence of obsessive obsessiveness of any kind right cost the body and includes a purity of mind and heart. Remembering the three trainings, the training and virtue comes first as the foundation for concentration, right concentration includes a sense of purity mental or mental purity or virtue. It includes as a kind of purity of mind, sincerity of mind, it also includes a stilling of the mind. stilling of the mind is a very important part of concentration of Samadhi. And the different levels of Samadhi involve progressive stilling of the different factors and activities of the mind. Like the mind is actually made up of many activities think of the mind as being a intertwined cord of intertwined rope of many different ports on the right word is with and, and as the concentration gets deeper, some of the strands that Make up the rope fall away. Whereas as the mind is more concentrated, so many different activities of the mind fall away and the requires could still become quiescent. And part of the great peace and joy of concentrated state comes from this great sense of stillness. And so the analogies that are often us, you probably know, a really quiet Lake, that completely still and reflects the mountains in the distance.

Right, somebody is not forced, it's possible to use our willpower force to get into concentrated state. And for the most part, and this is not completely accurate, but for the most part, right now, it doesn't arise as an act of force. It has a lot to do with a sense of allowing, allowing for a possibility. There's a my understanding of the cultivation of Somebody, one of the factors that needs to be there is a sense of allowing for possible for some practical possibility of unification of collectiveness of all these different factors that need to be collected in order to enter this Samadhi state. So, I don't think it was intended to be forced. So it is a collectiveness. And some people actually will talk about Samadhi as being a unification of the mind and body. That's what's involved in the concentrated state is the mind body get unified. And as I often teach it in the other intro class, if your mind and body are in two different places, you can't you're not really doing the practice, meaning that your body's never gonna go anywhere, but here, but if your mind is thinking about what happened to work earlier today, a conversation you had yesterday or is thinking about your plans for next week, then your mind is somewhere else than where your body is. And so there's a fragmentation going on. kind of split between The body in mind of sorts. And what we're trying to do is to heal all the different fragmentations of our psychophysical being in order to enter into the Samadhi. Samadhi requires an
integrity which requires integration, at least temporarily, of all the activities of our being. So something sometimes called a collectiveness. Everything is collected together, integration. Now, fragmentation seems to be a very strong quality of our modern society. And I think I believe there's a lot of different forces in our kind of popular American society, which supports fragmentation sports, a psyche being fragmented and not really settling in being stable and being able to track one thing for any length of time. I think that the way the media has gotten faster and faster, occasionally we'll rent a video and we would really like international called video like, last week. I finally saw Gone with the Wind, which I'd have, which I'd never seen. And that movie was like three hours and 40 minutes. And if it made it in modern, kind of modern style it, you know, you put you could have had all the scenes that had nothing, none of the words could have been short, another conversation shortened. But the whole thing would have been done in an hour and a half. Because there's all this spaciousness in the movies time and music and scenery. And, you know, it's really slow. And a lot of the older movies had the slowness to them, that people don't have patience for anymore. Let's get on with it. We're multitasking and, you know, you give too much space in the movie for just the scenery by itself. And people bring out their palm pilots to check. You know, check their email. And, you know, the pace of MTV kind of movie and just the space in which movies go on and paste some of the news media. You know, it's news media has very a lot of short clips. It doesn't have any often very The kind of watch regular kind of Evening News, it doesn't have, you know, doesn't really help you become concentrated focus stable on some topic, you know, you've a couple of minutes at the most, that's a lot. And you're on to the next thing you know, and the mind, you know, is always kept jumping and going. But it isn't just simply that our society which doesn't support the stable, concentrated mind, the mind itself doesn't support it. There are internal factors, the mind will sometimes rebel against developing concentration, partly because the concentration does involve a stilling of the mind, and the mind doesn't want to be stilled. Even though there's a lot of benefits of feeling the mind. It's ultimately a lot more pleasurable than the alternative. It's a lot more creative and intelligent than the alternative. It's often a lot less energy is expended than the alternate When the mind is fragmented, but there's a tendency for us to be somehow addicted to our thoughts. And we often kind of the mind is kind of short term directed, wanting short term happiness. And short term happiness often is understood to be, I just want to be free. I don't want to control the mind he can control is a limitation on the pleasure or the joy or the freedom of the mind. And it doesn't want to be controlled. It wants to be free to kind of be fragment go off in all kinds of directions.

And when the mind is fragment and goes in all kinds of directions, it doesn't settle. And it can seem very important to chase after 10,000 thoughts or thoughts seem very important to us. But in fact, the mind which is collected the mind which is controlled in the way that Samadhi even goes a control collected mind is actually much more satisfying than than the scattered, distracted mind. But the mind doesn't know that you might know that intellectually. But the mind doesn't know that it's like an unruly kid who doesn't know anything and you speak your wild horse, it needs to be trained. And so you have to know that about the mind that the mind will rebel often to getting concentrated. It's sometimes if the untrained mind, it doesn't understand the tremendous benefits from being concentrated, and doesn't see why should I go there? What's the purpose for the uncontrolled mind doesn't, doesn't relax or very
rarely relaxes. So if you want to have very deep relaxation, you can have a mind which is able to control in some way or other. And the deepest forms of relaxation that can come through meditation, come with having a great skill on how to control the mind. Even if you can get you know very somewhat relaxed by listening to music or laying by the ocean, listening to the waves or getting a good massage. It doesn't compare at all to what's possible through very deep meditation. I'm offering I'm still surprised and amazed at this little thing I've known for 20 years that I'm more relaxed after my morning meditation than I was when I went got woke up from sleep. If sleep doesn't sleep isn't even as relaxing as meditation about it, we're controlled mind can can do.

Part of a very important aspect of developing some audio concentration is our capacity to let go. And probably it's one of the more important factors that support concentrated state is our ability to learn to let go and letting go you can let go of faith the teacher tells you to let go and you do or you can let go out of wisdom because you know, the things you're holding on to are not worth holding on to. But somehow or other beginning to Let go. Let go of the need to think about things Joseph Goldstein used to like to say, nothing meditation, nothing whatsoever is worth thinking about. And I used to say that a lot until someone came up to me after teaching and said to me, oh, you know, I used to be part of a cult, they should tell me to teach us that. So they know they're not say that. But for the most part 99.999% of the time, there's nothing whatsoever you really need to think about. And an active kind of discursive, sweet kind of way, when you're meditating. There are times when you're developing when you're developing meditation, that you want to think actually, for the thinking is directly related to negotiating the path of meditation. So there's integration with all the different activities of the mind are unified together on this for the same purpose. Even our thinking is unified for the same purpose and there are times where thinking is actually useful. I think Joseph's teaching is very, but you know, very few of us get to that. point, when you let go overthinking is to let go of all this stuff has nothing to do with meditation at all. And then if it has to do with meditation, we have to look over judgments about measuring how it's to go how we're doing. That's not on the path either. So those are kind of letting go. It also involves relaxing. And this principle of relaxation is a very important one. for developing concentration. You need to be as you're as you're developing concentration, you need to be looking in your psychophysical being in your body, your muscles in your mind, where's the tension, and can you begin relaxing that tension, letting go that tension. The more you can be relaxed and meditation up to a point, the easier it will be to enter into a concentrated state, a current concentrated state. If you don't, some people will try to get concentrated, but they're tense in doing that. Nothing then goes against whatever the very thing they're trying to do goes counter with the game. And some people actually get more and more tense, the more they practice. And sometimes that tension can give rise to kind of wrong, somebody kind of unusable concentration. And the paradox that often happens is that people will push and get really tense and strive and try to get concentrated. And then at some point, some reason or other, they give up their efforts, they give up the tension of striving. But that said, they can set up the condition of that they've done a fairly good job. But they finally when they do relax and let go of the striving, and they dropped down to a whole different level of concentration, but it's not they're doing it's kind of like they just let go into it. The development of concentration of Samadhi requires a lot of respect, and a lot of care and for those of you who have tendency towards faith. It
takes a lot of veneration, a lot of faith, a lot of respect and a lot of care to enter into the practice of concentration, with respect, respect for the practice itself, but also a lot of respect for yourself and for your mind, and respect for what it takes to do the practice. It's kind of like if you go into the forest, say you're going to go spend a week in the forest, come backpacking someplace up in Alaska, where there's wild beers or whatever. And you need to go into some kind of respect to the forest, you'd be with care, you prepare yourself, you learn about a little bit about the local circumstances, you go in and you respectful the forces you go in, which means and in part, you're attentive and alert to what's there, you know, casual, older, or callous to what's there to kind of respect or care or kind of that, you know, that supports that intentions, that involvement. So when you when you sit down to provide Concentration, I think it's a lot easier if you do it by first establishing a sense of respect for what you're doing an NGO like, like, going to go into the practice concentration in respectful way. Like you go to Asia, for example. And, you know, you travel all the way to Asia to see some great, wonderful enlightened master, and you finally able to get to her temple and she's there she is, and, you know, you've kind of interconnect respectfully with care, and veneration or faith and even if you were kind of a flaming atheist, you know, whatever, you know, it's kind of you know, most people would you know, have some cares, they go in situation like that. So, respect care. Part of respect is you go prepare, you prepare yourself for such a thing. So, I think I also think part of very important part of developing Samadhi is the preparation you do before you actually start the practices of concentration. And that goes maybe against the grain of what some people would like. They would like concentration. And they'd like to be told what to do ABC sit down there you do it, you know, but actually, you want to set up a context and environment and ecology of the mind in the heart that becomes supportive for concentration to arise. And that that is, you know, to a great part is my understanding of Samadhi is to not you have a lot of responsibility for the arising of Samadhi. But your responsibility is to laying the optimal conditions for it to arise by itself. Samadhi is not something you make happen so much for the most part, unless you're quite an adept. But for the most part, it's something that even if you are adept at doing it, it's something like you're often you figure out how optimally to create the conditions. So that this thing, this mysterious thing, envelops you arises within you or settles through you locks in within you, this groove that you've kind of settled into your own groove, whatever it might be. So that's why the idea of preparation is very important. preparing yourself and understanding what are the various causes and conditions that I can put into place to support the possibility of something arising. It's like this movie that you've seen the some of you seen called, Field of Dreams. And the mantra there is, build it that he will come. And it's like that you have to build it, you have to build your meditation, and then something will come. But you don't know what it is, until it arises. So it requires preparation. And that preparation can be your whole life. If you're really serious about something in a certain way, you can kind of rearrange and organize your whole life and be concerned about your actions throughout the day. Your speech throughout the day, your life throughout the day. Your ethics throughout the day. You can be concerned Learn about the various factors, how you live your life in such a way that you notice those which ways which way to live your life creates more agitation in the mind, in which ways of living tend to create more calm, more concentration. So I can imagine, you know, if you're really serious about developing a concentrated mind, and you sit very diligently to sit and meditate in the
morning for 45 minutes, and then you go to some pub, where they have the casino and spend the whole day kind of, you know, doing the jack. Did you know The one armed bandits and, you know, just, you know, all the lights and the flashing and the sounds and, you know, you just whatever concentration and whatever you built up during that 45 minutes, is just blown away through that activity. You need to have the rest of your life consumed, be supportive of developing concentration. Some people will take this very seriously and look at how can they reorganize their lives in some way or other to make that happen. So other people don't want to do that or don't need to because their lives are pretty sane to begin with. One of the classic preparations for Samadhi in ways of supporting it to arise is a practice called guarding the sense doors which means not letting a lot of different sense input come into you in an uncontrolled fashion, letting to be some how do you think some some some care about the sensory input in your psyche, because the more sensory input you get, the more faster it can be, sometimes will agitate the mind and make it more hard for it to settle and get concentrated. It said that moderation in food and drink is helpful as preparing to enter into Samadhi are called concentration. So going to be careful with your diet.

Not to be an ascetic means but not too much, not too little with your sleep. sleeping too much disturbs the possibilities of concentration. sleeping through a little can do that also. It helps if you can cultivate a sense of calm contentment, contentment is considered one of the precursors of concentration. So, you know, it means using your intelligence and looking at your life looking at the places of discontent. And can you cultivate contentment, greater sense of contentment in your life? It seems a little bit odd for me to say that because a lot of people want to meditate so they can feel more content. And I'm telling you don't meditate until you feel until you more content. But the two can go together. It can be very helpful if you're very clear about the purpose of your meditation. So there's kind of a intenseness, or sense of purpose purposefulness, but what you're doing so you really know what you're doing have a good sense of what your why you're doing this. What's the purpose of developing concentration, what's the purpose of meditation? So when you sit down, there's some clarity of purpose that informs what you're doing that clarity of purpose, then you're less likely to be filled with doubt and wondering what to do and you know, yesterday count my breath today, I think I'll note my breath. Today, maybe a bit better day to listen to sounds and maybe the dashes take a bath, you know. And so, you know, the mind can be very confused. But if you have a real sense of purpose, it's a lot easier for the mind to get settled and kind of get on the program. So thinking about your sense of purpose, your intention is an important part of all this. And in spending some time outside of meditation, clarifying this by yourself or with friends with a teacher can be very helpful for the purposes of developing concentration. And then a little more directly connected to meditation itself. Having a clean and quiet environment is considered very helpful for concentration. And so you can understand that as you wish but maybe making sure that your place where you meditate that your home whatever feels clean and orderly, and they can you know, so you sit down and you enter into an orderly world or Clean world, a place that feels calm. If you have a lot of things, you know, messy all over the room doesn't feel calm. So you create a calm, clean environment, some people will take it to the point of always bathing before they develop concentration, which says the body is clean. And I've heard of even people put on clean clothes. So there's all sorts of cleanliness and kind of purity perhaps, that's supportive of this
developing concentration because I often feel different. I put on clearly clean clothes, you know, feel kind of cleaner myself, and it's easier to feel content and settled and concentrated. So I said earlier that the important part of Samadhi is letting go. In fact, Samadhi involves two important factors, many factors, but right now, two important factors work together in combination. There has to be some feeling of some aspect of letting go of relaxing and letting go but it has to be together. With making effort being engaged endeavoring, and if you all you do is practice letting go, you might enter into a kind of concentrated state, but then you have put a lot of effort into doing as well. So the effort has to be there that way it could really make effort letting go. But if you practice tendencies if you only practice letting go, it tends to make the mind dough and drowsy. As you need to bring the effort factor to match that people put in too much effort. You don't have enough relaxation, letting go, the mind doesn't really become still and quiet, it actually stays more agitated, active or energized, agitated.

In both these things, letting go and applying ourselves in practice, making effort and applying ourselves in void. It involves using our ability to choose to choose what we do with our mind. Without seeing the point of choice where you have a choice, and then choosing to follow your purpose to get concentrated, there is no path. So involves a choice. And that choice, that's the seeing the place of choice becomes more and more refined, the more you do the practice, but for example, there's a choice to sit down and meditate. It's a choice you make, you see the possibility of meditating. And you make that choice. You sit down to meditate, and you see the choice of turning the mind towards the breath. And so you make that you apply yourself there. You see the choice of letting go of thinking about tomorrow. So you make that choice, let go of it. You notice the mind has drifted off and thinking about something. There's a choice and you notice that that's a moment of choice. What do you do then? You could judge yourself and criticize yourself. It might not feel like a choice to do that. It might be automatic. Or there's a choice you just a matter of factly come back and be Again with a breath, do we engage yourself, we apply yourself to the purpose that you set yourself to do. So, a lot of meditation goes exercising your capacities for choice. But it's doing it together with a sense of relaxation and letting go. So that sense of choice doesn't become a burden, it's actually becomes part of the beauty of what alert, clear, peaceful mind is about. It doesn't feel like a burden at all, but actually something really delightful to do to exercise this choice. At first, as you're developing concentration, there's a lot of applied effort that's required. We apply ourselves and apply ourselves we kind of give the effort to a situation we choose to apply ourselves, we choose over and over again. At some point, you're going to get into the rhythm or the mind settles into kind of the concentration, and then it becomes less and less applied effort, but more kind of self generating effort. It's not you generating it, but As generated by the system, and in essence, maybe you all you have to do is kind of like, keep it pointed in the right direction. And your choice just involves keeping the energy pointed in the right direction, as opposed to keep choosing to reapply and be applied because the energy is beginning to kind of roll on its own.

So there's no Samadhi without relaxation. But relaxation gone too far, puts us to sleep or leads to complacency. And complacency is one of the great Henry hindrances to long term meditation. Many meditators sooner or later become complacent in their meditation, they get kind of a warm, fuzzy, nice
feeling. And they kind of become just Oh, it's okay. You know, all the major conflicts and concerns have kind of dealt with and they're kind of not suffering so much and things are comfortable and just nice. kind of settled back into this comfortable place.

So, one of the things is points to, in that meditation of concentration involves a balance of, of alertness, applied effort of using a choice, and letting go and relaxing. It also involves using our intelligence. And I think that in my encounter with a good number of meditators, there's a kind of feeling that intelligence isn't necessarily shouldn't be part of the practice something wrong with intelligence or you shouldn't be, but aren't using our intelligence is a very important part of meditation practice. Everybody has enough intelligence. So it isn't like, you know, you don't have enough intelligence. That person is smarter than me. And I don't know if this is really true, I'm about to say, but I like to think it's true that

Is your intelligence which gets you into suffering. And so you have all the intelligence, you need to get you into sufferings, all the intelligence, you need to get you out of it. So if you're not a very intelligent person, then you're there's not a lot of intelligence that goes into deep into your suffering. And so you don't need a lot of intelligence through the practice. If you're really intelligence, a really a lot of intelligence has gone into your suffering. So don't don't take this as a law rule. But, but, you know, everyone has enough intelligence, but it does involve using the intelligence you have. being alert, clear thinking sometimes about it, following your way, it's kind of like if you're in that Woods kind of walking along. And, and you're suddenly across, you know, some terrible rapids, and there's a very narrow kind of log that goes across and you really intend to cross that law. You'd be very concentrated, but you want to use all your intelligence. To figure out how to get across, you notice a vine there you notice this nap Slippery Rock there and you're engaged in the time you get across the other side. Your mind might be very still. But it wasn't stillness that, you know, that avoided a lack of intelligence. You're following me? Is this going okay? Tonight? I'm talking much longer than I thought I would. But that's the way it is.

So in terms of the preparation, preparing ourselves for practicing concentration, you might look at your life and look at what just makes sense to do. The other thing you might do is is think that There's actually a preparation you do for each particular meditation session. And you can call this like a setting up for meditation. And each person, I recommend each of you to find a way of setting up your meditation. So you're not just simply going into your room and plopping down and begin to meditate. Would you give yourself some period of time, a couple of minutes, five minutes or something, to set up the meditation to prepare yourself for it. And each person will have your own way of doing that your own procedures, your own ritual, some people like to do it very ritualistically some people other ways. It might mean spending a couple of minutes unwinding. They'd be going for a little walk first or just sitting looking out the window for a while before you go meditate, do something which is kind of relaxing. So you're not depending on your meditation to relax you, but you do kind of kind of the obvious ways First, some people like to chat. Some people like to recite the method sitter. Some
people like to do some loving kindness meditation is a preparation for meditation. Some people were like, you know, we'll sit down in front of a altar as a Buddha figure something that's sacred. So the feeling of being connected to them sacredness. Some people like to read some inspirational literature before they meditate. So their sense of faith enthusiasm, and confidence may be as they go into the practice. Part of preparing it as a sit down consciously and respectfully. Part of that what that involves is being careful and respectful for the posture that you take for your meditation practice. The posture that you sit in, has a lot to do with how easy or difficult it is to get concentrated. So be careful with your posture, develop a good balanced, alert posture, a good posture, something gets developed over time. It's not like a done deal. Just you know, you sit down and have either good or bad posture helpful or not helpful posture. But you actually begin cultivating, it might take a few months, but maybe, you know, sit first might be a little bit uncomfortable even. But you take and seed develop a cluster, which is supportive of being stable rooted, concentrated alert, the classic kind of metaphor for a good meditation posture or just sit like a mountain, either physically like a, like a triangle, or kind of just have a sense of being rooted like a mountain stable upright. Then, once you actually you know, do all that, then you actually start sitting in the sitting itself to sit a little setup. And when I do my intro class, I often have almost very kind of almost do the same thing every time, right? But kind of what I would guide people, one this one way of doing it for this class, I'll do something different guiding you into the concentration, but you'll find your own way of how you do it. For this class, what I recommend you Experiment with unless you have your own way, is what I call this. The seven point breathing or seven steps of breathing, which is you take seven breaths and for each breath, as you exhale, the inhalation you feel a certain part of your body and the exhalation, you exhale. And you count those seven breaths backwards. 7654321. So, you take so the first number seven is your scalp in the back of your head, top of your head. Breathe in, feel apart, and then relax the part of your body. Seven. Then Your Face. Breathe in, feel your face. As you exhale, relax your face a lot of tension with old interface six Breathe in, feel the air of your neck and your shoulders. As you exhale, relax, soften that part of your body. Five. Breathe in and feel the area of your chest and your back ribcage. As you exhale, relax that part of your body. And then the area of your diaphragm, your solar plexus, and then your whole abdominal cavity area. And then your legs, legs and your feet. So you can do those seven steps. And that's one way

for some people can be very powerful way of kind of relaxing the surface tension of the day, reminding themselves what you're going to do now is to be collected and unified for some purpose to really hear the here and now with what you're going to apply yourself to. And then you want to be intent, intent. This is a very important part of the intelligent engagement. With meditation practice, and learning how to be intense in such a way supports relaxation is part of the art that we're looking at here.

So before we do a meditation and give you actually some some instructions that you might want to even try as important as it is setting yourself up for meditation beforehand is how you emerge out of meditation. And some people you know, they're there, whatever signal they get the meditations over and the bell rings and they pop up and think about their coffee or whatever they think about and, and off they go. But you actually that's actually kind of disrespectful of what you just went through. What
you want to do is spend some couple of minutes not be a long, long time reviewing that meditation. what that was like part of the Art is to learn how to do that in a non judgmental way. But just kind of matter of factly review, what was that? Like? What happened during that meditation? How present? Were you? sleepy? Were you? How alert were you? How tense were you? If you following the breath, how many breaths could you follow? What were the main things that got in the way of being concentrated? How does this meditation compare to meditation yesterday or last week? Or the pattern of your meditations over the last while and that kind of comparison as part of the review is not meant to judge but it is supposed to be helping you kind of figure out you know, you know, are you making progress in some kind of neurotic way? But just kind of beginning to get a sense of what's what's working how things were what are the patterns? How did you engage yourself what happened when you when you engaged yourself? How do you work with different things? How might you do better next time you sit down? Oh, I was kind of complacent that city. Oh, you know, I I lost two cities. last few days of sittings, I keep thinking about motorcycles. And what a great to be have a Harley, you know, and so I noticed that, oh, it's been going on for a few times now, I think next time when I sit down, I think I'm going to be more diligent and really try to cut off those Harley thoughts earlier. You know, and you can, you know, but that reviewing helps you kind of sort through all these things. Also, maybe even more important part of the function of reviewing is that in a sense, you know that you're accountable for that meditation that you're interested in it. And so while you're meditating there's certain kind of more greater interest in understanding what's going on. You understand you meditation understand what's going on my track it to some degree, that engagement tracking is one of the things that then cultivates concentration. Making Sense Okay, so I do apologize for talking so much, because maybe it's a lot of material to take in. And I did earlier today when I was preparing for this, I do think this should have been a two hour class. But this is the way next time. So I'd like to sit a little bit. And what I like to do is for you all to stand for a minute, stretch your legs and

the thing about talking too much. We can use it we can call the Tibetan style Tibetan teachers, when you go on retreats, what they do is they just teach because it's so rare to get teachings and then you're expected to put on practice when you get home. Why would you waste time with the teacher putting into practice because he regretted you know, better off learning. So, you know, not that I'm comparable but That's the we justify today.

So I'm planning out because it's already almost quarter to nine. We're supposed to stop at nine right? That's what we said the advertisement, I would like to go a little bit longer the class maybe to 10 after. If that's a problem with anyone then you can get up and leave or you might for if you're comfortable doing this right now is because it's kind of near the side there. So it's easy for you to get up and leave and not disturb people and, but won't be longer than that. So take a comfortable alert posture. gently close your eyes and take a few moments to reflect this idea that We can take some sense of respect to engage in meditation practice. Hopefully a joyful respect a willing respect, but some sense of care respect. It can be helpful to take two or three long, slow, deep breaths. And as you exhale, relax your body, your mind. And then experiment now with a seven point breathing. As you do it, it's fine to breathe a little bit more deeply than you normally would, just to kind of get into it. So you begin with
your top of your head, your scalp, the back of your head, breathing in and letting go. Your face, neck and shoulders. chest, back ribcage. The diaphragm, solar plexus, belly, the abdomen and waist, lower back. Let everything sink, let everything surrender everything to gravity. And then also your legs. feet and then take a few moments now to feel your whole body, a global sense of your body. Whatever that means for you and within the body as part of the body, becoming aware of your breathing kind of a global sense of your body. Breathing, global as is easy to do.

In order to develop concentration, we want to switch our minds activity from thinking predominantly to sensing the practice of sensing more than thinking. So we want to sense the felt sense the feeling, what it feels like for the body to be breathing. The sensations of expansion and contraction, pressure and release of pressure.

and feel the kind of a global sense of the body. Perhaps you can feel the breathing is kind of like a massage. expanding and contracting moving your body hanging They're that sense of movement and expansion contraction. And if it's enjoyable, by all means enjoy it. If you're comfortable with a global sense of the body breathing, stay with that. If you're more comfortable, familiar or familiar with choosing a particular place to be aware of your breathing, yeah, I've done them with the chest or the nostrils. Then you can let your attention focus in that particular place.

The first two mental factors that are cultivated with concentration. The first is connecting the attention to the objects of concentration. So connecting now to the breathing turning the attention and feeling sensing The second factor is the ability of the mind to hold that breathing in attention over time sustaining the attention. And there are two different factors. The first one is strengthened by whenever you need to choose to come back to breath and reconnecting. The second factor involves once you're connected to doing what it takes to hang in there. With a breathing over time, hang in there with a rhythm of breathing in and out. And then in order to support staying connected with each breath, begin counting your breath and wait account is to count each exhalation and count up to 10. each exhalation gets a count and make sure you count each one if you lose count, fair enough. Matter of fact, we begin again at one count in a relaxed fashion. But be somewhat intent enough so that you can stay there with accounting. You don't have to like counting, all you have to do is to count. Let go of anything which is strenuous to be concentrated on the breath.

Whenever else the mind gets involved in, it's normal for the mind to do that you don't have to be upset. Just when you notice the mind is involved with something else. We connect to the breath and then remember to sustain the attention with the breathing over time. Letting the counter support you to maintain it over time.

It's not simply a matter of trying to maintain that concentration over time, that continuity of attention. But it's also a matter of being interested in doing that being interested in discovering what happens when you do that. What happens when you're not successful? What happens when you are interested
in reapplying yourself and trying again, maybe trying with a little different kind of effort, more application or more relaxation. Don't be afraid of interest curiosity. Investigation of How can you do this? What does it take experiment

And then the last minute or two of the city now very matter of factly review what that was like. It was always the quality of your efforting like were you trying too hard? Are you trying not enough? How could you have done better

So there are, as I said, many different ways of developing concentration, many different concentration practices. The one that I'm offering as the foundation for this class, at least is mindfulness of breathing. And for the beginning of the class, I'd like to encourage you to count your your breaths, one to 10. And begin again over again, one to 10. One to 10 is keeping it up. If you lose track, start over again. The counting has a lot of functions certainly keeps us on the track because you have to be alert enough to remember your to count. The if you're agitated and distracted, then the counting kind of tends to kind of hold the mind Stillier and keep you more on track and kind of brings a balance from that direction brings you more to center. If you're sleepy or Doe, or kind of not very energetic or engaged, then you have to arouse enough effort. In order to maintain the count, in order to count, you have to have more energy, you have some energy to count. So if you're too sleepy, then the whatever it takes to be able to remember to count, it requires you to kind of rev up in a sense. So it tends to bring more balance in that direction. So if you're imbalanced and either too agitated or to Doe, accounting can be very helpful. You want to count in such a way that accounting actually feels helpful in terms of the inner voice that does the accounting maybe need to soften it. Sometimes you need to make it louder, clear, more precise, sometimes more directed. But could you experiment a little bit with how you count. One way of experimenting is, in order to keep it kind of fresh and not becoming mechanical, is you can vary when you in the cycle of the breath, you count, meaning that you might first count at the end of each exhalation And then some other time when you feel let's get some more mechanical, he just switched to the beginning of the explanation. Because you know he's a little bit on your toes then. And then you might do it in the middle right in the middle. Or then you might do it to the inhalation, count those. So you very if you feel like you need to kind of if that's helpful to keep you on track, so that you're not, you're getting mechanical or automatic about how you're doing it's kind of kind of out of habit. I'm counting if you've never done it is a very good way of finding out how concentrated you really are. Um, I do it sometimes I'm surprised still to this day, sometimes I think I'm much more concentrated than I am. You know, I think I'm doing just fine, you know, and I count like, we get to six, you know, or five or two. So I guess I'm not as concentrated as I thought I was. And there's a way in the car mind sometimes can fool itself into thinking you're much more engaged than you actually are. The counting is a kind of truth teller kind of tells you what's really going on. So it has a lot of functions. And for the first week, I'd like to encourage you just to use the counting, just to learn what it takes to be able to hold the breath in your awareness over the time of the meditation practice, it's a training and what it's like to hold your attention or hold something in awareness. Don't worry too much about how complicated you get or how concentrated you get in some other kind of definition of concentration. Just experiment and massage and investigate. What does it take to hold something and
attention over time? And what did it take to kind of hold it more and more of your psyche kind of envelop itself or being developed by the breath so that the integration that gathered together everything around the breath is what's going on? I would like those of you who come to this class, the credit requirement, I think it was posted in the newsletter. That's good to sit 45 minutes every day. Because my understanding is you came to the class because you wanted to help concentration not learn theory of concentration and what's the point of coming to the class if you'd like to apply it, you might as well not come right. And if you want to, if you can apply it you might as well apply it in a way that really kind of makes a difference 45 minutes so that's the expectation you come to this class. It doesn't have enough not have doesn't have to be 45 minutes all in one city. Some of you might be new to all this that's challenged sit for that long. It can be two sittings in the course of the day. 315 minutes sittings. Some people actually might sit much better than 15 minutes in but the quality of the quality is more important than the quantity. So people can get a higher quality. Sometimes by sitting shorter times. I don't care how you do that's 45 minutes, that's 45 minutes each day. Okay, gotta be and the other thing is To do this week, is I'd like you to memorize

the Metta Sutta. And there's two reasons for that. One reason is that memorization is the which gets cultivated in the mind when you memorize is what's needed for both mindfulness and concentration. And it's a very ancient practice in Buddhism, to practice to, to cultivate to memorize things. So very supportive. We don't do it so much in our modern culture in the way people did in the past. So it's just a concentration practice itself supports the meditation for what I want you to do when you're memorizing the Metta Sutta. Is to study investigate, be curious, how you use your mind in order to memorize what do you how do you engage with this task of memorization? What does it take? What are the qualities of the mind what is the focus of the mind, relaxation of the mind? What kind of involvement is it? What kind of how do you hold something, because you're holding it in a way as you're holding something in your concentration. If you're trying to memorize, I want you to study and learn that, find out what it's like for you. So it's more than just a concentration exercise. It's an exercise in discovering something about your capacity of mind how it works. Is that clear enough? And my hope is that part of that is that you'll then learn something about how you can engage something helpful, but how you can also engage in meditation that's comparable to something about how you're engaged in learning how to memorize, work,

which translations you memorize. Okay, so you can either memorize the one we're giving you tonight, which is a different one, which kind of will be a new challenge, or you're welcome to memorize something different. If you could find your local teaching to the Buddha And find something you like in there. Also, some of you might find that by memorizing it, you can you use that you can chant it or recite it to yourself before you start sitting. And that engagement and that focus on the memorization that 234 minutes takes to say it will really jumpstart your concentration you sit down to do with your breathing. So as Susan copied how many you make 60 it's probably not enough for everyone here. But some of you are here with friends or partners. Take one and share. And if you're going to be coming Saturday for the one day sitting or Friday for the one day sitting or Sunday morning, for the one if you can just kind of wait a little bit and let the other people take first. Then if there's no leftover,
we'll have more for you then said okay. So that's it. requirements is 45 minutes sitting. And the method sutta suggestion optional, for extra credit is for you to maintain a journal during this time, at the end of each sitting to actually write down your reviewing, write down and kind of see how she has some evidence of track record of what happened and your engagement, your thoughts, your involvement with it. And then periodically over the five weeks review that and see if you can learn from that journal. And we're not judging, you know, it shouldn't be a journal, but how how awful it was, or, you know, or you know, how terrible you were or why you can't, why you can't concentrate is because, you know, you know, your boss got angry with you, and, you know, so you know, it's really kind of focusing on the actual, you know, technical aspects of what happened to you as you sat and how could you have done better and just, you know, just a very simple, straightforward way Other thing I'll say, is that two weeks from today, which I believe is a 15th of May, I'm going to come an hour early. So it's 630. And those of you who would like to come and actually talk about what's going on with your meditation will be kind of a group discussion. I think it's very helpful. And we're actually going to talk you can talk a little bit about, maybe bring your journals and read out of them or, you know, or kind of just talk about what you're discovering and talk about get details talk that was difficult. And we'll do that separately from the class in two weeks. And hopefully, that's gonna be served some of you really well and be very interesting. And I'll end with there are three classic benefits to developing concentration practice or doing concentration practice. The first one is very beautiful, it says it's helps you to have it's for the purposes of dwelling happily. And it is in the presence of a nice. The second is it cultivates insight and mindfulness. It supports and strengthens it. The third is it's a condition for the cultivation of liberation. So those are three wonderful benefits. If you're not interested in liberation in the future, then you can just have a pleasant abiding in the present. Thank you