

Concentration: Week 3

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Report, though. But how it's going with the doing the concentration practice over the last couple of weeks, or questions you have about any bit that's related to this? This is a good time. I got a question about the very last line is not born again into this world. Are there different ways of interpreting that? Oh, certainly that's, of course, this religion. What's the way of interpreting it that has now the word? The word in Pāli is—I forget the Pāli word, but it means no, not again reborn in a womb, is the expression.

And what it refers to is Indian cosmology, or the idea of liberation, is to actually not just liberated in this life. But you're liberating, liberated from the cycles of rebirthing, being born over and over again, and so you no longer reborn as a human being, no longer reborn in a womb, and so you're either you're freed, no longer be born at all, or you get reborn. If you really have to cultivate *mettā* to a high degree and attain the level of attainment to talk about in a sutta, then you do. You might be, you know, you might not be an Arhat yet, but you might be a once non-returner. And your once returner is someone who gets reborn in a very pristine, rarefied celestial realm for the last birth. And no, you don't get our spontaneous appearance in these heavenly worlds. You don't go through gestation and birth from a womb.

So that's kind of—that's the most traditional interpretation of this line. So if we want to interpret it for ourselves, you know, a much more contemporary language works for a lot of Westerners. It's no longer—I like that interpretation—no longer gets reborn in the cycles of suffering so that you no longer get reborn in the cycles of identity, of becoming, that we cling to and hold on to, by which we suffer. Right was the and right. You ask the question about that which is more skillful. You follow concentration *Māra* solely using that as the form of meditation. Just go as far, pushed at as far as possible. Verses Inside Meditation Me whatever is. In other words, going back and forth, you Uneasy Sensations insight. You get the point that but moving back and forth, verses stain with one form, enjoy as deep as you can.

Oh, to kind of take the question at the most broadest level first, or at least maybe my own bias to how I listen to that kind of question, and that is that religious people really love simple answers: This is the one way, this is the right way. So it's the concentration way, that's the way, or This is the way and to and the way you are. You ask the question. Was very generally. How do you know what's skillful? As if there's some answer separate from the individual. There's an abstract, floating answer to that question. The answer to that question has to be with each individual person who addresses it for themselves.

When we're aware of our own tendencies, our own strengths and weaknesses, our own issues, we're dealing with our own sense of how the practice unfolds for us as individuals. That's when we find what's skillful and what's not skillful. So with a we may sense then to experiment with moving back and forth for a while verses, or sometimes to one root, and see which deepens each form. Yes, I think a lot of Buddhist practice is a matter of trial and error, and of finding out by trial and error what works and what doesn't work, finding out what the consequences are of doing different kinds of practices or different ways, different approaches, learning from those, and finding one's own way, in a sense. But it's also good to get to talk to a teacher and talk about what's going on in your own life, your own practice, your own mind, and to get some guidance, because there's so much you can choose from otherwise that it can be challenged to a kind of endless trial and error. It's nice to hone it down a little bit.

And any law you so much depends on the abilities of a certain person. Some people have very good abilities to get concentrated, and the concentration route can really help them out. Other people have a really good ability to get concentrated, but they hide in that concentration state, and, you know, they can stay there for years, kind of hiding, and need a good teacher to kind of shake them up. Some people have naturally no very poor ability to get concentrated, or maybe because of the historical reasons they have very poor ability to get concentrated, and so they're better actually directed away from concentration paths. You know, some Loreal states a really serious path in itself to develop the absorptions and all that, and are be better off encouraging deviance. Some people are, you know, if a teacher is really tracking someone who's brand new. They might suggest that that person should start with *vipassanā*, and then switch over to concentration for a while, and then go back to *vipassanā*. Or for another person, they might say, You should start with concentration, then do *vipassanā*. There's always different combinations of how these things this can unfold.

So the question is, you know what is it for you? What's skillful for you is really the issue. And trial and error is one way. And my offering suggestion in offering this class is that a lot of people could use more concentration than they. That's almost a safe thing to say, is almost

everyone can use them with more constant concentration. And I'm not offering this class is saying that. Nakia, I know you are supposed to be on the *samādhi* path, you know, or to take this. As you know, for the next ten years, all you do is concentration practice. I'd be very happy if someone took the five week class. Did that practice during these five weeks? Learn something about concentration, appreciate it in some aspects of it, and then were able to develop a little more concentration they have. So whenever they go back to *vipassanā* practice, they bring along a little more emphasis on concentration as a support for that *vipassanā* practice.

Some of you might decide to spend a year just doing concentration practice based on this class, and that might be a really wise thing to do. And some people might take it further and go concentration retreats and these whole range of things. So without, you know, sitting down with you personally, and it's hard for me to give a generic answer to your question, but is that kind of helpful, the kind of I had a quiescence before it. I have hardly understanding how to apply investigation concentration without getting contemplative. I'm not quite sure how I meant that, but Socrates, it's a case to be contemplative. It isn't like as what you want to do, for it depends a lot on the depth of your concentration. But what you want to do with concentration practice is you want everything, all your faculties supporting each other for supporting the possibility of getting concentrated.

If you have a lot of discursive thought, and you know you can't sit down and settle because a lot of thinking going on, then you know you can't stop thinking very easily. Then start thinking about your breath. So you're using that tendencies kind of like doing a lot to you know, rather than kind of keep drifting off and thinking about other things, you start using that to fill that energy of thinking with thinking about the breath. So at least the faculty of thinking is directed towards the breath. And it might be very discursive then, because you know that's what you have to work with. And then, with time, you get more settled. As you get more settled, it might be that you feel that that kind of discursive activity gets in the way of further settling. If you let go of it, but you do nothing, let you not let go of it immediately. If you know I can, actually everything can be helpful in its own time and place.

Now, investigation. Even when the mind is quite quiet and concentrated, investigation can be part of the practice, and how to do it so as not discursive. I don't think there's a fine—I don't think there's a sharp line between a completely silent mind and a mind which thinks. The thinking gets more subtle, and sometimes it gets so subtle that some people won't even recognize their thinking. But there is some processing going on there in the mind, and now looks nothing like the normal kind of way in which we talk to ourselves in the brain, that

now that kind you think that part of the mind is completely silent. You now no indication, no inclination to start talking to yourself, self talk. But there's still a very, very subtle kind of discursive quality going on. So there's kind of a shift from discursive activity to silence. And I don't know if we ever get to silence, except maybe in some very rarefied states. You probably do. You probably do non-discursive, non-contemplative investigation already.

And so what you might do is, rather than or rather than to try to figure out how to do it, be very still and notice how you already do it, and then from that you might learn how to do it better and how it's helpful. So for example, you're when you might be simple as you're sitting here and you notice, you know, you're sitting here, you're concentrating on your breath, and you have a very simple noticing that when you're sitting here with your breathing, that you're a little bit slumped over, and it's a little bit, you know, a little bit more forced to breathing because of that. And so you sit up a little straighter, and there's almost no thought involved. Maybe, you know, normal kinds of ideas, are no thoughts at all involved, just but there was an investigation. Has recognition: I was there. There was discrimination always going on. What was needed? And you adjust it. That is, that involves a factor of investigation. So you're probably doing that a lot, and it's not very discursive or contemplative, and what you want to do is to utilize that kind of natural ability a little bit more when it's helpful, and not use it when it becomes, you know, is constant tinkering with our experience in trying to change things, make things better.

And there's a plan with concentration practice. Here's a balance between, or there is between knowing how to adjust and change, and, you know, work with a kind of ecology of the mind, and when not to do that, and just be very receptive and peaceful, not do anything at all. And again, this is not the one right way, but rather you've to be able to, by trial and error, find what you need at any given time, which makes a little bit more demanding for the practitioner because you have to be engaged. You make mistakes, and you sometimes you get tired out or by doing that. But I think it's much more realistic, and you go much further if you feel like you're engaged in that way. So strategically you decide when to be rest with a breath, and be very passive and receptive, and not try to make anything happen. And then, you know, sometimes that's really helpful, and sometimes that's not helpful. And so you would then you want, you know, some making sense.

So at what you find, I think, in America, a lot of me and a lot of American meditation teachers, there is a strong emphasis on using language like, Just rest with a breath. Don't do anything. Just accept things how they are don't change. And some of that's a function of, Most Americans are to die. They are too hyper, you know, you know, concerned about your progress in

making things and changing things and judging things. And so there's need, as a kind of as an antidote, you just relax. So multiply. Most of us here need that to just relax. But we shouldn't take that to be the ultimate teaching. Now, the ultimate teachings just relax. That's just an antidote to, you know. It's the medicine for us. But you can, you know, at some point you get to relax, and you need to also then bring in more effort and more energy. And if all you hear is relaxed, then you're not. You know you're not involved. There's an active and passive side to meditation, and hopefully of the wisdom to know when to use the different types, different aspects, active or passive. And now the active parts are really beautiful, as are the passive.

Yes, I recommend a *samādhī*. No, yes, I think. Again, trial and error, try different ways. In certain circumstances, the best thing you can do is move personal, which involves a number of things. And I could involve just, Can I be open, receptive to all things? It can also be involved very carefully, paying attention to what goes on inside of you in those situations. How does it you get pulled into other people's mind states or other people's emotions or feelings. What is there a sense of, you know, what's the sense of? What is it inside of you that's happening? Is there fear? Is there some kind of unhealthy sense of identification with others, or a sense of responsibility trying to take care of others? Is there what's going on inside of you? Whatever the personal psychological dynamics you have, and be possible in can help you know. You be open to that and explore that, not get to know it, so that those don't trigger those kinds of problems. Or you might find that you've tried that and doesn't seem to help much, and you find, Well, maybe what you need to do is have some strength of some specimens. You want to enter those situations calm or some strength of concentration. And so you practice concentration, practice not to get really calm, and then hopefully that calm gives you a better overview of what's going on in the situation. You're not going to get caught because of the strength of the calm. Or you do both. You do calm going into the situation, and you switch to be possible doing it. Or you do, you know. Or you simply continue doing a concentration practice in the middle of the family issue. You can just follow your breath, just follow your breath, just follow your breath and hang on you. Or you might some people you know hang on to the breath for dear life is the only thing that saves them. you don't be otherwise are on to punch someone out nose. I just breathed and breathed.

And what I'm suggesting from this kind of point of view of practice I'm giving in this class is that it's nice to have a repertoire of different tools that you can use, and then to know when the different tools are most useful. And you know, concentration is always helpful to a certain degree. But what happens with concentration is that, to some degree, concentration practice by itself is a practice of suppression and sore or avoidance. You're avoiding certain issues,

and sometimes we can get calm and concentrated, so you can look at these issues more carefully, more realistically. But sometimes it is a kind of your holding everything at bay, you can get really deeply concentrated. And then, and sometimes again, it can actually be counter productive, because the power of suppression or exclusion that goes on in very strong somatic practice somehow seems to let the suppressed reactions come back with greater force. Once the concentration wanes, and so suddenly a person is much more angry because of that repression that was going on. So loving kindness is a great practice because it has the function of not only being a concentration practice, but it also helps condition, reminds us of a different intention of how to meet people. So its a nice reminder: Oh, I think kindness is good here, not just say calm, lets be kind. It may be predisposes you to have a different kind of approach to the whole situation. So it could be very helpful to your loving kindness. And sometimes words are too long. The phrases are too long. And sometimes I just say, I'm in the last word of each phrase. I just say, You know, happy you know, safe, healthy, peaceful, joyful, whatever the words might be, just say those words over and over again. Just sometimes I just do one word. Just happy is enough.

How's it going with practicing concentration? You're finding it useful or interesting or challenging or all of the above. Yes, at first I found the county was a town. My concentration on begin. Its up front, I and I often a kind of space down. Once I went up to forty, did I on forty one? But the word by today, and I think by learning the sutta, that really helped me concentrate. And I to day was just incredible. I did the whole thing with the breath the whole time, although I had to use different kinds of hooks to stay with it. I began to imprint the number. Instead of saying it, I pictured it, but I stayed with it. And I only went up to eleven feet, Finn. But I really felt what it was like to concentrate and can of grabbing in, not letting the month get way great. And so, you know, you have to realize that when you take on a new practice like counting, it takes a while to learn how to do it, and to do it three or four days, or even a couple of weeks, and at first might be kind of rough and different than what you're used to and to judge. So that doesn't work for me. It makes as much sense as, you know, not knowing how to bike, ride a bicycle, and then getting on a bicycle and falling off the first time. Well, this is not for me, you know. This is too hard. This is too agitating. You note you have to kind of do it for a while to get in the groove, learn the skill, and then it becomes easy and easier, and then at some point becomes, you know, you know, it's really easy to stay with the breath and the counting. It really becomes like second nature, just helping you to focus the present in the and I would do it as me. Some people do. It's pretty common to get instructions at a certain point. You stop the counting, let go the counting. And some people like to count, find it more useful than others. Say it simply with mental noting in *vipassanā*. Some people

find that mental noting is its helpful pretty much right up until *nibbāna*. And some people find that they let go of the noting a lot earlier because it just gets in the way, or doesn't seem helpful. So again, it really depends on the person. So for you, it's to know that it's okay to let go of it. But you know, at some point, as the concentrating gets deeper and the breath is really still, you its very, very subtle breathing happening, and you don't feel like the mind's going to really waver from the breath at all, you know. You might experiment with letting go of the counting and see what happens, and then experiment with keeping the counting going. If you find the counting actually keeps you concentrated more than the opposite, keep the counting going.

I count on my fingers instead of noting numbers. I just count my fingers that because I enter a time after the number interesting and other media that wonderful shape. Keep trying doing the numbers themselves instead. I do know that there are people who use *mālas* for that purpose also, and but I don't know. And the fingers, you see them. Then you do. You're doing two things. See, the advantage of counting is its mental. And in a lot of concentration, is using that mental world to get more focused. And if you're using the counting with your fingers, I'm not moving them. I mean, I just, you know, my mind goes to the finger. Nya, you're mighty split then between two physical areas. You're between your finger and your and your breathing. And you know, I'm sure you can get pretty concentrated that way. But I think that dumb it's going to keep you from developing that one pointedness. That ness needs to get locked in a OP with numbers. So what happens when you do the numbers? I just find myself I give very a I applied just a test. I'm used to counting. When I for years I counted talking, you know, and so I use associated with my counting long numbers and not being very physically active now, and so I just find I can't rely. Relax. You just count up to two, then start over again. May that make it easier. I try. I just counted two. I you have said that when you lose your place when you're counting, then you should start back at once. Yes, I rarely lose my place. No, I can get up to ten most the time. But in between the counting are always thoughts. Its wondering, Non, when I realize that I am not paying attention to breath in between the actual, Oh no, more jungle. Back to one I saw. You go back to it. How I would get past to, you are able to count each breath, or you skip breaths in between the counts. No, I count every breath full. Yes, I think. I think not. My mind, I'm thinking of a man on a contain a anteater. Oh, yes, that can help a lot. Sometimes it can help to fill the whole count with a number. So For example, for a long time I counted the whole exhalation just one, two. So by filling the whole count, that kept me more connected and less likely to be thinking. The other thing that I like to do is every exhalation. If I need it, I'll not only be counting and be present for the breath, but I also remind myself to relax that part of my mind that thinks, some letting go

of my thoughts, every exhalation, every exhalation, letting go, whatever's arisen in letting go. And then an excellent ninaation something, you know, comes up, but the inhalation doesn't last that long, so that by the time I start exhaling, I let go again and let go again. And it's a very valuable message. very valuable skill. Just keep letting go, keep letting go. And it might be that it takes you ten thousand times to letting go to get your thinking mind to quiet down a little, but it can be extra. Another approach is just let go, let go. March Remember to let go every time you exhale. Use exhalation as a reminder to let go.

It's interesting to say that, because what I've known, what I've i.e., what has another thing that's been helpful some of the time, at least, is that in that space between the breaths, after exhale that, I have tried focusing on relaxing my face, because what I've noticed is what I'm thinking that sometimes I get tense. So at the end of each breath, the that's been re between. Or you see, Oh, for you, there's a gap between the exhalation and that's what you'll think. Yes, no, I don't know. It just seems like I'm may good of splitting my mind between going off in a thought of it, then also wanting to know where I am. Were counting each breath the same time. I often saw sova. The end of each breath abates on, rather than some touch point. That's touch point. It would be just as grand as a thing. That's fine. I am. That's a good way to help also. Now, where the principle of concentration practice is, the mind wants to hold, the common classic word is to hold a or a fixed caterpillar. One used the word fixate, but really hold something in the mind, holds something in awareness continuously. So I know this is a good example, but am I, if you know, if this is my belly that's breathing in and out, and you know, I guess the breath gets quieter and quieter, and after a while there's kind of a gap, and then, you know, it stops for a little bit, and then I breathe again. What I want to do is you want, you want to keep your mind, your cup awareness, held continuously at one place, some point. So if you are staying with the belly or staying with the nostrils wherever you feel the breath, even if the breath stops for a brief time, your mind is actually held to that place, and there might be very subtle sensations there, or pressure, or vibration, or tautness. Or, you know, I do know what to do, you know, and you just kind of, you just stay there, even though it doesn't seem directly connected with the breathing any more. Just whatever the vitality or the alive feelings that are in that part of your body. So you holding the mind in one place. Sometimes, Oh, it Ionians. Well, it's a practice since it takes a long time to do. And Yatati experience is absolutely fine, for I could find a nice in my mind to count in, out of the grand the menu, a table really split. I kept going. Just going on me back to one. Actually, just doing one is counted as the one good. So what you want to do is you want to notice that tendency to be thinking about dinner menus, whatever, and that's that energy of the mind, that ability, which you want. You want to divert that energy, redirect energy to being with

the breath, rather than being with food. And you really want to, and we might have to do it over and over and over again. What you want to be on the guard of all the time is that the breathing and the counting becomes mechanical, and that's when the mind will go off and think of all kinds of stuff. And you want to always make it alive and vital and connected. And your life energy is being poured into this thing the best you can. And so if your life energy is being poured into menu planning, just consciously like, Go that, or redirect it back into there, back in there. And you might even take, you know, a couple of seconds to think about the breath you know. Just in the same way that you are thinking about the dinner menu, think about the breath for a few seconds. It's kind of like when you are slipping. You're slipping on an slippery ground. Sometimes if you go with a fall, it's easier to catch yourself than if you just freeze right away. So sometimes with thoughts on, it's easier to kind of also sometimes easier if you find yourself with a lot of discursive thought. This I find sometimes, rather than immediately let go of it, sometimes I'll actually go along with it for a few moments, and then like, going along with it is like I really see it much more clearly by seeing it clearly. That seems to take some of the power of a way from for me. So I cannot go along with and see it and be present for a watch, etc., and then I'll let go of it. Then I'll come back to the breath. I'm supposed to do that immediately, and then it's less of a hole to go back. It's less of a now. I didn't feel powerful. And I was confused when I felt on my task and I'm not safe in at last. Yes, I've noticed it. I was completely in. That action was my last. We going along with it in together. But I didn't feel powerful necessarily. I didn't feel like wandering on it at all. Really one. It seemed to happen though. It's difficult to it was like I could do it all at once. So I mean, I wish it was just a simple instructions they give you, but you know, this is how it's done, and a b c just follow it. But with the thoughts, what? a There're certain thoughts that I have, their way of thinking, which is in the background, or peril, attracting whatever which doesn't seem to get in the way of the cultivation of concentration initially. And the best strategy for me is just to ignore it. And just long as I feel like my life energy, my primary life energy, is focusing on the breath and being there with that, then I won't be bothered by these other thoughts, and I can do whatever they want. And at some point, though, those have to fall away. Some point I disengage myself from those kinds of thoughts, too. But if we wait until the right time, if you think every time you think you must let go of it, then you might be kind of I find that is not so useful to certain I can't I can't. I on know how to teach this, but on I find that some kinds of thinking that I do I let go of. Some thinking I do I ignore and let it go on in the background, and in its way it settles by itself with time. And some thinking I do I turn my attention around and do *vipassanā* on the thinking. Unless I kind of do mindfulness and really explore the thinking, it's going to keep holding me in its grip. So depending on what's happening with my thoughts,

I do different things. Now, when I'm doing concentration practice, I always have in mind, I'm doing this so that I can get back to the breath. Wendee Posenta Practice Than I'm just doing it because its just I just pay attention to what's happening. But I'm in concentration practice. I always think I'm trying to get back to the breath. So there's a real emphasis in my psychic kind of nose that's where it wants to be, that's where it wants to go, and kind of doing whatever I can to make everything else supportive of the primary mission atlas. So I'm when I find myself in that state of thinking and counting. I found your recommendation to I'll shift the way that I'm counting very useful and bring me back to the breath. So if I'm staying with the exhalation and thinking, I'll count on the instant inhalation, or I'll count the inhalation and the exhalation together, whatever it is. It's a way of just bringing me back to the breath. But what I found in doing this practice is it sometimes I get quiet, and then, if, you know, I hear a loud pitched sound or something, that if I was doing a *passanā*, I would just go right to it and stay with it. And so it's an effort not to rest in that, and to come back to the breath. And so the question is, when you do the concentration practice, is it skillful to ignore the sound and stay with the breath? Or, yet, generally what you're doing is ignoring everything else but your object of concentration. But sometimes you need to. If something's really pulling you away a lot, then you might need to turn towards it for a while. You need to acknowledge it. Maybe do some *vipassanā* way it so that it can settle, be more settled. And unless you do that, it can be very hard to stay focused on the breath, or you keep concentrating. Other times, I find that I just kind of throw myself back more fully in the breathing. And one of the ways I do that is I become more interested in the breath, see if I can discover something new about it. So when I've been in, I've had this experience, I've used the technique of shifting the way that I count the breaths. Even for that, although I don't consider that discursive thinking, it's a different kind of an experience, but still coming back to the breath by I am shifting back and forth. It's really useful. That helps keep me like that. So now the question for all of you is, in what ways have you found this helpful so far? A couple of weeks of concentration practice helpful, or what way we find it helpful or enjoyable? In what way.

Well, I noticed that with more practice in concentration than during the day, I experience moments where, whether it's I'm at work or actually to day, I was on the bike in the tione back where suddenly I'm writing the bike, but then I'm focusing. I could pretty, I guess, quickly, or just maybe because of the tendency of doing the practice focus on my breath while I was doing the by verses. You know, maybe my mind was going elsewhere, and I notice that I worked to where I'd be doing some work with projects. And so the mind's kind of that has morbid central focus, and it's easier to concentrate, and that's how it feels in my head. The same when I try to do the memorizing in that to suit us. So must, curiously, that's part of the increasing

practice of the result of the question is, is it her increased ability to focus in daily life the result of doing the concentration practice? I would hope it is. It could be. I mean, a lot of people report that. I find that's true for myself, the a o the work more. The more I do concentration practice, the more my mind less. My mind is fragmented, and the more it's kind of contented in a certain way. And if it's more less fragment and more contented, it's a lot easier for me to be focused in one activity, what I'm doing. Yes, oh, it's Charles let me go explain easier. He hasn't fate hanging out to I'm feeling you go back to be easy to go. That's one thing. Also, a chart, a lay get like three days. Ill retreat because no, I go be. That's a thing. I be in a bad man much easier to be mindful. Be especially surprised on in I'm in my *mettā sutta*, which I had a little bit of resistance at first, and I would get to like a certain part of it, note radiating kindness, and I just, every time I got to that part, I just got completely still. I mean, you surprised me how concentrated I got doing that, and I just hang out there, and I wouldn't finish and got very, you know, after what I realized I was getting very attached to that, and I kind of made myself get off to the rest. But I didn't think I could get that concentrated by doing that. I was sure surprised, Arthra. I'm not dreadful related to my reading, because I could read, picked off my dinner, and I was aware that when I was going to happen, I could just kind jump right in, and it's great. So being aware of what's happening, and then being able to choose what you want to do, and kind of have some strength in that choice. Smita: Oh, I risk most of the positive things, or people mention it. Not as if a oating a little disconcerting. One is, I'll not being able to sleep, or waking it middle all night, and then not in. You sleep for two, three, four hours, and one just exhausted. And secondly, I like sometimes take a nap in the day because one make up for them. I'm asleep. I always is not sleeping. I'm entering an agitate, so I'm not trying to harm. Don't say at any hour studying my mind more light. It does mean your main, but there's a lot of sounds you feel on the warmth of through your body, and aware of different things in your body coming. Its a sound you get your invitation in or that on cousins, because the idea I could, in terms of a sleeping thing, Some people will find the kind that concentration practice has an effect on their sleep. Sometimes it makes them sleep much better. That's more common, especially in daily life, kind of cities. You sit may be an hour or forty five minutes or something, and some people find the opposite happens, that it disturbs their sleeps in some way. Sometimes people will avoid meditating before going to sleep because it keeps them wrapped up. Concentration Practice Meditation in general has a function also of taking off the surface lids of our minds. So the deeper stuff that's bubbling can bubble up, and sometimes, you know, unconscious material is bubbling up, and that's why people have trouble sleeping. Sometimes people need less sleep. when they do concentration practice. I find that true for myself, that I'll sleep less when I do a lot of concentration

practice. And even I remember when I was working at my dissertation, for example, or doing a lot of very focused, even intellectual work like that, you typing at the computer, I'd be very concentrated, and my sleep needs decreased during those times.

Now I asesato solomos common meaning, I tenisha present said. The concentration, he strolled, is also very unconscious. A mile or so, Missie, he said. Paóata to a loose asesas, as beautiful as what I do see. Second say that, so I orasay, so she became, so now I see a a siiiii. My my day because you, because you skipped it on the weekend? Yes, okay. So yes, exactly. The continuity is so important to keep momentum going good. So you're absolved, Uh, you. Or more importantly, you learn the lesson for yourself. Then that was really valuable. I think that you'll learn that. And maybe next time you do, I know I know some people who are well, some people who are committed to. Or sometimes I do this, you know, that some days I haven't sat yet, and the evening comes around, and that how I can't sit. Well, I'll just get in a posture, and I'll get on my cushion and sit down, and then I'm here on out. So nice, and you know I don't need whatever whatever is I need to. That's so important. And I can see I can sit there for five minutes. I like probably here five more minutes. And so you always commit, my always try to least get in the posture. So I feel quite grounded, for this fact is more than I've ever felt. And in a funny way, it gives me a sense of strength that's not very familiar to me. And I, and in some deep way, a sense of happiness and joy of its I'll. So you beautiful been really lovely. So the concentration practice helped Robert give him a sense of strength and a sense of happiness. And that is certainly part of the function. And that sense of strength, the inner strength, and come concentration really helpful as you go about your daily life. You can come to carry with you a sense of strength, of power, or stability, or can make a big deference. Yes, I was one night as Isaias, and then I thought I said were going to visit my place again. Conservation of Henery The Strength of the concentration depends on a lot of different factors. And when you're tired and the mind or body is tired, there's less access to any strong concentration. What's important in terms of the continuity of the practice is not necessarily that you're always at the peak level of your performance. What's important is every day you give your doing the best you can to strengthen the concentration that's there. And its that continuity of your best effort which will bear fruit. So if you sit down, you're tired. If you're giving it your best effort, you know your concentration is not very good right now. But your best effort that really counts, that makes a difference. If it really seems hopeless, then you might want to get up and do walking meditation. You know, if you feel like it's really hopeless, you sit down and just you go into dream states. You know, I just can hardly you don't try to. Folks, sometimes when in the late evenings, and now if I sit and I get kind of calm but relaxed, but I can't seem to concentrate I think I can concentrate my breath. I think I'm there with each

breath. But then I realize that each breath is a whole theatre of different people and characters and talking to each other. And somehow there's the whole amazing mental theatre that I've created of the five people talking and acting. It somehow co-ordinated with the breathing. So I think I'm with the breathing. But just, you know, I'm really in this fantasy land, and I remember there were times when I was slow to catch on because I thought I was with the breath. And really, you know, sometimes in that kind of state, I find it's better to get up into walking meditation. Yes, sure. You can count the same way. One to ten. There's one Burmese way of counting, which is kind of nice, which helps some people keep more the focus. If you count one to five, and then you start again and out, one to six, then one to seven, and you go up to ten. When you get to ten, you start counting backwards, one to ten, one to nine, one to eight, back to five. Then you start up again. And that's one way. Yes, one of the signs access concentration very fine. Are there others, whether there be others? The primary one is that the hindrances are no longer. The definition of access concentration is that the hindrances are no longer bothering a person. The hindrances are settled or quieted down, the mind is no longer got be pulled off into desire or ill will or the other hindrances. I find that that's after the access, as had well. They're not here yet in access concentration. One of the signs is the absence of the hindrances, and the that's alagindicate, or that the access comes close. Yes, and there is the awareness that there are no hindrances, that there is a true, you know, which is the access concentration. Yes, I mean, there's I was going to talk a little bit about the access concentration during the class today, and your question reminds me that, and kind of little but chastise myself because I was going to tell you what it was. But now I'm reno right minded that there's different theories or different schools, even, of what access constantly qualifies as access concentration. So, you know, so there's little room for interpretation here, you know, in terms of defining some use in this category to define a particular state, but classically is defined by the accents of the absence of the hindrances. But it's also defined by the presence of a certain one pointedness. It's relatively easy to stay focused on what you want to stay focused on. When you're doing concentration practice, it means its great use. You find you can relatively stay in a groove and you can actually stay with your object of concentration. If you're doing *vipassanā*, then the mind doesn't have to be in a groove on one thing when you're doing *vipassanā*, but rather the mind is quite wieldy or is pliable. We can actually take the mind and apply it to whatever it is seems the needed object of attention at a given time, and you actually have a lot of choice in the matter there. Just keep and you can keep there as long as it seems appropriate, as needed. So what you do with a mind is different if you do in concentration practice, as you're doing a *vipassanā* practice. And both practising can be done in acts as concentration. And I don't know how important it is to have you no fool,

no careful definition or signs of what it might be. But, you know, I think the hindrances are no longer. You no longer feel the mind can be pulled away from anything. One of the ways I characterize it for myself is I have like a rubber band attached to my awareness. And as I get stronger, stronger, concentrated, my mind, my mind is still my start going off, but I don't have to make any effort to come back. It's like a rubber band attached, and it pulls me right back. And sometimes, you know, as a concentration gets stronger, that then there's a shorter and shorter tether, you know, for the mind to wander away. Just that's what the mind wants to stay, want to stay and goes away and goes away. And at some point, any tendency to go away seems to fall away. And it's relatively easy to apply myself and stay present. And as you say, the breath at that point is usually very still and very quiet, and the body, you know. So some of the natural factors can begin to appear in various ways. They might not be very intense. So there might be some people have signs, you know, the signs of joy or happiness, or some feeling of well being and contentment. For me, I take it that now the mind has ability to get locked on, or is in a groove on, or settled, or fixated. Just really can be worked there, and there is no real tendency to walk, wander away. So the hindrances are not an issue. Then kind of contentment in the mind also. It isn't so much of the for me. There comes a point where the hindrances are no longer an issue, not because they don't appear any more, not because they still appear. And I don't want them. There's eternally not any interest in sensual gratification, interest in being angry with someone or something. In what you describe about seeing the shorter tether and seeing the mind, begin to wonder and bringing it back. I've experienced that. I'm and on retreat, what seems to happen is it, at some point, I realized that that movement or the way I have been dealing with it on retreat, actually, that some in I see that movement back is actually effort, and that there's kind of an inclination to let the mind do what it wants to do, not which is to wander, but to stay present for what it wants to do. I find that when I do that, I keep life almost settling deeper and deeper. So I don't know how that relates, but it is just it was kind of a wonderful gift to see that. I could notice the wandering, or notice the tendency of the mind to let go of what it was paying attention to. But still, the awareness with the mind as it did is beautiful. Let's live more *vipassanā* where you're open to whatever, open to whatever is going on. And as if I wanted to cultivate the concentration, it would go ahead and keep. Not necessarily mean *vipassanā* can support concentration also as long as you know you're settling something relaxing. If you're always wandering around, then I don't know. But I don't know if this is true, but I've been told by some of my teachers that if all you did was practise letting go, you'd enter into the *jhānas*. So, you know, so if you are doing what you're doing, and just kind of taking everything, anything comes up, and just letting go of our going, that makes sense to me that you get more settled.

And perhaps you would get into a deeply concentrated state that way. I have a pre probably about ten minutes. I suddenly get up. Fashion: We relax in Cagino. Yes, sure. Or maybe I should all settle the closer. I don't know how many people more coming, but a little while we'll sit and be nice to or late comers to find a place we? So, right, would you like to take a short break? Those of you've been here for an hour. Okay, please, you know. So I thought we would start on first with someone reciting the *Metta Sutta*, and then we do a sitting. Or we can start with a sitting, and someone can volunteer to recite the *Metta Sutta* into our sitting as we begin our sitting. So would someone like to volunteer to day right? So when we all just sit and close your eyes, and after a couple of moments, when Laura feels ready, she can start in.

This is what should be done by one who is skilled in goodness and who knows the path of peace. Let them be able and upright, straightforward, and gentle in their speech, humble and not conceited, contented and easily satisfied, unburdened with duties and frugal in their ways, peaceful and calm, and wise and skillful, not proud and demanding in nature. Let none, let them not do the slightest thing that the wise would later reprove. Wishing: In gladness and in safety, may all beings be at ease. Whatever living beings there may be, whether they are weak or strong, omitting none, the great or the mighty, medium, short or small, the seen and the unseen, those living near and far away, those born and to be born, may all beings be at ease. Let none deceive another or despise any being in any state. Let none through anger or ill will wish harm upon another. Even as a mother protects with her life her child, her only child, so with a boundless heart should one cherish all living beings, radiating kindness over the entire world, spreading upwards to the skies and downwards to the depths, outwards and unbounded, freed from hatred and ill will. Whether standing or walking, seated or lying down, free from drowsiness, one should sustain this recollection. This is said to be the sublime abiding. By not holding to fixed views, the pure hearted one, having clarity of vision, being freed from all sense desires, is not born again into this world.

As you continue with this sitting, begin by having good will towards yourself. Begin by extending some loving kindness to yourself. Sitting here in this body and mind at this time. Feeling yourself, feeling your body and mind, how you are. Having whatever thoughts you want of goodwill, of kindness. Having whatever feeling or attitude of kindness, intention of kindness that might be easy to bring up tender, gentle kindness for yourself. And then in a few moments, we'll begin with the breathing. Being with a breath in.