2002-09-16: Four Noble Truths - Four Foundations of Mindfulness

Sun, 6/28 9:28PM • 44:04

SUMMARY KEYWORDS
four noble truths, suffering, notice, mindfulness, mind, people, foundation, buddha, craving, buddhism, helpful, body, arise, feel, life, world, discourse, experience, attention, liberated

SPEAKERS
Gil Fronsdal

For so what I'd like to do this evening is to relate to very important practices or teachings of the Buddha. And so on one hand we have the teaching of the Four Noble Truths. And then on the other hand we have the teaching of the four foundations of mindfulness. And the four foundations of mindfulness is a refers to a particular teaching of the Buddha. From particular discourse, the Buddha gave called discourse in the four foundations of mindfulness, which that discourse is then found is the source for the persona. For most forms of a persona taught in both in Asia and in America, they trace the origins back to this particular discourse. And sometimes you can't necessarily see how they're connected. But the inspiration the kind of the basic idea of vipassana practice comes from this discourse. And then people have chosen different parts Have chose to interpret in different ways or developed in different ways. And you have all the different schools of modern Vipassana, derived from this discourse. And so I want to kind of bring these two together. And in fact, the two are brought together in the discourse and the four foundations of mindfulness in that the, the practice of understanding our life through the Four Noble Truths is offered at the very end of the discourse. And I'd like to offer you my interpretation, or at least one understanding my perspective and why it appears at the end of the discourse, the So, one of the remarkable things I believe about Buddhism, I think, a number of remarkable things, for one is, is that it's a religious or spiritual tradition, which presents its teachings its practices, without requiring people to adhere to any kind of supernatural, mythological tenants beliefs. So you're not to believe in a god or a godhead or there's all these kind of or they're all you know, some Domestos some true some idea about ultimate realities about are there all these ideas that different religious traditions have that are kind of articles of faith. And if you're not really brought up in that particular tradition, it's often very hard to believe in the particular articles of faith or traditions in if you grew up in a tradition, it just seems completely obvious that this is the way nature We're sorry world was is, but it's still an article of faith. And the remarkable thing about the Buddhist tradition, you're welcome to argue against me that I have a wrong view here. But that in the Buddhist
tradition, it offers a spiritual practice without offering any kind of real metaphysical or abstract or articles of faith that you have to believe in order for the rest of the system to to work And that works very, very well then for introducing Buddhism to a wide array of people, because Buddhism then doesn't conflict directly with other articles of faith or their beliefs people have. And in fact, from Buddhist point of view, you're welcome to be Christian, a Jew and Muslim, whatever. And mostly Buddhists don't feel that today, conflict between believing in some article of faith and religion and practicing Buddhism. It's just to kind of involve different domains of our life. But instead of offering some kind of article of faith, some some supernatural or something, some theistic idea, what Buddhism offered, what the Buddha offered was the Four Noble Truths. And the Four Noble Truths are not meant to be. They're called truths, but I understand them to be perspectives, frameworks, for they're helpful for understanding our lives. The life is so complicated. There's so many things going on, that it's very helpful if you can have a framework to organize your life, to make sense of it. So you can live your life efficiently, clearly and get to the point of it, which for the Buddha was ending your unnecessary suffering, going into suffering liberation, in a simple definition of liberation, Buddhism is the coming to the end of suffering. The Buddha said, Sometimes I teach one thing only, and that is suffering and the end of suffering. And whether you suffer if you're suffering, it's not really an article of faith that you suffer. You don't have to kind of like believe you know, you know, read a book, it teaches you that you suffer and then you suffer. I mean, that happens sometimes, right? You read someone like Nietzsche and Oh, I didn't know it was so bad. And

but, you know, suffering is something it's pretty direct and immediate and You kind of basically know it or you don't know it. And so, Buddha taught one thing and one thing only suffering in the end of suffering. And all the Buddhist teachings then is an elaboration of this, you know, teaching on suffering and the end of suffering. And he very clearly see that in the formulation of the Four Noble Truths. And there is suffering, there's a cause of suffering, there's an end of suffering and there's a path to ending suffering. So that's a perspective so much a truce perspective to understanding your life, the framework, very much like human beings have found it very helpful to have systems of measurement. And you know, here in America, we have what's called the, I guess, the English system and Europe, they have the metric system. And, and, you know, I don't know if you want to say that the American system of measurement of inches and feet is more true or less true than the metric system. One might be more efficient and more useful. But nothing more true or less true, just wait, you know, reality hasn't changed so much. It's just a way of dividing up reality that's helpful. So the Four Noble Truths are frameworks like that, that help us hold our experience. So we can become efficient in measuring and seeing what really is necessary for us to study. And so you don't have to believe them in terms of like a religious truth, but rather you adopt them as a perspective as a tool to help you make some sense of all the complexity of your life. So, you can get to the point of this Buddhist the Buddhist point which is to end suffering. And it's very interesting than that, he based his his, this model of the Four Noble Truths on a medical model that way doctors analyze the illness in ancient India. So rather than using kind of a faith model or religious model, he used actually very pragmatic you know, the pragmatic methods of a doctor. The illness Doctor is interested in the illness, the cause of the illness, the prognosis, the possibility of a cure, and then the cure, that the medicine you have to take. And so
there's suffering, there's a cause of suffering. There's a prognosis, there's a possibility of ending suffering. And then there's the medicine you take, which is the Eightfold Path. So the Four Noble Truths in, in their simplest versions, I think it's pretty easy to understand. Sometimes we suffer, that suffering has a cause, which the Buddha defined as thirst, Tana, which is usually translated into English as craving, this kind of feeling of compulsion of being driven. Sometimes we suffer and we don't even know why we're suffering but you feel like there's just this momentum, this power, this force within us, it kind of keeps us kind of, to the grindstone kind of suffering. And that force, that compulsion that keeps us there, in our, whatever the suffering might be, you know, Do you want to let go of it, you want to somehow break out of it, you want to, you know, somehow leave it behind and just kind of kind of hangs on to you, it stays with you, you can't seem to leave it. It's kind of like this powerful force of sadness or grief or anger or pain or frustration, whatever it might be. And the force, the momentum, the drivenness, that keeps it there. The Buddha define this thirst as craving, which is very interesting because craving something usually you think of that people do they crave. And what it implies is that our suffering arises from something that we do. So it's not it's not some impersonal force and force outside of us that come up its channel to our being, and therefore we suffer because of all the terrible things in the world. The Buddha pointed to the fact that we suffer only because it's something that we do. And that makes it very challenging, because it's invisible to us many times, our contribution to our suffering what we do, we feel Clear that people are doing things to me and, you know, life is unfair or whatever. And so it's very easy to look outside for the cause of our suffering. And the Buddha turned that, you know, you need to turn the attention inward. If you want to study the place where you can make a real difference. Who knows about the difference you can make an external world and how people treat you. But you can make a real difference in your suffering, by turning attention inward to see what you do. And in particularly, if you can notice that when you suffer, if you can kind of tease apart that suffering, look deeply into it. And see where is that grooviness? Where’s the craving? The grasping on, that's provides the momentum and the force for that suffering to be there. And if you can do that, well, then there's a possibility of letting go of that craving and experiencing the cessation of craving, cessation of suffering. If you do that really thoroughly, then in the Buddhist tradition, it becomes Someone who's liberated you have the experience of liberation of ultimate freedom. And then then Buddha offer this path. So, this is relatively easy their suffering of causes suffering an end of suffering and a path. It's very hard to understand this, the depths of our, of our psyche. It's very hard to understand, you know, if I’m attached to you know, I see someone out there who wears a beautiful t shirt that has metal across it or something like well I'd like a T shirt like that you know? You know it's green and boy I could see my desire and I could see maybe I'm suffer because why do I have a white shirt? You know, it's probably no one likes Why did I should be wearing green and probably feel don't people don't like me and how can I be such a poor choice of clothes and you know pretty soon again this lot isn't big morass is a mess of suffering. And I might, you know, be pretty lucky. I can see I can see oh, you know, this is my mind thinking. I don't have to pick this up. It's kind of a silly thought and I can just let go of it. But it's much harder to let go, as we know, of certain things. They're really deeply deeply enmeshed in our psyche. And we don't can't even see our contribution in it. The drive for security, the
drive for wanting to be liked the drive to, to feel acknowledged for our work, to drive to, to acquire, to have the desire to want things that there's tremendous impulse within us sometimes to be aversive to kind of be feel oppressed, you know, that way, sometimes some of us you feel oppressed by life is too much. It's very hard to see what we're doing in the midst of it. That is, you know, where our responsibility lies. And in fact, if you don't have clarity enough to see it, you have no choice. You only have choice if you can see the place of choice. If you can't see the place of choice in what you're doing. You have no choice. Then you're being led around by your desire and your grasping. And so then it doesn't feel it feels very impersonal, it feels like other causes and conditions are causing your suffering. And making sense so far. So it's very hard to apply the Four Noble Truths in the depths of our psyche. And they can actually feel very, almost insulting kind of injury can add injury upon injury, for someone to come along and say you're responsible for your suffering. Because you've people feel so raw and so filled with pain to begin with. And then now they have this burden, they feel guilty because I'm the one who's causing it. And so just that they feel even worse, and you know, they feel more discouraged. And it's not meant that kind of way. The beauty of the Four Noble Truth is you're supposed to apply it anywhere you can. And if you hear or you're responsible for your suffering, and then you can track because of that You apply the Four Noble Truths that to that particular contraction. Maybe you can see that and let go of that, oh, I don't have to take that on as a burden, thank you. So it's hard to get in, you know, it's so and so then also in Buddhism, they talk about the, the deep, subconscious roots of craving within us. So it's not necessarily available kind of in the conscious that normal mind street mind you wonder walk around in the deep roots of attachment to self for example. So the Buddha offered a path eightfold path offer practices to help us use the Four Noble Truths to their full potential. So like you have a knife, and maybe the knife is really dough in order to use that knocked his full potential you have to sharpen an sharpening stone, and then you can really use it well. You can't really cut deep down into whatever you're cutting into the eggplant unless it's Sharp. So in the same way you want to take in sharpen the mind. And now so you can use this tool with four noble truths to apply deeply into your, into your psyche. And that's one of the functions of the four foundations of mindfulness. And one way of understanding the four foundations of mindfulness is they're laying a foundation. As for you for applying the Four Noble Truths to our lives, and I think of it as a pyramid. A pyramid is a stable base, because it's so wide. And if you turn the pyramid upside down on its head, it'd be very difficult to keep it stable tip over. So you want to have a very stable base. If the Four Noble Truths are like the top of the pyramid, you'll have a very, very stable firm base for for holding that the top of the pyramid. You don't have it upside down. And then for this course, in the four foundations of mindfulness offers that foundation and I like to think of this Four foundations. And I like to think of the forest being the first one being the base of the pyramid. And the second being the next layer up and the third being next layer up and the fourth being the next layer up. So that they the first foundation is, in some sense, the most important because the foundational one. The first foundation of mindfulness is mindfulness of the body. Being mindful of our embodied experience, what it's like to live in a body to experience our life through our body. Many people are not connected to their body, it's very easy to lose touch with our body. And, but their body provides a tremendous to print a tremendous friend price tremendous information about what's going
They can help us a lot and processing our life. Often the kind of only the best ways of processing our experience is by entering into the body's way of holding that experience. And many times we try to fix things with our head. You know where the thoughts and ideas and sometimes you It'd be like endless kind of treadmill running around and around around our thoughts. And it can be a lot faster to drop down into the body and hold our experience right there. It's kinda like a shortcut to spiritual life is through the body. The so in this discourse, for foundations of mindfulness, the Buddha first says a very interesting thing. First instructions he gives is, before he's even described the four foundations of mindfulness is he says, Have you put away covetousness and grief for the world, covetous, this increased desire and grief, sorrow about the world. And the operative word here is about the world. It's, it's, for me, it's a pointing to the fact that if you're going to do spiritual work that the Buddha was pointing towards, you have to in some way, at some point, learn to turn your attention away from the external focus that we often have to the objects of the world, not because they're bad not to reject them, but so that we can turn inward, to see where the point of choice and responsibility lies. So it's a turn around the attention. So we kind of lose our concern with all the things in the world, our bank account, our job, our relationship, relationships, you know, our recreation opportunities, all the kind of things that we can get lost in. So that we can we can get access to this deep inner world. So there has to be some conviction or some understanding of the wisdom of least temporarily learning the art of taking that backward step, the inward step, and, and not constantly being caught in things of the world. It's a lot easier said than done. And some people come to do mindfulness practice. They're trying to help them not be so caught up in the world, the first instruction they're giving is just don't be caught up in the world. Thanks a lot. But at least theoretically, you should understand this. Theoretically, the practice is to turn inward and let go of the best you can. The external drive to always be thinking about future past things in the world. Then it says go to the foot of a tree or an empty room. And this room here qualifies as being pretty empty. And sit down cross legged, sit up straight, and set your attention in front of you. So that you set your attention straight through in the present moment. And then the first instructions after this is start paying attention to your breath. Notice your breath notice qualities of your breath. Notice a long breath is a long breath. A short breath is a short breath tune into the quality If your breath, the experience of your breath, what your breath is like, become intimate with the breath, get concentrated on the experience of the breathing. And the bottom layer of that pyramid is cultivating the ability to concentrate on the breath. That's one aspect of mindfulness of the body. The breath is a preeminent tool for calming and concentrating the mind. And, in fact, in this discourse and for foundations, the Buddha says, as you get tuned into your breathing, let your breathing help you calm your body in mind. Allow the breath to calm the body and mind Calm yourself. As you stay with a breath, calm your body, calm your mind, calm the agitation and might be there. One of the reasons for this is it's very hard to see clearly into the psyche if you're agitated and so in order to apply the Four Noble Truths, deeply, you have to somehow settle the agitated waves in the surface of the ocean of your mind. Otherwise, if you're all agitated, you can't see through the agitation. So cultivate, begin cultivating calm and concentration, not just in meditation, but see if you can develop live a lifestyle that's conducive for that, because it's not easy to to develop a calm mind or calm body. So, you know, sometimes you
need to look at the rest of your life and see, you know, what can I do to change my life and live in such a way that I'm not so always so agitated. If you want to do this, the work as deeply as it can be done. Then the next instruction after meditation on the breath, is to learn to start paying attention to your daily activities. So include your daily activities as part of your meditation practice, when you're standing Be mindful that you're standing when you're sitting, be mindful, be sitting, when you're lying down mindfully, you're lying down. And when you're walking, be mindful, you're walking. When you reach out to pick something up, be mindful of the fact that that's what you're doing. When you're going to the bathroom, be mindful that process of going to the bathroom, when you're putting on your clothes, be mindful that process of putting on the clothes. The discourse says, you start paying attention to your life, be present for it. Notice what goes on, have some some modicum of presence in the activities of your life. Partly so you can bring calm to that part of your life, the party so you can notice what's really going on. Remember, many years ago,

I was at the library at UC Berkeley. And I really, I was doing my dissertation research and I really needed a book that only they had in the library and was not on the shelves. So I went to the librarian to ask for help and other variants that are quite unhelpful and they willing to kind of look and see if someone had checked it out if it was missing or where else it might be if someone had returned it. And, and I'd come all the way up from Stanford, or Berkeley to get this book and, and I kind of explained to them the tremendous importance of getting this book. And it was certainly very important for me. And, and, and I was really into the discussion and trying to get their attention. And then, of course, this big table. And then finally someone kind of another library and walked by and said, Oh, you know, I'll help you. And so that she helped me and was able to help help me, but when she offered to help me, then I relaxed and only then could I turn my attention to what's going on with me in my body. And I was found out I was leaning, you know, halfway across the table. My feet were almost off the ground. And, you know, I was like, really, you know, and ideally, I would have maybe even noticed that while I was doing it, so I can maybe be more composed and perhaps more effective in my communication. So, you know, when I was caught up in that book in getting my way, there's not much opportunity there to use the Four Noble Truths as reflection to understand my experience in the present moment. If I had been more composed and pay more attention to what was going on my activities, the fact I was leaning over the table, getting standing on the table, whatever I was doing, that I would have done, it would have just noticed, Oh, where's the clinging here? Where's the craving here? Do I really want to be craving this way? That's one of the reflections in the forefront in the Four Noble Truths. Do I really want to live this way? Do I really want to live driven? Or is it part of my priorities and values? To lose my peace, my harmony, my sense of well, being? desperately trying to get this book? is whatever I'm grasping. Is it really worth it? And it can sometimes it can be like a wrestling match, a fascinating kind of exploration of the mind to be asking this question is this grasping really worth it? Why am I doing it to my heart's Heart Is this really what I want my life to be about. So pay attention to your breath, learn to use your breath as a way of calming yourself. The next instructions is pay attention to your activities. The next instruction is to start paying attention to your body, directly your body itself, the different sensations of your body, the different aspects of your body, get really familiar with your body. Part of the this foundation of mindfulness of the body is also an
instruction to pay attention to what's called the impurities of the body, impure aspects of the body, your
snot, you know, and things like that your piss and your bile and all these liquids, which, you know, you
don't really want someone to get that that person's those liquids of that person to kind of come all over
you. So, whatever you know, so, we all kind of have this sense, right? Sometimes, you know, Like we
don't really want that person's vomit to please. That was surprised that was okay for me to hold my
son's vomit in his hand when he was three years two years old. That was really surprised. I didn't no
idea that I no idea that human beings went around sniffing other human beings butts. I thought only
dogs did that. In holding each other's vomit, you know, when they're barfing his parents parent thing is
really educate education. But you know, anyway, so the impurity so there's a reflection instruction to
meditate a little bit on the impurities of the body. So and I think part of the reason for that is so you
don't get even though there's a tremendous emphasis in Buddhism on the importance of the body
being in your body sensing been enjoying being in your body. You also don't want to be attached to
your body. And many people are attached to their body in various ways. And so for people who are
excessively attached their body contemplating the impure aspects of your body is meant to be a
strategy so you don't have to attach to it. You know, it's really, but it is really great. It's really my
wonderful friend we have the Buddhist tradition says specifically, your body is your best friend. But if
you get attached to it, then think about those, you know those things. And then another instruction on
mindfulness of the body is, is contemplating death,

particularly contemplating a corpse. And either as a visualization or back in ancient India, they would
go to channel and grounds where they just dump the dead bodies on top of the ground to rot. And
people go out there and sit and watch the process of decay. And, and this maybe is partly also to help
with the attachment to the body. And it's a very powerful practice to sit with a corpse and watch the
process of decay. And I like to think of it Parkland That contemplation of death, which is strongly
recommended in Buddhism is not meant as a Mormon morbid practice, but a way of getting our
priorities straightened out to really understand kind of, you know, yes, I'm going to die. And what's
most important for me? And if I come to my deathbed, how do I want to remember my life, what was
really important in my life. So this, this, these, these different exercises all belong to the foundation of
mindfulness of the body, kind of laying the foundation of both the being calm enough being present
enough for experience for a body, knowing what goes on on our body, because suffering usually has a
physical embodied quality to it. And I've known people for example, it's quite common that people say,
I started paying attention to myself when I was angry. And when I was angry, I noticed what a
tremendous cost ahead of my body. When you get caught up in the object of anger, we often are blind
to the cost In our own physical body, and I've had people come and say, oh, when I noticed the cost of
being angry, I didn't feel it was worth it. I didn't want to do it. The Buddha said, if you want to do your
enemy a favor, you know, be angry. Because you're caught, you're causing yourself harm in a way
your enemy couldn't even do him herself. So the first foundation of mindfulness helps do all these
things. But our priorities little bit with getting grounded in our body, understanding the impact of our
suffering and our choices has on how our embodied life, our lived life. Just seeing clearly to the body.
The second foundation of mindfulness is called Verdana in Pali, and I like to translate this into English
as the feeling tone of our experience. And this is a very hump can be very humbling realization, or
study. The feeling tone over experience is the idea that every experience you have Whatever it might be, whatever sense stores you have, in the wrongness a sense, the sense level of the experience, not your experience of democracy that's too big. But in your sense experience in the moment experience of life as it's lived, hearing, sound tasting, touching, thinking a thought that that experience has, is either pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. And why this is humbling is if you pay careful attention to your mind, you'll discover how often you're actually a me You're an amoeba. And you have this Amoeba like reaction to pleasantness and unpleasantness, there's liking and disliking, holding on going towards not liking, pulling away pushing away, just based on whether things are pleasant and unpleasant. We're like slaves to pleasant pleasure and discomfort. And we react so constantly to this running away from the unpleasant holding on to the pleasant wanting it desiring it being caught and caught in it. And sometimes it's not really about the big picture of you know, sometimes people's political philosophies in their origins arise not at a great philosophical considered consideration, but they arise simply because they're, they found they find some experience unpleasant. And so they're reacting, they're unpleasant, they're unpleasant is propelling them to have a version to try to stop something. And it isn't that, you know, it's not okay to kind of feel like or preferences or dislike, but we wouldn't have to be master of our own mind. And to see how clearly the mind is can be this Amoeba like reaction machine. It's impersonal don't like even you doing it is is very, very helpful and instructive to start watching how the mind works and how the mind picks up. craving Other givenness arises out of this very original weakness very, very basic, simple thing. So I'm sitting here meditating, my knee hurts to an unpleasant experience. I don't just let the unpleasant experience to be there neutrally. But there's all these reactions to it, first of all, is this whole philosophy that in order to be a successful human being, I should constantly dwelling in bliss.

And I'm a spiritual person, after all, and physical pain is a proof that I'm not very spiritual. And here in America, you're not supposed to have pain because there's all these aspirins and stuff you can take and the personal failing to have pain and all this reactivity to it, and then you have pain and you're like, well, gee, you know, this is not right. I probably got the wrong instruction, you know, and meditation, and probably there's a better meditation teacher out there. And I think I'm gonna find a better meditation teacher, but this is the only place I can find what's I don't have to pay if I don't want to, and everyone else has to pay and why do all the other people charge so much and they're so terrible and And this whole universe arises in reaction to having somehow been hooked by the unpleasantness of the knee pain. Your life be a lot easier if you say, Oh, it's unpleasant. Just leave it at that. We kind of get hooked. So studying the pleasant and unpleasant that neutrality of experience teaches us something about the hook kness how we get hooked. And that's very helpful if you understand if you want to understand the Four Noble Truths. The next foundation of mindfulness is called the foundation of mindfulness of the mind. And that's who knows what he means by Buddha, except when he says it's the foundation of the mind, except he gives a list of things that he says you should pay attention to. And that's very clear. When the mind is filled with lust, you should notice that it's really help with notice when there's craving and lust in the mind and you should also know When that last is gone, and it's absence of lust notice a difference between what it feels like to have a heart or mind filled with craving. And when it's without it, notice when there's hate. And notice what it's like to have a mind is free of

This transcript is machine generated and may contain errors
Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0 License
audiodharma.org
hate. These are very useful things to pay attention to notice in our experience, notice when there's the illusion. It's much harder to notice when you're deluded. But again, sometimes notice your illusion and then notice the absence of it. Notice when your mind is distracted, what it feels like, get to know that really well. So rather than being judgmental, and be upset the fact your mind is distracted. You're instructed to really know that study that get to know what that's like. Be mindful of that experience. And be mindful of the experience when the mind is not distracted or dislike then when the mind is agitated, know that and when it's not agitated, know that Then that's all the kind of unwholesome states of mind and you should also know wholesome state of mind when the mind is there was great words like exalted. When you have the supreme mind, the ultimate mind, you have a liberated mind, you should know these wonderful minds are filled with joy, feeling a peace, feeling of being at ease at home in itself, feeling liberated from the craving and grasping, you should know those kinds of qualities of the mind to be able to distinguish between these things. And it says knowing these things, being being really expert at these qualities of the mind, is very, very helpful. Because if you see these things, well, then you can it's a shortcut to understanding, to using the Four Noble Truths to get down into the depths of our psyche. So the first foundation is the body. The second is a feeling tone. The third is the mind. The fourth foundation is the foundation of damas Dharma and no one knows why what the Buddha Again with with the title with a category Dharma is here. There's an ancient Buddhist dictionary that gives gives some like 5060 different definitions of dharma. So it's very hard to know what it actually means here. But again, what happens is that explanation is given in the explanation of that category, the fourth foundation. And there are five exercises or five things to pay attention to, in the fourth foundation of mindfulness. To make it simple. What you're asked to pay, there's a shift here, from the first three and the fourth, the first three little bit more just descriptive in the sense that just notice what's there. Don't be judgmental about it. Just notice what's present. When angers there. Notice that when when pleasure pleasantness is there, notice that when the body is tight, notice bodies tight and bodies loose. Notice that just notice how things are developing nonreactive awareness simple, direct seeing things as they are Which is a very basic instructions for Vipassana. In the fourth foundation of mindfulness is you're encouraged start studying the processes, the ways in which the mind works. It was supposed to study that, not just the other things in and of themselves, but how they're part of a continuum of process of change is a chain of cause and effect that it brings things together.

In particular, you want to notice to be very, give a shorthand version here. You want to notice when the mind is somehow are there it gets entangled, with experiences of life entangled with your thoughts entangled with your feelings entangled with the objects outside, in some way it gets entangled. Notice that and notice how that happened. Notice how you get entangled, and notice how you can maybe prevent that entanglement from rising the future. Notice the effect that entanglement has On your psyche, notice what you can do to let go of that entanglement to notice. So it's not a matter of getting judging your success and failure. And this involves some study here. What is this experience? So safe? So one of the examples is is this clinging to sensual desire, sensual pleasure. So what's the notice what the effect is on your psyche to be clinging to sensual pleasure. So you have this great foundation with first three mindfulness practices first, so you're familiar with how to pay attention to
your body, how to be calm. And so you can notice when sensual desires gripped your mind. The effect is contracts, the awareness, the awareness doesn't feel free, you don't feel free, you feel any kind of imprisoned or tight or constricted, contracted. And then you notice Why am I Why am I you know, what does it take to be free of this? Why is it there? What's the process of liberating myself from this? There's a study of this, you know, what can I do about this? Another example that in shorthand and what's given here is any kind of attachment clinging to sense of self. Notice that you've already cultivated the ability to be nonreactive in your experience. So use a nonreactive awareness, it doesn't judge and criticize and feel guilty for the detachment itself. And then notice the effect that attachment itself has on yourself. Notice the cost it has, again, you probably feel a contraction and limitation, you'll find heavy, it'll feel difficult and painful. Even the most sublime and wonderful, no senses, ideas of self and who you are, if you're attached to it, is a hindrance. And here you're asked to notice how that is hindering you. Notice the effect that has on you. Then the opposite end, you're instructed to notice those qualities of mind that arise that are helpful for the process of liberation. They're conducive for becoming liberated, becoming freer. Mindfulness nonreactive mindfulness awareness is helpful to liberate the mind. Investigating your experience is helpful to liberate the mind, Joy is helpful. tranquility is helpful, making effort can be helpful. tranquility is helpful, and equanimity is helpful. And the last seven, seven factors of awakening. These states of mind arise, notice the effect these states have, how the mind feels more expansive, more ease, feels lighter. It's very important to notice the effect these things have the process they're part of. And what can you do to support these the arising of these things? What can you do to maintain them as they arise? We're getting closer to the top of the pyramid almost to the top and then the last thing you're instructed to do. After do all these different things, being familiar with all these things, and then kind of gotten these under your belt is then the Four Noble Truths to look at your experience very carefully. Where is the subtlest form of tension of stress of suffering in your life, not to grow even the gross ones but so you have the very subtle if you want to get down to the very deepest roots of your suffering, attachment to self attachment itself is so powerful, it's so good at camouflaging itself, that we don't even know it's there. And it's so good at putting up tremendous resistance to being studied and being addressed. And there can be like, you know, biblical battle sometimes with people and they get close to the that sense, deepest sense of attachment to it itself. And he had to be very subtle to pick it up very subtle and very familiar with all the tricks of the mind. Learn how to be stay grounded in your body in order to really get down and see the depths of, of all this. So where's that subtle suffering? Where's that subtle attachment? That gives right because it gives rise to that, that suffering. And then can you find the release from that grasping the freedom from it?

So it can sound like a big project, all this stuff. It's not meant to be that way. But I think it's helpful to think of spiritual life as something that you're that you're not let you're not expecting to kind of work overnight. It's a slow, progressive thing. You're building the foundation over time. The last thing I'll say is the Buddha said, the Dharma is good in the beginning. It's good in the middle and good In the end, if you use the Four Noble Truths at the beginning, middle and end, you'd have to wait until you do all these foundation stuff before you do the Four Noble Truths. If you start studying and applying the Four Noble Truths at the very beginning of your Dharma practice, then probably you won't suffer because of

This transcript is machine generated and may contain errors
Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0 License
audiodharma.org
10
your Dharma practice. You'll enjoy it a lot. And whenever you notice, whatever, whenever you can notice the suffering and the craving and clinging that's there, let go of it or have a wiser relationship to it. So if you sit here, and you're brand new meditator, and you sit down to meditate, and your mind feels really restless, and then you notice that your mind saying, You klutz, you can never do anything right? And then you're supposed to be concentrated and blissed out here like everybody else was here in this room, and you're the only one sitting here and being miserable. And boy, you really, you know, a lousy no good person probably failure because a human being hope no one notices But then you remember, oh, but he's Buddhist, they teach the Four Noble Truths. Let's apply this to this, oh, there's all these ideas that I'm attached to doing it right. Let me let go the attachment doing it right. And then oh, I'm just sitting here being distracted. And it's not so pleasant to be distracted, but I'm not going to add a burden of all the suffering on top of it. So apply the Four Noble Truths anytime you can. So I hope that makes sense. If some of you are new, it might not make much sense because there's a lot of teachings that summarize very briefly. But for those of you who heard a lot of these teachings before, it might have been helpful for you. To get a sense of how the four foundations of mindfulness lay a kind of a path that helps us understand the depths of the Four Noble Truths. So thank you very much. And I wish you a wonderful week.