

# 2003-07-24: Confidence

Sat, 7/11 10:04AM • 56:12

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

confidence, meditation, people, mindfulness, discerning, workable, apply, effort, mind, life, happening, meditation practice, anxiety, practice, engage, track, relaxed, buddha, bit, find

## SPEAKERS

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I was reminded recently about something I heard Sylvia Borstein wants teach. Or say, Sylvia Borstein is one of the Spirit rock teachers and a colleague of mine, a friend of mine. And she was commenting on observation that she'd spent a lot of time in Buddhist practice centers with a lot of people who were very senior practitioners, long term practitioners. A lot of them had been teachers teaching for a long time. And her observation in knowing these people. What they had in common, she said was that they felt that everything, whatever happened to them in their life, it was all manageable. They can manage it, it becomes manageable, it was workable. And on the surface, that can seem like Maybe not a very illustrious glorious description of people who are quite mature and develop in their practice. But I'd like to use that then as a little bit because this is the beginning of a discussion a little bit about one of the very basic important teachings of the Buddha around meditation or spiritual practice.

The context of spiritual practice in ancient India, for the Buddha and other people besides Him, was one of the idea that things were workable, so they use the word manageable. The notion of what was true spiritually true, was a pragmatic criteria. philosophers say the Buddha was a pragmatic theory of truth. Meaning that well, you found out what was true, because it worked, because it was workable, because it worked to lead someplace it was beneficial, it was helpful. And so it wasn't a prop. It wasn't these these you know, kind of ultimate propositions about the nature of reality or something. But rather it was very simple, basic propositions of Buddhism, the truths have to do with discovery that how things are workable, how you can work with and how you can manage with your experiences in life. And how you can relate to the challenges of your life and difficulties of your life in a way that frees you when you have a pragmatic theory of truth, when you're interested. And kind of what's workable, then it's very important to have some idea of direction you're going, what is it? What is working look like? Or what is the result of making things work? Or if you're trying to do things which are helpful, if there's some sense of what it is the state you're going towards what's healthy or helpful or beneficial. And so without some clear understanding of that goal, it's very hard to know how to measure discern what is it that's helpful and what's not helpful let's work with what works and how it What should you do what

you how you apply yourself. So the Buddhist started with our basic kind of human condition that many of us share the many of us in some way or other suffer. There's anxiety, there's tension, there's stress. there's confusion. There's many, many things short term, the Buddha called it suffering. And the basic teachings of Buddhism could be it could be summed up and saying that, even though people suffer It's workable. It's possible to relate to engage in our suffering in such a way that we can be liberated from that suffering, such a way that we can find ourselves freed of it. So that the way in which our heart or mind gets contracted or constricted or burdened or pressed by stress or by fear, hate or resentment or all these things, that all those things can be that can be it's a workable, it's malleable. So you don't you don't you're not stuck with it. It's not something that this is the way it has to be the rest of your life where somebody can do you can engage in a process. That's helpful to release your heart and your mind so that your mind the heart can be unshackled your heart and the mind can be unburdened can be free, can be as free as a breeze in the spring in the spring, spring sky. As I said, sometimes

So in that Buddhist spirituality is looking at what's workable, how we can work and engage in something, apply yourself to how you're relating to the world with your mind your experiences, and make some kind of change to it. You can maybe understand why one of the most important criteria or foundations for all this is faith, or the actual word is maybe better confidence, to have confidence that you can engage in a process of working with stuff, applying yourself and can get results. And unless you have faith, I keep that I don't want you to faith. When you use the word confidence unless you have confidence. You're not going to apply yourself. The more confidence you have, the more wholeheartedly more fully you can engage yourself in the process that you're going to do. So you need some kind of confidence. So the Buddha said, you start with your condition, your suffering, whatever that might be. And then you have to have some confidence in something that you're willing to apply yourself in the midst of that situation, to see if you can make a difference. So you find yourself in a situation where you're quite tense, maybe worried about something about to happen, you have to give a talk or talk to someone you're nervous about talking to. And so you recognize that you know that, and you realize that this is a workable situation. And perhaps you've learned that by being with your breathing by breathing deeply just or just being with your breath and breathing, breathing mindfully over and over again, that somehow takes the sting out of your nervousness. It takes the inhibition, the death might be there on the side, you can engage in a useful way. Or perhaps you learn how to bring your mindfulness to bear on the fear and anxiety you have to feel your body be really present for it. And in that presence, maybe you can learn how to dissolve it or how you understand the roots of it. Maybe You see very, very discerning you notice in the roots of your anxiety, you're really concerned that this person likes you sees you in a positive way. And then you analyze and discern What's that about? Why should I be concerned about this mean seems like a reasonable thing that we should everybody should like you. But there are neurotic ways that people live where they're completely preoccupied about whether people like them or not, how they how you're accepted and approved. When I was in the monastery kitchen, I spent a year the first three months I was just a regular kitchen hand and I loved it. And after three months, I was made that kind of the kitchen manager and suddenly I was in charge of the kitchen crew and getting things done. And making sure the meals came out in time and it was kind of like, you know, operations manager

And one of the things I became painfully aware of, in that role was how much I wanted people to like me. This crew of people, and it became painful because as a manager, I had to tell people I did kind of did they had to do it a little differently, or, you know, they couldn't do what they wanted, or I had to kind of correct people. And I remember once telling someone in the monastery, that things in a Zen monastery, very choreographed and very particular. And so they it was very important that the cucumbers got cut to the size that they would, could be offered to the monks meditating in their small bowl that was really small, a small little bowl for their salads. And, and it's in the meditation on kind of context of meditating, these monks are eating. And so it's very important those cucumber pieces could fit into that little thing. So I had to Tell this person you know, excuse me, but those cucumber slices your slice, they have to build with smaller. She started crying. partly what happens in a monastery, it's kinda like a pressure cooker, where a lot of the good people are practicing so intensely and so engaged in their spiritual life, their inner life, there's nothing else going on, there's no distractions. And so things that are usually maybe we'd kind of easily kind of not affect us in normal life can affect you really big time in a monastery because our issues are kind of up in a sense. So people want to think of monastery is a place where everything is cool and peaceful and, you know, enlightened retirement. And monitors are often actually the opposite. You know, rather than escaping from the world, it's actually you know, you plunge yourself into your world in a much more sometimes intense way than you can if you're in the world shopping and, and watching television and all the ways in which we distract ourselves. So it's very constant. My role is very consequential in people's lives. And I really recognized that a few months that it was just a dead end, to be constantly neurotically preoccupied whether people like me or not, and it made my job a lot more difficult. For myself, it also made my job a lot more difficult for other people always trying to say things in such a way that they would still like me and all that. And I learned that it's worked a lot better, if I just kind of let go that concern me, I still try to be decent, and, you know, kind everyone, but it wasn't kind of constantly kind of like a trapped rat kind of looking to see, you know, people like me, you know. So, you know, so we so we use mindfulness to kind of be with our anxiety, perhaps if we're anxious, or fear, and then maybe you are seeing some of the beliefs that are feeding into that they're causing it to arise. And maybe it has to do, for example with me that those years ago with my desire my wish to be liked, and behind that, perhaps with some kind of insecurity so the mindfulness can reveal reveal these things and sometimes dissolve them or make it workable, make it so they don't stand in the way anymore.

So we start with our situation, and we have confidence that things are workable, and then we apply ourselves to the situation in some way or other. So confidence is the foundation. And then there's the application, which in shorthand in Buddhism is called Making effort. There is no spiritual life without some kind of effort. And effort is a huge topic, because you don't want to make striving effort to grit your teeth and kind of barrel ahead. But you also don't want to be complacent. And some people have kind of magical thinking about meditation, you know, just if I just sit there then something will happen and I'll you know, get enlightened or something wonderful happen everything all my problems will go away. And sometimes you have Beginner's luck at first because people are so you know, stressed out, they're just sitting doing nothing that calms them down. But then I've known people who spend years

you know, once the beginners kind of stage past, and they're kind of waiting for something to happen is if they didn't have to do anything. There is no Buddhist spirituality is some kind of engagement, some kind of effort, we apply ourselves some way. Very simply, you know, you have to make make your way make the effort to get to your meditation cushion. And as some of us know, that takes some effort sometimes. Sometimes your life is busy, and sometimes there's demands on us sometimes we're tired sometimes. You know, there's internal resistance is for many reasons to do city sitting down to meditate. It's we have to make the effort to sit and meditate and sometimes it takes a lot of effort to Okay, so what I'm going to do no matter what, sometimes it's quite easy. And, and then once you're sitting in the cushion, then there has to be some kind of effort there. And you know, the effort at least to turn your attention To your breath, or your effort, at least maybe pray maybe to let go of all your thinking or to not invest yourself in your thinking anymore. Or the or perhaps it's the effort to accept what's there unconditionally. That's a kind of an effort to make unconditional acceptance that maybe maybe Tara Brock talked about radical acceptance last week. And Richard couple weeks ago, this idea of you, but they're also the kind of effort to accept everything. And it's a very radical effort because many, many of us live a life where non acceptance is a characteristic feature of it. We don't accept something we don't accept some aspect of ourselves, we accept some aspect of what's going on around us. And so that, that non acceptance is a cornerstone for many, much of our behavior motivations for what's going on in our life. And perhaps, if unless there I think in some ways a consumer culture is dependent on people who have some level of non acceptance. Because if you simply accepted your life as it was, you wouldn't buy a lot of things. And so you think you think your life's gonna be acceptable more by getting things by buying things, then that replies it's, you know, what's happening now is unacceptable. So, it would take some analysis you can kind of look at in your life, you know, how does it How does non acceptance or non acceptance of something, play itself out and how you think and how you talk and how you behave, and what motivates you? Are you motivated by some kind of non acceptance. If you start playing put up practicing radical acceptance, it kind of pulls the rug from underneath the cornerstone of what holds up pops up a lot of people's psyche. And it's quite liberating to just discover the alternative. Even that's kind of an effort. Sometimes the effort is a row And sometimes it's quite delightful and useful. Sometimes it feels like you're mountain climbing, it's really, you know, to make the effort be present and show up in the practice, and to get concentrated. And sometimes it feels like just you're, you're, you're on a kind of wonderful, soft, gentle raft that just be going downstream just carrying you along just delightful to kind of be in there, and you come along and the there's the eddies, you know, and you have to kind of steer the boat a little bit so you don't kind of get caught in the heads or in the side and the branches on the side or something. You have to make some effort but it's mostly effortless effort. But there's there's effort as part of the effort apply yourself to some degree.

It's if you've spent a lot of time reading spiritual books, which some people do, it can offer a lot of confidence to people, a lot of faith, a lot of inspiration. But sooner or later, you realize that reading spiritual books is kind of like going to the restaurant and just reading the menu. You know, over and over. The menus are interesting and Now you can have great you know, and you can compare menus and different restaurants, you know, all kinds of things, you spend a long time on the menu. But you

have to work some point you have to order the food and eat the food. So same thing with it with, with a spiritual life. At some point, you have to apply yourself and do something to start living the contemplative life. Whatever living is, I think of spiritual life, as a life that you live, it's a life. So you have to engage in that life in some way. The engage so based on confidence, we apply ourselves, the greater the confidence, the more wholeheartedly, we apply ourselves. Once we apply ourselves, when we apply ourselves to what tends to bring more presence, more mindfulness, we're more awake or more attentive to what's going on in the present moment, generally. So it said that out of these application of this effort, comes greater mindfulness, greater ability to track what's going on, greater ability to be in the present as things are going on. This is really one of the pivotal things that we're trying to do in mindfulness practice is simply the ability to show up moment by moment to show up what's going on, to be present for experience. And it's a really beautiful thing. The idea of presence or mindfulness is the ability to recognize what's happening in the present moment without resisting it, or being in conflict with it, or without holding on to it, or clinging to it. So its ability to non discursive, which allow things to be as they are. There's another quality of mindfulness. That is often I think, not so well appreciated. And that is that mindfulness has a cognitive element to it. It's kind of alert, clarity. When it's strong with mindfulness, strong, alert, clarity, oh, recognition, oh, this is what's happening now. It doesn't have to be like words like that so much, but you're kind of away. Do you really, it's kind of like the difference between maybe driving your car, or your glasses, which is my experience often enough, having dirty you know, but, you know, some of you have glasses, you know, and, and you go around with the glasses and you're kind of engaged in the world. And then someone says, you know, you should clean your glasses when you clean your glasses in a row. And suddenly, things are clear. And you can kind of see more clearly. And you go, Oh, I didn't realize you know, that, that, you know, this and that. So there's a clarity, that confidence was mindfulness becomes stronger. And that clarity has a quality of energy to it, of effort to kind of delight for clear effort. And sometimes the efforts of being mindful can sometimes feel like just kind of making the effort making the effort making the effort and you're waking up, it's picking up great fruit to do that way. And at some point, it clicks in and it becomes like this clarity, kind of clicks. So there's a shift or relaxation that happens. Then the mind starts kind of being almost effortlessly aware, or there's clarity. Oh, it's so recognizing things. Oh, this is what's there. This is what's happening, what's happening here. And you're not trying to try to struggle anymore to be present to what's going on. The mind is not taking you off into the past in the future anymore. But now the mind is kind of settled in the present moment. Oh, here I am. Okay. And then there's the mind doesn't it's not trying to do something else anymore. It's not trying to run away or have a conversation with someone or all things wants to do with the mind. Oh, here it is. It's like oh, I've arrived. I went to a concert many years ago Symphony. And I don't go to symphonies very often someone gave me tickets, and they went, and I noticed that

they were to have some intermission. And the first half of the symphony, I noticed very quickly, that was hard for me to pay attention to the music because I We're sitting in the seat where you can watch the orchestra really, really well. And there's so much going on. And I kept being distracted by this conductors, you know, doing all this stuff with his hands and, and all these players doing different things and all these instruments and you know, it's a big Symphony. And, and it was, you know, it was



very distracting. And I had thoughts about what I was seeing and fascinated by what who's going to be next and judging this person in that and, you know, all kinds of things my mind was doing, I noticed that I wasn't really tracking the music. So finally, what I did was I closed my eyes, because I was there for the music. And, and that cut out cut off cut out the kind of visual stimulation, and that actually stopped the proliferation of thoughts and ideas about maximum speed with the music. And so I stayed with the music and stayed with the music. And then at some point, I think was the second half of the show. Then my mind relaxed enough, it stopped it in sessions kind of reaching out outside of itself to, to think about a judge or consider You know, what was going on. And it stopped that kind of searching outside of itself. And the mind became settled and relaxed enough that I could keep my eyes open, and be clearly aware of the music just be with the music, there was a shift that happens. So the mindfulness practices same same way, there's a period of time when we're kind of making the effort to be present, make any effort to the present, and there's often a very strong counter force within us not to be present. It's very important than to be very accepting of that. And just not take it personally and not take it as a failing and not fight against it or be angry about that the way it is, but just have a confidence that this is workable, I can keep engaging, it's useful to do this. And it's not useful to judge it or become discouraged. I'll just be patient with it. And I just keep showing up, keep showing up, the mind wanders away, you come back, you show up what's here, and at some point, sooner or later, maybe some more often later than sooner than mine. There's a shift And at some point, the mind has become the classic Buddhism, they call it say, the mind has become tamed The Taming of the mind. The mind is in. And I don't know about analogy there metaphor that works for you, any of you here but they did. Finally mindfulness seems like a wild puppy, or wild horse is something that has to be trained. And finally, it's been trained to calm down, it's been tamed. It's not going to be running off in all kinds of directions anymore, but it just here ready to do work, then the mind becomes really workable. And that gives a lot of confidence, because Wow, now, now I have this instrument, the instrument of the mind of awareness, which now I can start using. Before I was just, I was just getting it to show up and applying it and going away. But now it's here, and I'm really confident he was gonna stay here for a while, and he started applying it more fully. And as the attention is more fully here and more usable and can be applied and the forces of the mind and taking you away so much then the most starts becoming concentrated, the mind starts getting composed and collected and unified. The mind is not fragmented anymore going off in all kinds of different directions. And the mind starts settling down, gets more and more focused, more concentrated, more penetrating with that ability to be mindful, and begins penetrating kind of underneath the veils underneath the surface chatter of the mind, to see much more deeply what's going on, within us and around us.

And this in return. So we have a sequence, from confidence, to application, to mindfulness to concentration. And the last of the sequence then is what the Buddha called discernment. With a mind that's engaged, mindful, focused. You have the ability, start becoming discerning to notice what's going on in the present moment and be discerning about what is useful Probably not useful to do with your mind and your heart, with your thoughts with your feelings. What is going on now? And what can you let go of? What can you pick up? If you want the mind to become peaceful, if you want the mind to become still beautiful stillness, contemplative stillness, then can you become discerning of what

supports that? And what is it that detracts from that? So this is where, again, there's some work involved in that kind of spiritual life. He's not just a magic and waiting for something to happen. But you actually kind of beginning take some responsibility for not just your behavior. But you actually learn to take responsibility for your mind, what your mind does. You don't have to take your mind as something that's fixed, it just has a mind of its own. But as the mind settles down, you begin kind of, Oh, I don't have to think that anymore. I can let go those kinds of thoughts. I don't have to be engaged in that kind of activity or that kind of Those kinds of feelings, you know, I've had resentful thoughts for a long time, I don't have to be fueling them or feeding them with more stories. I've learned that forgiveness is a very powerful and useful thing that helps things, you know, become more peaceful. So I think I'll engage, you know, on gauging some forgiveness practice here, simple, loving kindness, practice. So there's a discerning, discerning quality of finding our way towards greater peace, greater stillness, greater subtleness maybe we need to be more even more concentrated, to apply ourselves to be more concentrated. These five qualities, faith, or you want to say faith, confidence, application, mindfulness, concentration and discernment are the five or five things, five qualified activities in the sense that you all have you already doing I think what the Buddha did was he took took things we that's familiar with all of us, not necessarily because you've thought about it, but if you think about a little bit you realize you you all use this all the time is these five these five things, they're not foreign things you have to apply to your life from outside from Buddhism. Say that you're a bicyclist maybe because a Tour de France is happening it's kind of on my mind a little bit but say that you're a bicyclist. And, and you have to agree, you know, you're going up a few mountains and down a few mountains and going someplace. And the first thing you have to it helps to have some confidence that you know, I can do this. I can ride the bike for a couple hours and go over these hills and make my way there. And without some kind of confidence, it's gonna it's hard. It's actually more tiring to do if you don't have confidence because you're constantly doubting and wonder if you can make it and all that. So some confidence in your abilities. Then you have to engage yourself in bicycling, you can't just sit, you know, at the coffee shop with your bicycle parked outside. And, you know, think about how wonderful it is to go biking and have your, you know, suit on and everything and your helmet on and then after when you have to finish having your coffee, you go home and take a shower. And so it was great. It might have been great, but it wasn't it's not biking. So yeah, you have to make the effort. You have to show up and be there. And then yeah, there has to be some tracking and what's going on, which is the mindfulness, you have to be able to track what's happening as things are happening. So what's hap so you're tracking Oh, that's the distance I have to go. So I have to I have to, you know, moderate my you know, my speed little bit here. Or now you know, now the hills going up. Now it's going down near the car is coming. Now I'm thirsty. So he's tracking all these things. You're present what's going on unless you're able to be present and track you can't really You know, make all the changes you have to do with the Viking attack going on all the time. And then it helps to be focused and concentrated to some degree. And then it's very important to be discerning because you have to be discerning enough to know, what is it going to what does it take to make this trip work. If you go all out on the first Hill, you're not going to make it all the way. So you have to know when the hill you start going up a hill, you need to know you have to slow down.

When you come over the crest of the hill, you're going down and on the other side, then your sermon tells you I don't have to make much effort now. And actually, maybe it's better to use this time to rest and, and kind of regather myself for the next deal. So you have confidence, application or effort, mindfulness, concentration, and discernment, I think are, are there in some degree in all activities we're doing

So the question we issue in meditation is, how are these playing themselves out in meditation? Can you use these things as a way of enhancing the quality of your meditation practice? Can you part of what we can track? Are these five things in meditation? How is your confidence today or now when you sit down to meditate, your confidence really low. Maybe you fell off the bicycle, whatever, I don't know, whatever that means, in meditation experience, you fell off, you know, your, your cushion. And you know, you had some really bad meditation experience or whatever. And so you come back, which kind of shake and you know, they don't have much confidence, or, you know, other other reasons not to have much confidence and you know, how much confidence that day or maybe you have a lot of confidence, but for some reason now, you know, you have don't have a lot of confidence in your practice. Oh, I've heard there are different kinds of mindfulness practices, you know, and there's this way of doing it and that's way of doing it this way of doing it. That Do I know which one is the best you know, and which one is the best for me and, and maybe you don't really have the best practice, you know? So then there's doubt about the practice, which keeps us inhibited keeps us held back from our ability to apply ourselves, engage in the practice that we're doing. So there's confidence in ourselves confidence in the practice. There's also confidence about the goal of the practice, the confidence that the practice leads someplace that's useful. If you have no confidence, it's going to lead someplace that's useful, then probably you're not going to apply yourself very wholeheartedly even if you do it. But if you have some real confidence that yes, I can do this, and it leaves a place which is really good. Then you can apply yourself more wholeheartedly. If you think that destination is fantastic. If you think it's the best thing going, then probably you'd apply yourself with much more enthusiasm. If you think you know, it's good You know, it's okay. But you know sex is better, or food is better or whatever big bank account is better or bigger houses better. Being a better conversationalist is better, you know, getting massages better, all these things that pull the mind, then it might be might be we hold ourselves back from really applying myself as wholeheartedly as we can. So having so in all of us will have different degrees of confidence and all these things I'm talking about. But these are all elements that feed into meditation practice. Is there a lot of confidence in these different things, and you can actually work on that confidence. You can work on your own self confidence. You can work on having more confidence in the practice, you can work on having more confidence in the goal of practice by understanding what it is understanding some ideas of the teachings of the Buddha or talking to other people who are further along than you and they say oh yeah This is some of the things you can expect or this is what can happen. This is how it's workable and how things can be improved. And then some people, a lot of people have some degree of confidence will have confidence. But they don't use it very often, they don't fall back on it. They don't remind them says, Oh, I have a lot of confidence here. And sometimes it's very can be very useful to kind of remind oneself to reflect what you do have confidence in and to call forth that confidence way of calling forth the confidence as you



begin your meditation practice. Classically in Asia in Theravada Buddhism, people are instructed to at the beginning of meditation to spend a few minutes reflecting on the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha, to reflect on those as a way of reminding ourselves of our confidence to eliciting confidence, evoking confidence the idea of application and making effort To actually track what's happening my effort level here, am I applying myself as well as well as I can. One of the interesting things to do is at the end of the meditation session to reflect back on the meditation, meditation session, and reflect a little bit, did I really apply myself as well as I could open that session? Not to judge yourself and feel depressed or whatever. But I find sometimes for myself that, oh, you know, I let some period of time of meditation slip by where I was pretty complacent, you know, I, I had this great thought or I had this really lousy thought or whatever. And I just let myself kind of go with it for a while. And I was for five or 10 minutes thinking about, you know, how wonderful you'd have a vacation, where I would go and this and that and what I would do and, you know, the menus I'd study and

and, and I just let myself drift on that for a while. And you know, I didn't really apply myself I could have easily there wasn't it wasn't much point to that kind of drifting and, in fact, I could have up find myself much better. And that kind of reflection, the end of meditation practice is not meant to be a burden. But that's very simple recognition that that was actually how it was will help condition the mind to be a little bit more diligent in the future, to recognize, make the make yourself a little more cognizant. Next time. Oh, I think I'm being complacent here. If you track over many meditation sessions, what's going on given meditation journal and keep track then you you might notice, or noticing patterns? You know, I'm complacent every time. I you know, if someone had asked me I would have said, Oh, you know, once a week or so I kind of a little bit, you know, complacent, but I didn't realize I was kind of like, you know, and, and so then oh, okay, I think I'm gonna apply myself more and a little bit more in the future. And how How well are you tracking What's going on? How well are you mindful of what's happening that present moment, you just simply switching into the words from mindfulness to tracking might make it a bit more understandable what you what you what you can do and help you kind of be more in the present to track what's happening within the present moment to track your breathing into the present moment, very diligently that way to be discerning to be able to wise about what's actually happening here. What's useful here, if you're really tired, we sit down to meditate, then be discerning what's useful to do, maybe you have to make more effort, mental effort to stay alert, stay awake, stay present, you're more likely to drift off complacently. Maybe you have to open your eyes or stand up or do walking meditation. Or if you're really stressed, perhaps you want to be really relaxed in your meditation. And maybe if you're really stressed, you don't want to be very discerning. You don't want to apply yourself too much because you just kind of add salt to the wound of stress and just want to be very Almost complacent, maybe even if you're really stressed out for a while. And sometimes I find it useful for me in my meditation, depending what's going on, especially if I meditate at the end of the day to, to let the first five or 10 minutes of meditation session, be bordering on complacency, just kind of not really trying to do anything. I'm not trying to accomplish anything. And I have this idea that I'm trying to be mindful, but I'm not really making any serious effort to be mindful. I do occasionally I'm kind of with a breath, a couple of breaths and wanders away and I come back and what I'm really doing there is just giving my mind a very, very wide pasture, to relax and to unwind. And just need it

kind of seems like he's really needs that sometimes, if I'm kind of a little stressed or preoccupied or something. And after five to 10 minutes of that, then there seems to be then it seems to be time to, you know, okay, now it's time to sharpen up a little bit. Now I can apply myself and now it's useful to do with the mind just settle down and relax the more so to be discerning what needs to be done What he's what needs to be discerning about what needs your attention. Sometimes it can, it can seem like sometimes there's a lot of choices to be made meditation. But you know, there's a lot of choices you have to make when you ride a bike. And but, you know, once you learn to ride a bike, it kind of second nature to make these kind of choices. And you don't even think about slowing down when you start going up a hill, whatever you have to do to change. So with meditation, it's, it's very much the same way that there are choices you have to make as you as you as you find your way through meditation. And it seemed like a very busy making all these choices. But the idea is to keep it simple and as you stick, stay simple with a meditation practice and track and learn and be present and learn from your experience, learn from doing it over the months, years. Then it becomes second nature to notice what's going on and know what kind of choices you need to make. Oh, I'm feeling anxious and I think in this kind of anxiety, I'm feeling now, I find the most useful thing to do is just be with a breath, they'll be relaxed or a different kind of anxiety arises and you find Oh, this kind of anxiety is more useful to feel to be with the tightness in my stomach. Or then you realize this another kind of anxiety, you know, with that kind of situation is much more useful to me to hang out with my beliefs. I try to understand what am I really believing? What am I buying into, that makes me more anxious. So the discernment kind of helps you kind of guide your attention to what needs attention, for the purposes of release for the purposes of helping you relax and let go of what's holding you and holding you tight. When I was practicing meditation in Southeast Asia, I was told once a few times that it was the job of the meditation teachers, when students came for interviews with a meditation teacher, to listen to see how these five faculties work.

Playing himself playing themselves out in the person's meditation. And so they listen carefully to Oh, this person here needs more faith, this person here could use more application apply themselves more, this person should apply themselves less, they're trying too hard, they're pushing too hard. This person can try to, should focus more on just being mindful, very simple mindfulness and just do that this person needs more concentration needs to become more relaxed, this person needs to be more discerning. And so the teacher is going to listening to this know, okay, try this and try that. You know, this is what you need to bring some balance into the practice, and, and follow along. It can seem like a lot to me like you're making yourself busy. But if you're discerning, then you'll notice that a busy mind is perplexed about what to do next is not a useful mind to have in meditation. So but we're learning by learning to be discerning and meditate. You made it your process of meditation, hopefully it's self correcting. When you start noticing the ways in which you are in meditation, which is not conducive to greater peace, and more greater wakefulness, if how you're meditating, how you're engaging, it is making you more anxious and more stressed, more busy. Then the mindfulness and the discernment supposed to show you that and then you're supposed to make a correction for that. So I think a meditation is being self correcting. So those are my thoughts for today. And you have any questions or comments or questions about something else you'd like to ask?

Can we went over this, but could you

summarize how you cultivate confidence?

Because I find that oftentimes when

I have fear or anxiety in my life is that I've gotten to the point where I don't feel manageable.

You kind of lose confidence at that point.

There's a lot of things can, can be said about that. One is, in terms of Buddhist spirituality, there's a very important distinction to be made between managing external events so that external events turn out successfully versus managing our inner life. So our inner life is not burdened by either success or failure. And if you confuse those two realms, Then it's very hard to find the kind of confidence that the Buddha was pointing towards. Because there's no guarantee that anybody is going to be able to have all the wise understanding, know how to manage external events, so that they've external events, succeed in some way that you want them to succeed. But it's, it is possible to to, to have enough self understanding and self. You know, that in a spiritual practice that leads you to take care of your heart. So that no matter even if even if things turn out, things fail. You know how to take care of your heart so your heart stays free, stays awake, stays compassionate, stays loving. And that's really that distinction, then, if you understand that distinction, then you understand that it's a lot easier understand where the direction of practice needs to be. The responsibility and practices to learn to take responsibility for this part of how we work with our heart does in any situation at all. And if you then realizing that then maybe you have, it's easier to know, oh, I can have confidence in that. Because you can have confidence in managing in this external situation that comes with experience, it comes with wisdom, it comes, you know, it can come with many different kind of things, but there's no ultimate guarantee. So that's one thing. And this is spiritual confidence is, you know, knowing what the proper domain of spirituality is. This is applicable in all situations, because we bring our hearts everywhere. So it is not something is just left with a meditation cushion. So it's really, you know, it's very, you know, it kind of covers the whole world, in a sense, your heart covers the whole world. So it's a very powerful thing to take care of and connect to. The other thing that can cultivate confidence is his experience. So bye, bye. And that's, you know, initially confidence to begin meditation practice, for example, or begin a spiritual practice. Maybe it's we have confidence in someone we've met. With confidence in some book we've read, oh, yeah, that I have some confidence with this person saying how this person's demeanor is. So I think I'll give it a try. But as we engage in the practice, then through our own experience, we learn that it's useful, it's helpful. And as we learn from our own experience, then we have what's called verifiable faith verified confidence. And then as practice deepens, and confidence grows and grows, because you know, how it is, so say you go to situation where, you know, you're at work and you know, you have a deadline and you can't succeed to make

your deadline and your bosses angry with you. And, and, and these are this is stressful, you know, and all these people are yelling upset with me and, and, and then you, you, you, you bring your attention to your stomach or your heart or someplace, you bring your attention inward, and you realize how you've run long yourself up in a knot around this and you learn Oh, you know, I can Like, oh, this not, I can soften, I can relax. And you find yourself able to relax in the middle of this very tense situation. And people are so angry with you, but you learn at least learned how not to be so tense. And then you and then because you're not so tense, then you know how to respond in a way that's not reactive. And maybe you you don't yell back at them and say, you, you know, whatever you say. And you sit you say, you know, this is really hard for me today. And you say something, you know what, this is really hard for me today. And if we realized there's a problem and let's sit down and talk about it together, and they say, Oh, okay. And suddenly have a lot of confidence in Wow, I turned my I use my mindfulness practice and turned it into situation that normally is very stressful for me. And it's worked. It's workable, things already worked. And, and that gives you some confidence, oh, maybe I can do this again. So experience brings confidence. And other thing it brings confidence is is Understanding the teachings other people bring confidence you see other people applying this and other people experiencing a living the results of that kind of, of spiritual practice. Oh, they can do it. So that gives me confidence it can be done. So sometimes there are external sources of confidence. And some people would like to read spiritual books sometimes in order to revoke their confidence and inspiration so that they can sit down and apply themselves.

Sometimes the most useful way of of most realistic way of cultivating confidence is paradoxically, is not directly but do it

in the opposite direction by focusing on what the lack of confidence is all about. It's question a lack of confidence and understand you really bring your mindfulness to that phenomena. And because you don't want to simply kind of always You have a confidence that overrides a sense of insecurity or inadequacy. That's not very realistic. Sometimes, and then if you apply yourself to where you feel kind of have a lot of doubt, and you resolve the doubt, then you might naturally find yourself in a situation where you feel more confident, because the doubts no longer there. So those are some of my thoughts that yes, or

mindfulness, or

if you find the time as St. Francis in your stomach, do you bring your breath to stop and concentrate?

You could

never There's a couple of things you might try doing. One is simply to be to be aware that you're anxious, it's very helpful to be aware you're anxious. And then continue with your breath meditation, just feel your breath. And just be with your breath and be with your breath. Because sometimes if you

bring too much direct awareness things xiety some people actually get more anxious. But if you simply aware of the anxieties, they're in the background, but you kind of ignore a little bit and you stay with your breathing, the breathing will come and person down and help release some of it. So that's one possibility. Another possibility is to do exactly what you said. So bring your attention there. And then send your breath there massages with your breath, imagine your breathing kind of goes into that and it goes in and out of that place. So you've had this kind of movement and massage and nurturing kind of presence that goes in and out and, and that can actually be quite relaxing. Something else you might do is just forget about the breath entirely. And just go directly in there and feel the physical sensations of tightness. Just feel that tightness in a very Matter of fact simple way as if you can feel it forever as if you're not trying to push it away or make it go away, because if you want it to go away it's a kind of an unfriendly this poor this poor you know support tension your stomach's gonna feel no one wants me No one likes me and this person I live with doesn't like me and then it gets more tight and tense and upset and runs away and hides and so you don't want it you don't want you don't want to. So the best attitude is just, it's okay to be there anxiety so can it be there? I'm just going to hold you in my awareness. It's like a like a young girl like a five year old girls for example. Who who, you know is really afraid. You know, you don't go reason with her and say, Well, these are the reasons why you shouldn't be afraid. Or you know, you what you probably do is you go over and just holder and you know, you don't have to five minutes say you know, you know that was enough. You know, you know you hold her however long she needs to be held And you kind of hope that she eventually relaxes. But if she feels like you have an agenda, you know, are you relaxed yet?

You know,

you know, she's gonna get, you know, feel more intimidated. So the idea is to bring your attention to that as if you're, you know, you know, just loving presence and loving awareness. Don't be aware, just hold, explore it, be with it, and maybe be with it for a long time, explore it from different angles, in a sense, you look at it from be aware of it, sense it. That's another approach that can be very helpful. And as you do that, it might be might be helpful to start becoming aware of the emotions that are connected to the anxiety. Or maybe the anxiety moves through your body energy is coursing through your body. And then you can just pretend there's a ping pong inside of you. Just close your eyes and just let the energy kind of move around. And you're just a container for the loving container just allows that ping pong ball just to kind of bounce around. So there's a number of different things to do. I'm sorry, there's more than one thing to do, but Because that leaves people with choices. And now, that's always that's sometimes difficult. But that's the way it is. And so we have to be discerning and find our way. And trial and error, try different things in different times. But to have confidence that things are workable, is really helpful. All this anxiety of mine, I think it's workable, I can do it. Or at least, you know, I've been told that can be done. So I think I can, you know, for some people, it's so radical. To find out that there is a practice, they can engage the stuff in that gauging cells with, they don't have to be the victim of anxiety or fear or hate or anything like that. But whether Oh, I can I can apply myself to it, I can do some engage in it. And just simply that changes the inner ecology. Oh, just that kind of



makes a little more space or makes you a little bit more independent from what's been oppressing you in the past. Oh, doesn't have to be this way I can engage. Great, let's do it. Is that helpful at all?

In this model of understanding meditation practice that we talked about the five faculties, that is very much a model of how a person is a craft, learns a craft, develops a craft. And, and the same things apply in a craft and actually the Buddha use a lot craft analogy for developing the craft of meditation. So you have to apply yourself you have to do to practice on a regular basis. If you don't practice your craft every day, you're not really going to learn very fast. You have to track what's going on. You have to be focused, you have to be discerning, and you have to have confidence that this is worthwhile doing. So I hope this is helpful. I hope this inspires you and gave some pep talk. It gives you some way of being engaged. And please remember what I said about The practice is meant to be self correcting. So that you're really tracking what's going on enough to know when you're engaged meditatively in a way that's not helpful. And then make a course correction. And that will always happen to you. Sooner or later you'll find yourself going down a track that is not useful. Sometimes Sometimes there's big swings. And as especially when meditation gets more and more subtle and you get better, better meditating, then you find yourself making smaller swings. And don't be despair. Don't disparage the fact that you've, you know, it's gone a little bit off off track. That's the process of finding the track is falling off a little bit. Okay, so let's end with a very short city.

We'll have to do this meditation really fast. So, you know, get ready on your mark. And it's a race. We'll see and, but it's a wonderful competitive sport meditation because we all arrive in the present moment at the same time.

So is there some healthy and realistic way that you can use confidence you can let confidence be a strength that supports your practice.

Thank you and I hope you have a wonderful week. Good night.