

2004-03-28 Mindfulness of Breath

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SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

So then Good morning. Nice to be back. So most of you know that I was away more or less a way for the month of March, helping to teach a month long retreat at spirit rock. And the retreat was back to back with a month long retreat offered in February. So that some people stayed on I think about 2324 people did both months out of the about 7580 people who were there. So there was a lot of continuity. People who in practicing a lot and then there were another group of people then who came for the second month as as I did, and it was quite a remarkable retreat to teach. I've taught month long retreats before and this one felt Kind of qualitatively different or quantit I don't know what to say quantitatively qualitatively. It felt there was much greater depth of practice and insight and, and also personal healing that happened for people with different different things for different people. And it was also a very joyous retreat overall. The lot of joy experienced by people meditating. It probably helped that we had good weather. And then so I'm still very much filled by having set been part of this retreat. And I would like to so you know, I was wondering what to talk about today coming from the retreat. And I thought I would like to try to do what I'd like to try to do is to Give a kind of a description of what mindfulness of breathing can be like. So mindfulness breathing is a very basic topic for mindfulness meditation. It's relatively central to our way of meditating, getting centered and grounded on the breath, entering into the meditative mode through focusing on the breath. And it's something that I do a lot of my main practice is focusing my breath and practicing mindfulness there. And I thought, kind of, to talk about a little bit and also describe what might happen and why the breath can be so significant as a place to practice the I read somewhere once that we'd read something like 23,000 breaths a day. I haven't gone to the trouble to count completely, but it seems about about right that you know, they're 15 breaths a minute, it comes out about that, give or take a few thousand. And, and that it's apparently equivalent to about 4500 gallons of beer every day that goes in and out through our body. And it's quite an exchange. Oh, we drink a lot less fluids than that. Probably a couple of three, four quarts of fluids every day. We take in compared to you know, 4000 times that in terms of air and it also a lot more compared to the food. We take in

It's a significant activity that we do the breathing. And we see that in many cultures around the world, the word for breath, and the word for spirit or something like spirit or spirituality, or the same word are very closely connected. And you see it certainly the English coming from the Latin word spiritus, which means, spirit is closely connected to our English words, respiration, to the word spire in their comes from the same root to the spirit of spirit. The word for breath and the word for spirits are closely connected. And you find that in Indian culture and Chinese culture and may different cultures, this tremendous intimacy, closeness between the breath and spirit or inner vitality or inner life and you probably know that in the Bible They're just I don't know, the quote so well, but you know, at some point, God shapes Adam and Eve out of clay. And then he breathes life into them. The act of breathing in the spirit or the what? What animates us what brings us alive? Lot of people, or enough people wonder what's the big thing about focusing on the breath and meditation. It can seem very mundane, it can seem uninteresting. It's just a physical thing. The chest goes up and down, diaphragm goes up and down, you know, and air goes in and out. Do some mechanical thing, right that goes on. And it can seem quite boring. I've had people tell me it's really boring. What's the point? I've been following this breath now for a few minutes, a few hours, a few days or however long it's the you know, it's just boring. It just has mechanical thing that happens. I'm just gonna sitting there watching it and nothing happens while I watch it. I know that I sympathize, because there are times, even to this day, that sometimes I have what I call cardboard bread. And it just seems like cardboard is just like, you know, the dulllest thing in the world it's like, and, and I just have, I have the wisdom now to know that that's how it is sometimes. And I know that I shouldn't get derailed by that or make any judgments about that. But it's just something that happens periodically as people meditate, that sometimes the breath can seem quite dull or plain or cardboard like. But one of the things that's happened in my years of practice is that I've learned to appreciate the awareness of breath, more and more, that continues. I've been doing this for some 30 years. And in my appreciation of mindfulness of breathing continues to deepen. So rather than overall getting more and more bored, by thinking that you know, now I've gotten it, you know, Let's move on to more advanced things. I find that staying with the breath being mindful of the breath just deepens and deepens in the experience of it, the intimacy of it, the effect it has on me the wonderfulness of it. So far from being something is boring, I find something that's actually very vitalizing brings life and spirit and a lot of joy and happiness to my life. So for people who are not familiar with being meditation on the breath, it can seem very strange, the idea that the breath can open up into a whole world of inner experience a very rich world. So this is what I want to do today. So try to bring that alive for you a little bit. It will mostly be through describing to you my own experience of breathing at times how it can be, and with the kind of warning that everyone will have their own experience what it's like to do. breathing meditation, What unfolds as you do it. So I'm not offering my experience as a standard by which you should measure your experience out unfolds for you. But in offering you a little bit of my experience, it might give you a sense of the possibility there and arise in you evoke in you greater interest in doing this exploration on your own exploring, what's the threat for you? What's it like? What can it do for you, and what happens as you engage in it. and engaging is really one of the key words, to really engage with experience of breath, mindfulness, I think of mindfulness at times as being an engaged practice, you really want to engage your whole life,

your whole being in the act of being present, of being mindful of inquiring into what this experience is like. And in the same way that to the point of getting absorbed in the experience if you're engaged,

to really absorb yourself in that so in the same way as maybe you'd be absorbed in reading and good book. And you might not notice how quickly Time goes or you might not notice that much else around you might not notice you've gotten hungry or various things. Because you're pulled into this book, you're absorbed in it. And, and someone might even come in, you know, call out your name. And maybe you don't even hear it because you're so absorbed. or there might be other activities that you're familiar with, where there's some level of absorption in that activity, if you have a hobby or play music, or music, or variety of things that we do. So part of it with with the breath is to find a way of connecting to the breath, so that there isn't just so that we get absorbed in it, we get engaged enough that we get pulled into its world we get involved in it to the point that the other aspects of our life begin falling away temporarily. So if you're thinking about taxes now that April's coming up, when you sit down to meditate, you're so absorbed in the Bristol engaged in the process of breathing, so interested in it, that perhaps you're concerned about taxes falls away. And, and that's, you know, not going to happen doesn't happen maybe if you read a good book. And so it's reasonable that maybe that shouldn't happen when you're meditating, you're engaged in this process, you're reading the book of your heart or the inner inner book. So that's kind of the direction to go in for we try to do in meditation is to use all our intelligence, or all our capacities, to engage yourself with that process of breathing to get absorbed in it. And there are many different kinds of intelligences we have this psychologist and I'd like to point out I don't know them all, but very popularly was that people talked about in the last years is emotional intelligence. And there's cognitive intelligence and so all kinds of intelligence that that we have within us, and the idea is to kind of use them all. Whatever is available to you, to help you engage and be present for the perience of breathing. So as I sit down to meditate, I begin connecting to my breath, the first thing I do is, I'll take a few deep breaths, feel my breath in a deep way and kind of see what's kind of to connect and arrive and be here, kind of use the deep breaths, kind of massage my torso a little bit to feel the tensions of the day or what's going on, breathe deeply to get more oxygen into my system a little bit. And then, and to remind myself to kind of feel the breath and be there with it. And then I let my breath kind of return to normal. And then the beginning of my meditation, and this might be very different for other people. I couldn't tell my meditation teacher in Burma, this is what I did. So it's not orthodox. But I'm actually the beginning. I tend to be somewhat casual, about being with my breath. I stay with my breath, and I'm kind of liked about it at first, and it's there with a breath, letting it be there and the awareness and while I'm doing that, I kind of know light Begin to familiarize myself with what else is going on for me, in my experience in my physical and emotional and mental experience, kind of taking stock of where I'm at what's going on right now. And I've learned that if I kind of rush in to be with a breath in a tight way, like, Okay, I'm going to be this great, you know, I'm going to do the equivalent with mindfulness of breathing as, you know, a car that can go to zero 60 in five seconds, you know, I'm just gonna lock in there and just kind of be there just doesn't work for me. I tend to I tend to quit tends to create strain and stress tends to create kind of a division within me between that which I think was wasn't paying attention to, and all the other aspects of my life which are then kind of push push aside, and don't pay attention to deny or ignore.

And the last thing you want to do when you do mindfulness practice, I believe, is trying to push anything away or deny something, the process of absorption where things fall away. is a very different process than that of pushing things away and say I'm not, you know, or fixating the mind on something so you can not aware of the rest of the world. That's not healthy either. So when I first sit down, it's kind of a light awareness of the breath. And it kind of somewhat light awareness, kind of exploring, taking stock of where I'm at what's going on with me. And so I'll notice things like what I'm concerned about my preoccupations, I'll notice a little bit what I'm feeling emotionally, in my life, right, then when I'm sitting there, I'll notice a little bit about what's going on my body, the tensions in my body, the way my bodies feels that they tired or tense or tight or relaxed or open or whatever it might be. So just feel they kind of open or open in a casual way, what's going on all the while, kind of just lightly being with a breath, kind of casually being with a breath, kind of some breaths I miss, I might miss a series of them. And I don't worry about that and I come back and with a breath for a while and Stick with it, sometimes I can stay with a breath pretty consistently reciprocal light touch, because I'm kind of like, maybe 20% of my awareness is kind of with the breath. And the rest is kind of just being with what else is going on. And I find this very important to do, because one of the things we're trying to do in getting absorbed, and in the breath or the meditation practice, is to overcome the ways in which we're fragmented from each other, from from ourselves. And there are ways in which there's a lot of momentum of fragmentation within our mind, in our hearts, with our preoccupations. And so we might have a lot of things that we were concerned about. We're concerned about things which are not here at this time in this place of interesting things elsewhere, we continue to have conversations with people. We have fears about our finances. We have concerns about this and that. And so the mind is ready to kind of spin off into its concerns quite easily, and that's spinning off into its concerns and thoughts. lend itself Kind of fragmentation of the mind, for the psyche, where the mind, the mind is kind of racing off on its own momentum into these different areas of our life. Often at cross purposes to, to, to itself, the mind could be concerned about two or three different things kind of at once. So in the same general time and place. And so the mind is not the harmonized with itself, but going in different directions. Sometimes we're even in conflict with ourselves another form of fragmentation. We have something that we're, it's going on with us, and we don't like it. We're opposed to it when oppositional mode to it. I don't like this part of me, we judge it, we're critical of it. We feel this is not the right thing to be happening right now. I'm supposed to be absorbing my breath right now. So thinking about my taxes is not a good thing to do. So, you know, so we've kind of, we fragment ourselves off with variety of different ways. Often, there's fragmentation in the body. Maybe it's not, it's not the best word for it, but it If you have a lot of caring a lot of tension in your body, then the tension in your body kind of the body's not hormone, harmonized unit that works together. The shoulders might be tight. So as you breathe the shoulders on, move with your breath, the diaphragm might be tied, the stomach might be tight, different things going on in the body, with the body's kind of having to deal with its own tensions, efforts to hold tight and release the pains of it. And it keeps kind of, you know, it's like we sit down to a really good book. And you can't really get yourself absorbed in the book because you have, you know, all this physical tension can be caring for the day just doesn't want to fall away. So there's a lot of emotionally there might be things that kind of emotionally keep us fragmented variety of ways. So by

taking stock at the beginning of all this going on, there's trying to create kind of a larger container a sense of harmony or sense of, of permanence. permission for all that to be there. And to realize all that stuff of who I am my full humanity, nothing left out is what is the material and the food for the process of getting absorbed on the breath. So all that stuff is going to be kind of corralled, that maybe there might be corralled in or invited in or, or, or harmonized. So that all those faculties of the mind that are concerned about thinking about different things or feeling different things or whatever, are all kind of beginning to kind of unite together to all be interested in involved in the process of breathing. So, kind of a casual, lightweight, being with the breath, kind of taking stock of what's going on here. And then I'll start being bring my attention more closely to the breathing, focusing on it more carefully.

And as I do that, I often become much more acutely aware of some of the main themes of activities in my mind or my emotions that are keeping me fragmented, where we often call the preoccupations. And probably all of you have some experience of preoccupations, you sit down. And, and for me, often, there's a strong physical element to the preoccupation of my thinking. So I start thinking about different things. And I'll start tuning in then while I'm staying with the breath, feeling the breath often, unless it's really dramatic, I'll stay with the breath. But I'll start also being aware of the physical tension or pressure that goes together with my thinking mind. Because if it's a strong preoccupation that keeps coming back again and again, I feel there's some kind of tension somewhere and lately I've been feeling a lot in my face, field my eyes. I feel it in my in my cheeks and jaws and my nose even kind of in my face area. Sometimes I think Feel that elsewhere my body, sometimes I feel my neck or my shoulder sometimes inside the head is kind of pressure. Sometimes I feel that tension in my body is connected to certain kind of preoccupation in my stomach. Barclay's dependent on the emotions that are connected to those thoughts where I feel my body. And so I stay with a breath, being with a breath and I begin feeling of tensions. And I begin to soften them and like let them go, if I can relax them, relax my eyes a little bit. And if I can relax easily, then I'll just hold it in awareness. Keep it in awareness as I stay with the breath. So my potentialism a little bit split between the breath and this tension, maybe my face or my eyes are in my stomach and just can't relax it then holding an awareness tends to be relaxing itself, or tends to keep it from being a distracting force, rather than force rather something that can help me be present. And so there's a lot of emphasis on feeling my body as I do. This, what's going on my body and kind of using kind of feeling how the body is kind of, in a sense fragmented. And as the body relaxes, the body becomes more united, more harmonized, more relaxed together in the flow. And again, this is what I'm saying, what I'm thinking I'm saying is we want to get everything together, lined up together. So it works harmoniously. So there's no wind drag. What I mean by that, if you're riding a bicycle, and you're going down a hill, you want to go as fast as you can. But you want to bring all your limbs in, maybe even duck your head. So you have as little wind drag as possible, you know, your whole your, all your physical body harmonized, working together. So it helps you to go in that direction, you're going well, in meditation, you have the same thing. You want to kind of bring everything in or you want everything lined up. So everything's kind of going in the same direction, so there's less wind drag. And so you want all your faculties everything involved, pointing in the same direction as being with a breath. But you don't want to force yourself to do that. You want to do it in a very compassionate and accepting way of all the forces which are taking

you away from the being with the breath, pulled out in awareness, soften around it, see it clearly, sometimes you stop paying attention to the breath entirely and just hold in awareness. Something else, it's very compelling. That means making it very difficult for me to be with a breath. Part of the function of being with the breath, is to really help us to see what else is going on in our life that's really important that needs attention. So sometimes if I'm just trying to stay with a breath all the time when something else really needs attention, then that create kind of a split, which is not very helpful for me. So occasionally, I'll just let go the breath entirely and give permission to whatever else is going on emotionally or cognitively or physically. And just hold up in awareness while it's there, and just kind of explore it and be mindful of that. But at some point, I can come back to the breathing again and feeling the breath in passing, and then as my what what often happens is as my thinking mind begins to quiet down, and that's no longer kind of distraction so much with a breath, and I'm able to stay with the breath more and more carefully and fully, then I enter the breath more fully, rather than 40%. Now, maybe 60% with the breath more fully kind of like the percentages of being with the breath increases, I kind of get more deeply into the meditation. And then I become more aware of my body in a different way.

And now I become much more acutely aware of what the experience is in my body of being breathed. The how the experience of breathing affects my body. The different places in my body that move as I breathe expanding, and I tend to pay attention, my breath a lot and my torso and my belly and my chest area, my ribcage. And so I began becoming aware of this expanding and contracting movement in this part of my body and I become aware of The ways in which the breath is not relaxed or full ways in which maybe there's some contraction of holding to the breath I breathe in. And I can't really breathe in completely because there's a little bit of tightness maybe in the upper chest, or I can't really breathe out fully because there's some holding there perhaps. And so become aware of the different places my body that seems to be somehow held in check as I breathe, and then I don't try to let go of them so aggressively, but I try. It's almost like a massage. Where as the breath moves in and out as my body expands and contracts, I become aware of the places of holding and I massage it without experience with the Brett with the movements, breathing in and out, feeling what's going on. And that has two functions. One function is that it helps to soften and relax like a massage those places where they might be holding. And also it has a function of keeping me engaged in the breath. I find it actually more interesting to be with a breath, if I'm kind of with the breath. Feeling to places of tension and kind of breathing into them and out of them and into the matter of them. So there's this kind of physical aspect that's going on paying attention to the body as they're breathing, what happens, I'm also very interested in the outer reaches of how the breathing influences the body. It can be, you know, if you're paying attention to the breath of the torso, it can be quite large, the movements of the chest perhaps or the diaphragm or the stomach. But then beyond that, the experience in the body is more more subtle. And I might feel the experience of alternating pressure or pushing little bit down in my, in my groin area down to my hips, you know, it's very subtle at times, or maybe in the in my lower back on my on my spine. There could be movement that's connected with the breathing, or up in the chest area, kind of aware of kind of the wider, more subtle ways in which the breath kind of fills my body or moves to my body comes back. Some people claim that they can feel the influence of the breathing

right down to their toes and into their arms and movement in there. And I've never had too much access experiencing the flow of movement or energy of the breath comes down into my legs. But some people say that they can do that quite beautifully. And for me, that's a possibility for you to now in this whole process, there are also times when my emotional life is not particularly suitable for staying with the breath, where my emotions are quite strong about something. And maybe I feel irritated or angry or I feel excited about something's going to happen or I feel regrets about something that happened or maybe a little bit sad, you know, your whole range of the gamut of emotions that people have. And sometimes I find very important to kind of really give permission to those Be there, feel it. And be aware that they're also in the field, sometimes of stop mindful debriefing entirely to be aware of those emotions. But sometimes you continue with the breath, and kind of imagined that the breath is kind of holding those emotions, or the container for those emotions are aware of the breath and the world emotional life, what's going on, so that both of them are kind of in the same container kind of together and awareness. So not splitting myself off or ignoring Something needs attention. And, and sometimes it stays away in the whole sitting and sometimes, more often, if I hold an emotion awareness, it actually changes quite quickly, to do mindfulness of emotions. And, and then with time, emotions that tend to be not related to the breathing, tend to relax or fall away from my experience and to soften and then As I continue to engage in the breath, this marvelous thing begins to happen where emotions connected to breathing begin to arise. Did you know he had emotions connected to breathing this strange idea a sense of well being, a sense of pleasure or joy can begin to arise in connection to being with the breath. Maybe some of you had the experience of feeling certain kind of joy or delight when you're absorbed in a good book or some kind of physical well being

I don't know if this is a good example but when I used to go and get my you know, the barber for haircut are still gonna go anymore but now still, I still my wife poses my hair proudly. But I still I really like the attention I get of someone kind of cutting my hair. You know, someone kind of kind of, you know, fussing around up there, you know, I hear that a little Contact you touch, you know, maybe I'm weird, but I kind of, you know, I kind of I feel, I feel you're comforted by it. And when I go to the barber I usually like to, I don't want to talk to me, you know, talking because I close my eyes and just take it all in it feels like kind of a wonderful, comforting, safe places to be there and take it all in and, and use it just as physical stuff like this contact Quick, quick clip. But there's a kind of sense of well being of being an intimacy of closeness to kind of kind of settles into my body as I do this. Or perhaps for some people, the analogy would be sitting, maybe in a rainy day, coming in and having a hot cup of tea or something and, and on your couch and maybe even wrap your blanket in the fireplace if you have one. And there's kind of just you know, just fire and just warm tea and not much right. But the whole thing kind of lends itself to kind of change inside your being a sense of inner well being Inner Glow in or something. So the same thing can happen as your with your breathing. There can be different element of this inner well being Inner Glow inner sense of something that develops within you, as you get yourself more and more involved are concentrated on the experience of breathing as you allow the breath to have its influence on you. So this is what I find. And so I find it quite wonderful. The sense of intimacy well being that comes with being with a breath. It's one of the great pleasures of my life is that kind of experience arises from that. And as I feel that those kinds of emotions or sense of well being

that comes with a breathing, then it becomes actually easier to be focused on the breath, and more interested in the breath. Now, it's become an interesting thing because it's much more interesting feel that well being that comes from concentrating on the breath than it is to think about my taxes. Which you know, doesn't, you know, bring me a lot of happiness. So I began kind of it can become becomes kinda like a biofeedback system that can uh, keeps me focused and interesting. In a breath and being, you know, concentrated in the breathing and, and so then I get more closely involved with the breath, feeling the breath and more carefully. And as I start feeling the breath more and more carefully, I start paying attention to subtleties of the breath, the subtleties of the sensations, what actually happens maybe in one area of my body, whereas earlier I might be aware of the breath and kind of more globally the expansion and contraction of my whole torso. As I get more concentrated, my attention narrows to smaller smaller area. And, and usually I stay in one little spot, maybe a little spot in my stomach, sometimes a little bit higher up and diaphragm area, sometimes I feel my chest area, but I tend to be one little spot in, in feeling. query concentrate continually as best I can is continuously as I can, what's happening there with breathing the different sensations that arise since a pressure and release of it movement, the tautness, the release of the tautness, the there's a whole series of sensations began happening that one little area. And as I do this, one of things that begins happening is that the breath becomes calmer and calmer. And the breath becomes more and more still. Still, almost. There are times where I feel like I'm almost not breathing at all. And in fact, there's occasionally times where I seem to stop breathing entirely. You're staying there staying there. And that says a number of reasons why the breath becomes more more still as you as you get concentrated. One of them I suspect, is that as the mind gets more concentrated, and all the kind of preoccupations of the mind and excitement in the mind concerned by different things fall away. You need a lot less oxygen. I'm not a physiologist, but I've read that a huge percentage of the oxygen you breathe in is used for the brain. And, and so once you mind as your brain doesn't need to use that much, because it's not so active anymore, so busy thinking about taxes, then, you know, you don't have to breathe as much anymore. Also, I think the sense of harmony in the body that comes with breathing, where things are all harmonized and working together, compose together, also lends itself to needing less oxygen. And so physiologically, you don't need to breathe as much. And there might be other things going on

why the breath becomes more and more subtle and quiet. And while at some point, you have almost no experience of breathing at all. In other aspects, or another reason for this is that as the breath as we get more and more concentrated with almost any object of concentration, but also more concentrated on the breath and there's a sense of well being that comes together with a sense of softness of relaxing, then the experience of the body tends to become softer and softer, tends to become more and more lighter. And in fact, the times the sense of having a body can heal parts of the body can fall away when you meditate. I've sat in meditation and even wondered whether, you know, if I disappeared, and then you kind of cheat, right, you open your eyes and you know, I know it's still there. And I think a lot of the some of the softening and disappearing of the body has to do with the harmonizing effect of meditation. As all the different ways that we fragmented from each other were cross purposes with each other fall away, then the body gets softer and more harmonized until it becomes at some point kind of a flow of vibration. Sometimes when I get really concentrated in the

body becomes softer. Sometimes there's one or two places in my body that are left it's kind of hard and some places Maybe some tension are holding or something is still there someplace. And so then it's interesting to bring attention to that and just hold that in awareness until that softens. And that quiets down also becomes a subtle vibration. And sometimes the whole body disappears, in addition to the breath seeming to disappear. The breath doesn't have to disappear in meditation. And the body doesn't have to disappear in meditation. But it's one of those things that can happen when there's this full absorption in the experience of breathing. Well before the experience of the breath, seeming to disappear, you know, getting very, very subtle, you can't even have a hard time finding it. As we stay with a breath and see, you know, I try to see are there ways in which I can kind of bring more of who I am on board with this experience of breathing. So, my body for example, can I bring more of my body into this experience of breathing sometimes I pay attention My posture because posture actually has something to do is for me, so am I composed in my breath and my body. Sometimes if I leaning forward too much in my meditation or slumping too much, I might be getting absorbed in the breath and getting concentrated. But actually, not all of me is not kind of quite in it. Part of me is kind of my body's little bit unconscious in a sense. And I find it sometimes more helpful to sit up in a more aligned way and my chest open, more open people more balanced my spine. And that actually helps me with the process of bringing my body on board with the experience of breathing. So I've talked for a long time. I don't know maybe some of you have convinced you by now that's really boring. Maybe this has been boring for you to listen to going on and on about the breath. So I apologize if I bored you. But my intention was to try to inspire you to inspire you to inspire has the word breath in it. To to take a greater interest in your breathing. And that's one of your capacities, one of your intelligences is interest. So you want to bring that on board also be interested in your breath. And then as you do that, you want to pay attention to make sure that your interest is not too interested. You know, if you get too eager and you know if you know, and then that doesn't work, there has to be kind of a light, relaxed touch. But you don't wanna be too relaxed. Some people. Some people bring the intelligence of relaxation, too much to bear on meditation, and then you get to relax. You don't wanna be too relaxed either. You don't want to be to make you know, you don't want to apply too much effort, and you don't apply too little effort. And you want to bring your efforts along in a harmonious way. The word for there often the word Samadhi is translated in different ways than concentration, sometimes translated into English as a collectiveness or unification. of mind and heart and body, uniting of different faculties of who we are. So again, underscore one of the themes of the talk today is that mindfulness of breathing, as it develops, involves a harmonizing and bringing together collecting of all aspects of who you are. So it's all aligned and working in harmony. For the process of being engaged as quickly as possible, in this experience, as you do that, you'll learn a lot about yourself. Because you can't

bring everything on board to be aligned and working in the same direction, unless you understand all the things that are taking you away from that. And you should be very welcoming about all the things you've learned about yourself in that process. It's really great. And that's one of the functions of mindfulness of breathing, is to learn about all the aspects of who you are, that keep you from being concentrated on the breath. So even if, even if you can't get constantly breathe, if you can't get concentrated on the breath, The meditation practice still works fantastically well. If you pay attention to

what it is it makes it difficult for you to concentrate on the breath. That's all you're asked to do. Oh, taxes and then not just taxes, anxiety, or whatever it might be right. So it would be nice maybe if any of you have questions. I think we can have one or two questions before we stop for lunch. for clarification, yes.

Yeah, if, if, if I'm getting really absorbed engaged in the breath very closely in the breasts begins to kind of get quieter and calmer, my attention tends to go in one particular place in the breath. Some people know it's up here, and for me, it tends to be somewhere in the torso often in this area below the belly. And sometimes sometimes sometimes it's a little bit higher, groped up to the area kind of center of the chest sometimes, where I feel it's almost almost the more quiet and subtle the breath gets smaller and smaller the areas of where the attention is going.

Okay, so, okay, so a few things and then we'll stop for lunch. So Fiona asked is, you know, in addition to the kind of insights that your understandings that arise, but all the things that keep you from being focused on the breath, are there insights that come actually from the concentration itself. So, I just want to say one more thing about the understandings about ourselves that come as we get concentrated, that the more concentrated a person becomes, the more we tend to, to flush out the deeper and deeper kind of core aspects of who we are which are which keeps us from being really centered and at peace with ourselves. So, you know, if you first first sit down, and you notice that the mind is so distracted by taxes, my suggestion is taxes is not a very profound aspect of our psyche, but it but it's kind of like what's there first, and you become aware Oh, I'm really concerned about this. But as that falls away, and you get more concentrated and calm, then you might notice that the deeper down there's some deep fear about your about being in relationship with other people. And then that settles after a while you might see a deeper noun that is a deep fear of or deep kind of attachment to life being a certain way or, you know, there's deeper and deeper core issues that tend to surface get flushed out, the quieter and quieter the mind gets. And, and so just appreciate that process of flushing things out and learning how to wisely and compassionately hold everything that comes. The as the as we get more concentrated Cause being concentrating the breath is not an it can be seen as the end in itself. But traditionally, it's not an end in itself. It's a means eventually to develop, have certain other kinds of insights and develop other kinds of freedoms. And, and at some point, in the meditation practice, there's a shift from insight into that which is, has to do with that, which is a personal nature to that which is more universal. And so initially, it's all you know, things that keep you from being concentrated, settled, a lot of personal things, personal issues. And anyone can be a lot of understanding and how I, you know, we are, how we function individually what makes us tick? Oh, I didn't know that's why I tend to always do this, you know, Oh, now I understand why that this triggers me. You know, it's all about you know, it's it has to do with you as an individual. having to do with your own biography, your own life, history and various things. The theme conditioning. But at some point, as all that falls away all this gets harmonized. Part of the advantage of all that falling away is then we can start tuning in or noticing that which is more universal. And it's universally true for everybody. And part of the part of the function of deep concentration in Buddhism is to begin having some deep insight into what's more universal in human human experience. And the, the, the teachings of the Buddhism

are that the deeper forms of freedom that can come or not freedom from only our personal kind of hangups, but as freedom from the kind of aspects of our psyche, which we're born with, in that only, only will free up all aspects of freedom that only comes when the psyche begins tuning into that which is more universal.