

Mindfulness

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So these weeks I am going through what's known as the seven faculties, seven capacities that we all have, which are cultivated and developed in the course of traditional Buddhist practice. In their cultivation, when they are really strong, when you develop different latent capacities that we all have, in a sense, they can be developed to the point of being quite strong. Then they're no longer called the five faculties, but they are called the five powers. So there are powers that we can carry with us and use in different ways in our life. These five are confidence, effort, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom or discernment. I've talked—two weeks ago I talked about the first, that of confidence.

Last week I talked about effort, and today I want to talk about mindfulness. Mindfulness is really key to what we do here. The Insight Meditation Practice core practice is mindfulness practice. It's one of the jewels in the crown, the crown of Buddhism. When the Seven Crown Jewels, I guess it's very, very important in the Buddhist tradition, and something that Buddhists will cultivate and develop with great enthusiasm.

The question is, what is mindfulness? And how do we practice it? How does the practice of mindfulness relate to these five faculties which get developed? How is it that mindfulness can become a power, not just a possibility, not just a capacity we have that we use here and there, but actually a power that we carry with us? So the word for mindfulness is *sati* in Pāli, in Sanskrit it is *smṛti*, and the probably simplest definition that kind of respects the ancient meaning of it is something like keeping something in the mind, holding something in the mind.

To keep something in the mind, to be mindful is to keep in mind. So if you have something important you have to remember, you keep it in mind. If you are aware of or focus on your breath in the course of meditation, you keep the breath in mind. To keep something in mind, keep something in awareness. To hold it in awareness, bear it in mind, is kind of the meaning, so you can kind of remember it in a silly way, perhaps. Or to be mindful is to fill the mind, keep the mind full of what's happening in the present moment in some way.

The word *sati* also has the meaning in the ancient language of to remember. So that also

means to hold something in mind, to remember something you hold in mind for a long time. To remember is to be *sati*, so that the English word to recollect also works as the translation, or to keep in mind. But to recollect, or to recollect what you have to remember, to recollect the place of your life, to recollect the purpose of the practice, or recollect your values, to keep it in mind—all these different things.

So the word keep in mind is where the expression is relatively somewhat ambiguous: exactly what it means. The word *sati* in Pāli is a little bit ambiguous. You don't want to have it fixed in a definition. Now I know what it means: it just means to, you know, to be aware of the present moment, or just means to know what's happening. There's a range of things that *sati* means, just as the expression to keep in mind has a little kind of a range of things that it means. It's sometimes been said to be akin to or the same as a presence of mind.

When there's a real strong presence of mind, there's a lot of things that are there. Often there's a keen awareness at the present moment, a keen awareness that you're aware, a strong presence, but you cannot know you're present. Then you cannot know you're here. A presence of mind also has an element of discernment or wisdom as part of it. You know, the salesman came to my door to sell me a piece of the moon, and I had the presence of mind to know that that was not a good investment.

So there's a certain kind of understanding, street smarts that can go with a certain, say, presence of mind. It isn't just simply having awareness. The opposite of a real strong presence of mind perhaps would be someone who's deranged, going really crazy, or someone who's phenomenally furious or angry. Perhaps there's not much presence of mind in that activity. That person can still be aware. They're aware of who they're yelling at, but there's not much presence of mind.

They're not really aware what they're doing. They're not aware of the context of what they're doing, or the impact they have. There isn't much presence of mind. We might say even though there might be a lot of awareness, some crazy person might be very much in the present moment. There's no presence of mind, so that it's a spectrum or a range from having no presence of mind at all, while being aware, perhaps, to being aware and having tremendous presence of mind, very strong presence of mind, to the sense of presence of mind, it feels really palpable.

And so, as a person, you know you're really here, you know you're here, and you're very clear about your response to reactions and your kind of control. To have a very strong presence of mind, I think, has some element of being in control of the situation—not the situation, but

control of your ability to respond to the situation. You can act or not act in a situation as is needed. You're not going to act reactively. You have enough presence of mind to see a reaction arise, but you're not going to buy into it. You're not going to be caught by it. You just let it be.

So to be mindful is to have a presence of mind. To develop mindfulness is to develop a very strong presence of mind or a strong sense of presence being here. It's said that *sati* is like salt, which is needed in every curry or in every soup. So salt—*sati*, mindfulness—is needed in every practice, in every state of mind, every experience. *Sati* is always useful. And the Buddhists say you can never have too much *sati*, too much mindfulness.

You can have too much faith. You can have too much wisdom. They say you can have too much effort. You know, you put too much energy into your practice. You can have too much concentration, but you can never have too much mindfulness. So *sati* is this presence of mind, or this ability to keep something in mind.

It has a number of functions. The first one is the one I think most people here in the West are familiar with. It's a kind of function or an aspect of mindfulness which is celebrated by many teachers. Thích Nhất Hạnh has a great book called *The Miracle of Mindfulness*. When he talks about this, it is to live in the present moment with a certain directness and alertness, to be present for our experience as it's happening.

That's kind of the simplest way many people in the West understand what mindfulness is: mindfulness is to be present and aware of what's happening in the present moment. This is something which is available all the time to all of us. It's a possibility to be directly alert, present, aware of what's happening here in your body. As you're sitting here, you can tune into your body right now. You can feel your stomach, your chest, your arms, your head, your back, contact with your chair or the ground. A direct awareness of what's happening is available any moment.

It's celebrated. Partly because an enhanced awareness of the present moment brings a lot of pleasure, a lot of enjoyment of life, it can bring a lot of healing in our life. Partly, if you're really present, you're kind of protected from those harmful consequences that can arise when the mind is not present. If you're not present, you're not going to see the red light, and you can have an accident when you're driving. If you're not present, your mind is lost, you know, in thinking about the future, the past.

And you're not going to notice that I just said something really wise because you weren't really

here. You drifted off. You didn't have the presence of mind to really hold Gil Dharma talk in your mind, and your mind wandered off. And you'll never be the same. You've missed the chance, and so you know. You often see the consequences of not being present.

It's not very helpful for us. And so in being present, there's a lot of wonderful things that can happen. It can be healing for some of us, you know. It's refreshing to go and see the sunset at the beach, or to be in the woods, or really be present for that experience, or to go listen to music and really be present. Some years ago I went to a concert, and before the intermission I had a hard time to be really present for the music.

My mind kept wandering off and drifting and judging and analyzing the orchestra. I finally had to close my eyes so I could hear the music, and only then would the mind quiet down, settle down enough to really take in the music and be able to keep it in mind, the music and hear it, have her presence there. After the intermission, then I was arrived by time, and so then I came back, and I kept my eyes open, and I wasn't distracted any more. I could really be there for the music. And that was delightful to be there for that music.

The analogy I sometimes like of developing our strong presence of mind, really being here, fully present, is that of someone who is living in a house. Maybe they're born in this house. They never left the house. The curtains have been pulled their whole lifetime, and they have this great television. It's not just nowadays, you know, a television is cool. Like if you have a twenty inch television now, you are like ancient; you're supposed to have a television that's fifty-two inches.

You know, that's really, if you're cool, it's a really big television. And yet maybe you're born into a house that has a big television or the flat screens that's up against the wall. It's very nice. And you have cable. Someone told me under cable they get six hundred channels. So you're born into this house that has six hundred channels.

It's great, big, you know. There's a lot of great things on television. It's interesting. You can watch comedy and news and sports and, you know, the whole range and the shocking channel, and you know there's a lot of worthwhile things you can do there. If you get bored, you can change the channel, and you can see something different, and you'll be constantly entertained, and you can have control, you know, boring. You have the wisdom to change.

To me, more interesting and it's a vivid color television. It's very vivid and very pleasant and beautiful music as nice speaker systems on the side. And you have surround sound, I guess, you know, different sides. Now, if you have the bathroom, of course, there is a little television

that keeps you connected, because it's always important to be connected, right? That's part of the goal of religious life—to be connected. So you have the television with you, you know, the little one in the bathroom, and of course in the hallway, and of course in your bedroom, and of course in the kitchen, and you probably have a split screen.

So you're really connected with things, and you're born into this house, and that's the way you live, and you don't know any better. You know, that's all there is, and you're pretty happy, and someone tells you, "You know, there's more interesting ways of living. You can go outside." "No, no, no. This is really great. It's really wonderful. You believe I have six hundred channels." Someday, after you've been doing that for thirty, forty years, the electricity goes out, and so you can wonder, "What do I do now?"

Well, there's a door here, so you open the door and you go outside, and you're just amazed at a three-dimensional world. You know, your world was two-dimensional all that time, and suddenly there's three dimensions, and not only three dimensions, but all your senses come alive. There's the feeling of the breeze against your cheeks, and the smell of the flowers, and a feeling of humidity. Perhaps now all kinds of wonderful things, and the new world suddenly seems three-dimensional, and the world now has come alive in a very different way. That's somehow the way it can be with a strong presence of mind.

People who do practice, sometimes have a regular practice, meditation practice, sometimes will have that experience of a kind of coming out of meditation when they've cultivated a very strong presence, kind of let go of the tendency of the mind to wander and drift and not be here, be distracted, or not really be here in a direct way, and the whole world just seems to sparkle, just amazing. You can look down at a piece of trash on the sidewalk and—whoa! That's far out. It's beautiful. Can you believe your glittering silver down there in this candy wrapper? And it sounds silly, right? We don't admit that in public, because you know, you know that people think you're strange, but things start sparkling, coming alive when the mind is not clouded by a lot of distractions, by a lot of preoccupations.

There's a kind of directness in our experience, in our life. A lot of the ways in which we suffer have to do with being preoccupied. So part of the celebrating of the present moment and really being present, where this life as it actually is, is an antidote to the suffering that comes from being distracted. In the classic texts, one of the definitions of mindfulness is to have a mind which is not distracted. It's a definition of absence. What's absent? A distracted mind.

But when the mind is not distracted, then there's a strong presence of mind or strong ability to keep the present moment in mind, to keep what's going on in the present. So that's one

of the primary functions of mindfulness, and that's what's most well known here in the West. But there are other functions of mindfulness, very important ones, especially very important ones as part of the Buddhist path. What I'll do is describe these in relationship to the other four faculties. These other four capacities make up a very important list in Buddhism, so I'll go through them again.

Confidence or faith, trust—the first one; effort; mindfulness; concentration; and wisdom. Mindfulness works together with the other four to bring them into balance with each other. It's considered one of the functions of mindfulness is to balance these other four. As I said, you can have too much faith. You can have blind faith. Faith needs to be balanced with wisdom.

It's a function of mindfulness to help bring those into balance. You can have too much wisdom, as in understanding, intellectual understanding, and not enough kind of heartfelt quality, kind of mind over the heart—you can be in your mind, your head, and understand a lot, but you don't really have a heartfelt connection, a sense of confidence or trust or heartfeltness in that connection, a dry understanding. So it's said that mindfulness, wisdom, needs to be balanced with faith. Effort needs to be balanced with concentration. If you have too much effort, then it's said the person becomes too agitated. There's too much energy going through.

But you need to have to match the effort with concentration, because concentration will bring a tranquillity or quietness to the mind. Quietness to the system—you can have really a lot of energy and you can also not be restless. You can be at rest. At the same time, if you have too much concentration and not enough effort, the tendency is to fall asleep or get sleepy or a kind of dullness in the mind. We need to bring up the effort. The Buddhist spiritual life is understood to be a life of balance, the middle path.

Coming into balance—Buddhist practice is always about finding the balance among many different things, and these five faculties point to some of these issues. Balance and mindfulness doesn't need to be balanced, but mindfulness is what allows the others to be balanced. You have to have a presence of mind in order to see what needs to happen in order to bring the others in balance. So faith is a partner to mindfulness. It's a very important aspect. When there's faith, when faith is present, mindfulness is seen as a refuge, as a source of protection, as a source of inspiration.

Partly when there's faith or confidence, then there can be a connection of the mindfulness to the ultimate values and goals of Buddhist practice. The possibility of freedom, the possibility

of not being caught, the possibility of protection is a word which is used a lot by tradition: being protected from being caught by all the different ways that the mind gets caught and preoccupied in ways that often harm us, harm ourselves. Part of the function of faith is to help us be inspired and keep us inspired with a big picture of what the mindfulness practice is about, why we're being mindful. We're not just being mindful for the value of mindfulness. We're being mindful because mindfulness brings a lot of benefit to our life.

It's extremely helpful—a state of mind, a practice to have. So we keep the bigger picture that what we're trying to do when we're practicing mindfulness is to help liberate the mind, help free the mind or the heart, help not being caught by our experience, help develop a useful presence in our life so that we can bring that presence to our friends and family and ourselves and to the world that we live in. When mindfulness is connected to effort, then mindfulness is likened to a watchman, watchperson, watchman. In the ancient world, when they had walled cities, there would be a gate into a walled city, and there'd be a watchman, a guardsman, a watchman at the gate.

That watchman's job was to see who was leaving and arriving into the city. If who was arriving shouldn't be coming into the city, then the function of the guardsman was the watchman: "No, you can't come in." If they were desirable types, then they would let them come in. The function of the watchman is to watch who is coming in and out. This is an ancient analogy I'm giving you.

So part of the function of mindfulness is to be your own guard, in a sense, and to watch very carefully what you allow in and out, especially in terms of what you choose to act on. All kinds of things arise in your awareness, arise in the mind—impulses, desires, wishes, thoughts—and the function of mindfulness is to stand guard over the mind and to have some choice about what you allow into your operating system, what you operate on, what you act on. So you have some choice. That's a very important ethical aspect where we apply ourselves. Then we make effort not to be taken over by a strong impulse that arises.

So the mindfulness protects us from being swept away by a strong impulse. You're walking down the street, you walk by an ice cream parlor, and the next thing you know you're holding an ice cream in your hand. Then you've been taken over. The watchman wasn't there. But if you can really see the impulse to want ice cream arise and you choose wisely, have presence of mind to choose wisely whether it's useful to buy the ice cream or not, then mindfulness is operating and you might decide, "No, I don't need one. I just had one an hour ago, so no, I don't need one. I'll let it go."

So you stand watch over the mind. Part of mindfulness is to stand watch and apply effort, the kind of effort to choose and let go of things which are not useful, and to pick up those things which are useful, to act on those things which should be acted on. So part of the function of mindfulness is to ensure that what arises in the mind does not cause further harm, doesn't lead you to a harmful direction, but rather may lead you to beneficial directions. Now, it can be said that we cannot have much control over what pops up in our mind. All kinds of things will pop up, you know.

I feel very lucky that when I was a young boy, I was about fourteen or so, thirteen, my father said to me—and I gave my father some talks—he pulled me aside. He said, “Gil, as you grow up, you can have some really bizarre thoughts. Everyone does. Don't worry about it.” And guess what? Periodically I have really bizarre thoughts and I have been warned about it. So I didn't feel terrible or guilty or ashamed. It's all, “This is interesting,” and all kinds of things can pop up.

So mindfulness is just allowed to pop—not to be reactive, not to criticize or blame or feel like you shouldn't have murderous rage, you know. All kinds of things can arise. So there's a kind of art in mindfulness in learning how to step out of the way or give space or pause that allows our inner life to be there as it is, in a certain way, to arise as it is. The arising, you allow the arising to happen, and not be judgmental about it, not be critical or not to deny it. To deny it or to hate what's happening just adds more harm to the system, just causes more difficulties for us.

You don't deny, you don't admit what's going on. You also don't want to necessarily grab everything that arises. You don't have to. You want to have the presence of mind that has some choice of what to do with what has arisen. Part of the choice is just let it be. You don't have to take it personally. You don't have to use what has arisen as a way to define who you are.

“I am a terrible person because anger arose.” You can just be—anger arising—without any conclusions being made. So part of the function of mindfulness is to see the possibility of just leaving things alone, just this by itself. Another function of mindfulness is to help or meet what's happened or add to what's happening helpful states. So the old things arise on their own. Things also arise in our mind because we prompt them, we encourage them, and we can take some control—or control maybe not the best word, but we can take some responsibility for what arises in our minds.

We can't take absolute responsibility. You can't have complete control over exactly all the

things that happen in your mind. You want to control your mind, you are in trouble. But you can take some responsibility for the state of your mind, for the quality of your mind. So part of the joining together of mindfulness and effort is that when there's a presence of mind, we can also make the effort to encourage helpful qualities of mind, helpful states of mind, helpful activities of the mind.

It's said that one of the most healthy activities of the mind is mindfulness itself. So if anger or something uncomfortable arises, you can choose to just bring more mindfulness, more non-reactive awareness to that experience—just that, that's enough. That's a very wise thing to do. In the vipassanā movement, we put a lot of emphasis on meeting the experience with this very skillful state of more mindfulness. We don't even talk about skillful or unskillful, or helpful and unhelpful. Just talk about just keep being mindful.

But mindfulness is understood to be a helpful state to bring, to have present. There are a lot of other states that you can bring up, qualities or things in the mind you can bring up. Sometimes it's helpful to bring up loving-kindness. Sometimes it's helpful to bring up a sense of discipline. Sometimes it's helpful to bring up a sense of compassion or concentration, or wisdom, or many different things to meet what's going on, and to water seeds of wholesomeness or skillfulness, beneficial seeds in the mind. So those seeds can grow.

But what grows in the mind depends a lot upon what you feed. If you feed your anger, anger will grow. If you feed your love, love will grow. So part of the function of mindfulness and effort is to see what's there in the mind, and see what's possible in the mind, and then make some effort to shape or to water or feed that which you want to encourage, and not feed that which you don't want to encourage. Taking some responsibility for the mind. We don't want to abdicate our responsibility as practitioners.

Buddhism has put a lot of emphasis on responsibility, but even though we can't control, ultimately I liken this kind of quality of taking responsibility and nurturing that which is skillful and helpful to that of having a grandmotherly mind. The grandmotherly mind in Buddhism is understood to be a mind that loves the children, loves the grandchildren with great acceptance, a great equanimity, has seen the ups and downs of children, and doesn't take every little drama as being such a major issue. But rather, you know, first-time parents are so fragile, have to be very careful about first-time parents. I've noticed that—it's first-hand experience. But grandmothers, you know, like my mother, you know, "Abigail, you're too worried," or whatever.

So to have this kind of spacious quality of mind, but at the same time as nurturing that which

is helpful, has a wise approach to not getting caught up in the drama of what is unskillful in a child. Today I came home. There was a message on our machine from another mother. My son was going to have a play date this afternoon after school, and I guess it's in the morning. The mother called my wife to say, "Oh, I don't think Jeremy can now have a play date. I don't think Torrance should come over to our house. He's already had three meltdowns today, and he's taken the padlocks and locked them up. They cut the car seats together, and we can't find the keys. My husband is now out there with a tire iron trying to change the padlocks. We take our son to school—all before eight o'clock in the morning."

So it helps to have a grandmotherly mind. It's said that greed, hatred, and delusion cannot be present when there is mindfulness. So mindfulness itself is understood to be a very healing and helpful state of mind to have. As long as you are mindful, as long as you have this very clear presence of mind of what's happening, in an odd way it says there can be no greed, hatred, or delusion present. I don't quite completely understand this. It's a piece of orthodoxy, almost a kind of article of faith among some Buddhists. This is true, but how I understand it is when the presence of mind is strong, in that presence of mind, you're not liable to act on greed, hatred, or delusion even though it might be kind of circulating around in there.

So that's mindfulness. And effort comes into play with mindfulness. Mindfulness relates to effort. Make an effort. Then mindfulness is connected to concentration. Concentration supports mindfulness by supporting a continuity of mindfulness over time.

So it isn't just simply, we touch into the present moment every five minutes or once an hour or something. Maybe, "Oh, here I am." But rather, the presence of mind is here continuously, the continuity of presence. This becomes extremely important if you want to take the mindfulness to its full potential. In Buddhist practice, you cannot take mindfulness to its full potential without cultivating continuity—it's not enough just to touch in periodically; you want to develop and strengthen it so it becomes a power that stays, you know, moment by moment by moment.

You're really present to track what's going on. It's not a phenomenally high degree of mindfulness you need, or continuity or concentration you need. It's not like, you know, you see the Olympics or something you have to train for. Probably the amount of concentration you have when you read a really good novel and you're so much into it that someone knocks on your door, you don't hear the knock—has that happened to some of you? Sometimes that's probably all you need to take mindfulness all the way to enlightenment. Isn't that reassuring? But you have to be as interested in your practice as you are with that novel, and that's

hard. But if you could be that interested, you could have an easy time.

So part of the function of concentration is to bring a stability to the mindfulness, to help you with that continuity, to keep you fixated or engaged in the present without the mind tending to wander off and be scattered. It's likened in the tradition to a post. In the ancient world, they sometimes had these big posts or pillars that they would put into the front of a city. They would go like, you know, it may be a thirty-foot post, but ten feet of it would be buried in the ground so that it was really stable and strong. You couldn't budge it. So that kind of pillar—mindfulness, if concentration provides mindfulness, that kind of stability where you're not going to be pushed over a lot.

You're not going to be swept up by things, and you're going to stay rooted in the present moment, really rooted, really grounded here. The marrying together of concentration and mindfulness in the way I'm talking here has a word in Pāli called *appamāda*. It's one of the most important words in Buddhism. It's very closely connected with mindfulness. It's the word that Buddha used in the last thing he said before he died. The last phrase he said was, "Practice with..." Some people translate as vigilance. Some people translate it as conscientiousness. Some people translate as continuous mindfulness—practice with continuity, with your practice mindfully, carefully, moment by moment.

Then mindfulness is sometimes connected to wisdom, or arises together with wisdom, has an aspect of wisdom that's very important to it. It's often understood in the tradition that mindfulness is not stupid mindfulness, in a sense—mindfulness is not just simply knowing things as they actually are in the moment. You know your breath as it actually is. Mindfulness also has the quality of being wise or discerning about what's happening in the present moment. So one of the aspects of wisdom is to know where it's useful to place your attention, your mindfulness.

There's a lot of different things you can be mindful of in the present moment. When I was first introduced to vipassanā practice, this mindfulness practice in Thailand, I practiced in a monastery where I was given a little hut to practice by myself, with interviews every day. So I went back to my hut to practice the first day or two, and I understood—I had understood the instructions to say, "Pay attention to everything." To me, pay attention to everything. I was wise enough to know I couldn't do that because so much was happening at the present moment. I couldn't be mindful of all of it.

So I thought, I'll just pay attention to the sounds in the monastery—it was a very noisy monastery. So I tried to catch every sound. My mind was racing to catch them all. I just

got a headache and I went back to the teacher and I said, “You know, I can’t.” “Oh no, pay attention to everything, but one thing at a time.” It sounded like serial monogamy, you know. You pay careful attention, fully committed to this thing that’s arisen and then the next thing that’s arisen, you know? So we pass a serial monogamy, so you know.

But some things are more useful to pay attention to than others; you can have some discernment or wisdom where you put your attention. The Buddha, in defining right mindfulness in the *Eightfold Path*, defined it as the *Four Foundations of Mindfulness*. He said it’s useful to pay attention to your body. It’s useful to pay attention to the feelings, the feeling tones of your experience. It’s useful to pay attention to your state or quality of mind, the quality of your consciousness. And it’s useful to pay attention to some of the processes that occur within your mind.

That’s not the same thing as saying it’s useful to pay attention to everything. It doesn’t mention paying attention to sounds outside, particularly. There are a lot of things you don’t think. It doesn’t say explicitly pay attention to thought, your thinking. It pays—it’s actually a subset of the full human experience that the Buddha defines as right mindfulness as part of the path. That’s a little bit different from the way the mindfulness is taught here in the West.

When we teach people to pay attention to everything, it’s a little bit different understanding. But there are some things which are more useful to pay attention to than other things, and it can be wise to have some choice about where you bring your presence, what you have presence for, what you’re present for. So to recollect, to remember, to be mindful of certain things. One of the forms of mindfulness is called *marāṇa-sati*. *Marāṇa* means death. So mindfulness of death, recollection of death.

This means it’s a little more active than simply a kind of non-discursive awareness. It means to bring up and recollect, to keep in mind the subject of death. Maybe think about it, because in a way that’s supposed to be helpful for a spiritual process. The texts say explicitly, if being mindful of or recollecting death brings up grief and distress, then don’t do it. But if it helps arouse your sense of inspiration, your sense of purpose, your sense of urgency, your sense of clarifying your values, what’s really important in your life, it can be to your benefit to spend time recollecting death, to be mindful of the subject of death and dying.

I’m reminded of Catholic monks—sometimes I’ve been told who would keep, in Italy or somewhere, where they keep the coffin they can be buried in, in the room, the concern kind of reminder that’s always there. Another thing that’s considered very helpful is *ānāpānasati*—mindfulness of breathing in and mindfulness of breathing out. There’s a focus. This is really

useful to pay attention to. To me, the whole Buddhist path can be fulfilled by focusing on the breath. You don't have to worry about paying attention to anything else, if you learn how to do that really well—*ānāpānasati*.

There's another *sati* called *Buddhānussati*, another Pāli word, but *Buddhānusmṛti* in Sanskrit: mindfulness of the Buddha, recollection of the Buddha, keeping the Buddha in mind, the qualities of the Buddha. For Buddhists who remember the qualities of the Buddha, the purity of the Buddha's mind, the liberated quality of the Buddha's mind, the compassion of the Buddha—that's supposed to create a tremendous inspiration for practice that traditionally Buddhists will spend a lot of time remembering and being inspired by. Here in the West, sometimes we don't like a devotional aspect, and so we don't want to do that so much. But in tradition, that's considered very helpful as a practice of mindfulness, to be mindful of the qualities of the Buddha. Again, it's kind of a discursive mindfulness.

As you remember, mindfulness has a range of meanings, because just in the same way that keeping in mind has a range of meanings, there is also the idea of keeping in mind that which is helpful or that which is lovely, that which is beautiful. So those qualities of mind which are beautiful and helpful for us—to keep those in mind. It's said, you know, keeping something in mind, bringing attention and awareness to something, is a way of feeding things. The beautiful aspects of our psyche are fed by awareness. It's one of the great things of how the mind works. The more aware you are, the more you bring non-reactive mindfulness, this presence of mind, it has a way of feeding the beautiful, and it has a way of starving that which is harmful and nothing.

That's really remarkable. Just simply bring a very strong presence of mind. The analogy I like for it is that of a greenhouse that maybe the curtains are pulled. So it's wet and damp and hot in the greenhouse. So long as the curtains are pulled, the mould grows, you know, and the algae, and you just kind of don't even want to go in there. If you pull the curtains, and the sunshine comes into the greenhouse, the sun just kind of dries up all that little moss and algae and stuff, and all the beautiful flowers there can blossom and grow, and it's great.

So the flowers, the plants grow with the light of awareness, and the moss and the ugly things, the mould stuff, dry up in the light of awareness. Part of this keeping in mind, bringing together wisdom and mindfulness, is keeping in mind the big picture, the potential possibility of a spiritual life, so that when we are engaged in mindfulness practice, moment by moment, there is an aspect that we keep in mind, that we're working with the deepest and fullest possibility of setting the mind, the heart free. I think that this is said—not said but interpreted,

but said explicitly or implicitly in the texts called the *Four Foundations of Mindfulness*, where we're encouraged to pay attention to the qualities of an enlightened mind even in the rudimentary kind of form within us. We're taught to pay attention to the *Four Noble Truths*, which are a key aspect of liberation in Buddhist tradition.

So we keep in mind those aspects of life which are liberating, which are beautiful. To keep in mind the possibility of using this mindfulness to set the mind free. So it's not just simply to be present for the sunset, not just present enough to reduce our stress or to have psychological healing, but to have a sense of a much bigger potential of realization that the practice in the traditional form is all about. So to keep that in mind, as I think it's a very important part of keeping the fire going and inspiration going and making the practice useful.

Recollecting the noble life, which is always available to us. Recollecting that life, a life of nobility, a life of living in a way that's noble—the nobility that Buddhism focuses so much about requires you, somebody who really has a sense of nobility, has a very strong sense of presence, I think. When someone is carrying themselves that way, there's a real presence of being, a presence of mind in nobility, a spirit that people can have. So to keep in mind that presence, to cultivate the nobility of being, of spirit, with all the things that come with it.

So those are all aspects of mindfulness. Mindfulness is incredibly powerful. It's a great protection. It's a great gift we give to the world around us. It's something we all have as a possibility, and it's something we can all develop. You get a sense of it perhaps as you develop a presence of mind, a presence of being, and cultivate that until it becomes a power you carry with you everywhere. And as it becomes a power, the Buddhist path will become a slide, and you'll just slide down. So may you all get to the top of the slide and then let go.