

2004-11-10 The Five Faculties (Part 1)

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SPEAKERS

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This is a second class of our three part series. And the common element of these three classes is that when a person is developing mindfulness meditation, it's helpful to track certain things. So whereas mindfulness practice in its kind of essence is simply being present for things as they are paying careful, mindful attention to what's happening in the moment. It would lend itself to the idea that we could just be open for anything at all. And since that's true, but while we're open to everything are open to our breath or body or emotions and feelings as I talked in the intro class. The we also want to keep an eye out to track certain things. In very simplistically, Erie simply generally can call certain some aspects of what happens to us as we meditate. So last week I talked about the five hindrances. And we have to keep an eye out all the time meditation, especially before person gets really stabilized the meditation for the operation of the five hindrances, because the hindrances are those forces that are gonna take you away from being present, so you want to get really attentive, you really get to know them really well. And then there are five other factors that get cultivated and tracked over nation. And these are factors are supportive of the whole process of mindfulness, the supportive of the process of waking up and becoming free. So we're the hindrances kind of hinder that movement. And what I'm gonna talk about today is what kind of supports that movement. And these are called the five faculties. And then next week, I'm gonna talk about another aspect of our subjective experience that we're also tracking, which is called the Four Noble Truths. So we'll talk about that next week. That's kind of common theme, a certain kind of subjective way which we're experiencing, or meditation or our life, which we're somehow tracking as part of the meditation practice to help the practice, go deeper. One of the teachings of Buddhism, and seemingly what's it'd be my experience is that awareness of things makes a difference. And it makes a difference in different ways depending on what you're attentive to. So if you're aware of some of the more popular English we say, the negative emotions or negative feelings, the unwholesome tendencies of the mind, those things that cause suffering, who bring attention to those forces, it tends to diminish their power. If we're paying attention or mindfulness to healthy qualities, wholesome qualities, the positive aspects, it tends to heighten or develop those qualities more. So the analogy I like to use is out of a greenhouse that you've kind of been covered with so you know, sunlight gets in for a long time. And in a dark, humid greenhouse, all this mold and algae and stuff begins to grow, it gets really slimy, and no one wants to go in there. But once you pull the curtains on the on the glass in the greenhouse, the sun comes in, dries up all the moss and stuff, the algae, the slime, and then the plants that are supposed to grow there, they can grow and they can flourish. So the light of awareness, if it's absent, tends to reinforce those qualities, those factors, psychological elements of our lives, which thrive most in unawareness, greed, hate fear, for example, thrive really locked when we're not paying attention very much or deeply. And in the light of awareness, so certain things in thrive in light of awareness, meditative joy, trust, confidence, concentration, equanimity calm, tranquil. ability, a lot of other things kind of the more you notice them, the stronger they get. So it's a wonderful quality, that attention really makes a difference and makes a difference difference in the right direction. That

makes sense. So today, we're going to do the, what's called the five faculties, five qualitative capacities that all of us have, all human beings have. And these five capacities are used in all, almost all human endeavor rings. So it's not something that's just particular to meditation with the Buddha emphasized their importance in engaging in meditation practice as a way of tracking what's going on with us subjectively as we're practicing. So our objective way of engaging in the practice can be most helpful and most productive.

So I don't want to tell you what they are first. I don't want to teach you what they are some of you know what they are, but to I want to like to do is to introduce them to you in meditation in their meditation time. So give you more an experiential sense of them. So if you could put yourself in a alert, relaxed meditation posture

so then gently closing your eyes

Begin by taking stock of how you are different aspects of who you are. How are they now? Are you in your body? What's your physical experience like at this moment being in a body?

What is your mood or emotional state?

What's going on in your mind? Your thoughts simply taking stock Matter of fact noticing what's going on

So here you are, in your this place at this time in this body so to inhabit this place to remind yourself, this is where you are. This is the present moment. This is where the lived experience is found

is a way of stabilizing yourself or anchoring yourself here. You might take a few long slow deep breaths, really feeling the breaths well. Relaxing as you exhale You relax him to here and now, this time this place this body

And then letting your breaths return to normal.

And if there's any places in your body there's some holding or tension your muscles. As you exhale, see if you can soften that part of your body. If you can't soften or let go of the whole thing, then it kind of accepting softening around it. letting it be letting it be spacious

And then becoming simple with the breath tuning yourself into how the body experiences the breathing and how they're breathing that since experience of breathing isn't alternating, experienced alternating sensations breathing in and out Kind of a rhythm to it for a little while now not very long in a dedicated and relaxed way, hang in there with that rhythm of the breath. Trust it, engage in it. Let it be the center of what you do for a little while for short periods for a couple of minutes here

So as you're sitting here, feeling your body and your breath

See if you can recall or remember, evoke what it feels like when you feel confident

and there's confidence presence present for you. What is it like energetically, physically, like emotionally? Like in the mind

perhaps you can even remember a time when you felt particularly confident whenever we're focusing on now is the subjective experience. So what it's like to feel confident.

Now it feels quite different, physically different, emotionally different from feeling a lack of confidence or doubt or inadequacy

in the best of your ability, see if you could evoke or tap into a sense of personal confidence whatever it might be for you, even if it's a very small amount

And when you feel confidence is there some place in your body that you associate most clearly with being confident with confidence manifests energetically or physically or with a sense of presence emotionally.

Some people will feel might feel it in their hands or their feet. Some people in their belly and people in their chest Some people in their whole body, arms.

If you can find some place of confidence within you see if you can maybe let the breathing, breathe through it or hold it with your breath or imagine your breath goes through. It is it Way of staying connected to it

felt sense of confidence.

If it's easy enough to do it, let it grow within you might become strong any confidence and confidence

in whatever connection you have right now with confidence. Is there any connection of confidence to having energy? Being energetic or a willingness to engage, willingness to make effort? Is there a willingness to make effort that arises out of the competence or an energy or a lightness?

You might remember some time in your life when you were confidently energetic or competently engaged or involved in something and what it felt like energetically and physically in your being Have that engagement that effort. Perhaps sometimes an effortless effort. said like in the body. You can evoke it perhaps remember

he's there someplace in your body right now. Even if it's just a hint small hint someplace that feels like the Locust location for energy being energized or engagement or involvement, effort.

Now both confidence and effort, energy are things of the present moment. They exist in the present moment. only place they can exist and they have confidence and sense of effort or engagement to be strong. That tends to come with it a greater sense of alertness presence Be here.

Can you perhaps feel your way into or remember, evoke some greater sense of being here presence, being alert that perhaps arises out of confidence, a sense of effort or energy,

kind of alertness that's a heightened recognition or heightened perception of what is happening in the present moment.

Perhaps you can remember evoke what it's like to be quite present and alert to what's happening now.

And there are certainly different ways of being alert to the present moment, be mindful and present. In one way is to feel stable, quite stable, composed the midst of that alertness, relax that ease, calm. And perhaps we can use the word stability or it's a nice, simple word to express being relaxed and calm and concentrated. To feel what it's like to be really stable in the mind. minds that rushing off or thinking about a lot of different things going this way or that. Perhaps you could remember some time in your life where you felt a real stability in your presence. You were just here. Fully here. rooted here.

Perhaps you can evoke

a calm stability. To go together with your alertness, your mindfulness of what's happening in the present.

When we sit down to meditate, great support for the practice is confidence can be a power and confidence. Yes, I can do this. This is worthwhile. It allows us to apply ourselves more fully to what we're going to do. Brings power bring more energy to the application of mindfulness.

Applying ourselves heightens the alertness heightens the mindfulness.

And then to be attentive to how that heightened alertness and mindfulness can be stable Calm, still. Kind of stillness in the mind, stillness in the body. That's alert.

And then fine. Finally, with this still stable alertness to whatever degree you have, we can add the fifth faculty, which for now Call intelligence to use our intelligence, our capacity to be discerning to be wise about what's going on

to continue cultivating or deepening our capacity for awareness and stillness. Letting go of thoughts, using our intelligence to let our thinking fall away. Certainly about other things. Use our discrimination to know that this is a time for being present. This is a time for letting go

is a time not to pursue anything with the mind could use our intelligence. Be alert and still to deepen our connection to the present moment, the fullness

So I'm now in the meditation now recite the traditional wording, additional list of the five faculties and as you listen to them in your meditative state, whatever state you're in your quiet the sink in or let them echo or remind you of something which is your own.

The first faculty is confidence.

The second is effort. The third is mindfulness.

The fourth this concentration

and the fifth is discernment.

Confidence, energy, mindfulness, concentration discernment

So these five qualities are things that human beings utilize your use or depend on in almost any endeavor we're engaged in involved in a, in a craft or art or music or work or sports or anything, some

way or other those five qualities come into play. Sometimes they're absent. Sometimes they're invisible. We don't, we're tracking this, we are paying attention to it. But if they were absent, we really know it. And then we then then we notice the next notice their absence because sometimes we don't notice their presence even though they're there. And the analogy I like to use is something as simple as riding a bicycle. For those that know how to ride a bicycle, that you know, if you're going on a long bicycle trip, there needs to be some confidence in our certainly our ability to bike but also our ability to bike for a long distance, say we're going to go back to Los Angeles, like a friend of mine did recently. And then there is the Be the application making effort. You don't get to LA in a bicycle unless you fix an effort. It's not downhill all the way. So you have to make the effort. And the effort factor can be strong and weak at different times you're tired, you're sometimes lazy. Sometimes there's a lot of energy, you're really kind of pumped up and really going strong. But the energy factor can vary. I could imagine the confidence factor can also vary in a bike trip like that. You know, the time you get to Monterey, I can't do this. This is impossible. It is really slow going. Going to Big Sur, you know, it's like, this is too far. How would I do this? Or the conference is really strong. Yeah, I can do to get San Luis Obispo, yes. Halfway I can do it. In the enthusiasm that comes with confidence kind of gives more energy, it makes it easier. And then there has to be a lot of tracking when you're on a bike trip. I mean, if you have your eyes closed, you're not gonna get very far and If you are, you know, you have to kind of be present, have a presence of mind to see the potholes or see the cars or see what's going on. And without certain kind of presence of what's happening around you, it's it's very dangerous. And the presence, that mindfulness and not just the environment around you, but good long distance bike riders actually tracking what's going on inside her inside. That's tracking mindful of the energy, my total confidence, mindfulness of, of what's needed different times you see a big mountain up ahead in the prison, oh, you know, I better conserve my energy for a while until I go up and, and then we start going up, you know, I think I better really slow down really lot. Just go really, really slow. And when you get to the top, there has to be enough, no, you know, tracking what's going on to know and now it's downhill. I can just coast still point to kind of push hard anymore. So the kind of tracking of, you know, alertness to what's happening inside and outside. It's a very important part of being a good bike writer and And I imagine there has to be some real concentration also isn't just enough to be mindful what's happening, but sometimes you have to really concentrate it. I've gone biking up steep hill, sometimes mountains, and I don't think I could have made it unless I really stayed really focused, I'll kind of let a lot of things fall away. Just not pay attention to a lot of things. Because in order to maintain the effort and keep going, I had to be concentrated really focused. And on my task at hand what was happening right now and then and then there's the sermon quality when you're biking Mondays, it has to do with the uphill downhill, you know, don't you know your energy level, there has to be a lot of discernment, a lot of understanding of what's needed different situations. And people ride bikes, you know, are doing this discernment piece. Many times kind of without much thought kind of effortlessly. A little hill comes up and you know, to apply a little bit stronger effort. You don't even think about it just the natural, seemingly natural thing to do. And A strong gust comes in, perhaps you hunker down, hold the bike stronger, tighter, something and you don't even think about it. But somehow the mind is kind of discerning what's needed and you make them constant shifts and adjustments.

So something you know, and this, this can apply to any activity that we do that there has to be these five factors come in these five factors come into play. So they come into play in meditation practice as well. And teachers, meditation teachers, part of their test job is to kind of notice how these five factors are playing out in a meditate meditators practice. Is there enough confidence do they need more confidence? And so, confidence in themselves and their ability to do it confidence in the practice confidence in the goal, they have a goal for practice? You know what it's all for once, you know, unless you have some confidence. You know, we've said this way, the more confidence there is the more enthusiasm In an effort to easier, just make effort, a confidence is a very important factor. And again, it's

particularly noticed when the confidence is absent, up lack of confidence and you just kind of hesitation then it kind of unwillingness or perhaps, you know, reluctance to make the effort to do anything. Because lack of confidence is a lot of doubting, self doubting it's often self defeating. So it's important to have some were with awesome presence to know what your level of confidence when we're practicing. And if it's easy enough to arouse the confidence and a stronger confidence, and that can be done in a variety of ways. confidence and faith are closely connected. So sometimes it's arousing stronger faith. Some people find they have a lot more confidence after they read a page of a Dharma book, meditation book. Some people have altars, you know, and they look at a Buddha Buddha statue or some statue of some person's sacred saint or something and they feel really nice fired by that person's example. And I can do that too. Or some people remember, you know how they practice in the past? Yeah. It's really helped me a lot in my in in tremendous difficulties last week or last month last year, and the mindfulness practice meditation practice, saw me through that difficulty. And then remind yourself Oh, yeah, it helped, can arouse confidence. Oh, yeah, did help, then I think I can give you the benefit of doubt. I think it'll help now. So various ways to arouse confidence there. And we don't have to leave it to chance. But there can be a little bit of kind of arousing or revoking or touching into or in confidence. There's certainly times when it's not there. So it's important not to kind of beat ourselves up for not being there. Traditionally, in a lot of religious traditions, including Buddhism, people who meditated a lot did acts of devotion. They would read and chant, recite. Sacred literature, sacred texts and teachings, they would offer incense, they would bow, they would do all these kind of things. And part of the function of that is to arouse this confidence factor. For people who don't have much of a devotion muscle in the body, it can still be a lot of confidence, you still access it through devotion, you access it through other ways. And then there's the effort factor, the energy factor, you know, what's the energy level, like when you're practicing at any given time, you feel lethargic, though heavy, you feel super energized, you really kind of gung ho and ready to go. There has to be some monitoring of the efforts sometimes it's possible to bring it into better balance to bring wherever they could eat, apply myself more here. Okay, I've been complacent kind of drifting on and on my sitting and, you know, I'm thinking about this and that and that and this and, you know, I'll get around to it eventually, you know, this really, you know, kind of lackadaisical complacency, and you're not going to get very far in meditation if you're complacent. In the city, so you realize, Oh, that's what's happening. I think I need to apply myself more, apply myself and really kind of, you know, anchor myself here in the present moment and notice what's going on. And then there's a mindfulness factor. You know, how's the mindfulness? Are you really paying attention carefully? Are you not here so much? When you're when you are here? What's the quality of the mindfulness? Are you really taking in what your experiences really relating to register really acknowledging it? There's a wide range of quality to attentiveness. And some people settle for very low quality attentiveness. You can Oh, yeah, I'm aware of what's happening. You know, the breath is breathing in and out. But you're really feeling the breath with some real intimacy and, and the texture and the flavor, the smell almost was like to be breathing. So you really offer kind of a quality presence to what you're paying attention to. So to attract what's going on.

And then there's a stability factor that concentration. And often concentration is synonymous with calm. And so remember that being calm is a very important part of the meditation practice. So is this practice helping you to become calm, more relaxed, more settled, or more stable, more focused. So the ability to have quality presence than focus presence to really kind of only be present in a full way but actually penetrating in the observation what we're seeing the effort factor and the concentration factor are paired. And they need to be thought of as being to balancing each other. So if there's not enough F, if there's, if there's too much concentration or too much calm, the tendency is we get lethargic or dull, and so it's important to bring up more energy. This is a very important aspect of meditation because sooner or later meditators will get calm through the meditation practice. You can get too calm or be imbalanced with a contractor. And then the mind will start drifting off and have kind of dream mind or have kind of

sometimes called a sinking mind, mind kind of wanders off to this and that feels quite pleasant and nice and the mind just kind of floating pleasantly around dreams or thoughts. And that's a good indication that the calm is good. There's good calm, there's good centered stability of the mind. However, the energy factor, the application factor, is not really up to snuff. And so you don't have to stop being calm. But you need to bring more energy arouse my energy or presence more engagement. with mindfulness it can simply mean start noticing more carefully or more precisely or more in the present what's happening now. Notice more what's happening present moment speed up, energize the knowing factor if there's too much energy