So I would like to talk today about the Four Noble Truths. At the beginning of each year I like to take that as a topic to kind of begin the year with. And also, right now in the power me practice group, we're doing the perfection of wisdom, and wisdom. One of the primary expressions of wisdom, wisdom in Buddhism, is an understanding or the application of the Four Noble Truths. It said that the Four Noble Truths contains all of Buddhism within it, that if not somehow related to the Four Noble Truths, and it's not Buddhism and other noble truths are kind of like the core essence of Buddhism. Not the common denominator, but incense, maybe the common was the opposite that common law is like that's not the lowest common denominator, but the highest common denominator. That's the highest common denominator. There's a lot of interesting things about the four Noble Truths as the core formulation of the Buddha's teaching. One is that the Buddha didn't present it as something to be believed, but rather something to be acted on. And so there were certain kind of practices or sometimes called duties in relationship to each of these so called four noble truths. So not taking this beliefs but it's taken they're supposed to be taken as plans for action are things that ways to applying ourselves in our spiritual life. A lot of people associate meditation with becoming calm, stress reduction, attaining a certain level of joy or well being in one's life. And it's part of certainly the, the, the joy of meditation is to be able to release a lot of the stress a lot of the anxiety a lot of the tension in the mind, the heart, the body, and, and to discover a capacity for the body, the heart and the mind to be quite soft fireable, relax the peace. But the function of meditation in Buddhism is not simply to become calm, or peaceful in some kind of conventional way. But it's to use the level of calm or peace or well being that comes from meditation as a springboard for developing greater insight or greater understanding of our life, like calm or meditation is a vehicle for greater insight. Maybe the analogy could be something like someone who's hungry, goes to the trouble of baking bread, and then make a beautiful loaf of bread and they put it up on the table with I don't know, butter, almond butter around it or something. And they just sit there and look at it. And they've combined a few days and admire their handiwork. Well, that was that was a great love of bed of sleep rate. Over the days and weeks, it gets harder and harder because well, it's, it's well preserved, right, it's sitting there and the person gets hungry and hungrier.
The bread was made in order to be used and to be eaten. So in the same way, develop a strong level of calm or concentration meditation is not an end in itself, but is a tool that can be used. And one of the primary ways it's used once you establish yourself well in meditation is to apply what's called the Four Noble Truths. The Four Noble Truths can be understood by a school child. That's the basic idea is very simple. But the full application of it is considered to be quite hard, and only someone who's fully awake and fully understands the full import of the Four Noble Truths. And in the classic instructions for meditation, the Buddha gave the four foundations of mindfulness, he lays out a whole series of kind of practices that can be understood as building on themselves. And it culminates with understanding the Four Noble Truths or applying the Four Noble Truths to our experience. So it's not meant to be it's easy to explain but difficult to apply or to understand its poor implications in our lives. And I think one of the great joys for me in my practice, At times, it's this continual unfolding and discovery of the Four Noble Truths and how it applies to my life in different areas of my life. So, the Four Noble Truths are very, can be stated very simply, they are kind of conventional way of stating them is that there is a truth of the existence of suffering. It's hard to deny that you look around you'll find suffering. The second is the truth of the arising of suffering, what is it it gives rise to suffering, the cause of the suffering, which is usually defined as by this an interesting technical word called thirst. And then the third noble truth is the truth of the cessation of the suffering. The suffering and suffering that dukkha can come to an end. And then the fourth Noble Truth is, the recognition is not easy to do that, but there's a path of practice that can be done to fulfill this possibility, of bringing dukkha suffering to an end. It's the first teaching the Buddha was supposed to have given after his enlightenment, the sermon that he gave, we gave the teaching the Four Noble Truth is called discourse on turning the wheel of the Dharma. And the Dharma sometimes is likened to a wheel. It's it's an interesting symbolism, because it has a number of different symbolic meanings, but one of them is that a ruler Emperor and Emperor a great kind of monarch in ancient India, was called the word for it was wheel Turner. And sometimes English has just expanded called the wheel turning monarch. And the mythology is that the Buddha had two options as kind of career options when he was born. And it was kind of prophecy stated in the mythology of it all. And one was that he could he was either gonna be a wheel turning monarch or he was going to become a renounce renunciant a spiritual seeker who renounced the work of a monk and his father tried to prevent him from becoming a spiritual seeker. renunciant because you know, you want your son to go into the family business. But the Buddha didn't become a go into the family business didn't become an emperor, monarch, but rather became this renunciant. And rather than turning the wheel of power, of
political power, he turned the wheel of spiritual power the spiritual wheel, in a sense, rather than conquering India, he conquered himself, he conquered the truths of, of liberation of freedom, as he understood it. So, the Dharma is sometimes symbolized by a wheel. And some occasionally sometimes there's a few places, there's Buddhist flags, and sometimes the Buddhist flag has a wheel in the middle of it, like the Indian flag, I think also has a wheel in the middle of it. The so I say this as a prelude to the talking about the Four Noble Truths is that we're talking about something that was very powerful. Something That Can incense conquer, something that needs to be conquered. And so in the, you know, the Buddha often talked in very powerful terms about the possibility of practice, the way a person will engage in practice in a very diligent way. It was kind of like a warrior, warrior, warrior spirit. I bet if you just, you don't tell you don't miss it. It wasn't necessarily about stress reduction. It was something much more noble. That's why it's called the Four Noble Truths. Some people call it the Four Noble Truths. Engaging This truth is what enables a human being. So the Four Noble Truths are structural background. For the Four Noble Truths, it might be interesting to understand Is that from the point of view of the Buddha, all conditioned things have arise and they pass away. They're impermanent. All our mental formations, all our mental activity that we have arise, and it passes away, some point it is a reason. And sooner or later it'll pass away. That's the nature of mental activity. Some mental activity continues through time seems like it's permanent. But in some ways, it's either gotten frozen or locked in there. Or we're continually refueling it and feeding it over and over again to stays in place. But in in and of itself, and it's not locked or not being refueled. All mental activities have the nature of sooner or later passing away. things arise because of causes. And when the causes disappear, those things go away. The rain arises happens because there's a rise of false because the class came in very simple understanding, the clouds go away the rain stops. So, the mental activity, our psychological activity, has the same nature, certain causes and conditions come into place and certain activities arise mental activities, mental formations, when those causes go away those C's. So that's that's there is simple structure is then inherent in the teaching of the Four Noble Truths, that the mental activity of dukkha of suffering arises because of causes. And when those causes go away, then what has arisen will also go away? The suffering will go away. Because of that, because the Buddha understood that correlation, he was quite convinced, or he realized, I guess, and became quite convinced that, that this thing called dukkha could be eliminated. If you got If you somehow eliminated the costs, so if you have a pebble in your shoe, and it's irritating your foot, if you get rid of that pebble, then you stop the irritation on your foot and your foot gets better. So if somehow can remove pluck out of the heart, the pebbles that he called it, the arrows that were irritating the heart that they were the cause for the suffering, and the suffering would go away. It was a it was a very in some ways, it's a very radical teaching, because it was so thoroughgoing. That's why, partly why is so challenging to many of us, is the idea is kind of the idea of perfection, that it's possible to eradicate completely from the heart, all the arrows, all the pebbles, all the irritants, all the causes, that would give a give rise to do what's called what the Buddha called dukkha in Our hearts and our minds. So not everyone is convinced about this and even know a lot of Buddhist teachers are not completely convinced that this is the case that you can do this work that thoroughly. Or some people think, well, it's not so interesting to believe in that because I'm never going to go back that far. I can go a little bit with this and use it. But I'm not going to go all the way. You know, that's not something in store for me, but I'll just take it as
far as I go. But the Buddha was pointing to the possibility you can go all the way you can really do this work and somehow purify the heart, the mind from these arrow tents, and so that dukkha doesn’t arise. Dukkha is the word the Pali word Indian word that's usually translated as suffering in English. But suffering is a kind of very strong meaning. And it's not really adequate for translating duka duka means anything. Any movement of the mind Any mental activity which is short of our being fully happy, attain a be able to attain the fullest kind of capacity of happiness the human being can attain. So even things that are kind of happy are sometimes characterized as dukkha or sometimes feel like like the translation unsatisfactory. They're great in and of itself and themselves, but they're unsatisfactory in relationship to what's fully possible. Sometimes minor a minor irritants are also called dukkha. Suffering seems like a big deal like we suffer. But if you have feel a little bit uncomfortable, that's dukkha. The definition of dukkha given in the first sermon of the Buddha, he said, birth is suffering, sicknesses suffering old ages, suffering, death and suffering being together With what is being together with what is unpleasant is dukkha being separated from what? Being being tick being with what's unpleasant is suffering. Or Duca. Being, away from what is pleasant or pleasing is suffering. to being with what you don't like is suffering and not being with what you like is suffering and not getting what you want is suffering. And all the ways in which we identify or get attached to our psychophysical being as being ourself is also a source of suffering is a classic definition. It's kind of thoroughgoing. So now to now to kind of change a little bit the direction of this. Some people complain that in talking about suffering, and putting out as the first noble truth, Buddhism is kind of a pessimistic religion. Kind of a party pooper kind of religion. But the purpose of focusing on suffering is to understand it so that we can be free from the causes of suffering. So we can be really happy in some thoroughgoing way. It you have to understand the illness in order to know what the cure is going to be. Also, understanding suffering is an act of compassion. And I think it's necessary to have I think it's helpful to evoke a sense of compassion as we begin exploring the Four Noble Truths, that somehow the background or this foundation for studying them. So remember what I said earlier, that meditation is a springboard for applying the Four Noble Truths. So you get yourself you know, into meditation practice, and you can get yourself into a calm, stable, maybe even happy place. Meditation and from that perspective of that happiness with a calm with a steadiness that is the ideal time to begin looking at suffering. That's really a party pooper. Right? If you're in a good place, finally. But it isn't, it isn't to make things worse. It's actually so you can go further. in this endeavor, you can take meditation further and go deeper into your capacity for freedom for happiness. So the first duty or the first activity in relationship to the Four Noble Truths is the instruction to understand suffering, to study to get to know it really well. The second is to abandon the causes of suffering, which is this word tundra, or English thirst. I like it because I don't think of as a technical term. So it's meant to kind of evoke a wide variety is kind of vague word kind of umbrella term. For a wide variety of human mental formations, mental activity, that is of the nature of thirsting or grasping or being driven or being compulsive. When people talk about thirsting for power, or thirsting for I don't know what we, you know, thirsting for power or thirsting for money or thirsting for there's kind of a grasping or clinging or attachment inherent in that kind of activity. So, the cause of suffering is the thirsting of the mind the driven so the compulsive compulsivity of the mind. So, the second store comes to begin to relax that, like, go over to abandon that compulsivity, that vividness and it's very humbling to practice mindfulness, to pay attention to what
goes on in the mind, because it's humbling because you realize how difficult it is at times, to let go of the drivenness of the mind. If you meditate a lot, like if you go on retreat, you'll see this in the nature of your thinking mind. There's a kind of seems to be a kind of addiction to thinking that human beings have. And it seems innocent enough if you're walking around ordinary life oftentimes. But if you really pay attention to your mind moment by moment, you realize the degree to which you're not really free because your thoughts are pulling you around, dragging you around this way and that way, you're trying to kind of direct the mind to be present. And your mind has other ideas. You know, mind has a mind of its own. So the, so there's going to be tremendous drivenness or compulsivity to our thinking mind. And that compulsive activity has a quality of dukkha of unsatisfactoriness of being uncomfortable or being unpleasant, or being somehow undesirable. So that's just my thinking, let alone other things that can be Strong desires or wishes or fears or resistances that we have to what goes on in life. And so, part of the practice, part of the issue of looking at suffering is that we can begin discerning the causes of it. And then seeing the causes we begin to relax and relax deeper and deeper, let go more and more thoroughly. When we do it thoroughly, we realize the end of the suffering, some suffers, there's not a one to one correlation, if I'm attached. It's so nice all the variety of ways that it used to be kind of boring, but now, you know, this is the same sound but now it's kind of a different different tune. The Some attachments, some, some, some support, some source of suffering, it's, it's a very simple attachment. And you can let go of that attachment. Some sufferings are much more deeply rooted, and more difficult to let go of, to release. And the image is given in Buddhism is that of a root. And the idea of a root to me is it looks like a plant that has many branches coming off, you know, out of the root. And if you pluck off one of the leaves or you pluck off one flower, one branch, the plant will keep growing. But you need to somehow reach down into the ground and pull up the root, pull up the root in order to stop the plant from growing. So certain forms of clinging or thirsting are like roots. They're the root of a lot of other things. So if so, if I desire Say that I desire someone told me she never gives example again. But my mind doesn't have much of imagination so you know, I desire a Ferrari. Right? Like it's really like that's my that's what I really thirsts for her right nice red convertible Ferrari. Might as well you're gonna go that way. And, and it's really important I really want that and I see them suffering. Okay, I'm suffering my Ferrari that's silly I just let go of that. Thank you. Bye The next day, what I really want is a Porsche and I see that they're suffering so I'd like go that great. The next day What I want is, I don't know I run out of I don't know much about cars. So that's about what I know. But BMW Well, that's giving modest Lamborghini okay. So after a while, for three or four days of this, you know, I began thinking, Wait a minute, it was easy to let go of those different cars, those different days. But why do I keep desiring these cars? these fancy cars. And they look more carefully because all you know what, and I know that I noticed, I want these cars because then I think I'm going to be the hottest meditation teacher in California. You know, increase my increase my status in the Buddhist world. All my friends, you know, what, call me or envy me. And it's kind of like, you know, it's like, you know, it makes my ego feel really good. So I can go around and get around faster and place and tell people to let go of your ego. So that's really good. So the desire for the car is not the route. That's the branch that we should lead let go of the branch. The route is there to sprout. And the root here now is some kind of clinging to self some self attachment. That might be so one of the functions of meditation is to get calm enough and concentrated enough that we don't just
see the branches. But we start seeing the root of what it's all about what this clinging is about. And there's a lot of wonderful lists about the different kinds of routes. One list that's sometimes helpful to apply, you might apply this to your life benefit a week or so and think about these list of four kinds of clinging and see if you ever kind of succumb to them. One is the clinging to sensual pleasure. There's nothing wrong with sensual pleasure, but the clinging to it is a source of suffering. And so is do you see that correlation? Do you have desire for central pleasure? Is it innocent and pain free? For those that desire for sensual pleasure cause your suffering Or the avoidance of discomfort, the craving for food, the craving for, you know, sex, the craving for security, the craving for companionship, the craving for many things often have their roots in a very simple thing wanting to be comfortable, sensual pleasure. And some people are really driven is kind of to kind of orient most of their life around trying to figure out how to get sensual pleasure or avoid discomfort. It's very, very motivating for human beings, the attachment or sensual pleasure. The second is the clinging to our opinions and opinions sounds kind of philosophical. Maybe you've kind of California's mittens and maybe say, cling to our stories. And we have all our stories, you know, all kinds of stories, interpretations, assigning a meaning But certainly opinions and views that we carry with us. And we cling to our stories our views are stories about who I am stories about what happened to me, what's going to happen to me what needs to happen to me about who the other people are, what they're like, all these opinions, all these opinions and views, and people cling to them quite tenaciously. So part of part of this investigation is to begin looking at how views and opinions operate in our lives, and how our relationship to them adds to our suffering. And a lot of wisdom in the Buddhist tradition comes from looking at our stories or interpretations or assigning a meaning and realizing how they're constructed, and how they're arbitrary, and how they're not needed. needed, you know, probably 90% of the time they're not needed. The third, clinging is one which somebody You will love because you're ready to give it up, especially after hearing this talk. And this is the clinging to religious practice spiritual practices and to virtue. Isn't that strange that the Buddha said that I love it. It's kind of like the safeguard, you know, people get involved in spiritual traditions. It's really common to get attached to get attached to what your ego You know, it can be I'm a spiritual person, I'm the most spiritual person my block, you know, and if I have a Ferrari, I can really show that two people agree they notice me and the Ferraro halo effect. And then the so the people who get attached to spiritual traditions, practices because it gives a sense of security and they know what's true and what's not. People are often driven to religion. Because it's thinking that you have no sense of certainty, they know what's true, what's really going on. And there's attachment, their story religion gives them so that there's a safeguard built into into Buddhism, that even Buddhist practice, you have to be very careful that you don't get attached to it. Buddha doesn't say that it's not telling you don't do spiritual practice. He's saying, Be very careful, don't get attached to it. Because that attachment creates suffering. The very thing is supposed to free you from suffering is causing you suffering. Isn't that sad? So you should never come to Buddhism and suffer because of your contact with Buddhism. That's, you know, what was the you know, many of you do I know, people, you know, they start practicing. So I meditate, I'm supposed to get concentrated and then you bear down. And then your expectations are not what your results are not what you expected, and then you feel disappointed you feel sad and upset and angry with yourself. There's many ways which people get attached to a spiritual practice. They get they suffer because of
it. The other half of that is attachment to virtue, virtue, ethical purity is very important in Buddhism. But the attachment to it, the clinging to it is a form of suffering. Certainly for you, but for all your neighbors even more, you know, you know, it's a lot of a lot of pain gets created in the world, when people impose their attachment to virtue onto people around them, the neighbors and their society. And then the fourth, clinging is this clinging to self clinging to self identity, self representation, self image, the whole kind of constellation of stuff that we build up around this idea of self. There can be a tremendous amount of attachment to that. Not expected, you know, not told you know, don't have a self Don't be a self be a nobody, you know, so that you could well, you're welcome to go run. Remember the boy is a warrior and he it Buddhism so him with this symbol of power the wheel. So he wasn't just kind of like self effacing kind of quiet man and kind of went in the back room and just kind of didn't, you know, it's kind of quietly spiritual. He was actually he talked about having a lion's roar, you know, when he proclaimed his liberation is great, powerful kind of confidence in himself. So the teaching of not self in Buddhism is not a self effacing teaching. But the clinging to self, the attachment to self is one of the routes for suffering. And in order to be free of suffering, we have to somehow abandon that. That root part of the meaning of root is that it's latent. This is not always there. It's kind of there in the background, ready to operate. I let go the Ferrari one day, and I'm happy for the rest of the day. But they're in the background latent, for me, is this idea of myself attachment and association of cars. To my, you know, my well being, and so that that, you know, pops up the next day, next day next day. So this latent, again means not easy to see. And that's why it's very important to practice something like meditation that gets the mind good, calm and concentrated. So you can really see deeply and well, it's kind of like having a telescope or a microscope or something that allows you to see things that normally you can't see. But the telescope or the microscope has to be on a stable surface, the telescope has to be on a tripod, and be well stable. But if it's agitated, or a moving object, you know, like, you can't, if you tried to use a microscope or a telescope on, you know, on a motorboat, you know, you can't really see very well, you need to have some things really still. So when the mind is agitated, you can't see very well. So part of the function meditation you get the mind still enough, so you can see clearly, exactly same way You can see clearly when you have a tripod when you're holding a telescope. So that, so then abandoning or letting go of clinging, thirsting, grasping attachment leads to the third noble truth, which is simply stated as the cessation of suffering, the ending of suffering is considered the highest ideal in Buddhism. But it stayed that way. It seems like you know, not much ending of suffering. But the corollary of that is a level of peace, of well being of happiness that is greater than least what the Buddhist tradition says. A greater than anything else a human being can experience in human life. It also opens up the doors for compassion, in a way that nothing else can open. a realistic, healthy compassion that doesn't drown us without the clinging in the back. Round. When we experience suffering in the world in others, there's no it's not going to, it's not going to squash us, or distress us or create anguish. But rather it's going to stimulate the healthy forms of compassion for us to respond to that suffering in the world. So some of the most beautiful qualities of human heart, have a chance to reveal themselves or show themselves to be there, when the clinging is no longer present. That's why some Buddhists but not all, like to make a manifest make a metaphysical claim that all of us have inherent in a heart something that they called Buddha nature, some some tremendous beauty or purity or essence or luminosity, that's there, always there. But it's
clouded over, it's covered over by the clings and attachments that often we live by. If we just kind of, you know, clean, clean, clean away the attachments, then this luminous core of who we are will show itself. Not all Buddhists are happy with that kind of metaphysical idea. Because it's metaphysical. And Buddhism don't like metaphysics, so much, at least they're not supposed to, according to Gil, that's my metaphysical view. And, and so the cessation of suffering, bringing that bringing that clinging to an end. And then it's not considered easy to do that. It's easy to say it's easy to do. So the Buddha's Buddha then offered the path of practice the ACL path that made it possible to get down to the roots and do that do this work really deeply. And it's kind of a little bit I understand it as a kind of a developmental model that you've slowly kind of develop yourself to create the right conditions in your heart, in your mind, around you in your body. So the You can become still enough or concentrated enough have insight enough to be able to see down to these roots and do this work of letting go and also have the strength of character, that when you begin to let go, you can handle that, when there isn't a strong sense of character, a strong sense of inner qualities or inner strength, it's actually very disorienting and very frightening to let go of the things we are we are attached to. And things we attach to kind of give us a sense of meaning, give us a sense of who we are and how to orient ourselves to the world around us. And there are attachments are there for good reasons, and to let go of them, without having a kind of inner stability or strength to hold us up without them can be very difficult for many people. So part of the idea of a developmental model in practice is to also to create this inner strength, so that when we when we let go and let go and let go, we come to a place where we can realistically stay, rather than go there temporarily and then ricochet back. So the path of practice This is the Eightfold Path. It begins with wisdom. It begins with that, appreciating the value of understanding our life through the framework of the Four Noble Truths. This is a useful way of looking at our life. It's not it's like just it's just a framework. It's not, again, not a belief system. But if you want to get rid of suffering, then it's useful to understand the suffering itself, the cause of the suffering, and the possibility of ending a suffering. If you're interested in ending suffering, being liberated or suffering, then you don't want to go look in the wrong direction. So the Buddha said there's a lot of wrong directions which don't help with liberation of suffering. They make it really simple. He said, make it as simple as possible. The Wisdom factor that To bring into your, your practice is to understand your experience from the point of view of the Four Noble Truths. If you don't like doing that, because it seems depressing, or it is depressing to look at suffering, put it off. Wait, don't do it right away then do the other parts of Buddhism. That's what the four Nope, that's what partly the path is about. Practice loving kindness, practice concentration, get some stability, some calm some joy in your practice. resolve some issues in your life. They get in the way of developing that calm and concentration. And then once you're calm and concentrated and have some level of well being and your meditation, then bring in the Four Noble Truths. Oddly enough, in some of the most key places you can go and meditation places where you know quite because I can't change the language. I'm gonna say, you know, the deepest The highest, you know, the furthest reaches of meditation can take you the greatest levels of joy or peace, you know, in the conditioned world. When there's a tremendous sense of well being and peace, equanimity, that's when applying the Four Noble Truths is, is maybe them even the most useful, because they're the thing that's going to push a person over into what's called the unconditioned. That part of the psyche or the mind, that dimension of the mind, which is not about
constructed activities of the mind, not nothing to do with the conditioned activities of the mind, but has to do with that part of the psyche, which the Buddhism called unconditioned, the awakened mind the awakened dimension. So the Four Noble Truths is the wisdom part of this path. Then to support that or to make to be able to realize that the Buddha said it's really important to look at your behavior. Before you start meditating, look at your behavior, and are the ways that you can improve your behavior. So your behavior supports your ability to look deeply. So if you go around, killing other people, stealing from other people, lying to other people, harming other people with your sexuality, or spending good part of your time drunk, your minds gonna be so agitated, that you're not gonna be able to sit down and meditate. No way. So you got to stop doing those things. And the more you clean up your behavior, the more you create the conditions in the psyche, where it becomes easier for the psyche to be at peace with itself, not agitated. And so you can start doing the deeper work that happens through meditation through developing the mind. So essential of behavior, the Buddha said it's very helpful to look at your speech. Pay attention to your speech, be mindful of your speech, and try to clean up your speech. So your speech is not harmful. It's not counterproductive to the process of clarifying the heart, purifying the heart of doing this deep work. The Buddha said it's important to look at how you behave in terms of precepts. You know, killing, stealing, lying and all these things. And he said it was important to look at your livelihood. Most people spend a good part of their day earning a livelihood, good percentage of the week and the months of the year, involved in livelihood. It has a big influence on our hearts, our psyche, how we make our livelihood is our livelihood in harmony with the goal of freeing ourselves from suffering, or attaining this level of liberation. Moving towards this unconditioned place of awakening, some professions, some livelihoods are counterproductive. go against the grain of following a path of liberation. I'm not going to go through the list, the Buddha gave a list. But one of the things he said was, like I'll go through the best I can remember livelihoods that have to do with killing, like being a butcher, is counterproductive. livelihoods that have to do with buying and selling human beings. Those counterproductive livelihoods that have to do with trading or being a merchant of weapons is counterproductive. dealing in poisons like you know, I was a weapon I guess it's also kind of productive. And the fitness five the fifth one So, that's a pretty strong thing to say. And I know some people, you know, it have to negotiate this issue, you know, is my livelihood. And I work for somebody, you know, electronic companies, it was a friend. He was a man who sat with us for a number of years, who worked for us. He worked as a machinist, more or less for a local machine shop. He was a big fancy kind of machine shop. And he got a phone call from the the Air Force of a foreign country. And they wanted a certain part made for their aircrafts. And he went to his boss and he said, You know, I'm a Buddhist, I can't make this part for this military aircrafts. And his boss said, you can go back and tell that government official, whatever you want. So he went back and said, I'm sorry, we can't do that here. So he felt that way. against the grain of a spiritual life to the making weapons, you know who's supporting or making pieces for weaponry. So I don't know how different people interpret this, but the idea is to look at the livelihood and see if the livelihood is in harmony with the direction a person wants to go in their spiritual life. Once one person has kind of gotten their behavior taken care of or looked at or began working on it, then the Buddha said talks about the last of the Eightfold Path, which has to do with inner development. So first you start with outer outer activity, how you behave. And once you kind of begin working on that, then
we talk about inner development. So when we talk about mindfulness, and concentration, working on the mind, the mind is malleable, changeable, plastic, it can be changed. The mind is not a fixed thing. It's not solid. The mind the mind is like software. Not like hardware. The brain is hardware to the mind is software. Some of you, I think are, you know, software engineers. And you know, you can easily you know, manipulate things, you know, and change things around, you know, pretty easily in software, can't you, I don't know much about it. But anyway, the mind is software. And so it's quite elastic and plastic and malleable, it can be changed and developed. And that's kind of like the good news that Buddhism teaches. And so then we start taking responsibility for our own psyche or mind by practicing. But moving moving the mind moving the heart to a greater, greater, greater and greater state of great possibility of awakening or freedom. It's a process that can take that is done, traditionally understood to take vaulted steps. I like to think of it as mostly taking a lot of small steps. Occasionally people will take a huge step, which is very nice, but mostly, they realistically think take small steps, small steps, small steps to understanding where's my suffering right now? And how am I contributing to that? What's my role in the suffering I'm feeling right now. Rather than blaming the situation, even if the situation is responsible, don't pay too much attention to that, turn around and look and see how you contributing to your suffering. Because that's what that's what the heart of Buddhist spirituality is about being taking responsibility for how we contribute, and doing small steps. Next time you're attached to a Ferrari, maybe it's easy to let go. Don't underestimate the value of letting go what's easy. It kind of builds the muscle and builds the insight that allows you eventually to take the big steps of letting go of some of the big things of some of these deeper roots that we have. The last thing I want to say about the Four Noble Truths The formulation of it the classic formulation of the Four Noble Truths, has no pronouns in the formulation and the wording of it doesn't say, you know, you or I or we, it just gets left out. There is suffering, there's a cause of suffering, there's possibility of ending suffering, and there's a path to the end. I myself am very fond that there's no pronouns. Because what it means to me is that it points to is that Buddhist practice in Buddhist practice, that we're as sensitive to our own suffering as the suffering of others. We can only take responsibility for our contribution to that to suffering. But we can be compassionate to the suffering around us. And it's equally important to have the compassion, compassionate concern, going both directions, they will have compassionate concern for our own ourself and our own suffering, that we treat ourselves with compassion, with the kind of care when we see our suffering and that looking at suffering and ourselves and trying to resolve it is a compassionate act for ourselves. And being sensitive and open to see the suffering of the world around us is a compassionate act that extends out away from us to the world around us. That are not having pronouns and the Four Noble Truths is talking about the flow of compassion in both directions equally. And that, for me is really central part of this, what's possible through a mature spiritual life is to have our compassion flow in all directions. And in the Four Noble Truths is one of the ways of manifesting, applying expressing our compassion. So that should give you enough to work with for the year. Thank you for listening.