This is our last concentration class. And I thought I would talk a little bit first and then we do a sitting and I'll talk some more and then you can ask questions, but all this good like so earlier in this class today, talk about use the beeswax analogy that I use sometimes. So you might have heard it elsewhere but I talked about here in the class. beeswax. You've heard it somewhere else right from me. You in the classroom yeah yeah but in this class here in the conservation class it's recent I did recently on Sunday or Monday but then enough I did it on the conservation class well I gave a whole talk about that on maybe a Sunday or Monday. So because it here I gave him money getting here also, I probably do I repeat myself a lot. So it's, it's a problem. Remembering where I saved what so so anyway, those of you heard it, but forgive me and those of you haven't heard it will be enlightened.

The

so you know, My son is kindergarten when he was in kindergarten, they had he had this piece of wax that they would play with and when they got to school, the beeswax would be hardened. Hold in, the first thing they'd be taught to do is to hold the beeswax in their hand. And they've rubbing their hands holding their hand and their own body heat, which slowly soften the beeswax. And once it got soft enough, then you could, you could work it and shape it and make it into something. And if you tried to make the take the beeswax and, and shape it into something, when it's still hard, you know, you basically would probably break into pieces, it would just you know, you'd have no chatter or something. And so the same same idea applies to the mind. If the mind is hard and cold. You want to be very carefully that you don't use a hammer to it or you don't want to push too hard, because it'll just break. But you want to first help the heart, heart the mind, become soft, or relaxed or at ease. And I've known people who have engaged in meditation practice both mindfulness practice and concentrate Practice, and because of their own personality or their own neurosis, or because of the way that the particular tradition or particular teacher they practiced with taught, they just, you know, they sat down and right
away, they were expected to kind of just bear down and really apply themselves to some hard way or
direct way and really kind of be very, very vigilant. And I've seen many people whose minds were hard.
That approach being unproductive at the best. And sometimes I've seen people's minds break shatter.
In extreme situation, people gone on long retreats, and weren't really ready for that kind of approach.
It wasn't taught at the retreat, and they just pushed and pushed and pushed. And, and it just wasn't
productive because the beeswax the mind wasn't soft enough yet. And so one of the very important
issues in meditation practice is how do you get the mind soft, the nose so that he can do the work of
getting concentrated. If you try to, you know, develop a laser like concentration first, when the mind is
hard, you might be able to accomplish it to some degree, but it's probably not gonna be very useful. Or
if you don't accomplish it, and you keep pushing and pushing and pushing against it, something might
give. And as I said, on long retreats, I've seen people whose minds have given and sometimes not
very pretty, because they're just kind of pushing, pushing beyond what the mind can do. So it's very
important to have a kind of softness to soften. And there's a variety of things that person needs to do
to kind of or could in order to create a certain softness or certain kind of acceptance or certain kind
of ease a certain level of relaxation, certain certain level of well being that allows for the mind to and to
get concentrated and One of the classic practices is loving kindness, practice. loving kindness practice
is also a concentration practice. So some people use that as the means for getting concentrated.
They'll do a lot of loving kindness practice. But loving kindness practice is also one of these five
practices, softening practices. And it's a lot of people who will spend five or 10 minutes at the
beginning of every sitting, doing loving kindness practice, so that they're kind of create the right
conditions for being able to do the other work. Each individual person is going to have to kind of sort
out and find out for themselves, what is the appropriate way to or what's the right timing and way to
develop, develop concentration or focus and concentration practice. And when is the right time to kind
of do something else to do? forgiveness practice, perhaps, or to do loving kindness practice, or maybe
to forget about meditation for a while. known people They've done this, and rather, very diligently, very,
devotedly, worked on their ethics when their seal was called sila. And because it's very, it's hard to get
deeply concentrated, without some degree of ethical integrity. There's one teaching, I don't know how
anybody knows this, for sure, maybe, maybe there's ways of knowing for sure. But there's one
teaching that says that you cannot reach access concentration, which we talked about last week,
unless your ethics is in good shape. So for some people, it just, that's what gets in the way of being
able to go further. And so they have to kind of maybe stop meditating or maybe not stop, but go off
and do you know, and really focus on their ethical behavior and get that cleaned up. Some people it's
a lot of self forgiveness, a lot of compassion for some people. It's just being relaxed, being at ease
about what the meditation is about, not sitting down right away and thinking I'm supposed to be, you
know, and this adamantine concentration just immediately. My approach often, which I never would
admit to some of my teachers in Asia was, I would sit down the first 510 minutes of sitting, or be quite
relaxed about it, I just kind of sit there and let my mind wander and, you know, and my teacher, I know,
he expected as soon as you sat down, you're supposed to note right away and be on top of every
single thing that happened. And, and I knew people who adopted his approach, and they kind of broke
because of it. But I found it very helpful. Just first 510 minutes of sitting with him was just very relaxed
and kind of still in a mind kind of flow and settle and I had no agendas, my mind, you know, wasn't

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trying to do anything. And it wasn't trying to do any particular kind of practice it kind of be present. And what that did for me is allowed me to settle and relax. That particular Mark kind of mind I had that was really helpful to kind of settle out, and then why after that five or 10 minutes, then my mind was soft enough to do the work that the teacher wanted me to do. And it worked. It worked just great for me. That way. So when you when you sit down to meditate, do concentration practice or mindfulness practice, one of the first things you might want to do is to just kind of take stock of where you're actually are. So we say often you're stuck where you are. Just take stock where you are, and then what does it take for you to somehow become settled in who you are, or not be in conflict with who you are at that moment or somehow have some sense of goodwill or some sense of well being about just how you are right now. And so there's a variety of things you might do, as I say, you might do some loving kindness, practice their forgiveness practice, or you might just do a very broad acceptance practice. Everything's okay, you know, it's all cool, man, everything's fine. And do that for a while. And just to kind of get yourself settled and relaxed, or you might use imagery, especially if you're doing concentration practice. And it's very bright of images. You can use those images for example of sitting like a mountain. And some people like it's a classic one should man yourself like I saw that like a mountain. And that stability can help people or imagine yourself like a, like a, like a really calm, placid, peaceful, Alpine Lake, you know, some lake or water is really peaceful and somehow managing the mind is like that. I mean, that's helpful to kind of settle things. Or maybe it's imagine yourself kind of enveloped in a soft cotton blanket. So you kind of feel enveloped and kind of contained in, in the monasteries like scientists I did. I learned this in a Zen monasteries, people would sit in sitting robes and so the ropes in Zen masters, you know, going from, you know, shoulders to one, set custom shoulders all the way down to the legs, I mean, sit down to meditate. It's kind of like your whole body is kind of held or contained within this nice robe. And it's not divided. You know, with a belt, you know, you have two different different pieces of clothes. And that's feeling of being completely contained within the same garment. As that kind of creates a nice container. Mix, I think for many people, a very nice environment within which to sit with a body to feel the body to be embodied to be here. So even just imagine that it's kind of being held in some way. Some people like to do it initially when they first start sitting, to think about things that inspire them. And there's there again, a classic Buddhist teaching at the beginning of a sitting to maybe think about the qualities of a Buddha or qualities of, of teachers, you know, who really inspire you or qualities of the Dharma if you have some sense of what the Dharma is or the possibilities of Dharma practice, to reflect on those possibilities, and reflect on your kind of reflect about people who practice who have really good virtue, really good ethics, and kind of use that kind of reflection, contemplation as a way of kind of getting you settled in here. And rather than being fragmented, or still thinking about conversations you had earlier in the day, or, you know, whatever else you might be doing, all this is all this kind of preparation is kind of to help you kind of arrive and be here. And here in a soft way, not in a hard way, not forcing yourself not fighting yourself to be here, but rather being here to be here and not being conflict with being here. So what does it take to do that, and, and in different settings, different things, different things, it will take different things. Now, sometimes what it takes is just mindfulness. You got to discover what it is and just kind of do a lot of mindful And mindfulness itself is a can be a very accepting practice. So to soften the beeswax of the mind, that's the first it's kind of his first task. Some people can just go straight into
doing a concentration practice in the breath. That is, that's what they do right away. And the way they do it, that itself softens the mind and develops a concentration and have to do anything extra to do it just have comes along with the practice. And some people find it best to do something else to get started.

So

I thought we would do a sitting now and perhaps would someone volunteer to recite the Metta Sutta as part of the sitting, anybody like to do it today? Okay, so what I'd like you to do, so I'd like to get everybody settled and eyes closed and That's great. That's fine. Yeah, so he'll do a different version that I passed out. And he the mic. So when we get to take a couple minutes, get everyone's settled, and then into the into, you can keep your eyes open and when I not to you then you can recite it and everybody else when you listen to this and your meditative space, kind of take it in, you know how to chant it. You want to change it. Okay, she's gonna chant it. So. So he's to take in both the chant and the feeling of it and the words and somehow take in the Metta Sutta. See if you can take it in in such a way that it inspires you, it settles you, it helps you to be here, in a kind way, in a friendly way. You're really here, you're gonna have a child like bringing you in, it's pulling you in, it's anchoring you as it happens. So, sitting upright and alert posture and quietly closing your eyes. And taking a few moments to feel your body here. This is the time and place your lived experiences What is your live and your lived experience happens through the vehicle of your body. Being in your body feeling it and then taking a few saw long deep breaths and as you exhale relaxing and settling in Your breath returned to normal, perhaps feeling the area around your chest, your heart. And as you breathe in and out, massage the area of your heart a little bit soften and then perhaps as if their ears, in your chest in your heart. Listen to the chanting of the Metta Sutta

This is what should be done by one who is skilled and goodness and who knows the path of peace. Let them be able and pride, straightforward and gentle and speech humble and not conceited, contented

and easily satisfied.

unburden with duties, and frugal in their ways. peaceful and calm and wise and skilful, not proud and demanding in nature. Let them do the slightest thing that the y's will later reprove wishing gladness and safety, May all beings be at ease. Whatever living beings there may be, whether they are weak or strong, mating, a great or the mighty, medium, short or small, the seen and the unseen

those living near and far away

those born into people.
May all beings be at ease

that none deceive another, or despise any being in any state

that none through anger or a will wish harm upon another.

Even as a mother protects with her life, her child, her only child, With boundless heart

should one cherish all living beings

radiating kindness over the entire world, spreading upwards to the skies and downwards to the depths, outwards and unbounded,

freed from hatred and they'll will

either standing or walking, seated or lying down free from drowsiness, one should sustain this recollection. This is said to be a sublime abiding by not holding two fixed views, the pure hearted one having clarity of vision.

being free from all sense desires is not born again into this world.

As you breathe, as you exhale you might imagine that you're good with each hour exhale. You're smoothing out the mind, the thinking brain, relaxing it. If there's a waves on the lake with each breath, you smooth out the waves to make the mind. broad, flat, peaceful. relaxing the energy behind the things you're thinking about. The tension behind it connecting to your breathing feel your breath And then see if you can begin to steady the awareness on the breathing. stabilize the awareness and the breathing. So you're there to feel each breath in breath, out breath letting everything else kind of recede to the background. Letting the vs continuous contact with the breath as you can And since the breathing is alternating phenomena, alternating sensations of breathing in and out expanding and contracting. Maybe it'll help you to imagine that that alternation, it's like a massage. That's working, the attention working the concentration, working in the continuity. Very, very gentle, very relaxed keeping the mind at ease peaceful With a real commitment or firmness to stay with the breath, one breath after the other Perhaps there's some way that you can let go into the breath. There can be a letting go into the experience of breathing so it becomes more The only thing happening you're sinking into it disappearing and it becoming the breathing Is there some way you can give yourself over more to connecting to the breath, staying with a breath. Maybe there's certain kind of inner strength that you can muster up. It's not tense but a strength which keeps you more fully with the breath. Counting the breath if that's helpful Then continuing with the breath in a relaxed way.
Notice

when there happens when pleasant or unpleasant experience occurs for you and something unpleasant or something unpleasant happens.

Notice

if there's any grasping, pushing away Is there any movement of reaction to the pleasant or unpleasantness, however subtle? Or is it just there usually a quantum miss about its presence? In the stillness that you have whatever calm that you have can they help you to see quicker more precisely the difference between the pleasantness of something and your reaction to it, the unpleasantness of something and your reaction to it. In the last minute or so sitting review what that sitting was like for you. Very Matter of fact way out was for you to sit in what you might learn. You're sitting but maybe you want to remember for next time you sit

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