

## Buddhist Meditation: Mindfulness and Awareness (1 of 7)

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So good evening. So in the particular Buddhist tradition that we are, that we practise in, mindfulness is very important. So one of the key aspects that we keep, aspects of practice we do, and so it's a fair question to ask, what is mindfulness? Also, the concept of mindfulness has become extremely popular in American culture in the last decade or so. In some ways, the kind of way that Zen was maybe twenty or thirty years ago, when there were so many books being written on Zen in the art of, and, you know, there's even one called Zen in the Art of Diaper Changing. But, you know, there is a long list of books with Zen in the title.

And now there's books with the word mindfulness in the title, and so there's books like Mindfulness Yoga is one, and there's a Mindfulness Based on Mindfulness based treatment of depression, mindfulness based cognitive therapy, treatment for Dean Way. There's a mindfulness becoming extremely popular in the world of psychotherapy, and many therapists are learning to live by the principles of mindfulness, using it in their work, and finding a lot of benefits in doing that. You find clinical uses of mindfulness in the hospitals. You can go to the local Kaiser here and take a mindfulness based pain reduction class. It goes on from there. So it's pretty popular.

Again, you could ask, since it's such a popular phenomenon now, what is mindfulness? And in some ways the answer appears obvious. There are some simple definitions you might hear. One simple definition is that mindfulness is present moment awareness, awareness of the present moment. Sometimes when it's elaborated a bit further, it's called a mindfulness, a non-reactive awareness of what's happening in the present moment. So the quality of non-reactivity is very important.

Non-judgment, non-judgemental. Just allowing things to be as they are, and being present for things as they are, without adding anything, adding any valuations, judgments, criticism,

manipulations, trying to change it, not being for or against it, but just offering this phenomenal thing of awareness that holds it in awareness. So those are both quite nice definitions, and those practices based on those definitions are quite wonderful. And many, that's many people have found how wonderful it is how to do that. However, since mindfulness, much of this movement of mindfulness comes from Buddhism, it seems also fair to ask, what is mindfulness defined, or understood in the Buddhist tradition itself or by the Buddha. And there we find something a little bit more both nuanced, but more different than maybe the most popular understandings here in the West.

One of the interesting things is that if you look at Buddhist teachings, the word mindfulness has a range of meanings. The word, the Pāli word, is *sati*. And in having a range of meanings, it seems like it doesn't have necessarily one technical meaning. In fact, by the time the Buddhists created a Buddhist psychology, we are studying the different qualities of mind. They did not include mindfulness as one of the core qualities or capacities of the human mind. There's only fifty-two mental factors that are the core factors that make up mental activity. And mindfulness is not one of those fifty-two factors.

To suggest that mindfulness is a composite activity of the mind, is a faculty of the mind, but it's a composite made up of different things. And so, since it's made up of different things, those things can come together in a different range of strength. So those different elements can give different shades of feeling or aspects to mindfulness. But if you take the various early Buddhist understandings of mindfulness, the closest kind of common denominator meaning is that of holding something in the mind. To hold something in the mind. So, for example, if you want to focus on the breath in meditation, you have to hold the breath in the mind, hold the breath in awareness, holding it in awareness.

So you could pay attention to the breath. If you want to remember something, say you want to remember to, you know, buy apples when you get to the store, you have to somehow hold the idea of apples in your mind. So when you get to the store, you remember to buy the apples. If you want to memorize a chant, then somehow you have to figure out how to hold that chant in your mind, to memorize it. Then it's held at least, and then if you want, or if you want to recite it, you have to hold it in a more active way, which actually comes back up in the mind. So you remember it at that time, so you do the chant.

So mindfulness. And also if you have a certain wisdom that you know, and you want to have that wisdom ready at hand, then you need to hold that in mind. If you have wisdom about impermanence, for example, or you have the wisdom not to take things personally, then you remember to remember that. If you've been warned, "Oh, you know your office mate down

the hall is in a real foul mood because the IRS is after her and you know, just don't get close. If you get close to her, she bites, you know, no matter what you do." So you're told that, you know, don't take it personally. They even tell you, don't take it personally.

And you walk down past her hallway and you do it. Somehow your gait is not quite right. Then you click your footsteps, click on the floor. And so the, you know, the person comes out of her office and yells, "How could you be so careless? Don't you realize I'm working here and you are a glut, you know?" And so you've forgotten that you've been warned about her mood. So you say, "Okay, oh no, I'm just a clump." You believe her. But you could also hold in mind the advice you were given: "Oh, she's just in a bad mood," and you need to kind of remember that, and then hold that in mind. When you hear the anger being directed towards you, and then you don't take it personally, do you? It's a lot easier.

So there's certain wisdom, certain understanding that you hold in mind, that it can be useful at different times. So the word *sati* has somehow the meaning of to hold something in mind. And in fact, the word *sati* also means to remember, or has a very close connection to the word remember, to remember something. So you remember what happened a long time ago, you are using your *sati*. If you are going to memorize something, using your *sati*. And one interesting way of understanding this is that this memory, holding in mind and memorizing, is a faculty that the mind, a faculty that enables us to remember. *Sati* is that faculty of mind, that activity of the mind that enables us to hold something in mind.

And so, if you have ever memorized something, engaged in the process of memorizing a poem or a chant or a song or something, you have to use your mind in a particular way to energize a certain activity of the mind, a certain function of the mind, to be able to take in the words of the poem in a more active, more full way. So it kind of registers in a deeper way, fuller way. So there's a kind of stay sticks there. You could read a poem. I can read a poem, and basically to understand what I mean when I'm reading, ask me five minutes later to recite it, and I don't have that kind of mind that can just do it. I have to work to actually memorize it. So it's an activity and engagement of the mind, a heightened engagement of a certain kind to memorize.

It's also a certain kind of heightened activity of the mind in order to recall something you memorized in the past. So I have some things I memorized in my head, and it takes a certain kind of engagement. My focus has to be focused. I can't be distracted. I cannot get into my body. There's a kind of more blood maybe going into my brain, and there's a kind of, it's also a kind of like it sometimes because it's kind of because of the energy and the blood and whatever I feel sometimes a certain kind of me feels more alive, engaged in that process of

memorizing. I wouldn't be surprised if people who do CAT scans or MRIs have the brain find that you lots of activity as blood is going into your brain.

And it's a really good exercise for the brain. It's a really good exercise. In fact, I don't know. I know people who believe that memorizing that's a regular thing in your life prevents senility of a certain kind, and so they kind of constantly memorizing, keep that exercising the mind, keeping going. So there's a kind of heightened engagement of something. And I don't actually know how to describe what that heightened thing is in some detail. But maybe most of you have some memory or some association with a heightened activity to recall something or to memorize something at the best of it, not some time when you're stressed about it, but at the very best of that kind of situation.

When I was practising mindfulness in Burma with U Paṇḍita, he expected that when you came to interviews to report about your meditation experience, you had to give a detailed account of what happened in your meditation sessions, and you had a very particular way of narrating what happened. One of the things, you couldn't narrate it as a personal story. For example, you couldn't say, "Oh, I sat down. It was so hard to be with my breath, and was kind of discouraging. And I remember the time in school when I was discouraged by failing a test, and you know, I'm really not. Life is really hard for me, you know. Help me in that, you know." He would just kind of throw you out, you know. "Come back tomorrow." You can have all those experiences, but you couldn't report that way of self-pity.

Also what you had to do is come in, kind of like an adult, like you kind of say, "I sat down and I turned my attention to my breath, and my breath was rather shallow and tight. As I felt that shallow and tight breath, I noticed that I couldn't follow more than two or three breaths at a time, and I would only notice that five minutes later, when I woke up from a daydream. At that point I would sometimes notice that there were thoughts of despair would arise. I noted those as despair. When I noticed those as despair, that despair got stronger. Sometimes it happens that way. At the despair at that point, I felt a lowering, dropping of my energy and I noted this dropping of energy. I felt discouragement, and I noticed discouragement, and I noticed a proliferation of thinking. And at which point the sitting was over." And he would say, "Quick report, that's really good."

And it was partly, it was a twofold training. I mean, I could give much more nicer descriptions, right? Wasn't all, but the idea was, you were supposed to report it without a lot of reference to self-image and self-absorption. Ideas and human beings often are quite involved with self-image, self-concern, how I look for others, and so there's all this extra stuff, baggage that goes on to the description. So you had to contact just the facts, just how it was in its simplic-

ity, without all the interpretation. The second thing was the value of that was that I had to remember what had happened, and so there had to be, you know, I could easily, I can easily be more or less mindful of the present moment, be aware of the present moment as it's occurring. But ask me half an hour later what happened, you know, I have a vague sense of what happened.

So I followed my breath a little bit, you know, and, you know, I wandered a little bit, came back a little bit, you know, was nice, but, you know, it wouldn't be enough detail for my teacher, you know. So I had to kind of track my experience in such a way that it registered deeply enough that I could remember it twenty hours later when I had my interview. So I'm not saying that I was memorizing it, but there had to be this heightened activity, heightened sensitivity, heightened registering, heightened awareness of what's there that allowed me to register it so that it kind of lodged a bit more in the memory banks. Just being kind of easily aware wasn't quite enough for what his teacher required. And at some point, when my concentration was strong, my meditation would last three hours, and I had to report on those three hours. That's a lot of, you know, a lot goes on in three hours, right? And he did it.

There was one way. He did make it all the easier for you, because you could keep a notebook at the end of your sittings. You could jot it down. So I didn't necessarily have to memorize it for twenty hours, but yet wanted to memorize it enough to get to the notebook. And I would. But three hours is a long time. So what I would do was I had this watch here, actually, and I set it to beep every thirty minutes, and I was meditating alone, so it was OK, and every thirty minutes it would beep, and I would take that as an opportunity to review the meditation up until that time.

Now, that review is not the same thing as mindfulness. In fact, if you listen to some of us teachers like me say, "Now don't think about the past. Just stay in the present, stay in the present, stay in the present." But I knew that was the practice. But since I had to remember, I thought I just every thirty minutes I'll just do this exercise of reviewing what had happened up until then. But what I found was that reviewing process strengthened that muscle of memory, and it strengthened the muscle and mindfulness, because it's kind of like the same muscle you follow. So, and then, because I was continually reviewing, and knowing that was important, it would help me, encourage me to have this little heightened sensitivity or awareness when I did my practice in general. So it registered.

Now, I'm teaching a retreat right now, at Hidden Villa. And I was there for several days. It's buildings there, wooden buildings. And then, you know, I was mindful, pretty mindful of the place. I was mindful in this practice. I was doing it. And then a couple of days ago, I looked

at the buildings and realized the building is red. I hadn't registered there was red. You know, I mean, you know, I know what red looks like, but it seems kind of obvious. Some people are very visually oriented, and that's what they see automatically. But you know, this big building is red. You know, I'm looking at the barn door, right? And I hadn't, you know, registered this red. In fact, if you had asked me before it registered, "What colour is that building?" I'm not sure. And green, you know, what colour is it? And so there's it.

So I was aware, I was present, but I hadn't registered what had happened. Or you could be sitting here meditating. Maybe it happened to some of you, and you're basically going to be engaged in the present moment. You're getting in the breath, and a car drives by, and you're kind of aware of the sound of the car. It's a non-idea awareness. However, you haven't really registered it. Have you really taken in in some clear way this is a sound of a car, so that once the car is gone, you know you hardly even noticed that there as you were focusing on the breath. Or you talk, fit listening to me, you're focusing so much on me, you know you don't even notice the car out there, even though it's in awareness in a cunning way.

So mindfulness is different than awareness. Mindfulness is using awareness. You have to be aware to be mindful. But mindfulness is a heightened activity of the mind. It allows you, in a sense, to register or fully acknowledge what the experience is that you are paying attention to right now. When teachers like me and other mindful teachers teach, we often will use casually the word awareness and mindfulness synonymously. And because you notice, for most people this distinction is not that important, maybe, but initially, but it also lends itself to some confusion by treating them as synonyms.

Mindfulness is different than awareness. Awareness is a precious phenomenon of our mind, and it's really one of the key things. And awareness, by itself, in its purity is very closely akin to the experience of liberation. In Buddhism, mindfulness is different than awareness because it is heightened activity that really acknowledges this is happening. So like you go to an example I like using, if you go to, you know, you go visit some friends or a party, and someone greets you with a handshake that's limp, and you know they like to see you. I often see someone already interested in someone else. You don't really feel like you have been met. The person is aware of you, right? The awareness was there, but you don't feel like the person really acknowledged you as a person, really met you. You meet someone else and they stop what they're doing. They turn towards you. They shake their hands and look at you and say hi, and you really feel like they acknowledged it, they're there for you.

Mindfulness has the quality of really being there for something, acknowledging it in that sense. You can't be in a hurry doing mindfulness. You have to take the time to really be

present for one thing. When you are being present for it, this one thing here is to be there for it. When you are being aware, there can be a kaleidoscope of many things happening at once. But when you are mindful, there has to be some choice about what it is you can fully acknowledge in this moment. Some choice is involved.

And so we often say you notice the breath, or notice what is most compelling or most pronounced in the present moment. Or if you're doing work with your hands, pay attention to your hands. Really acknowledge what your hands are doing. Focus your attention there. You're listening to someone. Really be there for the person, or be there for the words, or something. There's some choice that goes on with mindfulness, a voice of some choice.

Awareness doesn't have to involve any choice, because you know, if you're all, if you all were really relaxed, I tell you, "Don't imagine yourself totally relaxed but not sleepy." And I tell you, "Don't be aware. Stop it. Don't be aware," you know, unless you did something like, I don't know, went to sleep, or I don't know. You can't stop being aware. It's what the mind, what the human kind of condition does. It does awareness all the time. But it's very pleasant to realize the simplicity and the naturalness of awareness. When we rest in awareness and there's no other kind of complicated activity going on, like judging or criticizing or resisting.

But mindfulness involves a deliberateness, a deliberate engagement of this clear recognition of, "This is what's happening now." There's danger with this kind of deliberateness, and that is that of a number of different kinds. One is that many people come to meditation with over-active brains. They're exhausted, they're stressed out, and to be told, "You can't do something deliberate, heighten something." I mean, you know, the wrong place. Then many people need to relax first before they engage this heightened activity. And so actually, when we teach mindfulness, we often teach you focusing on the breath. And the breath has its double function, where it can both be a concentrating activity, can relax you, and it can be used to cultivate mindfulness, and so we don't. So we say you don't follow your breath beneath your breath. A lot of people first use it mostly as a place. It's a way of calming themselves down, and that's great. You need, you need, you need to come into balance. You don't need to get really calm like a couch potato. But we need to come into balance, and most people are so unbalanced that relaxation is out of the game. That's what needs to happen.

So if you hear this idea of mindfulness, deliberate heightening of the mind, and that's not right for you, just register that, hold that in mind, and wait until such a day or a year when that's appropriate. So another part is that the idea of deliberateness can involve a sense of me doing something, and as soon as I am doing something, I am in trouble because I'm doing it. I can be doing it right, I can be doing it wrong. I could wonder whether I'm doing it right or

wrong. I have sat down to meditate, followed two or three breaths, and then ask myself, "Am I there yet?" I've forgotten it, right? Yet it's kind of like the analogy that's given as you take a farmer plants a seed, of course corn. Then she comes out and she pulls up. The little seedling comes up like this. You inch out of the ground and then pulls the plant out of the ground to see how it's growing. Great. It's growing, and you can't plant it back then. It's done, right. So you can't just start right away evaluating and judging.

And also there might be all kinds of, you know, the part of it. There might be a kind of habit, strong habit of being aversive, and so the sense of deliberateness comes with it. Maybe resistance, or there might be a strong habit of desire, wanting, "I want a really good meditation," so I'm kind of leaning forward into future, holding on, trying to get something really good. Or striving might be a habit. Or fear might be a habit, "Oh no, I know it. I can't do this. Not safe." And so that is part often comes. We know, we kind of confuse or mess up that Deliberateness Doing Part. So that's another reason why concentration practice is often taught: First relax, take it easy. And when you get relaxed, you may be more or less likely to add all this extra stuff when it's time to switch to the deliberate mindfulness practice.

So I'll give you one of the Buddha gave a lot of images, kind of similes or analogies, for the kind of practices he was teaching. He was kind of like a genius, hundreds and hundreds of images, similes, analogies, metaphors. And he gave a variety of metaphors, similes, images for mindfulness practice. And they're different from each other, these different images. So it isn't like all the images pointing to the same thing. Mindfulness is not just one thing. It's a meditation. A deliberate registering of being present for things registers itself in different ways at different times.

But here is one, I think, very powerful image for mindfulness. It has to do with a shepherd who is herding sheep, taking care of the sheep, the flock. When the crops are growing, like the rice is growing in India, the crops are growing and the sheep are up or about walking round grazing. The shepherd has to be really attentive to the sheep. Make sure they don't stray from the fields, whatever, into the farmers' crops to eat the crops. And you have to. The shepherd has to go there and push them away and this way and that way, and herd them, and move them, and be really on top of them very closely, and it can be quite exhausting.

Comes to mind is that they have herding cats. I've never herded sheep, you know, but I've tried to catch some wild sheep with a job I had when I lived on a farm, and boy, that was something trying to catch them. "Ehi sheep," and so you know it in a lot of effort and work, manipulating, getting this way and that way. And you notice, once the crops have been harvested, the rice fields are just stubble fields. Then it doesn't matter if the sheep wander into



the crops and to where the crops were. At that point, a shepherd doesn't have to watch so closely, or doesn't have to be involved in manipulating, working the sheep, and moving this way, and getting good. At that point, the shepherd can sit leaning against a tree in the shade, and just kind of keep a very spacious eye on the sheep. Has to kind of watch the sheep, make sure no one steals them or something, but the shepherd can be much more quite relaxed.

So the image here is leaning against a tree just under the shade, not needing to worry or be afraid of anything, letting the sheep do what they do, make sure that they don't kind of wander too far away or get stolen. Mindfulness, the weariness of mindfulness practice, is like the shepherd leaning against a tree, watching the sheep in the stubble field. That kind of ease, you allow your experience to be what it is. You're not trying a shepherd, or, you know, herd your experience, make it better or different or never. But you also, and you stay relaxed in the gazing and watching of the experience. So that's a nice image, right? For people who are stressed out, that's great. You know, rest against a tree. Just watch.

And then you can kind of continue this analogy of the sheep. And I say, everything is sheep. There's nothing which is not sheep. So whatever happens, your experience, you don't have to leave your, you know, your tree. You can just keep everything in this kind of spacious, open gaze of awareness, recognizing what's going on. And the interesting thing is that if you really push this analogy, even the shepherd is a sheep, so even the one who's doing the watching is another sheep. That you hold in the same way is a nice, everything is sheep after the harvest. So that's what, so but that's kind of a very relaxed idea of mindfulness. And sometimes that's really appropriate. That's the kind of mindfulness we want to cultivate and develop. And sometimes what we want is only more heightened. This is when we really allow something to register in a deeper and fuller way.

And part of the reason for that is that a variety of reasons, benefits from that. One is if you really stop and register something, really be there for it, you can see it more deeply. You can see what it is. And part of the function of mindfulness is to see deeply into the nature of what your experience is. It's so easy, you kind of flit across the top of our experience, the surface of it. And it's not so usual to really, in a calm, deliberate, full way, let a mind really see what's really happening here. And a lot of spiritual traditions will say human beings are often asleep. They live in illusion, in enchantment. And one way or the other, the spiritual task is to wake up from the illusion, wake up from the enchantment, wake up from sleep. The idea of being able to see deeply and clearly in the Buddhist tradition is part of this way of breaking through the illusion and seeing what's here, to stop and really see what is here.

And often how things appear on the surface are not how they actually are. And so, you know,

if we really want to be with what things actually are, we have to somehow be able to see through the surface appearance of things. In the Buddhist tradition, in the early Buddhist tradition, it seems that the word mindfulness, also the word *sati*, also is closely connected to wisdom. And so sometimes you hold your wisdom with, it's a kind of discernment or understanding that goes together with the mindfulness. So in that sense, mindfulness is not always just kind of dumb. It doesn't just simply register what's there, see what's there, but it actually understands what's there in some fuller way that might be more fuller than just seeing it as it actually is.

So one way of understanding this is through a different analogy the Buddha used for mindfulness. And here the Buddha said mindfulness is like the gatekeeper of a fortified town. Back in the ancient world, they had fortified towns with, maybe, walls around them, and there would be one gate where everybody can come and go. And the gatekeeper's job was to make sure that, you know, only the right people got in and the wrong people were kept out. The bandits were kept out, for example, and the gatekeeper can't see who's coming in and out. Mindfulness is like the gatekeeper, and mindfulness sits at the gate, sits at the place where we contact reality. We contact life in living present, and then it's a part of the function of mindfulness is to help. Or wisdom together with mindfulness is to make a choice about what experience to let in and what experience to not let in, or what direction to let the mind go in and what not to go in.

So for example, if you're sitting and the decision is to stay with the breath, that's what you can pay attention to. And the gatekeeper notices that thinking about what's for dinner tonight comes up to awareness. That's of interest. I think it'd be good, steady, to plan dinner. So there the gatekeeper knows, "Oh, planning for dinner. That's the wrong person to come in right now. Let's keep that out. I'm not going to pick that one up, not going to open the door for those thoughts. I'm just going to drop it and go back to the breath." Or say thoughts come up that say, "I think that you're being a little bit too harsh in your mindfulness here, and you pay attention. I think it'd be useful if you can cultivate a little more kindness in your approach. How to be mindful here." The gatekeeper says, "You know, that's right. This is kind of harsher the way I'm practising." So we let that thought in, "Okay, let's see if we can find more kindness in this approach."

So there is kind of, so mindfulness as this gatekeeper puts us at the place of choice, the place where we make choice. And then, with the wisdom, it helps us decide what to let in, what not to let in, what to act on, and what not to act on. So part of the function of mindfulness is to help place us in the place of choice, and then to learn to exercise that choice in a wise

way. So mindfulness is not only this non-evaluative, non-judgmental or non, you know, bare attention, awareness of what's happening here. There is a time when mindfulness is involved in some kind of process of valuation and making a choice, and that brings up the problem of deliberateness again, that I'm making the choice, and all this stuff happens. Everything is sheep, including how we are practicing mindfulness.

And a big part of the process of cultivating, developing mindfulness, is learning about how we are doing the mindfulness practice. Just like when you're learning to use a bicycle. At first, all the usual, learning a bicycle comes into play. You are watching about, you're right, and you fall off. Or, "You know, I can master everything really quickly." You jump on the bike and pedal and you fall right off. You notice all these attitudes that go involved in riding a bicycle. And slowly you have to learn, and it takes a while. And then eventually you can learn to ride the bicycle, and you don't even use your hands. "Look, mum, no hands." When you become second nature to ride the bicycle, but it takes a while to find the right way to find the balance. It's the same thing with mindfulness. You have to do it in order to learn how to ride the mindfulness bike and you have to fall off a number of times before you learn how to be mindful. But in the process of doing it slowly, you're also paying attention to, "How am I doing this? Am I doing it with too much striving, am I doing it being too relaxed, too non-committal?"

There's something called the checklist approach to mindfulness, and that is, you've been told to pay attention to what's happening, so you just kind of note it really quickly. In breath, out breath. Once a sound happens, hearing, click, done. The quicker the better. You don't really want to kind of be present for anything. I said, click, click, click. And that's not the same thing as really being there for it. You know, I want to be here and really take this in. So the idea is, I lost track of what I'm thinking or I'm saying. It's a lot to hold in mind here. So try to pick it up somewhere. Why the sheep? It's all sheep. It's all sheep. And so part of the process of mindfulness is learning to purify your mindfulness. And it takes a while to do that. In different circumstances, you may have to learn that process in a different way.

And there are a lot of benefits to mindfulness. There's the benefits of learning not to be so reactive, learning to kind of meet your experience from a kind of an adult-like place of clear acknowledgment, "Here I am." It's kind of like being an adult, I think, being mindful. You're seeing, "Here I am. I see it." And you're not skirting around, or you're not embarrassed or apologetic about it, just you're really there, seeing it now. So it really helps to confine that corner of the mind that can have that kind of adult-like stability and independence, that's not enmeshed or entangled with all these different feelings and emotions and thoughts and

beliefs that we might have.

Another benefit of mindfulness is it can be relaxing, because the alternative ways in which you use your mind are so entangled, and so as we begin disentangling it, things tend to relax. Another benefit of mindfulness is it helps us to see more deeply what's going on. And most people who have not looked at their minds and hearts don't really know what's going on. Some people, it's a culture shock. It may be a shock to realize, "Wow, I had no idea what was driving me." One of the common ones is people realize how pervasive fear is. They had no idea how it seems to influence and infiltrate everything. But they were so busy doing life that they didn't notice. But they stop and look. "I now have no idea." So mindfulness tells us. It helps us to see.

And mindfulness practice also is self-purifying, in that you're doing it slowly. You learn how to do it in a way that doesn't have all the complications. And that translates also to learn to do the same thing for awareness. And it helps us, as we purify mindfulness, we're also purifying awareness, because awareness itself doesn't so entangled, simpler. And at some point in doing mindfulness practice, it's appropriate to let go of mindfulness, that deliberateness, that engagement. You let go of that, too. It's a kind of heightened activity of the mind, and that activity of the mind is too much, and you let go of mindfulness. It's a somewhat advanced stage in meditation to do that. And long before that, the experience of being mindful with deliberateness feels like second nature. It's fun. It's beautiful. It's self-reinforcing. It has a wonderful feeling to it. And so doesn't seem like the work. Maybe it feels like when you are just beginning, but at some point mindfulness has to be let go of as well.

And then one of things that can happen is you're left with, because you almost work purifying mindfulness. When you let go of mindfulness, then you're left with purified awareness: radiant, open, transparent, translucent awareness that has no location, awareness that has no centre, awareness in which there is no there or here, awareness in which there is no movement, awareness which doesn't move, awareness which has no boundaries, awareness which has no centre. That's pretty good. But it's also an awareness which has no there. So what good is it? You're not there. Then you know, you know. To put a badge on it says, "You know, accomplished meditator," you know. And what good is it if you can't get credit? It's an awareness with no us?

So in brief, that's what mindfulness is today. I'm sorry that I had to offer such a short introduction to this huge topic because, you know, I didn't exhaust the topic, what mindfulness is. But I hope one of things you come, you get two things. I hope that you get from this talk two, three or four anyway. One of things is that mindfulness is not the same thing as awareness,

though sometimes I use it as a synonym. Mindfulness is not one thing, but it's kind of a range of things that's kind of includes a variety of different situations. Your mindfulness might look slightly different. It's different ways of what it means. And the other thing, the last thing I like to hope to get across, which I didn't really say maybe, but that is. I hope that you come to really enjoy the adventure of mindfulness. It's a really great adventure to be on. Not take it as an onerous task and spiritual responsibility or something that's a burden, but rather something that is one of the greatest adventures you can take in this life, because it can really help clarify and liberate so much of what it means to be a human being. And it's just amazing. You know that the doors it opens, it's amazing. The vistas you provide, it's just amazing. You know, it enriches life in a way that you know. I would say the vistas, the experiences, the variety of things that you discover through mindfulness practice is greater and more varied than if you spend your life being a world traveller. The Chögyam Trungpa, the great Tibetan teacher, said, "If you can't meditate, travel." Eeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee. So self thank you very much. Thank you very much.