

# 2007-11-09 Anapanasati-Body as Breath 2 of 9

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

breathing, breath, body, breathe, relax, mind, steps, shifts, relaxed, mindfulness, affects, tetrad, important, freeing, foundation, buddha, sense, formation, meditate, sit

## SPEAKERS

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Welcome to Dharma practice day. And the theme this year for those of you might be new is mindfulness of breathing. And in particular, going through the 16 steps of mindfulness breathing, the Buddha taught a few different places. And it's a very interesting 16 steps or steps involve staying in touch with the breathing. So the breathing becomes a foundation vehicle for which to develop the practice. And the most famous discourse on this topic correlates the 16 stages of breathing with the four foundations of mindfulness so the four foundations of Mindfulness as a core practice, Vipassana, and it's those four foundations are the body, feelings, feeling tone in the mind, and what's called the Dharma, or the short term, you might call it the, the inner truths, the patterns, the inner truths that unfold and develop as we practice. So, the first four of the 16 steps of breathing, correlated to the foundation of the body. The second four are correlated to the foundation of the feelings, mindfulness, a feeling tones, the third fourth, from nine to 12, goes correlates with mindfulness of the foundation of mindfulness of the body of the mind. And the last four correlate with the mindfulness of the dharmas. So body feelings, mind and Dharma, dhammas.

And so the first four are have to do with the body. So it's very much about discovering what's going on in the body as you breathe. Now, these are these 16 steps of mindful breathing. They're very brief the description by the Buddha, because the descriptions are more like Cliff Notes. And, it's so brief, that there's not enough information in there to really understand what the Buddha was talking about. So what has happened down through the centuries is that different teachers will interpret it different ways. Depending on you know, whatever their emphasis might be, in some teachers or teachers interpreted as being a sequence Build build over time. And that's one way to do it. And the other way is that it's just a convenient way of kind of laying out a map with a variety of things that might happen to you, as you focus your practice on the breath, and there's noticing other things as well. And so you might jump around these different steps. Another way of understanding it is that each tetrad, each group of four, kind of stand on their own. And there's not really a sequence outside of the group of four, but each group of four represents a sequence. And they can be kind of studied or practice separately, just like people could practice separately, each of the four foundations of mindfulness. There are some places where they specialize on focusing on mindfulness of the body. that's mostly what they do in their practice. And the other fact foundations of mindfulness are not so much done. There are some people who focus a lot on mindfulness of the mind the third foundation in mindfulness, some focus a lot On the fourth Foundation, so people focus a lot on the second foundation. So one way of approaching this is that each each tetrad stands by itself, right and something has to build over time. And I say all this so that you're not oppressed by the list, you not oppressed by as we go through this over to over the over these months, we'll go through the 16 that, you know, worried that you know, not fit and not fitting into this wonderful, neat pattern. Or, you know, I'm still in step one, and now we're talking about step 12. And this seems much too hard for me or something. So

I love the mindfulness of breathing. I feel like being with my breath, even my breath is uncomfortable. And there's plenty of times when it's uncomfortable, because as I pointed out, the breath is very much affected by what's going on for us any given time by what activities of our body, the tensions in which we hold our activity, their feelings attention, which we hold our feelings, the thoughts and attention which we hold our thoughts. All these things kind of affect our breathing. And different people probably affects different ways. But, you know, it affects the rate in which we breathe, the speed in which we breathe, how often we breathe shallow, how deeply breathe, we're in the body, the movement of breathing tends to happen. Is it more just breathing, we're barely breathing. Is it a breath held in some way is a breath loose and relaxed. And this shifts you know, costly shifts and change. And I hope in those 15 minutes during the walking time, that you were able to stay in touch enough with your breathing, to see that probably there was a range of shifts in the course in that time. And I've known is, you know, sometimes it's something as subtle as going from this walking in the sun to in the shade of a tree can shift the breathing and, or someone passes you in the walkway. So you don't know it shifts the breathing, some kind of way or some great desire arises and that shifts the breathing and or some version that shifts the breathing or some kind of eagerness to get to the bathroom first scene of standing in line, and then eagerness to walk there quickly effects the breathing. And so the breathing then becomes a mirror can become a mirror of what's going on inside of us. But also the mirror then there's a reciprocal relationship between the breathing and the mind and the inner life. Just as the inner life affects the breathing, if, if we keep if we kind of keep the breath relaxed, soften the breath, calm the breath, that then has a relationship back on the state of our mind. And so, one of the reasons why breath is often used as a calming influence on people is because as the breath changes and shifts that occur away, it tends to shift the state of our mind as well. So in this first tetrad, which we've covered now already in the first couple of days, the first two steps is simply to become aware of the breath in the most simple i think i think it's the most simple kind of obvious way. Kind of this physic physical experience of breathing. It says in the discourse you're aware of the breath is being long, the in breath as long the out breath as long as the out breath in breath is long or short. the out breath is short, if we were going to expand that to include Just wherever the physicality of how your breathing was going on your breath. is a breath shallow and deep. Is it warm or cool? Is it tight or relaxed? What parts of the body are moving, just kind of getting to know the kind of physical sensations of breathing the third step in this First, let's read the way it said in the, in the Pali discourse, it said, to be aware of the whole body. And, and I think it's really great to kind of become more embodied experience your body as you breathe, and expand, expand your awareness to have the kind of global experience of your body wide global experience is connected to your body. And it's a wonderful way to do much closer breathing. in the, in the Chinese version of this fitness course, is translated to Chinese as well. And there it doesn't say the mindful of the whole body, but it says become mindful of the bodily formation. And the formation here sunkara can be understood as part of our experience, which is effected or conditioned by our mind, by our attitudes or intentions, what's going on. So in that point of view, there's a very interesting way of studying the breath net is to study the breath, the point of view of how the breath is Influenced by your, how you behave and how you think and how you feel and how you intend the whole inner world that exists, how that's affected your breathing. And I noticed sometimes when I sit down often we sit down to breathing. There's a momentum or remnant remnant of my day or last our last 15 minutes and how I breathe.

And before I came here at 930, I was up in my office and before nine o'clock or so I decided to sit before I'd come down to be with you so I sat for a while up there, my office irritated and I've been on my computer for half an hour before just half an hour and, and during a half an hour I sat down to meditate and I could feel a certain kind of tightness in the front of my chest here that that half an hour the computer and trying to do my things and get them done, you know, that kind of an effect that affected

how I breath. Breathe tightness and heaviness and resistance there. And so I thought, Oh, this is good, I decided to sit down. And I can kind of think it to hopefully kind of release this and come back to a more relaxed, easy breath. So there's momentum that could we bring with us. So one way of understanding this, the third step is to become aware of how the breath has been influenced by our inner life by our thoughts and feelings intentions. Because then the fourth step is to become aware, is to calm the bodily formation. And so here in Chinese, it says, Be aware of your bodily formation. And then the fourth one is to relax the bodily formation and the politics at the rear of the whole body, and then relax the bodily formation. and elsewhere in the discourses of the Buddha. He defines the bodily formation as the breathing as your breath as our breath. So rather than the whole experience of the body and how the body is in influenced by the mind, one way of interpreting this is where we're limiting ourselves to become to calm, be aware and to calm the experience of breathing itself. So the breath is affected by our inner life. And then to spend a little bit of time relaxing it, freeing it, calming it, the word is to calm. I like the word free it rather than coming but calling it making it more relaxed. And so to intentionally try to send a softening wave of calmness throughout the body, but especially with the breath, and there can be sometimes very small shifts that can be done with your breathing that are within the natural scope of a natural breathing, that make the breath more comfortable, more and more useful. So sometimes relaxing, the exhale, relaxing the belly as you exhale as you exhale, letting go a little bit more fully as you as you breathe out. So you know you're not forcing it, but just kind of a Often, sometimes the breath has held slightly unit breathing out completely. And so we intentionally kind of let ourselves kind of release it to the end of the out breath. Sometimes it can be a little bit more pleasant the breath. And I find that same, same thing true with the top of the Ingress, sometimes, sometimes the top of the inhalation is there's some resistance with some holding there. And if I just have very simple kind of sense of relaxed release, or letting go, the top of the breath, then the in breath comes a little bit fuller. And then it kind of kind of like massage then through the places of holding, breathe in and out to kind of moving through the places of holding. And sometimes, you know, the way that my mind affects is my breathing. I can't relax it, release it, you know, on will. So then it becomes I feel some holding patterns in tension connected to my breathing, that I'm very content just to kind of massage it. Maybe the tension is felt at the top of the in breath. Just like your push against it in a sense, like a massage and then relax. As I breathe out, push against it relax, it's kind of do that back and forth. with it. I found that for myself very, very helpful to relax the belly when I breathe. And for me, when I first started doing my meditation practice many years ago, my belly was chronically tense. And it actually took a few years to get the belly relax, I could relax it on will really come I wanted to I could relax it, and it would last about half a second. You know. And so I wasn't I didn't make it a big project, but you know, beginning of sitting and relax, very radically relax. Over the years, it's pretty relaxed. So did first become a witness first. Don't make not make a big project out of the mindfulness, just become aware of your breathing. And then once you've kind of established it capacity to be here, be present enough with your breathing and have some degree of just useful present just presence without things are gotten gotten to know what's here, then you get to know it better by understanding, seeing if you can feel your way into how the breath is being influenced by the mind. And once you kind of get a sense of that, then is it possible then to relax? The experience of reading, relax the breathing, make it calmer, make it smoother. If you do those those things, chances are if you do it well, chances are you won't be thinking about other things.

And as you stop thinking about other things, and get focused on that, you will get focus. You can concentrate and get settled. You get involved in there, and a lot of other things will fall away. Of course, it's easier said than done. But one of the very important things that you have to consider when you want to meditate is the degree of you're in 10 is when you sit down to meditate to be in some way intent on this is what I'm going to do. Now this is important. This is this is what I set myself to do. It's easy enough to sit down with some vague idea you want to meditate with your mind is really intent on something else. And reviewing a conversation for another day or resolving some problem or planning

the future or something. And, and I find it helpful to sit down with some sense of purpose or intentions, sir, since a clear recognition of this is what I'm going to do here to be here. This body time in place, I'm going to be here with a spot with a spread. This is important, this is useful, this is what I like to do. There's no guarantee that I kind of intent this at the beginning will translate to being more present the breath than you would have otherwise. But I think it helps more likely, you know, hopefully it's helps more than hinders. And To remind yourself that you know, just kind of money and invest it in the most relaxed way or more freeing most freeing way possible. So this is an important task you're doing. And this is what you're going to do. And if you're not convinced, you don't have some kind of conviction that being with your breath is a useful thing to do, then it might be important to, you know, to reflect a little bit on why you think something else might be more important. And, and do some analysis, actually think about it, maybe journal or talk to a friend or something and say, you know, you know, I sit down to meditate, I'm always thinking it's more important to plan. And, you know, and then look at that, is that really the case? At least intellectually, have a sense, some sense the value of sitting down and just being with your breath. If you don't have that intellectual sense of that value, then it'd be harder to channel two channels with the word channel your different forces, Marshal yourself to pray. Stay focused on the breath. It's hard enough even if you think it's important than the most important thing in the world, but it makes some sense. So

So last time we met, we went over that we've gone over the first four already. Today I offered you a little different angle, different perspective and before and, and then we went on to this five and six as well. And today I'd like to go on to the end of the day to event seven and eight. But Step seven and eight, but I think that'll be for the afternoon.