Good evening, everyone. This evening I'm going to start a series of talks on the five hindrances. Five hindrances is a very important list of mental qualities and mental states that have a big impact on meditation practice, and have a big impact on people's daily lives. And in our particular tradition of mindfulness, we encourage people to become very familiar with these five hindrances. The word hindrances has a negative connotation. And so that raises issues people's minds are literally the Pali word for hindrances. This means the coverings that which covers over and it covers over things like clarity of our mind, our ability to be mindful, it covers over a little bit of a bounce here. It covers over, our ability to be wise, covers over our ability to get concentrated covers over our ability to stay on purpose. And, and so somehow we have to contend or deal with these as we try to develop meditation practice. It's very important not to see these as personal failings, all human beings have them. And a huge part of the process of mindfulness meditation, and concentration meditation is to learn about these really well, so that you become free of them, so they don't have to hinder you anymore. So it can be easy to want to want to dismiss them. These are unfortunate, they're distractions. But it's actually better not to dismiss them to quickly get over them too quickly. But rather take these things and study them become a student of these, so you understand them really well. And when you understand them really well then it's much easier to set yourself free from them. So these five hindrances are, the there's a narrow list of what they are, and then there's a more expensive one, what they are so I'll do the narrow one first. It's essential desire, desire for sensual pleasure. ill will. sloth and torpor, restlessness and remorse and doubt because, but often they're kind of expanded outwards to include other things which can be can function very much the same way. So essential desire sometimes refer to the first hindrance as just desire. Because desire any kind of desire, not just sensual desire can derail you from your practice can obscure your ability to see clearly the Ill will is sometimes simply called a version. Sometimes any kind of aversion. Even if you don't have hostility towards someone wish them ill, there can still be very powerful forces of aversion, that kind of pull us into their, into their orbit, and it's hard to get out of them, they influence us quite a bit. sloth and torpor sloth is physical and torpor is mental. Sometimes it's sometimes expanded outward to be any kind of lethargy, any kind of drop of energy, where it makes it hard to be present. And then restlessness and remorse is remorse is not a popular topic here in the West. And doubt is usually use called doubt. So these are the five and they can be very mild forces in the mind and they can be very powerful forces. In the mind, seemingly on the mild side there the ability to have clear insight, insight meditation or clear insight into your life or your ability to stay fully concentrated is contingent on having these put to rest. Not getting rid of them once and for all, but letting them kind of drop long enough so that I can see clearly or get concentrated. And so in very deep meditation, or relatively deep meditation, pretty quiet pretty Still, the mind can still be wandering around and little bit, you're kind of staying on the breath.
thing and the breaths are pretty well on the breath. And then suddenly, you start thinking about how
good it would be to have chocolate you know, and no idea chocolate

would be really good and you know, there's an orange chocolate raspberry chocolate, you know, and
you Oh yeah, you know, you can kind of feel it, you know, and, and it takes a while to realize, you know
what in the breath. So it might have been pulled off very subtly, but enough so you know, on track or
very subtle version can arise. Normally in daily life, that desire for chocolate may not be such a big
deal. But it, but in deep meditation, it's just enough to kind of nudge you off course, your person can be
calm, pretty quiet. It doesn't take much to nudge a person off a little bit. And so you have to be very
attentive in meditation to notice how the mind might drift off this way or that way into these different
states. How many states are influenced you in daily life? These five hindrances can be mild, but they
can also be phenomenally strong, so strong that people die in a strong addiction. To such pleasure, any
kind of addiction is kind of usually seen as kind of a strong sense of attachment or sensual pleasure,
some sort or other, ill will get caught in the orbit of ill will so powerfully that people do things that they
regret for decades, maybe of the rest of their life. And these things can happen so quickly that we lash
out in expression of anger and detrimental to ourselves detrimental to our whole society. And maybe
some of the terrible things we read in the newspaper. It's an interesting exercise, is to kind of look into
them and see was a person who did these terrible things. Were they under the influence of one of the
hindrances were they were they was greed, desire, you know, in the forefront that led them to do what
they did. Was there anger ill will. There was there was it You know, something else, one of the other
ones. So it's, it's a wonderful thing to study these things, so even better to become free of them. And
so, we study them in order to become free. If you want to become a good student of the hindrances,
you have to be very patient with them, and not to be dismissive of them. You have to kind of when they
arise, you want to stop for them. The bumper sticker for these six weeks can be I stopped for the
hindrances. It doesn't mean that you indulge in them or let them do what they want to do. But you
become interested and you study them what is what is desire. What is sensual desire, as if you've
never really taken a good look at it. What is ill will what is a version? What is what happens here and
my energy drops? happens enough? What's going on there? What goes on when I get kind of revved
up with restlessness, anxiety and doubt what's going on there. I'm very, very fond of the word respect,
because it means coming from Latin roots to look again. And so we respect all this stuff by taking a
deeper look what's going on. So that's it. That's the topic for these next weeks. And today I want to
merely introduce the five and then the preceding weeks we'll do each hindrance for over five weeks.
And as part of the introduction, I want to relate to you some beautiful analogies that the Buddha gave
around these hindrances. And as I give these analogies, I'm reminded that I was driving over here
today, the how beautifully clear the sky was tonight, and we had a full moon and the full moon in the
clear sky is often taken as a symbol For a clear mind, and a luminous mind, a mind that settle mind is
not caught up in the cut up, not caught by things not being pushed around by the winds of desire and ill
will and thoughts and all that. So these analogies if you want to see yourself well which is one of the
things we do in mindfulness, we will really be able to see ourselves honestly clearly. Then we have the
analogy of the Buddha gave us a bowl of water. Now if you have remake a silver bowl or something and
you have water in it, you water is really still perhaps if you look over the water, you can see
reflection. However, if you put a lot of food coloring into that

water so it's red or blue or something, then it's hard to see your reflection. If you heat up the pot, and
the water is boiling, you can't see very well, your reflection. If a, if you go down to the local pond and
get a whole bunch of algae and algae and slime, and you kind of put it on top of your wonderful little pot
of water, you're not going to have your reflection. And if you put it out then a strong wind and the wind
whips up that surface, then you're not going to have a reflection. And if you put a lot of mud, it gets all
muddy, you're not going to have a good reflection. So if you're caught up in sensual desire, it's like
having the your eyes or your ability to perceive colored with strong dye. And we all know that it would be no when you fall in love with someone some some of us maybe not. Maybe not You particularly but others the you know you fall in love with someone you haven't seen them in role rose colored eyes You know, rose colored glasses, and then just you know they can't do anything wrong and then pendulum swings and then you know they become public enemy number one and everything they do everything about that person just seems like you know is bad and irritating our mood can affect how we see things and when we're caught in the, in the grip of Central desire, it's hard to see ourselves very clearly. were caught with in the in the in the grip of anger or ill will. It can be like you know, we've talked about the fever of the heat of anger, a fever of anger. So we kind of boiling and bubbling the mind is kind of on hot and in that sentence. Situation also it's hard to see ourselves clearly. If we're caught up in somehow in these energy draining states sloth and torpor, it can be like sometimes described as having, you know, just kind of slogging through sludge, it's very hard to kind of do anything or see anything or activate the mind. And so it's like pond it's covered with algae. And it's really hard with all this algae and slime on top to make your way through the pond. You can't swim very well you know, slimy. And then in the wind whipped surface of the pond is like when your mind is really agitated, and restless. It's hard to see anything clearly as well because the mind is just spinning and frag fragment and going this way in that and you're not subtle enough to see. And then doubt just like the muddy water if you're really caught up in doubt, there's no ability to move forward. That's the first analogy. The second analogy the Buddha gave is that of a river. Strong, steady river, where there's a current down the middle of the river, and that current is going straight down the length of the river, maybe out into the ocean. And someone comes along and opens up waterways on either side of the river, diverting some of the water this way in that way. And as this water is diverted, that current mainstream current down the middle also gets diverted. And, and it doesn't go out towards the ocean, but rather the current goes off into the side shoots the waterways, the irrigation channels and all these different places. So it's This analogy we can have a very strong purpose for our lives, something we want to do, whether it's to sit down and meditate, or it's to make some big difference in the world, help the world in some way, or all kinds of things. And that sense of purpose can be derailed or be siphoned off by being caught up in the hindrances. I'm somewhat Nah, I certainly have my own mind at times. Sometimes I'm humored by it. It said that, if you can be

can be humored by your own mind, you'll never stop. To see if you can laugh at yourself, you'll never stop being humored. So it's a good quality to have. So I can sit down to meditate. Meditation is really important for me probably guessed, and I do a lot of it and love it and it's feels very important and A central kind of kind of give them a central thing in my life. So I can sit down with this very important thing. committed. I'm here I'm gonna do it. Nothing right the moment seems more important to me. Okay, here I am. Okay, the breath. Thank you. One breath. Good to breath. Great. I'm on track. Three breath. Oh, it's gonna be easy now. Yes. Fourth, for chocolate. I wonder what shocked flavor chocolate we have in the refrigerator. Huh? Pizza would be really good right now. I wonder what kind of flavor piece of heaven new pizza place in Redwood City and you know, I should go try it and see, I wonder if they probably have thin crust. What breath was I on? third, fourth, fifth. Where was I? So that sense of purpose I had got derailed by something as petty As pizza, or, you know, dare I say chocolate is pretty, you know, derailed by it. And it really amazes me how a strong purpose something is really valuable can be siphoned off by any one of these things. Another analogy the Buddha gave is that of gold. Gold is a valuable metal. Many people wish they had more of it these days. And, and it in order to be able to work gold or to become soft enough to work, if necessary, take out the impurities. And if you take out the impurities and it becomes soft and malleable and wieldy and it can be shaped into something beautiful. Same thing with a mind. If you take out the impurities of the mind, then the mind stops being stiff. hard, but the mind then becomes soft, workable wieldy and can be shaped into something
beautiful. So it's very hard to kind of work on your psychology, work on your issues, work on what motivates you work on your dispositions, all kinds of things. If you're caught in the grip of anything, particularly the grip of the hindrances, and people wonder why I'm why they put so much effort into changing themselves, becoming a better person not being so much influenced by their fear or their desire or their version or whatever, and they don't make any headway. They feel so solid there. It's because it is solid, the mind can kind of stiffen up. And it's also possible whoever to make them to to free the mind of the impurities, and then the mind becomes more and more malleable and workable is a beautiful expression. The Buddha used malleable, really wieldy and workable And so if you want to kind of transform your inner life, you have to have an inner life that can be transformed that's soft enough for that. So these five hindrances are the impurities in the gold of your mind. And so if you can somehow free yourself of these impurities, then the mind becomes luminous to become something really valuable. And something you can work with and do more with. The last analogy is a series of analogies one for each of the five hindrances. The first hindrance is like being in debt. Somehow when you're focusing on desire and what you want. You're not really connected to ourselves not really self centered on ourselves, and you're in debt to yourself. And you feel like you know, you have to know you're not really satisfying to get what you want. Just something satisfying, that is satisfied. That's my best attempt to explain the analogy. Then the second analogy for ill will, or aversion is that this is I think it's a kind of powerful image. The analogy for a wheel here is having an illness. And maybe you can remember sometime in your life or someone else, you know, who was so caught in anger and ill will, that it's such a tremendous cost for the mind and the body. That it's reasonable you know if to call almost like an illness, the effect on us there was a Somewhere I read about an English gentleman, I think was a doctor in the 1800s. Who said the next person makes me angry. will be the death of me. And it did. His anger was so powerful in such a big impact on his heart that you know, it somehow again I had a heart attack or something didn't work. So it will will as it as a illness. sloth and torpor is the image here is like being in jail.

restless anxiety is like being a slave. So in jail, you can't get out and do something can't do what you want to do is no freedom, restlessness, you're being just pushed around by all these powerful forces in the mind this way in that and you have no control over it. So you're a slave. And doubt is like is like being lost in the desert. Now, this particular analogy has a flip side and that is that if you're free of that, it's expected, at least in this analogy, it's expected that you'll be happy, joyful. If you're free to illness, the analogy expects you to be joyful to be happy about that. If you're free of jail, you'll be happy about that. If you're free of slavery, you'll be happy about that. And if you've come to out of the dangerous desert into safeties, then you'll be happy about that. When these five forces in meditation practice when these five different forces are no longer operating, it can be such a relief. It can be so delightful, enjoyable to feel like you have yourself back to feel like oh, I'm in charge. Oh, you know, I'm not being being run over. yanked around, influenced by things I don't want to be influenced by yanked around by things I don't Want to get the act around about by, and it can really feel nice, wow, this is really nice. And in the teachings of the Buddha, you're actually encouraged to have this particular kind of joy, the joy of being free of the hindrances. That kind of joy reinforces the value of not wanting to be in hindrances. Hopefully you get a sense of something better. That kind of joy is much better. And this is a difficult lesson to learn, especially in relationship to sensual desire, essential, essential desire usually has, more often than not, it involves some degree of fantasy of thinking or ideas what something's going to do for us. And often those fantasies can be pleasant fantasies. And so there's kind of a pleasure in having the fantasy and some ideas, a few people I've met who don't want to give up their fantasy for sensual pleasure, because they're attached to that particular pleasure. Now, I have the pleasure of a fantasy you know, more than the pleasure of actual, you know, whatever their they want.
So there certainly can be kind of pleasure there. And here the Buddha is saying, there's a different kind of pleasure that he would call a joy, relief, the light that comes when the mind is free of these the gravitational force of these powerful forces in the mind. And so if you can feel that deep sense of well being that relief that can come from that, and you know, that's better than the delight or the pleasure of fantasy, then the mind will more likely want to go towards this place of freedom. It's a beautiful thing. The sky, the full moon and the clear evening sky with the full moon. It's beautiful. mind which has said free clear expect skylight expansiveness, free of clouds, wind and fog and smog and all the city lights. It's quite beautiful. See all these stars to beautiful thing. When it isn't that we want that kind of beauty for its own right or its own purpose in Buddhism. But that kind of clarity sets the stage. For us people to see something really clearly, just like go in the sky is clear at night and you can see the full moons clearly, then you can in essence study the full moon you can get a really powerful telescope and study and discover what it's like. When the mind is settled and freed of the hindrances, then we can look much much more deeply into the functioning of our mind at some of the subtle ways in which we hold on are attached reclaiming, we resist, we're afraid, we can look deeper into the very roots of what makes us tick. in a way that's very, very difficult to do when the mind is continually caught up in all these things.

So, another thing I want to say is introduction to these hindrances is the first four are paired. And it's interesting see how they're paired. sensual desire, and ill will, even though they're kind of subjective states. Therefore, the focus is on the object of desire, the object of the will. And we're often pulled into that object, that person that thing we want to whatever and their kind of focus object in different ways. Desire wants the object ill will, wants to attack it or push it away and get away from it. So opposite kind of directions, the motivation, the wanting, often with these sensual desire and ill will, we get caught up in thinking about the object, the person, whatever it might be. And one of the interesting very important things to do in that mindfulness meditation is to learn how to, to not necessarily stop having desire or ill will, but to turn the attention, hundred 80 degrees around and feel what it's like subjectively, to be caught in desire, or caught in your will. If we're blinded by the object, we're not going to notice what the subjective state is like. And it's easier with ill will, it will will you can see That you really pay attention to what the cost is for you. It's not worth it. The Buddha said, you do your do your enemy, enemy a favor, if you're angry with your enemy, because then you're doing a harm for yourself that your enemy could never manage to do on himself or his or his or herself. I say that right? You got the point. So you do this inner harm to yourself when you're angry, and only you can do that. The enemy can't do that. With desire, it's harder to see the cost. But go in and long meditation retreats, like a week. And if you have if you get an I don't recommend getting caught up in sensual desire fantasies. But if it does happen, meditation retreats a great place to study because sometimes it can go on for your daily life. You could have a fantasy and then the television rings are you have to go to work or you know, as long as reality interferes on retreat, there's very little reality into fear. And you're sitting there meditating and meditating. And the mind can just kind of somehow get locked in sometimes in some really good fantasy. And it can go on and on sprouter sometimes, and after hours, sometimes person by size. Finally notice, this is a drag. This, this is exhausting. This is a waste of time. The seduction of the pleasure is really a detriment to myself. I was fooled by it. But sometimes it takes you several hours to kind of where it finally kind of dawns on the person that wow, a trip. So slow slow desire and ill will kind of opposite directions of wanting And then sloth and torpor, and restlessness and anxiety, they're also appeared paired, one has to do with a dropping of energy. And the other has to do with the agitated energy kind of upping of energy level. Here Here the focus is tends to be more than a subjective state. There's something that makes us agitated something that may make a sloth and torpor fall. But it's more than more tuned into how we feel. And so it's up or down with the energy and down, down, it doesn't need to be paired. It just, you know, it said that doubt is the most dangerous of the hundreds.
Now, another way of looking at these five hindrances is that sometimes they are strategies that we use that our mind users when we're talking we're challenged by uncomfortable things. So things are uncomfortable difficult. Some people's default is to go into desire mode. Sitting here and meditation your knee hurts. This is a drag my backers on board. I wonder what it'd be like to go on vacation. Maybe I can go to vacation down there in the Santa Cruz boardwalk and summer and be in the sand and how wonderful the feel for the sand through my toes. be so good. And the breeze against my cheek. And it's a fantasy desire fantasy. That's a strategy to get away from the discomfort of being here now. Some people are really good at this. Other strategies is to lash out. There are people who are really good at blaming. You know, find what's wrong out there. I'm uncomfortable. So the story I like to tell is when my son was year and a half, I think I forget exactly how old a year and a half or two, I had a cold, mild cold and it was raining. Mild rain. And ups came with that unexpected gift from someone which was a big box, which was a big plastic, like maybe four foot high play structure, like a little fork with a slide and the instructions said and symbols and 10 minutes.

So I unpacked it and went out into the into the yard in the rain with my cold and started assembling it. And after about a half an hour or so I man finally managed to bang these pieces together. And not only then only then did I notice how exhausted I was Cuz I had a cold right there just like drain me. So I did a completely reasonable thing when I noticed, you know, you know, I'm feeling worse now maybe I get more sick. completely reasonable, at least in some people's minds this would be reasonable. I blamed ups for bringing me that box.

So, so I saw that go on my mind. And you know, the next instant I laughed at myself, that was ridiculous. Blaming ups for bringing your box, you know, I had to take responsibility for going out there in the rain. And then I saw that being a little bit sick and having been housebound for a few days, I was kind of bored. That was where I was being challenged by by boredom. And so I wanted a entertainment. There was desire there. And so I went out to pursue my desire to Get some relief from my cabin fever. And, and to my detriment when I noticed was a detriment and I felt lousy. Then I lashed out at someone else, somebody else is responsible. So it's a strategy talking about student strategies may feel half so or I'm sitting here and meditating and my knee hurts and rather than thinking about the sand and Santa Cruz, I think about all the creative ways in which I could slash and burn myself. My meditation cushion because it's something you need my the full onslaught of my fury. sloth and torpor sometimes comes because we're tired or who knows why. But sometimes it's a strategy of resistance, of lethargy of not being engaged, pulling back and you see it really well in children. And I in my situation, I call it my Sears mind, the Sears department store. Because when I was a kid, my mom sometimes would take me to Sears to buy me clothes. And I hated it. I hated the smell. I hated the whole thing. It just and I would get so tired. Oh, I can't go home. I cannot now. I'm too tired. It is hard. Try on those pants off. And it was sad story. And but then, at the end of this very grueling and taxing childhood trauma. My mother would say something like, you know, should we go out and get some ice cream? I had all the energy in the world. Where did it come from? I wasn't tired anymore. So it was a strategy of resistance. A sloth and torpor shut down. Because we don't we're challenged by situation. Some people in challenging situations, just get all agitated, restless during run circles, they know where to stand, got to do this got to do that fix this, you know, just problem solve going this way and that way, you know what foot to stand on. And they worry, endlessly worry. And, and that's a strategy to cope. And then some people their strategy is just to kind of fall back into uncertainty in decisiveness. This is difficult. I don't know whether to forward or backwards. I don't know what to do here. And rather than it being kind of wise, not knowing it's taking refuge in not knowing, because then we don't have to make this decision. We're going to do anything. So it's very interesting to look at these hindrances as strategies as well. They're also they're almost like natural forces in the mind that can come up for no particular good reason. But they can also be very powerfully connected to There's
something deeper going on in us. So we call them the five hindrances in English, they could also be called the five coverings. And a whole other approach to studying these five hindrances is to ask or to look into, what are they covering over. Desire can be covering over loneliness. Ill will can be covering over frustrated, desire. sloth and torpor can be covering over fear, maybe writing by situation we just shut down. restless legs anxiety can be covered or could could be covering over. Here's an interesting reason. Wanting to be approved and liked. A little bit strengthen the connection. But I've known people who said that in our family we showed love by worrying for each other. And the better you worried the more people knew that you cared for them. So that's rather unfortunate way of showing your love. But you know, so it's a strategy and doubt what does that cover over? Maybe fear, fear of commitment, fear of doing something. So there's a lot of things we could cover. But so sometimes it's interesting to look more deeply. What is it that's covering if this wasn't here, this hindrance? What would I have to face would have to deal with right now.

So I believe I said a lot today, I apologize if this was too much information too much all at once. But I wanted to kind of, kind of lay out the terrain, and then I'll tell a story in five minutes, but before the story, I want to say As we go through these weeks, the pace will slow down quite a bit from today, it will spend a whole day on sensual desire and ill will. And as you as you, as you reflect on this over the week, you might reflect, think about yourself, and think of which of these five might be your default hindrance, which of these best characterizes you, which of them is most likely for you to appear when you're challenged, which of these is more likely to show up or he shows up more often in meditation? So let's see if these are noticing patterns and see which which ones tend to be more your, you know your thing. And don't take it personally. You know, there's a there's a personal failing. You know, it's kind of like my good good way of thinking about this is that everyone needs to be you know, type and use happen to be the desired type, the old type for the slot, interpret type. That's what you get to work with. Okay, here's a story. And that's special monastery and once upon a time, there was a nun, who for many were lived there for many years. And she taught the monks and she was very wise and great teacher, trained many of the monks to the they became quite mature in their spiritual life. But at some point, she got old, and she decided that it was time for her to retire and to retire in the mountain hermitage which was a two and a half day walk deep in the mountains away from the monastery. So she did, but because she was she was so wise. People love to go see her. And people would do the two and a half day trek to see her. Get some advice. Tell her story about your story, queued, listen and get some advice and then she would They walk two and a half days out. When they came out and saw people, everyone would say the same thing. You say, Wow, she's really wise. She said, she said just the right thing for me. I don't know how she knew what they knew me so well, but she knew just the right thing to say to me. Got right to me is really good. But she had one particular condition However, before she told me my advice. The condition for getting the advice was I was not to tell anyone ever what advice I was given.

And what she said, when people came to see her, he had the same thing to say to everyone. And what she said was, what are you unwilling to pay attention to Some people were disappointed when they got there first. But after two and a half days of trekking out walking out of the mountains, by the time they got out, they realized that was a perfect thing for them. So that's a secret for each of you. What is it, you're unwilling to pay attention to. Okay. Thank you.