

# 2009-01-18 Seven Factors of Awakening Mindfulness Investigation

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## SPEAKERS

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what I had in mind today for a talk and for the next maybe few Sundays that I'm here is to give a series on talks in the seven factors of awakening. And the seven factors of awakening are very key qualities that could develop through Buddhist practice. In the fall, I gave a series of talks here and right speech, which has a lot to do with our social relationships, and how we relate to the world. And now I'd like to do a series of talks have much more to do with meditation itself, and which is what seven factors of awakening aren't limited to meditation, but that's really their primary domain where they're developed. And the seven factors of awakening sometimes have been called the sap that runs through the tree of Buddhism. Buddhism has many branches, all the different traditions that branch out from the core, the root of the Buddha, and the what nourishes all the branches, all the leaves and flowers and Buddhism is awakening in the factors of awakening. And it's very important the idea of awakening and the factors of awakening, because it becomes an alternative or becomes a alternative but also protection from having Buddhist practice, be self serving, or simply be caught up in the condition social conditioning that you're born into, or you find yourself into that Buddhism. Many years ago I was interviewed for a radio station in San Jose. And the woman asked me, What is Buddhism have to offer life here in the Silicon Valley and I said the first I said, I said something like, Well, you know, it has a lot to offer. But I think you have to remember that Buddhism is also subversive. I was never invited back. But it's, it's somebody subversive, because the values of awakening are so different than many of the popular values, certainly, of consumerism, of wanting and having, of prejudice of having us versus them, many, many things that Metro society is built upon. And, and so the seven factors awakening our way of protecting Buddhist practice, from being a servant of culture, or a servant of personal preferences. And, and at the same time, the seven factors of awakening are really beautiful qualities, qualities of hearts qualities of mind. And it reminds us that Buddhism also Buddhist practice is not only about suffering, but it's about addressing the issue of suffering, to let these beautiful qualities develop and mature and be something that we can express and live in our lives. So the seven factors of awakening are mindfulness. Usually a second one's called investigation, effort or energy, joy, tranquility, concentration, and equanimity. So we'll go through these and today what I'd like to do is talk about the first two, mindfulness and investigation. They're closely connected. It's hard to tease them apart too strongly. And in talking about mindfulness, an interesting topic is Where do you live? Where do you abide? You know, not just your address, or your city, but where does your mind live and the word abide is a very important one in Buddhism. Where does your heart Dubai, where does your, you know where do you rest in your state of being. And as some of you might be aware of the Divine abiding, the Brahma vihara. And so in Buddhism one has is cultivated is an ability to abide in these four states of love, ways of relating to the people around us loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and

equanimity. Those are called bindings. If we look at our minds, at times, you'll find that it's not necessarily so

wonderful or aware our minds abide where our thinking is concerned about caught up in what interests the mind. One of the interesting phenomena of meditation is you get to see what your mind is interested in. And it kind of goes into their doesn't should play stay interested in there but goes there and sometimes a bye There, if some of you had experienced in the meditation today, of realizing after five minutes, you know, I've been thinking about something for the last five minutes, then your mind was abiding there was resting there, caught up there, there was kind of what was defining or shaping the mind, the mind in some ways that the heart is shaped by where its attention gravitates to where it settles and centers. So if the mind is into greed, wanting something, anything at all, and it's involved in thinking and planning and feeling about what it wants, then we say the mind abides in greed. If it is thinking about what it hates, and is concerned about that and fuming about that, then divides and hate. If it's thinking about what it would like to offer someone as a gift, then it abides in generosity. So mind can abide in different places. And so where does your mind abide? Where do you tend to be? Where you live it live in. Now, mindfulness is a place to abide My phone is a place that you can take up residency. And it's an alternative than to many other places where you could take up residency with your mind. And it's a very considered to be very healthy place to live. And it's one that then is awkward leading at least it doesn't just lead to itself being very mindful. It also leads the cultivation, development of other healthy qualities, ultimately, to liberating the heart itself. So the analogy I kind of sometimes I'd like for mindfulness, and this kind of idea of abiding would be if you're in a big crowd of people, and they're having a heated conversation about something. And people have lost themselves in the conversation, different points of view and the arguing back and forth. And so there then If people are lost themselves in the conversation, and they're abiding in the feelings and concerns they have in the conversation, I'm right, you're wrong, this and that. And it can be quite heated and all that. And it's possible to be in that crowd of people. Maybe two of you can be in that crowd of people. And you're not caught up in the conversation. And you're, you're aware that people other people are caught up, you're where the conversation is heated, but you're calm, you're aware, so aware that you look at the other person across the crowd, who's also not caught in at all, and you meet their eyes. And both of you kind of have a little smile, little glint of recognition. Yeah. This is what's going on. We both know that we know both of us know that we're not caught in this that Maelstrom everyone else is caught up in this we know that we know kind of kind of thing. Mindfulness is more like that we know that we know. We're not caught up in in the store. And parties, crowds of our mind. But the activity of the mind still goes on. But there's a presence of mind and awareness of mind that we know what's going on. While it's going on, we don't simply only not only know what's happening, we know that we know. So there's a kind of a heightened sense of knowing with mindfulness, you can know something, but you really know that, you know, you say, Oh, yeah, maybe it could be a little glint in your eye. Oh, yeah, I know. I know that I know. And there's a magic thing, that almost magical thing that happens, you could be caught up in something. And if you know that, you know that you're caught up. If you really know that you are caught up. Part of us not caught up. So what do you identify with? Where do you take our presidency? Some people are so strongly pulled into their concerns that they keep thinking, I am caught up on personas caught up, this is terrible. I need to get out of it. And they're kind of caught up in being caught up. But there's a mindfulness there's awareness that they're caught up. So if we don't keep taking residence or don't keep identifying with what we're caught up in, but instead take identify with a mindfulness that's there. Then we have a different sense of who we are we identify with a mindfulness, then we're not caught up in how we're caught up. It might seem like a subtle difference, but it's huge. Oh, I'm caught up here. Oh, there's caught up to this happening here.

Oh, this is interesting. This is interesting sort of feels like my mind is contracted. My mind is going fast. My chest is tight. People are glaring at me. And a variety of things are going on here. And I know this is happening repeatedly in teasing apart awareness mindfulness of what's happening from what's happening. And then we learn to abide in the knowing in the awareness of it. So that mindfulness is to mindfulness practice is to remember to be mindful. mindfulness practice is to remember to hold what's happening in awareness, as opposed to living in what's happening lost in what's happening caught up in what's happening. So mindfulness is a relatively simple quality of holding something in mind. It's related to the words to remember to remember something. So remember something long time ago is to be insensitive, mindful of it. But the mindfulness of mindfulness practice isn't so much about remembering something a long time ago, but it's holding something here the present moment in mind and not just simply holding the present moment in mind, but also holding in mind keeping in mind That, a certain way of being here in the present moment. So remember, we remember, oh, abiding and mindfulness is useful. We remember that we hold that in mind. So we hold the breath in mind. When we're mindful of the breathing, we hold loving kindness in mind when we're focusing on loving kindness. we're mindful of our friend and conversation, we hold their voice. They're what they're saying in mind as we're listening to them. And holding is meant to be kind of a precious thing. It's kind of like having a presence of mind a presence of attention for what's going on. So this presence there. So this is simple holding something in the mind in the present moment being present. What's going on here now has a variety of functions. One that is often popular is it has a function of Helping us appreciate the wonderfulness of the present moment. There's often more wonderfulness than people admit, the beautiful sunny day, you know enjoying the sun perhaps or nature or someone's smile or relationship or the ability to breathe are many things that when you sit and enjoy if we're present, it said that the best things in life require you to be present for it. friendship, love, compassion, joy, are all things that require presence. However, being present isn't always so beautiful. And it's one of the reasons why people don't want to be present is often if you're fully present, it's also like this can be quite difficult. There's a lot of horrible things that happen to people and so horrible that people actually choose a need to almost check out or shut down or become down because it's so difficult and some people find As they develop a heightened mindfulness, they begin meeting some of these places that have been shut down inside of them, because it's too painful to look at. And so part of the process of mindfulness is to discover a way a safe way to open into these forces in these memories and concerns within us. And that nuts degree it's called a path of purification. To begin purifying, some of the things have been held for a long time. So just be present. The second function of mindfulness is to be present without being caught in what's going on, do not interfere with what's happening. And for people who are constantly interfering with themselves and with their life around them, it's very difficult trick or task to learn how to be present without interfering. One way of interfering is to judge to be judged everything, especially judging it in relationship to me, what's in it for me? What's in it for someone else? What can I get out of this situation? In the mind, if you study your mind, probably you'll find that your mind your thinking, is often trying to do something. It's trying to have a better past. You know, remembering all that and reducing the conversation you had or something, it might be trying to have to

create a better or improved future. By planning in some ways planning ahead. It's trying to thinking about what it wants, what it doesn't want, what he wants to avoid or have goes into fantasy which is often connected some kind of doing or wanting, the mind is often abiding in wanting and doing of something. And some people find that they're constantly there's too many cooks in the kitchen, of their own mind. And so, part of the function of mindfulness is to be present without trying to do anything just allowing things to be non interfering This can be a very difficult it can be very relieving to do this, what a great relief finally not to do anything, I can just be here as I am. But it could also be very challenging because to be as you are without interfering, sometimes you have to be with challenging things. If you're filled, filled with hate, or anger is it okay just be present for anger and not interfere with it. Just

allow it to be there shouldn't you to kind of be more responsible for your anger and stop it or overcome it? That the what we can find through mindfulness, that mindfulness, neither interferes with the anger doesn't get involved in it doesn't judge it, but also doesn't feed it just allows it to be as it is, doesn't justify it. It doesn't act on it. But it also doesn't suppress it and doesn't say it's wrong. Just allows the anger to be there. Kind of free floating anger, held in awareness. Kind of like in crowded room of people arguing. You see people are angry with your you abide in the mindfulness that sees people are angry, as opposed to abiding in the anger state angry state itself. So we step back and say, oh, here's anger. Some people find it a great relief that they have find it in mindfulness we find an abiding a way of being, that allows these very, very difficult things to be present, free of our judgments, free of our interference, wanting and not wanting and all that. So mindfulness is a very powerful training, of learning not to interfere without things are. Another function of mindfulness is when we stop interfering, we can see more clearly what is actually happening. And we can study you know, if we're interfering, then it's hard to see what is actually there. If we want something from a situation, often or attend is biased. And kind of the classic example. famous example is romantic attraction. where, you know, you only see the good qualities in the person. And then one day you wake up and say, What? What was I thinking? And then, and then if my pendulum might swing the other way, right, and then you're angry with the person, all you see is their bad qualities. And so the attention is biased, because we don't see clearly but as we learned to be present, without interfering, just present abide in mindfulness. The hope is we see the situation much more holistically or realistically or fully for what it is, and we get to tease apart and see more in detail what is happening. So a big part of mindfulness is how it functions for the in the service of insight, seeing more clearly what's here. To do that, it's helpful to just be Learn that ability. When Zen teacher I knew talked about coming to zero, mimic Zen Meditation was coming to zero, which meant zero reactivity, zero attempt to make anything out of anything just just present fully present, nothing else. The so the first function I talked about is just learning to be present and the values of that. The second is learning to be present without interfering, what's going on. And the third is to have insight into what's happening. These two functions, or at least these, all these work together, because as we have greater insight and see what's going on, we see more and more subtle ways in which we're interfering. We're caught up. And one of the great ways that we interfere with things is we identify with things. We use our experience to define this as who I am. And one of the important movements in Buddhist practices. Least is to free up mindfulness, free up attention free up the heart from being defined in any limiting kind of way.

We say in Buddhism, that the self identification is another way of interfering with reality, what's going on. So mindfulness can be is, is has this great challenge in it, of helping to free us from the self identities that we are caught up in, made up and or people impose on us than we believe or something. So those are three of the functions of mindfulness. And what's remarkable, I believe, is that those three functions arise out of a very, very simple practice. If it's not simple, it's not mindfulness. It's simply knowing what's happening while it's happening. Oh, I'm thinking that's what's happening now. Oh, I'm hearing a car outside. That's what's happening now. Oh, angry. That's what's happening now. Oh, I, there's generosity. That's what's happening now. I'm afraid. That's what's happening now. And staying in there as we do the mindfulness practice, that simple practices meant to be done as continuously as possible. So it's not just simply one moment and be mindful, and then checking out or drifting off, or thinking about that for the next 10 minutes. But rather, is a stay in the flow of mindfulness. And I'll give you an example of a I read in a quick some kind of clinical study, I guess, or psychologist, psychologist was working with someone who had some kind of very difficult psychological state. I forget what it was. And that and the client had to go on a trip. take a bus trip to someplace to see someone And the therapist was concerned about this state of this person's mind going. So that therapist gave the client an exercise to do on the bus. And that was to sit by the window, and constantly look out the window and constantly move the eyes to keep focusing on something different. So that the eyes couldn't fixate on

anything. Just keep looking, keep looking, with the idea that if the eyes keep taking a new phenomena, seeing something new and then new and new, the mind can't get stuck, or less likely get stuck on any particular preoccupation. And because this person has psychological issue problem, getting stuck in a preoccupation was going to be a big problem. So to keep it fluid, so as we keep the mindfulness fluid or keep going continually, it's a protection for people who don't have psychological problems. How many of you here

If you don't have you know not to it's a protection from getting caught up in the servers of seeing more clearly. So we've kind of seen more continuously what's happening. As we see more continuously what's happening. Also, then mindfulness helps us see the bigger picture of what's happening. Not just details of what's happening here now, but also start seeing the cause and effect relationship between different things. start seeing the consequences. start seeing of our actions or thoughts or behavior or feelings and all that. And this leads the second factor of awakening, which is sometimes called the investigation. But the word it's more closely the word is more closely connected to the idea of differentiation, rather investigation. Investing investigation might seem very analytical, but as my phones get stronger starts being able to differentiate between different things that are going on different possibilities in the present moment. So it starts differentiating between the difference between being caught up and not being caught up. They can see that difference. When that when a difference is seen, then there's some wisdom possible. Oh, I think I'll choose not being caught up or conducted mindfulness. If we don't see that difference, if all we see is being caught up, then there's no other option. Right? I know I'm caught up but there's no other option. But to see there's a difference. Gives you a different possibility. To be able to see the difference between being if you're if you're walking through the supermarket, shopping and you're You know you, you're concerned about getting the very best fresh loaf of bread that they might be selling. And you find yourself kind of getting in getting the shopping cart kind of rushing and kind of tight holding the handlebars in the shopping cart really tight and your knuckles are getting white. And you're kind of fixated and no one else you can see anybody else in the store, you can get that bread. You can you feel that. And you can see, oh, I don't have to I can differentiate between being caught that way and not being caught that way, then you have a choice to choose the possibility of choosing. Do I want to have white knuckles over bread? Or do I want to go in there and be in the market in a way that I hopefully can leave the market refreshed rather than being exhausted by time I leave. So in many, many ways, we start differentiating between choices. We can make that are helpful for us or healthy for us and ones are unhealthy. It can be very, very subtle things. As I said the other semester, some few talks ago about how you how you choose to leave here. Most of you have taken your shoes off. So how are you going to go get your shoes when you leave here? Are there choices to be made about how you go for your shoes. Some of you don't want to see anybody just kind of you know, want to have any relationship with anybody want to get out of here as quickly as possible, which is fine. I don't mind that. That's reasonable. But you could be caught up in wanting that. And so your body gets kind of tight and contracted and kind of hunched over and you kind of you know, and that hunching over again contracted. That's where you're suffering. When you feel and sense a present for what that's like going on in your body. Think Oh, is this really how I want to live? Do I live contracted in tight or can I Get out of here quickly, being relaxed, being open and settled. So as a person becomes more mindful with the person start seeing more and more of these differences. And then sees a place to choose one difference over the other. We sit in meditation, and we're following our breathing. And we can see, for example, that their breath is not what we want it to be, or the mind is not as attentive as we want it to be, the mind wanders off. There's a difference between then criticizing and being angry at that, and not being angry. There's difference between making a judgement about it, and just letting it be something to be held in mindfulness. Oh, this is this is an example of wrong meditation of a bad meditator. Versus, oh, here is a mind that keeps wandering away. That's an important distinction to be made. So the function of this The second factor of awakening builds on mindfulness.



And it builds our mindfulness by beginning to bring in a factor of wisdom or understanding, which is very, very simple. Investigation implies something analytical, like you have to probe get underneath the surface of things. Whereas differentiation is meant to be something much more obvious. As the mindfulness gets stronger, becomes more more obvious that there are distinctions to be made. And those distinctions those are also not just in the present moment, but also through time. So that, oh, if I, I'm parking my car to go shopping right now. And if I go in there and try to get out of there as quickly as I can, I probably end up getting stressed. But if I give myself extra time to go shopping, and just take my times and really be present and breathe and you know, just appreciate all the colors, the boxes and stuff, something like that, then perhaps you can leave the supermarket, more relaxed than you went in. So it's not just simply seeing the present moment. But seeing as we're more present, it's also seeing that we make choices about how we're going to go forward into the next thing we do, or for the next day, or for the next, you know, so it's also then kind of a little bit having a sense of what's the possibility of the future. Mindfulness and differentiation also has some sense of being backward looking to learn from it. If you leave the supermarket exhausted, then mindfulness doesn't say, well just forget that and just kind of stay now with the next thing. It also kind of takes in the bigger picture. Oh, I'm really tense. I see now, that attention came from how I went about, you know in the market And so now we can learn from that, too. Oh, I think next time I'd go, maybe I'll choose a different way of being. So mindfulness then sets the stage for understanding, discernment, differentiation and wisdom and wiser choice. This in turn feeds back to mindfulness. As we can differentiate an exercise choice, it supports greater mindfulness. So for example, if I'm sitting, meditating, and my meditations not going as well as I'd like it to go, and then I start, I can see myself becoming reactive to that judgmental of that or myself doing it. Oh, maybe I have a choice here. Maybe I don't have to go down that route of being so judgmental when I come back to the simplicity of just being mindful. So seeing that show Then brings you back to the mindfulness and strengthens that. That muscle of mindfulness. So it becomes it goes around, they support each other. More than mindfulness, the stronger the discernment, the more subtlety we see, the more choice we discover, the more choice we discover, the more that supports our ability to be mindful. As as the mindfulness gets stronger, at some point, it qualifies to become what's called a factor of awakening, one of these seven factors of awakening. And it's not just Dr. Awakening, just because you've exercised some mindfulness, it becomes a factor of awakening when the mindfulness becomes a place where you abide where has kind of power or strength in its own right. There's momentum in the mindfulness, that it's not something something we have to choose to exercise, but there's kind of a momentum of being attentive and present and and it feels like a Power feels like a strength. It's really important, I feel really helpful to start discovering these inner qualities like mindfulness attention is a strength and strength is a power because it becomes a power that that supports us to bring a certain kind of sense of power, more power, in our presence in how we go about our life. Our life can be difficult. Right now we're in the brink of, hopefully a huge change in our society with the inauguration of Barack Obama. A lot of people have a lot of hope, and very, a lot of excitement about that. And Buddhism counsels that the pendulum swings quickly. And that we don't know what's gonna happen next. Any kind of way and to put all our to get To all our to abide and hope is as dangerous as Dubai and hopelessness.

And the power of mindfulness shows us a place to abide. We don't abide in any of these external baskets. We use them we participate them as they're appropriate, but we're not caught by them. We don't attend on them. This is where mine has said the beginning that seven factors awakening are, are an alternative to being caught up in the conditioning of our society and our culture. It frees us from being caught up being or being victims of circumstances. And to be free of victims of circumstances, gives us a lot of strength, I would say a lot of power, at least inner victims and so mine fulness is a phenomenal as a factor of awakening helps make strong people. And I hope that as your might as

you're mindful to become stronger, you feel yourself as a more powerful individual and more capable to engage in this world. And that the second factor of awakening, two factor investigation or differentiation really supports you and helping you to make wiser choices about things that are healthier for you and healthier for others. And so those are the two first two factors of awakening. Then, over the next few weeks, I'll talk about the next five, effort. Joy, tranquility, concentration, and equanimity. So we have a couple of minutes. It's nice, it's nice a wraps to have a maybe we have time for One question if someone can project their voice and I can have a short answer Yes, please.

Especially when you're in an unreasonable mood, which happens sometimes. And, and you notice that then you freeze you stop you.

I think probably more practice. If you've never ridden a bicycle before then Learn to ride the bicycle, nothing else gets done. You know, because you're just kind of falling off and doing everything. So I would encourage you to just keep doing it. But I would in doing it, I would also. So maybe look for opportunities where it's okay to stop. But also then look more carefully at this discover what else is going on when you stop to be mindful. It might be that there's other complicating things going on in your mind more than just being mindful. It might be that there's a fear or reactivity, or identification of a variety of things. Kind of makes it harder for you to see what's going on. Now, when sometimes if you're really unreasonable, probably everyone wants you to not to do anything else. It's really good. It's better to not get anything done. And since you have kids, there's probably times when you can't stop so then you got to hopefully use have enough mindfulness to know that you're in an unreasonable state of mind. And try not to make any mistakes. Just Just have just keep just enough reminder, cross your fingers, and kind of go around to do what you do reminding yourself so that, you know at least I won't yell. With time, it'll get easier and easier to be free. Okay. So I hope that was understandable. And I wish you all well, and I hope all of you have a wonderful Tuesday.