

# 2009-01-25 Seven Factors of Awakening Energy Joy

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

mindfulness, effort, awakening, strength, joy, people, feel, awake, practice, energy, statue, monastery, factors, mind, wakefulness, stronger, thoughts, mindful, sense, moko

## SPEAKERS

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Today I'd like to continue the series of talks that I began last week. The seven factors of awakening. And the seven factors of awakening are some of the most beautiful qualities of heart of mind that get developed in the, in the course of the Buddhist Buddhist practice. And it's said that they begin to be awakened. Once the mind is no longer preoccupied. preoccupied, meaning caught up in its thoughts and concerns. In particular caught up in the hindrances, what we call the five hindrances. It's when minds no longer caught up in desire. desires, okay, but being caught up in it is a different thing. being caught up in the ill will caught up in resistance and lethargy And then caught up in restlessness and agitation, and cut up in debt caught up in doubt. So it was all of our minds are caught up, then begin shifting, and some of the other innate qualities of the mind begin to surface. And some of these qualities of mind, sometimes they're not so obvious that maybe how important they are. An analogy I like to use is that of conventional wakefulness. So there are factors of awakening in Buddhism awakening as a synonym for liberation, but more conventional, conventional being awake. If you have a nice nap conditions are great for you. You feel safe and contented, and you wake up and you are you feel really awake. Wow, I was kind of Sleepy before. Now if you're really awake, and maybe then you have been content and just go about your life and you don't notice what it feels like to be awake. But if you investigate, what does it feel like to be conventionally really awake, alert, and alert in a way crisp and awake, you'll probably find that some of these qualities of awakening are embedded in it. So there's some degree of mindfulness. When you're awake, you kind of know you're kind of aware of what's happening, just kind of presence. You're here in some particular kind of way, before you kind of get involved and caught up and things again, but when you recognize you're being awake, sometimes your sense of clarity about the things around you to see you know, sometimes a clarity about your own state and how you are you're mindful, aware. There's some mindfulness, some sense of presence. The second is that there might be some, not only awareness, but some discernment and that awareness, you see clearly what's going on. Maybe more clearly, you would normally so some possibility of discernment of differentiation of investigation of understanding what's happening here. The third is there might not be, again, something that you would think about. But there is some sense of energy, or effort or some sense of, in the Buddhist tradition, the factor of awakening here is strength. So, it might feel like a very soft strength if you feel alert and awake, but there's some sense you're not you're not being drained, you're not feeling weak. There's the absence of weakness, the absence of being oppressed absence of being somehow drained by stuff, being tired. And so we can maybe say strength or energy is there. And I think that for many people, when there's a clear sense of being awake, being alert and awake in a nice way, you might identify joy as being part of it as well. Maybe joys maybe almost too Stronger words some time, but something satisfying and delightful about it something meaningful about that sense of clarity that comes. And so in the Buddhist tradition, when that gets

developed, it's called joy. There might also identify some sense of calmness or tranquility. Even though the both energy and clarity, but it's not agitated, it's not stressed. It's not tense. There's some calmness or clarity, tranquility there as well. Maybe there'd be some concentration, some sense of being able to focus now on some task at hand. And then finally, a perhaps there's some equanimity, some balance of mind, in that state that it was like a state of alertness, state of wakefulness, which you can feel kind of like is a statement of thing. variety of things that normally would be challenging to you aren't as challenging.

You wake up from your nice nap. You Yo, Chris clear, alert, ready for life and everything's going going on and, and your neighbor turns on the leaf blower and Oh, okay. So you can always click blower, I can you can kind of hold that in that state of awareness, perhaps. And it's just, you know, not such a big deal. But if we're tired and stressed, lipo lower is a big deal. So, these, these are the seven factors of awakening. And perhaps, through the exercise, you can say, well, they're actually maybe they're in a normal state of wakefulness. When we do Buddhist practice, the idea is that these seven factors of awakening become stronger and stronger, and become not something that's simply there in the background. But develop this kind of strengths. into these beautiful qualities of mind and heart become strengths and as they become stronger, they allow the possibility of the inner life, the mind to heart To be freer to become freer. So they're called factors of awakening factor factors of freedom. Many years ago, I was living at the Zen monastery, and I was had a really, really bad cold. I was really sick, maybe flu or something. But I had to do my job anyway. I couldn't stay in bed and rest. And it was a bit of a demanding job to work, doo doo. And what I noticed, what I found out was that if I was going to do my job through the day, I had to be very attentive to the movements of my thinking. Because if I thought certain things, poor Gil, I'm so sick, this is, this is really hard. No one cares for me. You know, whatever, you know, if I start certain kinds of thoughts, you know, kind of, there's all kinds of thoughts I had that were, it would drain my energy and I'd feel sicker. But if I could track that my mind and see those thoughts happening, and not let my mind go down those track, then those kind of thoughts wouldn't drain me. And in fact, if I thought other kind of things get a little bit more energy, the difference was not that great. But the difference was enough to keep going. And if I had maybe sustained, continued with those draining kind of thoughts, maybe I couldn't have just continued through the day from my job. So I had to stay alert enough to notice what my thinking was doing. That the advantage of being sick was how they was much more consequential. The impact of I was thinking that it would be a normal life. In normal life, I would have enough energy in the system that I couldn't really kind of make such a big difference. I can have draining kind of thoughts, but it wouldn't pay me that much. I had enough momentum going in In my life that I was okay. And, and the momentum of how it was going was also so strong, that the way in which kind of more positive thoughts would boy me didn't actually make such a big difference either. But when I sick, it made a really big difference. So I felt I had to apply myself, I had to apply effort, energy to stay present. It took a little bit of extra energy, but I found that the energy it took was better than the energy it took in my system to have these draining thoughts that also took energy if they drained energy away. So it was kind of an effort when I was there being sick, that supported me or kept me in a more healthy, more healthy for your mind. Then the more natural easy routes to take. In some sense, the effortless route to take was to say, forget this is hard. Oh, there was effortless, but it wasn't really effortless. It drained my effort to create My energy to follow. So, in order to do this, I had to make a differentiation, I had to see that there was an effect of if I thought certain kinds of things, it would have a certain effect on me. I thought other things, it would have a different effect. And he had to be able to see that difference. And here was a very simple polarity between energy draining and energy, the more reviving in order to be discerning that difference, I had to also be able to be mindful to be presence. So that's been my app be some mindful some presence to tracking was going on. And there had to be some the wisdom enough to differentiate between what was useful and what was not was helpful and what was not. And then

there had to be the application of effort. They had to I had to make some effort. And the effort here was to let go of the graining thoughts and occasionally I would pick up more kind of vibing thoughts. So simple, simple things that in that particular situation, seemed really required to, to make it through the day. That example is then very much part of Buddhist practice and meditation practice. We're cultivating mindfulness, presence to be here, in a heightened sense of presence, heightened mindfulness, to really be here and really clearly recognize what's here. That clear presence and recognition allows us to then differentiate between those things which are helpful for us and those things which are which are not. And if we're limiting our conversation here to meditation, then we can, we're tracking very carefully what is helpful in our minds, what kind of activity in our mind helps us here. And what kind of activities in mind is not helpful. It feeds back on mindfulness because hopefully there's understanding that mindfulness is helped so if you see, oh, there's a difference between being mindless and being mindful, you see that difference, then there's a greater opportunity to make the effort to be mindful or make the effort to let go of the mindless direction the mind is going. So these three things work together, mindfulness, some kind of differentiation, which is, which is the second factor of awakening called the investigation, and then the application of some effort. The rather unfortunate thing about Buddhist practice is that it requires effort requires something of you. And there are some people who would rather have a spiritual practice that doesn't require anything of them. That just reassures them that they're perfect just the way they are. And they can go and then go home, they can go home and feel so good about themselves because they're just, you know who they are just perfect. And Buddhism can provide some of that if you really wanted. But But, but it really at the heart of Buddhism is the idea that you have to make effort. And I meant some years ago, I read a wonderful Zen book in Japanese and teacher. And the one part I remember from the book, still to this day was he said, there's certain things you can only do for yourself. For example, if you need to pee, you know, you can only do they can ask someone else to pee for you. So, spiritual life belongs to the same.

You know, you can't ask someone else to be mindful for you can't ask someone else to, you know, apply effort. So it requires something of us And in fact, the Buddha said that the Dharma is Dharma practice is not for the lazy. So Oh. So there's some effort that's being made. And to some degree, as we get more mindful, it becomes more and more obvious, the choices we have, and the effort that should be made. And sometimes we talked about effortless effort, it becomes almost second nature to make the effort like riding a bicycle. For most people who've learned the skill of riding bicycle takes a lot of effort to make your bike from here to San Francisco, or just here to Palo Alto. It would, you know, you probably have to have lunch afterwards, to really, you know, to get energy back, but there's also an effortless quality to it. Perhaps you know how to deal with you don't think about it, get get into the flow of it. So there's both effort and sense effortless, unselfconscious kind of effort involved. So it to make effort and effort to be mindful effort to let go effort to pick things things up is part of what goes on here and mindfulness practice. The word for this factor of awakening, the factor of awakening of effort, usually translated as effort or energy is in Pali is viriya. And viriya is is comes from the root word vīra, which means the hero, so, heroine, so heroic. So it's rather interesting his effort or energy, it's probably more accurate to translate a strength. So he's not just simply applying effort, but as a factor of awakening is something that supports and sustains the Buddhist spiritual life. It can be called strength we develop a certain strength capacity, they get strong inside of us and have a sense of personal strength, personal sense of efficacy, that what you do can make a difference. I think it's really crucial in order to engage, engage in Buddhist practice, the person doesn't feel that they can make a difference, that they have the power, the strength, to apply themselves and make a difference in their life. It's very difficult, very challenging. It's very challenging in social situations in the society, when society makes it very make some people, some make some people powerless and be able to take care of their life. It's also very difficult in the inner life. The radical thing about the teachings of the Buddha is that he said

that in almost any kind of situation, regardless of what's happening externally, it's still possible to find that strength within you find the place where we can make a difference in our hearts and our minds. regardless what people are saying to us or whether it's challenges around us, our so to come back, and, and find that sense of efficacy of since personal power or strength is a very important part of practice. Sometimes in Buddhist circles, we don't talk about strength, so much personal strength, perhaps because it looks like conceit, some kind of, you know, building up a sense of self. But that's rather unfortunate. I think having some strong, you don't have to you don't have to have conceit, you don't have to be attached a strong sense of self in order to develop some strong sense of personal power or strength within you. So as mindfulness gets stronger, we're not just becoming calm and relaxed and becoming kind of a blob on the floor. But rather, there's also a sense of efficacy of strength of capacity of presence. sense of real strength in our presence. The, in some schools of Buddhism like in zen, there's a great encouragement to develop strong strength in your lower belly in your heart. So you'd actually support focus on your breathing and your heart below your belly button and feel the real stability. You lower torso grounded rooted in your sitting posture, centered and balanced in this in your lower belly. So provides access power and strength, in many cultures identify the belly as a place of strength. So they sit there with some sense of strength and presence. unapologetic presence, as if you count as if it's okay to be here and be really here and present.

So, mindfulness leads to clear understanding of what's going on here. Clear, understand Ending leads to seeing where we have some choice to make effort to make a difference to do something. And that ability to do something then feeds back to strength develops strength within us. There's many kinds of efforts as many kinds of strength that are developed, not just one. One of the one of the sense of strength is persistence. So no matter what happens, just hang in there with a mindfulness, keep practicing, keep practicing, not succumbing to the various forces of the mind that might derail you. The various challenges and difficulties. Just keeping keep doing it. The knee hurts, keep being mindful, keeping mindful without damaging yourself, of course, but you know, you feel discouraged. You keep practicing, you feel elated. You keep practicing. So one of the things I tried to encourage people to do, people who have a daily sitting practice is to sit every day, maybe the same time every day, but sit every day and the commitment to it. whether you want to or not. Many people prefer to prefer to follow the preferences and to or to and some people will tend to sit only when they feel good. Some people their strategy is sit on them when they feel bad or try to deal with that. And, and if you're selective about when we sit, then we only only sit when we only see that side of who we are. Oh, I can only sit when have lots of luxurious time. When I'm stressed. I have a lot to do. I can't sit then of course. Well, if you don't sit when you're stressed and don't have much time, guess what? You don't get to see yourself when you're stressed and feeling that you don't have enough time. And it's and is it really the case you don't have much time. Dr. Zen monastery, I worked in the kitchen there. And we had this choreographed way of serving meals and had to meal had to be ready at exactly the right minute. You know who everything was Corey Oh, the monastery was choreographed, this whole ritual, everything had to happen. So it was a precise minute. And all these different players in the play had to, we're all you know, we all have to kind of click together. So there was a lot of pressure to have the meal done on time when I was in the kitchen. So lunch was the big meal. And so we were always working hard during getting done. There's never enough time to get it done. And then about 10 minutes before the meal was going to be served. There was an obligatory ritual that everyone had to stop what they're doing. Go to the altar, kitchen altar and chant the Heart Sutra. And so many times I was the kitchen manager for nine months, so many times. We can't we can't stop you know, we're just barely have enough time to do this. We are in a hurry here and we can't stop you know And while you guys go, I'll keep working. Oh, no, no, everybody got to do it. Everyone has to do it. So, okay, okay, so we've lined up there and we chant the Heart Sutra. And it seemed like, time is finished, we had more time. And we, you know, we always got the meal out on time, it just was this idea I had that we couldn't. So I'm sure people find themselves

situations where there's not enough time to do things. But I find myself I'm amazed at how much for me, sometimes that's a mindset that I get into. Like, sometimes I practice, then the practice that when I feel like I don't have time to do everything, I stop and meditate. And it seems counterintuitive, but I found not always but I found plenty of times, that afterwards I have more time and less time because it's a state of mind, birthday state of mind. So persistence is a very important part of it's a certain degree of courage is sometimes important to keep applying and being courageous. Here's a story from a Zen monastery. Like most Zen monasteries, the monastery had an unusual statue of Manjushri the great Bodhisattva of wisdom in shrine in the meditation hall. By appearance, the statue was unremarkable. Like many other statues of Medusa, Medusa, we held a book in one hand, and a two sided sword in the other. The book is set to represent Missouri's wisdom, and the sword is the application of that wisdom in cutting in the cutting of delusion and attachments.

What was unusual about the statue was the rumor that it would speak to People who had reached an impasse in their spiritual life, providing provided that the person approached the statue with sincerity. Many people came to the monastery seeking answers from the statue. However most left disappointed, often concluding that the rumor was baseless. moko n was a longtime supporter of the monastery, and a devoted follower of the Zen faith. He came frequently to offer gifts of vegetables to the monks and to listen to the Abbott's Dharma talks. However, he remained an unhappy person. One day, when he came doing vegetables, the abbot asked voco in to play some of them on the altar in front of Medusa moko and had never been in the meditation hall, which is usually reserved for the monks and the entered Reverend river reverentially and in all of the stillness that seemed to remain from the many years of meditation, the monks that practice there as he placed the vegetables on the altar, the Manjushri says that you leaned down toward him. In a way a person might lean forward to whisper a secret when moko and looked up, he froze as he gazed into the warm eyes of Manjushri looking at him, then Manjushri the statue said, why not? At first moko and I couldn't understand what was being said. So the statue repeated. Why not? a torrent of explanations came pouring out of McLuhan's mouth. Not now. I'm not ready. I have responsibilities. I am incapable softly Manjushri said again. Why not? With that mcquinn ran out of the monastery, never to be seen again.

To this day, he is still running away from that question. And he lives happily ever after.

So these factors of awakening that need to be there to engage in the practice of Buddhist practice. So there's mindfulness. There's this discernment, differentiation. There's effort or energy, when it gets developed becomes a strength that we carry with us. And then the next factor of awakening is joy. And joy can take many forms. But it's part of the path, then all these qualities are meant to be kind of beautiful qualities, and we appreciate having here. And it's kind of a wonderful contrast between a spiritual tradition that talks so much about suffering, and focusing on suffering and freedom from suffering. And the very path to become free of suffering and the focus and suffering, cultivates these beautiful qualities of a wakefulness clarity. And here we're really clear develops joy, and joys of many kinds, and different situations, different qualities, there's aspects of joy, get awake, get awakened, some people just simply the joy of having a practice to do to realize that we're not stuck in the URL conditioning and stuck in the kind of our attachments and fears and all that. But we have, we can do something we can engage in a path as we develop a greater sense of self efficacy, strength and build To apply effort, then it's easier to feel that joy that Oh, yeah, I have a path or something I can do here Isn't this great? I'm not stuck. So just that just knowing you have a path, even if even if you're not good at the past yet, knowing Oh, there's a path great. And then there's the joy of, of, of engagement. Some people find it really great to, to act to engage, to make effort. I like I liken it to like doing a craft or hobby. Sometimes if you're really engaged in the craft of the hobby, you there's kind of a joy or delight that arises up from it, because we're so absorbed in that. So as the mindfulness develops, and the and the



energy in discernment and energy feeds back to greater mindfulness, and we apply ourselves to do more mindfulness, after a while, hopefully, the very engagement in the mindfulness itself isn't a burden, but is a delight to join. Wow. And really kind of a kind of like, sometimes mindfulness feels to me like, I've caught like surfing. And I caught the wave and kind of gliding, that feels great out there it is, okay. mindful presence and just kind of gliding along sliding along. So that, you know, the delight of being engaged and involved in some of that, I think, I hope is kind of a natural thing. When our self consciousness falls away, when we can be debilitating self consciousness, self limiting thoughts fall away, when we are so involved in the activity, that there's no space and room for discouragement, for doubts for you know, these things which is really kind of fully engaged and involved and it's feel so good to just do be involved in something. So there's a joy, the joy of doing joy of engagement then there's a difference. There's also what's called meditative joy. And that is that as we get absorbed, and there's kind of a real, real kind of sticking, staying with what's happening here. There's the light or the joy, that that seems to arise from. Not from any reason, not because, you know, something's happening in the world and makes us happy. Not because of some act of valuation that Oh, yeah, this is really good to be on a path. I'm so happy that the hindrances are no longer operating. But the bubbles up a sense of well being, and natural well being. Again, if we go back to the idea of waking up from a nap and feeling alert, perhaps, you know, in that alertness, concerns and worries and fears of our life have fallen away for a time being, and there's a natural sense of upwelling, well being that can be there. So as the practice develops, and we're more engaged and involved in that practice, that sense of well being become stronger. And as well being enjoy becomes a factor of awakening, then it becomes a strength as well. something we've been stronger. So that becomes a boy's us and supports us. As the joy that light and the well being is there, then feeds back again, to support the mindfulness Oh, doing this practice of mindfulness. It's worth it comes as delight and joy. So I think I was more interested in doing it now. So there's kind of a natural kind of

more full absorption engagement in this. As we engage more deeply in the mindfulness is greater clarity to see what's going on here. And as received more clearly what's going on here we see where we have choice better. Where we can make a difference. Where we were holding on to we're not holding on to what we're trying to cling to and not cling to what we believe or we don't believe In a way that the training or supporting, and so you see greater, greater subtlety in this. And as the greater subtlety of this, there's maybe great appreciation for the engagement in it. And then that greater engagement in it, and focus and concentration, it leads to more joy, more delight, more sense of well being. So the seven facts so far, I've covered four of the seven factors of awakening. And hopefully one of the things you see is these things are self reinforcing. They support each other and go around and around. They're both seen as being a linear path through them. But also they feed back on each other as we go along here.

So if any feedback on mindfulness, to be mindful, to be mindful here, to mindful of what's happening, and so in mindfulness is one of the options you always have, in any situation, the value of mindfulness, it's lets us in a sense to pause. Pause long enough, we see where the choice resides. And so we can choose not to follow certain trains of thoughts, certain motivations, certain inclinations. And we can choose what's more useful. That ability to choose gives us freedom. And that sense of freedom is another source for joy and delight, to feel the joy of being able to choose the joy of self efficacy. So it begins with mindfulness. And it's it sustained through mindfulness. And so I lean forward, very forward each of you and whisper in each of your ears. Why not?

So thank you, and especially if anybody is new here today, or new recently. Welcome you to IMC and you have come for it. The day when we have our potluck, and everyone's invited, and including those of you who are new, and if you've been here for a while, and if you're new, I believe people here pretty

friendly. So please don't be shy. Introduce yourself to someone. And perhaps those of you who are been here for a while, if you notice someone at the potluck, who seems relatively new, you don't recognize Please say hello and introduce yourselves. And thank you all.