2009-09-06 Body Awareness

Fri, 8/14 5:19PM • 39:22

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

body, mindfulness, aware, pain, people, life, feel, emotions, meditation, relaxed, breathing, psychological, attitudes, disintegration, integrated, shoulders, book, part, anger, relax

SPEAKERS

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You who weren't here last week, I gave a talk about a Chinese folktale that spoke to the issue of disintegration, and then reintegration. And how I, it's easy to get this integrated, how to get home and get intense kind of split from oneself by what we pursue or what we try to avoid. And sometimes at a cost, we separate out from part of who we are. And then in the folktale, this woman who has been split, disintegrated, finds ourselves integrated becoming whole again. And I want to continue on this theme. And the but the main point I want to make today is that one of the great tools are great ways of finding us or doing the integration work is through the body through the mindfulness The body, our physical body, paying attention to our body is a fantastic way of bringing together all the things that the mind splits. It's very hard to keep the body split or fragmented. And so as we begin developing awareness of the body and all the different aspects of body, it tends to bring together the disintegrated parts. And some people would say it brings into play into awareness, the unconscious parts of who we are, or subconscious parts. And so much so that I like to say that the body is the royal road to the unconscious, to go to quote to paraphrase from famous quote. So today I'd like to start with a reading from one of the great modern forest meditation teachers monks in Thailand named john Tate and He wrote an autobiography. And there's one chapter where he refers to himself in the third person. It was a novice Tate. So here he's talking about when he was a novice. It was a novice Tate who became a millionaire. Here I am talking about the time when the government thought up the idea of creating one new millionaire every year in Thailand, that desperate out an annual lottery with a first prize of 50 or 60,000 Bhat. In those days, this was considered a fortune large enough for a time millionaire was all done so that we Thais would not feel humiliated before other richer countries. One night It so happened that novice Tate was unable to sleep because he had just won first prize in the lottery. It was time to set out about it was it was time just to set about finding the site to build himself a grant and extend a three story mansion. There's residents would be furnished in the most modern designs and be situated in the center of the commercial district. The employees and assistants would have to fill the shelves with every imaginable kind of merchandise. He would be at ease and body and mind without a worry in the world and spend his time lounging on a sofa, making eyes at the attractive young women who would come into shop whoever chance to glance in his direction and smile and receive a happy smile back. Throughout his life of 18 or 19 years, he had never known greater happiness. He indeed attained the rank of millionaire, just as the government had wished, yes. Yet then, within the blink of an eye, with all the things still fresh and new. impermanence intrudes impermanence all abruptly fades and disappears from his heart. And that's something he regrets so much. Now the state comes to his senses and he realizes that it is already late into the night. It should already be time for sleep. Hey, why is this? Not only has a lottery yet to take place, but I haven't even bought a ticket? How come I've already become a millionaire? I must be going crazy. That night he felt an unspeakable degree of shame. If any knowledgeable persons were to know about these fantasies, what would they say? He finally fell asleep

and I woke at dawn. Feeling guilty. This was an occurrence that he never told anyone about. He wrote his book.

So this kind of thing can often happen and meditate meditators or other people were, especially in meditation where you get there's a fantasy, some thought that arises and people enter into this world to the fantasy But it also happens in daily life. Where some fantasy, some idea, some dream. So it can be a beautiful dream, it could be a nightmare of a dream is something that we inhabit we get involved in it, we live in it, and it might have not have much bearing to what's actually going on. And then occasionally we wake up. Oh, wow. Not only has there not been a lottery yet, but I didn't even buy a ticket. And so, but the cost of that kind of going off into fantasy is a kind of disintegration from who we are, and the fullness of who we are being integrated being whole, because there's a loss of contact. disintegration. I mean, one of one of the what I think this means is that loss of contact with something. And so we're so involved in a fantasy or a thought or an idea or a particular feeling, or resisting or blocking certain feelings, that we're not going to contact or something Another part of who we are. And some of this now continues to work through us. Even though we're not so much aware of it, we're not in contact with it. And so there can be things come around and bite us. It can affect our behavior, what we say to others how we see others, because there's kind of this other picture going on other ideas going on in the background, that that still need to come out. But we're kind of locked in being resistant of. So in. In thinking of mindfulness of the body. I think of that there's kind of three stages of awareness. One is awareness where we're unaware, we're simply not aware of the body simply not aware of what's going on, at all. And I like to give the example of many years ago I was a graduate student here at Stanford. But I needed a book from the UC Berkeley library. And so I went all the way up there to get this very important book. And, and for some reason, it was not on the shelves, and it hadn't been checked out. And so I had a very good hunch that it was in the back room behind the check in check. You know, checkout clerks, you know, often they hadn't put it back on the shelf or something. I don't know why I had the idea but and so I went up to the library clerk and asked if you know, the book is missing, and could they look for it? And they said, no, no. And I tried to explain to them how important it was for me and could they please go and look for it? No. And so then finally, this conversation went on for a while. And some maybe more a little more senior librarian came by and said, Oh, wait a minute, you know, I'll go. I'll go look in the back. When she when I finally got someone to look, you know, Then only then that occurred to me to practice mindfulness of the body. You know, which, you know, a little bit of a habit of mind to notice my body. So, finally, a little bit late, but finally, and to my surprise, I found myself kind of maybe on my tippy toes projecting and leaning over the counter over into I don't think it was just a simple kind of relaxed conversation, you know. And so the first indication I had of you know, how possessed I was about this, you know, my drive to get this book was when I focused on my body into felt what was going on my posture. So there was an example where I was so involved in what I wanted, that I lost certain degree of awareness that wasn't aware of what was going on. Other times, there's there can be a dissociated awareness where we are kind of aware of what's going on. somewhat, but parts of us were disassociated with not paying attention to. And the body is a prime place where there's certain level of disconnect this loss of contact or dissociation. For many of us, some of that can easily happen because we're just busy. It's possible to run around so much that being so busy doing so many different things, that we're not aware of what the cost is for our body, what's going on for our body, or what we can learn about ourselves and our attitude or feelings by just tuning into our body. I was so busy getting that book that, you know, I wasn't paying attention to my body. But there also can be

attitudes about the body that help support a disconnect. There's attitudes of shame that some people feel attitudes to the body doesn't count. It's not important attitudes of you know, some things like that and some for some people coming out of certain religious backgrounds, those attitudes can be Very, very strong. And so they can keep people they actually paying attention carefully what's going on in

their body to learn through their body, connected to that convey the idea, or I said body's not important. They're more much more important things in the world, there's a world of ideas, politics, after all, you know, hugely consequential things, interpersonal relationships and thinking about and doing it and solving it, there's a whole slew of things that can seem so much more important than this thing that we kind of have to lug around a lot. That seems to kind of be in the way and, you know, whatever. And, and so, it can be hard to understand the value of bringing attention into the body because of the things can seem so much more important and valuable. There's also a disconnect that can happen to the body. because the body does. The body is where much most of our emotions reside. You know, emotions are not disembodied phenomena. You know? Something like you have this, you know, you have anger or happiness, and it just kind of floating kind of, you know, foot above your head. And, you know, some ethereal space, you don't know you're feeling, you know, all their emotions are manifested through the body, or part of what an emotion is, is a physical manifestations mental physical thing together. And so there are certain emotions that we'd rather not feel either because we have a philosophy says we shouldn't feel those, or because they're so painful, or because in and of themselves are painful, or sometimes the consequences of those emotions of acting on them have been so painful for us. So for example, the I have a philosophy you're not supposed to feel anger. And so then we don't pay attention to the anger that we don't want to notice it's there. And that was an issue for me in my 20s that I have an image of myself is not an angry person, and so I had blinders on and couldn't see where I was angry. There's also some of these can be very painful and difficult. There can be trauma that people experience very strong trauma. In that, it's very strong, negative emotions, that neuro not to feel them because there's too much to handle. People shut down their body as people not shut them down, but stop paying attention. And it's not uncommon for people on retreats to come to me and say, you know, it's interesting. I don't really feel it. I know I have a beautiful body, but you know, I don't feel anything below my waist, or I don't really feel anything below my neck. You know, it's really only part of who my physical body is I'm really aware of and connected to. And people might go through years and years of life before they notice that there's a whole part of their body that they're not really feeling connected to. Very occasionally, it's interesting that people who come to me and say that They think. Oh, this is really strange now that I'm really paying attention to my body, I realize I'm mostly aware of one half of my body, you know, one side, the left side or the right side. And I don't know why there's a kind of that kind of split that goes on, but left and right. And you know, and to open to the body, pay attention to the body can be an undesirable thing to do, because to open up to those to that part of the bodies to open up to those feelings, you know, if you if there are some repressed or held or unresolved feelings that we don't really pay attention to, and we've kind of stopped paying attention to the body in order to not notice them. And as the body becomes more awake, more aware, those feelings will come and that's not so good. And then we close down again, one way or the other. And then there's this issue of certain emotions might be fine emotions into themselves in and of themselves. But they have gotten us into trouble. So sometimes love gets people into trouble occasionally. And so sometimes people have such a bad experience in their interpersonal kind of love relationships, that they don't want to open themselves up to falling in love or being in love or trusting someone in that kind of way again. And so they make this kind of almost unconscious subconscious policy, I'm not going to do that, again, I'm not going there again ever again, I'm not going to be hurt like that again. And so it isn't just simply a mental attitude, but often it comes with a kind of a closing down or shutting down or numbing a part of the body.

Another way in which the body becomes kind of disconnected to is through chronic tension, chronic stress. The if the muscle is chronically held tight, it goes numb and numb means we're not aware of it too. So when we're not aware of that the cost of that chronically held attention or holding, and muscles can be held chronically because of you know, we say stress but stress is often a symptom of stuck emotions, somebody stuck in anger stuck and stuck in fear in some way. And so as long as the body

goes numb, sometimes the emotions and feelings behind there, we're not in contact with not aware of. And sometimes as the body relaxes, we become aware of the emotions that we that reside there that people set up on both emotions residing in the body. So for example, a common place for feeling fear or, or expressing fear is in the shoulders, the shoulders can go up. And if the fear is chronic, the shoulders will stay up. And if it's stay up chronically enough, it becomes kind of people become unaware of that they becomes kind of second nature to be always up. But then if there's some way through meditation or massage or body Work are something that those shoulders begin to relax. It's nice enough that they relax. But what then gets highlighted is the fear that's somehow triggered it that was there. And the people are flooded with that fear, they become aware of it. And so then people will think, Oh, I'm going backwards in my meditation. You know, here, I was relaxing, I was feeling good. And now suddenly, I'm afraid. This is a sign that meditation is failing for me. But actually is not the case at all. Part of the function of meditation is to reawaken and to help with this integration of all these parts of ourselves we've lost contact with. And so part of that is to meet the parts of ourselves that have been difficult parts of ourselves, we've kind of been pushed away or, or avoided or numbed out done. And so sometimes that comes with flooding, flooding, sometimes intense emotions, sometimes can come with very strong surges of energy and move through the body in different ways. Because those unhealed parts of the muscles, in a sense seemingly seem to hold a lot of energy there and as they get released things flow much more freely, and it can be sometimes quite intense. What can happen there is that the integration begins to kind of work itself out. So mindfulness of the body then is to bring the body into play, to notice the body and notice what goes on in it. And to awaken all these, this tremendous capacity, the body has to feel the tremendous capacity we have to connect to our emotional life, our attitude in life, the attitudes we carry, our intentional life, intentions we have through how those are revealed in our body. And it's very hard sometimes to think our way into, you know, what's going on here, what it what's really happening with me. the thinking mind is a wonderful tool, but it's not always accurate tool. It doesn't always have the ability to think clearly, clearly. And people are connected. testified about what, you know what's really going on. If we were only thinking about things, but the body is not a mystery, I would say, I mean, the body is not a idea. The body is not in the future. The body is not imagination about something. The body is one of the kind of realist things we have. And so if you feel what's going on in the body, you're connected here and now and you're getting some really direct information. That's not supposition. So if your shoulders are tight, you can feel that, oh, my shoulders are tight, might not know why. But, but you still feel something very immediate and concrete. Now, what's interesting is you might not need to know why

it might be the integration process doesn't necessarily require us to know the reason why the shoulders are tight. If we can relax the shoulders and have the whole shoulder area, kind of relaxed and sensitive again, so we can help us process and see How we move through life next. So if the shoulders are really relaxed, the next time we get afraid, or maybe notice, oh, the shoulders are going up. Oh, look at that. If they're really tight the shoulders and then you get afraid there's no more room to get any tighter, you know, you know, the shoulders don't reveal much then because you know what I'm saying. So if the shoulders are relaxed, and there's more movement with as you get afraid, and you can see, it might not be necessary to know why Originally, the shoulders went up, in integrated body would be relaxed enough to see how in the next instant next day or something, the tightness happens. Oh, look at that. Now I see. And then you're connected. And then because you've connected and aware, then you could address it in some more direct way you can address the object of fear and deal with it or you can address with the inner psychological things going on. You might just relax your shoulders. So the buy button being mindful as the body awakens to stuff and is a fantastic place of getting a lot of information about what is going on in our inner life. And that's why the quote, you know, the world road to the unconscious, there's so much the so much of what goes on in our minds and our thoughts or feelings is expressed to the body. And one of the places to see that is in our breathing. Breathing is often seen as

a wonderful bridge between the conscious and kind of more subconscious and unconscious conscious aspects of who we are. Because all the different kind of subconscious attitudes, reactions we have to our life. Many of them will affect how we breathe, or breathe, it will change where in the body we breathe with the chest, in the belly, different places get tight and more relaxed. And you can actually feel this tremendous play and variation in how we breathe depending on how you react to what's going on. If the breath is always tight, like, the belly is always, you know, pulled in and tight, then there's not much play and you can't necessarily see the variations. But as the breath becomes more and more relaxed, the breathing chest and the belly, then there's more and more subtle variations you can see and how we breathe. And each of those can be a feedback loop to show us Oh, look at that. I wonder why I tightened up there. Oh, that's because I was afraid or why did I soften? They're all because I feel trust, though. And as we as we use the breath as a feedback loop, and noticing how we tighten up on the breath, then if we can soften the breath, let the breath be kind of more relaxed again, that lubricates the inner life, the emotional, psychological life. It's harder to get fixated around certain emotions. If the breath is breath, breathing is fluid and relaxed. So you know I'm you know, I I call resent Frozen anger. And so it's interesting next time you feel resentment to notice how that's affect your breathing. And if you feel that it does affect your breathing, you're more tight, more shallow, maybe breathing more from your chest something faster than you usually do, perhaps. And then see if you can adjust your breathing, see if you can relax it and soften it. And if you can, successful in relaxing, soften your breathing. How's that feel? How does How is that affected your resentment? And chances are that if your breathing is really relaxed, it's hard to stay stuck or frozen around certain emotions. And when the emotions are frozen, then they can move through us. If resentment can come back to becoming just plain old anger, then the anger which is not going to stuck with has a chance to move through us to inform us to kind of Rican work with it much more effectively than I think resentment involves a kind of disconnect disintegration.

So in our tradition, we put a lot of emphasis on mindfulness of breathing. It's a wonderful concentration practice. It's a wonderful mindfulness practice. But it's also a wonderful way of beginning this process of integration. And as the breathing becomes something greater awareness of the breathing, we wake up to more and more the range of how we breathe, because only breathing as we've been more sensitive, that part of our body that breeze, the more access to how the breathing changes, the more we have access to how the breathing changes, the more we'll have access to noticing what we're feeling, and also being able to come back to more relaxed breath. So we're not it's kind of lopsided in our preoccupation with, you know, particularly emotion or feeling gratitude. And then from that we extended out into the rest of our body. And as we become more aware of the rest of our body, then it gives us a lot of information about what's going on in your life. And I would say much more accurate information. And, and the other thing it does is not only information, but it also helps support the inner processing. It's my experience and my sense that the inner psyche has its own way of healing own way of coming to wholeness on way own way of wanting to come to integration, it takes a lot of energy to be disintegrated takes a lot of energy to hold certain parts of our personality or feelings emotional life that day. And, and that energy is exhausting. And so, because of that, that all the energy it takes like to say what the natural tendency is to want to not do so much work. natural tendency is you know, if you if you hold, you know, if you hold the heavy ball above your head for a long time, the natural tendency is for the ball to when it comes to the ground, and you have to kind of, you know, because gravity and so you have to kind of resist that gravity and hold it up until you get exhausted but If you kind of listen to that kind of, in a sense, the call of nature to, you know, release that tension of holding that ball all the time, then you'll put it down on the ground. So if there's all this effort and energy into me disintegrating to hold things at bay, if you pay careful attention to that to almost feel there's a desire to integrate, or there's a momentum to integrate, simply the fact that that part of us wants to relax and not work. And so but it's not an easy process sometimes. So I think, for example, as people meditate, there's sometimes a tendency to get more relaxed, more concentrated more still. And then at some occasions, there are occasional times for some people where they can't get from a more concentrated and they'll try really hard to get more concentrated, more concentrated, and they just can't, they just can't mind just can't get concentrated anymore. And sometimes you go With this thing, it was my personal fault. I just don't have strong concentration abilities. So I just you know, I can't really do this. It's possible that person has all the concentration ability they ever need for meditation. But what's happened is that the awareness has encountered something that doesn't want to open up. Something, something, some blockage, some resistance there someplace where we're disintegrated. And sometimes what it takes is just hanging in there hanging in there, to staying present, keep coming back, keep coming back, being present, not getting discouraged, because the meditation is not working. It's always working. Meditation is one of those things that can never not work. So if you think it's not working, that's just always working. But you have to keep doing it. It only it only doesn't work if you don't do it. And that's what happens to some people. Some people stop doing and then they say it doesn't work. But sometimes it doesn't work the way you want it to work. And that's a different question. Sometimes when there's a blockage or resistance or some disintegrated part that doesn't want to kind of, there's a lot. Sometimes you have to keep coming back, keep coming back, keep coming back, until somehow, mysteriously, something opens up. Occasionally I've known people where it's in the it's, it's by staying in it staying present, keep doing the best they can. And then at some point, the person lets down their guard. At some point, the person relaxes or doesn't try so hard in the moment of letting down their guard. That's something floods up floods out. Oh, my God. Oh, wow. That's guite something I didn't know that was in there. And then there's a whole whole period of time where the person needs to integrate that or work with that and be present for that and allow that to come through. I say this partly because

I was trying to say earlier is that I think there's an inner psychological or psychic or psychological momentum towards healing. Just as a physically if you know, if you cut your finger a little bit have a little cut, you have to keep the finger clean and put a bandage over it. But there's a kind of if everything's going well in your body, then there's a natural tendency to, for the body to heal that cut. And so seemingly Same thing with our emotional psychological life. There's a momentum towards healing. If we just get out of the way if we create the right conditions, put a bandage over it. And I think of mindfulness as the great bandaid mindfulness is kind of leaving it alone and keeping it clean, not getting caught up in it, not interfering with it not attacking yet, just letting it be in a safe way. And then this inner processing the inner unfolding that needs to happen, the inner healing can move through us and I think it's quite remarkable how much Resolution could happen to our psychological difficulties. If we allow the inner unfolding to just do itself not and not interfere with it. And what number one way to help that happen is to be aware of what's going on the body, to open to the body, feel the body connect to the body, because all these things are expressed through the body. And if the if we're aware of within the body, then we're not going to add a story to it, we're not going to add all our dreams and fantasies about it. The body is not a story. And if you can feel how it's expressed through the body, it's a great way of getting out of the story out of which often interferes with the processing and out of the beliefs and ideas and let this inner life kind of move through us. So to feel for example, anything you know, feel the anger in your belly. And rather than thinking about you know, who Why am I angry, who is fault who's at fault. And all that is to go down and feel what's happening in the belly with the anger and be present for it there. And then see how that belly feeling of anger moves and shifts and changes as you allow it to be there, as you give it permission to be there, and you're not reacting to it or reacting to the anger or believing the anger acting on the anger or just letting it be there. So by by being relaxed enough to turn the attention into the body, the body becomes the vehicle for our fantastic inner process towards integration. And as we become more integrated, then we are able to understand ourselves a lot better. And as we become more integrated, then I think we can make wiser choices about how we live this life of ours. So I hope that was an okay pep talk for mindfulness of the body, it's been one of my surprises in Buddhist practice, to discover my body and to discover my body and then and then discover how helpful the body is. And then discover how amazingly beautiful and the experience of being embodied can be. It's a beautiful thing to be embodied presence that way. So you have any questions or comments or protests you'd like to make?

I I get how to access like the muscles of the back, but I'm stressing so often express through like the stomach ulcers, I'm one of those and I've not been able to access that. You know, the internal organs. Can you provide any advice or guidance on that?

Don't know how all these things, you know, physiologically work, I don't know if we need to be aware of the acids in our stomach and necessarily and maybe that's, that's a symptomatic of something else. So if for example, if for example, someone's getting ulcers because of fear, and that's the greeting, where extra acids in the belly and all that you can certainly be aware of the pain of the ulcer perhaps, but that's not really the important place of paying attention. There's probably the manifestation of the fear somewhere else. The way that fears expresses itself, in the moment might be tight, a tightening of the belly or tightening the shoulders or a tightening of the neck muscles or something. And the burning of the ulcer is a secondary. And so if you focus too much in the burning ulcer, you can get very concentrated but won't help you become aware of the fear itself because that's being manifested somewhere else. That makes sense. Now I think there's sometimes officers have no psychological cause at all. So the fact that the body hurts doesn't mean that there's some necessarily mean that there's some spiritual psychological process needs to happen. Maybe just need to take an antacid.

So jumping off of that I'm wondering what to do about just non psychogenic pain, non sort of psychogenic pain, organic pain,

as a major obstacle for a lot of people toward a mindfulness of the body. If we're so enveloped in pain, how do we how do we get past that to think about our to access anything greater than just that pain, not physical pain.

It's a great question. And depending on the particular person, it's probably different responses are appropriate. But I think we want to be careful about getting beyond pain is other things, but rather, we go through the pain. And so there can be a lot of physical physiologically based pain that people experience that can become a very good subject for mindfulness itself, because actually help people develop a lot of mindfulness. And the mindfulness practice might not help with the pain itself. But with as we stay really present for the physical pain, it's possible to become aware of all the secondary reactions to it, that that kind of hold it to house it. And mindfulness can help us resolve some of those. And sometimes the real issue, the psychological issue for why the pain is so difficult, is psychological. So, there's fear, there's resentment. There's a lot of a lot of tightening and resistance to it. I remember once I had a lot of knee pain, meditating, and every time that what I noticed was that if I, if I had thoughts of aversion, or self pity about all this pain, I could see the very subtly, the muscles around, my knees tighten up, and I'd feel more pain. And if I let go of those thoughts, I still had pain, but then it became much more manageable. And I've had very intense physical pain. And, and, and at the same time, sat in states of bliss. So the fact that there's pain does not mean that doesn't doesn't have to have impact on our inner psychological or spiritual well being, and how to, in a healthy way, not get to decouple that so that the pain doesn't affect our psychological life is one of the great functions of mindfulness. And one of the ways to do that is to be very present for the pain and learn how not to be nonreactive to the pain that develop certain kind of equanimity to the pain. And when we find that

equanimity, then we also begin finding all are in the process of doing it, finding all the secondary kind of things that are making it more complicated than it needs to be. Seemed like an okay answer. Thank you. Over here,

just this conversation reminds me many of you might have read the book by Eckhart Tolle The Power of Now, in that book, which I'm in the middle of at the moment, he talks a lot about the pain body and that we all experience pain, but the important thing is not to identify with pain, have the pain become who you are. And so part of the practice that he suggests is to When you're experiencing pain to label it, or give it a notice, oh, pain, I'm experiencing pain. And when you label it, it isn't you it is something you're experiencing in that moment. You don't run from it, but you, you work through it, as you said. And so I think I think the thing isn't as easy for those of us who don't have chronic pain, you perhaps someone who does. My mother has rheumatoid arthritis. So she experiences it every single day. And I think it's harder in that that event for someone like me to, to understand, but I think as long as we don't identify with it just as we wouldn't you try not to identify with

everything being wonderful and good and healthy all the time. That's not you either. It's a moment that's passing. And you recognize it. Yeah, that's very wise. And it's the there's a ways in which dentists find where the pain is part of that secondary react reactions that makes it more complicated makes it harder for us. So learning to see it as that pain as opposed to my pain can be very helpful.

And so I'll end by saying that the more you become aware of your body, the more you include your body is the field of awareness. Like your mindfulness come through the body the more your body becomes your teacher and, and you don't have to rely so much on books and teachers outside of you. And it's my mission in life to help all of you my mission in life is to help make teachers have purpose. And so one big step in that way is to really kind of just you know, get into your body and And really let the body really help you understand more deeply, what's really going on for you in your life. So many thanks. And I'm not sure when I'll see you again. But Beth Goldring will be here next week, and might be a few weeks before I come back again on Sunday. Thank you