

# 2010-04-19 Mindfulness And Concentration

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mindfulness, mind, people, buddha, practice, present moment, activities, thinking, attention, observing, shaping, mindful, involved, mindfulness practice, relax, training, develop, breath, qualities, pay

## SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

Good evening, everyone. So, in thinking about what to talk about today, I thought it might be nice to give a kind of a summary of sorts of the day long teaching we had here on Saturday. Some of you were here I know. But I was here for the month Thanissaro Bhikkhu, who spoke last Monday here. He gave a day long study class on the union, he called the union of mindfulness and concentration. And, and in particular, he focused a lot on what mindfulness means in early Buddhist tradition and teachings of the Buddha. And the reason he felt, I think, moved to talk about his topic was to offer an alternative view to some of the more popular understandings of what mindfulness is that it currently exists in our scene around about. And one of the views that he's very keen on offering alternative to is the idea that mindfulness practice is only nonreactive acceptance of the present moment nonreactive awareness of the present moment. as useful as that approach or that practice is a he wants to say that there's much more to what the Buddha meant we practice mindfulness. The other alternative he wants to offer is the to the view, that mindfulness practice is opposed to concentration practice. And there has been history in Buddhism of opposing the two. Some people will say I do concentration practice and then the people say, I do Mind flashbacks I don't do concentration practice. And there's been a long history of struggle or strife between people who focus on mindfulness people focus a concentration. It's rather silly right? Then we have this great world religion that's whole purpose is to help free us from suffering. And then we use it in order to suffer more. going to war with those people who have it right. Those people have it right. Most people have it wrong. And so then anyways, like that class, and Saturday has a lot to do with mindfulness. And he spoke in the I think, in the beginning of the day about how the word mindfulness has become quite popular. And you know, in my own thinking about it, when I first got involved in Buddhism many many years ago, decades ago. Zen was trendy. And there are a lot of books called Zen in the art of how a lot of books I went to I went to an academic talk by American Zen scholar. And he spent about five minutes reading the list of all the books, you know, to make this impression on the audience that how many books there are. One of them one of the more interesting books is the Zen and the Art of diaper changes. One of the most recent, recent, it's not that recent anymore maybe 10 years ago, but one of the books, one of the more recent books I got the title Zen and the Art of was a book written by a mindfulness student and teacher who's taught here ronica baths, Nick. It was using all the she's learned about mindfulness practice to apply to eating. And her publisher called the book Zen in the art of eating Even though she was a mindfulness teacher, and she was teaching mindfulness in the book, because that was still it was still in that era where the words then got attention. Now, the pendulum has swung. And now mindfulness is the thing that's trendy. And now we have a lot of books about mindfulness, this mindfulness that and now now there's a whole industry of books about mindful eating. So that's kind of what gets people's attention and mindfulness space, everything use now it's not that mindfulness in the art of that would be good. But mindfulness and mindfulness based this and that and this and that, to take the teachings of the of Thanissaro Bhikkhu, the monk on Saturday, I suspect that he was going to write a book with that kind of title. His title would

be the Art of Mindfulness or the art but the Craft of Mindfulness, mindfulness and mindfulness and the craft of awakening the craft of practice, because he likes to wear to craft a lot, and partly because the Buddha himself when he talked about the spiritual practice that he was teaching when he made similes and metaphors for that, with that practice was about trying to explain it to people. He used a very often used metaphors of the craft or the craft craft person. So someone who is shaping something out of clay, or so a, someone who's turning wood on a lathe, making a wooden bowl, someone who's shaping arrow shaft, somebody who's training a horse or training an elephant, kind of very ordinary, ancient India. crafts are skills that people were We're used to, that people did. And in using those analogies or those metaphors for meditation, he was linking then meditation to that thing. And meditation has a similar aspect to it as any craft that you would develop. And one of the key aspects of a craft is that it takes practice. And you don't sit down or some people do my, my, one of my sons does this sits down to learn something. And if he's not proficient immediately, then he's a failure. And I have told them so many times, about practice. You have to keep doing it for a while, but that fall seems to fall off and on deaf ears. But the idea that you you would practice something and there isn't meditation circles, sometimes people who expect instant results or they want a teaching that kind of points to somebody Got an instant awakening or something. And that's fine. It can be quite profound. But the way the Buddha presented the practice was, this is we're kind of doing something to develop the mind to cultivate the mind to train the mind.

And so I have these quotes from the Dhammapada. I thought I'd read the restless, agitated mind, hard to protect, hard to control. The sage makes straight as a Fletcher, the shaft of an arrow. So the Fletcher is the person who makes arrows. So it's a craft. So you so it's comparing and making the mind straight, like your blood sugar with an arrow. I just want to hear similar.

Irrigators guide water, Fletcher's shape arrows, carpenters, fashion wood. sages came themselves. The mind hard to control flighty, a lighting where it wishes. When does well to tame the discipline mind brings happiness. The mind hard to see subtle lighting where it wishes, the sage protects the watched mind brings happiness. So what does it take to become happy? What does it take to become peaceful, they're free. And for the Buddha part of it is to discipline the mind. And part of it is to watch the mind to train the mind to shape the mind. And the reason that Buddha can say this is that the mind is not a thing in Buddhism. But the mind is a process or a series of processes. It's an activity or a series of activities, and activities, because an activity or process doesn't have to be stuck in a particular way. It can be shaped it can be transformed if you changed activities can be become something else. And so we don't, we don't have to stay stuck with the with the mental activities that are currently going on if they're not useful for you, but you can take responsibility. And with patients and training practice, you can begin shifting the activity of the mind. So the activity, the processes of mind, are more beneficial for you more helpful. And that process of doing that is part of the process of Buddhist training. And in doing that, I think we have to appreciate that the human mind, if you prefer the word heart, you're welcome to do that because the word in Buddhism is synonymous. Some people prefer the heart because it feels much more closer to their heart, to their kind of emotional being, mind can seem kind of sexual. But it was appreciated this inner life is a vast ecology. It's a it's a vast ecosystem that has many aspects, there's actually many activities involved. And so, part of the practice is to appreciate that the different times in different situations with different inner states of mind that we address our mind in different ways we, we focus on different activities as being useful to work with. So to say this no different way. There are three large classes or categories of mental activities, mental faculties, that are activated or are utilized when people do Buddhist practice like meditation practice. Each of these categories has all these different aspects within them. So the first category is the category of mental faculties having to do with observation, watching what's going on. The second is that of making effort. And the third is the faculty faculties, the categories of activity that has to do with relaxing. So under observing, there are

such things as mindfulness, contemplation, reflection, observation, wisdom, discernment. And the Buddha would and wisdom and for the language of this month comes on Saturday, Minister dequeue also involves judgment, which raised a lot of excitement in the grouping game. They gave a whole talk yesterday morning about judgment in order to redeem or redefine the value of judgment for us all. So those all those things kind of fit under the category of watching. And then the category of activity has to do with effort. Certainly, energy is persistent. Making effort engagement involvement, interest. And interestingly enough factor, issues like joy and happiness come together around this category called effort.

And then the third category, you know, this thing of relaxation has to do with concentration, tranquility, serenity, contentment, acceptance, peace, things like that. So you get a sense of actually many, many kind of qualities of the mind that are being pointed to, and depending on what's going on, we would utilize them in different ways. Or we were trained develop different these qualities. So, for example, a person who's really hyped up really super anxious and involved in the mind is in overdrive. And maybe there's a fair amount of anxiety You might not want to teach them to pay attention, too much to do a lot of observation, because they might look carefully and get really get much more anxious into what they see. And it might spin out even further. Maybe it was best to teach them is to relax. And to focus on maybe a concentration practice relaxation practice. Something just helps him to settle down. For someone who is really lazy and just kind of really complacent about things. Perhaps what's needed first is to strengthen their effort, their energy factor to make more effort to too you know, there's a remember there's a book came out called the lazy man's guide to enlightenment. And that sounds good. But, you know, so it makes so and then for someone who maybe is completely out of touch With themselves, but perhaps, you know, at a time when they're kind of pretty relaxed about things, perhaps for them, you may think to be emphasize his observation is to look more carefully what's going on. Mindfulness or this capacity to observe sits at the center of all this, because there has to be some monitoring of ourselves in order to know what's needed at any given time. So if you're, if you're hyped up, you have to hopefully recognize that what's going on and so, you know, I'm so I'm so anxious right now. We're so energized. I think what I needed to do is relax. Or I'm really sleepy right now we're kind of dull. What's neat is I need to arouse more energy. Oh, one of the things that fits into the category of effort I didn't mention is desire. And then the Tennessee Booker made a big point that desire has a very important role in the teachings of the Buddha. There's a strong kind of modern tendency to think that all desires acceptable for Buddhists, Buddhism is the three years free from desire. But he wouldn't say no desires are very important quality, you just have to have the right kind of desire. So desire fits into this, because it supports efforts. So these are all these qualities that come into play, and it's our job to understand what needed any given time. And that and that mindfulness or that or the observing qualities is that which has to be enough monitoring to see where it is. And then when we see what's there, see what's needed. Then, with that, then comes a common choice, a decision to begin training, to cultivate and develop certain faculties and skills that we have. Some people would, some people would like their spiritual life, to mostly be involved with understanding with knowledge. And you see it particularly with people who, who are nightstand Buddhists. And where it's can be very, very inspiring. To read a book about wisdom and get all this wisdom, well, I knew that That's right. or hear a Dharma talk like this one perhaps and I think I know I understand and get kind of a contact high you know, or feel like this is a you know, really special but now you know, now you know, it feels wise you feel like you got it. But it doesn't go that far. It doesn't know, you know, doesn't reach out a bed in the morning.

There's a great, there's a great prayer. This guy, his person says thank you, God. For this day. I've lived wisely and haven't harmed anyone or myself yet. But now I really need your help, because now I'm about to get out of bed.

So as useful as knowledge is, knowledge doesn't go that far. And it doesn't really help us get out of trouble or really develop our lives. It's like, it's like going to the, you know, reading books on weightlifting. Suppose if the book is heavy, that would that would help with. And the reason that the reason I chose the example of weightlifting or bodybuilding, is that what's interesting about what I think is interesting about bodybuilding here is that it's also involves developing a craft, it's kind of your body is the is the object of the craft. And there's all the skill that goes into kind of shaping that particular thing that you're shaping, it's a craft. And what's interesting about weightlifting, I think is if I understand, right, is that the very thing that you use is what's being crafted. Right. So like if you're if you're eating If you're you know, if you're learning a musical instrument, you know, it's the musical sound that's coming out that you're crafting. And you learn all these skills to do it. But the product is something different from the skin, the activity that that creates, that creates the product. With bodybuilding, I think you know, it's kind of like the thing you use is also the product. So, the same thing with mindfulness, with meditation practice, the very thing that you're using is that thing which is being developed. And so we're beginning to utilize these qualities and as we use them to become stronger and stronger. So it requires us recognizing what these qualities are.

So in the teaching of the Buddha, mindfulness is one of the qualities of observing Observing quality of the mind, aspect of the mind. And mindfulness is both a faculty particular function of the mind. And also a collection of practices that function together with that faculty of mindfulness to understand that, so try to say it again. And this is important because it can be people often confused because they're, they're kind of vague, ambiguous about what they're talking about in their language. So mindfulness is both a particular activity, a particular faculty, and it's also the faculty used together with other things. To the example is, like running as a faculty you have you could run and if I tell you tell you today I ran. That's one thing. Maybe I was running out to the bus. Maybe the police was running after me. Maybe I was running for exercise, maybe I was, you know, late for something and running, you know, or maybe I just had I sat down in the wrong place not answering my pants. You know, just say I ran doesn't say much. But if I say, today I, I, I, I was involved in training to run, I've a training practice of running, then you know that I run, but you know, there's a lot of other things that go together with that. One is if you're if you're training to be a runner, there's regularity of practice that's important. There's certain kind of monitoring that goes on a certain kind of activities that go together with that training, Exercise, Training, activity of running. So in the same way, with mindfulness, there's just being mindful. And then there's a training in mindfulness. And then training and mindfulness is much more than just being mindful. mindful, involves doing a lot of other things as well. So involves for example, if you want to train in mindfulness, develop that capacity, be mindful. You need to do it regularly has to be a regular practice. It helps if you do it every day, on a regular basis. If you just think it's good idea to be mindful, and once in a while to get around to it. You know, it's good, every moment of mindfulness is helpful. But, and but if what you want to do is, is to shape the mind, the craft the mind, develop a skill of the mind, you're not going to develop it unless you you practice it can do it. And so what is mindfulness then? What is this, so it's much more than just acceptance of the present moment. nonreactive wareness, what's here for the Buddha, mindfulness and mindfulness practice, involves a number of things in being a faculty and a single faculty of the mind itself. Mindfulness means holding something in the mind. And so if you're, if you want to go shopping, and say you have a shop, make a mental shopping list, to remember that shopping list means that you held that shopping list of things in your mind, you're mindful of that list. You have to hold it there. And mindfulness is very closely connected in Buddhism to the faculty have to remember. So we remember to be present in the present moment. Remember to be with our breathing. If we're being mindful of the breath, we're remembering to stay there with our breath. And we're cultivating strength in their capacity to remember or strengthen capacity to hold the attention in someplace that we choose to hold the attention. So it could be the breath. It could be any activity or we choose to keep her attention there. Sometimes people do mindfulness practice, the choice is to pay. It's

where they choose to pay attention to, is the question moment, what's going on in the present. And however, the present moment is such a big, complicated event. There is a lot going on in the present moment. Some people will practice mindfulness or whatever it is most compelling in the present moment, whenever there was loudest, whatever is going to get their attention. That's okay. And sometimes it's a very wise approach to practice. It's called choiceless awareness. But for the Buddha, he emphasized actually choosing what you pay attention to, not leaving it to chance. But actually, it's some things are more useful to pay attention to other things. So in other words, you would hold certain things in awareness in the present moment, or choose other some things over other things. For example, it's not particularly useful to spend a lot of time focusing on your little toe.

You could mean you will tell us in the present moment, the auto heaviness, their sensations, their experience their butt, There's no as far as I know, I've never really heard any spiritual instruction, that it's particularly useful to pay attention to your little toe. But they do say pay attention to your breathing. And that's a very common instruction. There's something very, very, hugely different between the benefits you get from focusing in the present moment, your breath, versus focusing in your little toe. For one thing, the breathing is a wonderful feedback loop. That helps us to relax we focus on the breathing. Most people find that the focus is staying with the breath concentrates people relax as people. There's a wonderful feedback loop between our emotional life or our even our unconscious life and our breathing. And as we begin reading in a more mindful way, the ways in which we hold our breath, contract your breath, restrict our breath begins to release, and as the breath gets softer, more relaxed, it then has feedback and changes our inner life. It tends to relax and settle things as well. So it's more useful To pay attention to that pancake paying attention to, you know, I could pay attention all day, to the sounds of the birds in my garden, as possibly getting concentrated might be nice. The Buddha said it's actually useful to have a broad awareness of your body and what goes on in your body. And because the body provides a lot of information about what goes on with you. In fact, in my years of practice, what I've learned is that the information that I acquire I get from my body by paying very, very careful attention to it provides me as much more accurate and deeper insight into what goes on in my mind than if I paid attention only to my mind. And so, it's kind of like the I think of the body as the royal road to the unconscious. So the alert so it's useful to learn to cultivate a strong presence of awareness in the body. In our posture, and that contractions and releases of our body and what goes on there, it's useful to do that. So the Buddha went through and said, there's a number of things it's useful to hold in your mind to pay attention to. And so he said, the body, the breathing, it's useful to pay attention to what's called the feeling tone of experience. It's useful to pay attention to your mental states. And it's useful to pay attention to some of these some of the core processes of the mind that are operating, that either move us towards greater bondage, greater suffering, or move the mind to progress processes and move the mind towards greater freedom and release to start becoming sensitive to what goes on in the mind. So that we can monitor what's there. And then, and this is the key one of the key parts of mindfulness practice, as taught by the Buddha and also very small considering is that mindfulness is not only just Observing what's there and holding in mind the present moment. But it's also making choices. So if if you're so first of all, there's choice like, Oh, it's more useful to pay attention to my breathing, than to pay attention to the sound of the birds in my garden. So I think what I'll do here is I'll still stay with my breath. Or maybe because of how state of my life my mind, maybe at this particular time, it's most useful to just choiceless awareness, where I choose not to choose anything. It's still a choice. So we monitor ourselves to see what's useful. And then there's a choice about what to pay attention to. If you don't know how to choose, or tying yourself in knots by being to choice for their suggestion is that meditation, just focus on your breath. Make it easy for you. But as you start becoming aware of these things, there's choices that can be made. So when you start becoming aware of what goes on in the mind, Then we start making choices about what mental activities to pursue, and which not to pursue which to be involved in, in which not to be involved in. And one of the key ones, is thinking

itself. And there's a world of difference between being involved with thinking, lost in the conversation, versus stepping back and watching, observing, or here's a mind that's thinking, to watch it or thinking is happening. And I hope that all of you learn to see the difference between being lost and thought absorbed and thought, while you're engaged and thinking and feeding, thinking reliving, and you're thinking versus stepping back and seeing watching. Oh, here's thinking going on.

The difference would be kind of like, if you're at a wonderful gathering of many animated people, like at a party, and they're taught me be animated discussion argument about politics. Everybody, you're in the fray and everybody's yelling, it's not pretty. And casualties are happening left and right. And, you know, and people are talking on top of each other and interrupting each other, and it's all very exciting and so important and, and your opinions are so important, and you're just in there getting your opinions across. And, you know, everybody's kind of forgets themselves. But then something happens. And, and for some reason or other, you step out of the fray, maybe have to go to the bathroom, your cell phone rings, and you go out, and then used to come back and everybody's still involved in the fray of the arguments. We just stand on the edges of it. And you watch and you say, wait a minute, you know, I was in there a few minutes ago, hardly even aware of myself. And now I'm stepping outside of I can see what all these people are doing all the arguments and all the gestures and movements and how everybody's lost and some of them even have kind of seemed like their home. Look at their eyes, it seems like their attics, opinion attics. And Isn't this amazing? I was one of those people just a few minutes ago. So I don't know if that's a good example or analogy. But to step out of the fray of your own mind all the arguments and discussion and memories and plantings and everything, not so much, because you have to turn to stop doing it, per se, it's bad to do it. But to step back far enough, so you can observe this phenomena going on. And there's a huge difference between observing and being in the world of thinking. Now, once you observe the phenomena of thinking, it does begin giving you give you some choice of what to do about that. One choice is to stay there to keep coming back to observing as opposed to being in it. Another is to evaluate what you're thinking about. Is it useful to think this and it was not useful, perhaps you can change what you're thinking about. So you notice, for example, you're thinking a lot of nasty thoughts about someone. Simply midway through, right? Do you really want to spend so much time in your life thinking nasty thoughts? Is that really useful use of your precious moments of being alive? To know maybe there's other things to do, perhaps to be more useful to reflect and think about? What are that person's good qualities. And so you can actually, sometimes you can change what you're thinking about, or you can choose to let go of that thinking. to not think that at all. And one of the ways to cultivate and strengthen the capacity to observe, be mindful is to let go of whatever we're thinking about, or that go with the addiction to think the preoccupation to think and that's one of the great skills To learn, and again, it's a skill, it's a craft, reshaping the mind, reshaping the migratory slowly over time, helping the mind become soft enough, relaxed enough. So it's easy to let go. a mind that is really hard and tight contracted, it's very hard to let go to soften. It's like the analogy that I like to use is like, if you be, you know, ice, if you have is really hard. And if you want, you know, a little little piece of little drop of water from the ice, it takes something it may chip away at eight or something. But if you want to drop a water from a glass of water, it's really easy to separate it out. So when your mind gets very soft, it's like water. And it flows and moves and be shaped in all kinds of ways. It's very clear like water, clear water. Ice is not that clear. So if we're if the mind is preoccupied with anxiety, with fear with hate, with greed, with lust, many many things that can be caught up in, it can, it can be so caught up, the mind gets actually tighter and tighter, more more constricted, harder in a sense. And then it's hard to do anything with the mind. So as we begin meditating and relaxing, making effort being regular with practice being mindful which there we slowly exercising a choice, a simple choice of stepping back.

Slowly the mind begins to relax, sort of the heart begins to soften, and the more it softens, the more choice we have. And the more choice we have, the more we can then just choose to let the mind activities be healthy activities. And so for the Buddha, one of the very important parts of spiritual practice is to be able to differentiate between those mental activities which are unhealthy to pursue to be involved in, and those which are healthy to pursuing. And so, you know, I just read somewhere I think yesterday, I think that one of the serious issues that probably many of you have to face is a particular kind of addiction to technology to computers and cell phones into texting. And there are plenty of people apparently who the first thing they do in the morning is to check email, or check, see what's going on online. And then people get pulled into the world. And sometimes it's very hard to pull away. So when a wife told me on Saturday, she pulled out her her iPhone, and she said, You know, I'm kind of addicted to this iPhone of mine. And it's actually a marriage runner because of, you know, disappearing, you know, separation and it's lost in that world. So to recognize this is not healthy, this is not useful, and then had the ability to say no, I'm not going to follow that addiction, that involvement, to see that it's not useful to be that particular trains of thoughts are not healthy for you. And then different let go of them and choose ones that are healthy. So for the Buddha, that village, he was considered very, very important part of spiritual life. We don't just sit there to accept how things are. But part of the function of mindfulness is that mindfulness helps us to to see wisely what we allow to happen, and what not to happen. So the analogy from the Buddha that was given on Saturday, was that of a gatekeeper in an ancient citadel, the ancient city with no wall around the city. And it was a gate. And the gatekeeper was a person who stood at the gate and decided who could come into the city and who could not. You can come through the gate. And that part of the function of mindfulness is to be the gatekeeper. So something arises in the mind in the present moment. And you don't have to feel ashamed or guilty or bad about what arises in your mind. But when it arises in the mind, the function of mindfulness practice is say, oh, that particular hate that particular fear that particular self criticism, that particular lust, that way of thinking, I don't, I don't need to go there. Let's not go there. Let's not let that in. Let's not get involved. And one of the strongest ways of doing this, because it's hard to let go sometimes, is to come back to a very clear mindfulness of the thinking itself. The clear, more precise, the mindfulness is, the less we're involved or entangled or lost in it. And so again, if I could use another analogy that I like is that if you've gone for a nice walk, and a beautiful spring day You've had you sit down the edge of a river bank and you back against the oak tree in the shade and you have a wonderful lunch. You take a nice nap, it's wonderful. Wake up from a nap. You feel so refreshed, everything's perfect and wonderful in life. You look around and you see Wow, look at this beautiful scenario. beautiful river. It's so pastoral and so nice. Just being present, just being alive is enough, nothing is needed. But then, floating down the river is a Showboat. They flashing lights, casino district tech, the whole works. And before you know it, you've been on the show boat for a week. How did that happen? So finally, after a week you wake up, maybe you could use all your money up for something. And so you make it back, you make your way back on shore and you make your way back all the way back up to the top You sit down the rest there and everything's fine for a few moments and then a war boat comes down the river and the next thing you know you're on this war both fighting a war it takes you a while to realize that where you are and finally awake up until you make it back to the dry shore to save shore and go back up and do tree again minding your own business just being there committed okay I'm not going to get in whatever beautiful show boats come in. I'm not going to get on this day here everything's fine here peaceful nice.

The word boats come I'm not going to get on those wars and have you know, so you're pretty good until this decrepid barely floating poor little raft comes floating down. You know, I feel so sorry for the program. So dangerous and for you know You're on the raft. feeling sorry for yourself, Oh, it's so hard. It's about to sink. And you're on that draft of that draft takes, it takes a few years to get off that line. So the idea in mindfulness is that you're safer on shore. And watching the stream go by watching the boats go by. So watching the thoughts go by, you don't have to take them up. You don't have to get involved.

And so one of the six so what are the ways to exercise this choice? This mastery that happens in meditation is to choose to stay with a mindfulness to stay being mindful of what's happening without getting involved. And it's very simple things to recognize, oh, this is what's happening now. This is what's happening now. To choose that over choosing getting involved or to choose that, this is not useful to do but this is so much so as we do this as the mindfulness gets stronger as the capacity to observe gets stronger as the ability to stay present for the body be mindful in the body mind for the breath, feelings, mental states. As it gets stronger, then with that comes a stronger concentration and concentration as a function of helping us to see with greater intensity with greater unity with greater subtleness and composure what's happening here in the present moment. Concentration has the function of beginning to relax deeply create a kind of serene ease in our body, that comes with a mindfulness get strong. And, and, and create a subjective experience. That's very, very pleasant. And one of the one of the things that's really helps the process of mind shaping, like, like bodybuilding mind building, is that it's that we're beginning to shape a subjective experience. It's very pleasant. It's very enjoyable. And what's one of the benefits of paradox but one of the one of the kind of aspects of meditation practice can seem very odd at first is that the mind thinks that enjoyment is found in the external world of things that are safety is found the external world of things. But there's this kind of deep, deep satisfying enjoyment and sense of safety. That comes from a subjective sense of being mindful, observant, present, and then settled and unified around that experience. concentrated here And so with that, then so as the mind becomes more and more mindful, or more clear and crisp, or pristine, it's clarity. There's a subjective feeling of ease and safety that arises as well. And that that makes it easier for the mind to let go further and further and further. And in fact, if more than mine Let's go, the more satisfying it is. And rather than letting go, being something which is frightening or undesirable, it's really clear that the very desirable thing that enhances us It doesn't diminish us to dismiss diminish us, it enhances us is to let go. Of all the places of clinging, of holding of resistance of tightness, all the ways in which the mind the heart is kept limited, are bound or caught up until The mind lets go of itself in a very deep way. So, mindfulness is part of a larger project in Buddhism. That involves a sense of autonomy, the use language I heard recently, autonomy because only you can develop this capacity to take responsibility for your mind and develop the capacity to see. It develops a capacity that develops our sense of mastery. Because we do become master or become skilled at working with our mind and mine is not a foreign place could be something we slowly, very slowly over time, get a handle on and become kind of skilled with how to use it.

And then it's connected to a sense of purpose. Mindfulness in the Buddhist tradition is connected to the purpose of creating mental health, but more than mental health, of bringing the mind to spiritual liberation and freedom and That that sense of purpose is what guides the choices that mindfulness helps us make. As we're mindful. Mindfulness is connected to a desire. Mindfulness collected a sense of purpose that informs how we're mindful and what we're mindful of. So there's so to sum to say certain kind of concluding words, the human mind is kind of like an ecosystem. And as many species live in this ecosystem, and at different times, and in Buddhist practice, we focus on different aspects of the ecosystem. It's meant to be an enjoyable process, it's meant to be a simple process doesn't be so complicated. We pick up different aspects. Sometimes we focus on relaxing, sometimes we focus on seeing clearly what's there. Sometimes we focus on applying or efforts these three qualities, these three aspects mutually supportive of each other, and they circle around each other and benefit each other. And when when a person has become well, skilled well developed in Buddhist practice, those three qualities are like a three tripods that are strong well developed that support the further growth of the practice.

So, for those of you who are here Saturday for the class, I hope I did justice to the class to what Thanissaro Bhikkhu said, and if it all seems too complicated, all this stuff, then just follow your breath. Thank you.