

# 2009-10-02 Seven Factors of Enlightenment

## Mindfulness Part 3

Fri, 8/14 5:22PM • 44:28

### SUMMARY KEYWORDS

mindfulness, gatekeeper, simile, probing, awareness, goat herder, goats, spacious, lens, stay, breathing, mind, mindfulness practice, holding, hand, breath, aware, thought, faculty, feel

### SPEAKERS

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different teachers. And some of the confusion has to do with the distinction between mindfulness as a particular Faculty of mind versus mindfulness as a practice. So, for example, if most of us, you know, who have legs can, can run. And so you could run, or you can have a running practice. If you run, that's one thing, but when you say running practice, that implies that it's like training, right means that you rep regularly, you maybe push yourself a little bit more than you normally would you, you know, you stretch first stretch when you're finished. You do a variety of things that go with training. Training implies something more than just running. If I just said that I run you wouldn't know whether I was running for exercise, running up to the bus right? After a woman, you know, you would know, you know, there's all kinds of things to run after. And the robot being chased. That's why I'm running, you know, just running right? So a little bit, it sets a way. There's a distinction made between mindfulness and mindfulness training or mindfulness practice. And as a factor of awakening. It usually refers usually in the definitions of it. It refers to the practice of mindfulness as opposed to just a faculty, but sometimes it's referred to the faculty. So the faculty is very simple faculty, apparently, the way it's described, which is that faculty they're just able to hold something and awareness, like I said, talked about in the morning. The most common definitions in this tradition is that definition of mind not floating away, not free floating away from what it's choosing to pay, pay attention to. So it's not forgetting to pay attention. mindfulness practice that involves a variety of other things. And different teachers will emphasize different things that go together with that practice. One common one is a lot of people want to combine mindfulness with a strong sense of equanimity. And so there's discussion about nonreactive awareness, and when that the chronicity is brought to bear on it as well. There's also the idea of, such as of ardency, and clear comprehension. Clear comprehension is some jhana conventions, that part of mindfulness practice, that we clearly comprehend what it is you're holding, what's going on. So if you're you can be aware of yourself breathing, you can hold your attention with the breath and not wander away from the breath. And so you'll always remember to stay with your breath, stay close to the breath, but then they clear comprehension, start seeing clearly with the nature of that breath. So some people emphasize that part of mindfulness and mindfulness has to do a lot with recognition and seeing what's there. Mindfulness by itself as a faculty is not Not so much like that. It's more than when we mix with mindfulness practice that you get these other qualities mixed in. So there's some ambiguity about when people talk about mindfulness, what exactly it is. Because if people slide between it talking about it as a particular faculty versus talking about it as a practice, when as soon as you talk about a practice, other things are part of it as well. So it makes sense. So that was a, I wanted to say that because what I like to do now is do a meditation, kind of a guided meditation. And I would like to, during the course of the meditation, offer you four similes, from mindfulness that are given in the ancient sutras. And so kind of metaphors for understanding what it might be. And these, even though they're used for mindfulness,

they could also be understood that in different contexts, mindfulness looks a little different, depending on what's going on. So for example, If, if your mind is easily distracted, and wanders off into the hindrances a lot, then perhaps mindfulness has to stay really energetic and engaged to really stay present enough to prevent the mind from wandering off too easily. If the hindrances and distractions are not strong or they're not present at all, then it's easy to stay present. And then mindfulness can be much more relaxed. And the image of it is of a of a

image of these two two contrasting ways is like a goat herder, who during the rainy season during the growing season of the crops, has to watch the goats really carefully, make sure they don't wander wander off and eat in the fields and eat the farmers grains. And so they have to be right there with a stick poking and don't go that way. Don't go this way, you know stay on track. But when the grain has been harvested There's nothing growing anymore, then the goat herder can just lean against the tree in the shade. And just kind of just be very relaxed and spacious and open, just just just know where the goats are just kind of keep it you know, but doesn't have to be so concerned writing, it's so close. So sometimes mindful because because of our inner condition, mindfulness needs to be much more engaged and active. And sometimes it can be very relaxed and spacious and just allow things to come and go and all that. So each of these similes kind of point to different aspects of mindfulness, and relevant in different circumstances. I'd like to offer you the similes and perhaps the images and the simile, perhaps a sense of them, understanding of them can evoke something for you or touch something for you or point to some aspect of mindfulness for you that is, as be useful to plan so, for Allah for four

So, taking alert and comfortable posture,

especially since it's right after lunch, you might want to emphasize the part in your spine being a little bit more alert, maybe normally would be

and then take a couple of two or three long slow, deep breaths. And as you exhale into your body gently gentling your body

Then let your breath return to normal.

And then take a few moments to scan through your body to see if there's any obvious places of holding that you can soften. Perhaps you can soften your belly.

Perhaps you can release a little bit of tension in your legs.

Perhaps a wave of softening through your arms and hands.

In perhaps a gentling of your chest, rib cage,

and perhaps you can soften the muscles of your face, eyes, forehead, jaw

And then see if you can have a global awareness of your body. And whatever you do way that comes to you

and then within your body as part of your body. Become aware of how the body experiences breathing.

And then we'll continue for a little bit. Here's a couple of minutes silently, centering yourself on the breathing, being mindful of breath.

As I say the similes if you can use the breath as the primary place of mindfulness, but if something else is more compelling, it's fine to use that. The first simile is that of a surgeon who with his or her hands, probes in the area where there's going to be a cut, feel senses, uses your hands to really, really kind of probe and find out what's there.

And that way, mindfulness can have a capacity of probing, not just a holding what's there, but really being so close that it actually kind of touches and feels and explores the experience. That kind of intimacy of a hand exploring or feeling into the body through the skin.

So what's it like for your awareness to go into your breathing and feel the texture of it the various qualities of it sensations of it

almost feeling like feeling the breathing inside the breathing

Perhaps taking a deep breath, letting go the idea for probing surgeon.

The second simile that the Buddha used was that of a gatekeeper. In the ancient world, the cities might have been surrounded by a wall. And there might be a one gate into the city and out of the city. And the gatekeeper sits at the gate and is aware of everyone who comes and goes and is aware of who should, who should be allowed in And who should not receive the messages that come and deliver them to the city. So mindfulness sits at the juncture between what is happening and how we relate to what's happening. experience of the world always come to us through the gate of awareness. And then once it's through that gate, we think about it react to it respond to it, does our inner city so mindfulness sits there at that juncture and is aware of what comes Sounds smells a taste to touch the thoughts and just chooses what to pick up what to leave alone. thought arises. That alone doesn't have to come in. And it's aware of what leaves the city. Where is it the reactions we have that leave our city to to react to something, what's going on in the world.

Mindfulness puts us in the place of choice. We can choose whether to act react or not.

What's it like for you to have mine This situated at that juncture of the present moment between what's happening and how we relate to what's happening

There is a breathing and then there's a way to react and relate to the breathing.

Sitting at the place of choice. Perhaps you can become aware of ways that you relate that are not needed, don't have to let it continue and those which are useful

And then taking a deep breath, letting go of that simile

and the next one the Buddha use was kind of like the one I just mentioned this morning of the eagle bird's eye view. In the case of the Buddha, he used the idea of someone standing high up in a tower, the tower looking down that all the people and activities below Having this broad expansive overview of what goes on the same time not entangled with it, not caught up in the drama of what's happening below, just seeing it, noticing it. expansively spaciouly relaxingly. My high vantage point

staying aware of what happens here,

Then taking a deep breath and letting go of that image

Then the final simile is that of the goat herder who sits underneath the tree relaxing up against the painting against the trunk of the tree in the shade with a wide open expanse fields in front of her

keeping an eye on or no seeing at all but quite relaxed about it. So enough just to know it enough just to be aware, nothing has to be done about anything. Staying at ease in your mind, your heart connected and aware of what's happening with your breath elsewhere.

Now of those these four approaches to mindfulness which comes to you most easily, or which one is most compelling for you the kind of mindfulness that probes the experience That's which is a gatekeeper, tracking what comes and goes what choices we make and staying present or not or that have a standing high up in a tower. great overview situation

where they relax, go tertre with a panoramic view of the fields and the goats

If it's possible to put on different lenses and awareness Are you more comfortable with a close up lens of your experience or a wide angle, wide angle lens that takes in a wide range of what's happening here.

And how easy is it for you to switch between having your awareness be really close in probing Close up lens. How easy is it for you to switch from the close up to the wide angle from the bird's eye view can you switch back and forth easily

So one of the reasons I want to do this exercise was to convey to you the idea that there's not just one way of doing mindfulness, that mindfulness is not just one thing you want to kind of lens, one kind of approach to being with our experience. But that mindful approach practitioner hopefully is able to switch and move between different lenses, different ways of being present different times. There are some times where what's needed is a very, very precise focus. Other times what's needed is a very step back and very spacious, broad awareness of what's happening. And some people I know get stuck on one or the other. And they think that's only about, you know, this deep probing, you know, and, you know, detailed analysis of, of what's going on. And other people feel it's only this kind of broad, big mind spacious awareness, kind of let things kind of float through the big open space of the mind. That's the only thing he's supposed to do. But actually different circumstances, different ways of being different kind of way of using mindfulness and what's required. So I'm curious to hear from some of you what that was like to do that. I'm not that interested in about how it didn't work. Not to disrespect that. I mean, I certainly appreciate that any kind of guided meditation I do, it's not going to work for everyone. But I think in this circumstance that we actually we've actually learned I learned more from, you know, what worked What was interesting and helpful in this for doing this. Anybody would like to Yes, Victor

I thought it was a lot of fun.

This is great.

It

I've never called out those things in the past. So specifically, but I noticed that those are types that I go through, especially in retreat. I, I can see very distinctly in it usually the probing, precise, whatever is sort of at the beginning of a set and towards the end, it's there, relax, calm, spacious, but attentive. So it's just nice to have a framework around that.

Great, thank you.

I was kind of relieved that we weren't supposed to pick one over the other. So because usually I thought oh, My goats are all over the place, eating the crops in the shop running, you know, but then I found after to this this morning, I have come down so much during this morning that I was finding myself leaning against the tree and it was, you know, spacious and attentive This is Victor said, and I thought it depends on where you are with with which one is appropriate. And that's good enough. Great,

thank you. My goats were kind of big today, they might have been elephants. So the gatekeeper was very useful. Whereas taking a more spacious view, they really took off into the distance quickly.

So it was nice to see the contrast. Great. So being a gatekeeper allowed you to do what?

Oh, a lot more mindful law. More to stay more present with gatekeeper whereas taking a more relaxed view, I felt more jumbled up inside. Great. Thank you.

This is the first time I had tried the goat idea on explicitly and I find that very kind and, and fitting. So I saw once in some property in Carmel Valley these little pygmy goats Cruz the neighborhood, and they were sort of like, going and run into people's yards and going you know, they were bad goats. And I really feel like that's what goes on with me sometimes. It's like, there is this gold over there. That is like doing this thing. It's like maybe it's anxious. Maybe it's afraid maybe it's angry. But it's a gold afternoon. It's cruising around and stuff and the shepherd thing was helpful so that

I didn't feel quite as controlling of the whole thing that it was Like there's those goats.

So that that was very helpful.

Great. And hopefully all the crops are in.

I found myself most relaxed when I actually combined two of them so that I was up in a tower that I was looking down and, and I was also the goat herd sitting against the tree. And from the tower, I just felt very expansive and I was trusting that awareness was taking place in a way that I that I hadn't experienced before. I think maybe before there was this kind of urgency about whether I was paying enough attention. And this is the feeling Yeah. attention is being paid and I can rest in that Thank you.

I think the first one worked best for me. I was able to imagine like the surgeon's hand probing of flesh of another and I could do that with awareness. And I could get the feel of like probing with awareness and you taking an interest in the breathing, because my mind was kind of drifting off. But later, I couldn't really connect with the later assemblies, and I do so.

Great. Thank you. That's what I expected that some of the assemblies would you'd connect with and some of you wouldn't. It also depends a little bit on the state of the mind. So if the mind is drifting a lot, sometimes some of the probing keeps you gauge much more and less than you were Do you mind just drifting and just kind of be the go turn around gets a tree, you know, just use fall asleep. All the way in the back.

I became quite intrigued with the gatekeeper and I was

the gatekeeper to my thoughts. And I envisioned this ancient wise woman with a clipboard in her hand, very gently and kindly talking to each thought petitioner to come through the gate and saying, very kindly, very gently, well, you know, I really don't think you're that useful right now. No, come back another time. And then also Well, okay, this is worth evaluating or looking at, come on in. So

You. Great, that's enough. I appreciate that a lot to get a wide range of reactions to that. So hopefully that's interesting for you useful for you to get a sense that there's a wide range. The one that's most mentioned in the current American Vipassana movement is the thing about the lenses, that sometimes you won't have a close up lens, sometimes a wide angle lens. And so they have sensors, two different options, and everything in between, I suppose. Sometimes it's helpful to get really close zero in. And sometimes that just makes it more tense or like it's pain or something just makes us more, more difficult. But if you take this wide angle lens, then it can be much more room around the experience, much less reactivity, much less need to do anything about it, and much easier. So be able to go back and forth have a sense of these different lenses. It's helpful. So what all these forms of mindfulness have in common is they're all holding something about the present moment in mind to remember I'm ready to stay present if we're not gonna float floating away, drifting away into the past in the future and the thoughts are holding the present, holding some aspect of the present in our minds awareness. And just how we're doing it can shift and change depending on how mindfulness practice is being done, what's needed, what's needed. Take our times. Good. So we have a very good foundation, I think, for what we're going to do next.