

2011-02-13 Paying Attention To The Breath

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SPEAKERS

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Everyone and as a prelude to my talk, the occasionally that a distinction is made between people who are beginners in practice, meditation practice or Buddhist practice. And those who are advanced whatever that is. The one of the qualities of someone who's an advanced practitioner is that they're willing to be beginners more often. And, and so, we start over again, with the basics. And one of the most basic aspects of meditation practice and of mindfulness of Buddhist spirituality is mindfulness of breathing, paying attention to the breath and going back to the breath. And making it really simple starting over again. And even the idea of the word language of mind wanders off and then you come back to the breath is I think maybe is a little bit unfortunate, because the mind doesn't go anywhere, just the we have a metaphor of moving the mind. But I prefer the idea of restart, oh, we start over. Rather than coming back, just where we're at, we start again, and we start again. And the willingness to start fresh and over again, without the baggage of judgments about what just happened or the past. And just start fresh new is a sign of an advanced practitioner. And some beginners are more advanced than the people been practicing for a long time. Because they have McMakin the quality of just willing to start over and just be connected and do it again. And so in number of Buddhist treated Focusing on the breath, tuning into the breath is at the heart of the practice. And in doing that, it's, it's in common with a lot of other spiritual traditions. were focusing on the breath, paying attention, the breath is also Central and very important. Sometimes it's an important as a practice. And sometimes it's important in the, in, kind of in, you know, in, in ancient language in which the religion is kind of couched or comes out of. So, for example, in, you know, I don't know how many Christians focus on breathing. But you have at the beginning of Genesis, that the story there is that human life began when God breathed into a bunch of stardust together together. And we're also all we are right is stardust. But there's something that animates it. And so this idea that the animating force, the breath that gets breathe in that God into Adam Brock life and in other words, I'm you know, some you know, I'm very fond that the word spiritual comes from the Latin word spirit spirit to us which means breath or can be in breath breathing and to like respond or respiration you know it's clearly has it in it. And I wonder sometimes, if instead of saying there were deer in the world had different spiritual traditions, we said the different The world has different breathing traditions. Wouldn't that be nice that then immediately we're connected to our commonality that we have, we share the breath and common breathing in common. And we're co conspirators. We're all we're all breathing together, conspiring together the and maybe there's a little more harmony between different religions. And I certainly noticed that people who practice spiritual discipline, regardless of the spiritual tradition, religion, they're part of this very quickly they can can find and find commonality, shared commonality, because they're negotiating and working with a common human experience. If the starting point of inter spiritual inter religious dialogue is his beliefs, then it's very quick, we can come very quickly to the differences. But if we start in practices, then I think we come to our commonalities much more quickly. And if we can come to how we work with the breath, what happens to the benefits of the breath, I think we come very quickly to a very shared spiritual life,

shared breathing life. We breathe it said, I don't know I haven't counted but I wish we had said that we breathe 23,000 times a day, some of us and that's a lot of time.

There's this rhythm of breathing in breathing out. And a lot, a lot goes on breathing. Breathing is not a kind of a neutral thing. But it's easy to overlook the breath. Because most things that people are interested in their life are not the breathing. You know, you are interested in our relationships to other people, we're interested in our work, we're interested in our pleasures, we're interested in our safety, making yourself safe, we're interested in our money, we're interested in all kinds of things that the mind gets preoccupied in. And there's, you know, generally not a lot of monetary value in your breathing. And, or, generally people don't associate their breath with a lot of pleasure. Whereas in fact, this tremendous amount of pleasure could come with breathing but it's not like you know, you don't go to school and they don't tell you, you know, growing up, you know, the breath hack has within it. ecstatic pleasure if you just kind of tuned into it. Do you get messages that other things are important? My son's interested in this iPad that is breathing the game into his brain into interested in his breathing, I think would be hopeless. And so there's this focus on other things. And as we get focused on other things, one of the tendencies is to fixate on things. And to get obsessed on things get preoccupied with things. And there's a lot of things to get preoccupied with. Some number of has to do with our responsibilities. Some of it has to do with our fears, some has to do with our desires. One way or the other, we get to people get really interested in things and it's beautiful to get interested in things, but to be fixated, has a consequence. And one of the consequences of fixation is we hold our breath. And there's an exercise that's done sometimes in breathing workshops of having people with their eyes focused on a spot in front of them really fixate on the spot. And most people find that they do that, that in order to fixate no their attention on that spot that people hold the breath to some degree. The same thing happens in our mind. If the thinking or our mental attention gets fixated on something, it often translates to an effect on our breathing. If we pay attention to the breath and keep the breath fluid moving, then it's harder to fixate. And it contents can overcome that fixation or if the mind gets locked in really tight around something. One of the things that you're offering advice to do is to breathe, breathe deeply relax with the breath. One of the fixations people can have is around fear to get fixated on their fear gets sometimes up to the point of panic. And, and then encouraging you to breathe deeply, or just to breathe into your breath is one of the classic techniques. It was the first instruction I received from my first Zen teacher was I went to have an interview with him, and I never had a one on one interview with a Zen teacher Buddhist teacher ever before I was you know, 22 years old. And, and I got really nervous. I was so nervous, I couldn't speak. Now I do speak. But I couldn't speak and he had to tell me, Gil, just breathe deeply. So I breathe deep little bit and eventually I can kind of loosen up and have that conversation. So you know, so when we breathe, and breathe in, just tuning into the breath, especially if you can tune into breath and relax with the breath. It tends to translate to freeing up to some degree that fixations, that tightness in the mind and preoccupations we have, maybe not 100% begins that process of loosening things up. Sometimes even breathing out more intentionally. Some people find breathing long, slow Writing a deep breath and slow long out breath is a powerful way to begin relaxing the stress and attention that gets built up. Doing that a dozen times when you're feeling tense is a beautiful thing, very helpful thing to do. The problem is that many times when people feel tense, really tense, it goes with a keen sense of urgency, like I have to take care of something or do something now. And in the idea of taking a little break for 10 breaths can seem like that's, I don't have time for that. And so we don't avail ourselves with the possibility of just relaxing. I've encouraged a number of people to use the excuse of going to the bathroom to get to step out of their normal life and breathe for a while. Because most people are not going to be upset with you or be concerned about you. If you say excuse me, I need to go to the bathroom. You don't have to tell them what you're doing. Mostly Boom and ask you what do we call it, but it's better, maybe call it more to the restroom. What are you doing the restroom, I'm resting. And then you go sit there in the toilet and you breathe. Whether or not you have

to pee, you breathe, and you come back out and you've done your 10 breaths. The other thing about breathing is that it's stabilizing. And sometimes we're not necessarily fixated in their mind. But we're quite unstable. The mind is agitated, it's running around, it feels confused, it feels lost. And, and we feel we're kind of vulnerable and fragile. And then tuning into the breath is kind of like an anchor or stabilizing force that connects people to their body connects people to some kind of rhythm that is constant that keeps flowing through us and going through us. And having that rhythm and that constancy of breathing in and breathing out. Breathing in and out, for some people creates the kind of stability or discipline or that helps them in times of great instability. tuning into the breath also provides us with a lot of information about ourselves. And one of the values of paying attention to breathing is the way in which we learn about ourselves. Because almost any tendency of mind that we have any emotion mood, concern to the mind we have, it's translated into how we breathe, and the unless your breath is really contracted to begin with, if you have if you're really contracted and your breath is tense and your chest or your belly is held in, then there's no room to have any more effect than your breath. And so then you won't be much more but when your breath is relaxed and fluid, then you can watch your breathing and see how it changes. Sometimes pretty manually depending on what's going on around you, and we see that right if suddenly you walk if you walk down the street and then suddenly you pick up your pace and walk faster, your breathing correspondingly changes. And if you come to a stop for, you know, red light, you know, perhaps the breathing changes again, but it also the breath is affected by our emotions. I found it kind of fun to sometimes watch my breathing and my emotion but my breathing when I'm driving on the freeway and see the subtle changes that go on, depending on what goes on around me with the traffic and unless I constantly pay consciously pay attention to the breath, I will notice a subtle changes, but I can see how those changes are connected to the subtle emotions that going on. A police car pulls up behind me and I don't know about you, but it affects me. You know, even if I'm innocent you know, I haven't had an effect and I wake up Oh what you know, I look around and make sure that and I can fix my breathing. Or someone pulls up a little bit too fast in front of me, you know, cuts me off and affects my breathing. There's a whole series of things that goes on there. We subtle, but sometimes our life is not so subtle, like just do what in the freeway sometimes there's big things that goes on. And it's hard sometimes to notice how we're feeling even emotionally, if we're preoccupied with something. I've certainly been in situations where I'm so concerned with the outcome and getting my way that I haven't noticed how I'm actually feeling and sometimes How am I feeling is not helpful for the situation. And I'm starting getting irritated or annoyed or angry. And I don't know that because I'm so focused on getting my way and whatever it needs to happen. But I've learned that by making a habit of going back to my body and paying attention to my breathing, the breathing and what goes on my body can sometimes guide me or tell me what the emotion is going on. When I feel the breathing contracted and held in some way, that's usually indication for me to stop and pay more careful attention. If my belly is held in, that's sometimes indication for to relax my belly. And when I relaxed my belly, then I become aware of what I was feeling in a way that it was not aware. You know, when I was kind of caught up in something and there's sometimes chronically held emotions or attitudes about life that are held in the way we breathe, some people breathe in for your whole lifetime in certain ways. Remember, the first time I really saw this clearly was, um, I was teaching a retreat in it was a rented facilities in a Catholic convent. And, and it was kind of interesting at the opening of the

of the very opening evening of the retreat. There were some nuns In the convent, you were kind of welcoming us and showing us how to use the rooms and stuff and, and so they were nice people and she was kind of really friendly and relaxed with us. And, and then the retreat started coming in. And this one woman in her 60s, walked into the room, you know, wearing ordinary lay clothes. And she kind of walked in. And when she walked into the room, the two nuns who were talking with us stood at attention. Like it was a military. It was quite something you don't like. And what it turned out was that the woman who came in was what had been the sister and honestly for many years, in fact, was one of the

most senior sisters or maybe was Mother Superior for a while. But then, some years earlier, had left the order and, and went on to study psychology and was a therapist. But when she came back to do the meditation retreat with us, the nuns were And I guess you know, she was I don't know what kind of person she was, but the kind of person that you want to stand at attention for. And I'm sure that the women that attention, their breathing changed. But what happened was in the course of the retreat, the Mother Superior, talked about having some breathing issues. And she kept wanting to yawn during meditation a lot. And so I thought, well, let me have her do a guided meditation or under breathing, and let's see what happens when we can uncover as we do this. And so I had her close her eyes and I was just kind of getting started with, you know, getting her relax a little bit so we could explore what was going on under the breathing. So I told her, relax your belly. And she immediately burst into tears. And what you said was that she realized then, that she had been told as a young girl back in the Wayback when, that as a woman, she was always was to hold a pool holder stomach in, and she'd internalize that. And it spent a lifetime holding her belly. And, and, and it was, you know, quite a quite an effect for her to actually be given the instruction to relax your belly. No one ever told her that. And so, tears came pouring. So the way you know the lifetime of holding, because sometimes people have a lifetime of attitudes, people have a lifetime attitude of fear or apprehension that the anxiety they carry with them. And that gets translated into ways that we breed. People have a lifetime of a conceit of holding themselves up in a certain way. And that translates into their posture, which translates into their breath. So as we begin paying attention to the breath, there's a whole world of things that begins to open up and, and the breath is stabilizing, it's relaxing, but it also given us a lot of information about ourselves. And then information is very important, at least for a mindfulness teacher. Tradition, because we're trying to understand how we operate. So we can let go of ways that we operate, which are not helpful for us, and can operate in ways or behave in ways that are useful for us. And so as we learn, you know, I'm holding on to this or I'm, I'm always anxious, or I'm always this way, or we see we react to situations, and we can see how they how they react, then we can decide is this useful to stay this way? Stay tense, or should I relax? And so then, hopefully, you understand it's helpful to relax. And so then you begin the process of maybe relaxing this focus on the breath and paying attention to breath is so significantly so incredibly helpful that there's a story in this book, The monastery within so hopefully, you allow me to breathe. scholar came to the Ibis and explained I've spent A lifetime studying Buddhism. And it has not helped me much. What am I missing? What is it I need to understand? To prepare the scholar for her answer the episode silent for a while that she said, breathe in, breathe in an easy and relaxed way. And then study what causes you to lose that ease. Everything you really need to know about Buddhism will be found in that investigation.

That's quite something right? So the instructions first, breathe in an easy and relaxed way. So that takes maybe takes a while to find that. But then pay very careful attention to what causes you to lose that relaxed breath. And when you when you notice what when you notice how the expert is lost, pay attention to what just happened. Go back and study that. And here it says that everything you need to know about Buddhism org found in that investigation, because what you'll discover is how you relate to the world. And if you understand really well how you relate to your world, Buddhism is about freeing that relationship. So you don't relate to the world in a way that causes suffering that involves attachment and clinging. And so the breath is a window back into one of the windows back into understanding how you're relating to the world. And then you can do a very interesting thing, I think. And that is if you notice that your breath has gotten constricted or tight, you lost your relaxed breath. You can look and see is this really, you know, is it what is this really worth it? Sometimes maybe it is maybe, you know, maybe maybe it's your breath. The breath is speeded up because you've, you're exercising at the gym. That's okay. But, but there are times you know, if you're at a meeting or just around your house and you're trying to do a lot of cleaning and you get really greedy or anxious about getting as much done as possible as quickly as you can. Or you have something that you enjoy doing. But you have other

responsibilities. So you hold on to what you enjoy doing, but you feel the holding on to it also affects your breathing. So there's many ways in which our breath is affected. And then if you're not willing to go back to a relaxed breath, then the question is that then debate with yourself. Start start looking more deeply into what are the beliefs that you operate by that tell you that it's okay to sacrifice to relax, breath. Do you have beliefs and probably you do if you're not willing to relax? Oh, I have a lot to do. It's more important to get all these things done, than it is to relax it It's a frightening world. And it's more important to stay tense and on alert than it is to relax. So, you know, what are the beliefs that go on? Oh, it doesn't matter. That's another one people have sometimes, oh, it's just a little bit of tension. It doesn't really matter. You know, it's this breath being, you know, tension. You know, it's, that's not the real spiritual life is, you know, so one of the great ones is, I think, you know, I've done this you know, you're going to come to IMC, to meditate so you can relax and tune into your breath and have a relaxed mood breath. And what you're willing to tense up to get here. I'm late, I gotta get my car. I gotta hurry here. You know, you know? Why? mean? Why 10 sucks. You can come. Maybe that's why you need it. You need to tense up so you can come someplace where you can relax, right? I would suggest relax before you come. You know at that, you know, even if it means coming late you know you're we're set up, we don't you know, we prefer people don't come late, but we're intentionally set up here so that it's okay for people to come late because we realize people have complicated lives in an urban setting. And everywhere people feel welcome and they come. So, you know, I'd rather you have came with a relaxed breath, then came all tense on time. So what are the beliefs that operate is a very interesting one, look at your beliefs. What are the interesting beliefs? You know, it has to do with getting a lot of things done. And so, you know, maybe if you keep coming late time, see, because I'm guilty, it's okay. As long as you keep your breath relaxed. You know, if you keep doing it, then you might want to look back further in time, and say, Well, why am I keep coming back? It's because you have all this greed to do a lot of things. You know, you know, maybe Sunday writes me this Sunday paper and I'm gonna read as much of the Sunday paper as I can. And then you have to rush here not have to rush, I can just come late, maybe have to look at the holding on the attachment small maybe as it is to, you know, try to do a lot of things.

What I'm trying to point out is that the breath is a source of a lot of information. And we can engage in the breath and tap into the information that's there and engage with it in very creative ways in interesting ways. One of the pieces of information from focusing on the breath, at some point is to notice who it is that's noticing the breath, especially in meditation, to notice what kind of attention you use to pay attention to rap. So in the first task is just to Start stabilizing the attention on the breath, and find yourself getting concentrated in the breath. So you're here over time. But as you kind of able to stay with breath longer and longer, then at some point, the attention can turn around and you look at how are you paying attention to the breath. So some people pay attention to the breath with tremendous striving, ferocity, I've known people who when they come back to the breath, they don't just come back quietly and matter of factly they pounce back to the breath. They take they decided to shoot I'm doing the wrong thing again, wandered off, and the jerk that poor mind back, come back. And you know, it's kind of sad in there. And so but but but if you stop and look at and some people never occurred to them to look at how they pay attention to the breath, because the instruction is pay attention to the breath and but so if you turn around and look and say, how have you realized, wow, it's it's a struggle in there, there's all this kind of violent the way I do it, or other people find that, that, you know, there's hardly you know that getting back to the breath is a good idea and, you know, get to it at some point and, you know, it's Oh yeah, I know it's important and you know, but you know you want to make to have you don't want to make too much effort and misleading because you know, I get, I get 10 might get tense and you're supposed to get tense. I'll get around to it tomorrow. So, you know, it's kind of a laziness or kind of a little bit too, you know, you know, or sometimes there's fear connected with even something like paying attention to the present, present moment or paying attention to the breath.

And one of the reasons why there's sometimes fear connected to the breathing is that we hope some people hold their breath as a way of protecting themselves. An interesting phenomena. I've seen a few people. Some people are not willing to breathe out all the way. They start breathing out and then they interrupt the end of the outbreath by breathing in, because breathing out all the way, there's a kind of letting go of control at the end of the out breath. And letting go of control is frightening for some people. And so they're letting go of control, it gets translated into how they breathe. And so

so then if you pay attention to how you breathe, how you pay attention, you see that in in somehow in the attention in the breath is attend, try to control your situation. So this control going on. And it's not uncommon for people to come to me and say, I'm troubled by controlling my breath. I'm the one who's controlling my breath, and it feels very uncomfortable. The general approach in our mindfulness tradition is to encourage people not to worry about that. If you're controlling your breath, you're not supposed to control it. If you control it intentionally, you know, like you do yoga, breathing in our tradition, we encourage you to stop doing that just stop. But some people control their breath kind of unconsciously, they can't stop doing it. If that's the case, we encourage you to relax. It's really okay. Because the task in mindfulness meditation is the first task is to notice what is not to make it different. So if you if you ever control breath, your task is to become the world connoisseur of what it's like to have a control breath. get interested, get curious, start exploring all the ins and outs all the different places in your body that are affected by the control how your control is happening, what gets held, what gets tight. What are the emotions, what is the tendency of the mind, get really curious. And that'll do two things. Number of things. One thing it does is it frees you from being anxious about the control because anxiety about control sometimes is the very thing that keeps fueling the control. So if you stop being anxious, relax becomes easier. The second is that as you begin curious and bring investigation into the controlness of the breath, you're less and less energy is going into the control and more energy is going into the investigation. And so the control begins to relax itself. The other is that as you understand more of the details, what's going on with their control, you might see what you can do to relax and let go. That's one of the reasons why you can't look let go of the controls because you don't really see the details of actually what's how its operating. So we turn back sometimes are noticing what we bring with us as we pay attention. So there could be there can be fear, that's there and that fear can translate into breathing. There can be strong desire, some people you know, sit down to meditate, and they're really trying to get someplace in their meditation. There's nothing wrong to want to get someplace in meditation in some easy, open handed way. But there's a lot of meditators, I bet there's meditators in this room, even who have tied themselves in knots, trying to attain something, get something, strive, push. And one of the great headaches for meditators is to have a really beautiful, deep meditation experience. like wow, that was great. And then try to recreate it. Come back the next time and I'm going to do it again. And they try and they try and push, you know, to try and make it happen. And so there's desire expectation, striving, that's into how we're paying attention. So to turn to is to stabilize the attention on breath meditation, and then at some point, turn the attention around to notice the qualities of that attention itself. What's there with the attention. Because the attention somewhat stable, there might be possible to more likely have a chance to notice something, it's usually very subtle, which is the quality of attention itself. And the fact that attention the quality of attention is subtle, doesn't mean that it's insignificant. It's probably one of the most most these these significant aspects of our life. The kind of fundamental operating principles of our life that would holds our life together and motivates or drives it is as root, it's probably very closely connected to the attitudes associated with how we pay attention itself. And generally, there's always an attitude and how we pay attention. There's an approach there's a something we're trying to do. And it's kind of akin to, maybe you've seen someone who has been really afraid, maybe like, you know, like a deer trapped in the headlights kind of thing. You can see it in their eyes, and you see that every Where they're looking, they're looking with fear. You can see it's there, you know, it's kind of dramatic there. And it can be that way with our attention as well. The attention

itself can be infused with some kind of attitude. And even if we have overriding attitudes, like, you know, suddenly we're when the California Lottery and we're elated, or you know, or we're, you know, we get fired from a job and we're sad or angry.

Those are kind of momentary, or they're kind of things that arise and pass but then there's a kind of a constant background attitude that is there as well. And sometimes it's about to in meditation where you get quiet and quiet and quiet enough that you can see the background attitude and how it operates. And then to create the kind of let go of what's not helpful and perhaps and maintain what is helpful with that.

One of the things that we see as we focus on the breathing and look back at the attitude or how we hold how we're paying attention, is we can see how much self there is operating in it. How much there's me myself in mind, I'm the one who's having the experience. I'm the one who's doing the breath meditation. I'm the one who's in charge, I'm the one who has to have an experience. I'm the one who, you know, whatever. And one of the possibilities as we tune into the breath, meditation, the constancy of the rhythm of it, getting into the rhythm, and the regularity of it, is to begin losing our self consciousness. And to be able to tune into the breath and be with a breath without any sense of eye with it. And that's a beautiful thing, because the sense the active sense of eye is a form of suffering. Or as I like to call it, someone that once asked me, What is that what what it was What is the what is the i in Buddhism? The self in Buddhism? And I said it's when to drag because it just slows you down, you know to operate by it's like sticking out your hand out the window or something with a car.

Suzuki Roshi, in his book said, My beginner's mind wrote, when we practice 1000, zen meditation, when we practice zazen, our mind always follows our breathing. When we inhale, the air comes into the inner world. When we exhale, the air goes out to the outer world. The inner world is limitless. And the outer world is also limitless. We say inner world Are outerworld but actually there is only one whole world. In this limitless world. Our throat is like a swinging door. The air comes in and goes out like someone passing through a swinging door. If you think I breed, the AI is extra, there is no you to say I, what we call AI is just a swinging door, which moves when we inhale and when we exhale, it just moves that is all. When your mind is pure and calm enough to follow this movement. There is nothing no i no world, no mind nor body, just a swinging door. So as we learn this whole territory of breath, staying with the breath, getting stabilized and focusing and we begin clarifying now understanding our inner life and deeper and deeper ways. And then we can learn to simplify it and relax it and let it become more peaceful and more peaceful. And as becomes more peaceful and restful, all the extra things we do in our mind can settle away. And I'm making my making is really extra, more often more often than not, and then to have a palpable visceral experience of peace of to the Gershman because limitless beingness without the eye making mimicking a mind making operating shows us a possibility that very few people know about if we don't know that's possible to live without I'm making me making my making, then we're going to hold on to I'm making me making in mind making tenaciously but if we know that it's an alternative, then we might be willing more often out Life when it's appropriate to let go of all that, and to be present in our life, without needing to have a self operating, just be present in this limitless life in this open boundless life in this place where perhaps we can meet each other as human beings who just share the spirit of breath the spirits are so breath. Together, we share an open mind together, we share a limitless boundless heart together in the same place at the same time. It's a beautiful thing. I hope that the world can be made up of many breathing traditions and that we will all share it. So those are a few thoughts about breathing. And we have five minutes if any of you would like to ask a question or make a comment or protest Yes, please.

When are we

talking about becoming a connoisseur of your net case control breathing? How is that different from analysis? In other words, we get the instruction not to try and analyze. But how is that different?

You know, then I don't think there's a sharp line between between it. So it's more like what the emphasis. So in mindfulness, the investigation of mindfulness is about what's going on in the present moment. I think and analysis, more often than not, the tendency is to go back in time to understand the causes and conditions. So but here, we're innocent. Getting what's here now. And, and we're not. In addition to that, though, we're not doing a lot of analytical thinking about it sounds like we're going in there and kind of thinking our way and analyzing assist. There might be a, there's a little bit of that going on and might be a little bit kind of, say, you know, I feel about I'm controlling my breath. And so there might be a very simple thought that says, it seems like it's happening mostly with a lot of tightness in my chest. Let me go and, and feel that tightness in a deeper way. So it's a very simple rudimentary thoughts, it may feel it. And so and then you go in and you feel and sense as a sensual experience, sensory experience, that tightness and you're hanging out and feel and get to know it really well what it's like, but you don't start analyzing which muscles are operating and good at getting that me book and, you know, I tried to undo it, you know, it's not that kind of analysis. So it's, I think of as mindfulness investigation. A lot of it has to do with feeling and sense of sensing, what's going on. And then deeper, deeper, like

you said something last week, and it reminded me It brought it up today, that distinction between when you said it's good to be interested in something, and the distinction between commitment and attachment. You mentioned it and wondered if you could elaborate

on it. Different commitment and attachment. Attachment means we're clinging to something, commitments means that we're, we're intent on it, and we're going to keep doing it. But you can do that without attachment. So it's like a relationship, but many people will make commitments in their relationships and all kinds. And it's important then to maintain those commitments. And that's possible to maintain them without attachment. It's possible to maintain with attachments But, but it means you keep coming back. And you keep that as a guideline of your behavior and what you're going to do, and you stay true to that. The type of commitment to meditation practice every morning, for example, is a beautiful thing to do. It means that no matter what else is going on your set your intent, you've resolved, that this is what you're going to do. But you pay enough attention to notice when you get attached to that, so you don't get attached to a claim or get contracted. And if something really happens, it becomes impossible for you to follow through in your commitment. You know, you gave it your best try, but the house is burning. So, you know, you know, this is not the time to meditate. So you're relaxed about that. Whereas if you're attached to it, you know, maybe your house is not burning, and maybe you know how many houses down the street. There's neighbors you probably get up and do something right. But if it's two blocks away, three blocks away. You know, what point do you This is my practice Just meditation. I can't go look. Yes.

This is a comment really.

Recently on the computer, I came across one of the TED Talks by a woman whose first name I don't remember her last name was Taylor, I believe. She was a neuro psychologist at Harvard. She had a brain tumor in her left side of her brain. I don't know if you're familiar with this. I

haven't read her book. She has a best selling book. Yeah, it's

basically a description of that. And the fascinating thing for me is she went through a process to brain tumor stroking her left side of her brain, which basically took her 10 years to recover from enjoying this process, especially during the time she was observing herself as a scientist

would.

And she completely lost the ability she lost. her sense of self complete your sense of I completely during this period. And I don't know if it's the same thing that you're talking about, but it seems by her description, to The same for this one, she went through this period of a stroke, she completely lost her boundaries between herself and everything around her. She lost her sense of eye and with a very wonderful period for her that she's recovered, she felt she had the ability to go back and forth between these two states. And contest you in a sense if that's the same thing you're talking about when you talk about this? No, I

for no self.

Yeah, I think I feel quite qualified to refer to how she talks about in the books as I haven't read it. But the one of the lessons from a book like that an experience like that, is that the process of selfing process of identifying yourself or even the process of seeing something as mine like they say, they even even look at your hand and say, This is my hand as innocent and obvious that is require a certain kind of neurological functioning to happen and, and people whose certain have certain kind of damage in their brain can look with their hand and they don't see it as their hand. It's kind of bizarre for those of us who seems obvious, right? But it's still in neurological functioning. And so if it's a functioning some of that functioning, you know, in terms of its being a mental functioning, it can, it's possible to relax it. And so it's and that means it's optional. And so if it's optional, then it becomes it belongs to the area of life where we could, in theory, have some monitor ourselves and have some choice about what we pick up and what we don't pick up. So they have the ability to go into a deep state of peace where the AI disappears and have that functioning go away, is beautiful in its own right. It's beautiful, it's deep. Some people add a lot of metaphysical religious ideas on top of that, I mean, someone with a Cosmos of being someone with God, it means to do whatever. But you know, in Buddhism, we tend to keep it really simple just is the piece where the self is let go of it. We're not to add Anything make more complicated. But then and then we see, as I said earlier See, it's, it's possible to upgrade without that sense of self, as the self comes back in. We don't want to get attached to that state, we don't want to go around, I don't think Buddhists want to go around in some kind of ethereal space of just kind of like, you know, self here. And you know, just, you know, that's not useful anybody really. But what it allows us to do is to be much more, have much more choice and responsibility for how we pick up the self, we pick it up again, we see that it's a functioning and it's a choice. There's an optionality in it, and it creativity in it. And so we can then pick it up and hold it more likely be more creative and how we use it. We know when it's useful to use and when it's not to use and so we're really much more willing to fluid with it. And we see that some that was pretty obvious things like if someone has a role, you know, And they try to act in the world from that role when it's no longer appropriate, then they're attached to a certain idea of self. And, and so that the experience of going into meditation, being able to put all that self thing to rest gives us it kind of it kind of lubricates or loosens up the apparatus of selfing, which for many people has gotten frozen or stuck. And, and so and so that fluidity went back and forth. I'm glad she talks about having the ability to go back and forth. Because I think that's already in mature Buddhist spirituality. That's we want to come to is that ability not to be sucked in one way or the other. Okay, so breathe Thank you.