

2011-03-27 The Process of Awakening Every Day

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SPEAKERS

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So, today is this week is one of those weeks where I teach. I'm teaching retreat in IMC retreat at hidden villa. And it ends this morning. So it means that as soon as I finish the talk, I pretty much have to leave to get to the hidden Villa to close the retreat. And they don't really kind of awkward for them to have to wait. They're ready to go. And what I thought I'd do this morning is to share a theme from the retreat. So, to bring maybe a little bit of the retreat to all of you. The overall overarching theme of the retreat that Andrea Fella and I both two teachers of retreat were touching in on is the idea of awakening. And today I'd like to mention a little bit about that and then Go through the seven factors of awakening, a very important list of qualities of mind that come into play with practice, but to do so in a little different way than usual.

So, awakening is a translation of the word Bodhi. And it's has often been used in Buddhism to represent the full potential or possibility of freedom, the bration of enlightenment. And because it's kind of represents the ultimate goal of Buddhism, Buddhists will invest a lot of value into this awakening. And so and with that goes a lot of their ideals and idealism and, and so it's often then becomes this great thing. Far out in the distance are some great attainment that is maybe sometimes it's become even otherworldly. It's not something you maintain here only the really great people, the people who really great spiritual depths, and have experiences of awakening and, and, you know, US poor mortals, you know, you know, we can aspire to it, but it's way beyond anything that we can relate to. And there's a whole other way of approaching awakening or approaching Buddhism in general. And that is to not see Buddhist teachings as pointing to something different from what you already know. But in fact, pointing to something you already know, but maybe haven't recognized. So well. And I think whenever you hear Buddhist teachings, a useful approach to take is to assume you already know it. And then in assuming you already know it, look and say, how would how in my life have I experienced this? How do I know this in my life? And, and so with both awakening and the seven factors of awakening I suspect that there are things that you're already familiar with to some degree and some that you can recognize in your life. And so, when I go through this, I hope that that will be the case. Because the concept of awakening has such a broad is such a broad, big ideal in Buddhism. It has many connotations that people have too many meanings or associations people have with it. And one associations that I have with it is ordinary waking up. And if you, I hope that some of you maybe once in your life, have had a really refreshing nap and woke up from that nap, maybe in a sunlight room. It was very peaceful. The light was kind of luminous and clear and still, or something like that. Then you but you woke up The feeling of being refreshed from your nap of being really clear, stood out that stood out and highlight there was this feeling of being awake in a wonderful way that you weren't hyped up. But you also

weren't too lethargic or tired. There was this kind of clarity and unsteadiness that felt very satisfying, so satisfying that as you were looking around the room, you know, you could see things in the room. But the clarity of the seeing of the clarity without knowing mind the awake mind while I'm awake, you know, it's different. What I was before stands out, it's known. The state of the mind is known to some degree. Just like if you drive around with a dirty windshield for a long time and hardly know it, and someone cleans the windshield and suddenly, you know, the windshield is clean, Isn't this great? And then after a while you forget about it because you're focusing in the road hope. But, but you know, the clarity stands out so in that, waking up from a nap kind of the best kind of best kind of waking up we could have, there are some qualities of mine that we can maybe identify. One is, there's a clear sense of presence of being here. Because, you know, you know, the first moments of waking up, you look around, you're here you don't really feel even just need to get out of bed or need to do anything. or not do anything just there kind of feeling of content and presence is really there in the room. And that sense of being here in a strong way. doesn't make you feel like it's boring to be in your old bedroom. It just introduced you feel like it's kind of special. You see the light coming in through the window, you see the curtains, you see, whatever and, and it just the sense of being there is so strong. They there might also be a little bit of interest or curiosity. You look around you look at things in a fresh way. Even though the things you've seen many times before, in that awake state, you can't just content a look more carefully with light coming through the window. What's that? Like?

Maybe you get fascinated by all the dust in your house. That was always there, but now you see it dancing in the in this sun rays, or are you going to look at the curtains maybe blowing in the wind or something or just maybe just looking at the wall on the wall. So I've always gotten interested. But there's a kind of kind of very quiet, they're peaceful kind of interesting things that goes on maybe another thing is that there's a certain kind of energy and alertness of vitality that is almost invisible. If it wasn't if you weren't aware of the contrast of it, about how thought tired and lethargic you were before. You kind of like energized but it's not so much energized that you feel like you said earlier hyped up, but just like this clarity, that's there. There's perhaps a certain kind of sense of well being, and contentment or joy or satisfaction just feel satisfying. It feels kind of a kind of joy or happiness and just laying there and being there. being there with the mind alert and clear and seeing it just kind of kind of satisfying state. There might be where that you're calm, you're tranquil, you're pretty, pretty relaxed, just being there relaxed. Perhaps the mind has a capacity of being steady. You know, as you lay there in your bed and you look at the curtain swaying back and forth. You can hold your mind steady and just look at that in the steady clarity. You're not scattered or pulled this way and that by a lot of different thoughts and concerns, and there's a stability, perhaps, and then perhaps there's a sense of equanimity, or ease, where different things can happen and you don't get frazzled by them. You don't get upset by them in a way Maybe normally you would, perhaps you hear your kids fighting downstairs, as they often do. And, you know, it's like, oh, they're their kids again, rather than getting pulled into that world of fighting and I have to do something and fix it or this is terrible, I should divorce them or something, then you know, you use this ease, you know, just Oh, it's okay. Or all kinds of variety of things gonna might happen and you can just take it in, you're aware of it, but you're not get frazzled or reactive to it. So what I've done now is going through these seven factors of awakening. So there's strong sense of presence is mindfulness. The strong sense of interest is the factor of investigation. The strong the factor of energy is that kind of energy or vitality that's their, the factor of joy is that sense of well being or Happiness or satisfaction is there in this wakeful state. The factor of tranquility is the relaxation that's there. The factor of concentration is the stability of steadiness that's there of the mind. And the equanimity is the factor of equanimity of the non reactivity of, of being present and not reacting to things. So, I hope that little exercise, you could maybe think back and say, Oh, yeah, I've had a little bit of that I know what that is. I know what that those experiences are like, I've had little tastes of that here and there. And, and so in that, in recognizing it, it's already something you've experienced, then we can appreciate it. Buddhism is not pointing to something that's radically different, but rather it's pointing to a growth and fulfillment,

the growth and filling out of that, so becomes a bigger part of our life. So it expands out into our life. And becomes a regular part of it becomes a strong part of our life. So that that part that part of our life becomes something that supports us as we go through our life to someone becomes so called enlightened is someone who has taken these ordinary factors and develop them so strongly that they're resting in them. They're not something that touched him, you know, because they had a good nap. But they're there on a regular basis, and they feel that close at hand. So these seven factors of awakening are ordinary things ordinary that are developed to the great their full potential. So I'd like to offer you seven little practices, one for each of the factors of awakening that have to do with a word like a mental note, a label, but kind of a word that evokes each one. And these are the North American factors of awakening.

So the factor of mindfulness can perhaps be found at times, with the simple word. Saying here, just here, H e, r e. And I find this very helpful for me in my practice. There are times when I sit down my mind wanders a lot, it's kind of stirred up or something restless. And it's hard for my mind to be present. And so, what I find, what I find very useful then, is I say to myself, the word here, and it's a very generous kind of here. It's not like you know, commanding a dog here. It's more like this wonderful kind of connotation of or way of the association with here is the way you would maybe hand something to someone Maybe a gift or something and you say here, or you're going to help someone who's fallen in your or unsteady you give them your hand and say here, it's a kind of act of generosity here. Here's something. Or for me, that sense of here is a sense of, of being open possibility of here. Just this, this this moment right here. Not, I don't, I'm not looking for something different. I'm not trying to make it different. I'm not resisting or fighting anything. I'm waking up to what's here. And so when my mind is distracted, or restless, here is a mind that's distracted. It's not like saying it should be any different. What you're saying here, this is what is here. And here is a mind that's restless. And if I'm lucky, I can stay here for a second or two. And the mind wanders off and I do it again here. And I find if I keep doing that, here Then it's much more peaceful than trying to fight against or overcome in my restlessness, it kind of creates a lot of spaciousness or openness or that recognizes what is. And in recognizing what is be at ease with it, being met struggling with it. So just here, whatever it might be, I find that very generous and gracious way of being mindful. And so that's one practice of mindfulness is just to say the word here find yourself here for the practice of investigation they word is what what is this now that I'm here? What is this and so you know, once what you know to be curious, interested, what's going on here? What's actually happening here. Kind of a simple again, open to possibility. Open handed, open minded. Not to impose bias or pre existing existing ideas or, but rather, what is this? If I allow the experience to reveal itself to me, as opposed to impose myself on the experience with my expectations and demands, what it gets revealed? And this is a very important issue because many times people come to meditation practice or mindfulness practice, with all kinds of preconceived agendas, ideas, about what they're supposed to be experiencing, and what's supposed to be what's supposed to be occurring. And it's much better to, to let reality show you what you need to know. Genuinely reality has a much better idea of what you need to know than you do. And so, in this, I say, what, what is this now that I'm here, what? What's happening so, if my mind is distracted, What What is this distracted mind? And I might feel the energy of it, I might feel the pull and pushes of it, I might feel the particular concerns I have. There's already things I might notice, you know, what, what is this? What? And then it's really a kind of the essential the past in the past and the question, what is this? And then we do it again, what is this? And each time is kind of meant to be kind of fresh. What is this? What's going on here? What is this now? And it's very powerful to bring this investigation to our experience, because it generally goes against or as an alternative to how the mind is usually operating. Where it's operating on its you know, its ideas of they already know, I already know what's true. I already know what's supposed to be happening, where I'm already judging it. I don't need to know any better. I already decided

you know, it's bad or whatever. But, but to investigate also, to the degree to which mine is preoccupied and caught up in things, what breaks through the preoccupation?

And I like to think of investigation as, as a very radical thing to do. It's kind of like if you have an ecosystem. And as you introduce a new species into the ecosystem, the whole ecosystem adjusts accordingly. If you bring investigation into your experience, your whole psychological ecosystem has to change will adjust. If you if you only stay with business as usual, caught up and with your usual way of being caught and things, then business as usual. But if you say what is going on here, what's going on right now? What's going on with me that I'm so upset with my boss? What's you know, what's going on here that this person who's so upset with me? What's going on here? that that kind of Just helps us kind of step out of the fray, step out of the being caught or a meshed in situation, and gives us a chance to see more clearly, but also gives us a chance to be a little bit free from what we're studying, what we're looking at what we're involved in. Investigation helps us to see clearly and helps us to step out away from so we're not diminished. So the simple question What? So first, it's here, and once we're here, we can ask the question what and then we find something. There's a what? So then there's the next step is the factor of energy, or effort, and a nice word I'd like to offer you for that. Is this, this and what I, what I associated with this, once I know something, then this means here, this is what I'll connect to. This is what I'll get to know better than is what I feel and engage and sensing and invite in and experience more fully. So if I'm agitated or tired, then this agitation What does it feel like? Where does it Where do I feel at my body? In my mind in my heart? What's this like? So kind of turning towards an entering into the experience more fully, this? So for me, there were this has kind of energy to it. This is not a holding back. It's not resisting. It's this here, here. This this thing here. This engagement here. What? This then there's the next factor is joy. And for joy, the word is yes. Yes. So now you know what this is. Then you can say yes to it or not. You know, necessarily approving everything but the yes of Yes, it's good to connect. It's good to know it's good to let things reveal himself. It's satisfying to be present. It's satisfying type of practice that I can engage in. It's a satisfying to know that there's a path here that can help me be free and not caught by what's going on. And it's so this Yes, here it is. Here I am. Here. I'm engaged. Yes. So what is it like to say yes to everything? Yes. Your knee hurts in meditation. No, no. Not that. But you Oh, they need x Yes. Not to not to approve they need the hurting. But yes, hear this. Let me connect with this. Let me feel that me engage in it as opposed to resist it or get angry. Yes. So this you know, represents the joy factor and many it's a range of what can be joyful or satisfying. But this word Yes. Can you say yes to your experience? Then the tranquility factor has another wonderful word. Relax. Just relax. So relax. I guess there's other wonderful words sorry. It's like chill.

Relax, take it easy. Take a deep breath relax.

In ancient India and India, they had all these mantras and the most famous one that we know i think is home. But the one Montreux is just Ah, It's my favorite one. No, what a great mantra. So relax. So, say yes, be present, be here. And then relax. Soften your muscles. Soften your shoulders, soften your belly, soften the muscles of your face, relax your breathing, soften your your brain, your mind, relaxed, open up. most things in life that are important, I think can be better done if you're relaxed than if you tense up no matter how important it is. And sometimes we think that nor take care of important things we have to tense up properly. But I think it's actually relaxed, it works better. So then the factor of concentration. I couldn't quite decide what the best word for that But I decided that I would call it steady. Steady yourself here. stabilize yourself here. Steady. So here you are here. What this? Yes, relax with what's here. And then steady yourself with what's here. Steady, steady yourself. Don't be fighting it or resisting it. Don't be wobbly. Don't be agitated, don't be kind of scattered. Don't be jumping around a lot. It's that steady yourself with as experienced steady yourself. And there's, you know, lots of situations in life where in

order to do the task, well, we have to steady ourselves. And so we will actually take a breath and plant their feet on the ground and they steady themselves and have this kind of focus to do that activity. And then we come to the last factor of awakening. Which is equanimity. And here we come to the great American mantra. The mantra that was invented in Boston. And it's one of America's great contributions to the world. Through the English language, and it's spread, it's all over now. It's you know, and you you use this word all day long. Those of you on computer especially, because it's the wonderful word and wonderful mantra and the mantra we, we tell little children when they're upset or frightened or something. It's a great powerful, all pervading divine brace. It's okay. Okay, it's okay. It's a powerful word I can see a powerful it's I think when you see it with small children. When you can't really explain to small kid two year old, you know, the whole situation and you can't go and tell but you shouldn't be upset, you know, stop being upset. You know, the kid is going to be more upset and feel something's wrong with them. You show the kid, they're safe, it's okay. You're there with them your present. And it's okay. It's a very vague word. In some sense. It's okay. You know, it's not okay that they, you know, scrape themselves, but it's okay, now I'm here with you. Things are okay. And that okayness, I think is one of the ways of helping with equanimity to be willing to be present, without getting riled by things without being caught by things without needing it to be different.

So in North America, maybe we can begin to wake up with these seven words. Hear what in this Yes. Relax steady and okay. So work in America. So that's what I had in mind for today. So I hope you all wake up or wake up more than you already are. So thank you and so please stay for the potluck and if even if you're not staying, you know if you're new, please Introduce yourself to someone it's raining you know quite a bit earlier than usual today. So it might be nice for you to turn near some near near near someone sitting next to you and saying hello, before you go so people meet each other and have more community here. So, thank you