

2011-12-05 Developing Concentration

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SPEAKERS

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So Good evening, everyone. And can you hear okay?

This evening, I wanted to talk a little bit about one of the most basic elements of meditation practice. It's maybe it's so basic that maybe gets overlooked. It's important role. And it said it's a very important term or factor of mind or activity of mind for developing, concentration or focus or steadiness or unification of mind gathering mind together. And the term in ancient Buddhist language of Pali is the Chara and in English is sometimes translated as sustained application of attention or sustained application of thought. And it's usually paired with another activity of the mind that's called the Taka, which is then translate into English as the initial application of mind the initial application of attention. So it's the initial application and the sustained application of attention. And so these are in, in certain meditation circles, these are very important technical terms. So I'm sure you're already bored by these terms, and what it has to do with is if you're going to meditate in such a way that you're actually going to choose to pay attention to something like say you're going to pay attention to your breath. There has to be somehow or other you at some point Turning of the mind of attention to focus on this. And then, and then you have to sustain the focus on the breath. So you have to somehow the mind wanders off and you're off someplace else, then you bring the mind back to the breath, then you have to stay there. So the bring the mind back and placing the mind on something attention on something is the initial application. The sustained application is in staying there sustaining that attention. So it's not always so easy then to give you a maybe a non meditation example. Many years ago, my wife and I were given tickets to this Symphony. And it's kind of rare. I haven't gone to Symphony very much in my life. But everywhere, that's San Francisco Symphony, and we had this good seats, looking down at the orchestra playing. And I could certainly say to myself, Gail not pay attention to the music. But my mind was it was so novel to be there that my mind spent its time looking at down into the orchestra pit orchestra, and thinking about and analyzing and making comments about what I saw about and what I was actually seeing, so much so that I wasn't really listening to the music. And it took me a while to kind of realize that actually, I was much more interested in the trombone players and what they were doing and, you know, watching the different you know, what was going on with the violin players and you know, why those drum drummers weren't doing anything and what they were doing when they don't do anything. And, and so, but I after a while, I realized I'd come to listen to the music. And so I try to listen to the music and my mind since I was looking at the orchestra, my mind would get pulled away into this commentaries world of analyzing what was there. Until finally, I said, you know, this is really not working so well. I'm here for the music. So I close my eyes. And with my eyes closed, only then can I sustain the attention of the music, take it in and enjoy it. And I did that for the most of the first half. Then we had an intermission, and then we came back. And when I came back, my mind was settled enough calm enough that the mind wasn't inclined to get caught up in thinking anymore and analyzing what's going on. I was just going to settle and quiet and then I could watch the orchestra playing the music and listen

at the same time. But I think when I first came out with my mind was so busy or something that just kind of activated that, you know, got involved with what I saw.

So some meditators are very good. At the first of these two factors, they'd be Taka, which is the initial application, they can, they can come back and come back and come back, they can place their mind their place their mind there. But it's the sustained attention. That is difficult. And, you know, you bring your mind back to the breath. And next moment you're off against someplace, or you bring it back for a few breaths and you're off, but just standing and keeping it there is not so you know, not that doesn't really work so well. One reason for this is that the first the initial application is a coarser activity to easier activity to do. Whereas the sustained attention involves a more subtle movement of the mind. And so it's easy to do of course things but you need fine motor motor skills to do you know, more refined things. And so the sustained attention requires more refined mental skills to kind of stay there. Also, it's once you're there, it's easy to get distracted, it's easy to kind of thoughts arise. And the mind gets more interested in the thoughts or the sounds of activities around. And so a lot of other things seem can seem more important. And you could remember, I'm supposed to be meditating. And you think that's important, you come back, but then it's not that interesting to stay there with a breath sometimes. I mean, some, I mean, you know, there are times when your focus of meditation, the breath or the sensations, whatever it might be, can seem like them, for us the most boring thing in the universe. And why would anybody in the right mind sit there watching their breath, there is all this wonderful things you can do and, you know, you have your whole the whole world available to you and your pocket through your iPhone. You know, why should you sit there and do something as boring as sustained the attention in the breath going in going out. And so, one of the important things to learn in meditation is how to sustain the attention and keep it there. Sort of a little bit more about the analogies. So, the initial application is sometimes likened to placing a cloth on a brass bowl. And then the sustained application is polishing bowl keeping the, the, you know, rubbing the bowl with a hand or if you another another analogies used in the ancient world is that of you, it's relatively easy to, of course, to hit the bell but then it's more subtle, the ringing of the bell and the initial application is like the hitting of the bell and sustained application of attention is the ringing is a subtle ringing the tuning into that and it's hard to stay there with it. You know as it gets more and more subtle the mind drifts off. A beautiful analogy I like is that of bird flapping its wings to take flight is like the initial application, it takes more work the bird with its wings spread out, gliding through the air and the updrafts is like this sustained attention. And sometimes it I get the feeling sometimes when I'm really deep into meditation, that it's kind of like I've caught the surf. I've caught the wave. And I'm kind of surfing along it's quite delicious. To kind of like you know, feel like you're completely there planing along and involved. But it's not easy to learn that sustained attention to be Because of all the different forces of distraction so you'll find in different teachers who teach meditation. They'll translate this word and be Takada sustained attention state in two different ways. Some of them translated as just a sustained application of attention. And some translated a sustained application of thought, because the word v Taka means to examine and to reflect on and examine or investigate. And so there's something about the Wii Taka that's more than just keeping your attention there. But it's keeping attention there in a particular way where you get to know the object, you get to feel the opposite. You get to know what you're investigating, you're getting more familiar with it. Some, some teachers talk about it being like, the function of sustaining attention is to keep the mind anchored in wherever You're going to be pay attention to

I like to think of it sometimes is that commitment to stay with whatever you're chosen to pay attention to. That you're committed. The ancient texts also talking about this second quality sustained attention as being a subtle pressure where you kind of subtle commitment pressure to stay there, you know to keep the mind push the mind. Press the mind against the object stay there stay to stay there. It's a little bit of work involved. And the work that the analogy for the work is in the ancient world is that of kind of

like kneading dough. You take a half dry flour, and actually the ancient world didn't use flour they use a soap powder as the analogy but for us we use it sometimes flour Right this way. We take dry flour, and we sprinkle it with water for water the water in and then we need it and need it. They needed to we have to Go I mean then we need the dough and so that mixing the mixing the water in so the water saturates all the flour is the work of the sustained attention. So we keep could we stay there stay there stay there so that something can be transformed and changed inside of us so all of our all of our attention is completely permeated with present moment attention kind of like me, keeping the eyes closed in the symphony. After a while I was settled enough that my attention with could be completely focused on the music. Because you know, I was kind of my mind was I don't have the right analogy but saturated or permeated with attention making. So some people are very good at this initial and what's hard is to stay there and one of the functions of staying in on track staying there. Is that it's a protection from the mind wandering off easily. And there are a tremendous number of distractions that can pull you off. But if you can stay focused and not wander off into thought, stay in one place, then the distracted mind, the force of destruction, begins to quiet down begins to relax, give up maybe. And so over time, the movement of agitation of distraction of preoccupation, settles away, because you're not, you know, you're not, you know, it doesn't have a chance to be reinforced. Again, an ancient and one of the ancient analogies, I don't know if it's a good analogy for meditation, but it's analogy of how you train a horse. And maybe there's many ways to training a horse, but you take a wild horse and you tie it with a long rope to a stake. And so the horse runs around, runs around, jumps around, does what it does, but eventually, you know, you can't get free you can't get free. It's you know, it's tied. And slowly, slowly, the horse quiets down, and finally kind of quiets down gives up. And then that point that gets the horse to come up to the horse and start training it because it's kind of given up its wildness or its protest or its rebellion or whatever it's does. So the same thing with the mind, the mind, sometimes the mind has this amazing capacity to rebel, or amazing capacity to protest or get distracted in the most creative and imaginative ways. I mean, I it's really amazing. How, in certain times in my meditation, I've come up with the most important possible things to think about. You know, like this is like, you know, like you have the great American novel or you have you know, you know, you sudden these creative thought and you have to think about this or, or summit really important. You know, you realize you have to you know, you got to think about you have to plan your menu for your dinner tonight. And it's like, you know, It's so important to do this activity. And so, you know, there's all these thoughts that come up. And sometimes all these lawyers in the mind will argue the case of why it's much more important to think about and this distraction and is to stay on track. After all, the breath is kind of a boring thing, right and the great American novel and your dinner plans are much more important. But if you can keep stay on track, and stay sustain the attention, staying attentive attention, then the forces of distraction begin to quiet down and becomes easier and easier to stay on track. But more important, as we become less fragmented or distracted, you know, and centrifugal forces that pull us away from center, relax, then there's this beautiful way in which things start getting aligned, lining up, getting harmonized or gathering together.

And, you know, you know, you maybe some of you when you were little kids Might elementary school. I don't know if this is universal, but if you brought a magnet with you to school, then they had to send in the sand boxes they had all this little was called iron filings or something and ascend that right? And you'd go with magnets like this, and over the sand and iron filings, whatever would line up. Did anybody else do that? Some of you did. Some of you did. So long ago I could remember that I remember. So the same thing if you stay and stay and stay on the object of your attention as you meditate. Not only does the force of distraction quiet down, which feels very nice to have that quiet and calming, but also a variety of different emotional and psychological and mental factors. And physiological physical factors come along and get aligned and harmonize and work together with the concentration the focus you have And to have the different psychophysical forces of the body work in harmony with your

focus as opposed to, against your focus brings a tremendous sense of well being into into a being. And the experiences of ecstasy of rapture, that sometimes people talk to about that happens in meditation are a product of this gathering together, aligning harmonizing of all the different factors. So that all of us we're about are all focused on the same thing for the same purpose. You know, if you sit down to meditate, and it's your intention, your meditation is a good thing. So you're kind of your intention at the moment is to, you know, sit and focus on your breath. But you sit down to meditate, but you're a little bit hungry and so you start thinking about what you're gonna have for dinner and so there's thoughts about dinner. But then you had this near accident in your car coming here where someone was, it's a really stupid thing in front of you in their car. And then they did something with your finger to you and they drove off. And so not only you kind of filled with adrenaline, a little bit of fret fear, but you're also filled with irritation and self righteousness. And so the leftover feelings of fear and self kindness are still circulating little bit this tension and energy in your system. And so there's little bit those, you know, your stomach, still a little bit of not. And so you're sitting there and so part of your attention is going to you're not part of your attention is going to hunger. Park retention is going to the, you know, while you're waiting for dinner, and then you're also kind of rehearsing what happened at work today. And then what else could be going on all at once, and then the person near you in meditation hall has a Velcro jacket that they decide to take on and off and on. And so your mind is involved in many things all kind of almost at once kind of going around, you know, it's fragmented. And so the idea of this mitaka sustained attention, just keep it keep things focused, is that you can keep it to stay there, stay there, stay there, then things begin to settle down and get aligned. And now rather than being fragmented, they all work together. So your thinking, your intention, your bodily sensations, what's going on in your body, your emotions even are all connected to the concentration practice the meditation practice. And with that kind of unification, as I said, comes a sense of well being. And that sense of well being can get stronger and stronger, until it can be a very strong sense of joy and happiness. Some people call it rapture sometimes. And, and what's really delight about this kind of strong rapture or something, is that it's a happiness and Joy, that's not dependent on anything going right in the world around you. You don't have to win the lottery. You don't have to get a raise, you don't have to get you know, praise you Nothing has to happen in the world. You can just sit and calm and settle yourself and gather yourself together. And then lo and behold by being gathered and centered, this beautiful sense of well being begins to arise and to happen.

So, an analogy that I also like for this, the Chara this sustained application of attention is that of a boat traveling through the water that you keep the your attention at the bow of the boat, the front tip of the boat as it cuts through the water. And as you do that, it separates the water in the water, all the water separates to the side and flows to the side and back behind the boat. So they both just gave things washes away. And so the same thing if you can keep your attention on, say for example, the breath, a lot of things are going to come up. A lot of things are going to face you your thoughts, feelings, emotions, body sensations, a lot of things. But you stay there and you imagine all those things that come up, you just let them kind of wash by you just stay, stay on focus, stay on focus, and let everything just washed by and wash off you. Don't get distracted by them. Don't get involved in them. Or analogy. It's similar, somewhat similar. Maybe it works better for some of you is that say your breath is the primary focus of attention. So you keep your attention on your breath, as if your breath is your umbrella. And everything else that might occur just washes off the top of the umbrella and you stay dry. So you have if you think about think about your boss at work today, you think about your hungry, you think about the person near you with the Velcro and all those things. might have happened years later, wash away, wash away kind of fall off the side just rolls off rolls off, you don't get involved, you don't pick it up. You can't be in control the fact that those thoughts arise, but you have something that you have some role to play, but whether you get involved in it or not. And so you say, I'm not going to give in to anything or stay there with a breath, I'm gonna stay with the breath. And I'm not gonna I'm not gonna

allow myself to I'm gonna be alert enough to not allow myself to drift off into all the other things that might arise. I'm gonna stay there and let those be in the background. Let them just wash off, wash off. It's very powerful to do this. And in the Buddha in the ancient tradition, they say that one of the great benefits of this sustained attention is that it's an antidote to having doubt. So doubt can be a great hindrance to meditation. Am I doing the right thing? Am I far enough Mike? Can I do it? You Just missed this breath is boring, you know, you know there must be more wonderful spiritual practices in this boring breath. I can't imagine this is a good thing to do. And, and you know all these thoughts and doubts about what you're doing can come up. And sometimes it means on retreat doubt can be a phenomenal hindrance for people. Some of you I'm sure have had struggled with doubt on retreats, for example. And one of the antidotes for doubt is not to solve the doubt or argue with a doubt, but is to do the sustained attention to stay there, stay there, and let the thought just wash off the, you know, roll off the umbrella or wash to the side of the boat. As you keep your focus, keep your focus. Are you with me? Do you want to ask some questions that are a little bit concerned that this talk today might be a little bit boring, this little technical aspect of meditation? Are you really with me or you would like to ask questions or say go on Yes. It's v taka VIT A kk a and b charas v, I see a ra the Taka is the initial, the initial applique initial and the Chara is a sustained. And it's kind of nice to learn the Pali the ancient words because in certain when people do not mindfulness meditation but do concentration meditation practice in our tradition, sometimes as you go into the do it the person who will guide you will teach you the Pali word and want you to kind of relate to it from the Pali word rather than the English word. So it's kind of nice to get under your belt. Other questions? Yes.

Sounds like there's a difference between the way people teach sustained attention. Sustained examination?

Yes, there's a difference between a repeated. So it sounds like the people who say there's different people teach differently. Some say that between sustained attention and sustained examination that to me to say something about that. Yeah. So there are different you know, there are there are many different ways that people teach meditation in our tradition, there's different kinds of teachers, and some of them in strong concentration, they say that you don't want any thinking at all. You just want to keep the attention there, kind of the awareness is there, but there's no thinking about it. And other teachers say no, that important part of this be Chara is the examination is that kind of staying there and having very simple thoughts about what you're paying attention to. So I mean, as you know, you can have a lot of thoughts had nothing to do with meditation when you meditate. But you could also use meta thinking as a way of corralling your mind by thinking about what you're focusing on. So it can be very simple, ordinary and not complicated analysis but very simple. Think thought you stay with a breath and say, oh, there's a long breath. There's a short breath. What is that breath feel? Like? Am I feeling it right now in the ribcage? Am I feeling my diaphragm? Am I feeling it in the belly? What kind of movement is what's the, what's the what's the texture of the movement as I breathe in and out. So it's more like a little simpler, simple examining questions to help you stay there. And some teachers think that's really important to do an examination of looking or the teacher say no, not supposed to any kind of activity like that at all. Just kind of keep it there the commitment to stay present. So different teachers have different emphasis and the ones who don't want the no thinking involved. There tend to be the ones who are working towards a much deeper degree of concentration, degree of concentration where you get so caught untreated and absorbed in it that maybe you don't have any sense of where you are anymore. He's just completely involved. Those teachers that teach more the examination don't aren't aren't encouraging people to go that far in their concentration. But and so sometimes you have I've heard these different teachers argue about who's right. You know, which one is this? You know which one is right. It's different actions of consciousness, but also you know, what's a thought? There's no question, you know, you know, there's there's thinking behind almost everything we do, it's just

sometimes it's very subtle, and kind of background as opposed to discursive thinking, which is kind of loud. So for example, I don't know if this is a good example, but say that

you're

someone, someone sends you off on a task and the task is to go down the street. To the recycling bin with a little bag full of finished empty toilet, paper rolls, I just put it in the paper recycling. So Off you go. And then the next day, someone says, you know, down there where the recycling is, there's a bank. And here I have this bag here now, same kind of bag as you had yesterday, but now it's filled with \$500,000 can you go and just bring it to the bank for me. So chances are that you still the same walk, same kind of bag, just what's inside is different that as you walk that bag of money, chances are you're gonna hold it a little bit tighter. Probably a little bit closer. You're probably a little more committed to the bag, going to toilet paper rolls. And you might as you're walking down the walking down, you might be thinking actively, I gotta protect this bad I can do this. But it's, you know, just kind of like it's almost, you've already had that kind of reflection as soon as they give you the bag. But there's a kind of very in the background, there's this kind of understanding, I need to be really committed to this bag. And so you stay there, there's so there's some kind of thought involved. So the same thing with sustained attention. If you think your meditation is, you know, it's nice to get to eventually and it's, you know, it's kind of okay to do and I've read some books and meditation, it seems like generally is a good idea. And, you know, some people I respect, like to meditate and you know, it's probably okay. That's very different than sitting down to meditate, and saying, you know, my life is not working anymore. And I really need to make a radical change. And I see how meditation can really help me. And you know, I'm up against big challenges in my life and unless I can get my mind under control, I see myself going off the deep end or something and then you know, you You're really consequential. And so then when you sit down to meditate, you're not casual. And I'll check it out maybe or it's like, this is really important. So the degree of commitment that we have to the object of attention has a lot to do with how we understand what we're doing. And you'll have much more success up to a point, if there is commitment to what you're doing. And then if you're kind of lackadaisical, oh, you know, it's okay. It's a nice, it's like vitamins, you know, I know supposed to take it. But you know, you know, I'll, you know, I'll get to it eventually, you know, and they tell me suppose eat more kale now, and, you know, oh, you know, tomorrow, maybe, and that's good, you know, so part of the speak Taka is commitment. And so some people that's not a strength that they have is, you know, they, they don't get their strength of sustaining their attention, their commitment to something is not something that is, you know, something Muscle they've operated. So this sustained attention is like a muscle

that needs to be strengthened in order for meditation to work if you try too hard, and meditation doesn't work if you try too hard, but if you don't try enough, it doesn't work either. And so part of the art of meditation is finding just the right commitment, the right the right home for pressure to stay. And the amount of pressure you need to keep to stay depends a little bit on how distractible you are that no matter how much you tend to be caught by other things. And one of the approaches of meditation is when your have strong forces of distraction, don't give it any attention. But just stay, stay, stay, stay, make that the most important thing. And if you understand the process of how by staying on one thing, how beneficial it can be, how it kind of rectifies the mind how it helps the mind, relax and settle you To the mind, and how important it is to be a calm, settle, unified, centered mind, joyous, happy mind, then perhaps it's easier to have the commitment and said, this is an important thing to do. If you think thinking thinking about the dinner menu is the important thing to do, then why would you know of course your mind's going to go where it's mines wants to go, where it thinks is important to go. And if you think thinking about food, or thinking about sex, or thinking about what's on TV or thinking about is important, your mind's going to go there. If you don't think that meditation is important, you know, it'll be

harder for the mind to stay present. So sometimes what's helped if what you want to do is develop a sustained attention is before the meditation to have reflected and thought about your how important this is for you. Is this really important and to sit down with some intent? I'm here I'm going to do this this is what I'm gonna do, as opposed to sit down kind of casually Lexie basically and you know, Just go sit down. And you know, see what happens. Now, one more thing and then I'll think. So as the as this as we begin as a sustained attention, as we settle into its get into the groove of groove of it. And the force of distraction, dissipate or relax, it's easier and easier to be present. There's some point it comes so easy to be present, that what it's actually becomes difficult to leave the present moment. You You're so subtle, it's kind of like you've, you've, if the if, if time is like a bowl. If the mind is agitated, it's like the ball that's has all this energy and it's going up and down and around all kinds of ways. But finally, when the when the ball dissipates all his energy, it comes and settles. Dressed at the bottom of the bowl, and it's not going to go any directions I can go up the sides anymore. So if time is like a bowl and the present moment is the bottom of the bowl, then with at some point in meditation, the mind is just there in the present moment and doesn't want to don't inclined to go up the sides anymore into the past the future and fantasy or anything. And at that point, the Chaka mitaka and the V Chara these two kinds of attention are no longer needed. These these are activities of the mind, mind is a little bit active when you do this. And you have to enter a state present. But once the mind is complete, you know is so present doesn't go anywhere. It you don't have to try anymore. And so at that point, you can let go completely have that kind of effort. And, and it's you know, then it's much more relaxing not to have that But to let go of etuc on HR too soon, because it feels like work to do it means that it means that you might not you might not mind might actually be stay doing its usual work, which you might be so habituated to don't think of as being work. But the ordinary thinking we have in our mind takes a lot of energy. And so when that quiets down, a lot of wonderful energy gets released and becomes available. And this is one of the reasons why rapture arises as the as a result of this feedback on HR being strong or when they're strong enough that you don't no longer need them is that this all this beautiful energy, vitality becomes available, and it's flows into our capacity for joy and happiness for rapture. So please, what's your question?

Personal how it relates, I noticed the quality of my meditation is very different depending on the time of day Especially relative to sleep. So I used to meditate during the afternoon and found that it was harder to start meditating. But once I meditated, I got into a much more subtle state written down meditate first thing in the morning, not really thinking that I think it's kind of easy to start sitting, right?

It's not really

I'm not aware of.

So the question is,

are in terms of, like, time of day if

you have a random timer go off at some point during the day.

So the question is about the time of day to meditate. And you notice that different times a day has a different effect in the early morning, there's not so much thought and activities and so maybe it's easier to stay focused and present. The end of the day, maybe there are more thoughts and activities. I think what's I mean, it classically the instructions, the classic idea meditation is do it early in the morning if you do once a day. Because of the benefits of, there's not so much activity going on and, and you know, you're not ramped up for the day and you have to ramp down in order to get present. And then also,

there's something for you to get up a little bit early, before everyone else is kind of the whole world is kind of busy. It's usually a beautiful stillness. And it's kind of nice to kind of feel the stillness that somehow they're early morning. But you know, from my point of view with the answer to such questions, is experiment and learn what's beneficial different times of your life different things might be beneficial. It might be sometimes it's might be beneficial to sit in the morning calm settled, as an as a beautiful preparation for the day the day goes smoother and easier because of doing that. Sometimes it's useful to sit at the end of the afternoon because then you get to sit With all the different feelings and concerns and agitation that's happened during the day, and you get to process it and work it out in an open more conscious way than you would be if you just, you know, went home and took a nap or went home and watch television or went home and do whatever you got to do. And it's and you might, maybe it's a time to learn more deeply about what actually happened during the day and come to terms with it in different way. And so sometimes it's useful to have meditation at the end of the day or the end of the afternoon because of what you can learn there. I spent a long time in my life, very beneficially doing both. The morning was very helpful, but it was really great. I meditated in the afternoon at 530 to 630. And, and, you know, as a way of clearing out and working through some of the things that happened at work during the day, and it was great. So I don't know if that okay answer Yes. Can we say

So understand that for all types of meditation, that the breath is the anchor, and, and the type of meditation that you've been talking about tonight is more concentration meditation, you know, deciding ahead of time where where your focus will be and sticking with it. But there are many other types of meditation and I wondered if maybe you could speak a little about choosing which type of meditation is most helpful at different places? Hmm.

Yeah, there's many kinds of meditation and so four minutes

so so So, you know, what I was teaching today is, you know, it's most often associated with concentration meditation more than mindfulness meditation. But there's different ways of doing mindfulness meditation. And the way I like to teach it is is to teach it integrated together with some concentration so that they're not two separate practices. And so by keeping, giving priority to the breath, the breath is a great object both through mindfulness and concentration. The more concentrated you can get up to a point, the more beneficial the mindfulness can be. So developing mindfulness on the breath, so it helps stabilize steady concentrate the mind is very beneficial. And then if something else happens, that's more compelling than the breath. Then let go the breath and turn towards that. But, but more compelling is the operating word word. If you can stay, you know the commitment is there, you can stay and not get, you know and just think well that's not important thinking about dinner is not important. I just let that kind of just wash off the umbrella, wash off, you know, just stay on track stay on track. I think that's really good. But in other kind of meditation, which sometimes taught in our circles, different way of doing mindfulness is to have no primary focus at all for meditation except the present moment. And so there is no and so, you the, the initial application of attention, if you mind was wander off and thought is simply to come back to the present moment, and be present for whatever is happening in the present moment, that moment, whatever predominant thing. And then a sustained application would sit would be to stay in the present moment for the unfolding of experience in the present moment as it shows itself as it occurs. Sometimes that's called choiceless awareness, meditation, or very open mind big mind meditation, you just stay stay present. Use be and use a present for noticing what comes into awareness since it flows and comes there's no no single focus. So which one is beneficial? It depends a lot on you and the psychology and what's goes on and how concentrated you are. Some people will tie themselves in knots. If they're told to do anything in meditation, they there's so much trying to control and expectation and measuring themselves and trying to be successful and doing it right and, and trying to manipulate the experience

and force themselves into a box that when you tell them what to do, like a particular technique or practice, if they just, it's really ugly results. And so they're better off doing choiceless awareness with there's no focus and meditation. Don't just stay open and present. Don't try to if you give them instructions, you tell them instructions are Let go of any doing as soon as you notice you're doing anything, stop it. And just just you know and, and thinking about you know, your dinner is a doing so you let go of that. So just kind of show up, just show up. So sometimes sometimes you choose meditation practices based on your own personal psychology and what's you know what works for you. Beautiful practice in our tradition is loving kindness meditation, which is a concentration practice does require the pitaka which are just keep focused on it. And sometimes it is just a beautiful thing to do to cultivate your loving kindness. And sometimes it's taught, if people have a lot of anger, or a lot of any kind of anger but also a lot of self criticism or self loathing, or a lot of strong negative feelings of oneself. Then sometimes loving kindness is a beautiful antidote that can heal that. And so then, loving kindness is taught and In our particular, you know, Buddhist tradition, the be tuck on V. Chara is most commonly taught when people do loving kindness meditation in a sustained way on retreats. And so you're doing it day after day, hour after hour, day after day, week after week on long retreats, then because it's the only thing you're focusing on, it requires a lot of concentration. And as it gets more more concentrated, the speaker can be charged have it as an increasingly important role. So it's a big question and that's, you know, has to be there. And Victor on it, give me four minutes and I took six.

So, so I hope that this kind of technical discussion about some of the elements of meditation will encourage you to experiment a little bit. With this sustained attention, just hang in there and See if you can stay there Stay, stay put, without letting the mind or letting yourself get distracted or pool this way in that way, by all the things that come up and pull you around. And just stay there, stay there, stay there. And you know, you're not going to be you know, if you're not done that have done this before, you're not gonna be able to sustain it for very long initially, there's like a muscle to get stronger. So you do it. And then you get pulled away. And rather than get, don't get discouraged, just say great, I did it for two breaths. Now let's see if I can do for three breaths. And four back and see if you can kind of see how long See if you can slowly over time, have sustained attention lasts longer and longer. And, and as you do that, you'll probably find the longer you can keep it there. And the more two things will happen. One is that your mind will settle down, you'll calm down and get focused and gather together and the other in the process of that you'll learn a lot about yourself. Learn about all the different forces of distractions and preoccupations and things that pull you around. And it's good to learn about those things. Okay, so thank you