So what I'm doing these Monday evenings is giving a series of talks on the Eightfold Path. And today the topic will be right effort. And so the Eightfold Path are brilliant collection of eight practices that are supportive for the path to liberation to freedom. It's also a brilliant path to any kind of mature maturity, mature maturation. It doesn't have to be about liberation. It doesn't have to be about you in Buddhism. But these are eight kind of things that are very, very helpful, to mature and to develop in to be concerned with as we find our way in our life. And the Eightfold Path can be applied or be suggestive of many different things part of the brilliance of them, and I'd like to suggest a few things here today. First, The eightfold path are sometimes divided into three different categories. Three different parts, those eight, the first two are called the wisdom factors. So the more having to do with understanding a wise understanding for our lives. With that wise understanding, we have the next three. And they're called the ethic category. So they have to do with ethics and behavior, how we relate to the world around us. And the last category, which we're starting today has to do with inner development, developing yourself caring for your own mind, your own heart. And the so this idea of caring for yourself, the quality of your mind, quality of your heart is a very important one in Buddhism. And there's three whole factors of the Eightfold Path that have to do with this kind of self care to cultivate and care for the quality of our hearts or minds. It's important To recognize that this part of the path the last three occur after the middle three, which has to do with ethics or behavior has to do with cultivating healthy relationships with the world around us. It has to do with the really clearly with our interface with the world. And we want to have healthy relationships who want to live in the world in a healthy way. The idea of going off and caring for yourself and your own inner life, independent of how you live in the world is doesn't really work very well in Buddhism. You can if you're you know, just obnoxious at work, and then you sit down to meditate, something you know and get peaceful, something not quite right. There has to be some harmony or some integration or some correspondence between how we live our lives and how we do with our what we do with our inner life. So the inner factors of the have a lot to do with building on how we behave in the world. So we care for how we speak. We care for how we act in the world in terms of ethical precepts, we don't kill and steal and lie. And we builds on care about our livelihood, we live we are live the hood, where we spend much of our days is a livelihood, that doesn't harm that supports a clean conscience that supports creating a good world that we live in. So that's part of the foundation for this next three factors. And other part of the foundation I think is useful to think about is that it's very important for people to have their basic needs met. So we have to have enough food, we have to have enough shelter, we have to have enough clothes to be warm or whatever we need, have enough medicine. And these are called the four requisites that the Buddha thought were considered very important for his followers to have so many Buddhist monastics even though from maybe our Western modern point of view lay point of view, live lives that seems somewhat Ascetic. They're not meant to be aesthetic. They're meant to be lives that provide people with the bare necessity of what they really need to feel safe and comfortable and, and healthy in their lives. So it's important to have these things and
for all of us to support and to have that some people in our society don't have enough food, we don't have enough safety, they don't have enough shelter. And it's important those are there. But an interesting question arises when you have those basic needs satisfied. What is important to do next? What do you think is important to do next? If you have a basic shelter in house is important to get a bigger one. If you have in our society some people have, you know a car that gets them around is important then to get a bigger car faster car. Some people have the basic you know need food and shelter and basic needs.

They have, what then? Recreational opportunities. People have good paying jobs. Is that good enough? What's next, a better paying job acquiring more wealth? Or maybe we know wealth is not so important, but status is important. And so you want to you know, so move on to that. What What do we? What do we build our life on? What do we dedicate our life to do? After we have the basic needs taken care of and satisfied? There's things a very interesting question. And to consider what are your basic needs, you don't have to be as, you know, simple as a Buddhist monastic, but my guess is that most of you here, have you the most basic needs of your life satisfied well enough. Some people don't. But, but you know, you know, what exactly does it do we need what do we what do we consider important after those basic needs are satisfied in that The suggestion I have is that that I what I feel very strongly, is that there's two things that are next one is caring for other people. And the other is caring for yourself. And so the middle factors of the Eightfold Path, have a lot to do with caring for a world you know, the ethical things, living a life of compassion and care, the next but the next three have a lot to do with caring for ourselves, and, and caring for ourselves not by winning the lottery that's now really big. That wouldn't be necessarily caring for yourself. It wouldn't be about having, you know, better food, you know, go out to more expensive restaurants or bigger bank accounts or bigger houses, bigger cars, or bigger status or whatever it might be. But rather, it's so there's something much more important much more with what Buddhism considers to be a form of wealth, more valuable than Conventional wealth. And that has to do with the quality of your heart, the quality of your inner life, the quality of your mind if you prefer that word, but the quality of the heart, that the heart is not in conflict, the heart is not agitated, the heart is not way down are burdened, that the conscience is clean, that the heart is inspired, that it has a sense of being settled on itself is at peace. There's inspiration, there's beauty in the heart that shines forth. I believe that one of the most probably, I believe that the most beautiful thing in the universe that you're ever you'll ever see. is a purified heart. No, no art, no thing in nature. Nothing is as beautiful as a pure heart. It's one of the most beautiful things that all of you have. Everyone has. Do we care for that? It's very easy now. Not to care for the quality of our inner life. Because we think that other things are more important. And we could be focused on externals, getting things in the world. And in the process of doing that, stay agitated and stay in some certain way disconnected, as if all these other things we could pursue are more meaningful than the profound sense of happiness and well being that we can feel inside. This profound sense of well being is not meant to be done in isolation, separate from our care for the world around us. And I think that's part of the brilliance of the full path, that the caring for our inner life, careers after we've established healthy relationships in the world around us, they go hand in hand these things caring for others and caring for ourselves. But we have to care for ourselves. We don't have to but I think that I shouldn't have said we have to, but we can.

And, and it's interesting to consider the beliefs that we Some of us have some of you have that says that this doesn't count. That is not important to look and careful runs right in our life, that it's selfish to do that, or, or there's nothing there that's valuable or the beliefs we have that other things are much more important. And so we pursue different things than pursuing a high quality of inner life. What are the limits? One of the hindrances to cultivating and good inner life for some people is the idea that it's selfish, that I shouldn't be doing focusing on myself and being happy myself, because they're all these...
other people are suffering, and I have to kind of do something for them. And then the question is, how can you best help other people, you best help them when you're at or best help them when you're agitated? And I hope that the answer is the first. That being you know, so how can you best help someone who's upset? You best help them by worrying with them? Some people want you to do that. But is that really the best gift you can give them? Or can you offer your compassion, your care, your support, while being at peace yourself, calm yourself. When my wife when we were kids were young, she felt that one of the important qualities of being a parent for her was not to be alarmed. And so, you know, you know, if you have been around your kids, there's no shortage of things that new parents can get alarmed about. But, but you know, then you've pass on to the kids, you know, this conditioning of being alarmed. The world's a frightening place. So how do you, you know, condition your kids in the most healthy way. We're spending a lot of time worrying around the kids teaches the kids something very powerful. And you might think you're caring for them, but you might be undermining them. So how to care and teach and be responsible parents or anything, but to in the kind of the, the mother's milk or the parents milk, the father's milk, whatever his metaphor is, you know, what are we passing on in how we are. And I think that how we are is very, very significant. And so our inner life is important for how we support and care for the world around us. So this next step of the Eightfold Path, the sixth one is called right effort. And it has to do with being a caretaker for inner life and being able to recognize the difference between real you know, a good quality states of mind and poor qualities and the way that the tradition Usually translates This is the idea of wholesome quality and unwholesome qualities. wholesome qualities are those which are good and helpful, skillful. That'd be recognized as being beautiful or meaningful. The unwholesome ones are things that cause suffering distress, and they either cause suffering to ourselves or cause suffering to others. So things like hate is considered to be an unwholesome state to have. It's not wholesome. You know, if you spend a lot of time being angry, you probably get sick. There's a member of some years ago, I read a story about a doctor in England in 17 1800s, who had an anger problem. And he apparently said, the next person who gets me really angry is going to kill me. And he died of a heart attack being angry. So he kind of knew what was coming. So there are unwholesome or unhealthy so we know what's For the inner life, we know what's unhealthy for you in your life. That distinction is very important in this factor of the right effort. If we have some sense of that difference, then there are four tasks to be done in caring for our inner life. And the kind of paired, the first is to be preventative preventative medicine is very helpful. It's a lot cheaper. And so, it's not as true for men in medicine, but it's also true for the spiritual life, the inner life, to know what it takes to prevent unwholesome unskillful, unhealthy states of mind to arise. The opposite of that is called cultivate, to evoke to develop to bring forth healthy states of mind. wholesome states of mind. The next two are have also kind of paired when unhelpful or unwholesome states of mind have arisen. abandoned them.

That's the word they use abandon. And if healthy, wholesome states of mind have arisen, maintain them. Keep them going. So prevent and maintain. abandon their no prevent and cultivate, abandoned and maintain just knocking over to me. Send me me. I apologize. I don't know what can you see? I can't see this is it what you're doing? Am I breathing in it or so? So it's a very simple thing. You know, and I think that in conventional life, we do this all the time, right and we prevent things we know that our can cause problems, we fix things which are problematic. We bring fourth, we create good conditions, and then we maintain those good conditions. Some of you do those things, maybe with your car, you know, if you try to prevent problems with your car by canning oil change regularly. You try to if you have a problem in your car, you fix it, you could, you know, and then I don't know what to do about evoking good states in your car, but I can see you make sure you have good tires, good brakes, and then and then you keep them good. Going. So in terms of the so these, these sort of wholesome and unwholesome a healthy and unhealthy interstates be able to recognize those to have a visceral felt sense, a different feeling, not a moralistic idea, not concepts of what's healthy, not healthy, but rather to

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feel the feel in your heart or your inner life. What it feels to be different can be contracted, and open, agitated and peaceful. constricted, or relaxed and flowing and calm. There's a whole range of things that are, are considered healthy and a whole range of things which are considered unhealthy. The difference between feeling a heart that feels love and when it feels hate generosity versus one that feels miserly when that feels wise versus one that's filled with doubt. So there's all these different qualities and how do we relate to them? What do we do about them? How do we live with them is the question are we all I think we all have all of this? You know, I'd like to thank you I think that all human beings are basically the inner life is basically the same. And we have a wide range of emotions that come and go. We all have wholesome and healthy states of mind that arise. We all have unhealthy and unwholesome ones that occur from time to time. And it's not a personal failing to have it one way or the other. I think it helps to see it as a human condition to have these things come through. But then how do we work with them? What do we do with them when they're there? If you're filled with rage, what do you do? Dude, you guys are great. I can't wait to go and bash someone. This is really fun. You know, you know, and these Buddhists who say you should abandon rage, they don't know what they're talking about. I'll show them. And you know that that's not really a good way of living. I don't think it makes sense to live that way. Most of us, monitor ourselves well enough, that there are certain states of mind that we're very careful I know states are mind or their, that we don't act on those states that we kind of do something with them. And so the first one is to prevent. So if you monitor yourself, pay attention to cause and effect in your life. Are there certain things that are triggers for you to create unwholesome unhealthy states of mind that you'd rather not have ones that debilitate you ones that depress you ones that irritate you to have ones that kind of trouble you to have a trouble troublesome states and you recognize what those triggers are for those dates. And, and I think becoming wise about those triggers, helps you then to be preventative, to to think ahead. So for example, if you if you're a have some kind of addiction, say you have a real Trouble with alcohol as a preventative measure, it's probably not a good idea. It's probably a good idea. Some people go further, they probably it's probably a good idea not to go to places where people are drinking. It's just a good prevention. And some people, some people I think because they've seen the challenges they have with their addictive behavior. No, they better not do this. I've known a lot of people in the last time it seems to me like in the last five years dramatic escalation of people who come somewhat distressed about someone addiction, what some some addiction or other having to do with computers and the Internet, and even people who, what they're watching on the internet Maybe it's not necessarily unwholesome, but it's the amount of time they spend, which is the problem they get hooked in. And the quality of their mind decreases, they feel lousy, just kind of feel. It has certain kind of, I don't know, the adrenaline or their serotonin or something, you know, makes them feel good maybe in the moment, but if they just kind of get wiped out and can it doesn't feel good. As I've watched my mind stay in the computer. I'm convinced that spending a lot of time looking at screens, changes the quality of the mind in a dramatic way for the worse. And it's kind of kind of this in my mind, it kind of hypes it up, kind of increases the agitation or the speed or the kind of like a more superficial level of a mind is operating. That's kind of like operating like on caffeine. And I don't think that that place to operate from, for me is a very good quality place to be. It's kind of like a pulled out of the place of rest in my heart. They feel much more settled and peaceful and at ease. And I don't know what it is. Maybe other people don't have that issue. Maybe there's times where brains work differently or depends what people do. But I have to be careful with how much time I spend on the computer because the way I engaged in the computer after a while, it just I don't feel good about it. So I know some people still have these addictions to that. So preventative is limit how much time you're on TV or on the computer or whatever. If it's not healthy for you to do to do it. Get enough sleep. Some people are getting not getting enough sleep is a huge condition for having all kinds of unwholesome states of mind arise. So I can go on and on. But the idea is the
important thing is for each of you, if you're interested in this whole approach, is to be able to recognize and to know what are the triggers, what are the conditions that are needed. Be careful for and how to do preventive maintenance of yourself. Not looking at things that pull you into their world and not talk to the people that pull you into worlds that are emotional states, which are not healthy for you to be in. Or if you know there are triggers, know the things that cause problems for you. And you have to engage in them. Prepare yourself ahead. If you're going to be talking to someone who's always complaining and always being angry, and you tend to get pulled into their world, and you can think and also start complaining and getting angry as well. And it doesn't feel good to do that. Maybe you have to kind of not just show up without thinking about it. But maybe before you meet with that person, you have to spend time preparing yourself, come down meditate, or at least set your intention and remind yourself I'm talking to someone who pulls me into this negative universe. Let me try to stay mindful so don't get pulled Then that's preventative. There's a whole series of things you can do. And then but if an unhealthy unwholesome state of mind has arisen, then the task is to if you if you don't want to live that way, the task is to have a course correction. How to abandon the unwholesome states of mind the unwholesome activities of the mind on how some ways of thinking that are going on. And one of the most useful things that many people find in our tradition that helps This is to be mindful, to be attentive to be aware of what's going on.

And one of the reasons why this is so important for many people that I know is that there's a common syndrome, that when we notice things about ourselves, we don't like things that are uncomfortable or troubling, is to get more troubled by it. So you know it perhaps we get angry, and then get angry with us. being angry, seeing that we have some kind of addiction issue, and then feel shame or feel bad about ourselves because we have an addiction issue. The beauty about mindfulness is it doesn't in and of itself, judge what we're mindful of. And it helps us to disengage from taking things in a negative way, personally, negative personal identification with something and so we could feel weighed down by it and troubled by it, and could sometimes spin out because we escaped the spiral of just feeling worse than the worst about how we are. So one of the first steps of abandoning is not to abandon, but rather in a metaphoric way, step back and just be mindful of it, see it, don't be caught in it as much. practice mindfulness to help you step out of its orbit I was gravitational pull of what's going on. And it's a quite a remarkable thing to have the capacity slowly gained, learned the capacity to have a negative state Mind negative qualities going on, and to be able to watch it, or be present for it with a mind. That is not it. That's free of it. Sometimes the invocation with negative states is so strong that we feel we are it. But mindfulness, as it gets stronger and stronger, shows us that there's a part of our sub part of our mind a part of who we are, that is not in meshed in what's going on. And it's actually, oddly enough, perhaps, there can be a joy, kind of a delight, even in bringing mindfulness to unhealthy states of mind, troubling states of mind. Because of the strength of the mindfulness, wow, this is fun. Hard to believe, is that so that's one of the first things and then abandoning also is to learn what it takes to kind of to no longer be caught in these things. And then deeper Have a second, let go of them. The Buddhist tradition offers a lot of tools, a lot of techniques for this. Mindfulness is the forefront, get to know it well, not just learn to observe it with some kind of equanimity, but to study it more carefully to understand what's going on. And sometimes by understanding it more deeply, we can learn what we're what we believe that we're holding on to, that's a trigger for it, and we can maybe let go of something. So the idea of studying something getting to know it better, is really important. a technique that that tradition offers is, sometimes it's useful to ignore something, and to and to select something else to pay attention to turn your attention to something else. So, for example, if the issue is there's too many alcohol bottles in your refrigerator and you really tempted, maybe you should turn your attention to something else. Like go visit your neighbor who doesn't have any alcohol. holiner in our house, you know, and perhaps you know spending time there can, you know, make it easier for you kind of to calm down and to kind of not be caught. And then you kind of settle out and you maybe forget about what's in your refrigerator. And then you send your neighbor, can you go there, throw that out? You know, but the idea is, so sometimes
there's healthy and selected ways to ignore what the issue is step aside, and focus on something else to help you disentangle with the situation. And I think it's often intuitive to do that. Sometimes we get pull ourselves out of challenging situations, so we can call down and then perhaps go back and deal with it later the situation after we've cooled down. There's a beautiful Iraq's beautiful but in the ancient tradition in the Buddha, I think he appreciates that this is really hard sometimes. It's really hard to get To kind of just to get pulled out of the grip of very, very strong negative or unwholesome, unhealthy, troubling states of mind or impulses that we have. And, and so the when he gives us a series of techniques of what you can do, the last technique he gives, is to bear down and grind your teeth and not give in.

And, you know, usually don't hear that kind of advice from a Buddhist teacher. But I think it's realistic. Occasionally. Occasionally the tremendous for some people the tremendous power and force of desire and hate and the way that grips us and propels us. It might be the best thing a person can do is to just grit their teeth sit still. Hold on tight, and not given. This can be the wisest thing to do. Occasionally, if nothing else has worked, rather than making a big mess so then there's evoking or cultivating, bringing forth, wholesome or helpful states of mind. And when I was a new Buddhist student, I strongly mistrusted this kind of idea. The idea that you would create good states of mind seemed very artificial to me and insincere. took me a long time and a lot of practice, to come to appreciate that. It's a beautiful thing to do. And it's a fine thing to do. And it doesn't have to be artificial. It doesn't have to be saccharin doesn't have to be pretending something. There's a lot of ways in which to evoke or bring forth. Healthy states of mind are healthy qualities or healthy attitudes and some of them are Have to do with just simple choices. Is the glass half full or half empty? What do you focus on? I don't know if this is a good example but if your friend has a really beautiful sweater on, but kind of playing little bit kind of ugly pants on are you up? Which one are you obligated to mention talk to, to mention. There's no obligation to mention any of them. You could talk about the weather. But, you know, you know, where do you go? I can't believe these pants you're wearing Is that really the best use of your time and your voice and your focus of your attention. Your attention is an important thing. What you pay attention to and, and what you bring other people's attention to is very meaningful as well. Maybe it's important if they're going to some important meeting were having better parents is important. Maybe Gently say to them, you know, you might think of other pets, but other but it's a world of difference between saying those pants are ugly. Versus saying that sweater is beautiful. That's that sweater looks really nice on you is one insincere and one more sincere as the ugly pants things more sincere than saying that's a beautiful sweater. It's I think I'm suggesting here it's a matter of choice. Sometimes you can choose what you focus on. And there's a lot of beauty in this world. And there's a lot of beauty in you. There's probably more beautiful qualities and states of mind that you're in yourself and you realize, but if we're fixated on the negative or fixated on particular things or what troubles us the most, we might notice that it's a beautiful day. We might not notice that You know that there are things that are really going well in our life. I have a little pet philosophy that I kind of like, I don't know how well it works, but I'll give it to you anyway. that by the time a person is 50 years old, they can be assured that something has gone really well. Something has really worked well.

It's not easy to get to 50 something worked really well. And I've seen people who you know, get to 80 and they think they're still they think they're a mess. And they're, you know, still nothing works. But you know, just know if those of you reached 50 congratulations. Something has worked really well. And take that in appreciate that. What is it that you can appreciate about yourself? So one of the one of the important practices that the tradition offers is the idea of reflecting on your good qualities, and reflecting on the good things that you've done in order to help you evoke healthy good states of mind, something you feel good about and happy about what you've done. And one of the reasons to do good things be helpful to other people is so you can feel good about yourself. Some people find it goes against the
grain of how their mind works. There’s momentum and their mind is so strong, that nothing they do counts, that the only thing that counts is all the things that they did bad and wrong. And, you know, you don’t there are people like like me when I was younger, where I didn’t have to do anything wrong to be guilty. I mean, it wasn’t simply that I was, you know, guilty and guilty until proven innocent. I was guilty before I did anything. Even before I even thought about doing anything, I do anything to feel guilty. He was like, you know, is short for gift. You know, it's quite remarkable the capacity of the mind to get into these negative mind states you know? And, and so what are the beliefs? What are the operating systems you have are very important to understand this idea of noticing and monitoring yourself noticing how your mind works, noticing the patterns of how it works, so you can start questioning them. So you put a question mark behind them, do I need to be guilty? Why do I give my guilt so much in authority? Why do you give your anger so much authority? Why do you give your desires so much authority? Why do you give your negative self image so much authority? Where does the authority come from? That this you know, put a question mark what happens? But, but to spend some time reflecting and thinking and considering the things about yourself that can be You joy, things about your life that thinks about what you've done, the qualities you have. Even if you know maybe you're one of those people who 95% of who you are is pretty rotten. Maybe you think of yourself that way, at least the way you kind of. But how about spending more time appreciating the 5%? That's really good. If you do, I would. I'm pretty confident if you do, if you appreciate the 5% that's really good about yourself. You'll shift the percentages. And then more of you will be good. more of you will be healthy and wholesome. You'll water those seeds. You'll cultivate and develop those qualities more. The appreciate the healthy and wholesome mental states that we have, when they're appreciated. They have a chance to grow when they're ignored. They don't grow. If you spend a lot of time appreciating, in a negative sense of the term, your unwholesome states of mind, it has a way of kind of festering them and making them stronger. So be very careful. So part of the tradition says, cultivate the wholesome, cultivate the healthy, actively do it, it's a good thing. The last thing is when you have some good qualities going, when they enter your inner life, the quality of your heart is good. care for it, maintain it, keep it going. don't cling to it. Don't kind of insist on it. But perhaps there are simple ways of keeping it going. Not kind of rushing into the next thing. So say that you have helped neighbor, maybe you took those alcohol bottles and threw them away. And it was helpful and you kind of saw that made a huge difference in your neighbor's life. And while you did it, you felt good. And you felt good to know that at least for this night, your neighbor is going to sleep safe. There's no danger for your neighbors been struggling. And it feels good to have that done that it feels good to have better situation with your neighbor. So you could just kind of linger with that and kind of appreciate that before you rush off to do your internet addiction.

And you can have 50 forget that. But what what it what are the good things good qualities then love the generosity, the calm the peace that you are capable of experiencing? And are there ways that you give it up too quickly? The ways in which you abandon it too quickly because you rush off to do the next thing in a way that doesn't kind of lead Like you register and stay and linger in a good way, or to be informed by or be supported by, or be motivated by the beauty in your hearts, the good qualities of who you are. Don't kind of insist on these things. So the last thing I'll say is you're all beautiful people. You're all really beautiful people. And those of you who are not yet 50 you're really beautiful. Something something's really working well. And it's really good to take that in and to appreciate that then be nourished by that and, and live as if that's true. Let that come forth. Let that be who you are. Appreciate that. And appreciate people's beautiful tones in their cell phones. They're really nice some of them. So please take good care of yourself, cherish yourself, be the caretakers, custodians of your own beauty, your own inner life. And perhaps as you go to sleep tonight, as you put your head on the pillow, spend a little bit of time considering your good qualities, the good things you've done. And considering that whatever percentage you have 1% half a percent. I don't care what percentage that's really beautiful and wholesome and good about yourself and appreciate that. Thank you.