

# 2013-05-03 On Settling

Wed, 9/2 3:04PM • 58:55

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

concentrated, concentration, breathing, monitor, mind, meditation, breath, meaningful, feel, repress, find, settle, meditating, happen, state, people, thinking, group, sense, energy

## SPEAKERS

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So, not just to do the practice, like concentrating the breath as if that's the use, try to just be on the breath. but to also kind of also to have kind of a step back and a bird's eye view of yourself to notice how it's going as you concentrate, knowing as you're meditating. So you can monitor yourself and use some of the, what's happening is if it's feedback loop, you some of what's happening is to make corrections to know how to find your way. And so but this idea of monitoring yourself can also add a lot of complications to people. Because people can be very self conscious, they can make it into engineering project. They could strive, they can push, they can measure, they can start measuring themselves and comparing themselves to certain standards of how it should be going or what's supposed to be happening. And so, you know, it's it's fraught with danger, any kind of monitoring, and some people find meditation very relaxing meaningful, because maybe it's the one time in their life where they stop monitoring themselves, they stop that self conscious activity and just be very, very simple and present for the breath to just, that's, that's what's meaningful. So, you know, the idea of monitoring yourself is to know what's working, what's not working. And if what's if monitoring is not working, then you monitor yourself enough to know that and then you stop but you know that it's just leaving yourself alone not doing any of that for a while, is most helpful, then hopefully know yourself well enough to know that's what you need. But there are a part of the art of meditation is to know how to effectively monitor yourself to kind of know what's happening know the different aspects, know how you know something, but how you're applying yourself. Notice when you're distracted, know how to come back, all in ways that are harmonious or supportive of the process of getting settled, or concentrated. When we think of the when you think when you hear the word concentrated or concentration, it'd be nice if you then associate the word concentration with the following qualities. being ready, soft, free from hindrances, joyful and bright. So the mind becomes ready. Ready means receptive, open, something can happen. Soft means soft, as opposed to hard and tense. Free from hindrances means that we're no longer caught up in the distractions and things of the world. But we're just in you know, you can really be here. joyful means joyful, some level of delight or sense of well being. There third certainly can be joy in the process of meditation and concentration. Though if you just leave it to us, Joy is the only word. Some people have particular idea what joy is supposed to look like and they try to manufacture it or the measurements. I kind of like the term well being, because it covers a much wider range of feelings in that family of things well being joy, delight, happiness, gladness, something, and then bright. So, bright mind a clear mind and happens. So when you hear concentration, not to have to memorize this list, but it is kind of these kinds of wholesome good qualities come along. So, if you find yourself getting exhausted or tense. If you find yourself getting hard in the mind, you find yourself kind of getting caught up in the hindrances of aversion or desire, even towards the concentration thing. If you find yourself being kind of grim as you do the practice, or if you find yourself being kind of things get kind of dark and heavy, perhaps is not going you monitor yourself and you realize, Oh, this is maybe not so useful. I think I need to correct something As opposed to what I've

done, in my early years of meditation was, things weren't very going going very well. I was going the opposite of these beautiful qualities. And so the solution, of course, was to try harder. And try harder with this exactly the same way the very thing wasn't working, do more of it. And that doesn't, obviously doesn't work. Right. So since since it's not working again, then it just means more effort and more of the same, more of the same you know, it takes a while to learn, you know, that more the same is not helpful. And so and so the monitoring of watching and what you're, what you're doing is important part of this. So let's do a meditation.

So taking a posture that expresses some alertness, vitality, and perhaps even concentration

and then taking a few long slow deep breaths and as you exhale, settling in composing yourself on your body centering yourself here in your body,

relaxing the belly,

relaxing the shoulders viriya the shoulder blades

and if there's any way which you feel you're bracing yourself perhaps you can soften that bracing

And then once again See if you can bring to mind some time in your life where you were satisfyingly concentrated. We were absorbed in activity, whatever it might have been in such a way that the state of mind that you were in, stood out to you as being deeply satisfying. Because of the focus, the peace, the stillness of the mind.

See if you can read Remember this, maybe even visualize the situation you're in the sights and sounds smells around you as a way of maybe reliving what's your own inner experience was being concentrated?

If you're aware of your body, what did your body feel like? What feelings sensations were there in the body?

Was your mind like what was going on in your mind your mind state? Was your emotional state your mood? What did it feel like for you? That time to be focused and concentrated?

You see there any kinesthetic memory of the time and the way in which the feelings what it was like is available to you now. You can feel a sense it here

And see if you can let go of the memory of the time activity you were involved in. And just settle into whatever lingering sensations or feelings might be here from having thought about it

and then gently See if you can welcome or invite in breathing experience or breathing into

that state. See if you can let yourself get focused, attentive to breathing

Perhaps allowing breathing to become so familiar so central that breathing becomes who you are

Monitor yourself enough that you notice if you're more involved in thoughts than you are with your breathing if there can be a gentleness and a softness or even commitment to let yourself enter into the world of breathing. Just breathing

And then gently see if you can find anything about your experience being with the breath, the sensations of breathing or what it's like to be with a breathing, maybe the relief of being here and not caught up in the usual concerns in the usual way. Whenever there's a lightness or the pleasure of might be that to be some pleasure, find the pleasure of being here practicing on the breath in such a way that the pleasure encourages you to discontinue with the breath encourage you to enter into the breathing more fully.

As you're sitting here,

let your thinking mind become quiet in the way you would if you're trying to listen to a sound, faint for the distance. Not to strain to listen, but to be available with all your senses to listen deeply with no interference. If you can let your thinking mind become quiet so you can sense and feel into stillness. softness as you breathe in and out.

See if there can be a softening of your attention so that you soften into breathing so that the mind settles into just breathing. See if it can be a simplicity of being so simple that all you need to do right now most important thing is to be present for breathing in and breathing out

And then see if very gently, lightly, you can monitor yourself. Monitor yourself whether you start thinking or the way you're efforting. Monitor yourself to notice where the pleasure enjoyment is or how it's meaningful or useful to stabilize your attention on the breathing. Monitor to see yourself ever so lightly so that maybe you can see what you can do to stay present

And then in the last minutes of this sitting as you stay with breathing in and breathing out, can you do so in a way that evokes recaptures some of the ways it felt to be concentrated in a time in your life when that was most meaningful or satisfying for you. Way to relate to your breathing enter into breathing

And then to end this sitting taking a few long deep breaths again taking a few moments to connect more fully with your body.

When you're ready, can open your eyes.

So any comments about what that was like to do that guided meditation could you follow along with different aspects of it helpful. Fuller, not helpful are

a couple of things especially.

One was when when you suggested just pleasure,

the been in contact with the pleasure and

it, it just really seemed to encourage staying with it rather than rather than some kind of more beautiful approach that would be Oh, come back to the breath now.

Why would I want to leave it? You know?

Why would I want to leave it if it's pleasurable? Yeah, nice.

And the other one was just the softness

of the monitoring, you know, just very softly banging myself back rather than No more jerkily.

Beautiful. Thank you. Thank you, Gail.

I'm Steve. I remember

something came up in this meditation that hasn't really before.

And it's sort of a notion that to get that kind of concentration, and when I'm able to grasp it for a breath, or two or three seems to have something to do with safety or security or confidence in myself. And it comes about because we're here and everybody hears Struggling with us are trying to do this seems meaty, and that feels comfortable. When I can have that feeling a little bit of that feeling that I'm alright here, and then general I'm okay. In general, I can deal with the world. They're not complete the world, go out by itself and stay in my breath better. Nice and I hadn't put that together before.

Not sure what it means.

I think it's a great insight. So I think you should kind of live with that explore and reflect on that insight. Let it sink in and support you and find a way to let inside can support you in your ongoing practice. It's great. Thank you.

I'm just adding to it.

Yes, I was really touched by a phrase that kept coming up. So simple. But it was letting go. Breathing together. And letting go reminds me what he was saying about a certain hyper vigilance, that's always there. That doesn't absolutely need to be there whatsoever. Mm hmm. And there's something about the breathing together, both inside and out.

That takes care of everything. Don't need to be so vigilant feel feeling safe is very important to be able to no longer be concerned with the world around you and just be here fully be at home here in this moment.

When we first name,

you say your name, Carol.

Earlier when we did our little exercise, what really came up for me powerfully was an experience I had at the retreat in December which was where it seemed like The difficulty just fell away. And it was wonderful. And I think I was I was very concentrated.

And when you asked about what

what the

conditions were something about that it was safety. And I realized what and what happened to me and this last one was that I really did feel the calmness of getting in touch with my breath again. And that that but where I'm living right now, there's a lot of construction work going on, and it actually is going to be affecting me personally. So I, I guess it came up powerfully with this sound of this machine, I realized whoops, there's the fear again. So anyway, it was a real insight into I think the importance of your environment Yes. To, and the importance of really feeling safe.

Yes. I think I think what you said is great, but I wonder if we restate it rather than the importance of the environment, if we say the role of the environment, because if you say the importance, it might seem like oh, I better get a better environment, or with the role of environment has definitely a big role. And the opportunity with the bloat, the blowers, or the construction, sometimes would be that, yes, you can't get concentrated. Maybe that's what this is not the time to try to get concentrated. This is a time to deal with a fear. And, and dealing with a fear that arises is a very responsible thing to do for a meditator. It's It's always like pushing it away or trying to figure out how to make it go away. And that's so yes, safety is really important. But if safety is not available, in an obvious way, you know, I mean, sometimes our fears are you know, are not that realistic, or they're complicated. So sometimes what needs the practice involves looking at those. Great. So great. I appreciate very much those comments. And so I'd like for you to do have a little conversation now amongst yourselves, it's going to be in two steps. First will be in a group of four, and the second then I'm going to Belsen second will be a groups of two. And so in the groups of four, I would like you to think it's might not work, maybe there has to be one group of six to make it We'll see. But groups of four and if you could, just in a very simple way, go around the circle, maybe multiple times. If you don't speak for a long time each one if I better just keep it kind of short. And, and say describe or say a few words about what it felt like what it was like. In a kind of personal experiential way, some of the times when you felt most concentrated in your life, anyway, that was satisfying and meaningful. So not necessarily that near accident in the car, you know, where everything got focused, you know, unless that what you felt afterward was meaningful, but you know, what it was like, and you don't have to give a lot of story or detail about what the event was. What's interesting is how you experienced it for you inside. And the advantage of not just kind of saying a brief you know, this is what it was like. In say, Enough, so you feel like you've explained yourself, but not is that the more times you can go around the circle, the more you're going to be reminded or informed by what other people say. It'll spark some kind of association. Oh, yeah, remember now there was a time Oh, yeah, that and then you can offer more and there's kind of a group dynamic that happens when that's interesting when they kind of like think of as a group mine happens with a group has an entity in itself, it's something can happen, as opposed to we often kind of think it's me myself in mind. Those people or something, I don't know something. And we kind of look at ourselves as being so individualist individual. And that's important point of view. But it's also very interesting to kind of step beyond that outside of that and just be, see what happens, you know, when you share in the group and let yourself be influenced by the group and the group's influenced by you. I know that makes sense. So share with what the experience personal experience was like to be concentrated sometime in your life when you had a higher quality concentration in a way that was meaningful or satisfying for you. And do that for a while and then I'll ring a bell. And then I'll give the instructions for what to do when you're in pairs of two.

And if it turns out to be automatic, you know, you know the next group of two because of the numbers here, group one or something, those are people that will find a group of four, come towards the front and I'll help you be able to figure out how to connect you to a group of one or two groups a little bit bigger.

So, the second the second part of this is to pair up with someone else and the topic for you to discuss together or with each other is is meant to be kind of very open ended So, you can take different ways that each of you might answer this question in very different ways as you as you see fit as is useful for you. And this doesn't have to be like True Confessions, everything that you ever you know, but rather so the topic is What is your relationship to concentration. What's your relationship to Samadhi to concentration. And so, again, so open ended this, whatever that stimulated for you. And, you know, it's very fair to talk about or as it comes up. And perhaps a nice way of doing this is to start off, I asked you, man, hopefully each of you can time yourself. If each group might start off with maybe each person talking for about three minutes or so just kind of talking about it. It's kind of a monologue and then the other one witnesses and then switch and that the other person have three or four minutes. And then once you've both had that chance, then you can continue having the conversation. It's a little more fluid going back and forth and continuing saying more about yourself or whatever seems to come out of that. Listening to each other and talking. Makes sense about three or four minutes each time yourselves. And then so if you could pair up with someone and it could be from the group as you see fit, whatever is easiest for you, whatever feels right. And if they have trouble finding someone, you could, you know, walk towards the front and that'll help you.

Concentration talking about concentration. And some of you an important part of concentration is learning to let go. When the when the bell rang. So when the bell rang, some of you didn't. I think it was a lot of energy, I think well answered in a few minutes for lunch, but maybe she would go to sit quietly for a few minutes to settle in, relax.

Thank you and it would be nice to hear from a few of you especially nice people don't don't speak often or haven't spoken yet, but give those chance first maybe have you know, what was that? What was that like to have those two conversations groups or for the groups or to any insights, new insights for you understandings, any thing that was meaningful for you about those conversations?

One thing that kept on coming up for us, is the idea of losing oneself in concentration, getting really immersed in something so that you're not really aware of anything else, versus almost this meta of awareness so that you're concentrating, you might be focusing on your breathing, but but you're also a part of everything else. So I mean, there's this kind of this question of awareness versus concentration and what happens to awareness and concentration

is a great thing to explore. Both awareness and concentration are of different types are kinds and takes different shapes and forms depending on what's going on. So I think you guys are getting a sense of the range of what's possible when you were aware of the range of what's possible when we're concentrated and the dynamics between them as part of expanding the vocabulary or understanding the terrain. And then as you understand it better and better. Then you can be have got wiser choices about what's appropriate in different circumstances. I think it's probably a wise kind of edited To set everything in its own time and season. So there might be times when it's quite appropriate to lose yourself in a concentrated state. When you're, you know, maybe when you're alone or retreating, the constant, you know, meditation, but you don't want to lose yourself in the conversation when you're driving the car. You know, so there's a time and place for different different ways of being. So rather than answering, you know, so what you bring up for the fourth point of reflection, like about our back, is we want to get familiar with it all and then be able to choose or have some senses, what's appropriate



now what can what's appropriate to do now in a given context? What else? I was Hillary. It still is. I'm Marie.

We we were talking About

the type of person who can concentrate more easily. And so I was paired with someone who was very emotional, and I tend to be very even in calm and he is able to constantly get into a blissful state of concentration. And I concentrate very much when I'm doing something, but I can't I find it difficult to know what I'm doing when I'm meditating and trying to concentrate. So

so that's the dilemma.

So one of the comments hearing that is that there are people They're different from each other in some ways, and similar in other ways. And so some of the differences have to do with how the mind works, our minds tend towards concentration very easily, some concentration is not so easy. Some minds tend towards mindfulness quite easily. Some mindfulness is difficult, or you know, it's different different things goes on in different circumstances. And so the so some people you know, you sit down, sit next to someone meditating, and that person goes into bliss, just like that, you know, and it's just, you know, quite dramatic and like, wow, I wish I could do that. And then you said, the other person sitting the other side of you and never gets concentrated, never gets settled. But they've been doing it for a while and they've gotten to be so wise in the process of it and you haven't gotten otherwise. You know, happy to watch it, you know, but you're doing your own thing. So different different minds are different ways. And, and given that there's different minds different capacities, some of it has to do with innate capacities has to do with our life experiences, that the mind works certain ways, different ways. The best attitude to have is you've gotten the mind you're supposed to have. The mind that you have, that's your job to work with to find your way with. It's just a perfect one that tailor made tailor made for you.

Because it with that attitude, then you begin working with that mind. You find your way with that in mind, if you feel like you know, you're given the wrong mind. You know, somehow the minds were exchanged at birth, or something that the wrong mind, you know, and, you know, you know, then then you're not going to engage with it seriously, respectfully and find your own way to work with that with the material, your material, you have Please someone else behind you there narrabri

I tend to be very active in the market and tend toward agitation sometimes in the effort to be concentrated it seems like I'm trying to to repress all that energy because I want to be calm and very and very peaceful and in a sense, I guess I was reflecting how the energy can be very vibrant and that you know if like, this is the mind I'm supposed to have, this is my mind that to use to not try to repress the energy but transform it to something that is either skill for or wonderful and this

is a good question to raise and again, this idea that everything that's time and season, I wouldn't want to rule off ever never ever, ever repressing some And then it might be appropriate some system situations might be wise you learn something in the process. But often a meditation is not a healthy thing to do overall to repress, split the world what might be but on the other hand to just give free rein to the mind to be agitated and busy. There's no real benefit in terms of meditation for that, either. So where's the middle way? Or how do you find your way with that? So how can you allow for and some people find allowing for the mind as it is not repressing? It is in front of them is ways to let the mind settle down. It'll settle by itself if you make give it a lot wide pasture and let it be. Other people will find especially when you work in a concentration practice, that there's a way of harnessing all the energy and start using it for the purposes of getting concentrated. So if you're really agitated with a lot of

energy in your mind, and you can't stop thinking, and you're thinking about your taxes about what's for dinner about, you know what happened in high school and you know, all these different things and you can't stop it all. And that's what the mind Doing. So let it think I did they have all this energy around thinking, but start thinking about your breath. Thinking about what you're focusing on. And so that's by harnessing it rather than repressing it.

I think least what comes to mind. For me, that's the hardest when what's going on in the mind is tends to with, you know, very strong emotions. And the thoughts are not just you know what happened in high school, but there's an urgency and there's an intensity to it, so that it's harder to say, oh, let's have an urgent attention to the breath or something. So

there's a time and a place for concentration practice or emphasizing that part of the practice. And so where there's a lot of emotion and an energy like that, it might be a better time for mindfulness. And be really mindful and you know, what's actually going on and the emotions, the energy and their sense of urgency.

Yeah, for me, I also will do a deep breath and just saying I can connect to breath Death, even in the midst of this urgency, there's a there's something else here to make wonderful.

Here in the front. That was john. I'm Tom.

And no, I, you know, I think most of my life that falling into that really blissful concentrative state is more or less felt like an accident. I realized it when it was happening or afterwards and it was, wow, that was great. I really loved it. But I had no sense that I could help it happen. But, but I think I'm slowly starting to get that and it's really opening up even more today that I think that there is a general set of ways for me to be getting a good night's sleep, eating right being in a certain frame of mind, makes it more likely in general that that is going to happen. And then I also think that there's there's particular types of activities or particular types of events that that come together with my general state to make it more likely that that's going to happen so I I'm starting to think that there's There can actually be a lot more intent and control over getting into those states and different thought

wonderful, wonderful. So it might still be an accident. But if you practice well and live wisely, you can be more accident prone.

The

way what i

think i think it's wise, the idea that we have this less sour experience for myself is the idea, you put the conditions together for concentration. And, and as the mind gets developed and stronger and capacity, let go goes better becomes easier and easier to get concentrated. But when I when there's a kind of a state shift, some new some with construction off, sometimes there's a state shift, sometimes it's obvious state shift. Sometimes it's a gradual process, but clearly kind of in a different state than ordinary walking around the streets. That generally it feels to me like that. I don't call it an accident, but I feel more like it's a gift. And I feel like I'm not it's not my doing idea that if I'm not doing it, that's a gift heightens, for me the sense of appreciation for it, the respect of it, that I have. And I find it very meaningful that, that somehow that's something, something so important, something some mean that's a mistake that some meaningful is, is not something I'm controlling or in charge of. And, you know, you know, and I can kind of hang my badge on look at me and I'm such a good concentrator. It's not,



thanks. It's always not personal. But I it's my responsibility to put the conditions together. Good. Well, thank you for that. Then one of the conditions is to have just the right amount of food for lunch. Not too much, not too little. If you want to come back and meditate. So we'll take an hour for our lunch break. We'll start again at 130