

2013-05-20 Mindfulness of The Body

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SPEAKERS

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For those of you who were not here last week, last week, I gave a presentation on the Satiputthana Sutta, and discourse and the four ways of establishing awareness. Awareness being my preferred translation now for the word Sati. And, and so I wanted to follow that up with a discussion today about the first of these ways of establishing awareness. First, what's usually called the first foundation of mindfulness, which is establishing awareness through attention to your body, through being present in your body. And one of the surprises for me in my introduction to Buddhist practice many years ago, was the sensuality of the body. If you read books on Buddhism, it's a very easy to think that there is no body and no physical body involved at all. Sometimes people even think it's all intellectual. But in fact, when you enter into the practice stream is Linda in the world of Buddhist practice, in all the traditions that I practiced in the tremendous emphasis on being in your body. When I was doing Zen practice, my first practice, that emphasis in the body was not really in the rhetoric of the teaching of Zen. And there wasn't explained so much that how important the body was, you just have to sit and paint and, or you have to sit through the very strong posture and not move for 40 minutes at a time. If you do that for hours on end through a day. Sooner or later, my knees would hurt quite a bit, my back would hurt or be quite uncomfortable. And so not that I recommend this route for people. But what it did was it put me in my body and I had to be very present for we're going on for me, and, or I had no choice but to be present in my body because it was a strong sensation, strong pain that was coming up. And I found that slowly over time what it did was it, it really made me connected to my body much more sensitive and aware of what's going on in my body in a way that was useful. One of the first, early on one of the first ways that I started seeing it being useful was there were other times in my life, where I'd have physical pain, independent of, you know, the arbitrary pain or the voluntary pain of meditation that we had in Zen. And I saw very quickly that what I was learning to do in the in, in meditation, have learned to sit and try to be a equanimous be peaceful, be at peace with the pain, not react to it, not push it away, not have self pity for it, that I would I started to be able was to do that in my normal life as well my daily life times when there was physical pain, I had to deal with it because we just got injured or something. And it was very helpful for me to learn how to stay equanimous and peaceful in the intensity of ordinary difficulties in life. One of the things I learned through sitting with pain, my early years was how I made it worse for myself, by having aversion to it, how I made it worse for myself, by having self pity about it, how I made it worse for myself by kind of spinning off into my head, and planning and thinking and reacting and counting the time counting the seconds, how long you have to be here, and all the ways in which my mind kind of got very activated and active by this agitated restless. Like at some point I could feel how it actually made the pain worse made my whole experience of it worse. And if I learned how not to have mine kind of activated by it, that they just stopped Present, then it would you know it a lot easier. So that was very meaningful lesson for me. I don't know if it sounds like meaningful to you. The next important thing for me that I learned was that this wasn't so automatic, it came over a few years.

But a very important part of the lesson of the importance of being in your body, my body was that as I learned to sit in the pain kind of dissipate, my body started to kind of fall and kind of settle into the posture and relax into the posture and have some some ease in this kind of posture here that the heightened sensitivity of my body heightened awareness to my body gave me a lot more information about myself and my life around me. In fact, one of my Zen teachers refer to the our bodies as an antenna. And if you stay present for your body, you have this wonderful antenna that gives you a lot of information about inner and outer life. The inner life was, I could see how small too small or big twinges of tension that would build up my body or movements in the my posture, pulling away or leaning forward or sideways or slumping, or were there all kinds of movements in my posture. What I did with my hands, what was going on with my legs, what was going on my belly belly was important teacher for me, because I used to carry a lot of tension my belly. And so I started paying attention to that and noticing that. And so all these things would teach me about myself teach me about how I was in relationship to what was going on, how is it? How is what I was Connect, my attitude was my attitude was to what's going on? And a common attitude for me was a fear. And so that's it go into different situations. And sometimes the first indication that I had that I was afraid was i'd feel these twinges of tightening or, or my stomach turning up are some things physical sensations? And I thought, Oh, this is interesting. And then I would notice and then I'd have the more information and then only then would I noticed that that was maybe anxious, or situations where I was really upset by situation. And one of the kind of classic kind of experience for me was being really upset by some situations going on wasn't going the way I wanted to and kind of forced myself to get the situation to be the way I wanted it. And for some reason, there was a pause. In the situation, maybe the people I was talking to had to, you know, step aside for a little while I happened once the library, I really wanted this library book and I insisted they had it. They finally kind of went in the back room to look and now and because I had to set the head develop this habit of paying attention to my body when I wasn't otherwise preoccupied. So then when they left me alone, I turned I tuned into my body, and to my surprise found that my body was leaning far over the library counter and I got tippy toes, you know, I was trying to get a point made. And so this is interesting. This this posture says something about me. And so then I noticed how upset I was getting wasn't you know, and then by the time they came back I would put both feet firmly on the ground you know, sitting upright and, and I'd cooled down quite a bit as it went on further my practice then at some point, I noticed that the sensitivity of the body to was gone from me on me and was also translate to a greater sensitivity around me. So when, when I was with other people, and situations, I can kind of feel some people say the energy but I could feel through the way in which I perceive the situation around me, my body would also respond to the situation certain parts of my body would activated or the tension would pick up different things, you know, you know, I'd feel different ways. And that helped me be more sensitive to the situation. I was in the I was in a very important piece of information that I couldn't I couldn't have been as clever to understand if I was using my logic or my head to try to figure it out what's going on here why, but the body you know, they had they say they have we have mirror neurons, we have this ability to empathize or to feel a little bit whether people feel and so I think that operates a lot for many people through the vehicle, of some the senses of sensations that go occur in the body as we react, respond, receive the situations of the world around us in other people. And the biggest surprise for me was that sense greater sensitivity to the world around me, gave birth in me to a growing degree of compassion.

Compassion wasn't something that I had any interest in when I started doing my Buddhist practice, but in the in the wake of developing a much more sensitive as a greater sensitivity, physical sensitivity to my environment and other people. for greater sensitivity to my own physical experience, that that gave birth there gave me access to the feelings and the movements of compassion within me. So it wasn't so much a matter of thinking that compassion was a good idea and learning kind of mental tricks to try to look at the situation or perceived situation different ways. But rather as the mind got a bit quieter,

thinking less actually, and a heightened sensitivity through the body heightened awareness in the body, that that, to my surprise, I found that compassion became a more and more important quality of my life until became central for how I lived my life or something. And that was not what my intention was when I started Buddhist practice that someone had said, Come to Buddhism to be compassionate. I would have I think I would have lost interest because that was not I don't know, I was just strange, right? And, but it was one of the nice surprises of it. This practice When I went to practice in Thailand, important to kind of step in this heightened and difficult appreciation of the body happened when I was practicing with a teacher in there named Buddhadasa, famous Thai teacher, and he wasn't leading the retreat at his monastery, but because he was old, he was gonna give the opening talk. He spoke English. So you know, he gave a talk, and I don't remember anything about the talk at all. But I was kind of sitting in the front row. And it was over and I kind of lingered and he got up to walk away. And as he was walking away, he had like an afterthought to something that he forgotten to say. And I think very few people heard it, but he said, Don't do anything that takes you out of your body. Don't do anything, it takes you out of your body. And I thought that was a strange statement. What do you mean by that? So, because it was a strange, it's a foreign kind of idea to me. At the time, while he said it, I started paying even more attention to my body and what was going on my body, but I noticed with that phrase, you know, reverberating in my mind over the next days of the retreat was how often I was not in my body. How often one of the clearest ways I saw it was when I was a head of my body. And, you know, we would have two meals a day, that monastery in Thailand so they don't eat in the afternoon. And so meals were a big deal. And so I remember for lunchtime, being hungry, and we had to walk across the large monastery, monastery in the jungle, so we have to walk through the jungle and to get to the place where we ate. We had to kind of walk downhill. And I noticed that as I was walking to the meal, I was leaning ahead leaning forward in antistick patient for this important event. And not only was it leaning forward, but it was kind of like my center of awareness was ahead of my body, you know, towards where I was going, what I was going to get and all that. And I found that a very curious thing. And so then I would try, certainly I tried to straighten up, and I'll be leaning into the food up ahead, but try to just lean back and be in my body, and then bring that kind of awareness or energy of awareness back in. So it's centered in myself. And that would last for a little while, and then I noticed, you know, because I, I'd be ahead of myself because because the food so important, but because because you know, partly because this is my this my stability, stability of the awareness to stay present wasn't so developed. And so my mind would, I would be there for a moment. And then my mind would go up into the thinking and thoughts and anticipation of the food, and that'd be leading ahead and come back. So it was just this kind of seesaw going on over to another the right word, but going back and forth and coming back, coming back, coming back. And I found it useful to come back, come back into my body and my body, be aware of to my body. So that was a important lesson for me to watch. And to this day, I still watch that movement. I still watch. Even when I give talks like this, I'm paying attention to the talk to what's going on in my body. I'm noticing, if I'm getting tense, some little, you know, tension my stomach, you're often or my shoulders or someplace, I notice where my, if I'm, if I'm at my weight is balanced in my body.

If I find myself leaning forward a lot, when I'm giving a talk. Sometimes that's fine. I'm just excited or into it and when it's trying to say something, but sometimes it's a sign that I've gotten nervous and giving a talk or concerned or feel like maybe I'm losing all of you, and I got to make more effort to kind of, you know, whatever. And so I've learned to notice that notice these subtle these movements what goes on to pay attention? So I look behind the scene. And what else is going on here for me? What's going on in my mind What's going on? In my feelings? What's going on my concerns about the situation? And sometimes I find that it's innocent and it's fine to be leaning forward and sometimes I see Oh, yeah, girl, you you got caught by some concern and, and then I can make a course correction, I can kind of let go of those concerns, perhaps or settle back. So I still to this day, then you use body as

a reference point, come back, come back, come back. And it's so important. The idea of being present in the body, that I would prefer to emphasize the word body fullness more than mindfulness. Partly because the body is important, but also the body is a vehicle is a Avenue through which we are aware. And so the more were sensitive more, we're awake to what goes on the body that One way to register allow to receive the experiences of the world what's going on, through the filter or through the vehicle of our body. I think the stronger the awareness becomes, if we are only knowing what's going on, through our cognitive abilities of the mind thinking and having words and ideas of what's going on, as valuable as that is, it it becomes kind of, to always become disconnected from some of the deeper wellsprings of our emotions, our body sensations, our inner intelligence, understanding what's going on. So how to have both I think is really the issue but to come back so where, you know when i when i first started, no one asked me this, but if when I first started practicing, or just before I started practicing Buddhist meditation, if someone had asked me where I was aware from wearing your body, or your wear Word consciousness or something, I would have pointed to my brain. And then after some years of practice, if someone had asked me where you're aware, I would have pointed to my whole body. I wouldn't prioritize the brain anymore. But it's the whole body that somehow together as a unit, and then at some point, if someone asked me, where are you aware, I wouldn't, I would no longer point to the body, but I would take my arms and somehow just go like this. You know, kind of big arc circles everywhere. It's all all awareness. There is no difference. awareness. Awareness is everywhere. It doesn't have a location just in me. But that location, the sense of awareness, kind of permeating everything that I'm aware of and present is, is arises out of being grounded in the body being present in my body, here in this place. So when I meet with people that To talk with people, I feel like part of what women feel one of my practices, or kind of approaches or guidelines for how to be present for people when I talk to them, especially if I'm really going to be present in a good full way is I try to have 50% of my attention here in my body, and my inner life, and 50% of the my attention with the person that I'm talking to. And you would think that, you know, it's really important conversations important to really pay attention to the person kind of forget about yourself, it should be kind of absorbed in what they're saying, really listen well. But I found that for myself, at least, that I don't listen as well, if I'm completely into their conversation, as I do if I'm 50/50 there, because if I'm completely in listening to absorb what they're saying, I'm not picking up all the information of what's really happening in the bigger picture of it. that's available to me, when I'm grounded and centered in my body aware of myself as well. It's kind of like a One of the things I've become aware of I'm aware of my reactions and responses, my interpretations, how I am, what I'm doing and the response to it. And so I'm better able to put those aside my bias, put aside my various thoughts, my reactions, my feelings. So in fact, I can listen better. And if I'm 100%, completely absorbed in the conversation, don't notice what's going on. For me the filters, I'm putting up the reactions I'm having, then, in fact, I'm not actually listening as fully or as cleanly as I could.

And if I'm too preoccupied with myself, if I'm completely absorbed in myself, which occasionally has happened, where I start thinking about something in conversation, I hope this has never happened to you. And, and after I realized that what were they saying? I was that they said, and, you know, I'm not really you know, I'm not tuned into them. So The idea being 50/50 is very helpful for me to 50 here and 50. There. And, and this idea of the awareness is everywhere and it's not really, you know, just my body or in my brain translates to me that when I'm very present is 50/50 away. There's a very nice way in which feeling which I disappear. That the sense of having boundaries or being here and assault, and I don't know what to say exactly before, like giving the wrong impression. But I'm here without a being caught in a self identity. And I'm here without caught in a self referential point that, you know, I'm here and that person is there. And it isn't that I'm oblivious of myself because I'm very attuned to what I'm thinking what I'm feeling with my bodily sensations or what's going on here. But I don't tie it all together in some kind of self identity concept. That's and so the idea of letting go of identity and letting go of concept in an ordinary kind of way kind of any kind of transparent is the feeling is a safe and

appropriate thing to do if we're closely in touch with ourselves. And it's like that close deep mindfulness or attention to their inner life is a way of kind of disappearing. But disappearing in a responsible way because we know what's going on. The Zen master Dogen, Zen teacher and in ancient Japan had a very succinct way of talking about Buddhist practice. He said, to study Buddhism is to study the self. to study the self is to forget the self. And to forget the self is to be awakened by all things to be can be recognized by all things. And so this idea that we're studying the self, we're studying what's here but if you really hear in a full way, if you bring mindful presence to hear and learn to let go of a lot of the ideas and thoughts and reactions we have to really be here for ourselves. There's something about the self that disappears, you don't die. And you're still actually you don't get diminished by this, but something about self disappears. So study the self, the self disappears, you forget the self, you forget yourself consciousness. And then if you forget yourself consciousness, then rather than you defining yourself, you you deciding who you get to be for Dogen, student teacher, the whole world will tell you who you are. The world tells you what's going on. So you don't have to be the one in charge of deciding you can be who you are. And the world will tell you what that is your mirror and for you. When I i guess is connected to this theme of the body when I was in a Zen monastery, I discovered that if I didn't eat so much, that I could get more concentrated when I meditated and so I went to my teacher and say, What do you think of this not eating so much, so I can get concentrated. And I kind of thought he would said, you know, cut it, cut it out, just what he said, that's fine for you to do. But when people around you tell you that you should be eating more, listen to them. So that that was that was a great advice. So you know, meal, take the feedback, you know, let the people tell you what's going on.

So, body fullness, to be in your body to be connected to your body to not be disconnected to your body. It's so easy in the life that many of us live to be disconnected to the body. I think screen time is Last time for the body, many people has been a lot of time in front of a screen, they're not really that in touch with their bodies kind of lose touch with their body. Sometimes you see it in their posture, and slumped over or some pounding postures, and often not that strong and good. When you're sitting in front of a TV or computer or something. Also, it's kind of, it's kind of belongs to the brain, the activities of the, what's happens on the screen. And if we do more and more of that, it kind of reinforces, strengthens that and strengthens a disconnect with the body. Some people have very difficult emotions that they're dealing with in their life. They have trauma, for example, or whatever. And so, or some people have religious teachings, that somehow certain feelings and emotions are not right, or certain experiences of the body are not good. And so there's a variety of conditions for what some people are. Some people get disconnected with her body. Don't validate or value value, their experience of being in a body And, and so when we dis value it and get disconnected with our body, we actually lose a big part of who we are, we lose some of the we had lose access to the full holistic sense of what a human being is about. And so it's it's kind of dissatisfying or it's kind of feels like you're kind of off. And the odd thing that can happen sometimes when you feel off or feel something's not working, is some people then will continue or do more of the dysfunctional behavior they're doing because they think that's how they're going to compensate. So you feel uncomfortable, so you eat eating makes you feel uncomfortable, so you eat more and or you feel uncomfortable in some way and sad or depressed, you watch TV and maybe it makes you feel worse. You don't quite identify it as a TV so you, you know you watch more something, there's sometimes a reinforcing pattern of this thing can happen. An interesting idea that I read of many years ago also that was interesting for me about the body was if you if your body is not settled in the field of gravity, you're if you're kind of resisting gravity doesn't mean that you become a couch potato or collapse to the gravity or lay flat on the ground. But if you can sit upright or stand up, right, be upright, in good upright aligned way, and then relax with the pull of gravity. Then the mind can get quieter. If you're fighting gravity, nothing you're intentionally fighting and if you're tense and holding yourself and bracing yourself, what that what that does is actually kind of disconnects you with your body and makes the chatter of the mind busy, restless activity of the mind gets reinforced. As we relaxed, let go of the way

we're braced or defended or how are resisting gravity holding us up against it. That is we will let let go that relax, the mind becomes quieter, there's less and drive to think and figure out and react to what's going on. So as we settle into the body and get to know the body, one of the things we can learn to do is to relax to soften the body, as the body relaxed and softens, then it gives us more access to what's going on in the body, more information, more sensitivity. As we continue that process and becoming more sensitive to the body and relaxing more deeply. You'll find that your thinking mind your restless mind will become will think less become quieter and less restless and more peaceful. If you try to overcome a restless, agitated mind, with the mind itself, it can be much more difficult. It's kind of like taking a muddy pond and not letting the mud settle in because The water becoming clear but taking a stick and kind of stirring it up, it sort of stays muddy. Coming back into your body can connect it to your body and relaxing your body as a way of leaving the mind alone, but helping it relax and let go. Quiet down, settle down. So, in this discourse that the Buddha gave called the four ways of establishing awareness, it begins with emphasizing sitting down to meditate and becoming familiar with your breathing. The physical experience of breathing breathing is a physical baby. If you connect with your breathing, you're connected to your body.

And as you begin tuning into your body, your breath noticing more helps you to arrive and be more fully in the present moment. Then, and then it goes it goes on and says, instruction is as your breathing thing, hence your breathing. Breathe and notice your body. Notice that expression is your whole body. Notice your body gets into get familiar with the body to and into your body, get to know so important get to know it. So maybe as you continue your breathing, breathe with your body, breathe with awareness of your body, let breathing kind of be all encompassing somehow or be the stabilizing force, it helps you to stay there. And spend time letting the attention roam around your body, get to know the body, feeling the global sense of being in a body, but somehow cultivate a heightened sensitivity of your body. That's the next instruction he gave. And then one of the advantages of developing a heightened sensitivity of the body being aware of the whole body is it gives you access to something very important. And as I say, explained less last week. It allows it shows you a place a time, when you have a choice between two different directions. You can take And you have to have some degree of choice over which of these two directions you can take. If you if you're if you see this piece of information. As you become more aware of your body, you can become aware of whether your body is tense or not. And it's kind of becomes kind of you don't have to try to see if you're tense, the more settled and connected and aware you are of your body at some point will be standout and highlights. The places that you're tense when you're tense in a way that maybe you wouldn't even notice as you go about your busy life running around doing things. Sometimes there's a degree of tension that I carry with me in my body that I only tune into when I stopped doing my life and sit down, close my eyes and meditate. Because the way I live my life, there's kind of turn how to do a tension that builds up in different places. And I don't really recognize or tune into it sometimes until they really sit down to meditate and sometimes Some of the deepest held tensions in our life are not so easily accessible in ordinary life, but only become accessible if you have a strong meditation practice. And you can really get down and quiet and really develop this heightened sensitivity to what's going on. So at some point, you will come to this fork in the road. And the fork in the road is to see that you have a choice between continuing to be tense or relaxing. And, or the or trying to relax. And in fact, that's the next instruction the Buddha gave in this famous tech on how to establish awareness. Instructions are to once you are aware of the tension in your body once you're aware of this whole body experience whole body the next thing to be to notice to do is to relax the body. soften it. So if your tension the shoulders are tense and you can relax Sit, relax, if your belly is being held, soften it, if your hands are tense, sometimes, if you're some part of your body, your legs or your arms are kind of a little bit braced against life again, something what's going to happen, you're frayed. Relax the way in which you're braced. If you're tension in your face, and your eyes soften that. So, to intentionally allow yourself to relax, if you can't relax intentionally, which is not

always easy to do, some of the tension we carry with us is more locked in rather than something that we have choice over, we still have a choice to soften around it, to bring our attention into it, to breathe into it, to hold hold it in our presence. Because if you hold physical tension, in the field of awareness, hold it kindly, openly. In an open way, it's kind of like giving breathing room. And as our attention has breathing room in its own time, it'll begin to relax the Cause bringing attention and holding an awareness. If that's what the main thing in mind is doing, that has a very different effect than if the main thing your mind is doing is worrying about something. So if you're worrying, it might reinforce the tension you're holding. But if you step away from the worry and just hold attention and awareness, paying careful attention to feel it, you're not feeding it anymore. And as you're not feeding it to reinforcing it, it has a chance to relax and let go. So the first instruction that Buddha gave in this text was become familiar with your breathing.

As you become familiar and present for your breathing, then become aware of your full your all your body as a whole, a heightened sensitivity to your body. And then as you begin noticing if there's tension in your body, within reason, relax and soften. Within reason means don't make it you know, the only thing you're And with high expectations, you can you know, and you're always tinkering with your body to relax, but to some degree, relax, settle in. As you do this, you'll find that the mind gets quieter, as the mind gets quieter, and as long as as long as you don't fall asleep. And you stay alert, you'll find you'll develop a heightened sense of higher sensitivity to your body, more presence for your body and your body becomes something that starts feeling more and more as a, an important part of who you are important reference point. In fact, the deepest forms of well being that we can have, I think, are really experienced more fully. If we're present in our body. We can have more compassion, we can have more love, more joy and more happiness can be experienced more fully more cleanly, when we're rooted in center narrowbody. If we're disconnected to our body for not noticing our body, then chances are we're not so present any Even if we are present chances are we're in our thoughts and reactions to what's going on. And, and even if we're not reacting so much to what's going on and thinking what's going on, if we're still not connected to our body, so much of the information and the full experience that we're having is not available. And the full experience is, is what gives us the fuller experience the fuller sense of the beautiful qualities of lived life. So your body so What relationship do you have with your body? Is your body your friend? Is your body your enemy? Is your body a total stranger? How is it with your body? So I could go on and on. But I think that's enough about the body. So maybe have a few minutes if you'd like to ask any questions about this appreciate hearing questions or comments if you'd like. Yes, please. And if you could use the mic that that down chin down. Yeah. And maybe if you could see a green light. If you can say your, if you can say your name first, that would be nice.

I'm Jennifer. Hi, everybody. Can you hear me?

Yeah. Okay.

Kind of what was coming to me as, as you were speaking, I've done different types of mindfulness and different types of meditation. And I just was curious as to when you were talking about the mind a lot. What you think about mantras versus being still in the body? Because I've done you know, both Hmm.

So do you?

Yeah. What do you think about that in terms of meditation or just what you were just explaining?

I think a few things, I think monitor can be a great meditation practice, it tends to have a different result than mindfulness meditation. And so it depends a little bit on the result that you're hoping for.

Sometimes mantras are can be a great way of relaxing. And in fact, some of the people who've taught him since his mantra meditation, do so very explicitly for the purposes of the common deep relaxation. It also is a for some people, a very good way of developing not only deep calm, but also deep concentration. And some people use mantras to experience some of the intense forms joy, rapture, that can happen with strong meditation. The sometimes with mantra meditation, the, the, because of the deep, deep calm and presence that it gives, when they come out of that meditation. There's a heightened mindfulness and attentiveness and understanding what goes on around them. But sometimes what happens when people Do mantra meditation they get absorbed in the mantra, but they're not connected to themselves. And so they don't really they're not they're not really a heightened sense of awareness of their body, their feelings, their thoughts, what's going on. And sometimes it's possible to use my drives and escape from oneself escape from the world. And I've known as a teacher especially happens on retreats. It happens in somewhat regular basis as someone comes or retreats, who's done many, many years, sometimes decades of a mantra practice. They're quite good at it. And they can get really blissed out really calm and, and I could see that they're disconnected from themselves. And they keep using that as an escape. They can go to this nice spiritual state think their spiritual thing, it's good, but they really escape it often is because they have reason to escape. There's some real troubling aspect of their life, which they've been trying to avoid for a long time. And so they come to our retreats and we say, you know, we say, you know, while you're here, isn't that what we Teach. So maybe you've had years of doing that. And, and sometimes I'll say you've been doing this for years and years, and probably it's getting old for you. And they say, Oh, yeah, it's getting old, you know, even though they say it's ecstasy, you know, it's kind of like they're getting tired of it. And they have sense, there's some intuition that something's not quite working. So usually they're quite willing to, to stop doing this. We say, well just try stop doing it here. And rather than trying to get concentrated and blissed out, why don't you simply notice what's going on? And then what often happened, those people will come back a few days later for the meet to meet with a teacher. And that wide eyes and they say, I didn't know there was so much going on. And, and sometimes they have to face some really difficult things or demons, because they're, that's been waiting for them for years. And now finally, they're ready to say hello, and, and, you know, discover who's really in there.

Thank you. That was great.

When the backs whether, yes, you pass it back as a mounting Thank you. And I think I'm gonna start asking I think it's a nice idea for the ask people all of you to say your name before you speak because I think it helps me It helps also each other in such a community here for hear names, I'd appreciate it.

Hi, my name is Irene, on everything you said is so true. I, in the last year, kind of taught myself how to swim. And I've developed this daily habit now of getting up in the morning and going swimming and doing lap swimming. And it's, it's really fascinating. I have the best days ever. I mean, it's the total focus and concentration on the breath because you have to and the body at the same time. And it's I was just thinking while you were talking that probably many different kinds of you know, f would would also do that. And when I started doing this on a daily basis, you know, in the last few months, I noticed that my meditation practice in the evening is better. And I noticed like even tonight when I was sitting here, I could it the breathing kind of, it's changing, it's like it's almost resembling the swimming, the rhythmic breathing of the swimming and I find that it gets me very calm and very relaxed and you you don't lose touch with the body. You know, you

can't lose touch if you're gonna develop your swimming you have to be very in touch with their body. So developing heightened sensitivity that way is a great thing. A little bit of aside from what you're saying, but I'd like to say it anyway that example of swimming like someone who's had to swim practice into

swimming, you know, it's it's pretty routine, right? You're doing laps and you know, from you know, in the in the in the from the gross point of view like looking stepping back and looking at the you know, there's not very much that your strokes are different from each other, you know, they're all pretty much the same thing you know, it's pretty boring and same stroke. But in fact, if you're cultivating swimming of the inside, you're developing higher and higher sensitivity to subtle differences. And slowly slowly finding, how to swim move better. And you know ever so slight differences and that ability to distinguish very subtle differences is the root of the word English word skill. Because the word skilled means to originally meant to differentiate is still in Norwegian, means to separate out. And, and so part of Buddhist spirituality to do cultivating mind cultivating skillfulness in Buddhism, in variety of ways keeps going back to this idea of being able to differentiate two different possibilities or differentiate, differentiate something and become skillful and know how to make these things. Small, subtle differences. So the same thing happens in meditation. That by just like with swimming, you do swim day after day after day. And you make this. So you start seeing differences that are very subtle, but are very consequential over time you swim better and all kinds of. Same thing with meditation. If you're actually paying attention to what goes on there sensitive to it, then you start seeing subtle differences that maybe you didn't know existed at first. And those subtle differences, you begin finding your way subtle difference between moving tense and being relaxed, for example, or being more present or being having more attentive. And so slowly over time, we're becoming more skilled by being able to make more subtle differentiations. And that's that ability to become skilled, then that helps us then become more and more present and more relaxed, more free, more calm in the meditation as well. So what I

noticed is that what I began doing is when I swim, I focused on my brain And everything else just falls into place. And when I lose my concentration, I notice it really makes a difference in just the flow through the water. And so I guess a lot of people might say you should pay attention to the mechanics, which will come and you do have to practice it. But I noticed the breathing makes all the difference in how the mechanics fall into place.

But can you can you be as you're focusing so much in the breath? Are you also aware of the rest of your body? Oh,

oh, yeah. Have to Yeah, definitely. And I noticed how the mechanics change with Yeah, as you know, as I as I keep my folk, my breathing, you know,

I suspect that some of that is almost like a innate intelligence is making the differentiation not so conscious and cognitive that you're thinking planning and thinking but this is the system figures out the efficient way to do it. Same thing with meditation. So thank you, and I hope that this week that you will take heightened interest in your body and, and regularly through the week. I don't know when you want to do it but find ways where throughout the day, you're reminded to just simply notice what's going on with your body. Just that and to get a little more information on what's going on, what's up, what do you what you learn about yourself what you notice about yourself. If you tune in to what's happening your body and in different situations through the through the week. It's a great thing to do. Thank you