

2015-02-23 Seven Factors of Awakening Effort

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SPEAKERS

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Good evening. And tonight, I'll continue with a series of talks that I've been giving on the seven factors of awakening. And these are seven states of mind, and practices. practices and states of mind are almost synonymous at times we do the practices that evoke certain states of mind. And these are seven states of mind that support the path to liberation to awakening. And when mindfulness practice gets strong, the seven factors follow in the wake of mindfulness. And so some people will cultivate these seven factors directly, but more often, they're the byproducts of practicing well. And as we practice mindfulness and meditation Well, these things come along. And that's good to recognize them. And as we recognize them, there's something about the recognition of, of wholesome beneficial states of mind that supports them that encourages them that feeds them, so they continue to grow. So it's states of mind that meditators should at least know in the back of their mind and then, so that they can recognize them when they arise. And then as they arise and occur, then we want to be skillful with them. We want to know how to work with them and balance them and let them keep growing and, and such things. So these seven factors are mindfulness, investigation, energy, joy, tranquility, concentration, and equanimity. And in this series, so far, I've talked about the first two mindfulness and investigation. And this evening the topic is energy, the energy factor of awakening. And this factor of energy fits between investigation and, and joy. And that says so that one understanding is that these seven factors arise out of each other. And so if joy is going to somehow arise out of effort, it requires a particular kind of effort. That is not grim. that there isn't some, you know, you know, you don't take it too seriously. This stuff. There's a quote from supposedly from Suzuki Roshi, the Zen teacher in San Francisco. That said, life is too important to take seriously. Wow. The so what kind of effort gives rise to joy in the practice? So some of that has to do with the factor before investigation. As we started investigating as we started kind of tuning in and seeing really what's going on, then ideally, interest arises and a certain enthusiasm for discovery certain doozie, gasp for investigation, understanding what's there. And interest is, the joy that comes out of energy is sometimes defined as interest art. And not just interest but kind of zeal or kind of enthusiastic, engaged engagement with what you're doing. Call heartedly involved with what you do. Maybe a similar kind of joy maybe some people have if the if you read a really good book or you have a really a hobby that you get absorbed in or you play a musical instrument You get absorbed in a musical instrument instrument, and you kind of forget your world you forget your cares, forget even yourself, he was too absorbed in this thing. And there's a kind of sense of well being that can arise. I may be kind of happy to be kind of a joy that can arise from giving us a complete flow over to one thing that's really nice. It has your interest. And so the energy is one that I'm how we get wholeheartedly involved, the work we're doing. So that we are, you know, there's enthusiasm is joy, there's delight, there's an absorption, what we do, whatever it might be.

The issue of energy is I think it's a very interesting one. And some people would say that a huge part central part of any mindfulness practice, Buddhist practice, is negotiating the issue of energy. It's not

like just one kind of energy to apply, but understanding how we make energy. What kind of energy is needed, what kind of effort for what purposes we need to do? It's a big topic. And it's a topic that I try to avoid for a long time in my practice. Somehow I couldn't get myself to really understand how the how the topic of energy without the topic of striving or pushing or, like a burden of trying to do something. So I practiced a lot, I practice with enthusiasm, and probably with a lot of energy. But I didn't identify myself, I didn't think of myself that I was practicing with energy or a lot of effort, because somehow I associated with effort with work. And so you know, someone said, Make more effort, Gil, I probably would have just been bored worn down on that, you know, I tried harder and tightened up and all that. And so I didn't think that was conducive to any kind of thing good in practice. So I kind of my self image of myself was I didn't apply any effort. Whereas Actually, it was applying a lot. But it was, you know, it was a different kind. So this idea of what kind of effort or kind of a different approach to looking at how we make effort I'd like to try to convey with this idea is that in, in all your waking hours, maybe in all your hours, and all your waking hours, you're making effort. for some purpose, you're making some kind of effort. Even if you're completely kind of relaxed a couch potato, you know that you think you're doing nothing. You know, if someone asks you what are you doing, I'm nothing. You're watching TV, what are you doing? I'm doing nothing. You're looking at the ceiling. You're letting your mind kind of drift and go when your mind gets puts effort. It takes this you know our neural energies and applies it to daydreaming, something is going on there. There is effort being made. There's effort in and being a couch potato slouching in is relaxing. You know, so the a certain kind of effort that's there. But we don't think of it as self conscious effort. Maybe we don't think of it as work. So we say I'm not making any effort. But there's always some kind of effort and some kind of choice in what we're doing. And what we're asked to do. One of the things we're asked to do in this practice is to take interest to investigate. What is our relationship to effort? How do we make effort? What's our association with it? Are you like me and the word effort it has connotations of oppressive work, you know, know when a burden or his effort something brings you joy and delight. I kind of actually probably some of you already know this. I actually like making effort. I enjoy it a lot. When I worked on a farm for a while, when am I in my early 20s and I was so happy work doing all this physical work in the farm, that so I can even work more something or be I would run Between the tasks you know, I have to go get a shovel kind of run to get the shovel and come back so I can dig. So maybe that makes me strange but but the idea of you know, I wasn't thinking I was making effort, you know, that was an effort to I was just enjoying myself, you know, just having a good time. And then when I came to early 20s, also to San Francisco Zen Center, and one of the things I think, was the first question I asked the Zen teacher there. I got interested in Zen practice, but I'd heard you supposed to make effort in Zen. And in meditation, and I, you know, you know, the word effort was like a big, you know, it was like an E word or like a four letter word for me, even though it's more letters. And so with first effort, the question I asked my Zen teacher was, what kind of effort you have to do to practice Zen meditation. And he looked at me. And he said, All he said was, who's making the effort. And I didn't understand anything important what?

You know, and now it took me years to realize that that was a very profound counter question. You know, because you're supposed to kind of turn around and kind of go behind the issue of effort, you know, what's the self identity, the self consciousness, what's the sense of self behind that? Because there's something there about the self, your bring to your activity, their self identity you have that can be very important to understand if you're trying to understand effort. And I think for him, your The aim was to kind of see that it's possible to kind of, for your self consciousness to kind of disappear and then see what arises then what kind of effort what kind of energy arises on its own, without you self consciously, you know, bearing down and applying it. Then so that was a very important part of Zen training for me. Was there was a lot of effort made in Zen meters, you know, set up with sit up kind of very strong and straight, you had to not make the effort not to move in meditation you had to When the bell rang, you had to get up quickly and walk quickly and do all these things, chant and do all this, you

have to do a lot of stuff. And but what I learned was that by giving myself over wholeheartedly to the activity that I was doing, that there was some kind of effortless effort that arose. That effortless effort is an effort where I'm not being self conscious and doing it, but rather it's sometimes sometimes happens more with enthusiasm, the heart and heart wholeheartedness a certain kind of getting out of the way, a certain kind of just fully giving myself to it, and allowing something within and enthusiasm and energy and vitality. Two kind of animate me that I could identify with me doing the work. And so this kind of, you know, the birth the awakening of some kind of kind of natural enthusiasm or engagement, or something that was very important for me to learn in Zen. But the more important question for you is, what is your relationship to effort? What do you what are your associations with it? If someone tells you to make effort, do you get discouraged right away? Do you get resistant to the idea? Do you get enthusiastic is it Oh, boy, I'm so lucky. I get to make some effort, I could do something. What is your relationship to it? Because you might have developed over time, all kinds of attitudes, some from what you've learned, from your society, from schools, from classmates, from family, about what it means to make efforts and what kind of effort you should make, and some of it might not serve you very well. And that's one of the things that people learn when they start meditating, especially if you start meditating a fair amount is that the sooner or later you'll learn something about how you're, you're meditating what kind of effort you're making. Because sometimes effort can be counterproductive. If you make too much self conscious effort, you know, you're pushing and trying to get something striving, tightening up. I'm going to try harder. You actually can go backward and meditation. You just simply you know, you can't get more settled and more concentrated. You know, I've had I've known teachers in Asia who told their students you know, with the owl sometimes concentrate concentrate in Zen especially, they would yell, concentrate, concentrate, die on the cushion concentrate. You know, and I think it's certain context and certain kind of situations, that was probably very enlightening and helpful.

But for some people, they would get all wrapped up in themselves and talk all out to make more effort to get concentrated. Concentration requires a very calm, soft mind to get really concentrated, and so they get all stiff and tight. And you know, that's not really concentration. So, when someone says make effort, what are your associations with it? And now, if you remember from last week, I talked about investigation. One of the things we're investigating in all areas is what we're doing helpful or not helpful. Is it skillful or not skillful? So it's possible to turn the attention back to see how we're making effort and then investigate and see for yourself, is this helpful, or is it not helpful? If you're making too much effort, maybe you need to back off. If you make them too little effort, you need to kind of Make some more. Some people who come to meditation practice somehow think that meditation is all about relaxing and kind of being calm and, you know, and getting super thin. It's also nice, you know, and you know and as an antidote to being you know, always working and doing hard and, and so they, you know, they kind of don't make any effort. I know people who for didn't make any efforts and meditation real effort for years. And their mind wander, you know, it's also nice, they got a little bit of calm because they weren't doing anything, right. So, you know, they kind of pat themselves on the back, it works, you know, it's nice, I'm getting a little bit calmer and sleepy and, you know, and you know, going to Disneyland would be nice, and I wonder what I could go and there's those rides to go on. It'd be great to go in those rides and it's, you know, and I'm going to go on the roller coaster. You know, this, you know, I don't make any effort. Right, just want to relax just and so the mind has free rein to do whatever it wants. And so some people need to kind of, and some people start falling asleep in meditation, because they don't make enough effort. And then there's other people who make too much effort, and they get all tense. And one one, if you get too tense in meditation, you can't meditate. But really good, not a good but once one strategy that some people will make is meditation not going well because you make them too much effort is to make more effort. And that makes it even worse, right? So what what's the solution? Make more effort. And some people I know can bury themselves in the grave right? And doing that way, just you know, just keep pushing and pushing you know, knocking my head against the wall. So the idea is to

investigate and monitor yourself. And mindfulness and mindfulness meditation requires you to use your intelligence. You all have enough intelligence, but it's an intelligent person's kind of activity. And you have to use your intelligence. But remember the second factor of awakening investigation, you're always monitoring. Is this helpful or not helpful? So using your intelligence, but is it helpful or not helpful to use it? Sometimes it's helpful to kind of reflect and think and look and see, you know, what do I need to do here? Maybe, maybe I'm making too much effort. Maybe I'm making less. Let's try to make the tryst a little bit more. And sometimes you see that using your intelligence reflecting and thinking about it actually is counterproductive because, you know, sends up in your head and you're spinning around in your wheels in your head. So it's constantly coming back. Is it helpful was not helpful? is it helping me to have more years Freedom is it helping me to be more engaged to be more wholehearted in my activity. And so you're supposed to, we're supposed to become our own teachers. And you can only become your own teacher for yourself, if you're monitoring yourself well. And this is go back to the first factor of awakening, which is mindfulness. We want to cultivate the capacity to be attentive and mindful in the present moment. So that we in the present, then we can start to seeing what's happening in the present being present for it. Not being not meditators to kind of chill out and automatically zone out. But actually meditate to be really in the present moment in a calm, clear way. So we can see what's going on our thoughts in our body and our emotions, in our in our making effort. As we stay present, we then investigate where you started seeing what's going on is is helpful or not helpful, what's going on. And one of the things that we can then investigate is the quality of our effort and effort is needed.

The Buddha made a big deal about the importance of effort, he said make effort. But you have to kind of monitor to know what kind of effort to make. Do you bring a lot of self consciousness to your effort? meaning is a lot of you in the effort, you know, I have to make effort so that I look good. I have to make efforts so that I can be successful in the eyes of you fill in the blank. I have to make efforts so that I get an A, you know, I, I've known people who, who think that they have to, when they go to meet with a teacher to talk about their meditation practice, like on retreat, they have to show success. And so they make an effort because they, you know, not to just meditate well, but they want to look good when they go talk to the teacher. And that's also a recipe for disaster. The so what kind of self consciousness do you bring along? Is it possible? Is it? Is it helpful to be self conscious? Or is it not helpful? constantly asking that question? And if you look and see, well actually, maybe it's not helpful. Or maybe I don't know if it's helpful or not helpful. And then the task of meditation is trial and error. Try something out. Try it one way, and learn from that. And if it didn't work out, then try the other way. Try another way. And a big part of mindfulness meditation is in fact, trial and error. Again, you don't rely on teachers, you have to become your own teacher. And the way you learn is by trial and error. So with effort, you make more effort, you apply yourself more, and then you learn from the results. Don't be afraid to fail, because it's in the feeling that you'll learn how to correct yourself. I know people who've learned more from failing and meditation than from succeeding. And in fact, some of the biggest lessons I had were from failing utterly, totally. Yeah, I can tell you horror stories of how well I failed. And the reason why it was so good for me to fail, was that only then did I really understand what I was doing. So I had a certain neurotic desire to to be successful, you know, to be successful in the eyes of other people. And I was doing meditation, that is community of meditators. And so I would kept trying and trying and trying and the more I tried, the less I could meditate. And so that was one of those people who just tried harder and harder. Until finally on, on retreats, I would just crash and burn I'd reach rock bottom, I get all tense and it was hopeless in only When I finally gave up, okay, I give up, I don't know how to meditate, and I don't even know what meditation is anymore, I just give up. Then the meditation would begin. And in the process of them giving up fully, I saw the self identity issues, the sense of self and ideas of self, that were operating behind that effort that I probably couldn't have seen unless I failed miserably. Is that good? Now you tell me, you're never gonna make it again. You thought it was all about, you know, getting in the zone. So trial and error. So don't be afraid to try different things as you meditate, and then

see what that's like for you again, is it helpful or is it not helpful? Some things you'll learn quickly and some things take a long time before you get the feedback to find out if it's really working. So you know, some things you want to persist into. One of the definitions of effort in this tradition is persistence. And sometimes just hanging in there persisting is one of the useful things you can do. There are times when for me meditation is felt like manual labor. You know, I wasn't getting the obvious benefits that you read about and luckily when I was a new meditation student, we knew about less benefits but now because nowadays there's so much research and you know, all this clinical studies of meditation all these benefits you can get from meditation and it's a burden because you know, now you have that to measure yourself against my reach the goal you know, is my to the mirror has gotten me know what you know. They say that meditation kind of improves the health of your telomeres the ends of your DNA, and so you get old, slower so I didn't know that when I was a new meditator that no one knew that back then nobody to tell them Harris knew that.

And so you know, if you know a lot of the benefits and a lot of what can happen from meditation, it can be a real burden. You're looking for it. You're trying to get it. Am I reach that I gotten that yet and, and so that's not helpful. Is it helpful or not helpful? What kind of monitoring of yourself is helpful? neurotic monitoring, watching every little step? I've done the thing where I'm sitting down to meditate. I meditate a couple of breaths, how am I doing? do a couple more, but am I doing you know, my theory yet? Wherever there is, you know, it's like dalla Ji is I've told many times, it's like a farmer who plants corn plants to seed the corn seedling in the ground and it sprouts a little bit. And so then you pull the sprout out of the ground to see how well it's growing. And the thing about that it's very hard to put the corn seedling back in, basically, you can't grow any more than unless you're very lucky. You kill it right? So you know, so might you find out all this constant checking myself that doesn't work. I think what works is I think I need to check myself maybe once a week, you know, or just check at the end of my sitting up the undersea I'll set and the end of sitting a look back and reflect on that meditation and see what I can learn from it. But I don't think I'm going to try to monitor every moment as I as I do it, that just ties me up. But the idea of persistence is what I want to emphasize is that you hang in there and sustain the effort. They say that, you know, you if you want to heat water, and a kettle or you don't heat it up a little bit for a couple of minutes or a minute or something, then turn it off and come back an hour later, turn it on for another minute, and then turn it off. It's never going to you know you need to have continuity of the heat for it to build. Same thing with meditation. is a continuity, that that helps, helps the poor practice develop. And sometimes you don't get the benefits of meditation in one meditation session or two or three or four a week. And so if you're measuring yourself all the time, you can kind of tie yourself up and get discouraged. Sometimes the effort you need to make is just persist. Just hang in there, keep doing it. And perhaps maybe the end of the month, you you, you evaluate and look. And I've had the experience of meditation really feeling like manual labor, should I use my mind wants to wander away a lot, I'm sleepy a lot. I have to wake up and catch myself. I have to keep coming back, keep coming back. And there's no obvious benefits. But I've done this enough times over these 40 years that I've meditated, to know, to have a lot of trust in the process of the manual labor, just keep trying to come back, come back. Let go and come back. Like don't come back, sit up and wake up because some point Something comes together some something clicks in the whole psychophysical system, and then boom, then I find myself on here and present. And then it's possible to, you know, to get more concentrated and more settled. And I've learned to trust it so much that I can't know ahead of time how long that manual labor periods gonna last when it's like that. And so I just have to kind of keep doing it and keep doing it. Sometimes just a short while, sometimes it's a long time. But inevitably, it changes. And I can't know when it's going to change, but I have to make my effort. You know, as opposed to in a while, I'll just go watch TV, I'll go, you know, this doesn't feel like a good meditation today. So I, you know, I'm not getting anywhere. So I might as well give up you know, and better luck tomorrow. Then there's something deep inside it isn't being cultivated, developing and being worked. That happens

when there's manual labor. Other times my meditation has been the only effort I'd make is to make no effort. Sometimes I'm settled in the present moment, I'm here enough that I can really feel that any anything to do anything, tried to accomplish anything or get anything or just just kind of is an agitation in the mind. And what I mostly try to do is let go, let go of any effort at all, that it's kind of effortless effort, effort, just trust, getting out of the way, getting out of the way. And don't make any efforts that add anything except the effort of not making effort and sometimes even gets to the point where even that effort is too much. And so just kind of just trusting just being just being with it.

But the sense of just being an effortless effort getting out of the way, is a really nice thing, so helpful sometimes, but what I've seen some meditators do, is they adopt that as their power See, and they kind of sometimes it's great religious philosophy around how you should just be and not, you know, make any effort and just make effortless effort. But, you know, the Buddhist approach is not to have a policy not to have some ultimate kind of philosophical view would rather keep coming back trial and error, what's helpful and not helpful, what helps you become freer. And don't be seduced by calm. Don't be seduced by just being kind of, you know, just kind of generically kind of calm and relaxed and kind of removed from your troubles. Where we're trying to develop here in meditation is a certain degree of inner strength. It's kind of like there's certain injuries we have in our body, where the instinct for some people like certain back injuries, is to arrest the back, or what's needed is the back needs to be stronger. My wife had repetitive stress injury interest once and a lot of people were telling her Relax, relax, relax, and it just never healed actually got worse. And she finally found a physical therapist said you need to build up your strength and your shoulders. And when she built up the shoulders to shoulder strength, maybe created some different conditions there for the nerves. And that allowed the wrist pain to heal. So sometimes you need to build strength. And so Buddhist meditation practice does involve building strength. So you save energy is supposed to translate to becoming strong and different ways in psychological ways or ways of the heart. So there's not just learning how to be calm and some easy way. And then comes a crisis in our life. And you can't be calm and you don't know what to do. You want to develop strength, of mindfulness, strength, investigation, strength of being engaged and being present. Strength of joy, strength of calm, for sure. It's the kind of strength to develop strength of concentration and Strength of equanimity. So they've become stronger and stronger. And so that you can carry those with you into different settings in different places. And they support you, they create a balance, so you're more balanced in situations. But if meditation is only about kind of getting cool, relaxed, calm kind of floating around, it's okay that those strengths are not being developed. So this idea of effort, making effort to persistent effort, the effort to kind of keep it like Like, for example, meditation, do it every day. It takes effort to show up and meditate every day, however long you do, that builds a strength that builds momentum. Make an effort to let go of your thoughts and come back, make an effort to stay on the breath when you're focusing on the breath. And that's the stage where they make an effort to sustain the attention. Some people can be very good, to make effort to let go of their thoughts and come back to the breath. But then there's a separate effort needed to then sustain the attention on the breath. And they don't know about that second effort they know about the coming, connecting to the breath, but they don't have to start sustaining it. And so then to make a difference, discover explore what is it to sustain to hang in there to stay with the breath. in daily life, right effort in Buddhism, Brazilian right effort involves also involves an evaluation, a consideration of what kind of what kind of activities should I be doing, that are helpful for me, and what kind of activities are not helpful that I should let go of. And so things like greed is not a helpful activity to be involved in. generosity is a helpful activity. A hate is not helpful activity. hostility is not a helpful activity to be involved in. kindness and compassion is helpful activity. So there's this kind of differentiation, monitoring states of mind what our mind is doing, and having a sense of what is helpful and not helpful, not good and bad. Like you're a bad person if you have one way. But what is helpful and not helpful is the analysis, and daily life. There's a lot of emphasis in Buddhism. Make effort to cultivate the helpful

states of mind. Don't be pollyannish about it, don't kind of pretend. But then in simple, honest, authentic ways. Can you emphasize more generosity, more compassion, more friendliness, more wisdom, more investigation, as opposed to more greed, hate tuning out, not paying attention.

You know, cultivate the higher ethical sensitivity, more empathy, as opposed to being unethical. So you need to, so to make the effort, but then as always, what kind of effort what's the quality of the effort you're making? Is the way you're making effort helpful, or not helpful. Now, you know, you hear this talk is like not to make effort to be generous. And so you can't like you know, get all tight and looking for general moving and be generous do now was generous enough, and, you know, and, and you know, all this stuff. They do, how you make effort is good is. So if you want to be generous, can you find a way to be generous, that's nourishing for you. that supports you That feels good, not a way of being generous, that kind of burdens you more. So this is an intelligent way of practicing this is it does involve being your own teacher monitoring yourself, having a beginning to have a sense through trial, trial and error, what's useful and not useful. have a sense of, you know, what, what kind of how to evaluate. So it helps you become more peaceful, more free, more engaged. We're involved. We're more kind of intentionally involved with your life in a way that's freeing. So right out, so this effort factor of awakening, very important quality. And then they'll repeat what I said at the beginning. The effort factors is working well, when it's a foundation or prompt for the joy factor, which is next week.

So we have a few minutes anyone would ask any questions or express any reservations or wholehearted protests?

Worry about sustaining the breath, I find that I can return to it. And then just flit away. Yeah, butterfly. And sometimes I'm able to stay there. But I can't quite get a hold of it of the mechanism. Developing the model of this works.

Well, I'll try to say something. But again, this this the set, the theme for today of being your own teacher, and monitoring yourself, is that a teacher can a teacher can say something and make some suggestions. And they may they might not be appropriate for any given person. And then some people think the teacher is right, that teacher knows and so then it's like, you're burdened by this like teachers knows what I'm supposed to do. it that way, there is not one, you know, I think everyone has to find their own way. And sometimes a teacher's answer is on the mark. Sometimes it's not on the mark, but it's suggestive of something different, you find your own way. So you have to kind of experiment. So whatever I say take it, you know, seriously and likely, not too seriously. So sometimes an analogy is helpful. It would be if you're with someone who really feels like you need needs attention, you want to sustain your presence, you don't necessarily stare at them, but you want to keep them in focus. So they know you're paying attention to you. You may have had the experience of someone you're with and they weren't really paying attention to you. You were talking it was really important for you, it's something and they're like looking around and you know, you know, like not really there and you can kind of feel it, you know. And so and you know what it feels like when someone is there. Maybe you know what it's like when you're really there for someone. So can you take that analogy, that sense of being really there for some activities, you know how to do like being with the person who were accounts. And try to do that with your breathing. So some people are more focused with the eyes, he was trying to sustain the gaze, the inner gaze on the breath. Some people are more kinesthetic. So it's more like, like you're holding hands with the breath uses, you're there. Or you put your hand on your on a friend shoulder and they know you're there and maybe they're really distressed. So you want to sustain the hand there on the shoulder, you don't just pat them once and keep it there. So you so the kinesthetic physical feeling of being present with the experience of breathing is one way of sustaining it. Sometimes there has to be a kind of a little kind of thinking that goes along, a kind of little evaluation,

little kind of mental encouragement so that the thoughts are not going quickly into other Things fleeting away, but there's a very simple, relax kind of, you know, even leaving some, like, stay there. Stay with it going on this left actually saying those words to yourself. Stay, stay, stay, you know, I sometimes use the word Yes. Yes. You know, I find Yes, yes, they there Yes. And because it's like a using a thought to help you be present because if you don't give the thoughts some things to do sometimes the thoughts will wander off on their own they'll think they'll think they have things to do. So, you know, sometimes having a little label like that then can be helpful to sustain it. And the other thing is helpful was sustaining attention. Sometimes it's best not to have really big goals. Like I know sometimes I'm gonna sustain my I'm not gonna let I'm gonna With the breath 400 breaths, I'm not going to miss one breath to the end of the meditation session. It's just unrealistic. And you know, and it's just, you know, for generally for people coming off the street and starting to meditate. And so you're already setting yourself up for discouragement and failure. And sometimes it's better to have kind of shorter go smaller goals. You know, I'm going to sustain it. For one breath, can I just be there for the full in breath and the out breath. And that should you know, and that's, that's maybe manageable, like you can get that at the end of year. And so you don't flip it, you talk about flitting away so easily, right? But you're, if you just commit yourself to one breath, maybe your feet away a little bit slower. You'll get to that one breath, and if you can't, you know, then and then occasionally if you really doesn't work. There's all kinds of other interesting things to do. One is do the equivalent in your mind. gritting your teeth. You know, I'm not going to let I'm going to hang in there no matter what. It doesn't look pretty. But it might train your mind to relax and stay present and not give in. It's like overcoming an addiction. You have to kind of not we're addicted to our thoughts. Sometimes you need strong medicine to come hang in there Don't you know. And sometimes, the afterwards in order to sustain the attention, you have to understand much better, why you float away.

So you need to investigate the floating away to understand what's going on there. So maybe something there needs to relax. And only something when that flood, whatever is causing you to wander off in thought so easily, that tension or that pressure, as relaxed, then it can be easier just to stay with a breath. So that was a whole slew of things. I don't know if that you'll find something that's

So one more and then we'll stop

it's kind of a pipe dream question, but I was wondering if it's possible to transform your ego into a more harmonious energy?

Can you translate transfer your ego to more harmonious energy? So I think then you need to help me with defining what ego is for you. Well,

my ego is definitely more of a distraction for me.

So ego is distraction or ego the your ego concerns are a distraction. For me, which one is it if he didn't understand what you said, ego is a distraction, or definitely a distraction.

From you know when I'm trying to say

it could well be, but what is ego?

Oh, that's hard to explain.

Your question is really good. I think that the wise I suspect the wisest thing I can do in response for you the most helpful thing is to ask you to go home this next week and figure out what is identify what is the ego for you. So you can clearly describe it well what it is up very specifically, be really specific and look at yourself and

see ego come up as

kind of

grasping or taking Ownership of

like an ability or activity

I've seen it turn into a delusion

I've seen it

to contrast comparisons Yeah.

So it but you keep talking about it

myself. You know it's part of me.

But as I understand but you're getting closer you're what you described was great that you see all this a little bit away still a little bit removed. What is it in it? Because you started with the ego now you're talking about yourself or this anonymous?

Yes. Oh.

It is myself.

It is yourself. And so what is it about yourself as troublesome? That you Wanting to create more harmony? Well,

the reason I ask these kinds of questions is that the whole path of mindfulness works a lot better if we're more specific about what we're looking at and talking about. And it's quite reasonable that you asked about the ego given how it's often used in our society, but it's an abstraction. And so when we were talking about abstractions, we can't mindfulness doesn't really work with abstractions. You have to kind of ground yourself and find yourself with what's more specific what's actually going on what's actually occurring and arising in the moment. So if I may if I may suggest that you reported started report quite well do something. But that you go I spent a weekend and look more detail and see if we can be more specific. There. Okay. Great. Okay. So thank you all for this evening. And I hope that the haven't burden you with a talk on effort. But rather instead made you much more curious about it. So that you maybe this week you're kind of investigating Look, your relationship to effort. How you make effort are the more useful ways of making effort, and how can it effort, making effort, engaging effort, be something that really serves you in this life and something that brings you joy, which would be next week's topic. Thank you.