

2019-06-01 Different Forms of Attention Part 2

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SPEAKERS

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So for those of you weren't here for the earlier, first part talk, the theme of the day for the talks, at least, is that attention is not a singular thing. But that there are many different forms of attention, that operate for human beings. And that to be a skilled mindfulness practitioner, it helps to be able to recognize and know the different forms of attention. And in doing so know what form might be needed at any given time. And so, people who, when they first get introduced to meditation, you know, they don't really I need to know much about the different forms of attention. They just need to not wander off and come back. And whatever attention we have we can use to stay present come back might be good enough for the beginning. But as practice deepens, then we're able to begin to maybe to stay a little bit more with the experience of the moment, then we useful to know that there's actually multiple ways we can be, and that different situations call on different ways of being two different kinds of attention. And so I made the distinction earlier between passive attention and active attention. And I said that the passive is maybe an unfortunate choice of words, maybe receptive is better. But or maybe instead of passive or receptive, maybe just the natural functioning without any self conscious, willing of something. Maybe it's unintended kind of in a certain kind of way unwieldy attention as opposed to willed attention. If there's a loud, loud sound outside, maybe a nice sound, and you're not trying to listen to it, but it goes through your ears and you hear it, you know, it's just the natural functioning of, of hearing operates. But you're not actively listening to yours to hear hearing. But if I say there's a really subtle sound someplace coming from somewhere in the room here, and can everyone please listen to that very little, whatever it is. Everyone's going to kind of direct maybe direct your attention to activate Listen, try to tune in what in the world is Gil talking about? And, and so there's a, it's active that way. So there's active and there was not so active or what's allowed or something. And that sometimes we wanted to use the more active parts of attention and I talked about The act of knowing act of recognition, clear comprehension, which can might be more active, like, okay, let's, let's see what's here. Let's recognize what's here in the moment. And that recognition keeps us in the present. It's some for some people, it's an anchor to the present. And some things really it helps to know them, and to recognize them and distinguished you know, what's actually happening versus everything being a vague, you know, buzz of things happening. And then, but then also, there's something which I talked about, which can be kind of between or we can straddle both sides of something more active and passive. And that is observation. We have the ability to observe, and we can observe actively and really look, and we can, you know, actively look, or we can observe and just allow the seeing to happen, and sometimes being apart from the experience having some business For whatever we're paying attention to, and observing it or perceiving it in the mind's eye, that distance can be very helpful. So we don't over identify with it don't overly engaged or entangled with it. And, and so we're not kind of maybe we learn that observation, just to let it be there and not for us to interfere with it or come to conclusions about it, we kind of rest and some people find it very restful to lean back kind of, against the tree or something and just watch reality kind of occur go by, and that can be very helpful. So sometimes if you want to be active, sometimes there's more, you

know, observing and choosing how to observe whether we try to observe really close or observe something far away, we can kind of admit, you know, part of this thing about attention and awareness is a quite a fluid thing. What it actually is Let's say that I'm very fond of telling people that I don't know what mindfulness is. You know, I'm a mindfulness teacher. I've been doing this for a very long time.

And it's true, I don't really know what it is. But I seem to know good enough well enough. And I don't know what awareness is, either. But that's the medium in which my practice unfolds. It's like it's more. One of the most important things in my life is awareness. But I don't exactly know what it is. And partly, that's because it's, it's kind of a morpheus. What it is, it's kind of like water that takes whatever shape or the container gets poured into. Awareness is kind of a little bit like water. And it takes different shapes, different forms, different ways in which it comes together, and different ways in which it's imagined. Because the mind is constructed, constructs kind of an imaginary idea of what awareness is, and so it kind of is fluid. And so this idea that you can kind of let your observed A sense be close to an experience really intimate, or being not. So in a faraway is sometimes an option that we can play with. And some people find that very helpful to choose how close or far away they are, how spacious or open awareness is the awareness going to keep it really wide and open. And that's, you know, makes it very receptive like that your mind is just like an open window and everything just kind of goes through. Other times what's really nice is to have a pinpoint laser focus, that that just kind of zero and then just really look at it. But you know, the different ways of being attentive. What I wanted to mention, at this point in the day, is that one form of attention that one way and choice for practitioners of how to be attentive is to be aware Through sensing, using sensing feeling, and maybe you can use the word experiencing. So observing you're a little bit apart from the experience, recognition and clear knowing maybe it's could be said sometimes it's a little bit more in the head. To do that it's a little bit more mental. To do that. It's useful at times but to but to be inexperienced and to sense it to feel what's going on. So you would put yourself your awareness right in the middle of something, physical experience and emotional experience, and put it right in the middle in the body. Like I imagine there's a chair waiting for you in the middle of your anger, and you sit in the middle of it and feel what that's like sense the experience, or if there's physical pain, or if there's physical delight or pleasure. Same thing you might go and kind of imagine or have awareness to Nan Right in the middle of it, so you're in there feeling and sensing allowing the sensing of it to come alive for you and full. And, you know, if you put your attention in any part of your body, like put it in your hand, and really sense what's there, a whole array of sensations would become evident, that probably you wouldn't if you weren't paying attention to your head, you're ignoring it and listening to it doing something else. And, and the hand becomes alive with tingling and vibrating and pulsing and temperature differences. And, you know, all kinds of things can come alive if you're sensing it. So there's a very rich world of sensations that exists for us. And an important part of mindfulness practice it at the right time, is to sense the experience, be in the middle of the experience and make space for it to be there. By faith, the felt sense of distance. And might be more important than knowing it more important than recognizing it. More important than observing it by being in the middle of it and sensing it and let it kind of unfold and show itself to you from the inside out sensing. One of the interesting aspects of sensing is that there's a non dual relationship between the sensation and the sensing that the capacity to sense something to see to perceive, smell to hear. And the act of hearing the act of smelling the act of touch, you know, feeling that's physical sensations that they don't, you know, sensing and the sensations are not two different things, they kind of arise together. The sensing is more subjective. This sensation may be a little more objective, but it's kind of fast. stating that they come together in this non dual way. And to be really feeling and sensing it that

kind of that non dual place within the body just being allowing and letting it have its life is a very powerful way of practicing. So we have this capacity to feel what's going on. And there are times that that's the primary medium through which my practice is unfolding or this any situation is happening. I'll

tune in. How does this feel in my body? What's going on? I'm in some kind of situation and what does that feel like? What's this? What are the sensations happening here, what's happening my belly, my chest and what's happening with my temperature variations in my body or the tensions in my body, the sensing the musculature, this subtle little tightening and loosening of the muscles and as I go through the situation, even if you go down a street on a kind of sunny day, may If you're really tuning into how things feel, you might sense in your body, how your body sensations shift from being in the sun to being in the shade. Just that little shift, something might shift inside or not. So subtle things might happen. If you're walking down the sidewalk, and, and the neighbor neighborhood dog runs out towards you. There's a lot of different sensations that would arise maybe, and so you can sense and feel this rich world. Part of the advantages of that is it gives us a lot more information and often useful information, to understand ourselves to understand what's going on around us. Sometimes some of the most important cues about what's happening in the world will come through sensations that are arising in our body. And so we have if we allow ourselves to sense and feel we have just much more information to build our understanding with And also some people find it easier to be present. If they're really, in the experience itself. Any attempt to be apart from it or to know, it just seems like it's too distant, it's too forced. It's to something. And, and so this idea of sensing, So sensing experience, is another form of attention. And so the idea that I'm trying to convey that's maybe I said a little bit better this morning is that there are many different ways to be attentive. And as we learn the different ways that we have that, we have some degree of choice about which one to use at any given time. And, and as we kind of keep using these different ways of attention, we become wiser and more skilled about what's needed at any given time. So we can call them the right one, or the best one the most useful one, if we only have one idea of what mindfulness is, and then it might be useful in some occasions, but not in other occasions. Or it might be useful all the time in some way. But it's not, it doesn't really help us be connected to the richness of the fullness or all the different aspects of what's happening in the present moment. And so we see, partly what I'm basing this talk on this idea, this theme for today is in this ancient teachings of the Buddha, you see that he actually refers to different kinds of attention, when he gives instruction, different kinds of instructions for how to practice. And so, you know, this is not some you know, newfangled idea. One of the newfangled ideas that by the different kinds of awareness that Dharma teachers now are talking About the Buddha never did was talking about proprioception. proprioception is a whole form of awareness in itself. And, and so that also comes into play and operates, but we don't find that referred to in the suit this. So there's probably other ways of learning, okay, you know, modern modern physiology is learning all kinds of other ways in which we take in, data taken stimulus, information gets released, you know, process and all this stuff. So, maybe it's a good time to evoke our capacity for sensing. Feeling, this felt sense experience in our body, just before supper

so that as you have supper, you might enjoy this joy from or fully experienced it more AND and OR If you use the idea of sensing your food and your eating more, maybe you don't sense more but you understand much better how much you get caught in your thoughts until you're separated from at all, which is good to know too. So, we're very fortunate that Jessica Escobedo has made a wonderful meal for all of us for this day. And it's wonderful part of these day long intensive day long that the community comes forward and makes these offerings to the practitioners here and does it with the idea of supporting you and encouraging you and all that and Hillary voicing some and helping quite a bit she helped with breakfast and so if you're staying you know, please stay for supper and people who know how to do it, we'll set up the tables and the chairs and the outer Hall and if some of you at the end can help with the cleanup of it all including sweeping not all out there. That would be great. And it might also be a particularly good time at the end of this coming break to clean the bathrooms. Because the end of all day long, so we want to do it. And then we'll come back. There's a sitting in here again at 620. And then the two sits in a walk and now give a Dharma talk. It says here on the schedule 815 to nine, but I

can't imagine I'm going to talk for 45 minutes. So, you know, it's probably appropriate to have a little bit shorter and then to go home. So we'll see how that goes. So thank you so much.