

# 2019-08-26 Benefits of Body Meditation

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

buddha, body, mindfulness, people, ideas, deathless, thoughts, thinking, world, hand, meditation, life, mind, son, discontent, feel, grounded, rumination, feeling, taught

## SPEAKERS

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Yeah, I find it curious to hear about the announcement of this Sati center day long on Buddhism in neuroscience and how little I know on that topic. And you know, and as all this neuroscience is going on, I'm confident sitting here meditating. There's a lot going on in there. But I don't I don't know what that is the neuroscience of it particularly. So but I do know I don't know what exactly is going on in the inside. At least in terms of what is invisible to me. But in terms of what's visible or perceptible to this whole experience,

I read an article this week that the subject of which I've read articles about this topic for, I don't know, 4050 years, it seems like this cycles through the same kind of idea. It just seems that as time goes along, rather than getting better, because we know about this phenomena, it just seems to be getting worse. That's at least that's the impression I get from the article side. And that is the degree to which people in our culture are excessively body conscious. And you know, it's been an ongoing thing. And now with selfies, apparently There's this distortion of the face and what you know, you can't have a good selfie. So I don't know how that works, you know, I know little about neuroscience and a little bit of plastic surgery, but but I think that they tried to match their face with a good selfie photo, is that what they're trying to do? You know, so it doesn't matter what you look like in real life, it just matters what you look like in the photograph. You know, so I'm a little mystified by how it actually works in society, but the degree to which it seems to be intensified in our society. And one way of not being surprised by it, that this is happening is that it seems like when people spend a lot of time with their technology, with a lot of time on the web and all that, that it seems like it's becoming more and more visible, where we're all Image world and videos are becoming more important than they were certainly 40 years ago and, and now I was, you know, I kind of grew up even before these music videos that were really popular for a while whether they called it on TV that was music video and you know that really popular and I mean, I kind of grew up with TV, but TV was tame compared to what we have now. And so it's a world of those screens, that puts people into the world of their ideas and thoughts and images. And I think that one of the leading causes of depression, a leading cause of

probably insanity of some kind or other is uninterrupted thinking that we spend too much time in the world of thoughts and ideas, and we don't get out of it. If we get to many people, I think get into a distorted view of the world. Thinking is not necessarily so accurate, especially if it's uninterrupted. But if it stops and we could start over again, then the train of thought and rumination that's going on the self talk that's going on, gets interrupted and a chance for some kind of health to come in. But people who just constantly self ruminate constantly kind of this endless stream left alone too much left alone with their device. I think it leads to kind of faulty thinking of all kinds. And one of those kinds of faulty thinking is very, very concerned about self image. Got to be self conscious and body conscious and all that. And, and, and they can get to, you know, quite intense for some people. So but this has been going on

for a long time. And I don't know when in human history this began. But it seems like it was existing even that time at the Buddha because there's one story of the Buddha and his son. Buddha had a son and everyone realizes that and the sudden, Buddha left his family when the son was born, it's a story. But the Buddha went back to his family when he when the son was seven years old. After the Buddha was enlightened, it seems like one of the early things he did after he was finally kind of attained this quest was he went back to his home, and he didn't go back to live with his family, but he'd went back to visit and as a consequence, his son decided or somehow went off. For the father, rather than stayed with his mother, and became a novice monastic. And so I don't know, I don't know how, you know, the Buddha actually raised a son directly or whether he just he was raised in the monastic community but and but there's a few stories about this father son interactions. And one of them occurs when it's with a son his name rahula was we think he was like a young teenager. Some say he was 13 or 14. And they went out for their morning alms, monastics don't can't keep food overnight. Whatever food they eat, has to be fluid that's given to them. The morning of the next day, and that day, that's what they get eaten. At noon, they have to forfeit whatever food is leftover and there's they don't eat between noon until next morning, and they don't save any food. So every morning they wake up with no money and no food and they have to then live on the generosity of people who want to feed them. And what monastics will do is walk into town, if they're out in the countryside or walk through villages, with their bowls, alms bowls, and people will put food in it. So the, the Buddha and his son were off together on this alms round, and so the Buddha would be in front and the sun would be behind. And it seems that what happens you read between the lines is that the sun being I guess, having half the genes of his father kind of looked like his father. And, and the widow was like, you know, the big, big guy, right, that makes that religious tradition. And so the sun at the got a little bit of conceit that he was good looking like is that and so it's not so unusual, maybe for a 1314 year old to be concerned with their looks and what's going on and so even back then, you know, that was going on and so the Buddha somehow understood that this was happening, maybe that 13 year old was studying monastic studying or something. I don't know what you know, how you do it back then, but, and. And so, he should quoted accurately to what he saw the Buddha says to his son.

So, he says to assign any kind of physical form, whatever or their past, future or present internal external, grosser, subtle, inferior or superior far or near all physical forms should be seen as it actually is with proper wisdom. Thus this is Not mine, this am I not this I am not, this is not myself. So apparently he was thinking he was hot stuff physically. And the Buddha says, you know, anything that any physical form any shape that you have any look that you have, that's not really who you are in any kind of way of assessing, that's who you are. Don't don't identify with it. And, and I guess this was such a timely teaching, just given what the sun was thinking probably, that

they the rahula said, who would go into town for alms today, when personally admonished by the Buddha. So, you know, that little thing you know, don't take anything physical as you know yourself. That was an admonishment. So, you know, we don't quite know between the lines of what was going on. But so my idea that he was kind of proud of it. Looks, you know, interpretation, but something happened there. So he was admonished for that. And so then he turned back, he and it his alms round the sun and he went back to camp. And so that day he wasn't gonna eat because he wasn't getting any food. And he went back and sat down at the root of a tree, folding his legs crosswise, setting his body erect and established mindfulness established mindfulness. So he sat down to meditate. But then the Buddha's kind of main disciple, sorry. So I'm sitting there, and he said to him, rahula, developed mindfulness of breathing, when mindfulness of breathing is developed and cultivated, is of great fruit and great benefit. And so I guess he'd never heard the instructions of mindfulness of breathing. So that evening, rahula got And went to his father and said, Can you teach me mindfulness of breathing. And so the Buddha did, and taught him and, but he taught him a variety of things first, in preparation for that.

And the first he taught them was, how to be aware of his body, how to tune in to his sensations of his body, and be aware of those sensations. And that was the beginning. And then he taught him how to do loving kindness, and how to do compassion, practice and things like that. And in that teacher taught us on how to have equanimity practice equanimity. And then on that foundation, he taught him mindfulness of breathing. And, and what he did in doing so, was he showed his son or taught his son, how to develop a very different relationship to one's body. Then when can when is when persons involved with their ideas and images of the body body image and what people think of my body and what I look like and how I show off or something. In a sense, that's all surface thoughts. Those are concepts, ideas that kind of that are not very deep within. And so instead, by teaching meditation, he was teaching a very radically different way of experiencing oneself or knowing oneself. And a kind of direct contact with oneself, that provides a very different reference point for who we are, how we live, or what's important we feel. When you're really in touch with your body really grounded and connected and meditation. There's a very strong tendency to see thinking in a different light than we can if we're running around our life and kind of busy in our thoughts where we're kind of spinning kind of a one teacher one says that for many people thinking Like an endless loop of a freeway on ramp that's never you can never get off of, you know, just kind of spinning in caught and, you know, probably in rush hour traffic. And so the, so they'll

be living in that world is actually quite shallow. And to be able to drop down and feel the physical body and sense it from the inside out is actually you know, it goes from a two dimensional one dimensional way of living to multi dimensional, there's so much more of our life is here in the present moment. And we get a very different relationship to our thinking. Rather than having thinking, being giving it a lot of authority or focus on it as being so important or being the final say, thinking can be seen much more as provisional thinking can be seen much more as optional, you know, maybe it's true, maybe it's not, maybe it's not that important. It doesn't kind of have so much glue that we get caught in. And so this kind of continual rumination tends not to happen for people who are really well grounded or settled into their body experiencing things from the inside out. And for one reason for that is that meditation is one of the things that interrupts that train of thoughts. And it's really important for some people to have their thought trained interrupted, so that this you know, unhealthy ruminations self talk and stop, and then get a different perspective. When you really meditate deeply and well. It's not you're not really necessary to stop the thought train, it's, even if it still goes on a little bit. It's not really a train, it's just bubbling up with thoughts. You don't have any sticky glue to them. And, and then people get a very different relationship to their body, or to themselves. There's a place if you get really into mindfulness of the body and mindfulness of breathing, and the breathing comes to relax and relax, knowing soft there's a feeling of kind of reassurance There's a feeling of safety, a feeling of goodness, if you think of wellness, a feeling of stability, of safety, of confidence of well being of happiness, you know, different people, different ones with those words, work for what happens to them. But there's a whole different kind of feeling or way of being that comes into play. And, and, and to be able to develop or feel a sense of well being, feel good about yourself. To have an internal reference point for feeling whole. feeling fine. Feeling complete feeling okay about yourself. It can be really strong and palpable in meditation, because it doesn't require ideas. It doesn't require having a better biography doesn't require having a better, you know, story to tell people or a better identity or better, you know, things or you know, you know, more likely on your Facebook page, or, you know, it doesn't, that's not where it's at. It's just, it's kind of the sense of well being dwells and settles inside. And what's fascinating to me is even to watch this day, to watch having that, getting into that, and having that with me into my daily life, and then watching the forces inside, where I kind of start departing from that, and kind of go into that rumination into the thought. And it's so seems so simple in daily life to kind of get involved in all the concerns of the daily life and the thoughts involved in this stuff. And that has to happen. And pretty soon I find myself kind of, in that world of thoughts, again, more than I'm in the world of my connected body are coming out of here. And

so fortunately, I have a practice and I, you know, I recognize when this happening, and then I can come back and get settled again. And I do that repeatedly through the day. And I think my life is so much more comfortable because of it. I'm pretty confident that if I just let go My mind had free rein to only think and that's what my whole experience of life was when I was constantly vegetating in my mind. Not only would it be not be good for me, it probably wouldn't be good for you. You know, it's, uh, you know this mind, some people have said, the mind has no shame. But that's kind of a strong word to use, maybe not so nice thing to say. But, you know, the thinking mind at least for some people, it's not the wisest part of who we are. And so if we give too much rain, freedom to that thinking mind, it's, you know, it's can cause difficulties.

So, you see in the teachings of the Buddha, a tremendous emphasis on mindfulness of the body, a tremendous emphasis on being centered and grounded in the body. So that awareness, presence, being conscious happens through the body. Awareness is not one of the Big changes for me in my years of practice was that before I practiced, and someone had asked me, where are you aware? Like, what if you're going to point to where in your body you're aware, where are you aware? And before I meditated, I certainly would have pointed up here to my brain. That's, you know, and then after some years of practice, if someone asked me that, I would have pointed to my chest, that that's awareness resides in my body, not up in my head. And then, at some point, someone asked me, I would not pointed at my head or my body, but I would just spread my arms in a wide circle like it just all here. There's no you know, awareness that, you know, where are you aware, I'm aware everywhere at the same time, it's like holistic and whole, but it's holistic in whole, through the vehicle to the body through the senses and the nerves. And everything happening here. And that was us. Excuse me.

There was no magic moment or key or you know, flipping a switch for that to happen. But it was a slow and steady, day after day meditating, coming back to my breathing, coming back to my body, going back to the present moment over and over and over again. That began to awaken my capacity to feel my body to be connected to my body, and to sense and feel through the body. So that my experience of myself of this being here is not in the head but kind of radiates outward from some inner center to include everything, but in radiating outward and goes through my muscles, it goes through my nerves. It goes through Like bones kind of. And so all the information all that's there becomes a counterbalance to being lost in thought counteracting a thought. And so the Buddha, you know, emphasizes over and over again, the emphasis importance of being in the body. And he emphasized that also for ethical reasons that people are much more ethical, when they're connected to their body, there's something about the reference point of our physicality. That gives us a different kind of set of informations about how to behave, what our impact is, what the sources of our behavior is inside of us. That's very different if we're up there in the control tower and the head. And so here's some examples of CMC said so, first introduction, he said, what to say when, when mindfulness to the body has been repeatedly practiced. developed, cultivated, used as a vehicle used as a basis, establish consolidated and well undertaking. These benefits may be expected. When becomes a conquer, too strong word becomes a conquer of discontent. Isn't that polite, nice. You want to be a conqueror of your disconnect discontent and discomfort and discomfort. discomfort does not conquer oneself when abides overcoming discontent whenever it arises, so discontent How many of you are controlled by your discontent and discomfort and things have to change and you get angry at people or get irritated easily and, you know, you say things you don't wish you hadn't said. Only one person admits it. Oh, You're not alone, I'm sure. And so mindful, it's something about mindfulness of the body being centered and grounded your body, that it allows you to discharge the attention of it or not get caught up in the thoughts of it or the feelings of it. It allows a whole different kind of reference point of, maybe it's kind of more spacious, more clear, more grounded, we don't get caught by discontent. Then he goes on and says, When becomes a conquer of fear and dread and fear and dread did not conquer oneself, when a by overcoming fear and dread

whenever they arise. And I still get nervous at certain times in my life, not nothing like I used to be when I was 20 or 19. I dissociated because I was so afraid once you know, fear was a big part of my life. And now you know, have something there versus Neff left, but because I have struggled connection to my body. When the nervousness arises, I go back and just feel it in my body, I sense it to kind of rest in it in a sense. And it's like the body, the physical body becomes a, you know, like a kind supportive friend for the nervousness like it's like, it's like supported or helped or, or, you know, cuddled or something. And so it allows that nervousness to relax. And so that kind of softens away. So, you know, just not something that really bothers me or interrupts my life in any kind of way. Because I think I contributed a lot to this ability to feel it and be grounded in my body. If I go up to my head, and say, you know, why am I nervous? And what happened to me and then I should be nervous and what did that person say? And what should I do and what are the causes and what's the reasons and, you know, it's back to that freeway, you know, on ramp, you know, spinning around and it's for me, it's not that it's it's much less direct than just of dropping into the body and feeling it there and having it somehow be, be no longer a problem. Then the Buddha goes on to says, if one has a strong mindfulness to the body, one bear bears cold and heat, hunger

and thirst, and contact with gadflies, mosquitoes, wind and sun and creeping things. That with you what one endures ill spoken, unwelcome words. That's nice. So, one endures. So something about being centered and grounded in your body, you're less likely to be triggered by things people say mean things to you or unkind things to you and it's you know, you still be wise about it and know how to take care of yourself. But the triggering the reactivity is less likely to happen. If we're kind of centered and grounded in the body, the body's like ballast and then he goes on to say That bodily feelings that are painful, racking, sharp, piercing, disagreeable, distressing, and menacing to life, you bear those as well. That's useful, you know, strong pain. You know, sometimes the aspirin is not available, their pain medication not available and you just have to somehow manage with the pain. And, and I didn't do it consciously, you know, or intentionally. But in my early years of Zen practice, I worked on the Zen that green Gulch farm, which is a farm with its own centers, Cisco has, and farm work is kind of, you know, physical, heavy work. And, and there was lots of occasion where the work was physically painful. Sometimes, so we were carrying these really heavy things across fields. And you know, I wasn't not so strong and so it really hurt my hands or my arms. And, and it became a very interesting for me to, to kind of explore and feel what was going on with me with those strong pain. I knew it was optional, I could put things down. But to really stay there and see what was all the reactivity I had, whatever the fear I had what was what was the what was the impulses I had, that were trying to get away from it or be discouraged or upset or get angry or something? And how could I manage to just be holding the these things that were so painful to hold and the intense pain that I experienced? And how can I have equanimity with it? How can I just be spacious about it? And it just seemed like the natural thing to do when I was doing there, and I don't know why it was so unintentional. It just felt like the natural thing to do. But I think maybe because of all the meditation I was doing, the meditation I was doing was a training and how to have a non reactive mind That's felt so good to have that. And why would I give up that good mind. And so the idea of kind of exploring when I started to lose that mind, that became an interesting area to explore, to work with, and, and try to find how not to lose that economists are peaceful mind. And so I think that's probably why it was unintentional. Just like just natural, of course, I don't want to, you know, give up on this training, to have this kind of mind or this kind of way of being. So here for the Buddha, at least that Here are some examples of how mindfulness of the bodies, he thinks it's, you know, really supportive. And then he says, with strong mindfulness of the body when obtains at will, without trouble or difficulty, the four jhanas that constitute the higher mind and provide pleasant abiding here and now. So the idea of being able to get deeply concentrated, some people associate deep concentration with as a mental activities of mental and art or skill. And just if you do the right thing with your mind, then you'll get concentrated. But here the Buddha says that what really supports developing strong concentration is to



be really grounded in your body. And it's almost as the body gets concentrated, it's not the mind so much that like that the body gets settled and composed and unified and all that. So to keep coming back to the body, keep coming back to the body, and have the body be the source of attention. There's some theory that the Buddha was clearly countering ideas of the ascetic traditions, religious traditions of his time, who considered the highest goal was to disconnect from the physical world, to go so fully into a mental world, that you no longer experience your body, you know, Longer experience even sights and sounds and the world around you and really kind of went into kind of very heightened, reified, simplified, altered state of consciousness where even consciousness kind of disappears. And there's one theory that the Buddha

actually didn't emphasize this. He kept emphasizing the importance of staying in your body, staying your body. And, and with mindfulness of the body, you discover how not to cling, you start to discover how to be free. There's one little half century

when abides with mindfulness to the body established and then with a expansive mind when understands is it actually is liberation of mind. That's liberation by wisdom, wherein unwholesome states of mind and come to an end. So the idea of moving out of unwholesome states of mind unskillful states, states of attachment is not done by disconnecting from the body, which discovered with, with a relaxed, expansive mind, grounded in the body. That's where the work can be done. And people who doubt this, this is so important for the Buddha. There's, in this text called the numerical discourses of the Buddha. There are some, I don't know, 10, maybe little little discourses. They're like two peach discourses, two sentences, and they're very repetitive. But when they were repetitive, they're making a point. And, and so it's referring to what's called the deathless. The deathless Amata is one of the great off the terms in Buddhism, some people consider it, that it's a synonymous with Nirvana, Nirvana. It was a pre Buddhist term for kind of the ultimate and, and it was often considered to be before Buddhism at transcendent state, some transcendent place beyond this lid, the life that we live the experience world we have, and the idea was to go somehow experienced this transcendent state quite removed from this world. And, and he was fine, you find that in it still, to this day in Buddhism itself, this idea that the deathless is a transcendent state. That's really completely other than this physical world that we live in, still persists, and somehow tuning in are discovering this kind of completely other realm of existence. That's called the deathless is sometimes taken to be the purpose and goal And we've listened to what the Buddha had to say about this term because he often took terms that existed in his religious ideas exist in his time. And he kind of redefine them for his own sense. Rather than criticizing him, he just kind of defined them differently. And said, we do that. But this is what we do, is a good politician, I guess.

Because most monks, they do not partake of the deathless, who do not partake in mindfulness of the body. They partake of the deathless, who partake of mindfulness of the body. So there's no experience of the death. It's not like a trick for those people who are not connected to their body, the physical lived world, there's no experience of what the Buddha calls the deathless. So this is not a transcendent thing. And then he goes on this Next, you know the all these little discourses because the deathless has not been partaken by those who have not partake in to mindfulness directed to the body. The next one, they have fallen away from the deathless, who have fallen away from mindfulness directed to the body. They have neglected the deathless, who neglected mindfulness directed to the body. They are heedless about the deathless, who are heedless about mindfulness directed to the body. They have forgotten about the death list or forgotten mindful structures of the body. Do you get the idea? I mean, he's, he really wants to make a point here. They have not pursued the deathless who have not pursued mindfulness directed to the body. They have not developed the deathless, who have not developed mindfulness directed to the body. They have not cultivated the deathless to have not cultivated

mindfulness directed to the body that It was important enough for the Buddha to repeat it, so probably okay, okay. But I did do this to do it too. They have not directly known the deathless, who have not directly known mindfulness directed to the body. They have not fully understood the deathless, who have not fully understood mindfulness directed to the body. They have not realized the deathless, who have not realized mindfulness directly directed to the body. So, you better not neglect mindfulness directed to the body, whether your 13 year old teenagers a little bit caught up in their self image or your person just trying to become liberated and free. It's been one of the great joys of my life. And one of the great benefits one of the great consequences of this practice that I have developed a degree to which I've developed a connection to my body, this mindfulness of the body, and it's kind of like I said, last week, it's kind of like exciting variance in the world inside outdoors. It's kind of experiencing the world from the inside outwards. Whereas we've experienced the world through my thought the vehicle of my thoughts and ideas and concepts and stories. It's really, you know, outside any kind of experience is kind of a disconnected, it's actually disembodied and disconnected. That not a very useful place to be, but to, to feel and sense the world myself and who I am. It's a whole different game. How to be an exercise I like to do to point this out, some of you may be experiencing this with me. You know, if you look at your hand, and, and some of you, you know, some point in your life, you probably had some thoughts that your hand wasn't quite up to, you know, snuff. You know, it wasn't, it wasn't quite what it should be. It was too big, too small thinkers. too thin, too thin. You know, there were two thick, are fingers are too long or too short or, you know too many wrinkles are not enough wrinkles. You know something about these hands, right? I mean it's fairly it's a common thing to do. And if some of you may be can remember, you know, it kind of feels kind of bad and kind of depressing and put your hands behind your back hoping no one notices and you know, but if you close your eyes and don't have any of those thoughts about your hand, don't look at it. Don't think about it through that lens of what other people think they see your hand or something and just feel the hand in and of itself. Just feel it vibrating, feel it, humming, feel it pulsing feel the warmth and coolness. feel the softness and maybe the hardness that might be there the tingling, the hand itself, the sensations of it, the feelings in the hand in and of themselves. don't exist independent of the ideas of what the ideal hand should look like. Those sensations exist independent of whether the hand is too short or too big or too small or whatever the ideas are. The hand in and of itself has none of those problems. The problems Where do they live?

They live up in that ruminating place the control tower. If that's all you live, you probably go and get you know, answered, you know, plastic surgery. But if, if we can just begin to appreciate and love and delight in the likeness of the hand from the inside out of the hand, we have a very different reference point for the hand. The same thing is true for all the rest of our body. If we can feel the humming, the aliveness, the flow, the energy that exists in the body, unencumbered, unencumbered by the ideas, we've had the ideas as many of them which are inherited from our culture and all kinds of dysfunctional ways. If we can kind of free ourselves from that those ideas and those concepts, and now try to please a cultural model or what other people think or what other people want from us, but really kind of trust in the sense of well being, and the sense of beauty that we can have. That is not the beauty on the surface. But the beauty that flows from the inside out. The beauty of the energy or the flow, the sensations of the goodness that can live in here, that can arise from mindfulness of the body. So, mindfulness of the body. So this is a little bit of in wanting to give this talk. I really wanted to emphasize that this ancient Buddhist tradition That ends up having produced big books like this. All these big books, if you want to read them all, one of the most important things they're telling you is don't read the books.

Cultivate and develop mindfulness of the body. It's your body's the book that you want to read. really trust it, drop into it, and learn to live in your life. Learn you're learning to live your life, out of your body, instead of out of your head. It's one of the best things you can do. And it's a slow process to to wake

that up and develop that then so one of the great things you can do and it'll certainly support meditation practice and help meditation really kind of come alive and I think in a wonderful way. So I hope that you love your body. Hope you become your body's best friend. And then your body can become your best friend. When that'd be nice. All of you have completely good and adequate bodies. Completely hundred percent. I see no one here who has an inadequate imperfect body. I guarantee it. It's all like perfect. Don't waste any more time feeling insecure about it. Go inside and let the goodness inside flow out and just show you the confidence, the goodness and the and the freedom that you can live in. If you kind of just you know, don't care so much about the thoughts, ideas, stories about this body. Your body is completely adequate. Thank you