

# 2020-04-09 Intro to Mindfulness Meditation (9 of 9)

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

mindfulness, meditation, pain, breathing, feel, imagery, meditate, striker, attention, body, mindfulness meditation, experience, breath, emotions, relax, thinking, people, ideas, hold, buddhism

## SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

Good morning. And happy to be here with you in this way and a few weeks ago, I never could have guessed that speaking in an empty room to a camera like this was possible for me or possible as a way of communication and I'm surprised that that these chats and different ways that I actually feel quite connected to not only many of you, but also to the sense of a wide network of community and, and people interested in the same thing and a lot of goodness that exists around the world. So I want to thank you for the opportunity to share these instructions. And this is the last class for the introduction to mindfulness meditation at the end of this Session I'll talk a little bit about what could be next. Other things that might offer coming up that are related. And, and I want to. And I think that a few things I'd like to say as a introduction, and for today, which is a small review of what we've done so far. And first, I want to repeat what I've said a few times this principle that if it's not simple, it's not mindfulness. And so if you find yourself trying to figure out too hard, there's a technique and do I do this now or that now or what's, you know, what do I have to kind of investigate now to figure out what to be mindful of? You're probably going it might be useful, but it might not be necessary for the purposes of mindfulness. That, that the idea of the simplicity of mindfulness is to learn to be aware of what is obvious. And you don't have to have a label for it, you don't have to know exactly what it is. But the capacity to be in the present moment, with present moment experience with whatever is obvious. Now in different circumstances of life, we might have to investigate or look more carefully and do something, you know, figure out what's going on. But for the purpose, especially of mindfulness meditation, a lot of what we're doing is settling or opening or freeing our capacity to be aware. So if I hold something, so I hold this striker of the bell that we have, and I could hold that really tight this rayker can be very important, it can be a symbol of something simple of my status as a Buddhist teacher. And so I have to keep this close by so everyone knows that who I am, who I am, you know, whatever, some something silly and so I hold on really tight to it. And because it's so important, I don't notice that I'm holding it tight. I don't notice after a while even that it's hurting to hold it tight. I don't

notice that it's you know, my my fingers and hands are going numb from holding it so tight because I'm so focused on the on the striker on the meaning of the striker what it's going to do for me and all these kinds of things. If I now switch my attention from the striker and all the importance of the striker to what it's like for my hand to be gripping it, then I might notice that I'm gripping it more than I need to that sometimes I need to hold the striker but I don't need to grip it so tight. In fact, I could loosen the grip, I could relax it. In fact, it's possible to open up the palm in such a relaxed way, without losing it. If I need to hold it, it's possible to open the hand and hold it like this. And so I still have it and it's ready to be used. But how I'm holding it is very different. So in the same way, awareness, how we pay attention, how we're mindful, is as important as what we're mindful of. It's kind of like there's two sides of the meditation practice. There's what we're aware of, and there's how we're aware. And, and these two go together and they support each other, they hold each other up in a sense, and sometimes we pay more attention to one. Sometimes we pay more attention to the other and so what This means is that this idea of simple mindfulness is simple. Is the how we're being mindful, is also something we pay attention to, that we pay attention to, are we straining? Are we pushing into something? Or are we kind of gritting our teeth and really trying to be mindful to is a, you know, a duty or it's a good student or something? Or are we to laksa days ago, you know, if I hold the striker, and I'm not careful how I hold it, but I still relaxed about it. And I relaxed the holding the striker drops out of my hand. So in the same way, if we hold our mindfulness too loosely, and without much dedication and care, we lose it to mind wanders off. So there is a way of being careful of how we're mindful, but the care is to hold it in a way that we stay present and we stay with the experience and can hold the experience Well, so it's seen and known, but we neither lose it. We didn't, the mind doesn't slip off, to breathe the breath, for example, into daydreams. We were there, but we don't. So don't grab things. We're not pushing it away. So this idea of a noticing how we're aware, it can be a hard thing to do, especially for someone who's beginning to meditation. But it's the, it's the others. It's the second side of meditation. What's the how the mind is relating to experience. So there, it's sad to say all this in a little different way. There's always two things going on. And this is kind of just a very simplistic but there's, it's useful to think of, there's always just two things going on in the present moment. There is what's happening, which, of course, can be many, you know, infinite number of things. There's what's happening and there's a How we're relating to what's happening there's what's happening and then there's how we relate to it or how we push it away or how we grab it or how we try to avoid it or run away or all these things that we do to it or we stand watching it and we're judging it and you know this is a bad striker and it's dirty and, and no real Dharma teacher has you know, I don't know what mahogany strikers and you know, poor Gil because he doesn't have the right striker and all these thoughts and commentary and ideas and judgments and reactions and activity, all those things are distinct from the striker. The striker is a striker, and my relationship to it is different. So earlier when I talked about mindfulness of emotions, I the raft similarly, the last duty of raft is teasing apart, and so is to tease apart how Relating to something from the thing itself. And this, to do this, well, doesn't require a lot of sophistication or a lot of knowledge or even a lot of intelligence. It requires being quiet enough to be able to distinguish between an experience and the relationship we have to it, the experience and how we hold it or push it away, you know what we're doing. And as the mind gets simpler and simpler, quieter and quieter. we relax and thinking mind relaxes. It's a natural thing to begin seeing these as being two distinct things,

the experience and how we know it experience and how we relate to it, and how we relate to it. As you know, as we start feeling and recognizing how it is, it's important there also to stay simple and to just see it, don't ask Add second arrows, don't then now, you know, be upset the fact that you're upset, don't be afraid because you're afraid Don't be judge yourself because you're judging yourself, you know. And so the, the kind of the, one of the little mantras that can be represent mindfulness meditation would be something like, Oh, so that's what's happening. Oh, that's what's happening. Or Oh, so it's like this now. It's like this. Oh, it's like this now. So I'm moving clinging to my striker. Oh, it's like this. Now there's clinging. Not to be in a rush to relax. But to really just simple observation, Oh, look at that. This is a human being clinging to a striker. That's interesting. Let me be aware of that for a little bit. Let me just know it and enjoy Here perhaps that movement Oh, let me just know it. Let me just be aware of it and be curious about it is a very different relationship to it, then, oh, I got to get rid of it. This is wrong. I hope no one notices that I'm clinging to it, all this extra stuff. So as mindfulness deepens, we begin to see more clearly and making this distinction can be very helpful. So with that, let's do a little meditation to do a meditation session. So if you could, please take a meditative posture, whatever is appropriate for you. And generally, if it's possible, it's good to sit up a little bit straighter than you normally would. And then to softly kindly Close your eyes. And perhaps as we begin this meditation with the eyes closed, to reflect, that mindfulness meditation session of meditation is meant to be a time of kindness or positive self regard of doing something, which is a good thing for oneself because we care and we value what we are and how we are and that we don't want we're trying to not live with so much stress, upset and distractibility. And with a little bit of that positive self regard, to begin by, now to take some long slow deep breaths perhaps A gentle way, not more deeper than is appropriate for you. But as a way of connecting to yourself, to feel more of your body, maybe these are the deepest breaths you've taken today. And so you really feel more of the body's process of breathing, the expansion of the ribcage, the lifting of the shoulders. You're aware more fully of that whole process of breathing out and letting go with the smooth, maybe ending of enter the fading of exhale. And then letting your breathing returned to normal. And you might search through your body to see if there's any obvious places in your body where the muscles are held tight and contracted. And maybe don't relax right away as soon as you can take a few moments just to feel how that is. Sometimes the muscles were relaxed themselves when they're seen and recognized of being tight. And that's kind of a nice process to let the body take care of itself rather than us always in charge. But then you can also then if you bought it, the easy enough to relax. Let go. Soften the body, the belly especially maybe around the eyes. Face And then maybe your awareness can be global in some way. And for a few moments, speak globally aware of your body, in whatever way is easy for you to do that. And then within this global body as part of it, maybe SS has the functional center of it. Become aware of your body breathing and allow the body's breathing to come into your awareness. And as you become well aware as you tune into your breathing, have a clear acknowledgement or intention recognition that this breathing experience or breathing will be the home will be the center of where you keep your attention, rest your attention and not as an avoidance of other things, but by sitting at the center of all things rooted and grounded here in the body Perhaps as you're exhaling to relax your thinking muscle any tension or pressure to think any physical agitation or activation associated with thinking As you exhale, let it become softer. Let the mind become broader, quieter. Perhaps as you

exhale, Lady Go of your thinking. Not by rejecting it, but allowing it to float away to fall away and then let go into the experience or breathing And if there's something occurring for you right now that makes it difficult to be with your breathing, let go of the breathing and bring your attention, mindful awareness to this other thing in the body and emotions and thoughts and thinking in the sounds around you and recognize what that is. And there's something about the power of recognition sometimes supported by a mentor Note recognizing what it is, that can create a little bit of freedom, a little bit of peace in relationship to what is recognized. Sometimes the mental note needs to be done gently a few times. So that the mind eventually gets the sense of it, oh, this is being recognized. And their recognition is not the same thing as what is recognized. It's like we step away and look back on it. That's what's happening. And then whether you're with your breathing or you're recognizing what takes you away from your breathing. Notice how you're recognizing notice how you're aware when attitudes come along with being aware is the awareness very simple, simple recognition. Does it come along with more complicated attitudes of being for or against liking or not liking, having all kinds of evaluations, projections, ideas about what's happening is the awareness tight and forceful. might be too loose, too relaxed so that you just slip off too easily from what you're bringing attention to. To have the hand of awareness open so that whatever you're attending to is resting in the palm of awareness. Not falling off, fall dropping away and not being gripped In the simplicity of meditation, or very little needs to be done and accomplished or thought about moment of mindfulness is can be a moment where you allow each thing that occurs to be itself simply aware of what is and have the generosity to allow To be just as it is, what is happening can be what is happening and then we know it with a clear, relaxed mind. If the mind is not clear and relaxed then it's useful to know to recognize that mind how that mind is that can be the subject of mindfulness. And then if you're off noticing other things besides the breathing you might now come back for the last few minutes which can be with your breathing being a companion to your body breathing And then to end this sitting. Take a few deeper breaths again. feel more connected to your body perhaps perhaps little awaking up of a certain kind of the deeper breaths and then breathe normally again, before you open your eyes. just recognize mindfulness is always about recognizing, being aware of how you are now compared to how you were before. So there's many perspectives to talk about mindfulness meditation. And one of them is to talk about that what we're tuning into aligning ourselves with is our direct experience. So often a term that's used in our circles of meditation direct experience. And what direct experience is pointing to, is being aware with very little mental chatter, concepts, judgments, stories. Some of the label some of the concepts we put on top of things are extra. So before I had this analogy with a striker, the striker of the bell. And it's possible to experience this object without putting on top of it the idea of a striker. In fact, I might use it as a doorstop, and then it becomes a doorstop, or just a piece of wood, just to direct experiences just feeling the shape, the seeing the color, the texture of it. And I can have all those experiences of texture, color shape, without the concept of a striker. It's innocent enough to call this a bell striker, but it's also possible to experience it much more simply and directly. So in meditation, we're moving in the direction of that simplicity of just direct experience. And it requires the mind to be a little bit quick quieter than usual. It's not to racing and rushing from one story idea to another, but quiet enough to start seeing what's happening moment by moment. Now part of the value of this direct experience, value of getting quiet enough, still enough to be able to see the difference between what's happening

on our relationship to what's happening is that wisdom can arise. wisdom in Buddhism, the wisdom that Buddhism is squarely pointing towards, is not not book knowledge or knowledge about things that we didn't carry with us to remember and apply. It's more like a discernment that we discover and see or insight that we see moment to moment that's always fresh. And this freshness that and with deep wisdom, very important wisdom that can arise as mindfulness deepens as we start being with extract experience more directly. So I want to give you a little taste of how wizard gets a awoken or begins to occur. There's many forms of wisdom and discernment insight that's part of this practice as it deepens and continues. But here's one that maybe you'll find interesting and useful. So, I'm going to hold up a flower. So here we have a flower. It's a rose from the single rose bush that's outside of insight meditation Center here in Redwood City. And I imagine you can see it makes me look at myself. Yeah. So. So here you go, and holding up the flower. And now there's a famous story in Buddhism where the Buddha held holds up a flower. He doesn't say anything. All he does is smiles. And there's one person in the audience who says Somehow understand something very deeply, he's enlightened by that, that, and the Buddha then acknowledges his enlightenment. So maybe that that person was able to see just the direct experience. And somehow the direct experience of flower, the simplicity of flower somehow released something in his mind, maybe. But here we have a flower, just a flower. Sometimes in Buddhism, we call it the suchness of something without any concepts, ideas, just the experience of the flower in and of itself. So that's nice. But now look what I could do. I could say, here's a flower and interested is what it is. But then I'll get a different flower. And now let's see I didn't make sure that you I'm eager, you're seeing what I intend you To see so I'm going to look at on the screen here. So now I hold up something else, and other flower. Now Now I can say something that I couldn't say before. I can say that this is the small flower. And this is the big flower. So you see that right? So now I can, you know, this wasn't wasn't a smaller big flower before it was just the flower this suchness of the flower. And now it's still a such as a flower but the mind can say that there's a smaller flower and the bigger flower. But now watch this trick of the hands this magic that I'm going to do. So remember, this was the small flower, the rose, and this is the big flower. So now I hold up this flower And now, what was the big flower before has become what the small flower before has become the big flower. So you see that you even saw how the trick was done and right before your eyes. This went from being the small flower to being the big flower. So what this points to is that we live in concepts sometimes we live in concepts of comparisons, and that's a function of the mind. They have it, they're accurate in and of themselves in a certain way. But a lot of human suffering arises in comparative thinking. So you know, for example, people have comparisons about their physiology in some ways. That too tall too short, hairline is too high, too low hairs too long, too short, too much here too little here. Hands this that you know all kinds of things about their body. And they're all having to do in the comparison with other people's body or the idea of an ideal body. These are all mental ideas and concepts, some of them inherited or taken in from society and social ideas of what's body and what we're doing in, if we can see that we're doing that. And put that aside all these extra attitudes and concepts, and just experience experience the suchness of our body, just experience the body in and of itself, without the comparisons. Unless there's physical pain or something like that. Often our body by itself has no problems. You know, if you know the forehead, is completely content to be have a high forehead or you know, receding hairline or not really Getting hairline or the hair is completely, you



know, has no agitation around how much how little how long, how short, whatever it might be. And the generosity of allowing ourselves to be who we are the generosity of relaxing and just letting the simplicity of the direct experience to be itself. We can do that for ourselves. And we could really for others as well allow our friends just to be their friends, to learn how to separate out the judgments, the ideas, the attitudes we have, as being distinct from what the direct experiences to make that distinction allows the wisdom to choose what we do and choose what is wise about the attitude, what is extra, what is maybe harmful, what we can put down and what we keep up and to allow something just to exist in itself. If you remember, we did It's exercise on mindfulness of the body day of just feeling the hand by itself. And in and of itself the hand, as you know, it's just a hand some of us will look at our hand and maybe at some points in our life feel like our hand is not quite right. It's fingers are too small, too long fingernails are this way, that way, too much wrinkles, too many boards, too many something. But the from the inside out. The hand, doesn't have those judgments and ideas. It's a more complicated mind that makes those associations and ideas and thoughts. And so to quiet that down, and be able to see clearly what we're doing, the relationship versus what's happening, and to begin to prioritize the direct experience. As we begin to prioritize and to direct experience, we do a number of things. We're often benefitting ourselves by allowing ourselves to be who we are in a simple way. It became dissolving the layers of armor, the layers of reactivity which many of us live in and dissolve, it's settled it, take them off. So we can just be simpler and simpler just ourselves and more at ease with who we are calmer, who we are so calm and so and ease that in Buddhism, at least, at some point, we realize how little we need to put on top of ourselves. All these representations of who we are, all these ideas of being a good person, bad person, who we should be, shouldn't be, how we want to be seen in the eyes of other people, how we want to prove ourselves or apologize for who we are, we can just kind of be there and just and we don't have to even have a sense of you know, at some point, even what dissolves is even a sense of self dissolves in the flow in the richness of just direct experience. Don't lose yourself, of course, when there's no sense of self. But it's actually, you know, if you look at a sunset, there's no attribute attribute of self to the sunset, that's me up there in the sunset. Just the beautiful beauty, beauty of the sunset. So the same way when some of these concepts of self dissolve, the beauty of who we are, can stand there trust as well as when, you know, even better sometimes without the extra stuff we put on top. So that was an example I hope that conveyed some of the wisdom that's possible through this practice. And, and I wanted to and so, too, and that wisdom comes a lot from the mindfulness getting stronger. And part of the strength of mindfulness has to do with the strength of our country. centration mindfulness and concentration are partners. And they come together and support each other. And, and there's a number of ways of developing mindfulness further. And so that it has more momentum, it has more clarity, it has more. the groove of mindfulness has developed, become second nature. And one way is just simply doing it and doing it daily life. Like I said yesterday, doing it, you know, meditating every day is very, very powerful. I did, I've been doing meditation every day, mostly for the last 45 years. And I've been around a lot of people. And if you can meditate at least six days a week, even just for 20 minutes or maybe 30 minutes, maybe 40 minutes. I did when I first started my meditate regular meditation practice. I did it twice a day for 40 minutes. But never on Sunday. I had learned meditation That I was doing at a Zen center. And I never got a reason why. But on Sundays, they did not meditate. So I

thought, that's the way to do it. And that was nice for me. Other people find it's good to meditate every day, seven days a week, but to have some momentum. I know one person who likes meditating five days a week. But it doesn't have to be individual days. If the person misses a few days, then the person makes it up. So that by the end of the week, there's been five meditation sessions, but it's not necessarily on different days. So there's all kinds of ways and tricks to get oneself to meditate regularly. And for those of you who enjoy these, these instructions that I'm giving in my teachings, we now have this maybe you know already but we have an online morning minute on California. Morning meditation, seven o'clock in California time, Monday through Friday, and you're welcome. Join me now for that then, and have some continuity and have a little bit too supportive others to keep doing it. But there's also a developing concentration. And our concentration develops two different ways. It does develop by regular meditation practice. So, you know daily meditation, it also develops by occasionally going on a meditation retreat, meaning so giving yourself more time to meditate. I mean, you could be a three hour retreat that you could give yourself on a day that you're free. And will you sit and just kind of maybe you do sitting meditation for a while then walking meditation for a while sitting meditation for a while, and just go back and forth between the two of them. I know I didn't give instructions on walking meditation today and this on this class, but I think on MCs website, there's an article page and I think they're in the articles page and under Resources is an instructions for walking meditation. But to go back and forth, you know, 20 minutes each 30 minutes each for two to three hours in daily life that begins to build up to build up the momentum of concentration so that the mindfulness become stronger. It's possible to go on meditation retreats, and our particular form of Buddhism puts a lot of value on going on what's called the residential retreats, where you go for a few days. And generally these retreats are conducted in silence, that kind of a contemplative time that teachers teach like I've been teaching, you know, instructions and Dharma talks, and you often meet with the teacher, but the chance to kind of do this all day long and be in an environment that really supports a contemplative, mindful awareness throughout the day, is really a wonderful thing and really lets us mindfulness, build in the concentration build over time. And finally, It's possible to develop the concentration to support mindfulness by only by just really focusing on concentration for a while, and developing that ability to focus and stay present. And one of the ways to do that is with the breathing, and maybe count the breaths one to 10. And just for a while, if the mind is really seems restless, really scattered, they're easily get distracted. And you find that in the session of meditation, he's like you're mostly daydreaming, it might be useful to spend a period of time maybe even a few months, only doing the discipline of staying with the breath the best you can. And without strain without feeling bad about yourself, always happy to start over again. But to keep coming back to the breath, keep letting go and being with the breath, staying with the breath. And, and using the breath is a foundation for developing stability of attention in the present moment. So these are some Other ways of supporting practice continuing the practice developing the practice further. And there's certainly much more that I could say. And I hope that this introduction to mindfulness meditation has given you enough, but not too much that enough to kind of support you and launch you or keep you going in your practice. And I think that I would be very content and happy that you learn just enough that inspired you to do the practice and find your own way with it. And, and that you found that meditation was useful in your, in your life itself. So I want to take the last 10 minutes to give you a chance to ask some questions and a

few things before that for and I want to just a few things. Don't write the questions yet. They're all get lost. If you're the first one to write it. Maybe I'll try to go through the order but is a couple of things. One is I am thinking that in starting on April 21, on a Tuesday to offer an introduction to mindfulness meditation part two. And that would be looking at some of the things that occurred meditation that make mindfulness meditation a challenge in the challenges that people encounter and work with and how to really work with them in an effective way in mindfulness. And so, that'll be listed on IMC's website as soon as I've really decided to do it, which is 90%. A little bit depends on the date, but I think it'll be nine days like this one was starting on a Tuesday, April 21, probably at the same time, maybe half an hour earlier. So please come back if you like that. And that's and then the other thing is, there was a question from yesterday. That was kind of touching for me. And I'd like to before I take questions here, I would like to respond to that question. And that's the question, how can mindfulness help control pain? So, you know, for me, that's a very touching question. And both touching because someone wants to use mindfulness to address what can be very difficult in life, and very challenging. Some people live with a lot of chronic pain, and it's ongoing. It's a real big thing. And I've known a lot of people who have had chronic, very intense pain, who did find mindfulness, very helpful for it. So I'll say a few words about it. First, I want to be a little bit careful. Generally, I don't feel comfortable answering the question directly the way that it was asked, because I don't want the idea of controlling pain. Some people ask, can I get rid of the pain and sometimes mindfulness is, is advertised as being You know effective for pain, don't make your pain go away or fix your pain or do something. And I feel very hesitant to, to imply, as I teach, that mindfulness can help the pain go away or control the pain, something like that. It can, so I don't want to rule it out. But to promise that the act, you know, it's not really realistic to do that. However, what I can say that's almost as good is that what can radically change is not the pain, but how we relate to the pain, which has to do with what we talked about today that there's the experience and how we relate to it. That some of the difficulty we have with pain is not the pain itself, but rather is the relationship we have to at the resistance We have to get the pushing away we have to it the fear we have to with the contraction we have to. I remember when I had a lot of knee pain, I know I think I just talked about this maybe that I noticed that by itself pity felt sorry for myself the pain would it get worse. And I think what was happening there were the muscles around my knee, were suddenly contracting when I was resisting it and feeling sorry for myself. And when I relaxed those self pity thoughts, those little bit of muscles around the knee relaxed as well. And it was less. It was less painful. And you know, just anything helped. And so the relationship we have to pain is where we can loosen up. And there's some times I have, you know, pretty bad migraines sometimes. And, and I find that if I'm not saying this is useful for other kinds of pain, but what I do is I'll be quiet, go someplace, I can be quiet meditate or lie down for that purpose. And, and now bring my attention right into what I think is the heart of the pain and just let my attention rest there. And if I put myself right in the middle of the pain, rather than resisting it or being outside of it, looking at it or relating to it or something, and really feel it intimately and closely, it stops being pain in the usual way or it stops being a problem in the way that it had been before. And that ability to hold it really right the center of it helps free me from some of the related relating relating to it that I'm doing. It's just there in a very simple way. Now how we relate to pain, sometimes actually contributes to the pain. There are many factors that contribute to the intensity of pain. And then once I read a study where they were 10



different factors that contribute to the intensity of the pain, that it was the combination of the intensity of these 10 things that added up to pain and, and if some of those things that were weaker than the pain wouldn't occur, so sometimes it's our relationship our resistance, or hate or fear that involves the pain. So, we can have some control question was how to control pain we can control pain little bit, by controlling how we relate to it and finding some equanimity and peace with it. Rather than always fighting it or feeling pity or projecting into the future, how difficult is going to be, but that might not make the pain go away, but makes it maybe a little bit more bearable. Or we can bring a lot of care and attention maybe compassion and love to ourselves into the pain and hold it softly and gently and learn how to go closer and closer, letting it be more and more direct experience. And when the mindfulness is strong, man People have the experience that the pain is intense, but then at some point it stops being an intense pain and becomes something different and dissolves in a certain way that's still intense, but it's not really pain anymore. And it's possible with enough concentration and mindfulness to to actually have joy, at the same time is having pain to have peace at the same time as having peace. So, let's see some of these questions that have come in. I think if I can go up to the top of them oh, you know so I noticed that the imagery you use holding awareness with gentle hands, speaks to me very clearly. Do you think about why imagery is helpful? And if so, can you please elaborate? The Buddha used imagery to describe it instruct meditation. And part of the usefulness of imagery is that it becomes much more holistic, more of who we are, our visual side or imagination side are, are also kinesthetic or physical in a holding a hand up as an imagery is an image is something that we have a physical embodied relationship to, we can sense maybe feel that. So rather than just saying, you know, just hold your pain and awareness, that's nice instruction, perhaps, but to hold pain in the soft softness of your hand, the palm of your hand, that evokes many, many more associates. within us, and so we have a lot of different attentional faculties that can be brought together, as we be a mindfulness and imagery kind of awakens more of who we are to engage in the mindfulness practice. So imagery can be helpful, provided the imagery doesn't become fantasy, and takes us away from direct experience. Imagery can easily do that. But it is us us some little bit of very simple rudimentary imagery to help us bring us into the practice and then with time the imagery falls away, but the imagery can be helpful. So please study the relationship between meditation practice in the study of Buddhism, ideally, in that question, that the study of Buddhism would be in the service of supporting the meditation practice. So when I was doing a lot of medical Practice, like and living in the monastery. I actually I studied Buddhism every day. But I'd read a Buddhist texts, but I've only read maybe at the most a page, sometimes just a couple of paragraphs, because that was enough to be encouraged and inspired to have new perspectives in which to bring to my practice and explore it. So to dip into a Dharma book, a Buddhist book, to study Buddhism, just enough to be given something to work with and explore and new perspective, not to acquire a lot of knowledge at first. So to encourage your practice, so that's the reason to study. Some people need to do a lot of study until they feel like they have a handle and a foundation to really be able to meditate. So different people different things, but in terms of the question, study in a way that supports your meditation, and if the what you're studying in Buddhism seems too abstract, abstract and not connected to meditation, maybe Find something different to study. I often use distraction for pain control. Meditation makes me more aware of my body should I find a balance. I've known people who have very, very intense pain. I know one

person who was paralyzed and was below, you know, was variant. And he learned to separate out his attention. So he didn't feel his lower part of his body. And, you know, I never had that kind of experience and so and so I have a lot of respect for what he was able to do. And so maybe sometimes it's wise to avoid pain and distraction. I know there's one meditation technique for pain that is used for sometimes when there's a very intense pain is to go find in the body, someplace in the body. That is has pleasure that someplace in It could be just a small little square centimeter of something that feels soft, feels comfortable, seems pleasant. And then really focus on that develop concentration and focus on that begins to spread that pleasure through the body. It is a kind of concentration practice more than mindfulness. But that's a little bit distracting with intention moving it in, something's more helpful and allows the mind to relax sometimes the mind is kind of overly tense. So there's always kind of pain and maybe allows the mind to relax and and, and soften and get a break and then begin to spread that pleasure and throughout the body. And then there's a whole different relationship to the pain and if that's I've known people where that pleasure gets spread into where the pain is, and the pain gets transformed sometimes, but to do that requires a lot of concentration. And, but sometimes when people are in a lot of intense pain, their motivation is so strong. That may be the concentration we can be there. If it's if it's using distraction all the time. And like staying in fantasy and thinking fantasy all the time. You know, maybe it acts as a way of avoiding pain. But it's not really cultivating mindfulness, and the capacity to really meet life in a mindful, clear way. So it depends what you want to do. And if what you want to do is cultivate mindfulness, you want to be a little bit careful, you're not making too much of a habit of being distracted in, in fantasy or thoughts. So let me I used to practice meditation a lot when younger. Now I noticed my asthma makes me kind of tense about my breathing. How do I work with that instead of feeling of fleeing it? So I'll answer the question as you asked it, and also offer another perspective on that. How do I work with that? That makes you tense. So the simplest way in mindfulness is you make your tension, the object of meditation, you go find out where in the body where in the mind that tension lives. And then you hope you you let that be speed with the simplicity of that experience. Just hold attention, be with attention. There are times when I don't have asthma, but there are times when I've been busy and involved in a lot, I sit down to meditate. And I noticed that my chest is being held, it's tight, there's some pressure there, there's contraction there a little bit. And so when I sit and meditate, then I will bring my attention to that feeling of contraction in my chest. I don't not trying to relax it, I'm not judging it. I don't feel like I'm a bad person because of it. Or, you know that, you know, I shouldn't never admit that to an audience of meditation students because I should be better than that. I just hold it in my awareness, and breathe with it. It's sometimes I feel bad. In a little bit like the rhythm of breathing in the chest is like a massage for that place of contraction. And then after a while, it begins to loosen and relax. So it's possible the tension that you're feeling with the asthma will relax if you just hold it in your hand gently. The other thing to do though, is maybe find a different place in your body to be aware of the breathing. There are times when I've had controlling my breath or had a contracted breath, where I brought my attention to my back ribcage, and felt the more subtle movement to the back Ridge ribcage as I breathe. And that took me away from the place where the breath was problematic. And so then kind of eased up and then the breath was more came into more natural, easier way. Maybe feeling the breath in the belly rather than the area of the lungs, feeling the movement so the belly can make it easier for the asthma. And maybe sometimes if you

keep a soft belly, it might be that you can breathe more deeply. in a relaxed way, and maybe that's helpful. And then the other thing, which is not wanted to say that's not part of the question is that there are for some people like for asthma and sometimes certain traumas they've had when they were younger. I've known people who've had near drowning experiences, for example, or Joe almost choked on something, that the breath has become kind of a problem to connect to it and some of the fear that is still living in there. And that gets triggered when we just bring our attention to it. So it's completely fine to have other home bases for mindfulness meditation, it doesn't have to be the breathing. And, and the one o'clock one common one that's offered in our Buddhist tradition, is to use sounds. Sounds are always in the present moment. And to open this open your awareness to sounds and just hear the sounds that are going on around you. We tend not to fix the sounds interfere with the sounds and just allow the sound to come and appear rise and pass receptively and awareness and some people find that very relaxing, some people feel like their mind to almost like expands outward to become as large as a distance the sound is coming from makes a very spacious kind of situation. And then if other things become predominant, like sensations in the body, emotions, thoughts, whatever, then one would let go of the sounds and come back to those things to be mindful of those. So, those are some of the things that you can do and maybe that would be helpful. So, here's a question that is a more people about pain, how can meditation alleviate pain, pain from arthritis, for example? And so I hopefully the question I answered before, address that question with arthritis. I have I've had arthritis in my knees. And certainly I've I found out that if I walked a lot and build up strength that actually alleviated the pain for me. But I also learned that when I did walking meditation a lot, that very, very careful attention, this refined mindfulness to my walking, I could find a way to walk. So the knees weren't being irritated by the arthritis. And it required really careful attention and very subtle adjustments and just just the right way. Sometimes that's helpful. But can you comment about the difference between emotions and thoughts? Yeah, that it's hard to know what emotions are really exactly as a unified thing. But then there's a huge overlap between emotions and thinking. Sometimes they're not really so separate from each other and sometimes we can see them as being separate. Sometimes we can see how thoughts trigger an emotion sometimes to see how an emotion influences or even triggers certain thoughts. And it's interesting to watch the play back and forth between thinking and emotions, whatever an emotion is, and but generally emotions are in there, if I say it this way, in this most simple way that thoughts occur, they are, you know, without a lot of associations and involvement, it thought is kind of almost like effortless, it's soft, it's empty, it's transparent. It has no weight. It's like a cloud thoughts, and they're, and they're not necessarily embodied. emotions, always have some embodied component to their sensations, something's activated in our body. And so with that, it's what we call feeling something that's more pleasant and more unpleasant. into a feeling tone or something like that. But exactly, you know, as I said, I don't know if we can make a clear separation of these two worlds, but maybe all we're asking to do is just enough separation. To see the difference, enough to be mindful limit. Maybe one last thing I'll say is maybe one difference is that emotions are always something happening in the present moment. They can be triggered by thoughts of the past in the future, but the emotions are always present phenomena. Thoughts are also always present phenomena. But the thoughts can be about the past and the future. And then we get lost in that past in the future work involved and concerned about the past in the future, if we're too much involved in our

thoughts. When I turned away from breath, I realized I was feeling happiness, almost euphoria bubbles arising, tried to back away difficult advice, advice for not being it's for enjoyable emotion not clinging. Well as meditation deepens and some concentration happens and more letting go happens, then there is experiences of happiness that can arise joy well being, sometimes it can be very subtle feeling of contentment and ease and happiness. Sometimes it can be quite strong and euphoria bubbles arising sometimes it's a waves cascading of joy passing through a person. And, and sometimes they just has kind of a life of its own. So backing away from that euphoria can be it can be, you know, yet needs to take its time if it's too much, you can just stop meditation. And, and, and, you know, go for a walk or you know, go get some tea or something. But advice for not being for enjoyable emotion, not clinging? Well, if it's arising out of meditation, this feeling of happiness that's going on, if there's an innocent and appropriate way to be for it, this is part of a positive feedback loop. This is that kind of corporate occur in meditation, it's good. And you want to just allow it and appreciate it. The Buddha talks about as joy and happiness bubble up in meditation, to take that happiness and spread it out through your body. So you're allowed to enjoy it, no problem. The problem is when you cling to it, or you expect it or you're pushing to it, or you're trying to get the absolute last drop of that joy out of the experience. The idea is to be very open handed with it. See it as a gift. receive the gift open to the gift that IT support. You To be more in the present moment, sometimes it's a biofeedback mechanism, by the happiness, enjoy the well being is a sign the meditation is going well, and maybe continue with what you're doing. Or if they're going back to the breathing, seems a little bit, you know, like not quite to the point or diminishes the happiness, then maybe just enter into the happiness. If that's the compelling thing happening, then it's completely fine to do mindfulness of happiness. Just like when I had the migraines, I put myself right in the middle of the pain. When you feel happiness, that's, that's the compelling and strong thing. Put yourself right in the middle of that happiness and feel it. And like I kept saying, there's the experience and our relationship to it and become skilled at noticing that your relationship is extra that you don't have to cling and grasp and want build up a self and when I tell all your friends just stay with the simplicity of happiness. So we're going over time so maybe maybe I did I do the mall. Oh, someone said that she posted the link to walking meditation instruction on IMC Facebook page. Thank you, Wendy very much for doing that. How much do you meditate daily? Now these days, I meditate most days anywhere from 30 to 45 minutes. And, and I feel very lucky that I have a job minute teaching meditation. So it's like some days I'll meditate a lot because I'm teaching like a retreat or something. And so, I mean, I feel pretty fortunate and that's pretty cool to have a job that lets you meditate. So I think that's enough I feel like I'm kind of talked out and my mind isn't as agile after all this so I want to thank you all very much for being part of this and I would certainly be delighted to have you come back and if you ever come to Redwood City and we're no longer shelter in place, I'd be very happy to see you here and come and say hello and perhaps in a couple of weeks in April 21 that we'll meet each other again this way. So thank you so much and thank you for your comments and, and your good mornings and thank us it's all been very meaningful for me and I feel very nourished and delighted to To have this connection with you all. Thank you