So then we come today to the third factor of awakening. And during these seven days of this week, at these 7 o'clock sittings, we'll go through the seven factors of awakening Saturday and Sunday as well. So to the third factor is the factor of effort. And it could be, it's appropriate to translate this word that's the effort factor of awakening viriya as heroic effort. Now, I've had a complicated relationship with the idea of effort in practice. So much so that I have my early years are still I put a lot of effort into practice, but I do didn't see it this effort and for me effort was kind of a bad word. It's kind of like work which was kind of not such a welcome thing or the idea of working at something meditation. And I associated effort with I know somehow striving or pushing or doing something more than just, you know, adding something to the experience. But slowly over time, I've learned to recognize that I actually put in a lot of effort and practice. But the effort arises, the effort that really works, that's the magic effort or the alchemy that really helps meditation unfold is not a self centered effort. And it's not the effort of striving or pushing or contracting and not an effort that is exhausting. I've done plenty of that. But rather, it's an effort which the system, the psychophysical system, that almost wants to do, it's kind of like the nach almost like a natural flow of aliveness. And that as practice and meditation practice develops, there's more and more of the sense that there's a current of effort or current of energy or engagement. That is, what the system wants is how the system is. There's not much different than, again, a little toddler who is completely involved in putting effort into playing a game or playing with blocks or playing in the sand and, you know, building a little sandcastle or something. There's an effort there, but it's just you know, it's not work per se. It's more like play. That the effort of play and it can be a lot of energy and play, but it doesn't feel like it's effort to play. So. So the word heroic engagement to really, this is important in what we do, and to give ourselves to it. So, it's helpful to kind of seek to understand each of these factors awakening to see how they continue to build on the previous one. So the first factor of awakenings, a factor of awakening of Sati, of awareness, mindfulness. And that's really developing and establishing ourselves in the present moment in our
present moment experience. So we can experience it, feel it, be alive to it in a more vivid way. Not because we're working at it, but because the senses, our attentional apparatus is really available to receive and feel and experience and perceive what's happening. It's a kind of a restful place to be, this opening to attention. And then as that becomes more acute and maybe that's the best word, more sharp so there's greater clarity of awareness, of what's happening in the present moment. Again, not because we're working at it, because we've cleaned the glasses that we're wearing or we've cleaned the windows of the windshield of a car now. Oh, look, we can see much more clearly. Or the smog has cleared, and we can see the mountains and we see them with some clarity and with the details and distance. So we start seeing that thing, the distinctions of things, things are not a blur. We see things clearly, and one of them and as we begin seeing things clearly, we start seeing the distinction between what is skillful and not skillful, what is helpful and not helpful. And there's two areas of that. What is helpful for where attention goes, and what is helpful in terms of how to be when we're attentive. So for example, if I'm sitting meditating, I'm trying to stay with my breathing, but my mind is just chattering away and, you know, 60 miles a minute. Then at some point, I might realize, you know, where attention needs to be, where it's wise and helpful, is really bring attention to this high energy agitated mind and hold it in awareness, hold it in the open palm of awareness. Don't try to fix it, don't have a problem with it, don't try to push it away. Don't be upset with it, just be with it. And I find that kind of attention. It's kind of like a upset child, that when there's a calm adult there, the child begins to relax. So the mind also if we can learn to bring attention to it. So two things happened. And that is example. One is I decided it was helpful, skillful, to bring attention to the busy mind. It was also helpful that how I paid attention to it was important that I paid attention in a kind of non judgmental, non critical, non striving, non probing or working or pushing or fixing kind of way, just open to it, but open in such a way that I wasn't involved in it. I wasn't tangled with it. But I was kind of spacious awareness, kind of an open mind is open to see it and allow it, then something begins to thaw or relax or settle. So, but with time we start seeing these distinctions, what's helpful, what's not helpful and to where the attention is useful to put the attention and how to put the attention there. The choices we make around those two things is the right effort, is the right courageous effort sometimes. We do make some effort in this practice, meaning we do make some choices about how we are, what we do. And in the meditation practice, a lot of that has to do with a choice about what we do with our attention. So pay attention to what is skillful, what's helpful. Now, sometimes that means that with the breathing, for example, or sensations of the body or whatever we are paying attention to in the present, sometimes it's skillful to pay attention to what is pleasant. If there's a strong tendency towards paying attention to the problems and what's unpleasant and the difficulties kind of take over, then sometimes it is wise to choose specifically what is pleasant and enjoyable in practice. If all things are equal, sometimes it's useful to kind of orient yourself more to what's pleasant like in the breathing. Find out how what's pleasant, enjoyable about the breathing, maybe there's certain part of the cycle of breathing in and out that's more enjoyable or certain place in the body where the breathing feels a little bit more nicer to breathe, it feels good to be connected there. And some is taking in the nourishment taking in what's pleasant, so it's easier for the mind to want to be there. The mind is only paying attention to what's unpleasant. You know, why would the mind want to be in the present moment? Certainly, sometimes it's appropriate to pay attention to what's unpleasant. I've sometimes had physical pain in meditation, and
I found it very useful and important and skillful, to bring careful attention to the pain, sometimes so I know how to adjust change my posture to fix the little with the way I'm out of alignment or something. And sometimes in order to not pay attention to the pain so that I don't make it worse by contracting, by pushing, or by getting caught up in aversion or self pity. And to kind of just feel the pain sometimes really opens up and allow something to release and relax it sometimes. So right effort is the effort factor of awakening has to do with a very relaxed choice about where we put our attention. What do we do that's skillful and helpful. And awareness is one of the great resources we have, I think of awareness, attention, to be a little bit like a food and where our attention goes, that feeds what we pay attention to. So if we put a lot of attention into what's unskillful, unhelpful, we actually, paradoxically, we feed it and grow it and it develops more fully. So if we spend a lot of time with resentment or hate or self pity or conceit, or, you know, or, and we're really paying attention to it, telling stories about it to ourselves, reviewing it, all that, that, that then things are the food of attention is going there and feeding it. And it tends to feed or create the condition for what's unhealthy in us to keep growing and developing greater momentum within our life. But if the food of attention goes to our goodwill or compassion or care, if it goes to our generosity to kindness, or if it simply goes to a clear open attention to what's here. Then it's feeding what's skillful and what's great about this is you can the how we pay attention. If we attend to that and are careful with that, then then we can feed what's skillful and healthy, wholesome for us when we need to pay attention to what's unskillful. So if we have a lot of hostility or resentment, sometimes it's useful to take good honest look at that. But we don't feed the resentment because we're, we're doing it where the effort we're making is to be with the resentment in this open palm of awareness, just to see it, allow it to be there. But don't fight it. Don't give into it, don't act on it. But just notice it to make room for it. And see what happens if we kind of just allow it to be there without feeding it. So the word for effort, effort factor of awakening, is this. It's a little bit of a choice. This is how, where attention goes, this, or this is how to pay attention. Because we have enough clarity we can recognize where it's useful to pay attention, this, or how to pay attention to pay attention with this kind of attention. And so this choice is a little bit like a recognition of this is how to do it. So that as the mind becomes more here, and we see more clearly what's here, it isn't so much that we choose in the abstract. What's a good idea to, you know, to be this way, it's more likely recognize, Oh, here it is. This is the corner. This is the way to be. This is Here it is. This is where the engagement is. This is what I feed. This is what I allow. So, Here, the factor of awakening of mindfulness. What the factor of awakening of investigation, differentiation of Dharmas. And this, the factor of awakening of effort. May your ability to recognize this is the right place for your effort to be. Give birth to a heroic effort. What you do is important, you are important. Let your effort flow into caring for yourself in the world. Thank you