So here we are sixth day for the seven factors of awakening. And the factor today is the factor of Samadhi, often translated as concentration. And I think it's important to notice that it's the sixth factor. That it's preceded by practices or states of developing mindfulness, investigation, effort, joy, tranquility. And before that there is a kind of a understanding that the support for the seven factors of awakening is our virtue or good conduct, living by the precepts. And it says all these conditions that are in place that support the arising, the appearance of Samadhi. And why that's important to say is that there's not a few people who associate concentration with the be all and end all of meditation. A person is a beginner, they read about meditation, that means it big to be concentrated, and so then there's a huffing and puffing, pushing, tightening and expectation and measuring of oneself, am I there yet? Am I there yet? And, but rather this samadhi, this concentration, that the practice, you know, certainly emphasizes is partially a byproduct rather than a beginner's practice, it's a byproduct of doing the practice, settling in being open, being relaxed, being happy, being settled, having a sense of well being. And, so it's we're kind of like preparing the soil, tilling the soil, fertilizing the soil, so that the seed of Samadhi can germinate and arise. And, and so Samadhi I think of Samadhi as a gift more than as something I work for, in fact, ideas we're working to develop concentration seems a little bit kind of against the grain of what really is happening here and what's supportive and helpful. It's more like we make ourselves a vehicle, a vessel for samadhi to arise than we do the Samadhi. But certainly there's a combination of things that we offer and do with practice. And what a lot of the gifts that can be allowed to occur. Last time I looked at an English dictionary for the meaning of the word concentration, there were two primary meanings. One was a focus of mind, zeroing in on something, I suppose. And the other is that it's a gathering together of things or people, like a gathering of people in a crowd is a concentration of people, I guess. And I think when people think about Samadhi, or concentration, in meditation, I get the impression that a lot of people think, oh, the first definition of focusing of the mind, and an extreme version of it is a laser focus, just like really pinpoint and really narrowing down and
really hooking into something. The other meaning is actually probably more what the meaning is in the ancient Buddhist texts, a gathering together of something. The word Samadhi and related words they're sometimes translated as concentration, have the meaning of a gathering together, unifying. Samadhi in one dictionary means to come into harmony with things. And it's easy to see how fragmented we can become. And we can even be in cross purposes to ourselves, cross purposes where we're directing our attention one place, and our mind or system is concerned about something else. I think most people who sit down to meditate will have that experience sooner or later, probably sooner, that we sit down to be present. And the mind is thinking about something else elsewhere, other times in places and so we're kind of at cross purposes, the mind has one thing and we're trying to do something else. And sometimes there's many different kind of fragmentations going on at the same time. Our body has a legacy of experiences of the day or experiences of a lifetime that can be quite strong. And we carry tensions and resistance and pulling back, and tensing up and shutting off parts of ourselves. And so all these different parts of us with different emotions that have happened over a lifetime, kind of are there also, kind of vying for attention or pulling away from attention and doing things. We can have multiple concerns at the same time going on in the mind jumps around between them. There could even be kind of multiple emotions happening at the same time. There could be an overall sense of well being and contentment, but a little something in the back is kind of a little hint, maybe a little concern about that I forget to turn off the stove or it's a little bit of fear or something, you know, all kinds of of things. And so the mind has no chance to settle when it's fragmented because it moves between all these things. And so Samadhi is that is not just the settling of the mind, but the unification, the gathering together all the different faculties of attention, we have all the different ways that we can be in our body or mind or emotions, our hearts all kind of come in harmony, for the same purpose, for the same intention. And in that happens through a simplification that becomes simpler and simpler around one thing. So classically, it might be the breathing and becoming simple, just simple with a breath. Some people might protest, it's just being too simplistic, but it's a phenomenal process of a very sophisticated process, I would say, of bringing all the different aspects we have into harmony into being settled together. And the image that I have for this is that of, you know, maybe this ground has been parched for a long time like a rain, the mountainside is dry, the creek beds are dry, and then it starts to rain. And the water starts to flow down the hillside and flows into the creeks, into the streams, into the rivers. And there's a gathering together of all the water. And by time the all the waters come into a big river. It's all kind of as a kind of one pointedness, flowing in the stream of the river, the current of the river is just here. But it's also all these different things have become unified, gathered together. And the image of the water on the slope is the idea of a natural process. That there is a natural gravitational pull in the human being towards samadhi. If we get out of the way. I think that the deep seated kind of feeling of wholeness, contentment, kind of being all everything in harmony, partly because to not do that is to be fragmented, to not do that is to be tense, to be caught up in things, to be clinging to things or resisting things. All forces which are hidden know themselves eventually feels quite dissatisfying. And it's very, for some people, it's clearly very nourishing and settling to really be absorbed in an activity and let everything else fall away. Like your craft or reading a book or something like that. So Samadhi concentration is, you know, kind of a gift that comes when we've laid the foundation for it to arise. And this idea of this too, is part of as part of
the foundation to learn how not to be in conflict with anything, not to be opposed to anything, not to make anything into a problem, we add layers and layers of problem on top of the simplicity of what's actually happening. And so to kind of relax the outer layers of problem making mind, of just kind of being with what is trusting ourselves being here is an important part of this laying the foundation for developing concentration. There are two different kind of practices associated with concentration that support it. And it's helpful that to realize there's these two because some people only think there's one or only focus on one rather than the other. And the first is the practice of returning the attention to the object of attention. So in meditation if the objects of attention is the breathing, of course the mind will wander away from time to time. Much of the time, sometimes. And, and the practice is to return, to redirect the attention or apply the attention back when the breathing return. And, or a different language sometimes language is so important these metaphors we use is to really allow the breathing to return to attention. How their breathing to come back into awareness. So rather than we going to it, it returns to us. That sometimes lets the mind be quieter and, and less active, just opening Okay, back to the breath, let the breath return. But it has to do with it starting over, beginning again. And a lot of meditation has a lot to do about starting over, starting over. And one of the great skills in meditation is to learn the art of starting again, starting over, as if it's the first time and to do it in a way that's not discouraged, not annoyed, not irritated, not then pouncing back, being forceful, but the very return, the very beginning again, feels satisfying. Feels Oh, this is nice to start again, and the mind opens, things relax. It's kind of a easeful thing. Okay, let's start again. Let's start again. The second activity is then sustaining the attention, hanging in there with what goes on. And so that is, so kind of really hanging in there, and being with the experience and that so that attention stays in the present moment with what we're focusing on. And the reason I emphasize these two is some people are very good at the first. They come back they start again. But then they kind of become complacent or kind of don't do much anymore. They kind of there they are. And the mind wanders off very easily. And, but the two are needed together. And they're slightly different functions of the mind, activities of the mind. Starting again and then then hanging with it, lingering with it, kind of sustaining the attention over time. And there are two there's an art towards having the sustaining, be enjoyable and nice. And one way to support that is don't have a high standard or high expectation of how long you're going to be able to sustain the attention. Just do it for as long as you can. And maybe by keep doing it Okay, here I am. Let's stay with this experience of breathing. Let's do a couple of breaths. And slowly over time, be able to sustain longer, rest with experience longer, be attentive and connected. Rather, it's this massage of wandering off, starting again, sustaining the attention, wandering off, coming back, starting again, sustaining the attention, being there, opening to the experience. Think of it as a massage or massaging the mind or the heart. So it gets softer and easier and more relaxed, more relaxed and less caught up in its concerns, less momentum of clinging and wanting and doing and begins to rest and relax and settle and settle. And the combination of these two, of starting again and then sustaining the attention, the word that I like for this factor of awakening, factor awakening of concentration is steady. And you might say to yourself the word, can you come back, be here with a breath, be whatever you're going to be with, and just say steady, let yourself be steady. Steady in body. Steady in this posture. Steady in the mind. Steady in attention. Steady in the heart, just steady. Keep it steady, keep it steady and then the mind wanders off. Try to stay steady and repeat it return. Start again and steady
like holding the ship steady. So, here, what, this, yes and relax and then now steady So, Thank you so much. And post finished the seven factors of awakening tomorrow morning