

# Putting Aside Concerns for the World

Online Hybrid Insight Meditation Retreat

September 8-28, 2024

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It's commonly understood, at least in this early tradition of Buddhism that I base our teachings on, that it involves a path to the end of suffering. But for that path to work, you don't want to suffer because you're on the path. Then you're working at cross-purposes. So you don't want to engage in a way that involves straining, pushing, attachment, conceit, or unreasonable expectations. You don't want to engage in the practice in a way that's operating as a form of aversion, to escape from life.

There are all kinds of ways people suffer because they're practicing. It's a bit unfortunate when the very purpose is to end suffering and we suffer more pursuing that purpose. I think probably anybody who engages in Dharma practice will do something like this sooner or later. But I mentioned it so that it becomes another reference point for being caring and careful with ourselves. Be careful how you practice.

If the purpose of this practice is to help you be free of suffering, that's an incredibly kind and compassionate purpose. It took an incredible amount of goodwill for someone – the Buddha – to think about this enough to put together these teachings because he cared about people and wanted to make a difference in their lives.

So the idea is that we're sitting here in a field of care, a field of compassion, a field of kindness. That is in the background of what we're doing here. It's the foundation for what we're doing. And can we remember that so maybe it can mitigate the ways that we suffer because we practice: we're not doing it well enough; we should be faster; we should be further along. "Certainly, I'm not doing it as well as the person sitting to my left, my right, behind, in front, or all of them. Or certainly, I'm doing better than them. How did they let them in here?"

They're not really practicing the Dharma. I know what the Dharma is, I know what the practice is about. I know that it's not about being so self-centered. I know."

So these are all forms of suffering. Be careful here. See if you can bring forth a way of being on the path for a good purpose, for a purpose that awakens in you some generosity, spirit, some goodness, some compassion, and maybe even love for yourself and for this world. "Yes, this is good."

One of the first kinds of love affair that I had with the Dharma probably came when I was at Tassajara. I was a gardener there for a while. Being in the garden became a metaphor or a mirror for me, for how my practice was and what it was like to sit in the zendo. I didn't think there was a problem, but I imagined that if other people knew I was doing this, they would have thought this probably was a problem: I would start the workday in the garden and I would spend an inordinate amount of time just walking around and looking at the plants, kind of loving them or caring for them – "There you are." At the time I thought I was being kind of parental – these were all my kids – and I would go around and just love them. I wasn't thinking about doing it. It wasn't a plan. I just found myself doing this.

But that was what was happening in meditation. There too, there was a cultivation of something. Something was being born; something was growing inside, and I had the same kind of attitude there – "Oh, something's here. Oh, hello, my friend." I don't know if parental is the right metaphor for some of you, but I was there to tend – be a gardener who tends the garden. And I knew that you don't go to the garden and yank at the plants to make them grow faster. You tend them. You water them. You nurture them. You remove the weeds.

One of the big questions I had in that garden time at Tassajara was that I started to see that I had a lot of anger. But somehow the way I understood the Zen teaching was that you weren't supposed to do anything. You weren't supposed to do anything with your anger. You were supposed to just be and not try to fix anything or change anything, just kind of accept everything. And I thought it was pretty profound to practice that way. But I thought, "What about this anger? I

mean, when I go to the garden, it seems like it's a normal thing to take the weeds out. What's the problem with taking the weeds out of the mind? I mean, isn't that just a natural thing to do too? Rather than having aversion, or greed, or trying to make myself better, or having some kind of attachment, why can't it just be like tending the garden? Maybe the weeds don't need to be there. If I take them out, then I won't impose them upon the rest of the world."

So, cultivating, and tending, developing something, and letting it grow. The word sometimes translated as "meditation," sometimes as "practice," is *bhāvanā*. And *bhāvanā* can mean "growing something," letting something come into being. It's not making something. It's not constructing something. It's more about letting something grow and unfold and develop. And so practice means growing something.

So, in American Buddhism, people ask, "What's your practice?" That's a very common reference point in the West. But what if we ask instead, "What are you growing?" Because when you say, "practice," the emphasis is on technique, perhaps. But if you ask, "What are you growing?" immediately the emphasis becomes something different: "What are you developing? What are you supporting? What are you nurturing? What are you allowing to come out of you?"

If the emphasis is on technique, some people suffer more because of techniques. And one way is: "I have to do it right" – the perfectionist approach. "How do I do it? I have to get it just right. I have to get the instructions really carefully." And then, "I'm not doing it right and it's not happening."

You know, there are all these ways we tie ourselves in knots – some of us. I've done that with the instructions. But if the whole thing is about growing something, the approach to it is different than doing a technique. What if what we're growing is steadiness, the capacity to be steady in this life, to be steady in our activities, and feel a steadiness in ourselves, a stability? We're growing stability.

There are a lot of things about which you could say, "This is what I'm growing." At different times, some of you here on the first day of the retreat – maybe in

the most abstract way you could agree you're maybe here to end suffering a little bit – but on the first day of the retreat, what are you trying to do, to develop?" I'm trying to recover from a difficult life. I'm trying to settle. I'm trying to become more steady because I feel so battered around. Anytime someone says something, I get triggered. I'm trying to steady myself." It could be," I'm trying to grow a capacity for attention – to grow a capacity for attention, as opposed to "paying attention," as we say in English. (What a great horrible metaphor, like, pay attention? Probably you're in debt anyway. You'll never overcome the debt. Pay back all the attention that you were given but you didn't use. Imagine that. How about that ledger? We were given the capacity for attention. Our capacity is phenomenal. You've probably squandered a lot of it. So pay it back; pay attention. I think it's a silly metaphor that we use.)

But instead, to grow attention, to let it grow and mature. In the *sutta* that I'll be talking about more during this retreat, the *Discourse on Mindfulness of the Body*, the Buddha talks about cultivating and growing mindfulness of the body, (awareness of the body), cultivating and growing it. So how do you do that? What kind of orientation? How do you show up? How do you be present if what you're doing is being a gardener for the inner life, letting something grow and develop?

One thing that I like to suggest is that when we do Buddhist practice on retreat, no one's a bystander. And you're not here just to observe like a bystander. Doing that might be a relief for those of you who are overly involved in your life. It might be nice to step back. But the approach is we want to participate in the way that a gardener participates in the growth of the garden. "Participates" means cooperates with it or nourishes it, and supports it to grow.

We have a tremendous range of attentional faculties. We have a lot of different things that our psychophysical system can do that allow us to be attentive, to have attention. Take, for example, "I hear the dog barking." So the ability of my ears to hear is a part of the attentional faculties we have. I can see. That's an attentional faculty. There are smell and taste. There's not just one sense capacity in the body. There are many sense faculties in the body, of temperature, movement, proprioception, and balance. There are a lot of different ways we experience. Probably there are many different kinds of

nerves, so each nerve takes in a little different kind of information. We're consciously aware of some of the information we take in having to do with the way that the nerves are stimulated. And some of it we're not exactly conscious of in an ordinary way, but it has pathways within us so there's a response in our body. If you go to a place where there's warm sun on a cold day, you don't even know all the pathways through which that warmth is moving through your body. Your pores are opening up, certain muscles relax, and your blood flows in different ways. It's different than when you're cold. And now there's a whole kind of rich field of activity because the body can feel warmth.

I told the story yesterday of looking at the water in the calm Bay area. So is that just seeing? Or is it that sight? What are all the different pathways through which that goes on in my body – the associations and memories that come into play? What does that do? Some people nowadays are saying that when you when you look out across a vast expanse, it helps you feel safe because you can look out and you don't see any danger. And maybe there's something deep in our genetics where looking out across vast spaces like water does something to help us feel safe.

What happens? What shifts and changes inside? All kinds of things can unfold and change. You get softer, and your shoulders and belly relax, and maybe a feeling of comfort arises.

So the act of attention is not inconsequential. If your attention is mostly paying attention to horror movies or reading the usual news, it can create tension and contraction in the body. It can elicit emotions. With a horror movie, there might be an emotion of fear that's very uncomfortable. If you go to a horror movie every day for 360 days, then probably the last five days of the year, you've reinforced that idea of fear as a habit in your body. And you're operating with fear even when everything is safe because those pathways of responding and seeing have been deeply conditioned.

Maybe I shouldn't belittle this by saying "a horror movie" because some people live lives that are horrendous. What you do over and over again conditions

you. I use this as an example because the same thing can be true with what your mind thinks regularly. Some people have vivid imaginations. When they think they can visualize. They make up scenarios; they make up imaginary scenes of what will happen and what conversations will be like.

Some of those are enough to trigger pathways in our psychophysical and emotional being that trigger all kinds of responses that are uncomfortable. I've made myself afraid. I could feel the fear building up in my body through just having a fantasy about something. It could be anything, but you know, I like to go backpacking and hiking in the mountains and I've thought, "Oh yeah, it'd be nice to go up there. I've been there before; let's go," just imagining what it's like. Then I remember, "Oh, there's one place we have to walk along a little ledge and it's 100 feet down." I remember that at the time I was a little bit afraid. (This is actually true.) Just last month at the end of July there was a very narrow ledge and they had put in a wire cable. I noticed my wife didn't use the cable but I did, because I thought, "Wow, that's a long way down." And then later when I thought going back there would be nice, with that cable and that ledge, even just thinking about it, I start getting contracted, as if it was happening now.

So what you pay attention to makes a lot of difference and what you do regularly over and over again makes a lot of difference. Some of it is self-reinforcing. Some of it offers a kind of self-confirmation. A certain way of seeing the world tends to be a self-fulfilling prophecy. People who see the world aversively will get a lot of confirmation that there are things in the world to be aversive to. The mind picks it up. I'm not going to say those things aren't there, but it's not the whole picture.

So we have these pathways that are rich inside that are triggered and come alive with our attentional capacities. And many of these attentional capacities we have – to know what's happening in the moment, to receive the sense data – happen without any effort on our part. They're just there.

Sometimes there's effort to pay attention to something. Sometimes we will it, and have a sense of purpose in paying attention to certain things. If you drive a car, you know, something clicks in. For some of us it's a little bit second nature

to have this extra attention when we're driving. No one has to tell us to pay attention because we just know to do it. Sometimes there are things like walking around IRC where you might be kind of aware of the pattern of light and dark, shadow and sunlight but you're not consciously thinking about it. If you go 10 feet further you can think back and realize, "Oh yeah there was a pattern of light and dark back there." Somehow it registered. It wasn't exactly in the higher levels of conscious thinking or conscious mind but it didn't take any effort on your part. There was no choice on your part. You just took something in easily.

So this is a long way of saying we have these natural attentional capacities. On one hand, people might think, "Okay, now I have to apply it in this practice. I've got to muster it together and really make it work and do something with that, to be with the breath" or something. That's one way.

Another way is not to *engage* attention, not *use* attention, not *do* attention, but enter into it and participate. It's already happening. Your attentional faculties are operating all the time. Instead of coming outside of it, enter inside, like a gardener, and participate in it. And if you have the sense, "I'm going to participate with attention that's already here, and grow it, develop it," there's a very different relationship with attention than: "I have to bore into my (something) and really have a laser focus."

There are times when I would sit on retreat with pain, and my idea of practice was to have a laser focus on that pain – to blast it out of existence. I don't recommend that approach. I don't think it served me very well. There were other times when I felt pain and I realized, "Oh there's attention here; there's awareness; there are sensations in the area of the pain. What if I enter into that? What if I participate with that attention and let that attention show itself? Let the experience of pain reveal itself. Let me allow it to show itself, allow it to be there. It wants to be there because it's so strong. What if I let it be there and let it show itself?"

Both means can be a kind of present moment attention. One might grow out of a force of will. Another one might grow because it wants to grow – a natural kind of evolving, developing, and growing.

So the path that the Buddha emphasizes is a path of growth, a path of cultivation. In talking about mindfulness of the body in the *Discourse on Mindfulness of the Body*, he says:

*If mindfulness of the body is cultivated and grown [or developed, as it's usually translated] it will be of great fruit and benefit.*

It's not inconsequential that the metaphor used here is that of fruition – a fruit, like a gardener grows apple trees and, with time, the trees come into fruition; they create fruit. The Buddha is using the natural language of the biological world and the plant world as a reference point for how this practice unfolds. So the mindfulness (the awareness) of the body, when grown and cultivated, will grow into fruition, into a fruit and tremendous benefit.

So that's the topic of this sutra and one of the things I'll talk about during this retreat: how the Buddha talks about mindfulness of the body.

There are three different discourses of the Buddha called “the mindfulness discourses” (“the *sati suttas*”). The one that most of us know, which is the most famous, I think, is the *Satipatthāna Sutta*. The second most famous is the *Ānāpānasati Sutta*. And the third, which is rarely mentioned, I think, is the *Kāyagatāsatisutta* (mindfulness directed to or mindfulness in relation to the body).

It's a wonderful text and it has wonderful metaphors that sometimes give better instructions than the prose instructions. The prose instructions (like, this is what you do) are kind of shorthand, like cliff notes. But you really get the instructions sometimes when you tune into the metaphor because the metaphor evokes something, or it can.

With the imagery, again, through the pathways inside, we can feel, sense, and participate in the metaphor. A picture is worth a thousand words. These metaphors are pictures that come alive for us.” Oh now I know. They give me a feeling; now I have a feeling for how to do this practice.”

That works especially well with the idea that we're letting something grow from the inside out – something that's embodied, something that we can feel and sense. It's not a technique in the narrow sense of the word "technique."

Like the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, the *Discourse on Mindfulness of the Body* has a refrain. What these two *suttas* share is the first foundation of mindfulness, which is almost exactly the same. But one difference is that after each of the practices talked about in the first foundation, they have different refrains that are repeated.

This is the refrain from the *Discourse on Mindfulness of the Body*:

*Being diligent, steadfast, and resolved.*

(It begins that way. This might not be good news. This is like, "Oh god, I gotta gear up now and be diligent, and resolved, and steadfast." This is like, uh-oh.)

This is the refrain that follows right after the first instruction, which is:

*One knows when one is breathing out a short breath, one is breathing out a short breath. When one inhales a long breath, one knows one is inhaling a long breath.*

*(Breathing in long he knows, 'I am breathing in long.' Breathing out long he knows, 'I am breathing out long.'*

*Breathing in short he knows, 'I am breathing in short.' Breathing out short he knows, 'I am breathing out short.' Transl on IMC page.*

Then it goes on to say:

*Breathing in, one feels [or experiences] the whole body. Breathing out, one experiences the whole body.*

*(He trains himself: 'Breathing in, I experience the whole body;' 'breathing out, I experience the whole body.'*

The fourth part of it is what I want to emphasize:

*Breathing in, one relaxes the physical tension. Breathing out, one relaxes the physical tension.*

*(He trains himself, ‘breathing in, I calm the bodily formation,’ ‘breathing out, I calm the bodily formation.’)*

The word “tension” is how I’m translating *saṅkhāra*. Another way to render this more interpretively is “reactivity.”

*Breathing in, I relax the physical reactivity. Breathing out, I relax the physical reactivity.*

So we’re relaxing. That’s the first set of instructions in all three of the mindfulness discourses. That’s how they all begin. And just that first instruction is a practice that a person can do for years and come back to it over and over again. It’s so powerful to become really familiar with your breathing.

The breathing is at the nexus of all these different neural pathways in our body that’s connected to so many different aspects of the information coming in, and the inner processes. I’ve been sitting quietly with my breathing soft and relaxed, and then, remembering some way that someone wronged me 20, 30, 40 years ago, I could feel my breathing contract and get shallow just by thinking about it.

So the breathing is at the nexus of so many things. It puts us, in a certain way, at the center of our life. They say that all roads lead to Rome. Probably in the body, all roads lead to the breathing. It’s so central to the whole thing.

Then to feel the body, and then to relax the body – relaxing the tensions of the body. The tensions or reactivities that have built up in our body are intimately

connected to what the mind is doing. The mind and body are not so separate. The whole nervous system, all the nerves everywhere in the body, are considered part of the mind. The mind is not just the brain, but the whole neurological system everywhere. Every experience we have of the body requires a nerve or two. And that experience is a mental experience, so it's the whole inner world of how we experience ourself. And if the mind has tension, if the brain is tense, if our thinking is tense, it's as if it has puppet strings into our muscles, tightening them up.

As we relax the body, there's a reciprocal relationship. The tension of the mind can begin to relax as well. Relaxing the body is not lightweight Buddhism – it's deep Buddhism. You can go really deep with relaxing. Many people have experienced that, as we practice – maybe some of you have experienced it here – in the whole way of being on retreat for this long, there's a deep, deep relaxing in the body that happens, which is not even your doing. Just because you're here, something begins settling and settling and relaxing.

So that's the first instruction. Just imagine you are doing this diligently: just being with your breath, just really feeling your body, participating from the inside out. Feeling the body is being aware of the body. The body has a natural capacity to know itself, to experience itself. You're not coming from the outside and chiseling in to be aware of everything, but rather, you're entering into and allowing the mindfulness of the body, the awareness the body offers, to show itself and grow and develop the heightened sensitivity that grows from inside out. And in developing that greater sensitivity to the body, you're relaxing your body, and softening.

And just imagine in this thought experiment that you enjoy doing it. You feel so lucky – “Boy, I have this practice. Wow, how lucky can I be to have this time to be present doing this, and engaging. How lucky to be doing something that is going to touch some of the deepest, most intimate places within that are usually inaccessible in daily life. Wow. And I get to relax and soften this body. Wow.”

So that was the instruction the Buddha gave. And right after this, almost without pausing, he says:

*Being diligent, steadfast and resolved.*

So somehow you have to practice these together: softening and relaxing, and and being diligent, steadfast, and resolved. If it was only “diligent, steadfast, and resolved,” it would be easy to interpret that in a way that makes us tense. But the wonderful art of practice is not only about relaxing. The relaxation has to be supported by something that has a little bit of vitality, a little bit of engagement, a little bit of power to it. They go together, so there’s a nice combination of being alert and relaxed.

It's possible have relaxing as your primary practice. And it's also possible to be a hundred percent diligent, dedicated, and unwavering at the same time. That's what I'm working on – being relaxed. And because that's what I'm doing, I'm not going to be tense about how I'm diligent. As soon as I begin to get tense about how I'm diligent and wholehearted, I have a practice that protects me from that: I'm going to relax.

So don't be afraid of being diligent, steadfast, resolved. It does not mean that you have to get tense. It does not mean that you have to bear down and get exhausted. I would like to suggest that the potential is there for it to be the opposite: being steadfast, resolved, diligent can actually be enlivening and maybe even restful.

And now I'll come to one of the metaphors. The *Satipatthāna Sutta* has a metaphor which is not in the *Discourse on Mindfulness of the Body*. It has this metaphor for mindfulness of breathing in the first tetrad: It's like a lathe worker or an apprentice of a lathe worker who's working the lathe and knows that this is a big turn of the lathe or a small turn, or this is a short turn or a long turn of the lathe.

I don't know what kind of lathe they were using, but I have two ideas about what's going on in this image, because the imagery can come alive and give us some of the instruction. The first thought I had when I read this is about someone doing wood carving on a lathe. I've done some of that on a lathe with a chisel. While the lathe is turning the block of wood, all the work happens on a narrow sharp point where the chisel touches the wood. You have to be really

attentive. You have to be diligent, steadfast, and resolved to stay right there. The attention gets really focused: "This is what I'm doing." It's possible to do that and get tense. But when I was doing it, it was actually deeply relaxing. I got absorbed like one does with a craft, or a play, or reading, or playing a good musical instrument. It was a hobby that I loved doing. I would feel so refreshed putting myself into just being right there with crafting these bowls that I made, being diligent, steadfast and resolved to meet the lathe right there at that one point.

The other metaphor I thought about for the lathe is maybe it's more like a potter's wheel turning. Have you ever made bowls on a potter's wheel? It's not a sharp point, but again, you're using your sensitive fingertips to really be right there and you can't be distracted. It requires you to be very, very steady with a certain kind of stillness – to be very, very still, steady, connected, diligent, and really present. And a good potter might report, "It just clears out my mind. I do my pottery to settle out all the ordinary tensions of the day, and I come back feeling refreshed and renewed. It's like meditation for me."

So the refrain goes:

*Being diligent, steadfast, and resolved – (I hope I've inspired you with these words now) – Being diligent, steadfast, and resolved, one gives up memories and thoughts of lay life. Giving them up, one's mind becomes inwardly still, settled, unified, and collected.*

This morning I said, "Still, quiet, unified, and collected." There are different translations of what this actually means. This one says, "Still, settled, unified, and collected."

*This, practitioners, is how a practitioner develops mindfulness directed to the body.*

So "inwardly still, settled, unified, and collected," we can say conventionally is referring to cultivating concentration, developing a concentrated mind. This is where the mindfulness of the body discourse is going. Rather than emphasizing

the development of *sati first*, it emphasizes the development of deep concentration states through doing the same practice.

Practicing mindfulness and practicing concentration don't have to be so radically different. They can kind of come together and might sometimes be different perspectives on the same thing – different ways of understanding, or different aspects of the same experience.

The metaphor of the lathe and the chisel is kind of a metaphor for practicing mindfulness of breathing in a concentrated way, just being right there where breathing touches the point of attention. Being right there touching has that intimacy and delicacy. If you don't like the image of a knife or a chisel, maybe it can be the gentle hand that holds your hand guiding you in the dark, right there with you. We're right there, really close, caring for this intimate thing of breathing.

It was two years ago, I think, here, during this retreat, that my mother died. Someone reminded me of that who has the picture of my mom we placed on the altar. I held her hand while she was dying. That was intimate, that touch right there. To be really there, close in.

So the metaphor in the *Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness* suggests concentration – to really be pointedly right there and present for the breathing. Being there for the full cycle, the turning of breathing in and breathing out, in a loving, diligent, kind, participatory way. Staying there.

What I want to emphasize here today is being still and settled. These first two words are translated so many different ways. Another translation is "steadied." "Steadied and settled." "Still and steadied." "Quiet."

Can you steady yourself in your body? Can you be stable? Can you cultivate a steadiness of attention, a steadiness of presence? Can you have a certain kind of living, dynamic stillness, and steady yourself, maybe not like with a chisel point, but steady yourself to participate with the natural attention that you're able to have on the body breathing?

Steadying yourself on that breathing might be supported by finding a relatively small area where you can stay with a full cycle and track the cycle, kind of like a good potter who has their fingers right there on the lip of the bowl and just doesn't go. They don't leave the clay for one moment as the bowl spins around. So as your breathing spins around, be right there at some smaller area, not the whole breath body, but some place where you can steady yourself, still yourself, find some stability.

Then in the *Discourse on Mindfulness of the Body*, the Buddha gives a metaphor to describe how beneficial mindfulness of the body is. He says if you have not cultivated and developed mindfulness of the body, then Mara gets access to you. Mara can come in and take you over. And Mara is also you. Mara is just the personification of attachments – greed, hatred, and delusion. Mara is always there tempting you to get involved in these things. But if you have no mindfulness of the body, it's easy for those temptations, those forces to come in and take over.

In the metaphor, Buddha says, it's like you have a wet hunk of clay and you take a big, heavy rock, and you drop it on that little ball of clay and just flatten it out. That's how it is if you have no mindfulness of the body. These attachments, addictions, and desires come along and just take you over and flatten you out.

I think once in my life, the next day I woke up and thought, "I think I've been flattened, crushed by Mara." But developing mindfulness of the body and cultivating it, being really in touch with your body and having the capacity for awareness of the body, and letting the attentional capacity of the body flower in you, develop in you, and really flow through you, means that Mara will not get access. Mara will not get established in you.

Mindfulness of the body is like a big solid wooden door built of heartwood. Heartwood is the hardest part of the wood. So, a big solid wooden door, like the doors here that you're supposed to close carefully. If you throw a ball of yarn against them really hard, with the most strength you've ever had, the door is so stable, so steady, so still, and so strong that the yarn does nothing to the door. The door is like, who cares?

If you have mindfulness well developed – and part of that means being steady, and still, and stable, and connected, and aware of what's happening here – when Mara comes along he gets no traction. You might still have all kinds of odd thoughts, and desires, and wishes, things that maybe you don't want to broadcast to everyone here, but they don't go anywhere. You don't feel any shame, you don't feel any guilt, you don't feel any aversion. It's just like: "You're not coming in. You can just bounce off."

That's a powerful metaphor. Can you develop that kind of steadiness, that kind of stillness, that kind of stability, in the sensitivity of the body, in the way that we're present for our breathing, so that there's no room for our attachments or thoughts to get established? They might come through, but they just come and they go.

So, please, be gardeners. Be the gardener of your tree, the tree of awakening. Be gardeners and allow the tree to grow and become big, so it develops really strong, clean, wonderful heartwood. May you grow to be the Bodhi tree through mindfulness of the body, being here for this, where you participate and allow it to grow; you participate with a natural awareness; you steady yourself in natural awareness; you stabilize yourself in it. You're here. And as you breathe, maybe you're there like a potter, just right there, diligent, resolved, steadfast, but loving it.

We are so fortunate to have this wonderful art or craft to engage in and explore. I think people who make pots probably make a lot of failed pots before they do a really good one. Don't worry about how many pots you break. Just keep coming back over and over again. Come back, start again, start again, start again, start again, steady yourself, settling yourself, stabilizing yourself, stilling yourself, quieting yourself so that the living awareness, living attention, can grow and flow and wake you up. May your natural capacity for attention be given a chance to grow. Thank you.