

Seven Factors of Enlightenment - Concentration Part 3

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So a concept that is closely connected to the Buddhist practice of *samādhi*, or concentration, is the concept of unification. Part of the function of developing concentration in Buddhism is to create a more unified mind-heart. Maybe one way of understanding this is to see how easy it is for our thoughts, our mind, our inner life to be fragmented, operating at many different levels and in different directions. For example, I might come here to meditate, sit down, and my intention is to be present for my breath.

However, perhaps driving over here this morning, someone recklessly almost ran into my car in a way that was very dangerous for everyone involved. Some of the adrenaline and agitation, fear, anger, lingers from that. It still lingers in the body, so the body still has this feeling of agitation or maybe anger from that event. The emotional body is somehow connected to that anger, still operating there and churning up certain kinds of thoughts. Perhaps as I'm sitting here trying to be intent on my breath, part of me is aware that I'm in a room with a lot of other people.

There's a concern operating, kind of a radar, an attention going on, all these other people here. I bet they're attaining the 19th degree of *samādhi*. They're really doing well, and I'm the only one who's not getting concentrated. Maybe I shouldn't even be here. So the intention is to be with the breath, the emotions linger from what happened earlier in the day, and the attention is somehow tuning into the room around us, what's going on.

Then our stomach gets hungry, and the stomach starts thinking about lunch—how long is this going to go, we need to have lunch soon. That's all fine, but then in addition to that, there's this really important event you're going to go to tonight and you're not really prepared for it. So your planning mind begins to get concerned: am I going to get home fast enough, maybe I can leave at lunchtime and get home and do a little bit quick and eat my lunch in the car there, how am I going to balance this? All these things can be going on at the same time, and that just scratches the surface. Some of the lingering effects of past events are layered in the body, so there's all kinds of things—not just the near auto accident, but perhaps a conversation you had yesterday or last year or events that happened are somehow lingering in the background and pulling your attention this way and that way.

Plans about the future pull it this way and that way, concerns about the present pull it this way. All these things are operating and they fragment us, some of them quite dramatically and some of them not so dramatically. Part of the function of *samādhi* is to take all these streams of who we are, all these streams of concerns and attention and intention and everything, and unify them so they're all operating for the same purpose at the same time. So they're aligned with each other. Our intention is to be focused on the breath.

Our physical experience is not lingering with tensions from the past or something, but our physical body is really here. Our thinking is not concerned about what happened yesterday; our thinking, if anything, is concerned about what's happening here as well. We're not caught up in plans about the future. Our emotional bodies, our emotional feelings and all that, are not lingering feelings from the past, are not reacting to things which are not here. Our emotional feeling tone, about who we are, is also somehow closely, intimately connected to what happens when we're getting concentrated.

All of who we are—physical, emotional, mental, intentional, attentional, everything—is kind of centered around the practice we're doing here. It's unified, it's aligned. It's not so easy to do that because of all the different centrifugal forces in our mind. Our mind is very multi-dimensional. But as we keep doing the concentration practice, we begin aligning all these things.

Maybe it's similar to, I think of it sometimes like, there's iron filaments in the sandbox. When I was a little kid, we'd take magnets to school and you'd pull the magnet through the sand just the same direction. All these little black splinters would all line up. So we keep coming back to the breath, coming back to the breath, breath, breath, breath. Slowly, all these different aspects of who we are begin lining up until everything's lined up and unified.

When everything's unified, a tremendous amount of personal power gets channeled or awakened or something. Our personal power, strength, when it's fragmented in many different directions, is not so available to be strong. It's like divided up in many areas. But when our personal power is all unified for the same purpose at the same time, we can accomplish something really amazing. I think of the people who, maybe it's a bad example, but the people who are not particularly strong, but the kid gets trapped under the car and they go pick up the car.

We have stories like that. The adrenaline goes and everything gets focused in a certain kind. I don't want your adrenaline to be channeled here, but there's a tremendous amount of potential and strength and power in our hearts and our minds that, if it could all be used for the

same purpose, can be quite beautiful. One of the things that happens when that energy, that power gets concentrated or focused in that way, is it tends to be very enjoyable. The unified, concentrated mind-heart has a kind of joy, openness, spaciousness, expansiveness, quality to it that's very, very satisfying.

One of the things that's nice about that satisfaction is that it comes with the inner state, how it is, not from what happens in the world around us. Many people's happiness is dependent on the world around them for things being just right. But here we're developing a deep sense of well-being that comes from the inside rather than depending on what's on the outside. That can create a very different reference point for where we look for happiness in our life. So this idea of unification is very important.

So let's do a sitting and see if you can begin to bring together all the different aspects of who you are so they're all supportingly working together and concentrating on the breath. And to repeat a little bit of what I said last time, it's very helpful to bring in your body and your posture as important supports, contain your context for the work of meditation. The idea to unify everything, to have everything we are kind of aligned for the same purpose at the same time, it's very helpful to include the physical body. Some people leave their body behind, don't give much attention to it. It's an incidental kind of thing that is around, not that important in itself, people think.

But the body is actually very, very important and useful. So to spend a little bit of time when you start sitting here, feeling your posture, and giving some attention to a posture that feels both alert—the posture itself expresses alertness—and relaxed. Some of you perhaps have seen a small little toddler, child, sit up straight. It's just beautiful. You can almost feel the alertness in the spine, in the back.

But it's also relaxed and soft. Without pushing your chest out, perhaps it's away from the inside, as you begin focusing on the small of your back between your shoulder blades, the spine between your shoulder blades. Bring more aliveness there that makes your front ribcage open up more. And then in that, the whole body is going to be included in this. Take some moments here to familiarize yourself with the way you experience your body, here and now.

Let your attention roam around your body, getting familiar with what it feels like in your chest, your back rib cage, your belly, your legs, your arms, your head, without any judgments about it. Just becoming familiar as it is. Establishing a connection with as much of your body as you can, so that you're kind of pulling in your body into the sense of presence in the meditation you're going to do. If there is a lot of tension in the body, that supports fragmentation.

Because behind the tension there is a desire or intention or something that's different than being present.

So very gently, as you breathe, if you breathe a little more fully than usual, see if you can soften around your tension. Ease up on it a little bit. Perhaps as you exhale, you can soften your muscles of your face. As you exhale, soften your shoulders and shoulder blades. As you exhale, soften the muscles of your rib cage.

Soften, relax your belly. So your belly maybe falls forward, relaxes down. Thank you. Feeling your body, global experience of your body. Being as at ease with your body as it is.

And then within your body, as part of your bodily experience, notice how the body experiences breathing. Notice how the rib cage, front and back, move as you breathe. Notice how your diaphragm moves as you breathe. Notice any expanding and contracting feelings in your belly as you breathe. As you're sitting here quietly with the body still, see if you can let go of any thoughts and concerns you have that are different than being here and now.

To think and be concerned about other times and places is to be concerned with a virtual reality. It's not that real. It's not as real as the present experience. If there's a lot of thinking about something, notice if there's any sense of pressure or tension anywhere in the body, maybe in the brain, connected to that thinking. As you exhale, see if you can relax the thinking muscle.

As you sit here quietly, having the opportunity to sit peacefully and still in this large room, notice if there's any emotions or feelings about being able to be quiet and still, being focused, being present, practicing, which are nice feelings, nice emotions. Appreciation of the calm, of the stillness, appreciating not having a lot of things to do. Perhaps some appreciation of having the time to be in touch with yourself and intimate. Perhaps as you exhale, you can let go of emotional tension. Exhale and relax into what's enjoyable here and now.

Enjoyable with the breath being present. So that there can be a little bit of sense of comfort with breathing. See if there's subtle ways that you can adjust your breathing, so your breathing becomes more comfortable or pleasant. Very subtle, letting your breath maybe relax as you breathe out, relax more at the end of the in-breath. Breathing a little bit slower or faster, deeper or more shallow.

Breathing more from the belly or more from higher in the chest. See if you can do subtle and easy adjustments so the experience of breathing is more enjoyable. Then notice if the attitude you have about what you're doing feels supportive of concentrating the breath or

detracting from it. Can you maybe subtly, a little bit, adjust your attitude so you have an attitude about what you're doing here that feels in harmony with being peaceful, focused, present? You have an attitude which is not in conflict.

Thank you. Then see if you can enter into the experience of breathing more fully, as if breathing is the very center of your universe, the most important thing you're doing. Simple about it, so there's not a lot of expectation or demands or ideas of what should be happening. Content to just be with breathing as you can, as it is. If you find yourself thinking a lot about other things, experiment a little bit with a very simple, softly, engage your thinking mind in thinking about your breathing.

Thank you. Supported by your body, your feelings, your thoughts, your attitude, your intention. Let your attention be all about breathing. Thank you. In that part of your mind that can remember things, let it remember to stay with the breathing.

Remember to have as much continuous attention to the breathing as you can, one breath after another. Thank you. Thank you. Around the edges of your experience of self, body, there is stillness, space. Perhaps even the sense of stillness and space is there, supportive, aligned with staying focused on the breath.

As if breathing is nourished and nurtured by stillness and spaciousness. If something is happening that makes it difficult to be funded with the breathing, then include that in your awareness. But imagine that the breathing moves through the challenge, or that happens within the breathing. So you still stay with the breathing. You're not in conflict with what's going on, but you're breathing through it, or breathing with it, so that you're mostly in your breath.

Thank you. So in the last couple of minutes of the sitting, kind of in a sense, step back from the meditation and then review what it was like to sit here. Review internally with yourself. How unified were you? How fragmented were you?

Were you in cross-purposes with yourself, trying to be present with other thoughts, concerns, ideas? What might you have learned about concentration? So, um... There's a number of Buddhist topics that cause a lot of suffering, and concentration is one of them. Right?

It's pretty common for people to have some kind of variation of the thought, "I don't have enough concentration. I need to be more concentrated." I think pretty much everyone has adequate concentration for this practice. Plenty, probably. In certain circumstances in life, your capacity to get concentrated becomes very clear.

It becomes very clear when a police car pulls up behind you when you're driving on the freeway; most people become pretty present. They're not thinking about a lot of what they were thinking about. They're thinking about, what is she doing back there? Lights are not on, but she's on my tail. What's this about? I better drive really carefully.

Everything gets gathered together. Everything gets unified around, you know, everything's kind of for this purpose. Or when I took my, I like to say, I used to say that the amount of concentration you need for taking the written DMV test is adequate for meditation. You know, there's certain circumstances where you gather together, you really focus. What happens in meditation is that we don't tend to focus as much because it's not obvious in the moment how important it is.

You know, when the police car is behind you, it's important. DMV, you've got to pass that test. You focus. But here, you're sitting here and minding your own business. You have some vague idea that meditation is really important, but when you sit down, the sense of immediacy, there's no pressing concern that's marshaling your attention the same way.

But you have enough concentration. The other thing that happens is that in this kind of setting, a lot of the ways in which we fragment ourselves begins operating. As we get pulled left and right, we have enough concentration. It's just that we have so many distractions that pull us this way and that. The idea is not so...

So I think it's important to realize that you have enough concentration, ability for it. But it's a matter of marshaling it. It's a matter of not interfering with it. A lot of it doesn't operate because we interfere with it. We're thinking about other things.

So how do we get ourselves involved and connected here with the breath, for example, just that becomes a really focus point? I know some people who have gone snorkeling or scuba diving, the memory of how important the breath is then reminds them it's something about how to help them to be with their breath when they're meditating. Because when you're snorkeling or scuba diving, really the most important thing going on is breathing, and so you're kind of very aware of breathing and what's going on. So, one of the reasons why meditation, I think, is an important area of training and practicing is because the obvious external motivators to get us focused are not operating. Because they're not operating, we have to contend with ourselves much more honestly.

Some people would like to have some kind of prop, some kind of crutch, some kind of aid to get concentrated, so there's all kinds of aids you could do. I mean, it's a very simple thing;

some people like to listen to guided meditation tapes or CDs or whatever, and they're okay to do that, but you're being aided by something external and it can be easier. It's actually in the bigger picture much more significant to contend with the inner forces that you have and work through them so you can discover what you have to let go of and relax and what you need to strengthen so that you can do it on your own, unaided by something else. So it might take a lot longer to learn to get concentrated if you just rely on your own powers. But in the bigger picture, it's much more beneficial for you than a shortcut to get concentrated by having something external do it for you.

Last thing I'd like to say here for now is that in the sequence of Seven Factors of Awakening, as with many of these practice lists in Buddhism, they can often, they're often, they're almost always presented in a sequence by what gets developed sequentially. It doesn't always develop sequentially or they develop in spirals, kind of come back to the same quality again and get developed. There's something sequential that's important to understand. So, for example, we start with mindfulness. It's being present and attentive and honest for what's going on here and now.

With that attentive honesty, there becomes naturally a tendency to be more discerning about what's here, which is a second factor of awakening, to be really discerning about what's actually going on here. The third, when it has become more discerning and wiser about what's happening, there tends to come a greater capacity to apply effort and energy to be present. We want to be present more. With more engagement in the practice, then the next kind of phase of practice, in some way or other, is some sense of cultivation, arising of inner well-being, joy or happiness or well-being. As we feel more well-being, we can relax more.

So the tranquility factor gets stronger. Concentration is the next factor, is built on those other factors, especially the well-being and the tranquility. There's plenty of people who try to get concentrated directly. You know, I'm supposed to get concentrated and they kind of just bore in to their breath. It's actually very important to cultivate a context or a container for concentration practice by being able to cultivate some modicum of well-being and tranquility and some modicum of energy.

There has to be a balance of energy and tranquility. If you're not in balance, you fall asleep. You have too much tranquility. But to cultivate well-being and whatever you can do, to have some—it can be very small at first, but something that brings you a sense of delight or joy or happiness. Because it's a lot easier to get concentrated if the container of who you are feels kind of comfortable or happy or a sense of well-being.

Some people say that's a paradox, because I'm feeling so unhappy. That's why I came to meditate. And now you tell me I have to be happy before I meditate. You do your best you can. Then just, you know, once you've done the best you can, you just continue from there.

But what you don't want to do is set yourself up in this kind of stressful mind, upset mind, expect, I'm just going to bore into my breath and get concentrated, overriding everything else, because that's not going to be very helpful. The kind of concentration you want is soft and relaxed. So how you can cultivate some sense of well-being—so those are some of my thoughts here. Now I'd like to hear from you all based on what happened this morning in the guided meditation practice here or attempting to get concentrated, some of the ideas I presented today. What would you like to say? Say something about your experience, some questions about it.

Questioner: So I admit to failing to be concentrated in the moment when you were just describing that well-being paradox thing. So could you repeat that?

Gil: So the paradox maybe, or the irritation, the irritating aspect of this part of the teaching is that people come to meditate sometimes because they're suffering a lot. And then they think, and then they hear, "Well, you can't really do concentration meditation until you get happy." So, well, then I'm not wanted here. I'm kind of stuck, you know, it's catch—that's the paradox. Catch 22, you know, I'm supposed to be happy to meditate, but I came to meditate because I'm unhappy.

So that's often worked. People come to Buddhism, most people come to Buddhism because they suffer. Buddhism is an antidote, it's medicine for our suffering. But as we engage with the medicine of practice, it's important to do whatever you can in simple ways, but we can to help develop a sense of inner well-being, whatever it takes in a healthy way. Not expect that if you don't have some sense of inner well-being or relaxation, that you can get concentrated in an effective way.

So sometimes before doing concentration practice, you want to see what simple ways you can do to create some sense of inner well-being. One of the classic ways of doing that is to live ethically. And then enjoy your good ethics. Wow, this is fantastic, I sat down to meditate and I realized that I have not lied to anyone in the last hour—wow—and enjoy that as opposed to "I messed up today." Try to do as ethically as you can.

Then try to let that ethics kind of, you know, be inspiring for you and meaningful. So that's one way. Another way that classically they also say to bring some joy is to reflect on the path

to practice, that you have a practice, how meaningful this practice is, to reflect a little bit on the people you know or heard about who've matured in the practice and feel some delight in the practice itself and the faith and inspiration you might have. That can do it as well. They also say it's really good to reflect on your good qualities.

For some people it's really easy to list their bad qualities. But it's considered very helpful to go through and review, what are some of your good qualities? Even if you're not that good. The fact that you have some good qualities, or there's some modicum of good qualities, counts for a lot. So that can bring some feel, oh yeah, look, I have something here.

Some people are experts at being self-critical and so you want to kind of break that habit and begin to appreciate, oh, there's some goodness here. That's nice. Things like that. I think classically also in Buddhism, meditation practice in general, but also concentration practice, meditation, is meant to—it's best to approach it with a lot of respect, even reverence for the practice, so that you don't, you realize you're entering kind of sacred, a sacred ground when you sit down to do concentration practice or do meditation practice or mindfulness practice. So, in that kind of sacred ground, what's your attitude? How are you going to approach it? How do you meet it? How do you prepare yourself for it?

Can you prepare yourself a little bit so that you're worthy of entering the temple? Ethics is one. Perhaps, you know, not being so greedy for meditation experiences. Maybe being very patient. Maybe trusting that there's a, that the heart has its own unfolding, that's not necessarily what your thinking mind expects or wants.

You can reflect for yourself. If this kind of language or approach is meaningful for you, that you have to enter meditation practice with respect or reverence, sacred ground, and you should prepare yourself for it, what would that look like for you, given who you are, your background, views or opinions about things? Because preparing yourself then becomes, when you sit down, it's more conscious, you're more connected, you're more involved, and you've created a container that perhaps can override some of the fragmented, scattered ways which the mind is, or some of the less healthy, less helpful ways which the mind is operating when it's trying to do it. I've known people who've tried to get concentrated with a lot of ego invested in it. It's best not to enter the temple with a lot of ego.

Or a lot of greed. Or a lot of fear about trying to get concentrated. Or a lot of hostility to something. I'm going to get concentrated because I hate everything else but me. You shouldn't enter the temple with that kind of mind. You can. So if that kind of language, that kind of concept is helpful for you, great; if you're a secular Buddhist, then you can just forget I talked

about this sacred temple.

Questioner: In your Monday talk, you mentioned the conflict or dichotomy between concentration practice and mindfulness. Is that really kind of a fine line or separation in Buddhism?

Gil: I think, what's it called? Is it a Venn diagram? You know, where you have these two circles, these two sets, and the sets overlap quite a bit. So there's a set of mindfulness and a set of concentration practices or approaches. They overlap quite a bit.

Now, some teachers emphasize that they're two separate sets that don't have any connection to each other. Some say they overlap a little bit. Some say they overlap completely. So different teachers have different emphasis. Myself, I think it's helpful not to separate them out too radically from each other, and that they support each other, they work together.

But they are distinct from them. They are distinct, but they can operate in tandem.

Questioner: What would you say the major differences were?

Gil: One way of answering your question is to point out that when the Buddha talked about mindfulness and concentration, he used different verbs to talk about it. For mindfulness, he used verbs having to do with seeing, observing, watching, things like that. When he talked about concentration, he used verbs of touching and feeling and suffusing and permeating. Much more tactile verbs. Something you do with your body almost.

It's almost as if concentration is more of a physical thing that you do with your body than it is something mental that you do with your mind. Most people associate concentration with a mental thing, like a laser in the mind that's going to zero in like that. But Buddha used the language of touching and suffusing. A lot of the similes and examples for concentration, many of them have to do with feeling the body, sensing the body, being in the body in a variety of beautiful ways. The similes for mindfulness have a lot to do with watching.

So, for example, being on top of a mountain, looking down below, or resting under a tree, the shepherd resting under the tree, watching the sheep out in the distance, just watching, you know, like that. So there's a difference there. Another difference that some people emphasize: mindfulness has more to do with holding something in awareness, so that you can see it clearly for what it is. Whereas concentration has more to do with almost like becoming the object. So watching the breath versus being the breath, being inside the breath.

Because many people tend to think a lot and separate themselves from experience, it's some-

what common here in the West for meditation teachers, Vipassanā teachers, to talk about focusing on the breath. They tend to avoid languages of watching and tend to focus more on language of feeling and sensing and being in the breath, sensing feelings. So there's much more intimacy and connectedness. Partly that's also because concentration is so helpful. You want to be in it.

But also, mindfulness is more observing. Something like that. But they work together beautifully.

Questioner: Yes? I rediscovered today what I've always known or known for many years, that my mind will do anything to avoid the present moment and it manifests as boredom, but I think underneath it is fear and I think it's an ego, fear of the ego dissolution or whatever. So then what does one do about that?

Gil: There's many things you could do. It's profound to realize that. It's very significant. It might have to do with important background issues in your life. So it could be very interesting to talk to a therapist about what is behind all that. That might be useful to do.

But in terms of meditation practice, there's two general approaches that you could do. One is a concentration approach, where you keep coming back and strengthening your concentration on the present moment, on the breath, until the concentration is stronger than the tendency is to check out, to wander away. So the concentration is stronger than your fear. So it, in a sense, overrides the fear and gets you into the present moment in a deep, effective and meaningful way. That works really well for some people.

For some people that approach doesn't work at all, and for some people it becomes kind of like a spiritual bypass, avoiding what's there. For some people that can work very well. The other approach is to, once you notice there's a tendency like that, fall back on mindfulness and bring mindfulness into the boredom, into the fear, and really learn to be present for it. Not to think about it, not to analyze it, not to fix it, but to really see it clearly for what it is, to really allow it to show itself to you in a full way. What is this? Just show yourself to me. I really want to see what this fear is. I want to see what's there. It's okay. You can show yourself. I'm not going to attack you. I'm not going to push you away. Show me. I'll be present. I'll be quiet and still. Just show me.

It really brings mindfulness to find out what's going on there. That's more of a mindful approach, which can be very effective, and it has the advantage that you're going through your stuff and purifying it, as opposed to bypassing it. Does that make sense?

Questioner: One other piece of that is that I've been doing meditation for a long time, but I was just mostly made aware of the mindfulness aspect. And that, because I know my inner thoughts so well, and I don't want to look at them any more than I have to. So when I stumbled across the idea of concentration, this one I really like. And I don't know whether it's trying to bypass stuff or what, but it feels like a better approach for me. Because before, when I was approaching meditation, I didn't want to go there because I had to look at that stuff. So, just to say, I think the concentration method is better for me.

Gil: You might try. Also, they work together, because as you get more concentrated, it'll give you a more effective capacity to look at these fears that you have without getting pulled into the world of thinking about them. The concentration will give you a stability where you can watch without being pushed around by it. So, but please, yeah?

Questioner: Maybe one more, yeah, please. This speaks to the difference again between concentration and mindfulness, but I find myself much sleepier doing this than I do with mindfulness meditation, and I found my body—not so much my mind, but my body—kind of relaxing itself to a state where it wasn't even holding itself up anymore, which doesn't happen to me regularly. I would have to move around a lot, I found myself, just to stay present. Could you say a little bit about effort, perhaps, and how to bring effort? How do I work with that so that I don't have this problem of falling asleep in concentration?

Gil: When I was doing my first long retreat in Thailand, it was done with a translator. I would say in English, "I'm feeling calm," and it would go to the translator in Thai and come back to me, and it would be like I said, "I'm getting calm," and he would come back to me saying, "I'm glad you're concentrated." I thought, this is weird, what's going on here? It took me a while to realize that concentration and calm are seen as almost synonymous. The more concentrated we are in and by itself, it's a relaxing, calming effect on it.

If you push it too far by itself, you fall asleep, or get kind of sleepy, or get kind of dreamlike. It's very common to get calm and relaxed in the dreamlike mindsets, and the mind drifts off into images or dreamlike thoughts. So the trick or the art of meditation is to have a proper balance of energy and concentration. We have to monitor ourselves and know where we're at with that. Not enough energy or effort, the mind sinks and drifts away. Too much energy and we get agitated.

So if you find yourself getting too relaxed or sleepy or the mind drifting off, you don't necessarily get less concentrated, but you have to bring more energy. Some of that can be mental energy. You just kind of bring more mental alertness. Some people arouse a kind of mental

clarity and alertness. Sometimes it helps you do it physically, sit up straighter, maybe even open your eyes.

Sometimes you need to do things that actually create more momentum of energy. Sometimes doing walking meditation or fast walking meditation to get some energy going can be helpful for some people. Some people find that engaging the mind a little bit more, like with mental noting, to note what's happening. Or if they are already noting what's happening, using mental notes, to note a little bit more loudly, more energetically. It can kind of bring some more alertness to it.

Sometimes with sleepiness, you might go through phases for whatever reason. The best you can do is keep making the effort over and over again. Sit up straight, sit up straight, make the effort until some kind of the inner chi is activated. At some point it gets activated, and then there's no problem sitting up straight. It's like effortless because the chi is there.

But until it gets awoken, you have to keep making the effort until. The mindfulness and concentration that it's required to keep making the effort to come back over and over again is valuable to do. Now sometimes people who focus on concentration, or focus on any kind of meditation, who fall asleep a lot, sometimes it's because they're not getting enough sleep. Sometimes there's other issues going on for them, physiological, and sometimes it's avoidance. Okay.

So it's 12:15. Let's take one hour for lunch. Start again at 1:15. Those of you who are new, this is a time where we set up tables in here. If the weather is nice enough, you're welcome to take a table out in the parking lot and sit outside or chairs outside.

This is a time, if you want, to be in community and talk with each other about this or anything else, just to kind of create community and hang out, sit down with people at tables. If you really want to stay silent after this morning, you could have your lunch in the conference room or someplace outside quietly. It's fine either way. But one of the functions of this kind of day is to be able to talk to other practitioners and get to know each other. So I would encourage you to make maybe some effort. Some of you might not know people here,