

The Seven Factors of Awakening: Tranquility

Gil Fronsdal

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Tonight I am going to continue the series of talks on the Seven Factors of Awakening. And it's one of those things that we're instructed to notice as they arise in practice, just as we're instructed to pay attention to the five hindrances, things that come on, some of the primary forces that detract or distract us from being present. Just to notice the hindrances, understand how they arise, understand how to let go of them, how to not have them hinder. In the same way, we are supposed to understand the presence, the rising and the supporting, nourishing of these seven factors of awakening. So in a sense, these two balance each other, these the five hindrances, those forces which lead us to lack of sleep. Do not pay attention to being distracted, to suffering.

And on the other hand, those forces in our forces that lead us towards freedom, to liberation, to peace. And now, the part of the insight of the Buddha is that the path of practice, that liberation and freedom and deep abiding peace, is something that can be found. But in a progressive practice of development, we develop ourselves, we grow in certain qualities. And these seven qualities are some of the key qualities that lay the foundation for that leap, or from that letting deep living go, which Buddhism calls *nibbāna*, or freedom, or liberation, or deep peace, happiness. So these seven factors of awakening, the first one is mindfulness. The second one is investigation.

Then there's energy or effort. There's joy. Then there's tranquillity, which is the topic for today. And after tranquillity comes concentration, and then equanimity. So today the topic is tranquillity. And many people associate Buddhism with or meditation, at least with tranquillity.

The image of the Buddha meditating is often taken as an image of someone who is deeply calm, tranquil, serene. And I think it's the popular mind. Buddhism is often kind of associated

with that. And just today in the chronicle, some of you read the chronicle today. The front US page banner article was about the health problems of stress. And the article pointed out that it is just a few people in this country who are stressed out.

And as a lot of people and that a lot of health problems arise in the wake of the result of distress. And so many people have come to Buddhism because its distresses relieve the stress, bring some degree of calm or tranquillity to them. The ordinary tranquillity or calm is very important, but its seen as a stepping stone is not an end in itself. I do not suppose to go round like some kind of super calm zombie, but rather deep abiding sticks or calm create a very good foundation for getting concentrated, for being able to see deeply into one of experiences, and to have a very balanced mind. So the mind is balanced and not reactive in cut off guard and pushed this way and that by the experiences of a lot of life. When it's said that when the before the Buddha went off on his spiritual quest, he left, led a fairly privileged life, protected life, and that at some point there were these four messengers that came to see him, or these four experiences that he had that prompted him to start his spiritual quest, and the first one was he saw a sick person.

Somehow this seeing a sick person kind of got his attention in a way that nothing else had. No, this is a little bit of a very much of deter the talk. So in, like, you know, they do, they don't. They do that on, you know, on television, right? They have commercials and they just stopped just that. So you're used to it. So it's okay to stop in the middle and well pick it up.

Some of you know Stephen Levine and his wife Andrea. It turns out that they've been phenomenal mentors, supporters, helpers for a lot of people. And a lot of people they help the most are not alive any more help them. They helped a lot of people die. They kind of was worth pioneers in the hospital movement. Turns out that they are both very sick and broke, amazingly enough. And so there's no I've just told us today, and so there's going to go a benefit of Spirit Rock for them.

Ran Ramdas is going to put together some benefits and is going to be a male, is going to go out to people that in the area, people he people, his community of people who know him, and ask for support. So those of you who are an insight announce, When I get this female, all forward it to inside, announcing, If those you who know Stephen Andrea Vine and feel grateful for what they've done, can no, you know, support them. She has leukemia, and he has his own problems, and so sickness, you know. So the first messenger, and Stephen Andrea Levine, they are deeply and engaged in these messengers of life. But some people, the contact with sickness is transformative. It changes them. They can never look back at life in the same way again, and a lot of people get sick, and that doesn't happen.

But for some people, it changes the whole direction of their life. The second messenger was age, and someone was old. And sometimes the contact with age, old people, or our age, our old age, is something that really gets our attention. The way. Nothing else does and can change the direction of life. There was and then there's death was a third messenger, the same thing that death, contact with death, can change a person's life and certainly get them to get them to. It'll change their motivation, their priorities.

Today there was a meeting, as were at Sperrock, among Sparrow teachers, and one of the Sperroch teachers just come back from seeing a Going to Body World recommended it. It's in the tech museum in San Francisco, and it's a long tradition of Buddhists of somehow spending time with corpses. And here we have this, you know, is not how much it costs is ten dollars, twelve dollars, fifteen dollars. Even get it twenty two dollars. You can get a ticket and go see Body World. And the teacher who talked about it said that one of the most powerful things there was, in his plasticized corpses, this body world, right? And she could see a year corpses that somehow I plasticized.

So the kind of the skin has been taken off, you see. And so it was a thing impressed her the most was a woman with a five months pregnant. It's quite something to see. So the contact with death, you know, what does it mean to die? What's the experience of death? You know, what's that mean about our life? So these powerful experiences the Buddha somehow was motivated by an The fourth messenger was a calm renunciant.

He was out and about, and he saw someone walking down the road, a renunciant, a monastic kind of person, someone engaged in spiritual life. And the person was somehow the calm or the tranquillity of this person. Somehow it caught his attention, especially in contrast the sickness, old age, and death. And he ought to hear something here: someone who maybe has come to terms with these dramatic existential issues. This is someone who has found some degree of peace in the world where I don't know how to be peaceful. I don't know how to be at ease. And so he said, unacquainted would set that on a quest to find peace, some deep abiding peace.

And it's said that that knows. One of the primary quests he had was to find that peace. So how do we stay calm? How do we stay? How do we discover tranquillity? How do we touch into this deep capacity? is wonderful thing. Its very interesting that this the word *passaddhi* trying to translate here is tranquillity in the list of the seven factors of awakening follows into joy.

So now I've depressed you all you know by brought up sickness, old age and death. But the serious engagement with life based on these kinds of experience is deep issues leads to a

practice which really helps us to look deeply, more deeply into life than you ever looked in your life before. And that deep looking engagement leads to a certain kind of joy, which we talked about last week. And that joy there is then, in its own way, leads to some sense of contentment, of satisfaction, of well being. Adanta: That leads to a kind of tranquillity or a calming effect, particularly on the body. The *passaddhi* is often seen as meaning physical tranquillizing and settling.

And I've been quite amazed just on how I can live sometimes a relatively calm life. I can have, as far as I can know, a relatively good night's sleep, and I get up and meditate in the morning, and I'll become more calm. I let go of more places of tension holding in my body than when I first woke up. That somehow even a good night's sleep doesn't bring me the deep, deeper, higher levels of peace or well being or release or relaxation. That's something about meditation. Takes me further than sleep. Takes me further than just spending the day at the beach.

Takes me further than many places that we can go. And so something about the process of careful attention being very present, not reacting for and against things that allows things to unwind and relax, allows us to notice the places of holding. Certainly allows us to notice the place of the choices we make, grab on or to resist. And then the context of the practice, just being present and being here. There can be a letting go, a letting go, and the body can relax. The shoulders can drop. The stomach can soften.

The face can soften. And with that can come an experience of peace and well being. A friend of mine teaches mindfulness to a young, great school kids in the Oakland school system, and it's like a third of the kids there, some kind of post traumatic stress. And, you know, very difficult lives. And it's a little bit tricky to teach mindfulness, you know, practice when you close your eyes and patent what's going on for kids who have post traumatic stress, you know? So they might evoke all kinds of deeper feelings but it turns out that it's a fantastic success, this program and open school system. And so at some of these kids, apparently it's the only first. It is a very safe and precious and kind of intimate time to sit quietly in the classroom and not feel afraid or threatened by things.

And it's very touching. One girl wrote that she felt in meditation in the classroom. It is five minutes. They did, too. She felt as peaceful as sitting at the grave of her grandmother. And something I don't know. I don't exactly what it meant for her. It was very touching for me. That's where she felt safe. You know, one place in during meditation she felt that.

So meditation time, as being something that's not just distressing, but perhaps helping us touch into a level of well being, contentment, peace, deep sense of inner ease. And one of

the analogies or metaphors I like for this is that of going deep into the ocean, you know, here in the surface of the ocean, so as can be calm, the surface of the ocean, or could also be rough seas. And if you only know the surface of the ocean, then if you don't know how to swim, you're noble. But if you know how to swim, that helps you, for then a big storm comes along, and then you have to learn the skills of how to negotiate the big waves, and you know, move this way and that way, kind of, you know, kind of go with the currents and do all the things you need to do. If you're on the surface but still in a big storm, and thunder, and lightning, and rain, and use you've learned how to maybe be with it to some degree, but then if you are know how to swim, and then one option you have is to dive down. And you don't have to go very far, very far down in the ocean to find that it's relatively tranquil and peaceful.

And I've sometimes I do a lot of snoring when I was a kid, and you go down. And I loved playing, looking, and laying, being on the sea bed, and looking up, and watching the waves, you know, up and down, and splashing, and sometimes to the waves even breaking. And it felt so peaceful and calm looking up, and now you go down into the ocean, very peaceful. So sometimes I think its this metaphor works very nice for meditation and for mindfulness, because sometimes you it can have that feeling of oceanic peace or spaciousness or openness or calm that you carry with you. It seems, at least to you, palpable, seems like it doesn't just stop at your skin, but kind of extends out into the room, into the environment. But also this difference between learning how to be wise in negotiating the world at the terms of the world. You know, there are experiences. There can be all kinds of things that can be. You can be wise and learn how to kind of you don't know how to be skillful in the world and somehow get along. Some people can get along. You're smart. They are capable. They've been around the block a few times and they can kind of get by life relatively well, but they don't know any kind of peace.

So's not just a matter of learning to swim. It's a learning somehow some depth of experience. And so meditation is one of those ways to experience depth. And so to kind of discover some depth of consciousness, depth of peace, depth of well being, a fullness Some people call it a er spaciousness and openness, something really beautiful that can always be here. So joy, meditative joy, is said to be the condition or foundation for the possibility of tranquillity and well being, of peace. And as we'll see next week, that becomes a foundation for getting concentrated there.

So when the question is, how do we get tranquil? What are the conditions that support tranquillity? And so there's a variety of things that can do that. There are simple, you know, practices like meditating, developing some degree meditation or concentration or stillness.

And meditation tends to bring a calmness and relaxation. That's why some people are really attracted to it. I think spending time alone or in nature or in doing nothing is very helpful.

There was one of the meditation teachers I spent time with today said that his life has got pretty busy as a meditation teacher. And he's Inter biking. And he says biking is so great. Anandhasi racing bike in. He bikes around, and he says it's the only time I don't work and Anita not work, you know? So this idea of stopping and not doing something, I think a lot of people in our culture would be probably better off just stopping than trying to meditate. Sometimes adding meditation on top of a very busy life is unnecessary. Is there unmeditating? Unless your meditation really helps you to stop, you're going to cram it in and do one more thing, you know? But that was five breaths. What's next?

I'm very fond of the term sacred leisure because there's something very important that happens. I believe in the psyche when we don't do anything. And in a hyper, you know, consumer culture, you know, getting ahead and succeeding is so important for a lot of people, some people. And it's been a talk, Rob. You've talked about it to friends and people, but how there seems to be a kind of contagious epidemic of being busy in doing and filling our life. And one of the things that's sacrificed or lost in that is the deep way in which the psyche, the consciousness, the mind crosses his stuff, works through stuff, touches into a and a deep way in which when we still and quiet the shy parts of our minds sharp, shyer parts or personality and consciousness have a chance to be heard and seen.

And if we're always busy in doing, I think that the shy or the very quiet voices inside of us doesn't have a chance to come out. And being the quiet, the quiet parts or the shy parts don't mean that they're unimportant. I think there might be the most important parts of who we are, and they can so easily kind of overlooked or squashed or kind of drowned out in the business of life. So one of the ways of having some more tranquillity in life is doing less. Having quiet time alone, time in nature, for example, can be helpful. Or just a time sipping tea looking out a window can be great to do that.

A classic of instruction for cultivating tranquillity is to spend time with tranquil people. And I've noticed how my tranquillity or my agitation is affected by the tranquil or agitated people that are around. For people who do mindfulness practice, probably one of the most important ways of cultivating more tranquillity is to study the ways you lose your tranquillity. Study how you get agitated, how you get tense, how you get stressed out. And the reason for this is that if you just go to try to get calm or concentrated directly without understanding how you get uncalm. Those forces that make you uncalm are still going to be there, ready to kind of work their thing on you, and the first chance they get.

But if you can actually study carefully, how is it you get caught? How is it you get agitated? Then you can come to work with that, move through that, and maybe not have those triggers any more in your life. Learn, let go. Learn not to have those beliefs or have those emotions or those feelings that lead to that kind of behavior. So, for example, I'm noticing the tendencies to be really under the influence of our likes and dislikes, to think that our likes and dislikes are really important. The pursuit of comfort, for example, can actually be a source of agitation.

Some people the attempt to try to control life as can be very agitating. Sometimes I am having a lot of desires. Not noticing, you know, having lots of wanting can just leave a person very, very agitated. I've noticed sometimes when I am busy and trying to do a lot of things, I have a long list of things to do, and I try to be efficient. I'm doing things, and then after about a period of time I stop. And sometimes I can feel this momentum: what's next? What has to be done next? It's like, you know, It's like this habits been set in motion, and something wrong if I don't get to the next thing shinings going to be wrong, you know? And so I've learned to recognize that when it arises and not believe it. Oh, I just, I've developed a habit, so I just, you know, drop the habit.

I've also learned that If I feel like I don't have enough time to do all the things in my list, that's a really good time for me to meditate, but I don't have time. It seems that more often than not I get more time. I have more time after I meditate than I had before I meditated twenty minutes of meditation. Why where all the time come from. I just wasted twenty minutes, and now suddenly I see, feel like I've more. And what's remarkable is I find it myself is to get you get which time and the shortness of it is. It is a function of my mental state. And as much as it is how long the list is of things to do, one of the things that can be a source of agitation.

Lack of tranquillity is a mistrusting, a feeling of mistrust. Fear and fear can be of many different kinds. Fear can be real. Sometimes then you feel kind of tense. But there can be a lot of mistrust of life, mistrust of people in general, mistrust of yourself. The variety of feelings of fear that might be a cause of agitation for people. And so part of the task of becoming tranquil or some degree of peace is to work through the fear.

That's the anxiety. A part of fear and anxiety could be an attempt to hide, to avoid showing what's really going on, and protect oneself, defend oneself, or try to prove ourselves. We need to prove ourselves and show other people. It's very important to say, You'll see me a certain way. I have to kind of show up and be a certain kind of way and be a certain kind of way for certain kind of people. One of the amazing movements, I think, is the movement, the idea that some people have that you show someone that you love them by worrying. Isn't that great? But if you don't worry enough, then you how could you? How would they know you

care? Well, that certainly would keep you unagitated, keep you agitated. And then there's a lot of judgments self criticism judgments that can keep people agitated.

Study as a whole. I can go on and listen eternalist forever. It's a long list. So to actually be interested in that study. Look what's going on here. And that's the investigation part of the sunfactors awakening. To investigate what's actually happening here and be interested. And is ating a lot of people in the spiritual path to try to do spiritual bypasses? We are trying to get to some spiritual state by going around or avoiding what's really going on for them, who they really are. And I think the path of mindfulness is not hopefully no way a bypass. It's really to go into this stuff and clarify and resolve and work through it.

And as a result, sometimes it's a slower path, as it's possible to get concentrated and bliss blissed out pretty quickly. I bet I could, you know, do an exercise for all of you in about ten minutes, get you all kind of blissed out, and just kind of buzzing, and kind of feeling really good. Leaving her, kind of like, Ah, that was great, and you've come over and congratulate me, and said, Gil, that was the best evening. We've had a I'm seen a long time. And then you do more of that. It was so wonderful. I really needed that. Thanks so much. And I feel so good. And to what a great thing I've done. And rather, I give us a talk being calm, and you know, being tranquil, and the nice kind of slip in there this idea that if you still pay attention, this idea that you suppose to look in, to investigate into your neurosis and your clingings and all that.

And again, you know, and this is going on and on this talk, and what a waste of time. I cut on ten minutes of this exercise, and just being blissed out. Well, I think that its a long term. You are much better off learning how to go into your stuff and working through it and doing that deep kind of mature work than you are kind of getting a quick eye. And a quick eye in long term is not to serve you so well, and a quick eye is not very deep. And so we be beware that the highs are not so deep, and I think Buddhism looks through the deeps more than the highs. So I'm sure other things make can help with tranquillity.

Another one is to have a lot of compassion towards yourself and for others, a lot of acceptance. And I think have a very big, generous attitude towards what's going on for you what's going on for others to have a lot of compassion. And it's really hard, and it's hard. Someone is wonderful, and as wise, and as deeply practised as Stephen Leline, somehow end up finding himself now and financial trouble. Someone who helps so many different people. I think many of you are touched by compassion to feel that, and to be to learn about that. But what about you? No, it's hard. It's hard for Stephen Levine. It's hard for everybody to live this life and all the challenges. And I think it's really beautiful and profound to be able to appreciate

how much everyone is trying their best, even when it doesn't seem that way.

I think it's really hard to be a human being. It's certainly hard in our culture here. So to have come to cultivate compassion so we're not ending up continuing the struggles in adversarial relationships and the put downs in all the things that we do toward yourself and others. It's one of the ways of cultivating tranquillity, peace. One of the aspects of compassion is that a Buddhist compassion is universal, and it's impartial. It's meant to be universal, something we can extend to everyone in an impartial way. We don't leave anyone out of that field of compassion and others.

A way of cultivating tranquillity is to look at your priorities. This is to do it more like a reflection. I think a deep life is one that's also in some degree of reflection, contemplation, consideration. Maybe not during meditation. Maybe on walks on the beach, or sitting, having tea, or having talks with friends will really look at your values, your priorities, what's most important for you in your life, what you want your life to be about. We have here sometimes these Dharma practice days, on Fridays, we Sometimes we have these dialogues. People break people into pairs or into small groups. Sometimes we happen to Monday night, and after we did, after we had done this for a while, in not too long, but a few years or something, I saw her noticing people come up to me and say something like, You know, this is the only place in my life. I've a chance to have this deep conversation about these kinds of things. So I don't know some people have them, and other places near life. But to be able to talk about your relationship to compassion, your relationship to generosity, your relationship to death, your relationship to, you know, all these and very deep things in a kind, concentrated way, sometimes very difficult for people to have. But I think it's very valuable to spend time reflecting and thinking about these important issues. And I think that it helps put our life in perspective, which I think often can create a great sense of calm and not be so caught up in the drama of it all.

For some of you, the next one is going to be unpopular. Talk less. Some people are talking is a source of agitation. I did an eighth month retreat once where I almost didn't speak to anyone for eight months except for the meditation teacher, so I'm mostly silent the whole time. But after four months in that retreat, there was some reason I am I took a few hours off from the retreat to clean my room. I hadn't cleaned my room in four months. I was in this retreat center, and so I know what the occasion was for a kind of stopping the regular routine and meditating all the time. And there was an American in the building who was there also, and as soon as he saw me, Cindy, clean my room. Oh, Gills not in doing his intensive meditation any more. So he came over to talk with me, and what you were worth was to do was against the

rules. And he talked to me. We talked for half an hour, and after half an hour conversation I had to take a nap. I was wiped out with it. There was something about four months of meditation, and being so deeply peaceful and calm and concentrated, that somehow they The Rig of Conway kind of finding that voice and speaking, engaging the social activities and all this. So all the things, so complicated social interactions. And so to talk less, make more space, talk slower. I can support tranquillity. Leave space in the conversations for something else to happen besides what you think needs to be said next.

So in this regard, if you feel that calm, tranquillity, being relaxed, being at ease, peaceful it is valuable, then it's important to value it. What I mean by valuing it is to not just abstractly think it's important, but actually pay attention to it. Try to support it. Think about it as being a valuable thing. Maybe make it a theme for a while. Each of these seven factors awakening can be a theme in your life. And so last week the theme was joy. And this week, if you are ready to move on, how you can make the theme tranquillity or calm or peace. And to see, what can you do to cultivate a greater sense of peace or well being or tranquillity that has depth for you, has meaning for you, is nourishing for you?

A: It's certainly possible to try to be calm, try to be able to hold yourself still, and it's not nourishing. It can actually be deadening. So what is it when it's an alive kind of peacefulness, with an alive, nourishing kind of stillness or tranquillity that you could have. So look for that. Feel your way into that. What does it take to appreciate its valuing it?

Now, in the context of the seven factors of awakening, which is what we're talking about, these mind seven factors awakening are meant to be these wonderful capacities that we all have that are awakened, evoked, developed, appreciated in the service of moving towards freedom, moving towards awakening, releasing ourselves from the ways in which the heart and mind is contracted or in shackles or suffering. So there's no moral is no moral imperative to cultivate tranquillity. I won't be sitting up here giving the impression that thou shalt be tranquil, or else, Oh, it's fine not to be tranquil. But in the service of deepening your practice, it might be supportive and helpful for you to take an interest in tranquillity or peace, and see what you can do to cultivate more of it. And as you cultivate more of it, Oh, maybe even just for one week. You know, it's a temporary thing, and see what you can learn from that. See what the consequences are of having greater peace. See if it's something that seems beneficial to you. See if it's something that, in a certain kind of healthy way, enlivens you or nourishes you or makes you a better person or supports you to move in the direction that you want your life to move in. And if you learn that from one week's practice with it, then maybe it's becoming your own in your own way.

And the kind of calm that you have might not look like the calm that someone else has, but you're finding your own way to be calm. And now it shouldn't look like a particular way. I've tried at various times in my life to try to be calm at. I had an idea what calm was supposed to look like, and that was deadening. And so, but what is it? What is it for you? And how is it serves you? And benefit? What benefit you? And after a week or two, if you try to make an exercise of cultivating more tranquillity or calm in your life, and you'll find it's not serving you. Then I suppose you'll find something else to do. Maybe next week we talk about concentration. Maybe that's more interesting.

So there's a great story that Thich Nhất Hạnh said to tells when the boat people were escaping from the area and were left near the eddy boats. These relatively small boats. They were sometimes packed with refugees, and they would set out from the area hoping to get the Philippines or some place. Nineteen eighties, right? Early eighties, I think. And Thich Nhất Hạnh, being the tames, would sometimes go to the Philippines various variety of places to help receive them when they came, and support them, and to and he was told that. Then he told a story that an officer having one or more than one tell a story of sometimes these boats pi boats would be packed so packed with people that the that the which are called the rail of the boat, to the side of the boat, but just a couple of inches above the water line, and then the up be a big storm would come up, big waves would come along or something, and so the boat would start rocking, and you know, it's pretty precarious. People actually were lost at sea to both people. And what Thich Nhất Hạnh said was that if one person in the boat could stay calm, it would help everyone else, because we have a both load of agitated people like that kind of situation, you know, not going to keep the boat stable, but if one person can be calm. So that story, that little metaphor idea, has been inspiring for me. So maybe developing a capacity for peace and calm is something we do not only for ourselves, but we also do it for others and for society. They get so easily caught up in all kinds of things. So may it be that then we can help each other become calmer. So make so. Thank you very much.