

Four Foundations of Mindfulness - Week 6: Mind States

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And there's a particular discourse that the Buddha gave that is called the Discourse on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, where he lays out thirteen exercises or thirteen approaches for developing your awareness. So your awareness can be a vehicle for freedom, for liberation. Most of these exercises involve seeing things more clearly. When Buddhism came to China, they had to translate all these Sanskrit words into Chinese characters, into Chinese, and the basic two practices of meditation. They translated it in a very simple way. In Sanskrit or in Pāli, it's called *samatha* and *vipassanā*.

In Chinese, it's called stop and look at you. So the *samatha* practice is to kind of slow down the busy, agitated mind, stop the normal reactivity of the mind, so that we can see more clearly. This process of these thirteen exercises of the four foundations of mindfulness can also be understood as ways of being, to slow down the normal reactive, busy mind, so we can start seeing much more clearly what's going on here. One of the ways of understanding this emphasis on seeing is an alternative kind of, maybe kind of informal synonym for mindfulness, which I like, which is intimacy. So not only are we cultivating greater mindfulness, greater awareness, but we are cultivating greater intimacy with our life, with our experience.

One of the advantages of the word intimacy is that it's intimate. It's close. It's connected. Whereas the idea of seeing more clearly, some people can interpret that as being a little bit distant, kind of aloof, kind of apart from the experience—you're up here in your eyes and what you're looking at is down there. But intimacy means that you're really connected. As we slow down, as the normal reactive mind stops or quiets, one of the places we become intimate with is with ourselves, and we get greater and greater intimacy with ourselves.

This process of Four Foundations of Mindfulness, where we first are aware of the body, then aware of feelings, the feeling tones, then the mind, and then the particular processes that

operate in the mind or the heart, is a journey from what is more outer to what's more intimate, closer in to the very heart—kind of what makes us tick as a human being. The first five exercises have to do—first six exercises have to do with the body. The first seven, I think, first six, at first six, have to do with the body. This can be understood, even though you feel intimate with your body, in the way it's understood here, as you start into kind of beginning to connect your body. Part of these exercises, as you get closer in, deeper into your body, is to start feeling not only the kind, the outer concept of the body, or what goes on on one's surface, but kind of really be connected.

As we settle into our bodies, we relax into our body. One of the things that becomes obvious sooner or later, without intending to look at this, is to become much more aware of how the body is either comfortable or uncomfortable. In the language of this text, you are aware of things, how the body's pleasant and unpleasant sensations in the body. This is not, you know, a sophisticated stuff to feel that you have pleasure and pleasant and unpleasantness in your body. But it's an extremely important piece of information. A lot of the wisdom of Buddhism comes from really understanding the nature of what's pleasant and unpleasant, and using that as a guide for our behaviour and our actions in the direction we are heading.

This very simple separation, distinction between pleasant and unpleasant, allows us, if we can see that clearly how it works in our life, our lives, to make choices to move in the direction of the pleasant, what's more pleasant. This is one of the characteristics of religious traditions and philosophies that do not rely on external deities as external reference points for what's truth, that's going to tell you what's true. Religions that rely on really knowing for yourself what's true use something that may be, unfortunately, something called the pleasure principle, understanding really what you can really know for yourself, what you can feel and experience, and use that as a guide for a better life, or happier life, for a freer life—not only for yourself, but for other people as well. As we settle into the body, at some point before becoming aware of how things are comfortable and uncomfortable, pleasant and unpleasant, this is a very important piece of information that we're getting. If we live our busy life doing lots of things, running round, doing tasks, or if we are preoccupied by certain concerns like fear and worry, or preoccupied with our fantasies, the world of our mind, the past and future, it's possible to be so caught up in the world and things that people sometimes will get dissociated from themselves. They don't actually feel their body; they're not connected to their body.

Two people spend too much time on computer monitors, it's easy to lose touch with their body. Sometimes people sit there and only realize when the electricity goes out or, you know,

they have to leave or something, how stiff their body has gotten because of how uncomfortable they are sitting there. Because people are distracted by their concerns and preoccupations, they don't really feel the impact of their posture, how they are, and they don't know how tense they are, for example. Some people, when they sit down to meditate, sometimes it's a surprise. Only then do they start realizing, "Oh, I am tense in my shoulder. You know how tense I was, tight in my stomach, my jaws, my face. You know, I'm a mess."

One solution is never meditate, because then you're not going to have this information unless it's really big. But what happens as we settle down, get more intimate, we start seeing how the tensions, holdings in our body operate in more subtle ways. We start feeling the pleasant and unpleasant more deeply. As I said last week, there are two categories of feelings. There's those feelings of things are pleasant or unpleasant that have to do more with the sensory world that we live in, the experiences with sensory experiences we have, whatever they might be, somehow register as being pleasant or unpleasant. Then there's a whole other category, also kind of connected to the body, but which are pleasant and unpleasant experiences we have that do not arise because of what goes on in the sensory world around us.

We haven't eaten some good food. There is not a beautiful sunset. It's not because the temperature is as good or something, but rather it's from some kind of a deeper movement of the heart, deeper movement of the inner life that somehow wells up and somehow spreads its effect on our body and our mind. That can also feel pleasant and unpleasant. This gets more intimate. It is not deep, deeper down. You know how your—the state of your heart, the quality of your heart—I think it's more intimate than a good feeling you have from a massage. It's nice, kind of intimate. You only want certain people to do it for you, maybe, but, you know, it's still kind of surface. But to have at your heart, you know, your heart massaging you, to feel kind of the quality in what goes on in your heart—my feeling is that's more intimate, closer. It's closer in a nice way.

So we get this information about what's pleasant and unpleasant in these different ways. The third exercise, the third category in these four foundations of mindfulness, the third foundation, is that of the mind. The word is *citta*, and it could also mean a mind state. The mind is not the brain. The mind is kind of the total processes of the brain, the inner life. I don't know what exactly it is, but our mental life. The word *citta* sometimes is translated as heart. So there's a tendency in English to translate it as mind. If you go to a temple in Burma and places like that, sometimes if you ask them where their mind is, they point to what we would call our heart. Sometimes it's translated in that way as the heart. The Chinese character, which we translate into English most often as mind, is actually a picture of a heart. We have

such a strong separation in English, the thing between mind and body, mind and heart, but sometimes in Asia—so keep that in mind. If I keep using the word mind and it's not so intimate for you, you're welcome to translate your mind to heart.

The third foundation is becoming aware of the mind, the mind state, or the quality of the heart, the quality of the mind. In this movement, journey into greater intimacy, the quality of your mind and heart is really intimate, really. Now you are getting really down to what may be much more important than that. You have nice food, you watch a nice sunset, you have a nice walk in the park, and you feel kind of relaxed and nice. That isn't as important as the real quality of the heart itself. In fact, you can do pleasant things in the world, but if your heart is not right, it's kind of—you feel cut off. You feel like, you know, doesn't even—doesn't sometimes—anything that doesn't even matter. If it's beautiful, sensitive, you're really feeling lousy on the inside.

As we settle in and settle in, then at some point the quality of your mind, the quality of your heart, begins to stand out in highlight. The instructions are to start noticing that. Pay attention to it, and we become—that allows us to start becoming the custodian of the quality of our own heart. The quality of our mind is the very deep thing. We don't know how we feel on the inside. It doesn't have to be left to chance. But this is something that we can—we have some ability to create conditions, to direct, to evoke, to develop. So we develop a higher quality of inner life. In Buddhism, this is considered to be real wealth. The real spiritual wealth in Buddhism is the quality of your heart, not how much money you have in your bank account.

To develop and enhance a kind of support, that requires us to see clearly what's there. In this Buddhist practice of mindfulness, the first task always is to stop and take a good look, see what's going on. Don't be in a hurry to fix. Don't be in a hurry to change yourself. Do the really important work, and sometimes very difficult work, to take a good look and see what's really going on here. Many Buddhist teachers will emphasize over and over again, just practise non-reactive awareness, because you need to take a really good look at what's going on. So take your time before you start shifting and changing what's there.

In this third foundation, then, we're looking at the quality or character of the mind, the mind state that we have. In this text it divides, it lists eight categories of things you can notice about your mind or mind state, and these are all set up as pairs. I'll do the first three pairs first. You can know that when the mind has lust, that there is lust in the mind, and the mind state is characterized as being full of lust or greed. Greed probably—there's probably no good English word to characterize what the original means, but it's some kind of a combination,

a wonderful soup of greed, lust, passion in the worst sense of it. So if the mind is caught up in these kinds of states of greed or lust, one knows that's the case. What's interesting is that the instructions say nothing whatsoever about judging it. Just know it for what it is.

Many people find it's a very helpful kind of relief to be able to just be with how you are, even if it's not so, you know, not the best qualities that you have, and not to judge it, not to value yourself by it, not to define yourself by it, but just to see it: "Oh, there's a mind that's filled with lust." Just see that clearly. When there's a mind that doesn't have lust, know there's no lust. Then it goes on and says, when there's a mind of hate, of ill will, know that that's the case. When there's a mind that's characterized by the mood that's characterized by the lack of ill will, know that that's the case. When there's a mind that's deluded, characterized by some kind of delusion or confusion, know that that's the case. When there is no delusion or confusion, know that's the case. Very simple kind of binary kind of experience.

The tradition itself will then say sometimes that a mind that lacks lust can be characterized by generosity. A mind that doesn't have any ill will or hate is characterized by love. A mind that doesn't have delusion is characterized by wisdom, sometimes, perhaps. So the fact that—but it's kind of noticing what's there. Now, this relates to the earlier exercise of noticing things are pleasant and unpleasant, because it's possible to notice that a mind that's filled with lust is unpleasant. A mind that's filled with ill will is unpleasant in and of itself. The mind that's filled with delusion is unpleasant in itself. Some of you might have a good relationship with lust, I don't know. So, you know, but in the Buddhist analysis, whatever they call this word, *rāga*, lust is unpleasant. You have to go along with it. This particular analysis they're doing, so it involves a contraction. It involves a narrowing. It involves a kind of drive. It involves some kind of way in which the mind is agitated or tight or tense, these states.

It might not be obvious, because sometimes some of these might involve the pursuit of pleasure or the expectation of pleasure, or sometimes even minds when there's a lot of anger or hate. Sometimes the energy and the vitality of it, some people feel, get addicted to because it feels good to be alive. So there can be something pleasant to it. But as the mind gets quieter, as the whole system quiets down more and more like meditation, at some point it becomes really obvious. No one has to tell you this. It's not because it's in the book. It's just like, God, that doesn't feel good to be caught, have the mind kind of under the grip of these different mind states. The analogy that's used for a mind that's in the grip of ill will is that of two really big, strong people that come and grab you and hold you, so you can't be free, you can't move. Sometimes ill will, just as it grabs you and you're like in their power, and you can't really be free to do what you want.

At some point in this process of stopping and looking, we start becoming aware of what's actually going on in the inner quality of our life. Take that in, notice it, and then notice that there's a difference between that which actually is inherently unpleasant and that which is inherently pleasant. As you get more familiar with that, which one would you choose? I think the assumption is, you choose the pleasant one, you would avoid the unpleasant one, you'd move in that direction. This is why they say that this mindfulness practice also has an ethical quality, because generally some of the unethical stuff that happens around pleasures, you know, are driven by lust. The unethical things that happen because of hate are driven by hate, you know, violence and stuff like that. So to move towards the pleasant in these mind states tends to move people becoming more ethical as well, which is very nice.

Then it goes on to say, talk about being aware of a mind which is contracted, and notice a mind that's scattered. You can feel that in yourself. Sometimes it just feels like everything's kind of, you know, shrivelled up into a small, little contracted ball, and tight. Sometimes it just gets scattered and fragmented, and is jumping around so much all over, and that also doesn't feel so good. But you can see that and feel that. It's also possible to have all these things happen and not really feel the impact of having these states on oneself because one is so preoccupied, involved with one's doing. When one's attention is not directed back to this inner quality of what's going on, then it goes on and says that I should know when there's a mind, and that now it gets better.

The next one says, when a mind is expanded, know the expanded mind. When it's not expanded, know that it's not expanded. Expanded mind is what happens in things like deep meditation, or if you're out in nature or something, that there are certain times when just your mind—you're aware in, it just seems so spacious and large and clear that it seems like it's bigger than anything that you know. In detail, like if you are aware of this room, you might—you can be aware that the room, the space in the room is bigger than any of the things or people that are in the room. You can be preoccupied with objects in the room, or you can open your awareness and look at how high the ceiling is, and then you have a different feeling of space and openness. Same thing with awareness, with the mind. The mind can start becoming expansive, and it feels like it's bigger than anything that you know. It's very pleasant. It's a very, very sublimely enjoyable state to be in.

It's also possible to know that as you get into deeper states of mind, its higher qualities of heart as possible. It's possible to feel into it that even though it's so nice, what I'm having now, there are things that are even better. There's even a more expanded or more sublime or more still in a nice way. One can actually feel this is not like you even want to go to the

better states, but you can feel, oh, there are better places to go. One can also be aware of when the mind is liberated and when it's not liberated. Liberated means that it's free from being caught up in preoccupations, free of greed, hate, and delusion, free of attachments. You can feel when you are attached, when you're filled with greed or hate and these things. You can feel when the mind is free of that. That's a very important piece of information to have, because then also, if you have that information, then you can kind of also know what's possible, your potential. You can know what you're possible to work towards. You can feel that the liberated mind, when it's temporarily free from these things, is a much better state of mind to be in than a mind that's not free.

All this allows you to become your own teacher, and you really become aware of this very intimately. You don't really need a Buddhist teacher any more. You don't need to come here any more. I'm trying to talk myself out of a job, because you get the information inside of yourself about how to find your way, though. That's the way. That's the direction to go towards more freedom that's possible. For some people, the first real palpable experience of a liberated heart is a wake up to them, that of a potential they had no idea they had. It's like, now they live in a new world, because now I don't have to live the way I was living all the time. It's like you never took a shower and you finally took a shower. "Who? I had no idea. Why didn't anybody tell me?" You know, it can be that dramatic.

Then to know the mind that is—as the last one is, I forget. There's one more—oh, I skipped one. One is liberated, and the second to last is concentrated, a concentrated mind, and mind is not concentrated. That makes sense that concentration comes first, because it's a stepping stone to some deeper liberation, and that also, to really feel the quality of a concentrated mind is very helpful. To recognize that that's—for some people, that's kind of like, you know, maybe they didn't get it, take a shower, but they discovered a sponge bath. You know, it's that good, you know, to have me concentrated compared to, you know, it feels pretty good.

So in this third foundation of mindfulness, the foundation of mindfulness of the mind, it starts becoming aware of the quality of your inner life, the quality of your mood or mental state that you have. This becomes a way of becoming much more intimate with yourself and getting really familiar with a part of yourself that is probably where you measure, where you evaluate how you are feeling, how you are anyway, that when you're feeling well, probably there's a good mind state there. It's hard to feel well when the mind state is kind of lousy. So to start becoming sensitive, to be aware of it, has a kind of intimacy. To know it, and to know it in more subtle, deeper, fuller ways, and start getting a sense of the range of options that goes on in the mind states.

Some people can be stuck in the same mind states for decades. I've met people who seem to have anger or seem to have fear, and it's there. Maybe it's the background default kind of mood or mind state. It's always there. They have other things that go on. They might be happy and excited and all kinds of things that happen, but it's kind of on top of that. But as we get quieter and quieter, we start seeing that the mind state underneath has its pervasive fear or resentment or anger or something that's there. So as we stop and look, stop and stop and stop, we start seeing these deeper and deeper layers, and get familiar with ourselves. Sometimes it's a shock for people to discover what's there. But this is the good news—to see what's there, because then we can start seeing, because it's making a difference, we can change it, we can move it new ways.

The more we become aware of the range of mind states that we're in, then this leads to a very important insight that our mind states are not inherently fixed. They're not built into the hard wire of our brain. They're part of the software we're operating. So they come and go depending on the software we're using, and there's choice. Kind of begin kind of flowing between them, and start holding them more lightly. A really great step in this mindfulness practice is when you can hold your mind states, whatever is going on for you, lightly, when you start seeing them not so personally, but just see them as phenomena, rather than kind of using it to define yourself or react to or something.

Now, as intimate connection to yourself deepens, and you really start becoming aware of the intricacies of the mind states, what goes on in the mind states, to recognize it, that sets the stage for beginning to understand the software, or sets a stage to beginning to understand what actually goes on in the mind. What are the activities of mind that go on, that give birth to particular mind states? So it's one thing to have a mind state that's characterized by a mood, that's characterized by anger. It's another thing to recognize how anger was born inside of you. What are the particular movements of the mind that brings that about? This is the fourth foundation of mindfulness. This is to start looking at what's called in Pāli the *dhammā*. The *dhamma* here means the mental processes that go on. What I like in my analysis of this, I feel like the mental processes, really how it operates in there, is much more intimate, closer in, it's closer to the heart of the matter than our mood and our mental state.

Some people identify very much with their mental states and their mood, and they take it to be, "This is who I am. End of story. We'd better have a good mental state. That's all it's about." But as we get more intimate, more intimate, what gets more and more interesting is not the mental state that we have, but within the mental state, what's actually—how the mind is operating, what it's engaged in, what it's interested in, what it's trying to do. By becoming

familiar with the mind state, it sets the stage or kind of gives us the information we need to begin looking more deeply. That's very hard to see if you're not settled enough to really stay there with the mind state to make sense. So next week I'll start the discussion about the five exercises having to do with the mind states, with the mind process, the mental process that goes on and on. Hopefully this—you start seeing how this leads to kind of making a choice, looking more deeply into the experience, understanding it more deeply, and how it can lead to a liberation that doesn't feel like liberation just by accident, but a liberation that has to do with really beginning to understand what's really going on in there in a way that you can't if you don't really stop and look. Well, make sense? I hope it makes sense. I realize here is a lot of information. So I apologize if you felt like a lot to track. We have ten minutes, if some of you have any questions, comments, desire for clarification, protests, anything's welcome?

I was wondering if you could say a little more about knowing when you're deluded, because it kind of seems like you can't know when you're deluded or else you are not deluded. Yes, delusion is the more difficult one to see, but you know the mind can operate sometimes even in opposition to your best understanding. Sometimes habits of thinking will operate even though we've learned they're not really true. After a while you might see, you know, "Ah, I thought that television was to make me feel good, and that's kind of what's driving in a desire to watch TV." Maybe you've learned, you know, many times you feel lousy after you've watched it. But, you know, maybe this show will work, and then it happens again, so you know. Sometimes even the mind can operate under delusion, even though we already have the information, they know it doesn't really work that way. So I think that's an example of how you can know when you're deluded, some expense.

Yes, thanks. Are there any other examples of how you can know delusion that you can suggest? So can you pass the microphone down? Your spouse can tell you. It only works if you believe the spouse. The common delusion, one that I fall into sometimes, is a delusion of permanence. I know that, you know, almost everything is changing, and things will change eventually, and all that. So I know that. But there's an instinctual drive or instinctual movement. Sometimes I have, "Oh no," I remember when I was once, many years ago, I was depressed, and it was like, "Oh no, I'm always going to be depressed." Or when a challenge with my kids—when they were young, we had some wild days, Anna, and I kind of instinctively was operating the kind—like I knew that wasn't to last forever, they were going to grow up. But then logically I could know that, but, you know, the kind of instinctual way of acting was as if this forever, I'm stuck. So that's an example of delusion, too, like the delusion of permanence. This is the way it's going to be. My wife, when our kids were young, sometimes—I at

least remember once, beautiful day when we were having challenges. She looked up at me, and she said, "We're having one of those kinds of days," and that popped the bubble of my delusion of permanence. "Oh, just this is how it is today."

Thank you. I think certainty sometimes for me is a form of delusion, because I'll never examine any other perspective. So too much certainty—right, they're wrong. Curiousness is better sometimes. You know, then there's words like never and always that, you know, eventually we learn that maybe that's not, you know—there's maybe a little delusion in some of those words. Sometimes I saw a hand out there—bring and pass the mike all the way to the outer hall. You want to come forward?

Is this good? I wondered if you underline the entire awareness that you're focusing on attaining through letting go of lust in all the categories that you were just mentioning, through this revolution that you realize, and then you get to a point that you think, "This is it." Then if you underline that, that's delusion, that is delusion, then the real let go of what you're pinpointing is what you're preaching is underlined. I don't know if I'm communicating on under light core. Do you mean underline meaning as a form of delusion? It creates a paradox. It's a paradox. So to avoid the paradox, the emphasis in this—in Buddhism, the early Buddhism—is mostly to look at, to see what's going on. If you are clinging, if you're attached and it hurts to do so, let go if you can. Then what's left after you let go? There's no need to say anything about it. There's no need to underline it. They can just be what it is. The next day and the next and the next time you cling, notice that, yes.

So what you're saying is that to let go, you will fall into that whatever. You don't want to talk about it any more. You want to call it love. You want to call it a state of *nibbāna*, and having no recognition, unessentially, this, and no expression on this, again, will give you a continuous experience of that state of *nibbāna*. But have you ever been pointed again? You are underlining it. Yes, so I don't know what's the cause of any practice. So I think there can be recognition, and you can use language a little bit to point to something. But as soon as you underline, as soon as you pinpoint it, "This is it," then you certainly have lost it. So I may know that I have a—I have a right elbow, but if I try to grab it with my right hand, I can't really get to it. The experience of freedom exists in a certain kind of very important way, and becomes a reference point, is something you can recognize. But as soon as people get—it's possible to get attached to it and hold on to: "This is it." So what I cannot prefer to focus on is not any kind of state that people attain, but rather the fluidity and ease that we can move between states.

Thank you. So four foundations of mindfulness: body, feelings, mind, and then I will do these

mind processes starting next week. I hope that this idea of intimacy makes it come a little more alive and more attractive somehow. Yes, how nice this idea of coming closer in, deeper into yourself, getting to know yourself, being intimate, cosy, and not spinning out. May you be intimate with yourself. Thank you, you.