

Tuesday sit with instructions, week 3

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There is an important lesson from understanding the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* as a progression, and we're building a foundation so that when we get to the last period, the mindfulness of these inner mental life activities that we have, that we can relate to them. We can be aware of them in a beneficial way, in a way that promotes the growth of what is wholesome, what is good. So we get to something like the hindrances, the kind of very creative or difficult stories that the mind can make. The lesson of this means that there are actually three things. There is what is difficult. And sometimes people just dive in to address what's difficult, to fix it, to attack it, to just be in relationship to it, as if there's nothing else.

The second thing there is, is how we know it. And all along with *Satipaṭṭhāna*, we keep coming back to learning anew how to know, how to sense, how to observe in a way that is calm, in a way that is steady. We know how to steady ourselves as we know and as we sense. We know how to know simply, non-reactively. So we're not in conflict with what is. So we're not entangled with it.

The third thing that's going on is in the course of the first three foundations, we're actually changing how we are. We're changing how we are, because how we are affects how we know, how we sense. How we are affects the relationship we have with what is difficult. Sometimes it's appropriate to be mindful of what is difficult—the hindrances, for example. Sometimes it's appropriate to first re-establish your awareness, your mindfulness, so that it's a useful way of being mindful. It doesn't perpetuate the reactivity we have, because the reactivity is traveling along with the awareness.

And sometimes we give attention to how we are, where we're rooted in, from where we show up to know the difference between shallow sensations and deep sensations. We can sometimes re-establish a connection to our depth, the grounding, the settling. Sometimes if we

know the difference between the surface mind that just makes more things up and the deep mind that knows with care, that knows and reflects in ways that nourish us in the present moment. If we can know something about being mindful, where the mindfulness, the knowing, sees things with the word with, the mind with the hindrances, the mind with experience of pain or sorrow or whatever it might be. If we know something about an expansive mind, or what I sometimes prefer to say, meaning the same thing, an expansive body, since the mind is not just in the brain. It radiates, glows out from the body.

And so this, to know whatever is difficult, that it's just a part of this wider whole, the whole body, the whole mind. So we don't collapse into it, we don't get stuck in it. So the *Satipaṭṭhāna* begins very simply establishing awareness with the breathing, on the breathing, and then beginning to know, know the breathing, but attending to how you know, where the delight, the joy comes from. Not what you know, but how you know the breathing. Know that it's a long breath or a short breath, or whatever characterizes it. But the knowing has a very light touch.

It's so light and simple and it has maybe almost like the beauty of a butterfly landing on a flower. And sometimes the knowing can be the next, very next, just short of doing nothing. Knowing, but just, oh, lightly, just short of doing nothing. And then breathing, knowing the breathing in a simple way. And then expanding your capacity, your bodyfulness, to know the whole body, but more than know it, feel it, sense it, so that you're sensing, breathing in the body, sensations. And the awareness is open to spread beyond breathing to a wider field, sensing where you enjoy sensing.

Maybe because sensing has been set free from agendas and making something happen. There's a feeling of openness and allowing a kind of freedom to sense what the body reveals. And then there's relaxing the body. It can be gently relaxing certain areas or the whole body, where relaxing is not a job or work. Maybe at times it's simply feeling the body carefully, lovingly enough. You sense that in the body itself there is a movement to soften, to not hold tight.

And it feels good to give into that movement of softening, releasing, and letting go into the body breathing, sensing the body breathing with a steadiness that's gentle, continuous, without it being work, sensing and knowing deeply. And now if there's a hindrance, if now there is a difficulty or a story you're caught in, it can now, can you know it and feel it? So you're not caught in its web. You see it for what it is, and you see it as just a part of the whole. Knowing it lightly, sensing what's going on, sweetly, to recognize and know a hindrance, a difficulty, from the deep mind, the deep mind that knows and feels, but doesn't make anything a prob-

lem. It's just one more thing to care for as we care for ourselves here.

And sometimes when there's a difficulty or a hindrance, and it's known and seen and felt in this healthy way, it becomes less sticky. Maybe it disappears. Or maybe it's enough to let it recede to the background and in the foreground, to steady yourself on the breathing, to become attuned to the pleasures and goodness that radiates in the meeting of knowing, sensing, and the body breathing. If you wander away from the present moment, and you know that's the case. No need to see it as a problem. It can be a way, a means by which to feel deeply, know deeply, to recognize a mind that is with, a mind that's expansive, free in relationship to it.

Here and now, the clock says it's 9 a.m. I won't ring a bell to end this sitting. Maybe today as you go about your time on the retreat, throughout the day walking around, eating, making tea, going to the bathroom, wherever you are, your room. Stay close to what feels profound in you. Profound knowing, profound sensing, stay close to the sensations that are wholesome and nurturing for you. Stay close to the expanded mind, the expanded body, so that whatever arises that's difficult can be met and known and felt in a deep way, a meaningful way.