

## Wednesday sit with instructions

**Gil Fronsdal**

**October 29, 2025**

**Keywords:** hindrances, divine faculties, mindfulness of emotions, letting go, embodied awareness, faith, clinging, stories, mindfulness, breathing

---

So there are these two themes of the retreat, the hindrances and the divine faculties. And in the ancient instructions, going back all the way to the Buddha, the instructions are to let go of the hindrances and to let grow the faculties. These two different movements, one of letting go, and the other of setting free. And sometimes we're letting go, and sometimes we're setting free, something inside. And these two can come together, if in letting go of the stories, letting go of the clinging that's involved in having an entrance, then we don't just let go, but we let go into these wonderful qualities that can exist within us. Letting go into awareness.

Letting go into peace, calm. Letting go into our torso. If the stories are in our head, the faculties are more embodied events. To let go so something can be set free to grow, spread. And usually on the retreats here, on the third day, we give instructions in mindfulness of emotions. And that's important because it's valuable to include emotions as part of mindfulness, part of the field, part of the movement in Buddhism, Buddhist practice, mindfulness, is to become whole, to have not to have any divisions or limitations on what is included in the awareness of ourselves, of the world.

And emotions are an important part of our whole. They have a place here, and the ability to know and feel and emotions can help us to let go of what should be let go of. The stories, the clinging, and they can help set free and help grow the beautiful qualities that can grow. The capacity to have embodied sensations, to really be inhabiting the body with its emotions, gives us access to the divine faculties within, these wonderful qualities. So often in the way that we teach here, it's nice to have something like the breath, the breathing, as the home base, the place that's where we dwell at home. And so finding some place in the body where the breathing is comfortable to feel.

It's not always comfortable to feel breathing, but to find that which is most comfortable, pleasant, maybe even pleasant, at the beginning of a sitting, maybe using the inhale to feel your body, the embodied body, and on the exhale to relax, to soften. And also on the inhale sometimes at the beginning, to feel the embodied mind. That part of the mind, mental activity, thinking, the thinking mind, where there might be tension or pressure, agitation, or where there might be kind of a contracted focal point for thinking. That someplace in your body, maybe in your head, to feel that on the inhale and on the exhale, to soften the thinking mind. It's softening the whole body on the exhale and calming, quieting the way you would know that you're breathing in, the way you would know you're breathing out. Sometimes the knowing is non-verbal, and sometimes it's maybe very lightly verbal, quiet, knowing to allow the knowing to be calm, peaceful, knowing breathing in, knowing breathing out.

Or maybe it feels even nicer just to feel breathing in, feel the embodied sensations of breathing out, sensing the sensations in the body associated with breathing and sensing in a calm way, and in offering the instructions in mindfulness of emotions. You might now calmly, simply, know, maybe very generally, how you feel emotionally, the mood, the attitude, that's here for you, where you experiment with how you know to know without a story, even a story about yourself, feelings this way. And if the emotions are agitated or difficult, experiment with stepping away and not identifying too much with it, and knowing it calmly. No, quietly. Alternatively, you can sense, feel in your body the sensations that might be associated with the emotion. Letting go of stories so you can better let go into the bodily feelings associated with the emotion.

And in knowing and feeling emotions the simple way, at some point, return to the breathing. Maybe to just be with a breathing, or maybe to have the gentle rhythm of breathing move through or be with the emotion. Letting breathing move through or breathe with an emotion is a way to continue knowing it, but maybe without identifying or reacting so much to it, allowing it to be there, and if there is a story, maybe on the exhale, letting go. And maybe if what you're feeling feels right, as you let go, set it free in your body. Give it room. Some stories are very, very simple. Maybe no plot. As simple as, I can't, I must. This shouldn't be happening. It's something different supposed to happen.

This is not okay. This is great. No need for stories of any kind. With the exhales, following the exhale, releasing with the exhale, deep into your body, so that when you inhale, the depths of your body expands to give breathing room for awareness. An embodied awareness that spreads and opens, can include all things. Or if it's nice for you, as you exhale, drop into your faith, the trust, the confidence that also can be a wonderful embodied state, that can gently

grow on the inhale.

If we're too involved in stories or thoughts, awareness gets... contracted, small, even hijacked, relaxed the thinking mind, and with every exhale settling into embodied awareness that has lots of room for all things. Mindfulness is associated with remembering, remembering the awareness that's already here, before you have to try to do it. Sometimes it's experienced as sensing, as sensing, broad sensing of what's here that is always occurring. And remember to take it in. The mind can know without you willfully doing the knowing. Remember to stay close to the knowing that is naturally occurring without story, without a past or a future, the natural knowing of what is here now, learning to recognize how a preoccupation with thinking and stories is limiting narrows our life by disconnecting us from a holistic awareness of the body and mind, letting go of story, to make room for what is healthy and good here, to be set free, quieting the thinking.

And if you do think, only thinking about what's here, simple acts of recognition. And if the mind wanders off too much, or identifies with pain or difficult emotions, gently, calmly, softly use a mental note that acknowledges what's there while you appreciate the calm knowing. And as we come to the end of this sitting, is there some calm or subtleness or a little bit more intimacy with your embodied experience, with your emotional experience? That you can relax into, soften into, hear, remembering. Not so much remembering to be aware, but remembering you are aware, even when it's not being done consciously. Thank you.

So in referring to the faculties, estates, I associate them, we're placed them together with this category of emotions. Their overall moods, overall states of mind, states of body, states of being that are present for us. And the ability to be attentive and caring and loving for any emotions we have, even the difficult ones, is a training to help us also to be aware and present for that which is good, that which is healthy. And the art of it is to learn to have a very open, non-reactive awareness where all emotions are allowed to be there. This practice of mindfulness is one of the... Sitting in meditation where you're pretty safe, it's a safe place to feel anger, to have anger, even rage, to have grief, to have joy, to have confusion. It's even a safe place to have the hindrances, provided you don't get sucked into the story so that you believe it or believe your judgments.

Generally the simpler that you could know something, the simpler you can be aware, the closer you are to the heart of the matter, keep it simple. And when you're knowing emotions, generally if you know it physically, know the embodied expression of it, that can make it easier, because then you're less likely to be continued telling stories about it. Some emotions are just continued for decades, by the way, that we keep telling the same story. And there's an

art to resting, breathing with difficult emotions, where something about them can shift and change and reveal... The faculties are also here, holding, being with our emotions, with the faculty of faith, the faculty of awareness. So today we're doing the second cycle, the second half of the practice discussions.

So we didn't see you yesterday. Today is the day for seeing you. And we think we have every one on the list. And today's Wednesday, and sometimes even if you... It's good to go down and check and make sure what your time you are and day you are. And so there's two chairs to wait for your practice discussions, just behind this small or large little redwood grove that's right behind here.

And now when the person comes out, you can come in. If you're the first person, you can just come up. And one of the ways that might support your practice here during the retreat, during today, is to, whatever you're doing through the day, to do it at the speed of mindfulness. And that means the speed by which you can stay in touch with yourself, speed by which you remember to be aware. Remember you are aware. And it's fascinating to kind of pay attention if you can.

It's fascinating. How quickly leaving this hall, going down the steps, walking across the community hall, you're already pulled into the world of thinking. And he said, well, stop, watch. Don't do that, but you can do it. But, you know, how quickly is it? By the time you get to the top of the stairs, by the time you get to the bottom, by the time you get to the door, when the bell rings, that's all it takes.

Just, it's fascinating. It's kind of humorous, too, sometimes. But to go at the speed of mindfulness is go, usually it's a little bit slower than usual. So you notice when the mind begins to wander off, oh, there it is. Then you come back, be embodied, be present. And I hope that now, after most of you, I think, have done your work meditations for a couple of days now, you probably now know it pretty well or well enough.

You might also there slow down a little bit how you do it. I'm, you know, if your task takes you a little bit longer, there's no rush to need to get anywhere usually. And if you're a pot washer or dishwasher and you're you're allowed to come a little late to the sittings if being more present with the job and doing it kind of more mindfully slower. And when you're working on a crew of people, be a little bit of attentive, a little careful. Kind of, kind of, if there's the mindfulness of being together, it's a whole form of mindfulness itself. And if your crew member is slower than you, just kind of make room for that.

Just be a little careful that your speed doesn't somehow get too close to their slowness. Make

room for everyone the way they are. So thank you very much, and may you enjoy this day of practice.