

Introduction to Mindfulness, Class 2-Body

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Hello, everyone, and welcome. Any of you new who weren't here last week? Welcome. Welcome. So it'll be a continuation from last week, but hopefully I'll do enough review that we can catch up. Hello, everyone. Oh, not that way. So... But maybe we'll start a little bit slowly.

Those of you who were here last week and maybe tried some of the things I taught last week or maybe you have some questions left over from last week, any reports, anything you would like to ask or say? It's also a little bit nice for me to know so that I can kind of understand better how to teach because I understand a little bit how it's going for you. Anybody offer something? Yes? Is it a bit... Keeping mindful of the coldness of the air going in my nostrils, being mindful, can you hear me, of the cold air going into my nostrils continually, helped me more than some other things. Wonderful.

So there's two primary ways that mindfulness of breathing is taught, and one is at the nostrils, and one is somewhere in the torso, in the movement of the belly or the chest. And there are whole schools that emphasize here. And some people works really well. And some people find it gets very precise and very small and very, you know, it kind of pulls them into a kind of more concentrated state than doing here. And some people find that doing the belly or the chest works better. So you found your way, and that's great. You've been doing it during the week, and you're so chilled and calm quiet and it all works just great.

Well, let me say a few words for those of you who are new, and then you're going to want to start a little slow as people are coming. So what we're doing here is I'm introducing to you the practice of mindfulness, mindfulness meditation in particular. So mindfulness can be used in daily life and doesn't require meditation. But one of the primary forms of meditation in Buddhism is mindfulness meditation. And some of the instructions, some of the ways of living with mindfulness is a little bit varied if you're focusing only on meditation.

And part of the value of meditation, it's a wonderful laboratory to understand oneself. It's a wonderful place to kind of be within reason, undistracted enough you can see how distracted you are. So maybe a little bit louder. There's also hearing system devices, if you have trouble, on the counter, just around the corner there. Or you can sit closer to the speakers too.

And so, one of the advantages, one of the benefits of sitting quietly and meditating is that you're not being pulled into all kinds of tasks, all kinds of things to do things you have to do. Certainly you can be mindful as you're doing things in life, but it tends to interrupt the flow, the development of mindfulness. And it also interrupts the flow of calming down, of settling, relaxing. And you can relax too much for the purpose of mindfulness, but that's not most people's problem. Most people discover that as they calm and relax, their attention becomes clear, and it becomes richer to be in the present moment.

And some of the fuller benefits of mindfulness come when the mind is very quiet, very settled, and it doesn't add anything to the experience, which is very unusual for most people's minds, where we're usually adding commentary, judgments, conversations, preferences, aversions, all kinds of things we add on top. And many people don't realize how much of what they experience is not the thing they're experiencing, but is their whole reactive inner world of concepts, ideas, interpretations that builds all kinds of things, including emotions. So we're trying to quiet all that.

And one of the principle, one of the kind of core teaching stories of early Buddhism, of mindfulness practice, has to do with supposedly, there's a story, the Buddha was sitting with a group of people like all of you, and he said, if someone comes along, an archer comes along, and shoots you with an arrow, will that hurt? Oh yeah, yes, that'll hurt a lot. And then he said, if he comes and shoots a second arrow, will that hurt even more? Yeah. And they said, oh yeah, that'll hurt more. It's kind of maybe strange things to ask. But in any case, he said that. And then he said, well, the first arrow is what life brings you. The second arrow is what you shoot.

So what that means is that if I'm walking down the sidewalk here and I trip on some rock that's there, that happens in life. That could be the, you know, that's just life. It's living my life. It's dark. I trip. I fall. And things like that happen. You could go home if you were here in a car. You can go home and go to your car now and your car has a flat tire. That's the kind of thing that life provides people with. That's the first arrow. It's not ideal. Sometimes it hurts, but it happens.

The second arrow is our reactivity to it. So if I trip on the sidewalk here, I could be really angry and upset with me. And I have decades worth of mindfulness practice. What good did it do?

I'm a failure. And I should have done better. And now all these people are not going to think very well of me as a mindfulness teacher. I didn't notice. And I could just be slinging one arrow after another into me. And after a series of them, I start getting depressed. I feel kind of discouraged. Right. Because of all this voice that's kind of building up all this... Those are all the second arrows that I'm adding.

And so what we're learning to do in mindfulness is to not add second arrows. So we allow what's there to just be what it is and see it clearly and see ourselves clearly and have a certain freedom, where we're not getting, we're not being automatically reactive. We're not piling up the interpretations, piling up the reactivity, the second arrows that we say in Buddhism, and experiencing just life as it is. And it's unfortunate to have some of these first arrows, but you know, you get sick. That says, you know, everyone gets sick sooner or later. That's the first arrow. What's unfortunate is we pile up the top of that, what we do to ourselves. And we criticize things.

You can't sleep at night, and you build a whole story and reactivity about what that means and why it shouldn't be there. And then what's keeping you awake is the second, third, and fourth arrows you're adding. What we're learning in Buddhism is just leave something alone. You're awake at night and there's no second arrows. Maybe it's not so comfortable, but that's maybe the first arrow. Just leave it like that. It's a lot simpler.

And so this art of mindfulness is to begin quieting down enough, be still enough, be attentive enough to see what's extra, to see what is generated by you that doesn't actually have to be there. And just allow what's there to be there in a simple way. And what that allows is a deeper quieting, a settling, that relaxing, because the second arrows come with tension. The second arrows come with stress that we build up. Probably every second arrow has a layer of stress. And some people had done a thousand arrows by 10 a.m. in the morning. And so there's all these, you know, tension that builds up over time.

If mindfulness is the practice of being present for what is without adding anything on top of it, then we have a chance to relax and settle in a very deep way. And the combination of being nicely settled, alert, and present creates a very rich chemistry or alchemy for our life that we start kind of appreciating more and more.

So to kind of start here with an exercise in mindfulness, I'll start with what we did yesterday, which is we'll do the three-breath journey. For those people who haven't done it, especially, it may be nice to do it first, and then I'll build on that. So what it means is stay as you are, don't have to change anything, but maybe close your eyes. And as you are, track three breaths. You might count each one, one, two, three, just do it. And then when you're finished, open your

eyes. So three breaths.

And what happened last week when we did, I asked how that was for people, and some people said they felt more calm, more relaxed, just doing that. It's not a very, you know, it's not a great spiritual technique. It's not some complicated technique. It's just, you know, just using your breath, just staying with it. And what it does is interrupts the ordinary stream of thoughts that we have. Many of those thoughts, one way or the other, are adding more to the situation that's needed. That we're engaged, we're reacting, we're trying to figure out, we're trying to figure doing all kinds of things or staying busy in the mind. And this kind of switching the attention to something very simple like the breath and giving ourselves to it can sometimes very quickly stabilize or settle us in a way that's maybe not dramatic, but maybe in some situations better than the alternative.

So this three-breath journey is something relatively simple and it can be done in a way that helps you to support to relax deeply. Which is a nice thing to do. I shouldn't use those kinds of strong words. Help you relax somewhat. And it can be done. It's a very nice thing to do at the beginning of meditation. It's nice to have a ritual or a little process of settling and arriving, being connected here, so to prepare you for the mindfulness practice itself.

So this is... So I'll guide you through this. And it's a three-breath journey, focusing on different parts of your body. We'll start with your face and your shoulders, your chest, your belly, and maybe keep it those four places in a very simple way. And I'll direct your attention to these different places and just bring it, feel it. If you can, if it makes sense to you, feel it from the inside out. Feel it from the inside out. You know, just the idea is the sensations, what it feels like sensually to feel what's happening there.

Feel the warmth, the coolness, the tingling, the vibration, the tightness. If there's tension, feel the tension, the holding. Just feel. See if you can feel it without adding any more arrows, any judgments. Oh, I'm not being tense the right way. I'm always doing it wrong. Okay. You know, just whatever it is, just kind of keep it really simple. And one way to see this is that you're allowed to be just the way you are. This is not an exercise in judging, needing to be different. It's just to stay very, very simple with this.

So when I say bring your attention to your face, and then just for three breath length of the amount of time it takes to do three breaths, maybe count the breath, stay there and feel your face. That's all. Very simple. Maybe as if you've never really paid attention to it from the inside out, the sensations of it. And if my speed is either too fast or too slow, it's okay. So if you end up doing more breaths than three, it's okay. And if you only had a chance to do two, then it's fine for it to be a two-breath journey and then move on to the next place and the

next place. Does that make sense?

So to begin, at this time you can take a meditation posture... That's nice for you. And then we'll begin very simply. Just do the simplest version of the three-breath journey. With your eyes closed, count three breaths. And now bring your attention to your face and feel and sense your face while you're aware of three breaths. Count three breaths. And then do the same for the shoulders. And then do the same for the chest. And then the same for the belly.

And then continuing with your eyes closed, really not don't do anything particular, but just feel how you are. Feel if anything has changed. And notice the experience of breathing. And we'll sit here quietly for three minutes. And in those three minutes, kind of stay close to your body, your body breathing, being aware of both the inhale and the exhale. And if it's nice for you, you can just do a series of three-breath journeys, just so you can maybe stay close to your breath, your breathing.

And then to end the sitting, you can take some deeper breaths and feel your body. And when you're ready, you can open your eyes.

So first, I'd like to ask some of you, what was it like to do that series of three-breath journeys with the different parts of your body? Just kind of scanning your body in this kind of systematic way. What changed for you? What happened? What did you notice? If you could use the mic. Because that's the way that people online can hear, too.

Hello. I feel like I can control those parts a little bit more, and I'm more attuned to them. You have to be a little louder for my sake. Also, let me explain. If you hold the mic this way, then I have a better chance to hear it because they're designed to be spoken. Yeah. Like this? This close? Yeah. Okay. Mainly I feel more attuned to my body. I kind of can picture where my pieces are, I suppose. Great. Very nice. And it was nice for you to be attuned to your body. Great.

Up there on the stage. Maybe because I came in kind of in a rush. My breathing was really heavy at the beginning. Oh, can you hear me now? Yeah. So it was really heavy at the beginning or fast at the beginning. And so it was really dramatic. I actually really noticed, you know, as it was moving down to my chest and I was like, okay. And then I figured belly was next. And I was like, my legs were activated. Like they weren't like I was not in my body at all when I came in. And so it was just really helpful, it was immediately helpful to bring me to this present moment. So you came into your body again into the present pretty quickly. It was a pretty short period of time. Pretty short. Yeah, it was amazing. Great. Thank you.

Anything else besides about that meditation? Was it difficult? Was it easy? Was it got a sense of how it might be grounding or settling to be that simple? Yeah. For me, the breathing part in the beginning and the end was easier for me. Because I got distracted when I was focusing on my body. I noticed my mind wandering. So it was just interesting observation. That's very interesting. But when I was just breathing and looking at my breath, I could stay more focused. Great. That's good to know. So maybe they're doing this like three-breath jarring, scanning through the body. It's not so useful for you. Or I just need practice. Yeah. Yeah. So...

The way that I explained yesterday, last week, about how we teach mindfulness here, we do it in four or five steps each of these days. We start with the breathing. That's what we did last week. And for some people, mindfulness of breathing, meditating with breathing, is what they do for their whole meditation career, for a whole lifetime. It's very significant. Just to practice settling on the breath, being mindful of the breath, being concentrated on the breath, can be hugely transformative.

But when we're trying to do mindfulness practice, the full range of it, it's not just limited to the breathing, but it's really meant to build up a capacity to be aware of our whole life, all aspects of our life, not being excluded. There's a certain kind of higher quality attention... higher quality kind of attending to our experience, where we learn to do, that we can learn to do to anything that we experience, anything that's going on, all the range of things that can happen to a human being, because if anything's happening to you and you know it, you're aware of it. And the quality of that awareness is something that we can learn to develop and have a higher quality way of attending.

And one of these ways is learn to keep it really simple. Learning what it's like to be simply aware without those second arrows, without the layers of reactivity or interpretation or meaning-making or prediction or that we add to our experience. And some, it's fair to say that some people hardly experience directly what's happening in the moment, they're mostly living in the second, third level removed from it that has to do with their stories, their interpretations, their reactions to it. And they like it, they don't like it, and I'd like to do something better, and someone's supposed to fix it, and I'll blame that person for what's going on. And I'm certainly innocent. And so the mind lives in this world that's kind of reactive, it's thinking, it's stories. And we get further and further removed from our direct experience here.

And that can be, and to learn how to not do that, but have a very simple attention to what's actually happening, where we don't see it through the filter of our reactions, our interpretations, our meaning making, can be very nice just going at the checkout counter at the grocery

store. Because I've certainly done that and hardly knew who the clerk was because I was so busy thinking about something. And I delight to be there in a very relaxed and open way, not making any story and attending to this person, paying attention and smiling and how are you and something. And it's remarkable how quickly it's possible to have a very meaningful exchange with someone if you're really present and available. And I leave the checkout line just having had a wonderful human connection to someone that I'd ever seen before and might never see again. And I'd rather do that than look and see what chocolate I can get. You know, it's nicer to be connected to humans.

And so to learn how to be present in a very simple way kind of enlivens and enriches our life because of how we relate, we connect more fully to what reality is rather than seeing it through this filter of our additions that we have. So when we sit down to meditate, it's sometimes nice to have something, preliminary steps you do that are more grounding, more settling, helps you to arrive here. And so they're doing the three-breath journey with the breath and different parts of your body is one thing you can do. Sometimes the three-breath journey is maybe too much. Sometimes people just scan through their body and just relax, relaxing on the exhale. Okay. And then at some point you're more settled and we're here.

And then we switch in our tradition and let breathing be the default place for the attention. We're developing concentration and mindfulness together and just staying here by kind of tracking the breath, attending to the breath, feeling the breath, being with it. The mind will wander off. That's what it's meant to do, kind of, to be caught in its thoughts. And the idea is to notice it in a non-reactive way. Don't add second arrows that saying, oh, what a terrible person I am, meditator, because I thought. That's a second arrow. Just notice your thinking, let go, and start again.

And one of the ways that this approaches to meditation is to always be ready to start over, to begin again. Just don't worry about it, don't come to a conclusion, just okay, I start again. And come back to your breathing. Come back and do it again, and again, and again.

But as I said, what we're trying to do is to learn how to have a kind of a contemplative or meditative or clear way of being aware of all aspects of our life. And one aspect of our life is our body. And some people's relationship to their body is... There was a magazine article many years ago I saw. The title was *The Body, Friend, Foe, or Perfect Stranger*. And different relationships people have to their body.

In Buddhism, a lot of Buddhist practice unfolds through the body. You wouldn't know that from a lot of books you might read about Buddhism, but they're fairly intellectual or cognitive with ideas. But if you actually practice, go to the monasteries in Asia or retreat cen-

ters, they're very body-centric practices. The idea is to be able to, like your temple, your monastery, your retreat center, is your body. And that's where so much of the inner life of the *Dharma* of Buddhism unfolds is by a deeper connection to the body. Everything you need to know about Buddhism is found if you read your body, not read a book. So just realize it's that important.

So one of the things we're learning to do is to be present for the body, to be able to experience and feel it as it is for itself. Not how it is from what we've read from some kind of fashion website or some kind of beauty contest we've been watching. If we're seeing our body through all kinds of social constructs and preferences, a lot of people suffer extra. A lot of extra arrows we shoot at ourselves. But what is it like to feel the body for its own sake?

So I want to now do an exercise with you to kind of give you a sense of how this might be, what this means, what I'm trying to say. So you can just sit again quietly, and it doesn't have to be exactly a meditative posture, but as you are comfortable, and close your eyes. And just to prepare yourself to kind of do this exercise, I'll sit here for maybe three breaths, maybe a little bit longer. You can count three if you'd like.

So then, bring your attention into... one of your hands, as if you can allow the hand to feel itself. Feeling the palm of the hand, the back of the hand, the fingers, feeling maybe the tingling, the warmth, the coolness, the contact of the hand against some other part of your body, the heaviness, the lightness, as if you're allowing the hand to experience itself independent of what you think about it.

And now, switch and think about your hand. What do you think about this hand compared to other people's hands? Are the fingers too short, too long? Fingernails too short, too long? Wrinkle, blemished? And what is it with your hand anyway? What are all the ways you've thought about your hand compared to other people's hands? And if you engage in this wonderful... exercise of comparing your hand to other people's hands and how your hand is. What happens to you compared to the last exercise of just feeling the hand for itself? It's probably a world of difference. Where do you live? Where do you want to live? Do you want to live in those thoughts? There is an alternative to live in the hand, to live in the hands experience. Be close to that.

So now switch to the other hand. And do the same thing there. Just feel it. Sense it and feel the hand. Allowing the hand to be the hand. With no reference to anything else but the sensations that are there right now. Letting your attention roam around in the other hand. Back of the hand, palm of the hand, fingers.

And now to switch again, and now move your attention to where it's most comfortable or easy for you to feel your breathing. In that part of your body where it's easiest or most compelling to feel your body breathing, and not so much focusing on breathing, it is feeling that part of your body in the same way that you felt the hand. Letting that part of the body have its own experience and you stay close to it. Attend to that. It could be in the belly, it could be in the chest, it could be in the nostril. And as you allow that part of your body to have its own experience, you'll also experience how breathing is there.

Some people appreciate the intimacy of staying close to the body's sensation, how the body experiences itself. In relationship to breathing. And if you're staying close to your breathing, but then your mind wanders off in thought, notice that. Notice that if you're thinking, if you're adding second arrows or unnecessary complication, then very simply begin again with your breathing. Begin again feeling that part of your body.

And then to end the sitting... to take a few long, slow deep breaths, feeling your body, feeling the room, and when you're ready you can open your eyes.

So I little bit apologize for the part of the exercise where I asked you to think about your hand and all the ways you thought about it in the past. Maybe all of you have had just a wonderful relationship to your hand, and it's the perfect hand, and maybe I didn't imply that well enough. But for some, maybe a few of you, it was maybe like, what a difference between just feeling it and then suddenly, what is Gail doing? I mean, it just pop you back up into another world that sometimes, maybe sometimes you've lived in.

What did you think about that contrast? What happened to you in that contrast? Did you learn something? Do you see some clear difference between two different ways of being? The biggest difference that I see is that... first looking and feeling and saying, oh, I have all those brown spots. So it was judgment. I noticed that that was what I was doing. And then as I began to try to just not judge, but just to feel it and not look at it, not have even really any visual, but just a feeling and experience. It was much better. It was very calming. Very calming. And probably your hand was happier. Absolutely. Still being criticized. Very nice.

Someone else? Yes. What was so clear to me was the striking difference between being with the hand, thinking about the hand. And my mind did say, Gail, what are you doing? Your mind, what? Gail, what are you doing? Yeah. Yeah, it's like there was, I noticed the reactivity, right? Something felt off. You know, it was a very striking experience. Yeah. So you got a sense of something for you felt off versus something that felt... Being was... Just being. It just seemed that it's so much more enjoyable than going into the judgment, into the thinking. Very nice.

So one of the things that we emphasize in mindfulness is that be careful you don't prefer one over the other of these. It's okay to have some preference. But the idea is, what we're trying to do in mindfulness is not be in a particular place as if that's how you're supposed to be, but rather we want to start seeing clearly what actually is happening. And if you see how nice it is just to be with a hand or with equivalent, and then you see how off it is to be caught in the world of thoughts and judgments and all that, it's enough just to really see it. And as opposed to, oh, one is, oh, I shouldn't be doing this. I'm supposed to be doing this. That's adding a third arrow.

Just, oh, look at that. This is one way. This is pleasant. This is unpleasant. This is complicated. This was simple. This was just being. And this is like, I don't know. There's no being here. It's just, I don't know what it is. It's thinking. And so you want to start seeing these things really clear. Because as we see these things really, really clear and learn how not to add reactivities on top of them, then the whole psychophysical system can come into homeostasis by itself. You don't have to be the one in charge. It's just seeing it and being it. Something begins shifting and moving.

And even if you stay with the... You know, if you've made all kinds of terrible judgments and ideas about your hand... If you clearly started to see that you're doing that and stay seeing it, maybe do the three-breath journey, just seeing what you're doing, something will begin shifting and you won't believe those thoughts as much. You'll see them just as thoughts. And something will begin shifting and changing, and you start feeling some freedom from those thoughts. You don't identify with those thoughts anymore, and they float away. And then you find yourself back in the breathing again.

So that's part of the power of mindfulness. The power of just really seeing clearly what's here and not being in a hurry to get rid of it, not to fix it, and certainly as best you can, not to add more arrows on top of it. Just see, oh, that's how it is. Let me spend some time getting to know it. It doesn't have to be a three-breath journey, but, you know, spend a few seconds, five seconds, ten seconds, just sensing and feeling it, and then coming back.

So the instructions for mindfulness practice is the default mindfulness meditation is we encourage people, if it works, to practice mindfulness of breathing. But if something becomes more compelling than the breath, more difficult, that's in the body, some physical thing, then you let go of the breathing, go to that place with your attention and attend to it. And in the same way you did for the hand. It's a little bit harder. The hand is relatively, I imagine for most of you, was a little bit neutral. But sometimes when people meditate, it's not so neutral. Their knees hurt, so their back hurts. And so it's not so easy just to go there and feel it

because of pain or discomfort or something we're challenged by.

But the art of mindfulness meditation is to learn the way of how to be present for something, even when it's uncomfortable, and very, very simple. And in doing that, there's a chance of learning something very significant, and that is how to be free of it, how not to be caught by it or reactive to it. Look at that. And many people have found that in... I think most people who do any mindfulness meditation for some time will discover this amazing art or skill that they actually feel better if they feel the discomfort and leave it alone. Don't fight it, don't resist it, don't judge it, don't make conclusions about it. Learn to have a very simple awareness of it. And sometimes it even stops being uncomfortable in the wake of just a kind of very simple attention.

So what we would do in this practice is you would be with your breathing, and then if there's some other sensations that's stronger than the breath, you feel more compelling, you feel pulled towards it. Rather than setting up a tension, a tug and pull between the two, you can let go of your breathing, and then bring your attention and use that as the place to cultivate present moment awareness, whatever that is. And you can do that for three breaths. You can do that for about as long as it's maybe three breaths. And then you come back to your breathing. After maybe two or three breaths, it seems like it's still compelling. You come back and do it again. It's kind of like you're tapping in, seeing what it is, being clear.

And you don't necessarily need to stay for a long time with the strong body sensation. It's enough just to tap into it and see it, and just enough maybe to see how you are caught in it and doing second arrows, take a deep breath, relax, let go, and then come back to your breathing. And then as you go, as you sit and meditate, different parts of your body might speak up. And we just follow it, and then come back to the breathing. It's kind of like the breathing is the center, is the home, home base. And then we go out to meet and attend to something else in the body, and you come back. Then it's something else. Come back. And it all keeps us in the present moment.

And if you can do that in a relaxed way, then slowly the meditative mind begins to show itself. The mind that can just be with experience rather than the mind that wants it to be different or wants it to be the same or is judging or making stories about it. Just staying simple and present. And that simplicity of being is, it creates the conditions where something deeper and deeper and deeper and deeper inside of us can be relaxing and letting go and softening. And that's part of the charm, the beauty of this practice, is how so many extra layers of reactivity begin dropping away, dropping away. But we don't have to do the dropping away. It's what the practice does it for us. Just staying very simple with it.

So is this clear, what I'm saying? Does it make sense at all? Yeah? Yeah. So, should we try it? So we'll do about 10 minutes of meditation. And the idea is that you would, I'll get you started, and then we'll be quiet. And during that quiet time, just continue with your breathing, attending to it, being with it the best you can. But then when you, if something in your body becomes strong, it could be something pleasant or unpleasant, right? Then experiment with this way of bringing your attention to that part of your body the same way you brought it to the hand. Which I'm hoping the example of that was the hand, you were pretty simple with it, you weren't reactive to it, you're willing to kind of roam around and feel it and just allow it just be the way it is. Surprisingly, we can learn to do that with discomfort too. We can also learn to do that with things that are very pleasant.

Because that's one of the things that can happen is people learn to meditate more and more, is that really pleasant sensations arise. And some people grab onto those and build stories around those. And so we want to learn how to leave things alone, but just bring attention. Just be there. So do the body thing for a little while, and then come back to your breathing until the body speaks up again. And just go back and forth. And if you end up staying with the breath the whole time, that's great. Is that clear? Okay.

So, assuming a meditation posture, a posture that you think you can sit still and not move for these 10-so minutes. And this is a way of kind of beginning to be connected. You might take a few longer, deeper breaths. And then as you exhale, relax your body. And then letting your breathing return to normal. And you might, as you breathe in, feel your face two or three times. And as you exhale, soften, relax in your face. Feel your shoulders. As you exhale, relax your shoulders. And as you inhale, feel your belly. And as you exhale, soften your belly.

And then bringing your attention to that part of your body, where it's easiest or nicest... to feel the body breathing. And stay close to that. Maybe riding on the waves of breathing in and breathing out, the waves of expansion and contraction. Stay with your breathing. If it helps, you can do the three-breath journey a few times. And if anything arises in your body that's more compelling than the breathing, bring your attention there, like we brought it to the hand.

And then in the last minute or two of the sitting, kind of relax and see if you can now open up to feel your whole body. Kind of relax, gentle, global experience of the body, similar to how you experienced your hand. Not the whole body all at once, but it's kind of a global way in which you kind of roam around and feel. Without having to do much except to just be here, to experience how the body experiences itself, free of the ideas of what's supposed to happen, what you want to have happen, free of meaning. Sitting here quietly, allowing your body to

be as it is, and allow it to be known, to be experienced as it is.

And then taking a few deeper breaths and feeling your body more fully. And when you're ready, you can open your eyes.

So as you know, because the word we use for, in English, we say mindfulness, which emphasizes the mind. And it's a little bit unfortunate that that's what the choice was, to translate this ancient Indian word that's called *sati*, S-A-T-I, *Sati* doesn't contain any reference to the mind in it. And I like to translate *sati* as awareness. But sometimes I wish we had translated as bodyfulness instead of mindfulness because of how centrally important waking up in the body is.

In fact, at some times in Buddhism, teachers have insisted that it's not the mind that wakes up. It's the body that gets enlightened. The body that wakes up. And it's a way of emphasizing that the body is a whole field of nerve endings, of all kinds of different nerves. And it has a tremendous capacity to sense and feel the environment, feel ourselves, know what's going on. And I like to think that, you know, where's the mind? Not in the head, it's the whole body. Wherever the nerves are, that's where the mind is. So it includes the head, but everything else is.

And so when we start opening up and feeling more and more of the body, then we start receiving the messages more clearly that the body is providing. And not necessarily us, who we think we are, but our whole inner landscape, ecology, starts waking up. In relationship to all these sensations that are communicating with each other and moving and learning from each other. And it tends to create a sense of wholeness, tends to create a sense of healing, a sense of subtleness, of relaxing. It's remarkable what begins happening when we kind of start allowing ourselves to feel more and more of the body, kind of the way maybe some of you felt the hand. Just letting it just like...

And then I talked about just the being of it, just letting it be itself. Experience something very, very simple, free of the reactivity, free of the arrows, free of the preferences, free of the past and future, free of the expectations. Just let it be. And to do it with the body is a phenomenally powerful thing to do. It's hard for some people to imagine because some people live so much in their thoughts, in their stories. That's where everything is negotiated. That's where the whole meaning of life is found. It's a whole entertainment of life or the purpose of life is found and navigated, negotiating the stories and who said what to who and the conversations. And it's a whole world we're trying to fix. And... you know, and trying to, some people are spending a lot of time in their thoughts trying to have a better past. You know, that's, I think there's better things to do than that.

So what was it like for some of you to start including the body in this way as part of the meditation? Yes, please. Hi, so I found it helpful to think about my face, my shoulder, as I take that, you know, three deep breaths and settle in. And it was also... It was hard to do that? It felt easy. It got easy, yes. And then I felt a bit of discomfort in my neck, and I thought about my neck and took a breath. And then I tried to bring my attention back to awareness. And I, as soon as I do that, I feel like I lose that kind of visual anchor and I start thinking about what I'm going to have for dinner, you know, my work and stuff like that.

I find myself thinking about certain object image in my head just to settle my mind, not to get distracted. Yeah. But by doing so, I don't think I was really feeling the sensation in my body. I was just trying to prevent me from thinking about something else. Yeah. So in a couple of weeks we'll talk about mindfulness of thinking, and it's actually possible to take this contemplative, meditative attention and look on thinking directly rather than having thinking take you away. So that's coming.

But for now, I mean, it's okay what you're doing, but when you imagine an image in your mind and keep your attention to it, an image is a creation of the mind. Right? And what we're trying to do is to be close to the lived life, not the mental creations. And so I wonder if you can switch that. So you have a skill to stay focused on this image. I wonder if you can kind of use that, the idea of an image, to bring yourself into the breathing.

Like, for example, I've known people who have imagined, imagined, visualized the breathing as waves washing up and down the sandy beach. And that image keeps them right close to it so they can stay close and feeling the experience of breathing. I've known people who had created the image of that as they breathe in and out, they're a jellyfish. And they can stay with their jellyfish, and that image keeps them right there. Or maybe more inspiring than a jellyfish, I've known people who have imagined that they're an eagle. And in breath and out breath is kind of gently the waves, the wings going up and down. So that way maybe you can use your capacity for an image to help you to stay with your breathing rather than do something abstract. Does that make sense?

Over here. One of the things that came up for me was, I don't know if this is the intention, but for me the preference with breathing is to focus on the nostrils part. And so at some point it kind of, or at least the connection for me was made that like breathing is probably the like most salient way to notice the sense of self because it's kind of like where do we start and end and there's this idea of like, am I breathing in? And that was vexing me for a while, ironically, was a lot of thoughts. Looking for yourself there? Something, or like, you know, and I don't know if that's the intent, right? The breath is like the first point of contact

we associate with, oh, ourselves, something's coming in. And then there were thoughts of who's doing the breathing, you know, etc.

But at a certain point, though, I felt a certain peace because that kind of just went away and... What went away, those thoughts, looking for a self? The thoughts just kind of dissipated. I was like, that's really, can't really answer that. Fantastic. Something is doing the breathe. There's like a back and forth. And it was a bit brief, but that was, I don't know, that's what came up. I love the lesson. I love the last part of it that you stopped looking for the self, thinking that way, and things got easier, right? And more peaceful. Yeah.

So there's a way in which the whole thing about self, me, myself, and mine, where am I, who am I, is another layer, maybe not an arrow, second arrow, but it's a whole other reactive layer we add on top that isn't needed. And what we start learning, and you learned it today, that there's a whole layer of self-construct and self-preoccupation and concern that can just quiet down. And life is so much easier without it. In meditation at least. And that's one of the gifts of meditation is to have this wonderful feeling of being alive and present and calm. And there's no need to have any thought about me, myself, and mine, and who I am, and what my identity is, and what I should be, and all these things. Who's the true self? Just leave it all alone. Let the mind become quiet. Thank you.

Someone else? Thank you. Yes. Here, Nananda. Thank you. For me personally, I had a difficult time sitting still. This would be my second time meditating. And it's hard to sit in one place. I have like ADHD. No, I'm actually hard of hearing. And the challenge is that if I put my hearing aids in, then my voice gets really soft and you won't hear me. Or was I talking to you? And so if you're skiing, if you can. Yeah, pardon me. I'll talk a little bit louder. Sorry.

I had difficulty sitting still during the meditation. This was my second meditation, so it's very new for me. But I noticed when I truly relaxed all the muscles in my body and my brain, it allowed me to think more creative thoughts in the sense of like images would come to my head piecing together different narratives of a story that didn't exist. And I found that particularly beautiful. Yeah, it can be. So this is very interesting. So... It's a good sign. It's very calm. People get really relaxed and calm. As long as you're still alert, their minds get very creative. And they can do poetry, song, different ideas, different, all kinds of connections. And it's nice. I'm not going to think, you know, it's not a bad thing to do.

However, it's not meditation. And so it's nice to have that kind of contemplative time with yourself and relax and do this kinds of creative time. And that's an important part of life. But still, it's not meditation. And so in meditation, it's a little bit like this. There's a phenomenal view on the top of a big, tall apartment building. And you really want to go see it. You get in

the elevator, start going up like it's supposed to. But in the second floor, it opens up, stops and opens up. And there, there's this amazing party with all the most wonderful people you ever could have imagined being assembled there. So you go out and you have this wonderful time at the party until you remember some weeks later, wait a minute, I was supposed to go to the top. So you get back on the elevator.

And it opens, doors open to the third floor, and there's World War III, and you're going to fight the good cause. And it takes you a few years to get off that floor, and remember to get back on the elevator, because you're supposed to go up. And then the fourth floor that opens, but maybe at that point you've learned, stay on the elevator. Don't get off. And then you can go to the top. So it's like that. It's fine what you did, but you've gotten off the elevator. And so you've interrupted the movement of the meditation, which can... It brought you to the good place. It can bring you to better places.

I'm a little bit confused about that. Sorry? I'm a little bit confused about that because I was just trying to let myself be rather than exacting some level of control over releasing everything because for me that takes a little bit of focus. So maybe so, so maybe I misunderstood you but I understood that you were prioritizing it and getting involved and allowing it to happen. As opposed to letting it happen and recognizing it, then you come back to your breathing. You started your breathing again. So you're not kind of somehow following along, kind of engaged in it or entertained by it or appreciating it. It's a little bit too involved. That's what I heard, but maybe I was wrong. Maybe you were still in the elevator. And there's a glass window. What? Maybe I didn't get off on World War III. That didn't sound like World War III. So thank you.

Someone else? Any questions at all about the instructions of what we did? So my question, I have two of them, but the first one is about, what if you get an itch? Something starts to itch and you can't leave it alone. So is there a suggestion for that? Well, for a beginner, it might just be easier just to scratch it and just be done with it. But for some people who are really getting into this practice, then the itch becomes the meditation. And so you just bring your, like you would have spent the time with your hand, now you spend time with the itch. And no one has died from an itch. And so it's fascinating to see what does it take to just be present. And not give in to my aversion, my restlessness, not give in to my feeling I'm going to die. You know, whatever is there, just kind of, and just breathe with it, be with it, come back to your breathing, tap into it again, and see if you can find some freedom from the itch. And by the time the itch goes away, which it will sooner or later, usually later than you want, you might find yourself very present because the itch made it easy to be present. Right? So, but you

don't have to do that if you don't want to. You can scratch.

Okay, and one more comment. I found it overwhelming to do my full body. It was just like, okay, well, where do I start and where do I end in which place should I, you know? So I wonder if... For those of us who like some sort of order, do you suggest maybe doing a scam shoot? You start at your head and you go into your neck and you go into your shoulders and your torso and like that? Yeah, so for some people it works better to have a clear program and just follow from the top to bottom. And some people it works better to let it be most floating around, just be more random. And so your way is to have structure. Okay, thank you.

And... So to kind of gather it all together, the basic idea is to sit down to just to be present, to cultivate attention to what's here, as opposed to necessarily trying to change things too much. The place where you can do change things is when you first sit down, it's nice to do a little bit of breathing and relaxing. Just like take some deep breaths, relax the body, maybe have a normal breath, feel where the tensions are in your body, and potentially relax maybe for the first two, three minutes or something. It helps kind of the mind kind of relax too. There's a close connection to tension in the body and tension in the mind. Tension in your mind and tension in the body. So whichever one of those you have some ability to relax, it benefits the other. So for many people, it's easier to do the body sometimes. And then the mind will kind of a little bit start relaxing too if you do that.

And then the basic idea is you just stay as easily as you can, just being with the breathing. Okay. And being with the physicality of breath, what it feels like, the sensations of breathing, and be with a very simple knowing that you're recognizing, oh, I'm breathing in, I'm breathing out. This is breathing in, I'm breathing out. And that being an alternative for the mind having free reign to think whatever it wants, and off you go to the races, you gallop off and... It takes a long time before you wake up again from it all. The idea is just stay present, stay present, helping the mind relax and not wander off more. You're kind of training the mind to stay here, stay here. And you can just do that with the breath and just ride the breath.

We are trying to expand the instruction to include a wider range of our experience. And so if you'd like, you can now also, as it's just nice for you, start being mindful of your body. But this simple way I recommend is to stay with the breath. And if something more compelling happens, go take care of it. Go attend for a little while. It could just be for a couple of seconds. It can be three breaths. You know, you journey with that. You don't have to count, but just more or less three breaths. Just feel it for a while. And then come back.

Some teachers will teach that if something's really compelling, it can become the primary base for mindfulness, just kind of hang out with it and be with it, as if it's allowed to be there,

and you're just going to feel it in the body and let the attention roam around in that small area as you let it maybe roam around in the hand. But sooner or later, it'll come back to the breath when it's no longer compelling and when you feel like that part of your bodily experience has been acknowledged.

So this way, strong sensations in the body are not seen as distractions that are making it difficult to meditate. They become the meditation. They make it rather than the problem for meditation. So just bring your ideas to bring simple, very simple attention to it. And because it's physical, you can feel that part of the body like you felt your hand. With that kind of simplicity... It's not easy always, but that's the exercise we're trying to do. How can I get out of the way? How can I be simple? How can I let go and not my stories, my second arrows? Be really simple here with this. And then come back to your breathing.

And it's always, if you're not sure what to do, come back to your breathing. Let the breathing be a place where you kind of just stay with the breath maybe, and every exhale you can kind of relax, let go of your thoughts, and begin again. Come back to your breathing and start again. And over time, that whole thing becomes a relaxed rhythm, a relaxed journey. Breathing... body sensations for a while, come back to the breathing, settle in, then body sensation for a while, breathe in. And it's kind of like you follow that.

So that would be the simple instruction. If last time I recommended you meditate every day, if you could, for this course for 15 minutes, or maybe three times a day for five minutes, if that's what works better. I would recommend for this next week, you add five minutes. So you do 20 minutes or twice 10 minutes or four times five minutes. But try to do more because these instructions don't really make a lot of sense, start making sense, unless you're trying to put it into practice. And don't worry if you don't understand the instructions too well. That doesn't matter too much either. What matters is you sit down and try it. And you start learning and understanding what's going on for you and how things are going and how much you're in that, maybe in the thinking mind, how much you're adding second arrows, and how you can just be simple with this, simple with this.

And if you think the instructions, try to remember everything I said and it starts feeling complicated, just slow down and make it simple again. Just go back to breathing, simple as you can. So it all makes sense? Yes. So I'm happy to answer questions or comments now that we finished. Come up and talk to me. Nena has a lot of experience, and you can check in with her. Some of you did last week. And thank you for being here. Thank you.