

Thoughts Instruction

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So normally, and that's probably today, the instruction has to do with mindfulness of thinking.

And it seems a particularly poignant topic after having talked about strength, vitality, aliveness. And where that aliveness goes, where our precious vitality, where it gets poured into, or where it is allowed to arise and spread. And where can it spread through the body in such a way that there can be suffusive contentment, a contented body?

And so we know that all too often our vitality, our energy, gets poured into thinking. Sometimes the energy into it can feel volcanic. It's just pouring forth powerfully. Sometimes the energy is chaotic. Sometimes the energy that we put into thinking is so all-encompassing that we lose touch of our vitality, we lose touch of our basic aliveness here and now. We get lost in our thoughts, we get absorbed into them, and we don't even know. So distracted by our distractions, we don't know we're distracted.

And it might not be the best place for our vitality, the precious aliveness. Maybe there's another place to wake up to the energy of life as it flows through us. There might be another place to allow it to flow. And so one of the places where it flows, one of the choice points we come to, maybe you start seeing, feeling, that it feels more wholesome, more part of the whole here and now, to be awake, to be aware, than it is to be pouring into thinking.

And there can be a choice not to push away thoughts, not to be in conflict with them, but a choice to wake up more broadly into the wider feel, field of aliveness, of sensations throughout the body, maybe centered on breathing, or simply the kind of very special aliveness, vitality that feels more like clarity in the fine clarity, in simple calmness, calm knowing, to know thinking, to recognize that thinking is part of the whole and maybe to recognize how much energy, vitality is there in the thinking.

And maybe one of the primary ways of being mindful of thinking is not to focus on the content of your thoughts, not to think about what you're thinking about, but maybe how to know thinking calmly, clearly, and to know it energetically. Sometimes there's a place in your body that's activated when we're thinking, maybe with a kind of agitated thoughts, agitated energy, maybe with pressure and tension, and to feel the sensations of thinking. And sensations of thinking are part of the, part of our aliveness. Anytime you feel sensations, it's part of the aliveness. Or the sensations of thinking, pleasant or unpleasant.

Sometimes thinking flows out of our emotions, and it might be more part of the whole to be mindful of the emotions that are the support, the fuel for thinking, and to feel the emotions in the body, maybe as sensations, and at the middle center of it all is your body, present, attending to the simple aliveness and sensations of the body as they arise.

And sometimes as part of the body, the center of the body is breathing, where a ripple of sensations appear and disappear. Sensations associated with the inhale, with the exhale, being awake enough in the middle of it all to notice if the mind picks up thinking, gets involved in thinking. And if it's easy, let go of it. Let go of your thinking. And let go into the breathing body.

And if it's not easy or obvious to let go of thoughts, calmly know your thinking and feel the sensations of thinking, and calmly, simply returning to breathing again after a while. Might there be some calm vitality, aliveness diffusing your body that carries with it a quiet form of contentment? Maybe with the waves of breathing in and out, gentle waves, contentment through your body.

So as I said yesterday, one of the features or the taste of mindfulness is not forgetting, maybe not forgetting the natural capacity to be aware, to be awake. And as you go about the day today, what if you conduct yourself at the speed of activity? That's the speed of mindfulness. Yes, the speed it takes to not forget, not forget to be aware. And I believe that one of the primary things that takes us away, that causes us to forget to be aware, is thinking.

So how would you be here at the center so that you're awake enough, alert enough to actually notice that you're drifting off? How would you walk down the steps so you're right there with each step? And because you're not forgetting to be right there with the activity, you'll notice when the mind begins to drift and wander away and when you forget. And then you remember, how do you walk through the community hall? How do you conduct yourself? How do you live in your room so you don't forget?

And maybe as you don't forget, maybe the light goes on, the illumination, clarity of investi-

gation. And maybe with the light on, maybe you can be attuned to the vitality that supports all things, the vitality that is the upholding. And if you allow your vitality, the upholding, to uphold where it feels wholesome, where it feels alive in a good way, maybe you also feel at contentment. So being at the retreat center, at the speed of not forgetting, being at home, for those of you online, at the speed of not forgetting, thank you.