

7 Factors: Joy & Tranquility

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As I mentioned before, these awakening factors are factors that are on some level alive in us at other times than when they're fully mature. You know, and, you know, they can sound a little bit lofty sometimes. And if our mind is full of activity and some hindrances here and there, there can be a tendency not to consider that they're relevant. And so it's really important to really connect with the flavor of them, whether they're light or they're mature, you know. And particularly as the cycle of the, in this, in the sequence of one leading to the other, you know, from the little stream to the ocean, that kind of activity, but that happens even when the mind isn't that steady, even when we're not that established. But just very clearly, the steadiness of even a little bit of mindfulness very easily actually deepens into investigation, if we allow it to, if we allow it to.

And, you know, the quality of non-, I love the quality of non-forgetting, thinking of mindfulness that way, non-forgetting, non-forgetting we're here, not, not, not forgetting we're alive. So when we're curious and interested, we're interested in the breath, we're interested in what shows up, you know, it brings energy. You know, you see that at any time, you know, like I've been kind of dull or, you know, just in daily life, you know, and, you know, my mind's kind of, you know, kind of the bored side of things. And something catches my interest. All of a sudden, this body that seemed to have zero energy for anything, just like the energy rises.

And so as we, as investigation gets activated, curiosity gets activated, the energy begins to show up for it and meets it. And as the energy rises and gets energized, it becomes, you know, becomes happy. I love being energetic. I love that feeling of having energy. And as *pīti*, you know, it's interesting, you know, the way people define it. You know, commonly I hear a lot is joy, and Gil used "suffusive contentment."

So what is that quality of *pīti*, you know? And I know that there's this one teacher that I remember, you know, she was really struggling, you know, she'd been practicing long retreat

in Asia and, you know, she couldn't find *pīti*, you know. And she described it to the teacher, you know, and the teacher said, well, you're describing *pīti*, you know. You know, and she described this as rapt interest, pleasurable interest. So there's very different ways that we can experience these states. You know, we don't always fit into the same mold, each of us.

But *pīti*, I mean, it's not "but," but *pīti* has a certain excitement in it. You're very interested, you're a little bit excited, there's a little bit of an anticipatory feeling, you know, a little forward movement. And when that relaxes, when that relaxes that forward movement, we begin to experience tranquility. But all the other factors are still there. You know, we're still mindful, otherwise we know we have tranquility. You know, the factor, the mind is seeing very clearly in tranquility. There's nothing fogging it, so investigation's available. And the pleasure, the contentment of *pīti* is there.

And so as we enter into tranquility, it's a very alive state. And it's quieter than the energetics of joy, you know, of rapt interest. It's just a little quieter, a little more relaxed, but more fulfilling, just a little more fulfilling. You know, and, you know, the way I think about it is like, you know, if I'm excited, like, you know, I ran into a long-lost friend at the airport and hadn't seen him like 15 years. And he had been a really close friend of mine through high school and even after. And he was actually at the wrong place, you know, but if he had been at the right place, never would have run into him.

But, you know, I was so excited, all this energy came up and we're just, you know, jabbering away, you know. But then later, after a while, you know, that excitement, you know, can't keep that excitement. It's tiring after a while, you know, and so it quieted into this really wonderful pleasure, just catching up on our lives, getting to know each other, very happy, loving time, you know, but it was just a quieter, you know, quieter. So tranquility, you know, one of the places that I think about, you know, for myself, you know, when I was a teenager, there's a couple of years of my life where I went to yoga class every single day of the week for a couple of years. And each class would end with *śavāsana* or corpse pose, where, you know, a lot of you are familiar with corpse pose, you know, where you lay on your back and you systematically relax the body, just like in one area at a time. And it would be done, it'd be guided. You know, the classes I went to were guided.

And, you know, the classes are really energetic. Some yoga is mellow. This was not mellow yoga, you know. And so by the time I laid down, I was like, ah, you know. And so I'd start paying attention to the guiding, guiding, guiding. In the two years, I never made it to my toes. You know, I just fell asleep every single time, you know, but I loved it. I loved it, you know, it's great, you know, the sleep was great.

And so it was a real surprise when I started meditating that I could get that level of relaxation, that level of ease, of tranquility, and still my body is still sitting up straight. And so that was, you know, that was, the factors of awakening were there, right? The investigation, the mindfulness were there. You know, that's, you know, sometimes people relate to being tranquil like kind of like a limp rag. You know, the only way they can imagine being tranquil is like just lay there, you know. And so really getting that this level of tranquility is really alive, really alive.

You know, I've told this story before, but, you know, I was taking an anatomy class, you know, in college. And one of my close friends was very, very scared to death of giving a talk. And we were all required to present one of the muscles of the body and, you know, get the origins, insertions, all this stuff about it, you know. And so, you know, he practiced yoga, you know, so he kind of, you know, a little meditation. So he knew some of the tricks, you know, and so we really focused, you know, I was trying to help him, you know, okay, really, okay, you know what you're going to say, you know, and so now you're going to do the relaxation part, and he really focused on that.

And he got up there to give the talk, and he was really relaxed, you know, it was great. I was just really happy for him, you know, he had big smile on his face. And he just stood there, really relaxed, really happy, and absolutely did not say a word. He wasn't frozen in terms of like fear. He just was relaxed. And until finally, after a little bit too long, the teacher said, "Your topic was..." And, you know, and he continued.

But, you know, that's relaxation without any of the wisdom that comes from investigation. You know, it doesn't stand alone. It doesn't stand alone, this factor. That's the, you know, really the main point. So about the state of tranquility, you know, and again, one of the things, you know, it's a beautiful, beautiful state when it matures. And, you know, it's a profound peacefulness, a pervasive joy.

It's just everything. It's enough. There's nothing needed, nothing wanted, alive, alert. And it's an enoughness, completeness. And there's no desire. And that's what's really important.

A lot of people, including myself, when I learned about *samādhi*, about concentration, and I learned about the factors of awakening, in my mind, well, I can skip that one. I just want the, I want *samādhi*. You know, and I didn't particularly, I go, yeah, yeah, yeah, you know, I didn't really value that quality. And as I practiced with it, with time, you know, and I realized for me what the key was, the fact that it's a state without desire, where the clarity of the mind is so clear. So if desire begins to arise, like, let me go to *samādhi* now, how much, you know,

let me get there, you know, it's so obvious, it's so obvious, it just settles right back down.

You know, but that's, it's, it's a crucial quality. And I spent so much time in my practice striving so hard to get concentrated. You know, I was trying to get into the *jhānas*, trying to, you know, and it was like a real struggle. I was, I mean, really a long time. I spent retreats doing that, you know, and even when I wasn't, it was like at the back of my mind, you know, kind of sneakily wanting it, you know. And then when I finally allowed myself to settle into really a tranquility, you know, even for like a moment, you know, I would just see the desire come up, this little subtle desire of moving forward, moving forward.

You know, one of the words that I like to think of, you know, for tranquility that comes to life for me is a joyful tranquility. You know, we go from the joy to tranquility. It's like it has that flavor of contentment and joyfulness, but it's a quiet, joyful tranquility. There's a description in the *suttas* that makes it clear how essential this factor is to awakening: "Suppose a bowl of water was stirred by the wind, disturbed, rippling, and churned into waves. A person looking at their own reflection would not see the reflection as it really is. But if a bowl of water was not stirred, undisturbed, it was still, unchurned, they would see their own reflection as it really is."

So, another word that comes to mind with tranquility is there's a sense of relief, which I felt that flavor in the yoga class, you know, when I would just lie down. There's a certain letting go, a certain relief. You know, and we let go of desire, there's actually relief. There's a feeling of relief. So, you know, there's different ways of relating to the factors, you know, and as I said, these qualities are at play.

You know, there's a mature level of this really profound, beautiful peace. But there's also much, much, many other levels of calm, of tranquility, of serenity that happen all throughout the practice before it fully matures. And each one of those is valuable. Each one of those is essential part of the practice developing. The awakening factors can be seen a little bit as both. You know, the way we've been presenting it is like they arise naturally from the one before.

But there's a little bit of doing, you know, there's doing and not doing. And there's a little bit of doing when we're spaced out and we bring the mind back to be mindful, right? I mean, in a way it comes up by itself, but in a way we pay attention. You know, okay, I'm going to sit down. My intention is to pay attention. We're doing, a little bit of doing.

And just like in the *Ānāpānasati Sutta*, you know, the first two stanzas tell us to calm the bodily formations, to calm the body. It's a doing. You know, calm the mind. It can be seen as

a doing. But in a way, it's not doing, because really the way we calm our bodily formations is we stop tensing them. You know, we're actually doing too much, you know, when we're tense. We're doing a lot more than we need, so calming is actually not doing something but letting go of something unnecessary.

And so just different ways of looking at it as we practice. As the mind gets more settled, we do less and less. You know, in the first, in mindfulness of breathing, you know, the calming, the bodily formations, sometimes, you know, I've sat down and it's like, boy, that's a big thing I'm doing. You know, this really tense body, it's, you know, to become, you know, calm. It's like, it seems like, you know, it took me a mile walk at least to get there.

And, but as we get more settled, there's less stuff in mind and we do less. There's less to let go of. And, you know, it's in the same way with effort, you know, any of you who have run or you play a musical instrument or some other creative endeavor, you know, you know the feeling of putting out effort. You know, like for me when I used to run, you know, and it would always take a lot of effort to even get out there, you know, be cold and, and, you know, in the beginning, you know, a couple of laps were like a little bit of torture, you know, not too bad, but a little bit, you know. And then at some point, you know, something would kick in and it was effortless.

And I wasn't doing anything. You know, so in the same way, each one of these, you know, has a little bit of a doing side, you know, where we orient the mind in a certain direction, and then a natural way that arises. One of the, for instance, with equanimity, you know, we tend to think of equanimity as a state that arises out of meditation, you know, but it's something we can aim towards, aim towards equanimity. If I'm really caught up with something, with an opinion, you know, I can aim towards being equanimous about it, even though it may be far away, it's a direction of the mind. Yeah.

I always, you know, it was one of, you know, those of you who know Goenka, you know, it's one of his favorite phrases was "be equanimous." You know, and I remember when my husband did one of those retreats, you know, he said, you know, every time he said "be equanimous," he'd get pissed. He said, "If I was equanimous, I wouldn't be here." So it's an orientation. Okay.

So another way of considering the factors of awakening is that they have a balancing quality. So, for instance, okay, so we'll, so they're traditionally, they're known as like the, you know, mindfulness being neutral, the first three being energizing, which makes sense. Investigation is active, you know, joy is definitely, you know, energy has a lot of oomph and, you know, joy, and all those are very energizing factors. And then tranquility, *samādhī*, and equanimity

are calming factors.

And sometimes it can be really helpful to use those qualities consciously to balance when we're out of balance. And, you know, my common example is when we're having sloth and torpor, you know, when the mind's kind of sluggish. Sometimes the mind can be very calm. You have a lot of calm. And I don't know how many of you have had this kind of, it's a nice, pleasant dreaminess, and it's kind of nice. And the mind just kind of starts sinking into this niceness with no awareness of anything.

But, you know, you kind of know, I'm a little sloth-and-torpor-ish. And, you know, and at that time, you know, you can actually apply investigation as a way of bringing energy in. And not for the purpose of bringing energy in, but for the purpose of really getting to know what's really happening here. You know, the mind thinks like that. It doesn't know too much. It's not aware.

You know, and though maybe, you know, sometimes thinking mind can be really nice and really pleasurable, sometimes it's just dull and not interested. So we can bring investigation and that begins to balance all that calm. You know, same thing in the other direction, you know, if we're really restless, we can bring in calm in different ways. Like one of the things that, you know, people have mentioned, you know, in practice discussions, you know, is working with restlessness, you know, and the mind feels restless. It feels like kind of trapped inside this little head. You know, there's so much going on and it's like, you know, constricted.

And it just wants to go out and think, you know, go out and do. And, you know, one of the ways of bringing calm in is with the, you know, I know most, many of you have heard this, the image of wild horses. You know, when you put like horses in a corral, you know, they're really constrained, they're really unhappy, you know, and they're like, you know, kind of going up and down and, you know, and pretty, you know, they're pretty unhappy. But you open the corral doors and you give them a pasture to roam. And, you know, they can breathe, you know, they've got all this room and they're joyous. And even though they're still moving a lot, you know.

So if there's restlessness, a lot of restlessness, you know, there's a certain energetics to it. We can give it a lot of, not try to force calm, but give it spaciousness that creates a sense of calm. You know, there can be movement in a field of calm. You know, like I can be very calm with a two-year-old that's having a fit. You know, they're not calm, but I can be calm, you know, and in that same way we can hold a field of calm while a lot of activity is going on, even if it's our own minds.

One of the things that obviously takes us away from calm is our reactivity, you know, the hindrances. And it's so interesting to me how this has happened to me over the years, a number of times, you know, this kind of thing. But the story that came to my mind was I was doing a month-long retreat, and I was getting pretty settled. And, you know, it's one of those retreats where there's like five teachers, you know, so each teacher teaches, like every other day they teach something. And there's this one teacher.

And, you know, I was like really calm, really, really settled at this point. And she was doing a guided *mettā*. And every, maybe every couple of sentences, she would sigh very loudly. She'd go, "Ah." And over and over and over again, she guided the meditation the entire time, you know, with, I don't remember any silence. But I just remember it was the opposite of *mettā*. It was just total reactivity.

And my mind was like problem-solving, right? Okay, should I write a letter? What should I say? But it will hurt her feelings. Should I write the administration? You know, should I stay in my room? You know, just *papañca*, *papañca*, *papañca*.

It was so strong. I just, you know, I would cringe every time she did it. It was probably the, I don't know, I don't even want to guess how many days of her teaching went by with me going through a similar cycle. Okay, I'm trying to tune her out. Can I tune her out completely, not hear her? You know, all sorts of strategies I was trying.

And finally, finally it dawned on me, what if I investigate my own reactivity instead? You know, and of course, you know, I just started really turning towards my own reactivity towards her until it never became pleasant. But I was at peace with it once I was able to really meet it and see how I was holding on to my aversion. And the part of it that what was really interesting for me was that what kept me from letting go of the whole cycle was the belief that she shouldn't be doing that, that she shouldn't be doing that. You know, it wasn't that it was that unpleasant, but it was that idea that she shouldn't be doing that, you know, as a teacher or blah, blah, blah, whatever my, my just, you know, my thoughts were.

But, and so it can, that's why it's so powerful to really notice when a hindrance is up, when a hindrance shows up. You know, not try to bypass it by, okay, I'll inhale deeper, you know, so I don't have to, you know, hear that, feel that. And just to say one more thing about that is I did that in a number of retreats over different things. They just weren't so memorable for me. You know, just say one thing that's on my mind, you know, I was planning to give a talk on joy. I didn't realize it till yesterday morning that I was doing a different talk, you know.

So there's a part of me that's like, okay, you know, I'm not as organized in my mind as I usually

am. But that's equanimity, right? You know, flow with it. Teaching with Gil, I've really learned that I have to flow with it. You know, the importance of tranquility is that it's a state without desire. And, you know, it's funny with these, the three factors of awakening.

You know, I remember at one point, you know, being in a deep state of equanimity, you know, and asking my teacher, you know, well, you know, I don't care if it's not awakening, you know, it's good enough, you know, and tranquility was good enough, you know, why do I need to wake up, you know. And, you know, he looked at me, you know, with a smile on his face, it was Joseph Goldstein, you know, and I still remember he said, "It's temporary." Yeah.

But it is these states, even a friendly moment of where we feel tranquil is a moment of freedom. And the taste of freedom, you know, it's like right there, we're right there. You know, mindfulness, we're really mindful. There isn't a moment of mindfulness that is not a moment of clinging. A moment of mindfulness is a moment of freedom. And as we deepen the practice, it's an onward-leading practice, and it's the fruit of the practice at the same time.

As the Buddha said, the practice, the *Dhamma* is good in the beginning, in the middle, and in the end. And so recognizing that freedom now is something that makes the whole path so much more easeful, you know, and without that idea that I'm getting there, you know, you know, "Am I there yet?" you know, that kind of quality. So tranquility is a state without desire, and right now do you have, can you find a little moment without desire, or maybe a few moments without desire, or maybe even floating without desire? You know, and in all the striving, you know, for *samādhi* that I did, you know, it really affected me when my teacher told me that contentment was the precursor to *samādhi*, to concentration. You know, and so, you know, she had, this particular teacher who taught me that, you know, she had this beautiful, serene face and this beautiful smile, you know, and I remember, you know, every time I'd find myself striving, I'd see her face, you know, and consider what she said, you know, and yeah, it was really, really helpful.

You know, so Ajahn Sucitto said, "Tranquility is not something you create through force. It's the result of stopping." You know, so stopping, stopping tensing, stopping, you know, what are all the multiple things we do? It's a result of stopping. So any force brings us away from tranquility.

And then, you know, as we've been saying, the happiness and contentment that come from tranquility are the conditioning factors that make us ready for *samādhi*, for concentration, which, you know, unification of the mind is another way of talking about it. And Gil will talk about it tomorrow. So maybe that's all I have today, except for a poem I want to read you. And I love this poem, so it's called *So Much Happiness* by Naomi Shihab Nye, or Nye. I'm not

sure how to pronounce it.

It's difficult to know what to do with so much happiness. With sadness, there's something to rub against. A wound to tend with lotion and cloth. When the world falls in around you, you have pieces to pick up. Something to hold in your hands, like ticket stubs or change.

But happiness floats. It doesn't need you to hold it down. It doesn't need anything. Happiness lands on the roof of the next house, singing, and disappears when it wants to. You're happy either way.

Even the fact that you once lived in a peaceful treehouse and now live over a quarry of noise and dust cannot make you unhappy. Everything has a life of its own. It too could wake up filled with possibilities of coffee cake and ripe peaches, and love even the floor which needs to be swept, the soiled linens and scratched records.

Since there is no place to contain so much happiness, you shrug, you raise your hands, and it flows out of you into everything you touch. You are not responsible. You take no credit, as the night sky takes no credit for the moon but continues to hold it and share it and in that way be known.

So thank you, and let's share some silence.