Monday Dharma talk

Gil Fronsdal

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So the reference point for the development, the growth of mindfulness, the growth of this practice, is a biological reference point. It's growth. It's considered to be, in Buddhism, a very natural process. This practice, we're learning how to be in harmony with the natural process, how to support it, and it's a bit like being a gardener.

In fact, the word for practice in Pāli means to cultivate, like the farmer cultivates their crops. So it's a kind of supporting. A farmer doesn't just decide one day, "It's nice to go outside, and I might as well plant something now," and just kind of find any old place, put a seedling or a seed in the ground, walk away, and say, "I'll come back in three months, and it'll all be good." It might work occasionally, that approach, but generally, it's something people tend.

I used to be a gardener and a farmer, and it was a love affair with the tending, the caring. I was nurtured by nurturing the plants that we had, what we were growing, and tending to them and preparing for them. It was really clear that growing plants, growing crops, had its own timeline. Different plants had different speeds in which they grew, and some take a long time.

I love the story of farmers in the Middle East, Greece, and places like that, where they're old, their grandparents know they're dying soon, and they plant olive trees. Olive trees that are not going to bear fruit for twenty years, and they're not going to be alive anymore. There's this wonderful sense of time. We're doing it for the future. We're doing it for the well-being of our family down the line.

Some plants grow faster than twenty years, but still they take their own time. Sometimes, when you plant them, many times you recognize there's hard work first. You sometimes have to clear the land, break up the clods, soften it. You have to, they say, condition the soil. Sometimes you have to bring compost or manure or something to the soil and dig it in and prepare it nicely.

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For the farmer, sometimes that's the heaviest work: the work to start and get ready to plant the seed that can grow in it. Then there's the planting of the seeds or the seedlings in the ground, and there's caring for it. You don't start pulling the plant, you know? "Are you there yet? Are you there yet?"

Like a little tomato plant, just an inch high, just the seedling has grown, and you start tugging on it, looking under the leaves. "Is it there? Is the fruit there?" You're tugging and taking off some leaves in case it's hidden in the corner or something. You don't do that. That doesn't make any sense.

You're not in a hurry. You're not pushing it. It's a miracle. It's an amazing thing that, deep in the inner workings of the plant, it has the instructions of how to go from a little seed to a little seedling, to germinate and grow and develop. Somehow, out of its branches will come flowers, and the flowers will produce fruit, and the fruit will grow from green to red, and eventually the whole thing unfolds.

At some point, the fruit is ready, and it's good. We say that's come to fruit, it's come to completion. Literally, that's the metaphor that the Buddha uses for this practice. He uses the metaphor of planting seeds and growing until things come to fruit. The fruit is a beautiful thing, and so our practice, when it becomes mature, becomes a beautiful thing.

One of the characteristics of that beauty is that the fruition of practice is that we become imbued or filled with—we've grown and developed—a lot of wholesome qualities, and a lot of goodness in us has grown. There are a lot of things they talk about, but for people who are practitioners, some of the primary goodnesses or wholesomeness that slowly grows are the seven factors of awakening: mindfulness and, as some of you know, clarity, clear seeing, vitality, joy, tranquility, *samādhi* or unification, and equanimity. Happiness is high on the list of things that are wholesome that grow.

The capacity for wisdom is another. There's a lot of wisdom that can grow and develop in us. That wisdom is a faculty we have that we can develop and grow until it comes to fruition, and we have enough wisdom not to suffer. That's a pretty cool wisdom: not to suffer anymore.

You might not have the wisdom to know how to invest in stocks, but that probably is a recipe for more suffering. But you'll have the wisdom of how not to suffer, how not to cling or react in a way that you're caught or identified or contracted around whatever's going on. So this metaphor of growing and being patient, preparing the ground, getting ready, translates sometimes to doing this practice.

Understand that this practice, at times in the beginning—at the beginning of a retreat—there

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are times where it's manual labor. It's preparing the ground. It's getting ready. For some people, the beginning of retreat is catching up on sleep. We have a culture, a society, that probably needs to sleep more than it needs to meditate.

So many people are sleep deprived. There's a beginning where maybe, hopefully, we might need to relax some of the tension we carry in our body that we don't even know we carry. It tends to get highlighted when we come on retreat. Some people feel like the first day is hard, and it's partly because we're running into the wall of ourselves. We're meeting ourselves.

We're no longer racing ahead, looking ahead, doing things, and being busy. But we find that we are stopping long enough to really see what's here and not be distracted from ourselves. That's a powerful and invaluable thing: to stop, to pay attention to yourself, to be with yourself. Sometimes you see that in caring for other people. It's so valuable that you stop and really are there for them in their difficulty, and just make space for them.

Go for walks with them. Just allow them to be who they are, so they can kind of catch their breath and settle down and kind of be here. Sometimes it's much harder to do that for ourselves. I don't know. Maybe each of you can consider why that might be the case, but it's much more difficult because we somehow feel like we're supposed to be somewhere else.

We're supposed to be ahead of ourselves. We have to be. We're supposed to be perfect. We're supposed to already have it figured out. We're supposed to not have any difficulties.

We're supposed to be able to sit down and enter into deep *samādhi*, just boom, and there you are. But I think it's much healthier, and has a kind of appropriate and very supportive humility, to not be in a hurry in this practice. To realize that, at the beginning, we're just preparing the ground. We're just kind of settling down. First, we're just recognizing what's here.

We're just recognizing where we're at, what's happening. So I think of the first day of a retreat as kind of a deep check-in with ourselves. Don't focus on getting concentrated on the first day. Focus on having this super-deep check-in. Really, what's really happening here for you in your mind?

What's happening in your heart? What's happening in your body? What's here? What's really here? What wants to be here? What wants to be known?

What is it you haven't been paying attention to and seeing and feeling and taking into account, so that you really study the ground that you're going to till, that you're going to prepare? You're getting to know the conditions, the weather, the soil. Does it need any nutrients? Does it need compost? Is there enough water in the soil?

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Does it need to be moistened? Start seeing what's here. Just know yourself well. That's, I think, one of the big tasks of the first day. The second task in the first day is, because it's sometimes difficult the first day—with sleepiness and the mind which is busy and thinks a lot and won't settle down, headache sometimes the first day, restlessness—is to be gracious.

To be very gracious, very patient, to tend yourself. Something in you might really value, something you might need to find, discover, is that you're going to care for yourself in a deep way. You're going to be tender and you're going to tend yourself. You're going to love yourself. You're going to treat yourself as important, and you're going to discover what's here so that you can be gentle with it or supportive of it.

Because after all, on the first day of the retreat, maybe all the *dharma* that's growing in you is just a little seedling, and it's so easy to squash it. It's so easy to overlook it. I've had people go into the garden to do weeding who didn't know their plants. I thought they knew the difference between the tomato and a morning glory or something, or carrots and crabgrass or something, and they just pull everything out, or they pull all the wrong thing out, because they don't know.

We can be the same way. If we're too much in a hurry, we think we know what's supposed to happen. We're supposed to get super concentrated or super clear or super this or undistracted. It might not be a way of really honoring or respecting what's needed here. You might be inadvertently pulling out the wrong plant from your garden.

So the idea is just being gracious. "Oh, this is difficult. I have a headache. Okay, let's just be with that." Who knows why it has to be here? It's just one more thing that needs to be tended and seen and known.

"I'm restless. I'm anxious. I'm grieving. I'm sad. My mind is just thinking all the time. I can't stop the thinking; it's just incessant." Be gracious with that. We don't even know what we're doing when we're preparing the ground.

But one of the things I would like to say is that the metaphor the Buddha used a lot is water. We're sprinkling the ground with rain. We're letting the rain, the moisture, the sprinkler work to saturate the soil with water. What is the soil? It's our bodies. What's the water? It's the awareness that we have.

As I said this morning, Buddha used this metaphor of raindrops falling on the mountain. The raindrops are clearly awareness, and it's going to be the growing nature of awareness. Awareness gets stronger, fuller, more and more continuous, until it becomes this big river of continuity, this natural stream that carries us along. At a certain point, we become a stream-

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enterer in this tradition. We enter the stream and get carried in the current.

But we have to make the river first. How do we make it? The river is born through the rain on the mountaintop, and every drop of awareness, every little moment of being aware, is the drop. I like to think of that drop as falling onto dry soil. If you ever see new rain going into dry soil, it just gets absorbed into it.

However, if there's a fire nearby, the water will evaporate right away, and it won't absorb into the soil. So if you're aware of what's happening, and you're immediately averse to it, immediately attack it, immediately are disappointed by it, immediately make up stories that it should be better, or immediately try to say, "Okay, this is good, but now I'm going to really turn on the fire hose." "If I'm supposed to get all moist, wet, everything, I'm going to put on the fire hose and put it on full speed, and that's going to make it go quickly, because after all, I'm in a hurry."

"If I'm not enlightened in seven days, then I won't be able to go do something crazy afterwards." So the idea is to stay present very simply, and almost give time to let each moment of mindfulness have its time, have its existence, to settle in and be absorbed. Where is it absorbed? In the body.

Each moment of mindfulness, there's a kind of, in the awareness, giving yourself time for it. This is not speed mindfulness we're doing here. It's not like mindfulness, mindfulness, mindfulness per minute. The person who has the most mindfulness per minute is going to win. It doesn't work that way.

You want to give enough time for each moment of mindfulness, of what you know, to let it kind of—almost like you're on a journey. You feel your inhale. You're aware of your inhale, and you're there for the journey of that moment of mindfulness. It has a beginning, middle, and end. Feel that you're there.

Mindfulness is not just that quick. It's like, "Okay, here I am with the inhale." Maybe it only lasts the length of the inhale, but it has a kind of duration. "Okay, I'm here for that duration." Then the drop of mindfulness is absorbed into the body. Trust that it's gone there; it doesn't disappear.

Then you do it again, and you allow a time to sort of be here. "Exhale. This is what an exhale is like. This is the experience in the body of the exhale." Almost as if something deep inside of you is letting that register, letting it absorb, kind of getting moistened by it.

Slowly, the body gets more moisture. Slowly, the dry body fills with awareness. Then, at some point, it starts flowing. The flowing, like a little creeklet maybe at first, is the beginning

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of a continuity of mindfulness—not just a series of mindful moments—but now it becomes more like a flow of attention that you're being carried by or that's moving through you.

You feel like there's a continuity that you're living in: continuity of awareness, continuity of presence. Ah, and that can become stronger and stronger until it feels like you're not doing it anymore. The presence is just how you are. It's what you do. You really kind of feel that there's something very comforting or meaningful—not just the practice you're doing, but the practice that's doing you.

You're in the stream, and the stream is carrying you along. But to get there, you have a lot of these little patient moments of being sprinkled with each little moment of mindfulness. So a moment of mindfulness is not inconsequential. If you take it in, if you don't dry it up and evaporate it before it even has a chance to go in and penetrate, every moment is a moment of mindfulness that starts filling your very being with this thing called awareness or attention or presence.

One of my favorite verses in the *Dhammapada* is the one that goes something like this: "With dripping drops of water, the water jug is filled." That's too modest. So I redo it for myself: "With dripping drops of water, the bathtub is filled." So you just have to let the drops.

It takes time, takes time. But the more that you allow the drip, drip, drip of awareness to operate, the more moist you get. This idea that it's the body that gets moist is part and parcel of the tremendous emphasis the Buddha gave to mindfulness of the body. Matthew made a mention of this yesterday.

There's a whole section of suttas, discourses of the Buddha. I don't know, maybe twenty-five of them or something, maybe more, fifty, where it's very repetitive. For reading, it's very boring. But in an oral culture, where they're chanting and the practitioners are chanting in unison, this repetition has a power that pulls you along and carries you. You hear the drum-beat, you hear the emphasis over and over again, and it becomes like these raindrops that are penetrating and going in.

> There is one thing, O monks, when cultivated and well developed, that leads to the development and the growth of all wholesome faculties, all wholesome states. What is that one thing? Mindfulness of the body. Just as we consider that all the oceans of the world include all the streams running into them, so this body includes within it all the streams of wholesomeness of who we are. All the good qualities, our goodness, are included when we focus on mindfulness of the body.

Mindfulness of the body is not just a hunk of flesh. It's not just a bunch of mud that God

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breathed into. The body is integrally what it means to be alive. I love the idea that every sensation we have of the body, every experience that we actually directly feel of the body, is there because the mind is there. The mind and body are not so separate.

What I mean by the mind is, if we have a sensation in the body, there are nerve endings that reach that part of the body that get stimulated. The mind isn't just the brain. The mind is the whole field of the architecture of the nervous system, and that spreads out throughout us. So you're participating in this amazing event, phenomenon, when you're aware of your body.

It's not just a bunch of random body parts or something. It's the working and the play and the activation of this nervous system, these nerve endings that go everywhere. Part of this filling the body with awareness and waking up to the body is supporting all this beautiful mind we have, this nervous system we have, to come into harmony. It can't be in harmony when we're fragmented. It can't come into harmony if we're divided from ourselves.

We don't include all of ourselves. For the Buddha, the way to be inclusive of it all is to rest in your body, to wake up in your body. Here is where we wake up. In Mahāyāna Buddhism, they have teachings that awakening, full awakening, happens through the body. It's that important.

For me, in my early years of practice, I was surprised that the source of where this beautiful feeling of the practice coming alive in me was in my body. It was not a mental understanding, a mental thought. It wasn't like dry knowledge that somehow I read from a book or something I understood with my mind. Rather, it was a feeling of harmony, a feeling of wholeness, a feeling of tenderness, of love, of peace, tranquility that was beginning to course through my body.

It felt like a very deep expression of something within me that I didn't even know I had. Wow, this is good. How do we do this? How do we wake up the body? How do we use it?

> Because the Buddha says that this is the one thing that leads to awakening. "There is one thing, O monks, that leads to awakening. It's mindfulness of the body. There is one thing, O monks, that leads to the ending of unwholesome states. It's mindfulness of the body. There is, O monks, something that leads to wisdom. What is that one thing? Mindfulness of the body."

Then there are like twenty-five repetitions like that. Then, fascinatingly, that's followed by a similar repetition. I don't know if it's twenty-five or whatever it is, but now it really wants to

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make an emphasis: mindfulness of the body is where it's at. There is this idea that developed at a certain point in Buddhism about the deathless. Some people will pronounce it with a capital T and a capital D, the Deathless, like it's a real thing.

Not a few Buddhists down through the centuries have posited that this thing called the deathless is something that doesn't die, that transcends life and death, and that the point of practice is somehow to attain this transcendent, deathless place where we don't quite continue being alive, but we don't really die either. We're now in this deathless dimension of reality. So it's a transcendent dimension of reality, completely disconnected from our lived life.

> So I think someone came up with this sutta attributed to the Buddha. This series of suttas says something like, "There is one way to attain the deathless. It's mindfulness of the body. It's one way to experience the deathless. It's through mindfulness of the body. It's one way to grow into the deathless. It's through mindfulness of the body."

Again, someone wants to say, "Wait a minute, you guys. It's not transcendent. It's immanent, immanent here in this life. It's our lived life right here. It's through our body, through the lived experience."

We're not being asked to separate ourselves from the body or leave ordinary life behind. It's saying it's possible to wake up right here in this life through mindfulness of the body. Don't neglect the body. Don't dismiss it. This is the place where some of the greatest forms of joy and peace and happiness and love are born and grow and spread out through us and out into the world.

So we're dripping drops of awareness. We're slowly feeling it in the body. Rather than thinking that mindfulness, in the way that the English word implies, involves mind, think of mindfulness as bodyfulness. The full body is involved. Mind means it can be an intellectual exercise.

Sometimes we emphasize mental noting or the knowing, and some people think that mindfulness is thinking about things, thinking about the breath. There's definitely a mental side to awareness, the recognition of things. So I implied that in ringing the bell this morning. You hear the bell, and so much of the hearing is not a mental thought. The ringing is more in the ears.

The ringing is physical, but the knowing that it's fading away—that's knowing. But the knowing that it's fading away, that knowing fades away too when it stops ringing. It's gone, and now there's knowing it's not there. But this physicality of hearing, the physicality of

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knowing—so we're staying with the breath as we meditate. It's not a mental exercise from the control tower, but it's becoming awake, being aware of the sensations of breathing in the body.

That's where the bodyfulness, the mindfulness, is the seat of it. The seat of it is in the sensations. There's knowing that helps us to be present. Knowing is kind of a little drop of awareness, but the primary one that really grows is this: the drops of sensing. Oh, breathing in, the movements of the chest, the expansion, the pressure, the tightness, the stretching.

Then really feel and sense all the different steps of breathing. Feel how the inhale at the top switches over to a letting go, a release, a softening, a relaxing, a contraction, a settling, until you come to the end of the exhale. Something in your mind might know, "Oh, the exhale is coming to its fading away." Look, the exhale has stopped, just like with the ringing.

But we're sensing and knowing together, to really stay there and feel, trusting that this is how you're getting yourself wet. This is you letting, allowing, and being available to start to absorb, to feel what it's like to sense, to allow sensing to be rich, to take time to sense and feel. Then we do it with the inhale and the exhale. Slowly, as we sit with the mindfulness of the body, the body begins to settle down, and the body begins revealing itself to us.

The body, in a sense, is speaking to us through its sensations. If you've been carrying a lot of tension, the tension begins saying hi. "You haven't paid much attention to me. You've asked my shoulders to do a lot of work for you. I didn't ask for this.

"But all that anxiety you had, and all this striving and pushing—you don't seem to realize that this is taking a toll on me. There's a lot of aching and pain now, and tightness, and it's kind of locked in. Poor shoulder can't really take care of itself because you've been so—I mean, not really, but it almost looks like you've been dictatorial. It didn't have a vote. It didn't have a say in how tense it got."

Finally, you come here, and, oh, look at that, it's saying hi. Maybe it's asking you to care for it and try a different approach and help your shoulders soften, relax. Maybe all the shoulders need is time to be felt and known. The dripping drops of awareness are little drops of feeling—the pain, feeling the ache, feeling a tightness—and feeling a tightness without the fire that's going to evaporate that wetness.

Without the hostility or aversion, or the disappointment, or the shame, or whatever we add on top, that makes it hard for the simple work of the drop of awareness to be absorbed, to grow, to really have its time to take in and feel what's there without any complications to it. Uncomplicated sensing. Uncomplicated awareness. Here in the shoulders, or it might be in

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the back, it might be in the belly.

For many, for a long time when I first started practicing, my belly was always contracted and tight. It was fascinating to bring attention to that. I would relax it periodically, and I was successful for about ten seconds keeping it relaxed, and then it would automatically tighten up again, and I would relax. But what I didn't know at the time was that it's actually okay to have it. For the purpose of this practice, it's okay to have a tense belly.

It's not a crime. Nothing you have to make any big conclusions about. No shame. You don't want to do anything that evaporates and diminishes the value of this moment of mindfulness. You just want to take time.

"This is a tense belly." Keep it that simple. "Oh, now I get to cultivate mindfulness, awareness of body, through the tension." It probably needs awareness. It needs its time. Let me do that really simply, so that the moment of mindfulness counts.

So that it can be so simple and doesn't evaporate. It does not deny it. It's not, "I don't put a blowtorch to it because it's a crime to have a tense belly, and I don't want to." "It's so embarrassing at a Buddhist retreat center to have a tense belly, and of course you're not supposed to, right?"

You're so upset by it and make so many stories about yourself and tense bellies that what you're doing in that is not allowing this precious resource of water—your mindfulness, your attention—to do its wonderful work: to settle in, absorb, be present. Ah, really begin feeling. As we sit here with the breathing, maybe at the center of it all, with time more and more of our body begins showing itself, waking up, saying hello.

Sometimes it's not painful or difficult. Sometimes there's a wonderful feeling of tingling or warmth, or flow, or calmness, or settledness that begins happening. So the same thing with that. Be very simple with it. Just know it. Just feel it.

Give yourself time to let that knowing and feeling of it have just a little bit of time, so it can absorb. It takes time to really be present and allow something to be influenced, affected by it. Slowly your body is waking up. Slowly you're becoming more full. So this mindfulness of the body is key to the whole enterprise of mindfulness.

The way I was taught mindfulness in Burma, they were very explicit. It was a sensation meditation. It was primarily being present for all the sensations. Whenever something was happening, I would always ask myself, "How's this feeling in my body? How's this feeling in my body right now?"

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I remember when, in Burma, they sometimes had monsoons, and I'd be sitting in my little meditation dwelling with a tin roof. I was sitting there quietly, peacefully, minding my own business, and just from zero to sixty in a tenth of a second, there would be a river flowing down on top of that roof of rain. It was amazing how much rain would come down in the monsoon. I would immediately switch my attention into my body and feel, "What's just changed in my body with this deluge of water, change of humidity, atmospheric pressure?"

"Okay, I want to feel what it's like here in my body. What's this like?" If I went into a new room, "What's it like to be in this room?" When I went to *dharma* talks with my teacher, I would sit there and look: "What does it feel like in my body to be in his presence? Is anything shifting in my body? Anything different?"

I usually didn't feel anything, but there was always this question: "How is this here now? What's happening in my body now?" As opposed to sitting down to have my lunch and, "Well, I've got to eat lunch quickly, because then there's enough time to exercise a little bit, and then take a shower, and then come back here and have a toast and jam so I can have time afterwards to have my coffee, so I can go to the sitting."

All right? There's a lot to do, so I better plan ahead. If I'm going to be a good practitioner, I have to really do all those things. You're welcome to spend your time that way, I guess, but you're not getting wet that way. You're drying yourself out with that kind of approach.

By the time you finish lunch, you're completely dried out. All the effect of mindfulness has disappeared. But if you sit down and say, "What's now? I'm here with the food. What's happening in my body as I sit here? Am I hungry? Is there a desire to eat?"

"Is there saliva beginning to flow? Would I like to look at the food? It's beautiful. Look, I put it in a nice pattern on the plate. Oh, it relaxes my eyes." What's it like now? Okay, now I want to eat.

"What's it like to begin picking up the oatmeal with my spoon? What's it like to put the oatmeal in my mouth and chew it and feel it?" "Oh no, no, you can't do that. I have important things to do. I have to make sure there's enough coffee for my third cup of coffee." "I see people are getting coffee. Is there going to be enough coffee for me?"

You're drying out. Just stay, stay in your body. Don't worry about the coffee. Don't worry about anything. Don't worry. Just let yourself get saturated.

Take the time. You're cultivating. You're watering the garden. You're bringing sunlight, sunlight of awareness, turning on the light and letting things grow and develop and saturate. Until there's this continuity of the flow of awareness, take your time.

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This idea that all wholesome states, all wisdom, is found through mindfulness of the body is because mindfulness of the body exists at the nerve endings of our whole nervous system and brain. The totality of that nervous system is really wise. It's been designed to take in information so we can take care of ourselves. It's been designed to take in and harmonize and feel and be and teach us what is good and what is not good, what is healthy and not healthy.

The ability to really sense and know wisdom has a lot to do with really being connected to your body. Buddhist wisdom is found in your body, not in a Buddhist PhD program. I have some credibility about saying that, just so you wouldn't have to go for the PhD. My hope for all of you is that, believe it or not, it's a love affair between you and your body.

We have a society that teaches us the opposite of that. We have a society and culture and all kinds of forces that somehow want to let you know there's something wrong with your body. "If you pay me, I'll fix it. Buy this product, do this thing, get these clothes." It's all about external appearances.

What we're doing with mindfulness of the body is dropping away from the appearances, concern for that, and giving yourself the chance to feel the body from the inside out. The lived body, from the inside out, comes alive, comes awake, and becomes free. It has wisdom, knows what's most important. It's the foundation from which we can recognize some of the unfortunate thoughts that might be driving us.

The unfortunate wars we're fighting, or the unfortunate desires we're caught up in, or the unfortunate ideals we think, "This is how it's supposed to be"—all that dries us out. What we're trying to do here is let this inner seed germinate and grow and develop, this inner river to begin flowing and carrying us along. There are all these beautiful metaphors the Buddha uses for something very profound that grows from the inside out. How does it do that? Mindfulness of the body.

Stay close to your body. Stay close. Don't let anything convince you that you shouldn't stay close to your body. Don't be tricked to abandon your body, to forget your body. Be sure to bring your body along.

Of course you are, but be sure to bring the aware body, the awake body, the body that's always there, informing you of its sensations, its inner life, what it's picking up from the environment. The body is always awake. Join it. Join the way the body is aware. Participate in it.

Let each moment of mindfulness begin to saturate this body, so that it becomes a beautiful

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lake. The Buddha literally says this: a beautiful lake that you can rest in, swim in, that you become the lake. Isn't that nice? The body.

My hope for all of you is that you come to love this body when you love it from the inside out. From the inside out means from the deep inside. That's deeper than any pain you have, deeper than any pain that holds the pain, that holds everything.

The final thing I'll say, in my own—it's kind of all this is a kind of deep expression of my own delight and appreciation of how important the body has been for me in this practice over the years—is that as the body wakes up, as we have more and more awareness in our body, we begin having more and more room to feel more and more. We have room to experience more and more. As there's more room to experience more and more, we don't take the little details as seriously.

So, you look down at your hand and you have a new wrinkle. Well, that's interesting. But you have this whole big experience of being alive and content and happy, just being alive, so that your whole life doesn't get reduced to that wrinkle and what it means. "This is the end coming, and I better hide it from people. No one should know I have any wrinkles."

Stay in the water. Stay in the garden. Stay in this inner life. Let it flow from you, and as it grows, there's lots of room to hold everything: hold the pain, hold the sadness, hold the anger. Hold the joy. Hold the happiness.

Hold some of these maybe unfortunate thoughts you have. It's okay. You don't have to be at war with them, or try to fix them, or define yourself by them, or see yourself in those unfortunate thoughts. They're just all this too.

Now, what I want to really emphasize is to be aware of it. You can say to yourself, "What's really to be emphasized is the awareness of it." That awareness gets bigger and bigger. It holds everything. So may this mindfulness of the body support you.

It's doing it anyway. May you recognize that it's doing it. It's been doing it for a long time. Offer yourself to your body. Be awake. Be aware.

Live in the awareness that the body is moment by moment.

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