

2001-05-31: Intention

Tue, 6/16 4:48PM • 55:16

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

intention, inner landscape, people, meditation, motivation, buddhism, vipassana, person, practice, deepest, buddhist, life, breath, notice, act, activity, karma, left, sitting, conducive

SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

When Buddhism went from India to China, they translated all the Sanskrit words into Chinese words. And the two main forms of Buddhist meditation practice in Sanskrit are called or in Pali at least some of the same is called samatha and vipassana. Samatha is usually understood to be kind of concentration practice. And vipassana is the practices of mindfulness of insight what we practice here. So they had to find the Chinese equivalents of samatha Vipassana and they had no clear words that were comparable. So they came up with the words stop for concentration and Look for the past. It was very nice stop and look. This is where the chairs you know these two words stop and look. And, you know, it kind of makes it a lot simpler. And in a sense that's a big part of what we're practicing is stopping to look, stop and look and half the half of what we do in a sense is learning how to stop. Stop the incessant busyness of the mind or stop the racing head of our thoughts or feelings or ideas stop the kind of all the ways in which we get lost in our feelings are lost in our self preoccupations, our self being self conscious, and, and then take it click stop enough. So you can see clearly what's going on. And then mindfulness is the practice of seeing clearly. In looking clearly at what's going on. The way the way it's described, you stop it into Look, it has a kind of passive side to it. You stop, which is kind of passive, you don't acting anymore. And you simply look around or you watch or you notice you look. And when you look and can have kind of a passive feel off when we talk about just allowing things to be as they are and just notice how they are. And sometimes people who practice Vipassana mindfulness practice, tend to get the strong message that there's a kind of passive quality receptive quality to the practice. And as a Buddhist form Buddhism, that's only half the picture. And the other half of the picture is the, it's developing active qualities and developing strength, inner strengths that we carry with us not just simply a capacity to be open or capacity to be present, and receptive. Some years ago, I was listening to the radio, and there was a woman talking about she was a bank expert. And she was talking about how In the recent time, she said, there was a kind of a general trend, away from a tendency that had been in the 20s and 30s, or something earlier, the earlier tendency had been if you have some kind of physical problem, you got to strengthen yourself. And people would go out and they strengthen themselves somehow. And now the bias is in direction of, you've got to just relax,

you got to release, you got to go lay on the bed and just kind of let the body heal itself and not try and do anything. And sometimes from her point of view that was overdone in our modern society. And sometimes what people needed to do was to bring strength to strengthen themselves in order to have some kind of healing. And I know a friend of mine who had carpal tunnel disease, tried all kinds of various strategies for dealing with it. All it's all most part they're all kind of passive, you know, wrist guards, and then aka puncture and kind of physical, physical therapy there's types, until a physical therapist told her that she had to start with lifting weights. And for her particular form of what she had, lifting weights and building up strength in her shoulders, was what it took to help her with her particular problems, building up strength, so the active side of meditation practice and the active side that I want to talk about today, and more things we stop and look at and pay pay attention to, is a side of intentions, our motivations for what we do.

Buddhism is understood can be understood as being a religion, of motivation, focusing on motivation, and intention is as a really preeminent role in our inner life from the point of view of Buddhism, and attending to our intention, noticing what really motivates us what our aspirations are, learning how to have strength of intention and get behind our intentions and act on them. noticing the consequences of the very intentions we act on is a really key element of Buddhist spirituality. So I want to talk a little bit today about intention. But looking at it, attending to it, and being wise about our motivations. And part of the motive part of might have motivation to give this talk is that I've noticed among some people, a few people, a small minority, perhaps, of people in spiritual circles, in Buddhist circles, who approach meditation with a kind of magical thinking, where they think that if they just put their butts on the cushion, and sit there long enough, and kind of do their duty, spiritually, something's going to happen. And we're often often just simply stopping it this pretty transformative for some people are always busy. But some people kind of expecting something to happen to them. The grace of God the grace of the Buddha or something Come and just kind of do something and they're gonna be, you know, transformed and enlightened and happily ever after. And I know one person who spent years going on retreats, 10 day retreats, longer retreats and was had that attitude and was getting very bitterly disappointed in the practice because nothing was happening to her, there's no change. Because she was, she was thought she was just diligent and dedicated and put in her time, the rest would we do what happened on its own. There has to be an element of taking responsibility for ourselves and our choices, our mental states, that goes along with meditation practice. And if we're not taking some responsibility in the practice, then we're missing out on the big potential of what the practice has to offer. If we just keep it in the passive kind of modes. It's kind of looking a little bit myopic. So intention to look at our attention. intentions have a big consequence on our inner life. And the whole day very loaded and kind of loaded for well I Westerners Buddhist word connected to intention is karma. And you find people talking very glibly, you're likely about karma, sometimes these late days in the West, it's your karma to do that. You know, it's that happened to you because of your karma. You got sick, it must be your carbine, you discounted. And so, you know, that is where karma is going to enter the kind of dictionaries imagined in the West, at least the common usage. And in the Buddhist use of the word karma, the Buddha clearly linked equated karma with intention. And because your karma is your intention is the intentional activities you do effects your karma creates your karma.

So how does it work? Karma kind of a vague word it's been as people react against it a little bit negatively, because it's can have a whole large kind of association of almost a superstition, kind of there's this big kind of, you know, accountant up in the sky someplace, is, you know, measuring out your activities and measuring your karma and weighing it out. And then this dispensing justice, or boons depending on what, you know, how it all, all the equations work themselves out and if

I think it's helpful to look at it this way, if you have two people working in the same, say they are partners and they start a business together. And so they both have basically the same intention on the surface kind of physic you know, to start this business. However, the underlying motivation for why they want to start a business can be quite different to these two people, one of them wants to get rich as quickly as possible. And you know, within five years he or she wants to retire a millionaire or, at the minimum, at least, that's kind of poor if you're just a millionaire, and in some eyes, so you know, really kind of do well. And, and it's going to do whatever he or she can can to to attain that the other person, the other partner, what's important is not making a lot of money quickly, but rather, is to create a company where there's a wonderful sense of morale among the workers, where the well being a kind of sense of community among the people who work there in a sense that people are taking care of each other and helping people working there to bring out the best in them. So it's a very fulfilling personal place for people to work. And that's really the reason that person went into business in the beginning was to kind of create this kind of nurturing supportive environment for people. And so both those two people are engaged in this business together, side by side make many the same decisions. However, the background of the decisions is that they have a little bit different motivations of why they're making their decisions. Maybe over and over again making exactly the same practical decision. But in the background, there's a different wish to what they want to accomplish. Well, after four years, it goes bust. And four years is a long time in the.com world, right? It's like forever a successful business. So I just say, six months, they get busted or whatever. And,

and so

and so what's the consequence left or what happens to these two partners, the person who just wanted to make a lot of money, maybe just feels bitterly disappointed, you know, I wasted this good parts of my life, threw myself into it and, and wasted my time my money and had nothing to show for it and, and probably I should blame my partner because he, you know, whatever. He was just touchy feely kind of guy, and whatever. And so that Other partner might feel what else too bad that business failed. But in those four years that we work there, we had a really good company really good morale among everyone. There was a everyone is really grateful to work there. And we really nurtured a lot of people to come forward and develop themselves. And those people who worked for us, a lot of them now we're able to move on, get to work, work jobs elsewhere, because they were so well trained and taken care of here. And that person feels was kind of a pity that job ended. But it's really nice that I have, I did this once in my life that I really tried to make this work. And I feel that person leaves a certain level of joy and delight and self satisfaction for having done some kind of basically an active

service. So one, so because of their different motivations starting off, they leave the situation with a very different inner sense. And that inner sense, is what we're talking about in karma. What's that inner life like? What's the inner ecology like? How is it shaped by the motivations that drive us that inform our decisions that were remake I was many years ago, eight years ago so I, I was invited over to let Pleasanton is that where the women's prison is federal prison federal penitentiary for women, Fullerton, Pleasanton Fullerton, overwhelmed the other side of the day somewhere. Fullerton, there's a men's prison next door doesn't do them any good. And it's like when I went to boarding school in Switzerland, I chose it because it was co Ed. And there was you know that women were a mile away and there was this fence with this wall with glass on the top. And he's German separate in the yard. You know, I didn't even know that women existed, you know, and this is coed school. But anyway, so I went over to see the women and I was gonna do a day long meditation retreats for them and And it wasn't like maybe 20 or 30 or 40 women who showed up for the retreat. And some of them were there just to, I don't know, hang out, be tourists kind of look at a guy for a while or something. And, you know, these kind of kind of puppy no slouch against the wall listening. But there were a couple of women who, who really impressed me. And remember one woman in particular who sat kind of almost directly in front of me, and she sat up really dignified way and she had this bright, you know, live happy eyes and, and real intensity, we shouldn't meditation very intensely and to the kind of yogic body. So she's in the course of the day she told me that she had when she entered prison, she had decided that she was going to make the prison, her monastery, and she was going to dedicate herself to a spiritual life and do yoga and meditation. And the three or four years you've been there, she was, you know, she is radiating a kind of presence. And peace and joy, that very few people are outside of prison half. And it was very interesting to see, you know, she had made a choice about the intentional choice. So how she was going to live her life in the prison is very demanding situation that other women in the same room had not made for themselves. And you could really feel the difference between the consequences of that over the number of years. So the intentions, the choices, the intentions behind what we do, shape the inner landscape, that they have a consequence in our lives, that are different than the external causal consequences that we can often focus on or notice. So he's two business partners, they started a business the choice was to start a business, the choice was to make these decisions in the business and then it failed. And that's what we see on the surface. And if you look at the surface so that they were fail failures, they were calm failures and, and, you know, whatever, and maybe feel sorry for them or angry with them or, you know, whatever we feel, you know, they failed. Their business. But if you look kind of underneath the surface at what's going on in the inner landscape, then there's a very different evaluation that we see. And we can see a radical difference with these two partners. In the inner landscape, the motivations that they were acting, basing their life on, had a big difference in their well being. The person whose decisions lead to a sense of satisfaction, even though the business failed, is better set up in the future, to,

to have their to be guided by decisions which bring joy and delight. These kinds of things. These things are kind of self reinforcing. The person who was set himself up or herself up to be disappointed and angry and bitter, is in essence setting themselves up for not appreciating not respecting the power of their intention and power, the difference in our life can make It can be very small to notice what our

decisions are, and what the consequences are as a result of those decisions. Where does it where is it we take our inspiration from our sustenance from. One of the things that somewhat strange for Westerners when they hear about Buddhist teachings is the Buddhist teaching of rejoicing in your good qualities. Inevitably, someone's will think that seems pretty selfish, you know, to go around focusing on your good qualities and celebrating them or the bad in Buddhism, it's considered very efficacious to spend some time reflecting on your good deeds and good qualities, the good things you've done in your past, the good intentions you've acted on, and then enjoy and appreciate them for your happiness for them for that. And it's not meant to be a egotistical thing at all. Buddhism is a religion that says which focuses on what's not self, it kind of pulls the rug out from underneath egotism. But pulling the rug away from being egotistical doesn't mean you can't also then at the same time appreciate those good qualities which happened to be there. You can do it in a non egotistical way. One of the good qualities, one of the sources of of appreciation of oneself is appreciation of the intentions by which we live our lives. What are the underlying motivations, which motivate us. And the advantage of focusing on that, rather than worldly success and failures is that you can still fail and appreciate your intentions. Not only that, but because you were acting on your intentions, trying to act on them, you're strengthening some inner part of who you are, you're strengthening your intentions. You're strengthening various kind of the capacity to act on those intentions like strengthening a muscle. So even if you fail in the in the activity, Do you want to do? The inner life the inner landscape, which has nothing to do with worldly success and failure has been developed and strengthened. Buddhism Buddhist, Buddhist practice doesn't care that much about how successful you are in your worldly life. It's nice if you can do good things for the world and be successful at it. And Buddhism is not supposed to stand in the way of that. But Buddhism itself is not so overly interested in that. So when you fail, you know, Buddhism is there to accept you. But rather, Buddhism focuses on what that inner landscape is like, and what was an inner landscape as you're shaping. If the first businessmen who want to just make a lot of money, has succeeded in his business and made a lot of money, he might have had a certain kind of happiness from not having being wealthy. But chances are that the inner landscape was not improved. One bit because motivations of greed only got stronger. And reinforced because they've been successful. How are we shaping that inner landscape? What do we look at? What do we what do we base our life on? One of the interesting exercises is to imagine that you're, the anthropologist from Mars, comes to look at your life. And apologies for Mars can't look and see what goes on inside of you, you know what's really driving you? And so has to kind of make a really good guess. What is it that drives this person? What's really you know, what's really operating motivation in this person's life. So the person sees you know, that you come home from work and you flop in front of the couch and turn on soap operas and watch for four hours before you eat, frozen dinner or whatever. And suddenly, you know, that person really seems to have a great motivation for television. It's really inspiring. increases person a lot of, you know, inordinate amount of time watching and it must be a you know, great, you know, great benefits that bring this person or they notice how often there is self congratulatory statement you know you personally, how often you say something to a friend you know about yourself you make some statement about yourself that just basically it's a way of building up yourself in people's eyes, or the anthropologist might notice how often you rush

this, this person can relate to this person he was first he goes to church every Sunday, you know, it seems like that seems very important for the person because that's only like an hour of the week. They come to come here Thursday nights something it's only an hour and a half with a week and it doesn't seem very important to the activity overall. What the person spends is about at least 60 hours a week rushing. I think these fit this is a religion of Russia, Russia is so Russian religion and they have these special kind of authors you know, with a, you know, that helps them with the rushing and And so what would what would you think someone would say about you, if they saw you from the outside? Well, actually, it's a motivation that runs your life. And that's sometimes an interesting exercise because sometimes there can be a disjunction between between the intention we want to live our life by and actually how we live our lives. And that this junction is often for some people a source of of pain of suffering, because they want to live somewhere, they want to live a better way. But they see they're not doing that. They want to be generous, but they always being greedy. They always want to butt into people when they're speaking and, but they want to kind of be better listeners and they can't seem to do it. So in Buddhism, the focus is is starting to look into notice what is actually operating, what are the motivations and intentions what are the choices, that actually operating your life as the as you are right now and to look at that without any particular judgment that had been good and bad, but to look at it, because that's the starting point of understanding where we are at what is the motivations that run your life? You know, both in terms of daily activities, and also in terms of the bigger picture of what why do you have the job that you have those of you who work? Is it what what motivates you to have that job? Is it because it's just a good way to make a living make certain fiat money? Is it because it makes a difference in the world in a positive way? Is it because it brings fulfillment and activity you do? Is it because your parents expected you to work? Is it because you're afraid of of taking risk in your life if you weren't afraid of taking risk, you would have long since left that job and done something more interesting. So to look at these things, and then in that in that looking, spend some time evaluating what What is your deepest intention? What is your deepest motivation? What's your heart's deepest wish? I think it's very easy for people to live a busy life. It's very easy to live a scared life, where people are unwilling to look very deeply at what their deepest wish might be. And a busy life just kind of numbs out after a while, the demands of our life, you know, we're all kind of running around a lot. We don't spend very much time asking ourselves or checking in with ourselves, what is my deepest wish? When I used to live in monasteries, they would people would come periodically for a week or a month or six months or a year sometimes. And their motivation for coming to a Buddhist monastery was they wanted to find out what they were going to do with their life. They didn't they didn't know they didn't have a deep motivation, the purpose of living and they wanted to somehow clear the board get away from all their normal activities and normal associations, normal relationships, and in the quiet of the retreat center. Try to discover for themselves what is it they really wanted in life? What was their deepest motivation and wish for themselves? I think it's a very powerful exercise to every day, spend a little bit of time thinking about what is your deepest wish for the day? What is your deepest aspiration for the day for your life? I did, I did this exercise in the following manner for about a year. But every day, I would think I'll get up in the morning and I would think, if I knew that I had 24 hours left to live, how would I spend these next 24 hours? And that clarified a lot. What my what was important for me, because, you know, death is one of the great clarifiers of our

values. And so much stuff, you know, can seem being petty or unimportant or not as much value in the face of you know, in 24 hours, you're going to die. I did. For a while I did a little I did, I did three or four death and dying workshops from Buddhist point of view. And I did this exercise where you have people meditating. And then you'd ask them in the course of meditation. Imagine that you have you been told that you have, you know, a month left to live? What would you do

with that, would that be like? And then after a while, he said, Okay, now, take a deep breath and clear your mind. And now imagine you had a week left. And after a while, a day left, and then an hour left, and then five minutes, and then a minute. And then what if it was going to be now? So anyway, so I did that. And one woman afterwards reported what our experience was like. She was at this retreat center. We were doing it and she said, Oh, When we had 24 hours left, I rushed home so I could clean my apartment.

But I only had an hour left, I didn't have, there wasn't enough time to get home. So I relaxed and let go and boy, I'd never knew I could let go so fully and so it'd be, it'd be so present and suddenly I was present for the trees and the sound of the birds and the river nearby. And the way that I was I didn't know was possible. And because I couldn't, I couldn't do all those things I thought I had to do to kind of be successful or you know, Be a good girl or whatever. So sometimes, you know, thinking about death is a helpful way of thinking about what is your deepest intention for your life, what did you really most want? And then when you think and then there's a whole process if you do it regularly, that tends to clarify and explore and massage that issue of intention that deepest intention you might find when you start this exercise might not be very deep. And don't worry about that. You see what's the deepest one accessible to you don't judge it. And just hang out with that and live with that and maybe follow through on it. And then slowly the, in the process of working with it and practicing, there's a clarification and pure and purification of intention.

Many years ago, I had been practicing as a Zen student for many years. And then I went and did Vipassana practice for a number of years in Southeast Asia. And one of the differences between Vipassana and Zen is in the past. Now there's a lot of understanding about the inner world of meditation and the techniques of meditation and the mind states of meditation. There's a lot of discussion between teacher and student about what goes through going on with those things. And then there was next to none of that. Isn't my Zen center where I was at. And there often be very lengthy discussions with student teachers, but we talk about worldly things, you know, relationships and jobs and, you know, understandings and philosophy and stuff. But meditation was almost never talked about almost, if it was taboo to talk about your meditation, even though we spend a lot of time in meditation. And so I came back from Southeast Asia and I was at a meeting of a group of teachers from Zen center. And I pointed this out. And I, you know, why is it we don't talk about meditation with our students. And no one said anything. We're just kind of in character. And so you know, I, okay, so but then after the meeting, when the senior teachers come up to me and said, oh, by the way, I wanted to respond to you. And the reason we don't talk about meditation is that we approach the

same thing from a different angle. And that is what we focus on is intention. And we talk about in student teacher relation we took on a lot of time talking about what people's intentions are and how well they understand their intentions for their life with activities or doing whatever they're doing in clarifying their intention. And with the clarification of purification of intention, the process of meditation follows on its own was a claim of pure that part of the process is Buddha spirituality is a process of purifying our intention clarifying what our intention is

to Namaste beginning to think maybe I'm rambling as I go, Should I continue or should I ramble this way this okay.

The

So the issue of intention A lot of people are very concerned about judgments and good and bad. Am I good enough? Am I doing a bad or whatever? And in Buddhism, Buddhist Buddhism tends not to judge things according to catters, your good and bad. It tends to focus more on whether it's wholesome or unwholesome. And when you're skilled we actually the word technical word is skillful and unskillful. So rather than good and bad is a skillful to do that. Rather than say, that was a bad thing you did. You said that was a unskillful thing you did there. That was an unskillful thing you did. And when you say it in my field, what you're saying is it's bad, but be careful how you say it what your intention is, but but skillful and unskillful. Is it skillful? Is it helpful for the process of bringing you greater peace, freedom from suffering, greater compassion, greater presence? Is it helpful is it conducive towards your own well being? Or is it conducive in the other direction is it move you in the direction of Being happy. And so for example, something like, you know, when I used to live in San Francisco and come down here, it was a little bit faster for me to drive down on one on one than 280. But what was most conducive to my well being, I found out very quickly that it was more conducive for me to come down to 80. And I would have arrived a little bit better state of mind, then coming down one on one, even though it was a little bit took a bit longer. So with more skillful to go down to 80, what often so one of the criteria for what is skillful though, is what is the intention behind the action? Because intention is what sets up that inner landscape. These are ecology. And so when when people ask me, is that a good thing to do? It was a bad thing to do. We had a right thing to do wrong. Is it a right thing to do? The Buddhist response is, well, let's look at the intention. What was your intention for doing this? Because you can do overtly in the external world. Something that looks good something helpful for people but the motivation inside might not be for the inner landscape might not be very conducive to your own inner well being. So for example it's possible to go and help a neighbor out with some need some help they're sick and see you go shopping for them. And it looks like you know that you're doing a great thing. But really what it is is you're you want to be elected to be the local mayor. And so it's you know, you really won't be mayor you think a piece of great status to be the local mayor and everybody's gonna like you and if you become mayor then you can become local congressperson and if you could congressperson that and become a senator and eventually become president, you know, be really great the president this country and, and but you need to get people support behind

you first, and you're really driven to become president united states. So you need to start doing start small. So you go and help your neighbor with our grocery shopping. You know, and you really, you know, you couldn't care less about the, your neighbor really, but it looks good. And of course, you can go help your neighbor because you're really concerned about your neighbors. And you want to help and, and, and you're not as concerned at all about yourself what it's gonna do for yourself. So Buddhist point of view we're not interested in so as much in the external world, what's obvious meets the eye as we are, what's the intention behind what you're doing? Are you trying to build up your sense of self? He's trying to present yourself in a way that somewhat egotistical? Are you trying to get manipulate someone for your own good for your own benefit? Are you trying to run away from situations? Are you being motivated by your version, or by fear? To be asked to act on a version to act on fear strengthens, you're acting on an intention. The motivation then is a motivation of aversion of pulling back, running away. When you act on that, you strengthen that muscle and you shape the inner landscape in a certain way. One of the ways we avoid as we talked about is, is we shape our dispositions. Sometimes it's called the habit formations inside of us. We disputed how we dispose to act in the future is shaped in part by how we act today. And we need to take care of how we act today. The intentions we follow through on to create a better disposition for the future so we can act better in the future.

One of the one of the ways of understanding karmic consequences is that there's nothing more mysterious than you're creating certain disposition. So you tend to act a certain way in the future. Oh, this is another story I thought of telling told before on this topic. Some years ago, I was coming off the freeway to at at page Mill Road. It was calling going southbound to 80 and got off a page Mill Road and if you know that, that exit, there's a stop sign there and traffic goes the cross track of traffic also has stopped signs. So it's very usually it's very polite and everybody stops, find your way. And I was in a hurry, I probably always come over hurry to come here and teach people to relax and slow down. And I was a little bit not a lot in a hurry, but I was kind of pushing it more than I probably should have. And I came to the stop sign I stopped. And then I continued because it was a car coming. But the car coming had a stop sign. So a new car would stop. And so I had right away so I was going to go in and you know, do what I had my legal right to do, which was to control going well, the person didn't stop with the stop sign. And, and luckily, I kind of had enough wits about me that like put my brakes on and we missed each other just barely, you know, person who came right in front of me missed by an inch or something and reflected on that and it would have been Very easy for me to have gotten angry that person, if we had had an accident, legally, I think that person is responsible for the accident, at least from a legal point of view, that person caused the accident. They missed their stop sign. And I, from a normal kind of normal, I shouldn't say that. But from a common approach to living life, I would have had a right to be angry at that person for you know, how could you sit down to miss a stop sign or that the Buddhist analysis and same situation is a little bit different. It's not denying where the response kind of worldly responsibility and denying what their surance companies would do about it. But the Buddhist point of view is to look well, what was going on in your inner landscape. And I had to admit that I was rushing a little bit. And then if I hadn't been rushing a little bit, I would have been more attentive to what's going on with me. And I would have noticed that person was going to miss a stop

sign a lot earlier than I did. The fact that I had this intention, this motivation to get someplace quickly. Was shaping was creating disposition was shaping the future outcome was going to happen, it wasn't going to be a necessary cause and effect relationship, but I was tending towards something might happen if that accident happened from Buddhist point of view, or from a karmic point of view. I'm responsible for the karmic consequences of that which the insurance company is not going to help pay for anyway, but, but the inner karmic consequences, you know, I have to take responsibility for so Buddhist analysis often to look back at our intentions, how is what's motivating us, which driving us? What are the choices we're making? And can we make wiser Choices, choices that are for the betterment of ourselves and for society around us? This is a really key part of Buddhist practice and part of one of the things we do in mindfulness practice. One of the one of the functions of mindfulness practice is to help us in that study and investigation. To teach us the skills of stopping, slowing the mind down enough so we can see clearly. So he's not becoming familiar with the inner landscapes, we can notice the subtlety of motivation. So we can learn the skills of noticing the inner landscape in an accepting patient and friendly way, compassionate way, because so we don't meet the inner landscape with further condemnation or upset or whatever. So we're learning these skills and mindfulness to be receptive and accepting what we see and to study investigate. But at some point, in practice, you want to use your mindfulness practice, not just simply get calm and then hope that the calm is going to take care of your life. You know, if we could calm enough meditation then I can go into go back out into my life and just carry that with me everywhere and weft calmness everywhere I go, and everyone fall in love with me and now everything will happen beautifully, and there'll be no lines and safe way. But rather use that calm to help study what is it that motivates me What is it that is, you know, are the choices I'm making in the inner landscape as I go along. And then the last thing I'll say in this line

is one of the one of the very practical ways you can do this study is do your daily meditation practice. And then as you leave your meditation practice, continue with the mindfulness. Some people's tendency is when they finish their meditation is done that you know, let's go jump up and they grab their coffee in the newspaper and turn on the radio and turn it in the car and cell phone on the same time and off they go. You know, do you know and but rather get up leave your meditation, start your life, start the day, but do a little bit slower than you normally would. Try to stay attentive for the first five or 10 minutes as you get up for whatever long. Notice the first time as you leave meditation, that you in some way Get contracted, or some way started rushing ahead of yourself. So you want to be mindful have to catch the first moment. When you catch that first moment, then stop and look at what is it? What was it that motivated you to get contracted or to rush? What was the motivation was a choice at that moment? What was the values that you had bought into? And then look at that and say, Do you really want to? Is this really what you want to live your pace your life and is it worth it? Is it really worth getting contracted like this over this particular thing? Maybe it is you'll decide, but at least you you know more clearly, or maybe you'll see it's not worth it. And maybe there's another way of living. So I didn't mean to talk so much There was my attention. So, comments questions?

Sometimes when I go on retreats, I'll just have the thought that Wow, that's really negative comments that other people might have about.

Beautiful, that's very nice. It's very nice to be happy and be appreciate that it's, it's a really a fantastic thing to do any spiritual practice at all. And it is a kind of sign of treating yourself really well. Traditionally, in Buddhism, it's considered an act of self respect, having self respect is considered very important. And one way to get self respect if you don't have it, is to make practical steps that do it that there are signs of that or act on that. So do go doing a simple thing as you know, sitting every day and just you know, you know I might have to I feel self respect when you start the fact that you keep it up consistently over time is a proof that there is self respect there and strengthens it. And then the joy and yes.

We practice is sitting here focusing on breath.

Is there another practice when you sit in the meditative

the breath but on

what your intention is

sitting practice?

Yeah yeah, you definitely can you can spend some time, maybe the end of your meditation in the morning if you sit at home. It's been the last five minutes thinking about your intentions for the day or for your life or for the moment the way it works with the passing the practice is that because the practice itself In and of itself is a subcategory of other Buddhist practices. It is a receptive mode of practice, where choiceless practice we just notice what's happening in the moment as clearly as we can. And we don't just focus on the breath. We do Vipassana, it's very powerful to do that to stay with the breath. But we pay attention to whatever is predominant in the moment. So that might be the breath or might be feelings might be body sensations might be mental states or thoughts. What What part of that things that we can pay attention to that's occurring in the present moment, is our intentions. So as we're doing as the mindfulness practice opens up beyond the breath to be choiceless, be aware of whatever's going on. In our experience. One of those things that is always operating is intention. Buddhist psychology teaches that the intention is operating in every mind moment. It's always there. Buddhist psychology teaches that intention is operating in every mind moment. Alternatively, you know, it's always there. So, as we open up to whatever is happening in the present moment, one of the things we become aware of is our intention. So, for example, you're sitting here trying mostly stay with your breath, your mind wanders away. What is the intention that brings your mind back to the breath? The study that for example, because for some people, the intention is informed by disappointment, aversion, let's get away from that, by greed, by self condemnation by

striving, because people will jerk their mind back to the breath or pounce back on the breath, or go back to the brassica. I gotta get concentrated or, you know, that, you know, I'm gonna need to prove myself you know that to be successful meditator and there's all these kind of little subtle sub agendas going on. Even though such a simple thing is bringing the attention back to the breath. It could also be noble intentions. Oh, Which what I'm trying to do with being with my breath, is to really try to be present and relaxed and awake to life as it is. So I can be compassionate and present for my whole life. So that that motivation is there. As you come back to the breath. It means there might be there anyway. But it can be noticed. I know for me sometimes, that the intention to come back to my breath, might sometimes is is that the intention of aversion is present as part of that process. And sometimes it's the motivation of love as part of it. So intentions are operating, you know, all the time. Also, looking at our intentions, this is a little different topic. Looking at the logo for a while I had a practice of having a date book and schedule book, write down, you know, things I had to do for the day. And then I would sit down in the morning before I started doing all those things. And I'd look at them all those actions. And, and think about what was my intention in doing those things. Now, on the surface, the intention was to do them, you know, go to Safeway or whatever go shopping intention is to go buy food for my family and bring it home. What could be simpler, right? Is that the intention that is that the only intention that I want to have operating when I go shopping. And if I look at that list, you know, I don't want to just live my life, but he's kind of being an efficiency expert getting to the market as quickly as I can at home again, something as important as going to the market. I'd like to do it in the spirit with the intention, that that improves life in some way or other that I go there and I do it in such a way that, that I'm present and calm or attentive to what's going on or that I try to be attentive to people around me that I might meet and make a difference in their life or at least maybe least least the checkout clerk. My intention is to go and buy, buy groceries and see Can I in some way that's not too forced or too artificial. Can I sell Way, go down to the checkout counter and have an open heart to this person be available in a friendly way. And maybe the no communication happens but at least have the intention of being friendly.

So I would go through the day in the morning, sit down on the couch and look at all these things. Okay? Okay, shopping, Okay, I'm gonna do my shopping Of course, but the intention is try to be friendly to the clerk. And, you know, and or, by, you know, go through different things and see what the intention I wanted to bring with me to that activity. And because I had this intention in the background, occasionally I remember that and it would kind of shaped my disposition and shape little bit, not only how I went about doing it, but also enrich the activity. It made it into into something much more valuable than simply going to the market and buying something. That's which is kind of a not very important thing to base your life on. In looking at your deepest intention for your life, one of the Some people have, especially around careers, is the idea that there's a right career for you, that you find the right thing to do you know, your vocation, your calling. And there's some people find that and so then you feel like that should happen to me too. And there are some people who whom they seem to never find have a calling, there's never a job which is the job, but rather how they do their work is their calling, not what they do, but how they how they do it. So how they go about whatever job they happen to have, is much more important than what they do. And their whole inner life, the inner

landscape, the changing transformation, spiritual transformation is possible comes from focusing on how we are much more on what we're doing.

Anything else before we said any last things should be please

Like today I was hot and irritable and I, instead of sitting decided to go swim, and I started to notice how similar swimming in my laps was to walk through meditation or

or sitting, is there any way you can turn this into legitimate practice?

But I noticed even just keeping with your breath

Your mind is open.

It wasn't quite the same as being in the same room with

the

so

runners and walkers, all kinds of things people can do to clear themselves out and be present. And remember seeing a movie many years ago, whole documentary. And there was this guy who said, When I was younger, I used to think, raced motorcycles, and was really great to race motorcycles. But he cleared me out. And I get stressed during the work week and I go race motorcycle on the weekend, and I'd be really clear and present and calm and just empty my mind really quickly, you know, but then I had kids, and I didn't really have a time and the ability or the desire to do a kind of risky thing anymore. So I stopped but then I didn't have any meaning. So built of kind of releasing all the pent up pressure inside of me. But I had to find something it was quick. So he figured out that getting up earlier in the morning, just just just before dawn, and when it's still dark climbing up big skyscrapers. office buildings are being built who can speak in construction sites. climbed to the top with these little parachutes that they could have and then jump and then he jumped down to the city streets below and have a getaway car nearby. And then the you know, drive home and said it was really quick you know just jump in by the time he got to the bottom I was clear and empty.

The

I'm not sure what to how to answer your question your concern a lot of different activities like swimming can conducive to being very mindful, letting go of all the preoccupations and being learned to be really present and open. And anybody who does mindfulness practice, I'd encourage them to bring that practice of presence and mindfulness to whatever you're doing. So if you're swimming to

bring it there, if you're running, if you're working, whatever Do you do it in all kind of circumstance I think there are advantages sitting that are absent something like swimming. One of them is that

swimming can be you doing something can be interesting. You feel like you're accomplishing something, it's kind of engaged in physical way in what you're doing. So that a tie so that you're not really leaving yourself alone as uncompromisingly as you're sitting. And when you sit you leave yourself alone completely uncompromisingly and you do something that at least from some point, people's point of view is completely pointless and senseless, you know, you're not doing anything, you're not accomplishing anything. You're not even exercising, you know, building up your muscles or anything, you just, you're just sitting there and getting sore knees. And you know, what good is this? as big, it's a place where you kind of leave yourself alone quite thoroughly and radically and you're not doing any activity that In and of itself as conditioning or changing your state, we're swimming, it's kind of easy to change your state. But rather what we're trying to focus on mindfulness is not to change your state. But to be really Cognizant, really aware of where you're actually at. And the process of doing that you might get common open. But you want to do in such a way that you really learn who you are and what makes you operate and what the motivations are and what were your hang ups are working preoccupations are remembering mindfulness see that whereas if you go swimming, you might actually clear the air quite quickly. But you don't really see necessarily see. You know, the greed or the fear and how it operates. And mindfulness The idea is to really see those really clearly. And by seeing those things clearly become free. So I don't know.

I mean, you know, the breath is then used in a different it's not quiet exactly the same as that because you're just you're paying attention to each breath. But in the same sense, your body's using it in a different way. I mean, as you talked about, I'm

sure in the water in a stream or you watch your thoughts or your

go by.

There is preoccupation.

Yeah, yeah. So and for the deeper states of meditation, it's very important to do very little less and less. So I'm in the deepest states of meditation on accessible I think swimming, because there's an activity of the mind that has to be functioning that you can let go of when you're sitting. Also,

I thought but the thought the self liberated itself

So,

let us take a couple of minutes sit quietly