

# 2002-05-08: Concentration Week 2

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

concentration, practice, mind, samadhi, concentrated, breath, people, relaxation, memorize, breathing, develop, helpful, meditate, meditation, state, compose, relax, sense, factors, continuity

## SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

How many people here today who are new didn't weren't here last week? Okay, so we have any more Metta Suttas.

I think there's some of the table. Okay?

The only handout last week was it was a copy of the Metta Sutta, which you can pick up on the way out today. The expectation is a little bit loud today. We a little bit that's a little bit better. Can you all hear okay. Okay, you can put it down on the table next, on the chair there. Yeah. So the chair out there. So the only handout from last time is the copy of the method chant method.

Which,

if you're going to be in this class you have to memorize. That's part of the deal. And I thought you'd have you know, I didn't say this, but I was expecting him memorized for today. But when I mentioned that to someone they were shocked. How could that you know, till soon but some some of you might have memorized it. Does anybody memorize it? Who would like to recite it? For three lines? Yes, please register your mind standing if you don't mind.

This is what should be done by those who are skilled in goodness.

Let them be able,

straightforward, straightforward and gentle speech and

duties

contented Daddy's always

do a single thing which the wise regret later reproved now proud and demanding in nature. We shame, gladness and safety. May all beings be whatever living beings there may be, whether they are unique or strong, or maybe

the money or the current

media

small or short,

the seen and unseen

those living near and far away

those four in two people right off the bat

despise anything in any state before that, to see deceive another or despise any being in any state

through anger or ill will wish harm upon another

protects her child her only child. So, with a boundless heart she'd want to cherish all the radiating kindness over the whole world that there's nothing before that Three kindness over the entire world spreading outwards to the skies and downwards to the depths, outward and unbounded, free from hatred and ill will. Whether standing or seated or whether standing or walking seated or lying down, free from drowsiness

once you sustain this recollection

This is said to be the sublime abiding

by law holding on to

the pure heart and

with a clarity of vision

being free from all

Great, thank you so much. It's a little refining. But this the spirit was there. It was great. Thank you very much during that, and I love reciting it. Every time I hear it's like reflection for me when I hear the words or speak the words and reminded about some of the values in it. So wonderful inspiration for me. It's a wonderful thing to memorize. And that's one of the reasons or the main reason there weren't two reasons I wanted you to memorize it for this class is the concentration class. And so and there's there's a relationship between how we use our mind to memorize something and then to recall something from memory. And what how we use our mind to be concentrated and as you're memorizing the texts, pay attention to what happens in your mind how you use your mind to memorize. Not simply not only, you know, some of you might notice difficulties you have to stray thoughts and attractiveness and the judgments that might come in. But more specifically, when you're when you're actually doing it well or succeeding, how is it you're using your mind when you're being successful at holding a phrase or holding the whole sutta? In your mind? What is it? What's the, what's the sense the felt sense in your psyche? In your mind, when you're holding something like that? Maybe initially, when you first started to memorize it, it's kind of maybe tense and stressful. But as you get into it, and as you learn it, and as it becomes easier and easier, how is it you're holding it in your mind? What's the flavor in your mind? And as it becomes kind of second nature to do it, but still, you know, there has to be kind of focus. That focus that you're using the whole this sutra in mind, might have helped you a lot with how to hold your mind in meditation. When you want to concentrate in meditation, and because sometimes in meditation in a sense, you want to use your mind in a different way than how you usually use it in everyday life, especially when you're doing concentration practice. And my idea was by memorizing, that you get kind of a was a another way in to learning, there's a different way of using your mind, because you have to use your mind differently you're forced to when you're trying to memorize. So that's my hope that you do you study that and pay attention to what happens to you in the process of memorizing. And the second reason is that once you have something memorized, then it becomes a concentration device. And you can repeat it, and the repetition of it tends to focus the mind and concentrate the mind stabilize the mind. And there are times when if you're really agitated, for example, and restless, that's really helpful to have something memorized you recite it maybe even out loud, and some people hold on to that as an anchor and very desperate situations and really see a person through great difficulties. But even when you're not greatly agitated sometimes people find you just having something to chat at the beginning of a sitting as a way of kind of getting yourself concentrated. And then once you're concentrated, you can continue with the concentration meditation as you usually do it, or you can switch over to the past in a practice. So please memorize the text and I'm hoping next week, someone else will volunteer in the course of the five weeks, four people do it individually and then the last week when everybody has to memorize by then unless you you know, is we'll all do it together, out loud.

So, and the other requirement for the class for those of you who are new is your is to sit for 45 minutes every day during the course of this five weeks and It doesn't have to be continuous it can be broken up two sittings, you know, 2025 minutes if that works for your life, but the total should be 45 minutes

each day. One of the really important principles for developing concentration is that of continuity. That they come continuity of the practice is one of the really important factors that creates concentration. And that's often overlooked, because many of us will measure how we're doing how we're doing in the moment and decide we're not concentrated or not working or do something. But we think we have to do more. And there is something we have to do in applying ourselves to the practice. But the simply applying ourselves in staying in there in a continuous way is the continuity that builds something over time. The analogy for this used in the sutras is that of starting a fire but rubbing two sticks together. And if you rub two sticks together to sort of fire you For a while, then you decide to go get tea. And you come back and pick up your sticks and start again, then you say, well, it's time to go pee now. And then you come back after a while and moment again. So this is kind of tiring, I think I'll come back tomorrow, you're not going to build up enough critical friction, to create a spark. And the same thing with concentration with meditation, you have to have a continuity of practice, in order for some kind of momentum to be built. And without the momentum being built, it's very hard for a deeply concentrated states to arise. So in terms of daily life practice, you know, if you sit once a day, then it's sitting every day. And if you sit, you know, three days in a row, and then decide to go on vacation for three days, and then start up again for a couple of days and then off again, that on and off, again, is certainly valuable. It's always valuable to meditate. But what you're not getting is the benefits of the continuity of momentum that's created day after day, which is very, very significant. And it's kind of an visible in a sense, you can't you don't actually see how you're doing it. It's like a thing you're doing except you're showing up and just doing it and doing it.

And

the same principle applies on retreats, the continuity on retreats is really important. So it's a continuity is your practice which builds concentration. If you if you decide to sit for, you know, sitting, and then go take a bath and take a nap and then go, I'm really going to apply myself now and I get back and you apply software to the hour and then you go get tea. That doesn't really allow that the benefits of continuity to occur. And you might have tremendous willpower and dedication to keep practicing for those one or two hours here and there. But if you're much more gentle and relaxed about the practice at ease about it, but do it continuously to have continuity, that continuity will bring the power lot of the power of the practice

I wanted to read you this opening of this paper that I have that's written by Eleanor Rosch, who's a professor of psychology of Buddhist psychology actually, at UC Berkeley. It's an academic paper she wrote, it opens with this story. Some years ago, I was questioned by a visiting Tibetan monk, about how psychology was studied in the West. Carefully, I tried to delineate our fields of psychology, cognition with its sub areas such as attention and memory, personality, psychology, development, and so forth. He looked puzzled. I attempted to explain what we meant by empirical method. He seemed even more puzzled. I talked about operational definitions and described some psychological experiments. Suddenly, his look of intensely interested bewilderment turned to one of a Ha. So he said

You're saying that in America, people teach and write about psychology who have no meditation practice? Yes, of course, I said. And he said, but then how can they know anything? And then giving me a piercing Look, he said, Do you think that's ethical?

Is it ethical to study the mind without studying your own first. So concentration is one of the avenues into studying our mind getting to know our mind, it's a concentrated mind that has the ability to really see deeply into our own psyche. In fact, the Buddha said he kind of wanted the kind of imperative declarations he makes in the sutra, he says, develop concentration is very clear. It was really into the importance of developing concentration Develop concentration. For one who is concentrated, sees things as they are. We usually think of expression seeing things as they are as being the passionate practice. And it is in a sense, but he says, By concentration, then you can see better. Be possible is often talked about as as seeing things not having different kind of experience, but seeing your experience in different way. Concentration is one of the great aids to learning how to see things in different ways certainly see it clear what's going on. But it often changes the perspective of what's going on in our life. It happens over and over again in my own life, where I'm consumed concerned about something and kind of I feel like I'm just so many trapped in a box. I don't know how to get out to how to figure it out.

And then

I meditate and get still and quiet and concentrated. And suddenly there's a very different perspective of the possibility and the potential and what's really the issue at hand or what the problem is or What's not the problem after all, concentrated state changes a lot changes how we see things. Concentration is the concentrated states, developing concentration is probably much more common than is often realized. And many people who complain that they have no ability to get concentrated. Some of it's sometimes true. But sometimes we overlook how in daily life, there's many situations we do get concentrated. I think often children who don't have potential problems, can naturally fall into sometimes very deep states of concentration. And I've known people and it was my own situation. And when I started doing my meditation practice, I recalled states that I'd entered into as a child, which I've long since forgotten. So it's kind of returning memories of really good memories, a really feeling whole, whole and healthy and at home in the world that I experienced as a child. One of them was I Part of my growing up was in Italy. And when I was about 11 or so I took the public, the public transportation, the bus into town to go to school and the bus home. And we lived at the end of the bus route, right near the end. And I noticed that if I set it back back then they had the bus driver and the conductor sold the tickets. And, and then at the end of the route, the conductor would sit kind of in certain place every time and he would tally up how many tickets he sold in this ledger. How many one way how many round trips, how many children whatever he did. And I learned that if I sat right behind him and looked over his shoulder as he concentrated on the work, I felt I would feel tremendous sense of well being very peaceful, very hard, very still. And I know you know, and until years later, I get some sense of what's going on. I just need was great. And I would always sit in one place so I could you know, sit

there with him and He was my daily meditation practice. And I was kind of riding on his concentration or writing something there. I'm somewhat somewhat to be provocative in the past or, or tend to be evocative. I've said that the amount of concentration you need to meditate is not the concentration you have when you take the written exam, the DMV. I don't know how it is from all of you, but at least for me, that I'm pretty focused on taking that test, you know, want to get out of there and be finished, you know, my mind doesn't wander that much. I'm just much less than when I meditate. That ability to concentrate is right there. Sometimes Sometimes, you know, if fear is a part of that part of it, then the fear will encourage you also. But we back this how I felt as a child, the center world Being sitting behind them fostered a sense of being at home that sense of delight and joy. I felt very much in my body at that time kind of feeling of warmth, a sense of well being kind of waving through my chest and my shoulders and my belly. And points that concentration is more than just one pointedness it's more than just thinking the mind has to be one pointedly focus is the awakening or arousing of other factors also. And it's adding a sense of appreciation that it's more than just developing one pointed concentration, I think is very helpful for knowing how to get concentrated to begin recognizing some of the other factors that are get aroused as you get concentrated. And we'll talk about score that as we go along these these weeks.

My,

the word concentration is Samadhi, which we talked about last week. The word Samadhi is often translated to English as concentration. I don't think I said this last week. The life Translation of it is composure. They say this last week. Because the word sum in Samadhi is the same as our word con with. And the word bhi part is in its root means to stand or to pose. And so to compose to, it makes a very, very nice list of literal translation of the etymological origins of the word Samadhi, to be composed, and I like that a lot because composure is something you do with your whole being your whole body. you compose yourself on your experience, rather than thinking it's purely a mental thing of focusing your mind. Certainly the focus is important part of concentration, but it's a composing ourselves around that experience. And so much more of us involved than just this one mental factor of focusing. How can you compose your suffer and experience. In order to be composed, you have to pay some attention to what you do with your body. How you hold your body, how your body relates to what you're trying to do, are you composed in doing this? Are you settled and stable so the image is often used for a stable meditation is that of being a mountain, imagine yourself as a big pyramid pyramid like mountain. Some people like to use the word concentric, to be a translation of concentration, because it's bring things together into a center. So rather than concentrating where if you focus on one thing, concentric somehow many of these people imply or bring everything together onto that center. And then I've seen people then differentiate that with contrast that with being eccentric, and most of us are eccentric, and at least in meditation, you're being asked to be concentric. Not to be eccentric means you're outside the center, outside of yourself in a sense and the country centric than this. Everything's harmonized, everything works together. Everything is integrated together, the sense of integration and connectedness. And part of the reason why I think a lot of people feel at home, when they get caught, gets some degree of concentration. The word for one

pointedness in Pali is *eko* Gotha. And so I want you to learn that there's a different word for one pointedness than the usual word for concentration, which is Samadhi. Samadhi is a different factor than one pointedness. One point is one particular mental factor. In some of the later I'll be Dharma literature. They enumerate that there are 33 to 35 mental factors involved in getting into the first jhana first deep state of concentration. That's a lot of technical factors to harness and get together. Luckily, most of them happen without You know, are needing to organize or take care of it. But there's, there's many different things that come together to create a Samadhi. And *Agata*, one pointedness is one of those things, and some people emphasize it's the lead thing, it's the main thing. If you have enough of this *ekata*, one pointedness, it gathers around it, it all the other factors, it pulls them in together and like a magnet for the others if you hold that one pointedness but it can also work the other way. And that is if you can, if you focus or develop some of the other supporting factors for concentration for Samadhi. Besides outside of the one pointedness it's actually possible to enter into Samadhi without necessarily having a very strong one pointed focus. Some of the various states of Samadhi that can arise. One point is isn't it isn't it isn't the one necessary factor for developing countries The other thing is concentration or Samadhi. *summit*, our practice or concentration practice is very is different from personal practice. And I want to talk about some of those things because most of us here have been doing the passionate practice. And to really clearly see that there's a different practice might be helpful when you're doing Samadhi practice itself. You don't try to confuse the two. One of them is that when you do concentration practice, there are such things as distractions. When I teach Vipassana, I emphasize that when you do the first now, there are no such thing as distractions.

So you're allowed to have distractions when you do concentration practice. And which means that you have to be wise about how you relate to so called distractions, because what you're trying to do in Samadhi practice is in a sense, develop some kind of one pointedness on one thing, and distractions, anything that takes you away from that And if it takes you away too many times or too powerfully, it's very hard to develop that stability on this composure on one thing. So that's why, if you want to develop concentration practice, it's helpful to have to practice in an environment which is peaceful and calm and hopefully quiet. Hopefully, some way you can reduce them a number of disturbances around you, if that's possible, it's helpful to have a clean environment and orderly environment. So everything is helpful and supportive of the concentration practice. You don't want to be neurotic about this. You don't we don't want to you know, start getting earplugs and you know, and you know, I patches to cover your eyes and you know, shooting your neighbors or you want to, because you also want to be realistic. You can put yourself in a sensory deprivation tank and enter into somebody that way. If you really But one of the things you're developing is also part of part of developing concentration is developing a strong ability to develop some inner strength. And that inner strength needs to become stronger than the forces of distraction. So in the sutras, there's descriptions of the Buddha sitting in deep Samadhi states, and having 500 oxen carts passed by on the dirt road in front of them just where you sitting. And when it comes to meditation, he said he didn't hear it. That there's he so concentrate so focused, that he's not aware of the environment around you. Generally, when you do be posting a practice, we're not encouraging you to have that kind of, sometimes that happens to be positive, you're not aware of your environment anymore. But it's not put up as being kind of the point of the

practice. We're entering the deep states of concentration. that often happens, the environment, sensory input from the environment tends to fall away. So when you have a distraction, rather than, you know, ending your meditation, you want to then try to override it by developing a stronger focus, stronger strength and being focused. So take it as a challenge. And we'll talk more next week about how to work with all obstacles, and many kinds of obstacles get in the way of concentration. But it might be helpful for you to realize there are distractions, and do what you can to minimize those distractions within reason.

They're also prerequisites for concentration. I talked some about this last time and this time I'll talk about a little different angle. And prerequisites means you don't just simply plop down on your cushion and just, you know, throw yourself into getting concentrated. It's helpful to is prerequisites in terms of how you prepare yourself for that particular meditation practice. And the prerequisites in terms of The kind of understanding you bring to bear to the practice before you start it, it's very helpful to have some both for vipassana and for concentration practice to have some good understanding of what the practice is. So the first thing you need to understand with concentration practice is the value of getting concentrated. And we talked a lot about that last week, but you need to review that think about it really reflect for yourself, do you understand how valuable it is to be concentrated. And from that sense of feeling value and concentration, and hopefully their sense of inspiration. And the any inspiration is one of those 35 mental factors that supports developing a concentration, I can't support it. The second thing you need to understand is what the practice actually is. really understand what the practice is you're doing the specific practice, how to do it, what it takes, how it's done, to feel like you Feel like you just theoretically know what the practice is about, you've got some good instructions. If you don't understand the instructions and you ask questions. And when you sit down, you feel like this is what I'm going to do. Now. I'm going to really apply myself with the breath, I'm going to stay with a breath. This is what's all about just being with the breath. When other things arise, I'm gonna try to be wise about how to relate to that so I can get back to the breath as quickly as I can. This is not the posture practice, it's not about working, learning how to work with these other distractions or learn to work with the kind of forces that in the same way, they're trying to penetrate it or learn how to be you know, free of it, while allowing him to continue with concentration practice learning how to be free from things by learning how to develop a stronger concentration to basically avoid them. There's a lot more to be said next week about this but part of concentration practice, it's a seclusion practice, or sensory restriction practices. So it's a practice we restrict our attention because sometimes I'm just talking about a practice which opens attention to become unlimited. And why expensive concentration is restricted practice in recomposing ourselves on something very particular, as opposed to all possible things. But to understand this is what I'm doing. Right now I'm really gonna develop my composure on this particular thing, or their issues or their thoughts or their ideas, other things that I could be working on. I'm not going to do that now. This is what I'm going to work on for now.

And hopefully, understanding what the practice is give you some sense of confidence. And, you know, this is what you're going to do. The other side of that, it's helpful to know what the practice is not. And it's not working on your psychological problems. It's not working on great ideas. It's not trying to figure

something out. Not trying to use a lot of things. It's simply it's very, very, very simple task. And the simplicity of it is simply to get still and quiet and peaceful, composed on one particular thing, and to have all the different elements of your psyche, engaged together harmoniously on that one particular thing. So it's a simplification practice. As opposed to you know, so many of us are addicted are very strong programming to be working on all kinds of issues. premeditation and concentration practice is a reprogramming or it's breaking old habits of how we use the mind and learning new ones. And learning something very simple. Learning how to let go a lot of it's letting go just letting go of everything else besides the one thing you're focusing on. The other thing that's helpful is a prerequisite for Concentration practice is to appreciate your own potential to change, to change your mind, to change your heart, to change your psyche, and to have great respect for your own capacity to change. Some of us have no confidence that we can change. But all of us can change all of us have within us the potential to become awakened to be fully awakened. We have the potential of becoming freer, becoming more loving. And to have great respect for that potential. I think it's very helpful for developing a meditation practice. I think it's actually a lot easier if you come to yourself with respect and care and associate Can you find some modicum of respect and care for yourself. And it's an epidemic in our culture that people don't have that people have come to the opposite. They have respect for themselves, they don't they have to come with a sense of a lack of self worth. But if your your respect doesn't have to be for your, what you can do so much, but rather for the potential that you have, in the potential, it's helpful to think of the potential within you as not being personal. Because if you think it was being personal, then it gets tied up with you know, all kinds of personal issues and ideas you have. But this potential for awakening and love and compassion that you have within you, is not a personal thing. Every human being has it. It's not there because of your personality, if it's whether it's inherent in who you are, there's potential. So understanding the value of concentration, understanding something about what the practice is and isn't understood, understanding your potential for change and respecting it. And the fourth thing is to understand something about what might happen to you as you develop concentrate When we do vipassana practice, this means many teachers don't want to suggest anything particular is going to happen to you will say vipassana practice is not about any particular thing happening to you. It's how you relate to what's happening, how you see it. It's not about having developing some great state or getting a right state is just about learning how to be present for all states without choosing and choiceless awareness. Concentration practice is about developing some states is about particular experiences. So it's a very different direction for the practices going. So having some sense of what direction you're going in, is one of the things that will help you develop concentration. What might you expect, as you're doing the practice? what might happen?

One of the, if you have some sense of the various things that might happen as you develop concentration Hopefully, it'll provide you with some patience and some trust in the process. If you know, for example, that continuity is one of the keys to practice, then you might have more continuity takes time, then you might be more trusting and patient to what arises. If you know that concentration practice often works like to dislodge repressed material in the psyche, and suddenly you might be bombarded by all kinds of things. And you know that that's, you know, fears and angers and

memories. If you know that that's part of the process, then oh, you can be patient about that. So I was told this might happen. I'll go back to the breathing. I don't want to engage in it or think I'm a failure. If you know that you might have memories arise long since forgotten. If you know that you've been told you might start writing the great American novel or even great creative idea, then you may be more or less likely to be derailed by those it's okay just fine. No, that's might happen. I'm just gonna be patient and stay there. If you know that when you first sit down to meditate, first day or two and retreat to the first 20 minutes of the sitting or whatever, that there's a tremendous amount of momentum, from your daily life, of agitation of thoughts of concerns with things. And that's what you expect, but to have momentum, that, that has to work itself out of the system. And that part of it, just patience. You can't suddenly expect the momentum of your life to stop just like that just because you'd like it to stop. You have to be respectful of the momentum that's built up by how you've been living your life up to that moment you sit down to meditate, and then to be wise about how to practice with that momentum. Not to be patient with it, not to fight it, but your spirit and Matter of fact, that continue with a very simple concentration practice not being derailed by the fact that it's not working for a while you're agitated or restless. For While

concentration states are very susceptible to the attitude that you have, the attitude you're carrying. So you have to be very careful with the attitude you have when you're practicing somebody. If you have an attitude of defeatism, if you have an attitude of self critical judgment, if you have an attitude of pride, if you have an attitude of impatience, all those things have a very powerful influence on what happens to you, as you you know, in these kinds of states, and they can derail you quite strongly. So you have to have some sense of your attitude, what's the attitude, which you're practicing, be very careful with that can respect patience trust are very important elements.

So that's what I want. say for now. And what I'd like to do now is to have us sit again this time it could be more guided meditation. If you'd like to stand for a minute even sitting for a while

is there a speaker system working okay for people, everyone's everyone's happy with it. It won't be a long sitting because I have a lot to say. And to the class time is not gonna add up much to your 45 minutes. still depend on the class, fill your requirement for the day.

Busted on. So compose yourself. Take a posture, compose yourself with your posture. And then the beginning of every sitting. It's helpful if you have a setup procedure, some real procedures, some ritual away that you have to help you get settled to remind you to be here to let go of the tension of the day. I find it very helpful to take a few long, slow, deep breaths and the exhalation to let go of whatever tension stress that might be easy to let go of. Concentration practices are, I think of as being embodied practices. It's very important to be embodied. into the use of setup time or the beginning of a sitting to somehow rather embody your body. Take some deep breaths and feel your whole body as you breathe.

And then you can return your breath to normal. And since this is a Samadhi practice in Vipassana we say don't control your breath. If you find it useful, especially in the first 510 minutes of a sitting, it can be helpful to control your breathing a little bit, perhaps to breathe a little bit more fully than usual. So there's a little bit of conscious effort involved with each in breath and out breath as a way of conscious effort helping you to stay connected, being involved engaged. So the conscious effort to breathe helps center you on this phenomena breathing

in you want to feel the in breath as carefully as the out breath. the out breath as carefully as the in breath

and the operating word is feeling when you were switching from thinking to sensing the breath And then you want to develop as much continuity of sensing the breath as possible. So you sense the beginning, middle and end of the breath, the breath of the out breath.

If the word makes sense to you, compose yourself around the breathing. Compose yourself within your breathing.

As you continue a session of meditation on the breathing, chances are that your breathing will change as you continue sitting. And it's helpful to know to track how it's changing as you stay with it. You first sit down, it might be

tight or short or tense. As you relax, it might become deeper and folder. Then as you get more subtle that might become light and slow and very subtle. Might even disappear. No awareness, no sense of breathing at all. You won't be very patient not be ahead of yourself expecting it to be different than it is. But if you start becoming familiar with how it does change, then you can kind of track how it's going. Oh, now it's the breath. It's like this kind of that stage of breathing and then later, you know, now change to that.

Then as a way of helping you develop the concentration, you can begin counting the breaths, one to 10. If you lose count, start over again at one count, give a count to the acceleration. Make the count right in the middle of the explanation.

Let your interest the with the breathing. If you find yourself interested in anything else, let go of that other thing. Just be with your breathing the counting developers as string The Learning strength of letting go. So you can really let go of anything else.

And now continue counting the breath. And now, each time you count, give the count at the end of the exhalation. Just as it ends.

Notice if there's any differences in how you feel the concentration or anything at all, between counting in the middle of the exhalation versus counting at the end

and now continue counting But now count at the very beginning of the explanation, just as it begins or even just just the instant before How's that? How does how's that different for you?

And then to end the setting, in this issue you should do at the end of every sitting with a concentration class. He's to spend a minute or two reviewing what that setting was like. What happened? How you applied yourself what the quality of your effort was, your enthusiasm, your interest, not to be judged. Mental just very Matter of fact. So you can learn from your experience. So you can compare different sittings over the week and the weeks and see the patterns

so There are many different techniques for developing concentration. For this class, we're using the breath and the counting. And you might find it interesting to move around where you do the counting how many found that interesting differences. And so you can and sometimes you can use the differences for your in your in your favor. So if sometimes, if you're sleepy, for example, you might find that maybe counting at the beginning of the exhalation makes you more awake or simply varying, it keeps you more awake or keeps you interested. Or if you find yourself very agitated or very tense, maybe counting in the middle and drawing it out. changes how you you are, or if you're very agitated, it's very hard to stay focused. You find yourself keep drifting off a lot. You might find that Giving a county both the inhalation and the exhalation in the beginning helps you kind of get on track 1122 like that. But you can experiment with that and play with different ways and learn how it affects you and find where it's what works best for you in different ways. In developing meditation practice, both, especially for concentration. There are two factors. There's many factors involved, as I keep saying, but there's two factors I mentioned. Now they're very important. One is the factor or the possibility of relaxing, deep Samadhi state is a very relaxed state. And the other is to be alert. And we don't always know how to hold those two together. And we don't even you know, some of us are really attached to being relaxed, and we just go into a relaxed state and fall asleep. Some people talk. And if somebody state they may I don't know if this is true, but they talk this way that you want your body to fall asleep, but your mind to be wide awake. So there's this real, both these things are going on deep relaxation, physical relaxation, mental relaxation, but also kind of vitality and alertness in the mind, which really clear, crystal clear and awake like, you know, just, you woke up from a great nap. And these, these are two different factors. So alertness also effort, relaxation and effort applying oneself important. It's important to look at these and see how they work. Relaxation is a very important element. And if you know some of the signs of relaxation, notice how you get relaxed what happens to you as you get relaxed. It can be very helpful then to nurture nourish along the process of developing concentration Part of relaxation is loosening unnecessary control. And of course, sometimes relaxation is frightening for people, because they don't want to give up control. But a lot of unnecessary control that we give up. When we practice concentration there is some control involved controlling the mind to be present for the object of concentration. We were letting go of control of knowing, for example, or figuring things

out or manipulating or being right or, or always, you know, a lot of different things we let go of unnecessary control. Understanding how you get stressed, and how you hold stress in your body in your mind, your relationship to stress can be helpful. Some people are really attached to their stress. Because some people think their stress is what gets them by in life. They're more confident, more capable in their work or in their life or the people they think that people will like them more if they're kind of hyped up. Some people people rely on stress to avoid facing themselves. Because if you're really always hyped up and kind of, you know, stressed out, you don't have to kind of turn the attention back and really see deeply what's going on. Because sometimes stressful states are often outwardly directed, what has to be done. We need to acknowledge a stress that we carry with us. We pass the practice, of course, is very helpful.

If you've had a strong Vipassana practice, for during concentration, because you have the skills of seeing clearly what's there, but you don't understand that our stress and sometimes understand the source of it, and their stand, how it gets relaxed, how it gets released. As we meditate, the process of relaxing, I carry stress in my shoulders. You know, it's the burden of my sense of responsibility that I carry with me, right. And I sit down sometimes to meditate and one of the things I'm aware of is how I carry it in my shoulders, not aware sometimes going around, being responsible kind of guy But when I sit down to meditate, and I'm aware of it, and one of the things that happens is that begins to relax and releases. And I kind of know that that's part of the deal. And I don't get upset with myself that I'm tensing aching. They're just part of the deal. And I wish I could flip my white life wiser. But somehow that's one that still catches me. And, and luckily, I meditate. But there are signs of relaxation. And it's helpful I think, I think might be helpful if you know some of the signs. What happens to you as you relax, and you begin tracking what happens to you as you get concentrated, helps a concentration process. One of the things that happens sometimes is the body starts feeling heavier. Sometimes it feels lighter. A lightness it's inner heaviness it's in sometimes when there's a lot of adrenaline flowing system or a lot of stress. The body can griddle has a way of kind of lifting a person up and sometimes when the adrenalin falls away The body kind of comes back to Earth. Sometimes the body feels heavier, the shoulders feel heavier as we relax. Sometimes as a relaxation deepens, the sense of lightness in the body begins to occur. Sometimes it goes from heaviness to lightness, sometimes we lightness to happiness, but the sense of weight in the body, simple sense of solidity in the body shifts and changes as you develop concentration. And sometimes in the beginning stages of concentration, I find my body feels very, very home in it, but it tends to feel very, very solid. As the contractions deepens, my sense of a body becomes almost a theory or sometimes even disappears. There can also be tingling and warmth on the skin that occurs. The You know, there's a classic idea that when you're stressed, sometimes the blood leaves the extremities, and when you relax, the blood goes back to your fingers, for example, and that you can you can raise the temperature of your hand by relaxing and so sometimes You feel that warmth spreading through your body. And some people, some people get cold when they meditate, so they shouldn't feel bad. That's just the way I don't know why that is. But some people find they get warmer, and when they meditate and just recognize that, Oh, this is a sign of relaxation, things are going along that way. One of the interesting things that can happen as you relax is that things get worse. and acknowledge tensions get revealed. And you can start feeling

aches and pains. And to know that that's part of the deal to know that when you sit down, I know that I'm often can feel the tension in my shoulders. Oh, that's just part of the deal. I'm not, you know, meditation is not making me worse, is like suddenly I'm getting tense my shoulder because I meditate if revealing attention is already there that I'm unconscious of. And there's a whole series of tensions that reveal themselves as we met it today. And to just be very known, that's the case and be very patient with that very accepting of it. Oh, it's there because of causes and conditions in the past, it's there because of the way I've carried myself around the ground in life. I can't expect it to go away just like that. But it can go away as I continue practicing, it will begin to unravel. And the other is, which I talked about in the in the setting is your breathing itself can change as you get more relaxed. And to track how it's changing also can help the process of developing concentration to know how your breath is and how you speak breath. breath is maybe you know, you normally carry a short tight breath, fast. The know as you relax, that it starts getting longer, softer, more relaxed, more open, deeper than to know that maybe after a certain point, it goes in the opposite direction. Again, it gets very short, very deeply concentrated state the best gets more more subtle and sometimes very, very short. or very little movements goes on there. hardly notice any movement at all. You're not you don't have a deep, you're really deep a salon breath anymore. You have this very tight little, little movement goes on. And sometimes the breath seems to stop entirely other signs of relaxation,

or some some people will see colors. As they develop into get concentrated. Some people will see images, some of them develop a great sense of space of being very spacious. some sense of lightness, great sense of physical bodily lightness. Some people feel very grounded. Some people feel increasingly at home, in themselves as many, many different ways you can feel. But there is a change that takes place as you go into a Samadhi state as you get concentrated. And to be a little bit Cognizant and aware of those changes and be wise in relationship to them to anticipate them. Don't be upset if they're not they're not happening quickly enough for you, but to notice, when they do occur to notice them, appreciate them. I believe the appreciation and noticing of them and tracking of them helps the interest of staying focused and developing concentration. It helps keep you on track. It's kind of like using a biofeedback system where you use this to feed back or to keep you on track and to do what you can do to doing what you're doing. So there's a lot of relaxation that can happen when you meditate. Some people think of meditation as the place they're going to relax, they use that for that purposes. Nothing, nothing wrong with that, where I would recommend to all of you, if it's possible, try to relax before you meditate. It's you know, it's really good if you're already relaxed, but time you sit down to meditate. And then you might say, Why should I meditate then there's much more beneficial things you can get from meditation and just relaxing. So if you even you can just take five or 10 minutes to sit and sip a cup of tea or do something kind of to unwind. Do something so you can You sit down to meditate, you kind of prepared and kind of come with a more relaxed disposition, it probably can help. Now you can have too much relaxation. Mostly what you can have is too much relaxation. It's not balanced with effort. And one of the symptoms of too much relaxation is what sometimes in meditation we'll call the sinking mind. There's two kind of opposite directions of the mind sometimes called sinking mind and drifting mind. And the thinking mind is a mind that's gotten though, and kind of cloudy, not really engaged. At first, the sinking mind can be very subtle, just a little bit, you can be

concentrated, you're very present for your breath or whatever. And then after a while, the your effort is not so strong and effort starts getting dull, and you're the clarity of the breath starts getting a little bit duller and fainter, just a little bit, and you can still kind of stay present, but things are a little bit taller and easier. And because often, when you're concentrated often it's more of a pleasant state. You must congratulate congratulating yourself but how well it's going with the mind is actually getting old and older the mind is sinking.

So you want to track that you want to track the vitality of the mind, vitality, the effort that you're making. So you can be balanced, develop to help sense Samadhi the mind has to be balanced, not too far, One Direction not too far the other direction, not sluggish, not agitated, not hesitant, not striving, not though, not agitated, I guess. Not. So when you notice a sinking mind, you want to adjust for that. So again, vipassana practice, we don't usually do adjustments so much. We talked about just seeing more clearly. When you do concentration practice, you adjust constantly, to keep you in that balance and keep you going on track. And so you can adjust your body if that if you're getting too relaxed or too sleepy or dull. You can sit up straighter develop kind of more energy in your body somehow. Be more kind of intent physically. You can adjust your breathing. You can breathe more deeply to get more energy back in. You can read sometimes if you relax the abdomen more, sometimes that can bring actually paradoxically more energy, more alertness. Sometimes, a deeper, more relaxed breath will alert the mind. Change the place where you focus on the breathing. Something like the way we did accounting for example, or maybe if you if you tend to follow the breath in the stomach and your mind is getting dull or sleepy. Maybe move the breath up to your your top of your chest or to your nostrils. Moving where you pay attention to the breath can change the dullness of the mind you can wake up Mind are getting sharper a little bit. Sometimes if people need to relax more, being aware of the breath lower in the body can help food relaxation higher in the body can help with a little more alertness. So you can experiment with this. How is it for you? How can you adjust the breathing. Some people who meditate will use the breath to soothe themselves. And this is the positive practice practitioners do this too, and it gets in the way of the passionate practice. But if you're using the breath to soothe yourself, it's very good. If you're tense. It's a great good practice if you're tense. But if you're already somewhat relaxed, if you keep that up as a habit, you're gonna start putting yourself to sleep and the minds gonna get dull. And you have to be very aware. Are you how you're connecting to the breathing? Are you leaning into it in such a way that you kind of being kind of? soothed by this best word I can come up with suid by nerd nurtured by something you're trying to try Hang in there really relaxation, you have to rest with a breath. If that's the case and your mind is getting dull, if it's sinking, stop doing that. Otherwise you keep you know, just doing putting yourself more and more into sleep. So adjust your body, adjust your breath. And you can also adjust your mind, your mental state, you can inspire yourself, you might think of something that's inspiring. You could remind yourself to be patient, you can have wisdom, clear understanding what's going on. You can, you know, bring mental energy into situation, apply your mind more fully. It is a mental focus that's going on with somebody. It's one of the things going on so you can you put more energy into the mental focus, be more mental effort into involved, so change your mind also, it's fine to do that when you do Samadhi practice. The other thing we do is probably go over 10 minutes again, like we did last time it's not nine o'clock. Drifting, the mind

gets slightly overexcited, or it gets a bit putting too much effort into the practice. And so you want to be very attentive is the mind beginning to drift into thoughts a lot or the mind beginning to get distracted a lot. Then you want to bring it back into focus. You want to relax. Sometimes when the mind is drifting a lot, you want to relax more, then you want to maybe soothe yourself with the breathing, rest with the breath. Sometimes developing more receptive attitude is helpful with a thrifty mind, relax and become very open and receptive to the breathing. Whatever your object of meditation is, again, you want to adjust yourself to stress too much effort, it gets in the way too little gets in the way. If you're too tense, it gets in the way, if you're too relaxed, it gets in the way. If the mind is drifting, it keeps you know, you can stick your mind sometimes the mind you get into concentrated state, the sense of well being that sets in and then people get complacent, and then the mind drifts all too easily. You're gonna be careful, the minuses are drifting and you stay in focus, you stay engaged and you apply yourself. The last thing I want to talk about today

is some of the things I talked again about last week, but talk a little bit more emphatically about them. In the classic development of Samadhi, and Buddhist tradition, they're, they're the first two important factors that get developed in the mind. And then eventually you have to learn how to let go of them. So you have to first learn how to use them and bring them up, arouse them and apply them. And then you have to learn how to let go of them. But they're called v Taka in V Chara, and V Taka is usually translated as the initial application of mind of attention. And B Chara is the sustaining of that attention over time. So many Repeat. Some people are very good at, you know, the mind drifts away and distracted and they come they bring the mind back to the breath, they're very good at bringing it back. But once they're there, they get up or they can become complacent or they don't apply themselves anymore. There's a different kind of effort that's needed to sustain the attention over time. So first you make the effort to bring mine back and apply it to the breath or whatever whatever your object is, then you make a different kind of effort to sustain it over time to hang in there. There's all kinds of analogies which are given. Beautiful one is the V Taka the initial application is a bird when it takes off when it jumps, you know, takes off to fly and be charged when the bird is flying. Or the tacos when B is heading towards a flower. And B char is when that flower would be is buzzing around the flower Or Pandita love the analogy of if you're polishing a brass bowl. First you have to take your cloth, and you have to connect the cloth to the bowl. And then once you're there, you sustain the attention in the bowl by rubbing it and polishing it. So the initial application and then sustaining the attention over time. colloquially, in English, we can say, hang in there with it.

An analogy that I like or a little image that I use for myself sometimes is a fishing. I don't do much fishing or I didn't when I was a kid, I did a little bit but so hopefully this is accurate enough, but if you catch a big fish, you have to vary the length of fishing thread for the fishing line you sent out If it is a really big fish, it's pulling away from the boat, then you give out. But if it's coming swimming towards you, you reel in. And what you don't want to do is have any slack. You don't want to be too taut, because then it might break. You don't have any slack because if the line gets Slack, and possibly the hooking fall out of the mouth, so you want to keep it taut all the time. So you will stay as taught connection between you and the fish through the line. So the same thing with the mind and the

breathing is sometimes imagine that there's a there's a fishing line to the breath, and I've hooked the breath and I want to keep that connection. taut, not tight, not tense, but not slack either. Just the right tautness just keep it there, keep it there, keep you there. So that means that the sensing of the breath feeling of the sensations of the breath and be connected. I'm not going to leave that one moment. So there's, I like to stay in one place, usually in the in the body. Usually it's my abdomen. And I'll just hang in there that one place and try to have as much continuity in that one place as possible. So you don't, the mind doesn't leave the wareness doesn't leave that like that one spot. At any point in the cycle of breathing in and out. I'm tracking and feeling what's going on there. The whole cycle. That's where the line is taught and connected and not letting it lead up for one moment. Now, I can't always do that, right. But that's, that's the direction we're going towards. And as the mind gets more more concentrated, is that continuity that we want to have. And that requires letting go of all the other things that might pull the mind away. All the habits we have or the things we waste in which we use our mind we get interested in. So It's a developing new habits of mind. And breaking old habits is a very important part of the concentration practice. Learning how to exert the mind when the mind is Slack, learning how to restrain the mind or hold it still, when it's agitated, learning how to encourage it, when it's restless or dejected, dejected and viewing the practice with equanimity, when it's going well. Those are the things. So initial application of mind sustained application in mind, learning how to apply just the right amount of effort in doing those things. Not being too tense, not being too relaxed, but being very, very intent in what you're doing. And as you keep doing the practice, the initial effort that you make changes and initially, it might feel a little bit tiring to Do it. But as you get into the groove, it becomes easier and easier and more relaxing. And eventually, you have to let go of both the initial application of mind and sustained application in mind, because no longer needed. And they just get in the way, because, you know, it's like, you know, if you're trying to run all the way to the beach and go swimming, when you get to the beach, in the water, you should stop running. But you knew that effort to get there. So you need to have some effort. And then you have to know when the right time is let go of that effort. So again, I talked a lot. I hope this is useful. And if some of you have questions, I'll stay stay around a little bit and use that as an opportunity for questions. Next week, I'll come an hour early or come at 630 And if there'll be a time that our 637 30 be time, we can talk about all this much more, have a dialogue and you can talk about how it's going and your meditation, how it is practicing this at home. And we can explore all these things much more before the class starts. And I really hope that you have a real appreciation for the contemplative life, the life that

develops our capacity for great stillness, great peacefulness in the mind and the heart. Samadhi is around defining this contemplative stillness, peacefulness, silence, and it's really a beautiful thing. So many thanks. See you next week.