So last week, I talked about faith, trust or confidence. And I mentioned that it's the first of the five factors by faculties, which can be seen as the grammar of meditation practice is kind of this kind of stuff that which often meditation teachers in Southeast Asia will use to measure how someone's doing in a meditation practice. So look at these five faculties, five potentials, these five capacities that we have, and see how they're coming into play in order to help with the meditation practice. And if one of them is imbalanced, they'll try to bring it into balance or one is lacking or one is too strong, to try to make an adjustment for it. And these five capacities that we all have is different. acity for confidence or trust is the first one. The second one is the capacity for, for energy to make effort. The third is the capacity for noticing what's going on that of mindfulness. The fourth is that of concentration of stabilizing the mind getting concentrated focus set on what you want to pay attention to. And the fifth is a discernment or wisdom, the capacity to be discerning about what our experiences in a way that's useful for the meditation practice. And it's been said that in all human endeavors, that these five capacities by faculties some way or other come into play with those endeavors. And it doesn't have to be applied only to meditation practice. But the Buddha took these five and applied it to meditation practice in order to help a particular endeavor or the particular activity of meditation practice. There's a classic teaching that these five are sequential. They don't have to be is also classic teaching that they all arise together and interplay with each other. But in the sequential model, it's you start with faith or confidence or trust. And with that, that gives you the inspiration then to want to apply effort or inspiration to make effort. And so effort arises out of trust or confidence. And that often happens in daily activities. That the more inspiration more confidence you have, in some endeavor, the more likely you are to put great effort into adequate energy into it. So it's often very important then to have a good foundation of confidence of trust of faith for your meditation practice. Today, what I want to do is talk a little bit about the second factor of energy, in practice capacity, the faculty of energy and I find it in thinking about it today. It's a difficult subject for me to talk about. I'm not sure exactly why maybe other people, it's easy to talk about. And the first time I taught a class on what's called the eight fold path, the kind of classic Buddhist teachings of the Buddhist path. One of those eight aspects of the path is
all right energy. So I did an eight or a series of many weeks, I don't know how many weeks and I skipped, right effort. Intentionally, I just didn't want to just come I didn't want to touch it. Because I didn't quite know how to talk about it or didn't know how to relate to it or in terms of talking, I had made and I make a lot of effort in my meditation practice when I've been on retreat that made sometimes phenomenal amount of energy and effort and practice. So something I love doing the effort part, the energy part, the engagement part. With practice is something which I have a tremendous love and appreciation for doing sometimes it's really fun. Sometimes it's not but you know, something I really liked doing. And it was odd, you know that I didn't know how to talk about it, I couldn't find how to talk about it. And I feel like I'm still trying to find my way and talking about it. It seems like maybe odd thing for me to say since making effort or energy is, you know, like pretty basic. If you want to sit down to do a spiritual practice, you have to apply yourself. You know, if you get someone gave me the analogy recently, of, you can get a lot you can go to library or bookstore and get books and exercise. And you can stay home and read them and read them and read them. And it's very nicely I suppose they could be captivating and nice photos and stuff. But sooner or later, you know, you have to do it. You have to make the effort to actually apply yourself you might be getting good reading skills by doing that, but you know, the exercise books are not Usually about that. So sooner or later you go to the restaurant, you can just study the menu you have to order the food also. So effort is really central to this whole thing. I'm trying to teach my teach mindfulness. So it's a little bit embarrassing to say I don't know exactly what it is, or how to talk about it. So as that with that as an introduction, we'll try here today. And then I'll say also, there's there's different words in the Pali tradition, teachings of the Buddha, that overlap with each other that kind of belong to this general category of words meaning effort. There are words for effort, there's a word for energy. There's a word for endeavoring. There's a word sometimes translated as persistence. There's the word power. There's a lot of different words that kind of fit into that category. And they have nuances of meaning but they overlap quite a bit also. And sometimes I'm Buddhist teachers are texts talk, they slide into each other different meetings on it. I want to give you a One example from the discourses of the Buddha passage which is repeated in various places in his discourses. They give you a flavor of how important effort or energy is. And you can find many other passages that are similar among gems generates desire, strives, initiate strength, takes hold of his mind and endeavors. It's a very energetic thing. He's kind of active, you know, so generates desire. It was Chanda for those who don't know it. And some people think that Buddhists are supposed to have desire. Within the teachings of the Buddha. There were certain desires that the Buddha saw as being problematic, certain desires which will lead to suffering. But there are other desires which are quite beneficial to have, and there's no they don't lead to suffering. They don't lead to delusion or inappropriate way of living. In fact, certain kinds of desires, considered very wholesome and helpful for the spiritual path, being able to differentiate between those two is a very important part of Buddhist practice. And in order to apply effort in the spiritual life, that there has to be certain kind of desire. And so the monk generates, the practitioner generates a certain kind of desire, certain kind of aspiration, maybe some people would like a certain kind of sense of purpose, a sense of dedication, sense of, you know, there's something that's really they want to do here. That kind of healthy sense of desire, even if the desire is to have no desires at all. That's still a
little bit of a desire. Some people like to pursue that right energetically. I'm going to sit here and have no desires at all. And then they let go of all desires except for that one, until that's the last one. And then they kind of do that one. Wait, wait until the last bit. And then you have striving is something also that's often not appreciated, very much Much in sometimes meditation circles because striving will often give you a headache. But striving is a word the Buddha seemed to have used. And striving has not meant to be a something as headachy producing or self centered or kind of kind of pushy or very willful. But striving I think means something very something to do with great zeal, a great occasion, a great enthusiasm. Yes, I'm going to do this, I'm really going to make an effort here and really pursue this. And then in here's the translation is initiate strength, the word is viriya. And initiate this very strong kind of energy, arouses energy, in order to then engage in this particular endeavor. in the, in the discourse on the great and the four foundations of mindfulness. The Buddha talks similarly about making effort, and he told us there uses the word that's translated to English as artists and those Have you know Sanskrit or Pali the word is tapa tapas, she sometimes has this feeling of fire with primary energy or fire. And so this being ardent is the usual English translation to be ardent in your practice. So in the ancient times at least, there was a lot of effort, a lot of emphasis on making a lot of effort. And the word viriya. Just word use for energy is a cognate to the word Veera, which means hero, or warrior. And so the idea is to make heroic efforts or kind of be like a warrior, in your in your spiritual practice. And some of you might have met great practitioners like Groupon, or someone who really has the warrior approach to practice. And I've noticed that at among my colleagues that be passionate teachers, that spirit rock and elsewhere there's a phenomena where the only ones who seem to talk about making warrior like effort Your practice are the women teachers. So

I'll leave that for you to kind of sort through. But they're certainly in line with sort of the way that the tradition talks about really kind of putting your putting your wholehearted effort into the practice. So I would call it venture or we gonna go on to say that there is no spiritual life without effort without some kind of effort, some application, some engagement, something we do. If you're us, you know, we're not going to refuse. There's a phenomenon called bedside nights nightstand Buddhists. And, you know, it's probably good, but it's like, you know, the exercise book. So, one aspect of this constellation of things, a cold calling effort, energy is the energy factor itself. Energy is something which has, can vary from from hour to hour from day to day from month to month. vary depending on many different things or health, or you know how busy we are. It can also vary based on psychological factors, our attitude, when we feel discouraged by something, sometimes our energy drains out of us. And sometimes it's our energy can turn very quickly. one direction or the other. Suddenly, you know, something really marvelous walked through the door, and suddenly you find yourself all the energy you ever needed. Or something really terrible happens or you you know, you get a phone call says, phone calls and says, you know, can you please come in, you know, we need someone to scrub the walls of IMC and outside and you've been volunteered. And then, you know, maybe energy kind of, maybe feel enthusiastic about that. But I can imagine, you know, I remember when I was a kid, often, having my energy level dropped dramatically. When I was asked to do certain things. Energy has a certain kind of the energy in the system is sometimes If something is affected by psychology, it's also affected by our other activities, you know, we exercise a lot and keep our body in good shape, there's often a good
energy that's available to us in the body, the system kind of coursing through us. And sometimes if we 
over eaten or we're just been staying up late or locked or just gonna wear ourselves down, we don't 
have the physical energy, the vibration, the vitality that's available to apply in different directions. So 
one of the aspects of energy in practice, is we need to have some forms very helpful to have a good 
energy, good vitality, and, and do we take care of ourselves in all kinds of ways? Do we have that in 
place, we get enough sleep. Americans are said to be sleep deprived, deprived culture. Some 
Americans need to sleep more than need to meditate. Maybe some of you need to sleep, more 
humidity to meditate. And some people need to exercise more Some people are trying to have 
meditation help them in their lives. But you simply don't have good energy in their system to really get 
alot of benefit from meditation. And they better off doing some exercise first, maybe all kinds of things 
with that, what that might mean but they need to get to the button or body back into balance to have it 
balanced, good form of energy to help their meditation practice, be successful, be useful. The Buddha 
didn't teach exercise program, you know, like you know, push ups and sit ups and you know, Tai Chi or 
whatever. But I think that if you lived in a modern day America, you probably have like a nine fold path, 
you know, and probably the you know, the nine through somewhere in there would be right exercise. 
The but you know, the Buddha. He didn't need that because he spent all this time blocking. There was 
time when he walked a lot. He walked long distances he walked every day. He did a lot of work. 
Meditation. I think when you walk a lot, walking itself is a wonderful vitalizing exercise it kind of keeps 
the body toned in going well. I learned recently, someone told me that I, john Moran, who is one of the 
great exemplary monks of Thai monks who kind of started the whole lineage of Thai Buddhism. Very, 
very important meditator meditation master who spent a lot and a lot of his time meditating even as a 
accomplished master. And apparently, he spent something like four, figure exactly the numbers now, 
so don't take me literally, but he spent something like a twice or three times as much every day doing 
walking meditation, as he did doing sitting meditation. So if you do that much work, meditation really 
kind of keeps your, your body in good shape.

So to make it to somehow ensure that you have a good foundation of energy in your system. So you 
can come to meditate, you have that available to you. To us. I have noticed a phenomena which again, 
it's just maybe it's anecdotal rather than real. But 50 6070 years ago, there was a stronger tendency 
when people had when their backs were out, or people were sick or something. Those people had the 
attitude, oh, you have to kind of strengthen yourself, build yourself up. And then I noticed kind of in my 
generation, kind of like, you know, when I was younger, you know, when people's back went out, you 
know, tennis, you just got to rest. And there's a I don't know if this characterizes different generations 
or different approaches in different areas of our of our society. But some people's focus when things 
are not going well, when they're stressed out, or when they're feeling weak, is to rest. But actually 
what's better than sometimes is to build up strength is to be active. My wife had shoulder injury for a 
while. And she, we did a lot of different things and things resting in various things. And nothing helped, 
until someone told her, she had to exercise it. And that was kind of counterintuitive. And so she 
exercised it and that made all the difference. So sometimes, you know, we feel kind of lousy and 
depressed and bad. The tendency is just to kind of rest and kind of not do anything and lay really low 
in what's called on is to do something very active to bring the energy up in the system. So that the
whole psychophysical system is a more useful instrument for most certainly for meditation practice for many other things also. And the energy that's available to us. There's certain ways in which energy feeds on itself or grows on itself develops with itself. As we apply energy. In sometimes it can also kind of generates energy. And I've seen that in meditation practice where I've been sleepy or slow. Meditation are kind of, you know, collapsing my posture. And I keep putting effort and keep putting effort in. And at some point that effort begins to kick back and the effort kind of gets aroused and awakened and kind of develops in a beautiful way. And that energy that kind of, sometimes it can kind of crystalline or pure, beautiful, the effort of the energy is available for practice. And you can kind of feel your whole body kind of come alive. You know, I wouldn't call it exactly relaxed. But I wouldn't call it a tense it's kind of energized in a wonderful, clear, restful way. And I think that some people who associate meditation with becoming calm and relaxed, sometimes miss the value of meditation that goes beyond relaxation, to developing kind of alert energy. That that is one of the most satisfying things I know much more satisfying than being relaxed. So there's energy that's important in meditation, and ensuring we have the right kind of energy, then there's the issue of where we apply the energy. You know, it's one thing to have energy, it's something else will we do with it energy. And so that's lost the category of effort, the kind of efforts we make with that energy. And the Buddha talks about four great efforts to make to make, and these again, can be applied to any activity that we do. If you have something you want to pursue. You work there's four things you probably do without thinking you're doing it without, you know, thinking you're thinking along these categories. But first, the first thing maybe you're concerned with is avoiding doing those things, which gets in the way of your purpose. The second is, you try to avoid the appearance or the arising of things which we could get in the way. The third in this list is you try to maintain or support or enhance those things which are helping you with your purpose. And then the fourth is you try to arouse things which could help you in your endeavors, but are not present right now. All of those things. And in a very simple, simplified formula that's given, they are abandoning, preventing, supporting, and arousing. Those are the four kinds of efforts. We, we try to abandon those things which gets in the way. We try to prevent the arising of things which get in the way but haven't arisen. We try to support and enhance those things which are there which are helpful, and we try to arouse those things which have not yet arisen, but which, you know, could be really helpful. For us, so there's so if the purpose that we're engaged in is to wake up is to get concentrated, is to practice mindfulness, those four efforts apply there also, we try to let go of those things which gets in the way. So we might want to let go of a tendency to move our body a lot. Sometimes if you move your body a lot fidget a lot in meditation, it's actually hard to develop a deep, stable, concentrated mind. So you let go of that. Because as soon as you get away, or you notice that you spend a lot of time thinking about certain things they say you're reviewing over and over and over again. How are you going to get a patent on your wonderful invention on collapsible, collapsible automobiles? People think about the most amazing inventions in meditation. And so you have this wonderful set of very useful train of thought to think about patterns for collapse cars. Unless you're, you know, I don't know what. But so you learn, oh, that's not very useful. I'm trying to wake up and be present. I think I need to let go of this train of thought, this train of thought if I keep following this train of thought, it's not conducive and helpful. certain certain attitudes are not very useful and
helpful as we learn to let go of it. So the process of letting go or abandoning, it can be a very wise part of any activity, but certainly of any spiritual activity, knowing what what wisely let go because it doesn't serve us and then arousing things that try to prevent things from arising. detract, which is not the other reason. So you might have learned from experience that certain kinds of things that you do end up standing in your way. So for example, say you meditate in the morning I really like meditating in the morning. But you also really like reading newspaper. And so the newspaper wins out first, right? So you get first thing, you get a jump out of bed, you're all excited you run out, get the newspaper. And just like the best thing, right? You open it up and you read the paper. And it's wonderful or not. And then you go meditate. And your mind is filled with images and ideas and thoughts and opinions and judgments and maybe fear and anger and delight, or whatever, you know, might be coming out the newspaper. And you notice that that when your mind is filled by those images and input and reactions from newspaper, it's very hard to sit down and get concentrated. So you know, oh, if I'm going to be a good meditator, I think I need to read the newspaper after I meditate not before, to prevent the arising of things which which gets in the way of getting concentrated. The third one, the effort to support things which are helpful. They're already here. I think that one of the things is very helpful in spiritual life is to begin appreciating the good qualities, the good activities, the good mental states, the good attitudes, the good intentions that we already have. There's often a lot of goodness within us a lot of helpful qualities here that we often will overlook and appreciate deeply enough. I think human beings, the witness, the ones I know, for the most part, seem to have an amazing capacity to be selective in their appreciation, or their their disdain, or their critical illness. And you know, that could be 90 like my son, my little six year old son, and he's going to suffer some in his life, I think, because he has this amazing ability to spend three or four hour playdate and everything's going really nice. I mean, time is life running around, you know, just everything and then your The End usually at the end, when they're tired, they something goes wrong. The kids kind of like, you know, do something a little snide or mean to each other. And he will latch on to that particular thing. And forget the four hours earlier having the time in his life, or that was a terrible playdate. You two minutes ago, fight the head over something, you know, is very selective. And I think what's helpful in the spiritual life is not to put, we don't want to put blinders on things which are not working, or things that are all for unwholesome unskillful. But I think it's actually very helpful to develop a habit of appreciating that which is already here, which is beautiful. That is wonderful. That's already working. And my suggestion to you too, is there's probably a lot more that's working a lot more to appreciate, than probably already that you're doing so far.

So if you take that challenge of mine, you will just you know, go and look, you know What is it to be appreciated right here. So then support enhance that which is already wonderful that's happening here. And then if you notice that things, something could be helpful. And it's not here already, then arouse it cultivated. I have no I know sometimes when I sit down to meditate, that my mind is not very concentrated. Sometimes I decided that the wisest thing for me to do is to sharpen up my concentration to arouse it and take it and bring it up so that I can have more useful mind. So the mind can focus and look and be engaged in activity in a more useful way. And so sometimes I'll do two particular practices that arouses my concentration when it needs to be there. Sometimes I'll do a practice through rouses loving kindness. If I feel like more kindness will be good in the system.
Sometimes you'll do practices to arouse my energy, because I feel the energy needs to be there. Sometimes I'll do practices which more relaxing and calming feel tense or feel to energized or restless or something, I'll do certain things which are relaxing, because I think feel like I need to rouse that factor in order to bring the body mind into certain kind of balance. So that it's useful to engage in the practice of mindfulness and meditation. So, those are called the four great efforts and they apply to any activity and they apply to spiritual life and to meditation practice. One of the reasons why I was hesitant talking about effort in the past is that I had the idea that effort, my idea of effort, in the my definition of it seemed to imply something about self centered effort or manipulative effort or effort to somehow get something to manufacturer create something in the future. That was not portable was already here. And a huge part of my meditation practice over the decades that I've done, it has been, and continues to be practicing and acceptance of what is already here. And it's a non acceptance of what's here, which often causes a lot of suffering for people. And it's very radical to practice acceptance, you can pull the rug from underneath a lot of our difficulties in life, and we just begin practicing acceptance. And so for me, given who I was, there was a very, very important practice, to practice of unconditional acceptance of this moment here. And so then I was confused between radical acceptance of this moment in mindful this moment as it actually is an effort which seemed like it didn't involve that kind of acceptance. It was like pushing or trying to make something happen or however, when I try to practice this radical acceptance to the present moment, I used to practice it, practice it with great enthusiasm I remember the story, you know, when, when telling stories sometimes haven't become like on fire, like, just like the most important, most passionate thing I've had in my life to do was to sit down and told him I could completely and fully accept this moment, just as it was, without trying to push it away without trying to make a difference, without trying to hold on to it. Just as open, balanced awareness just here. And maybe it sounds like a paradox to talk about making kind of almost heroic effort to be totally accepting of this moment here. And sometimes I know like when my mind is really scattered in order to me to be pleased, accepting of this moment here, I have to really work on my concentration. I have to somehow really make strong strong effort trainers, like my breath kind of stay there. The more work distracted the mind is, the greater the counter forces needed to work against that or to balance that sometimes answered. Really kind of hold that mind it feels like sometimes physical labor, kind of be there, either be there either. And that seems a little bit and aesthetic antithetical to the whole meditation process to make kind of strong, strong effort isn't all about being relaxed. But there are times when really strong effort is needed. When I sat with a lot of physical discomfort in my meditation practice, the practice of rather radically accepting unconditionally accepting the present moment when it's pain, required a tremendous effort to really apply myself to stay there, stay there, stay there, because the mind was so powerfully conditioned to recoil from that. It's hard to kind of work with it, stay, stay, stay. Now, effort. The other thing I was thinking about today about effort is sometimes in play.

Human beings apply a lot of effort. If you go to a playground, and watch those kids, and then if you try to mimic the kids, like, follow right behind them and do exactly what they're doing, you would be wiped out, you know, very quickly. And they're sitting there saying, Daddy, Daddy, come come. But play often hasn't, you know, you put a lot of effort in a play volleyball or something, a lot of effort goes into it.

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Effort can be really fun. Effort is not something to be thought of as a problem or as a hindrance or something to hesitate to be engaged in. I think the task and meditation are something to be applied ourselves in a way that's healthy, for meditation is appropriate for meditation. And in a way that actually brings enjoyment and delight. It brings us delight to sit down and engage in this activity. This is great. Even when it's difficult, I really want to do this. Sometimes it can really feel like play. Meditation sometimes can be actually a lot of fun. For example, there's the, there's a, I will tell you, everybody, everybody has been develops their own little idiosyncratic ways of meditating. And you know, and so, I want to tell you mine, you could do your own. Oh, tell you well, then I'll never live it down. But there's, for a while, I used to do this, like a pinball approach to meditation. You know, like, where you kind of, you know, you need just mental notes and notes, you kind of notice what's going on, you know, sound this matching of playing pinball, you know, like, and that was fun. And it kept me very engaged and helped me get concentrated, you know, and then as soon as some point had to let go of that, because it got in the way, that kind of, that kind of activity with meditation can be fun in many different ways. Part of what's important with effort and energy is to monitor the energy and effort we're making, to ensure that it's the appropriate kind of effort, given the overall ecology of where we are at that moment. So it's kind of like a whole ecology of mind and body is going on. And it has to be, the energy has to match that or be a match with that. So there are times where energy needs, the effort, the energy is very strong and very powerful. And other times the energy needs to be very relaxed and loose, maybe almost feeling no energy at all. I think for people who live stressed out lives, it's probably best. Sometimes it's best not to make too much effort. Maybe sometimes it's better to make no effort at all, and just sit back and just relax. In my own meditation practice, I find it's very helpful for me to make mostly a non effort in the beginning of a meditation session. She's kind of just be there. Practice just being letting go and letting go of the tendency of the mind to wander and just not doing just sitting there being very relaxed and almost not making any effort at all, and letting the tensions and the distractions of the day kind of settle on their own, but they settle on their own, don't engage with it, don't try to do anything, just try and be very kind of still. And then at some point, after I've gotten quiet and calm enough, then is a different kind of effort and energy that's made. And sometimes it can be quite strong. Sometimes it can be quite steady. Sometimes it can be quite sweet. But it is the monitor the energy we're the effort we're making. So it's not too tight, not too pushing or too hard. But also not too complacent, not too loose. One of the one of the traps of certain kinds meditation practices that focus on radical acceptance of the present moment or just being or like she can't toss or things like that is complacency. Just kind of like everything's okay. Just the way it is. I'll just sit here, everything's okay. Everything's fine. Everything's wonderful.

And it's fine to sleep. You know, it's wonderful, but it's not really meditation practice and so. So that kind of complacent effort and energy is not very useful. And so you don't have effort that's too complacent. You don't have effort that's too tight or too pushing. And what actually happens in practice is often a balancing of finding the way kind of trying little bit of triangle that harder, and it's a little bit too much. try too hard. Now I need to back up. Oh, no, I backed up too much. Make a little. It's like a pendulum that swings. And you'll never actually very seldom get to a place we feel like you Right in the middle, because if you if you and the environment never changed, then maybe you could find the

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middle after a while. But actually, you're always changing. And the situation is always changing. So the effort and energy that's needed is in harmony with the overall ecology of the situation. So it's always going to be this little bit of kind of swinging back and forth. Sometimes things are really big. Sometimes you make big mistakes and meditation practice. And, you know, I've gotten headaches, sometimes from making the wrong kind of effort. Sometimes I spend a long period of time sleeping, you know, there was a Zen center, there was a period where I just slept and slept and slept. bobbing back and forth. And I still Bob, but not as much as I did. And so effort, energy is a hard thing to talk about, even though I've gone on and on now. And I hope that That kind of aroused some interest in you at least to investigate to study it, to engage in it to think about it more seriously to look and appreciate its role and its place in your spiritual practice. And I need to add one more thing I want to say. One of the ways that this word viriya is sometimes translated into English is as persistence. And one of the one of the keys of making energy in a spiritual life is to practice persistence, continuity, regularity, regularity, persistence, constancy of practice, is what tends to bring the greatest fruit over time. No matter what the practice is. If you in a nap and get the analogy that's used in the tradition, is, if you want to just you know it's an ancient tradition, is if you want to make fire by rubbing sticks together. You don't rub the sticks together for a couple of minutes, and then go get And then come back and pick it up and rub it for another minute and then go pee and then put them down, they go take a nap, and come back, you know, you know, it just doesn't work, you don't build enough, build up enough enough heat to get the spark. So you have to kind of be persistent and constant keep going. So same thing with this, this inner energies inner inner fire, that you need to kind of have a constancy and persistence in the efforts we make. And sometimes that makes means persistence over a period of meditation, if you sit for 40 minutes, but you just kind of may be really persistent in that 40 minutes are on retreat. And people practice on a daily basis. It's really helpful to have regularity. That persistence takes the form. I sit every day, every morning or every day I sit. And that regularity, as over time, is very, very supportive of the overall energy and effort development of a good good Quality of it for our well being of our meditative life.