

2005-04-11 Aspects of Mindfulness

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SPEAKERS

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There's an image or an analogy that's used in the ancient Buddhist texts. It's that of a shepherd or cow herder, who so much to make tending the cows and they're out in the fields wandering around grazing in the pasture. And when it when it's the season for the rice to be growing, the rice paddies are out there. It's very important that the person tending the cows, watch this very closely. stays very close. And make sure that make sure that cows don't wander into the rice fields and eats the rice in the field. So the plants just stays on the edge of the dikes or the patties and eats the grass on the side and things like that. But when the grass when the rice is crop has been harvested, then the Person tending the cows doesn't have to watch so closely. And the person can just be up against the trunk of a tree relaxed, staying attentive and alerts so that the cows don't wander off. But they don't have to be so vigilant kind of watching it every moment you know watching so tightly or closely or and but can be there resting against a tree kind of relax, very spacious, very open awareness, as opposed to this kind of constricted kind of watch it closely. And that and now this analogy is used to describe a quality of mindfulness. That mindfulness is the is like the person tending the cows, when the rice has been harvested, that that kind of awareness, that kind of attention that's relaxed, but open, not anxious, not kind of riding every moment. so tightly, relax, open awareness kind of resting in the armchair of the Easy, easy trunk of the tree is the quality of mindfulness, mindful attention. And that's very important for some people to realize. Because some people, when they're trying to be mindful, they all sometimes are a little bit too vigilant or too forceful or striving or too anxious or trying too much to get something to happen. And this quality of being relaxed at ease, is a very huge part of what mindfulness is. So mindfulness is the topic for today, I want to talk about a very key aspect of Buddhism. It's very central to our tradition, the insight meditation tradition. So we're cultivating is mindfulness. It's what we're all about. And sometimes in certain, sometimes in Buddhism, mindfulness and Buddhism are almost equated Mindfulness so centrally important for Buddhism that they almost indistinguishable, this so you know, and it's been said that many different spiritual traditions have mindfulness as part of paying attention paying attention to what's happening in the present moment. But it really characterizes Buddhism is kind like at the, at the center of the heart of what Buddhist

practice is trying to cultivate and do is to be mindful and be attentive. Mindfulness is seen as one of the primary vehicles or primary paths for becoming free for liberation for awakening. So what is mindfulness? And the word for mindfulness is Sati. And Sati is in Sanskrit, Murthy. In Pali, it's Sati the ancient language, and it's a cog, it's a word, it's very closely connected to the word for remember, and, or memory. So someone, anon dot that disciples of the Buddha, who memorized all the so supposedly memorize all the discourses of the Buddha and then preserved them for us was preserved them for the future. He was said to have very good memory, probably nowadays we say photographic memory, but he can remember really well. And he is said to had very high degree of Sati this Billy Billy a memory. And it might be useful to think of memory as being to use a synonym and that is to recollect, you can recollect something well, it's kind of like you've memorized it. Well, you have it in your memory really well. But the word recollect, has the English has the feeling of to re collect, to re gather together. Because one of the functions of mindfulness besides helping of memory is helping us helping the mind to stay present here. So that's it can recollect itself here to remember to be here, to remember this important too. Be present here, in the ancient definition of mindfulness is that capacity of the mind that keeps the mind from floating away, or keeps keeps keeps an idea or a theme or an activity that we're paying attention to keeps that idea or theme or activity floating away. So or the mind floating way, and often, you know, probably most of you have seen this 45 minute meditation session we had, that your mind had a tendency to float away. And sometimes it took a while to realize that you would happen, you're just so floated away. And then you come back and start over again. Mindfulness is what keeps the mind anchored in the present moment or here. So it doesn't forget the present moment or recollects itself collects things together here, in the present moment. I think of it as or sometimes just talked about as a presence of mind. There's one kind of presence and the mind is Present presence of heart to presence is mine. We do activities and deliver life we go through life with a presence of mind. And one of the qualities of presence of mind is to be present to be here and to know what's happening as you go through something. If you do something with the presence of mind, you're really therefore it. You're not absent from it. You're not haphazardly there. But you're really there. You're doing it with the presence of mind, it means you're doing it consciously, intentionally. Clearly, this is what I'm doing. And this, quote, this sense of a presence of mind, sometimes people even sometimes emphasize the idea of presence. They were cultivating presence. Just Just to be a presence is enough to presence is an odd and interesting word. Because sometimes mindfulness doesn't seem too personal. It's not something we're doing. It's almost like maybe stretching a little bit. There's kind of like, you know some presences here, present, or there's a presence here. It's you know, it's yours in a sense, but is it really yours? Is it really you're doing sometimes it's very strong, the sense of can be very strong, is it those are the presence here. Whereas it just kind of say here, there's something impersonal, some kind of some larger kind of field of attentiveness, of awareness of heightened attention. Occasionally, when I've talked to theists, to Christians, or Jews or people like that, and they asked, you know, what is your spiritual practice? And if it felt right to the context of saying this, you have to kind of give me some permission or some imagined maybe the context is appropriate, but I'll tell them that Oh, what I practice is the presence of God. And because the sense of the presence of mind the presence of mindfulness via wakefulness, they can come to this practice can have this in person Inequality consists of is larger than myself or bigger than myself. And I can't even

take responsibility for times when it's really large. And so what is it, and I can easily imagine someone falling into a very strong sense of presence, and not being able to identify with anything that they normally identify with. And then trying to find a concept outside of themselves, so reference outside of themselves, or have some reference in their normal cultural, kind of religious background. And they'll fall on the earth, the presence of God, this must be God, it sets a very strong presence of being here. So mindfulness is a very can be can be at times are very powerful sense of presence. Other times it can be something that is desperately lacking. And, and, you know, we kind of wake up for two seconds and then off we go again for another five minutes and then we try to remember I'm supposed to be here. Okay, let's come back. I like wakefulness as synonym for mindfulness to be awake. And because wakefulness if you're going to be awake to something, it generally in my mind, it has a connotation of simply being present for it as it is. There's no association, you're trying to do something with it, or trying to fix it or trying to get away from it. or trying to judge it. You simply awake. I was really awake to this phenomena. So we're cultivating mindfulness. We're trying to be awake to what our experience of life is, in the present moment to be awake. Now, to be awake. Wake up, is a very common common term in Buddhism and in other places, too, I guess people carry around the magazine. They try to pass on called wake up, awake, so it's called and I smile when I see the magazine going around. The And sometimes when we use the mindfulness, some people who've been around the mindfulness tradition for a long time, have all kinds of associations with the word. And some of those associations are unfortunate. And sometimes people that got picked up the Association of striving, pushing, or noting, in some really kind of straining way, or neurotic way, or, you know, they have some idea of what it is you're trying to do, oh, if I'm, if I'm mindful, I was supposed to get concentrated. Or if I'm mindful, then supposed to be really still or mindful. It's just supposed to be just beautiful. Everything's gonna be okay. And whatever, some some Association, but for me, at least at this point, the word awake is free of a lot of those associations. Sometimes a word that frees me from associations is the word notice that when we practice mindfulness, we're only practicing noticing, it's a noticing practice. So when people can come in You know, what are you? What is your religious practice? You could say, you know, presence of God and that sounds you know, Wow, I didn't know Buddhists did that and they would be marvelous with your you know, presence of God that seems pretty noble and great in certain circles. But if you say, Oh, you tell someone you know, your Buddhist practitioner, so Wow, that's cool in Buddhism, that's cool and sad and all that I'm sure that you know, you know, tell me what you do is lofty, great, authoritarian, authoritative religion. What do you do? What's your core practice? And you tell them, oh, I practice, I practice noticing. You know what? noticing that's all you can say. You know, it's a great religion, you all you do is notice notice things. So you can call presence of God or noticing, you know, whatever works best in different situations. But to notice, and I like the word noticing because it also frees up space associations with mind. This mic, we think it is what is supposed to be. I wanted to read a poem by Naomi Shihab Nye. And I think it's a little an odd poem, in some ways, but it's also a very nice poem. And it makes it very interesting point. Knowing it kind of, maybe I shouldn't say too much for social media. When they say, Don't I know you? Say No. When they invite you to the party. Remember what parties are like before answer. someone telling you in a loud voice, they once wrote a poem, greasy sausage balls on a paper plate. Then reply. If they say we should get together say why It's not that you don't love them anymore. You're trying to remember something too important

to forget. Trees, the monastery Bella Twilight. Tell them you have a new project. It will never be finished. When someone recognizes you in a grocery store, nod briefly and become a cabbage. When someone you haven't seen in 10 years appears at the door. Don't start singing him all your new songs. You'll never catch up. Walk around feeling like a leaf. No, you could tumble any second. Then decide what to do with your time. Walk around feeling like a leaf. No you can tumble any second. Then decide what to do with your time. So Not that you don't love them anymore. You're trying to remember something too important to forget. So mindfulness has this quality of remembering, remembering something. And is there something to be remembered in the present moment? That's too important to forget? And is it more important than a lot of other things we could do? Or do we tend to lose the treasure, some treasure by rushing headlong into many different activities or into many requests, or maybe not even many, but it can be a simple one one, someone calls up and says, I need help or someone calls up and says anything and does a guilt trip or does you know anything pulls on your strings and, and I think that has always been good examples, but how easy it is to get caught by life caught by activities and being involved in life is not wrong. activities are not wrong, but being caught by him being lost in them to lose that presence of mind and the presence of mind is the treasure. And the presence of mind is kind of invisible. And the presence of mind the presence of here has no monetary value has no recreational value has no you know there's a lot of a lot of things that don't normally want their life, things we call the quality of life issues. That the that the presence of mind doesn't directly relate to. And so because he doesn't do a lot of good in some obvious way, or direct way or something, too many things we most want in life, or think we want we tend to ignore it. But the argument here is yesterday is that your presence, very simple quality being present here presence of mind, presence of being here is the most valuable thing that a person can invest in, to be in. And it's something you can take with you anywhere you go. So it's a consensus of deep, it's kind of a sense of well being, that you can carry with you wherever you go, and to stay grounded or resting as net well being and not sacrifice it for the activity you're about to engage in. So then the challenge is, how do you engage in activity? How do you go to the party and not get so caught up in the social dynamics? And do they like me? Do they not like me, or when I'm supposed to say next or, you know, Will anybody talk to me or, or, you know, or let me tell you about politics, you know, you know, and suddenly you're lost in a conversation about politics or whatever it might be. And then we find ourselves having left Have any kind of out of body experience out of the presence experience where you don't no longer staying resting here there's something about the presence of mind where we're present, but not self conscious. We know where we're kind of like here in this radiant field of awareness. But at the same time, we can kind of disappear. In the ancient texts, contrast is made between the mind which is constricted, and in mind, which is expansive, or boundless. And mindfulness is associated with the mind which is boundless or expansive. They don't use the word spacious, because I don't know I don't know, maybe they didn't. They weren't spacey or they weren't spacious back then. They didn't have it was a concept that they use the ancient world in the same way we do, but I think it translates quite well to how they have been very special. A mind which is very spacious, very open is a mind which is mindful mine which has a sense of presence of mind that is awake here now to what's going on. So how do we discover that treasure? How do we convince our heart or our mind that there's a treasure, there's a great value, there's a richness in being here. One

way is by big by practicing it and beginning to see the fruits of it, the benefits of it. Finding there's some sense of well being here. Some sometimes that's easy, and sometimes it might take several years of practice to really be grounded and really feel convinced that there's a tremendous satisfaction. That's incomparable to anything else life can give in being fully here, awake and present. Another way of being convinced to the value of mindfulness See some of the other benefits it provides. One of the very important benefits that sets it provide or does is it gives you a level of choice in how you live your life. If you're really present, you have a presence of mind to what you're doing, then you're mindful of what you say when you're saying you're aware. And, you know, you can make a mistake in speech, say something very kind of flip. You know, it's been said that, I think take years to cultivate a good friendship and one sentence to ruin it, say the wrong thing. And I've been in situations where I've said things that I regretted. And I realized afterwards that I didn't have much presence of mind. When I was doing it. I wasn't present really, if I'd been present. You really knew what was going on. Had this broad awareness of present moment awareness and could feel the motive The impulse to speak as I was gonna speaking, was tracking what was going on, I would have tracked what I was saying, the impulse, and I would have held back, not sent it or activities, different activities. So mindfulness is considered to be a very important doorway or vehicle to making wise choices in life, living a wise life. And that's one of the primary one of them very important functions it has in Buddhism, is that as you become more and more mindful, you personally can distinguish between those activities, which are helpful are healthy, and those activities which are not helpful for our lives are unhealthy. And so then begin to kind of choosing one over the other. And the marvelous thing is that as you develop more healthy qualities of speech quality, healthy qualities of activity, healthy choices for the mind with the mind does, it builds on itself over time. Health begets more health. And as we get more healthy, tends to be easier to have a presence of mind to be here, present, if you choose activity, which is unhealthy ways of speaking which are unhealthy, spend a lot of time gossiping and slandering and being angry at people and complaining. It can feel very similar, somewhat satisfying in the moment to do that, but the chances are, that it's not a lot of presence, you know, it really grounded and centered in that kind of speech. And, and it tends to that tends to create more unhealth and to reinforce that habit, more and more. So it said that mindfulness helps to undercut or undermined habit formations, that sense of being able to choose, be present, be mindful, and to choose what we do, or at least choose what we don't do. be choosing what we don't do and one of the most useful things you can do Tennessee, Tennessee, a baker who's a Buddhist monk is going to speak here in a couple of weeks. He likens the mind to a corporate boardroom. And, and you have all these directors of the board. And you have a chairperson of the board. And the chair has no control over what the director say, suddenly the director stands up and the director says, You know, I think we should do this, I think we should do that, and have all these crazy ideas. And the director, the chair can control the directors. However, the chair has one very important function or power, and that is, she has the veto power. So someone can suggest something. And, and the chair says, No, we're not going to do that. And so that's part of the function of mindfulness is to place us in a, in a situation where clearly we're aware of what's going on. So we can exercise our veto power. We can't control the mind all the different impulses in the mind. All the thoughts, the intentions that arise. You don't have to criticize your mind for having those. You just have to have a lot of confidence that you are not those

things. And if anything, you're the You're the one you're the chair, the chairperson of your mind says, Oh, no, I have to do that. I have to say that or do that or continue that train of thought. So mindfulness puts us in the place of choice. An important choice we have is a choice to say no. Mindfulness is also a little more difficult to talk about, but mindfulness tends to bring together with it. Other qualities or attempts to evoke, or fertilizer develop other psychological qualities that are considered to be healthy to have. The mindfulness tends to bring along with it. A good sense of effort or energy. Not initially sometimes, but it tends to kind of be a magnet to like energy, magnet towards concentration stability. It tends to be a magnet for greater wisdom and understanding. It tends to be a magnet for joy, for tranquility, for peace, and equanimity. And it said that it's kind of like a like, if you imagine a boat, plowing through the water and the bow of the boat, just kind of cuts through the water kind of in a very kind of gently pushes the water to the side. So the rest of the book can follow nicely. If you have a flat fronted boat, it's a lot more resistance. So you have this, this point that kind of breaks the water apart, separates it, and then everything else to the boat follows. And so mindfulness is like the bow of the boat. You have mindfulness and then lead then A lot of other things will follow in its wake will come will be carried along. If you have other things in the front, if you have trying to get concentrated or trying to have effort or trying to have wisdom or confidence or many other things sometimes in the front, sometimes it doesn't work so well. But mindfulness is considered always to be useful to always have mindfulness practice to fall back on mindfulness, fall back on noticing what's going on. Now, what's here, can I wake up to this right now here. Now one of the very simple ways of finding yourself in the present moment, because it can be hard, it can be very hard to come back. But one very simple way that I use sometimes when my mind is most scattered. When I sit and meditating, my mind wanders off and just wants to be off someplace else a lot. I'll use a very simple word That's the word here. h e r e. That's like a command to a dog. But, you know, just say the word here. It's just a reminder here, like, Oh, this is where I am. I'm here, here, I now this is where I am. What's this? Like? Kind of like I'm a topologist, from Mars. And somehow I popped into human body here, and what's this experience like, or here, and it's not an attempt to push anything away. It's like, oh, here, here is a person whose mind is scattered. Wow, here and now this is what it's like to have. This is what it's like to be human mind, which is completely out of control. Here. This is really, but as soon as I say here that way, then I'm here. You know, I'm not exactly I'm not exactly lost, even though my mind might be still racing in other ways. So in a very simple movement of here, noticing what this is what's happening now. And if I do that a number of times sometimes has to do a lot of times, but very gently here. Here, the mind begins to relax and soften. And the mind needs to be relaxed. If they're going to be a presence of mind, the mind is anxious, it's very hard to have a presence of mind. So one of the very important necessities for mindfulness is to be relaxed. And get used to saying the word here, for me at least, sometimes begins that relaxation process. And it's very important that I when I say here, they don't have an agenda, just here and open to what's happening. Now here. And if then if it gets, gets going really well, then then I'm really kind of here. I feel like I'm going really well I'm saying here. Then I imagined a little bit that it finally becomes here, here. Like when you approve what's going on, you're here.

The

other quality of mindfulness, which I think is important to understand is that mindfulness is like water that can flow into any container you put the water into. So you can put pour water into a square container and takes the shape of the square container. You pour it into a round container. It takes around shape, whatever the shape of the container is the water and basically takes that shape. And so mindfulness is like that. It's kind of visible, okay, whatever shape or whatever is going on. And this is important because sometimes we have an idea of what it is like to be mindful or what not Mindfulness was to be calm and serene, are supposed to be spacious, or I'm supposed to be very penetrating, I'm supposed to be certain way. And there are sometimes associated factors that come along with mindfulness like tranquility, and penetration. But mindfulness is is sometimes deceptively simple. So that when there's agitation when you're sitting here and you're agitated, there might not be much tranquility or equanimity, or peace or penetration, what's going on? clarity What's going on? But in the mindfulness, the presence is kind of like the presence that's within the agitation. It's kind of like flowing in there. And so don't, don't confuse the agitation for the presence. But don't think that the mindfulness is supposed to be separate from the agitation Also that makes sense. So whatever is going on, the mindfulness can be there regardless of what the quality or quality might be. So you're mindful. Another another important aspect of mindfulness is in the ancient world they talked about. Mindfulness is like the gatekeeper at a fortified city. And nowadays I heard someone used the analogy of a doorkeeper at a hotel, because we don't have you know, guards at the city city entrance anymore. But, but, you know, the guard at the gate to the city, fortified city, no one goes in and out of the city, except to that gate with a gatekeeper stance. And the gatekeeper doesn't follow someone comes into the gate wants to leave The guard keep can choose as the veto power, you can come in, or you can go you can go out or you can go out. The gatekeeper also just simply recognizes and sees what's going on going in and out. But the gatekeeper doesn't, if someone comes into the city, the gatekeeper doesn't kind of just follow them around into the city. And the gatekeeper gatekeeper doesn't go out into the fields outside the city. And somebody else goes out, the gatekeeper just stays there at the entrance and watches what comes in what comes out. So mindfulness has this quality of being a gatekeeper. It just tracks what's coming and going. And occasionally it'll say yes or no, something wants to go this way or that way. But he's kind of watches comes and goes, but doesn't go after anything. Doesn't get involved in anything, just watches here coming and going. A little, much more modern analogy for this that I use sometimes. Not is actually a little bit different idea but is that of a washing machine. When you're meditating sometimes it's kind of like your, your washing machine in this way. You put your dirty clothes in the washing machine and you put yourself in, you turn the machine on, and the machine agitates the dirty clothes and all this, the dirt goes out into the water. If you open up the washing machine and look into the water before it drains out, you see all the dirty water. You're happy. Very few people complain or upset or depressed, that the water is dirty, like wow, it's working. Isn't that great? And that's really good. It's working. And then it drains out and dirty water and then you know, maybe it has to rinse it a few more times and each time you rinse it gets cleaner and cleaner because it's doing its work. When you meditate. The meditation is like the one machinery and the mindfulness is like the soap maybe. I don't know. But, but awareness. Maybe smells like smells and like the soap and the awareness kind of little bit, everything. But awareness. What comes into awareness. wareness is like

the water. So when you're meditating, and something arises from inside, into awareness, you know that it's happening. It's come into the water. it's on its way out. So it means whatever has to happen has already happened. The client cleansing process has worked when it comes into awareness. What that means is when you meditate, you can just be content. The darkest, ugliest thing has arisen and you're aware of it. Just Oh, look at that. It's on its way out. It's in the water. Because I, in fact, I know it means it's an going going in the water, it's on soil, provided you don't get involved in it. It's very common, of course, for us to not see it as the water. But to see it, this is who I am. Or this is really important. The fact that it's present means I have to react and get anxious and nervous and fight it and introduce, do all kinds of things with it. But when things arise, especially things which are uncomfortable to look at unpleasant, just think of it as Oh, great. The fact that I'm aware of it now, it means most of the works already been done. Now I can just wait for it to drain. And that's just a passive process, right? You don't you know, so. So this idea of, you know, the doorkeeper, who watches things come and go doesn't get involved. I use the idea of the washing machine to kind of try to inculcate the same idea. When certain things arise in awareness. Don't be anxious about them, because about it, just be content, they're there and just be content. It's enough just to know that we're there. And this ability to be content, just to know that something is there is one of the ways then to discover this wonderful quality of the presence of presence, to be content to know what's here. And that's enough, is half the way to cultivating a strong sense of presence. And then once we have this presence, then can we begin extending that into our daily life. It's one thing to find a sense of presence in meditation. And it's a whole lot of other tasks, to learn how to begin carrying that with us, in a sense into our daily life. So the activities of daily life doesn't cause us to sacrifice our presence of mind or presence of being our beingness. So it'd be mindful, to be aware to be recollected to Have a kind of presence that's so powerful, they're so significant, so valuable, that some people would call it the presence of God to notice what's happening, to be content, that's enough just to know what's arisen. Nothing more needs to happen. To now, not just not to make things go away, but to see more deeply. To see into things more deeply have a deeper sense of life or experience of beingness. In our encounter with what's going on. The add depth, the part of the function of mindfulness is to add depth to our experience. Depth of who we are with the experiences by stopping scent stopping, sensing, feeling, seeing, recognizing what is this that's going on. Well, that's probably enough for me. Thank you for listening. I'm beginning to wonder what's going on for you.

After. So,

we have about five minutes if anybody would like to comment on the talk or something about it or make a question. Welcome to do that. In the back there, if you don't, please use the mic. It's important to use it the washing machine every day in the washing machine, you go I wouldn't worry about it. But I would start paying a little bit of attention the best you can. And if you find yourself actively fueling the agitation or the scatteredness, wherever you were to use, then you want to see if there's some way you can, maybe you can begin not fueling it. Because if you're fueling it, then you're not letting it be the washing machine. But probably you're somehow involved and engaged. And so then the word here might cut through a lot. Just here. Oh, here's a person who's caught up.

I would like to know what your experiences like. You feel some kind of wild joy. Maybe you're rolling around in the waves with your kids or something. That's really just so spontaneous and just involves you and excites you. In those kinds of experiences, are you aware that you're mindful? Or are you mostly experiencing just being locked in this wonderfulness? And then you come back to it periodically? Back to mindfulness. Are you going all the time, which might take you down a peg?

Yeah, it's a good question. It's a little bit hard to answer. I think because there's so many different situations and contexts for all this. There certainly are times where certain kind of activity of choice abandonment is it take down and quality of life can feel kind of pleasant enjoy four at a time, but actually, it's not as deeply satisfying or deeply happy. As can come with a kind of race, war, grounded presence of mind, it's here. And, and you can see that sometimes in meditation, where sometimes very strong states of joy can rise in meditation, and, and when the when that's superseded or, or transformed into happiness. Most people find that a great, great relief, that happiness is so much better than joy. And it's less agitated, less energetic.

Sometimes.

Certainly, I've been involved in very joyful, enthusiastic, passionate kind of activities in life, where I feel like I'm quite present. And sometimes I feel even more so present than usual. And then you sometimes you some activities, like playing sports, for example. You know, there's a very heightened sense of awareness and presence that can be there. And some athletes even talk about the kind of being in the zone. And there's a kind of abandonment of self consciousness. But but the same time is very keen mindfulness and presence of what's going on. I've had a kind of joyful kind of giddiness kind of a joyful kind of way of being, where I kind of lose my sense of presence kind of giddy or a little bit kind of intoxicated with my joy or what's going on. And, and then sometimes I've made mistakes and said things and done things which I regret it afterwards. And so it was kind of nice, but I wish I was a little more wasn't so intoxicated on the good feelings, where it was going on. And then sometimes there are certain activities that I do, where sometimes I do abandon my mindfulness, or the quality of my presence of mind, I sacrifice it's even though I encourage people not to do it. There are some times where I do that. And I don't know how I always do it wisely. So I've not done want to be the example of the model but of this, but so One example is it. When I was writing my dissertation at Stanford, I gave myself a three month block. Once once I gave myself a three month dissertation retreat, I told my friends, I was on retreat. And all my friends knew what that meant, so that people left me alone. And, and then later, I gave up one month more to finish it up. And during parts of that time, I abandoned a fair amount of my mindfulness in favor of just kind of pouring myself into this activity of dissertation. And it wasn't exactly the kind of pouring into into the activity, which was relaxing or enlightening. It was a little bit of a strain to do it. And I could feel the quality of my mind my body kind of decrease, but I felt what I was committed to doing, seeing the student being finished with it. And I was okay, I'm just going to do it intensively for this time and be finished with it. Go ahead, get through

this period of time. Rather than You know, rather than not do it at all, or, you know, this is what I know how to do. And so I kind of sacrificed a lot for three months so I can just kind of pour myself into it. Sometimes a certain kind of conversations with friends really good friends, where it gets really lively and fun and sometimes I let myself be abandoned in the conversation. And usually it's if I'm careful and wise but making that choice when I do that, it seems to work out but occasionally it hasn't worked out so well and sometimes I've I sometimes will tease a friend and later so you know, I shouldn't be teasing my friends you know, kind of joyfully kind of happy kind of and sometimes teasing is all part of good fun, but sometimes it feels you know, once was okay, but it is my friend three times, you know, what's going on? So, is that okay, that's it. Okay. Have an answer. Last one, If you use this because we use it because some people have hearing system devices. And so even if you speak up, they can't hear

both of your

metaphors, the cows and the washing machine and from the cow. One, it reminded me of a situation I was in today when I was in a meeting and needed to be present and present things. And I found myself getting very uptight. And I was thinking they're probably watching me be uptight, as opposed to listening to what I have to say. And I I saw myself in your analogy, I I wasn't just watching the cows to make sure they didn't do rice, get into the rice. I was using a caliper on myself to you know, contain myself anyway. So my question was going to be Well, my answer to it was Richard, loosen up just you know, have some fun, make a joke or something. And I don't remember making jokes, but it did. It did help. So I was gonna ask you a question about where does humor come into to this being present? And I may have discovered the answer. This is kind of my question to in your wash machine analogy, where it seems like once I said that to myself, then it just dissolved some of that tension.

Kind of like it came out in the wash.

Because I don't remember myself becoming the jokester. Yeah, but I didn't add just after thinking that I wasn't so uptight.

Well, maybe you know, I'm Maybe the joke is on you. But you don't have to tell people that. I mean, it's really something to watch your own mind. I mean, it's a kind of, you know, some people are embarrassed. Some people are distressed what they see in their mind, but a good attitude, just be humored by it. Jesus, you know, where did this come from? This is amazing, you know? I mean, this is, this is absurd. You know, this is the biggest joke around. And so there's a lot of humor, just watching your own mind and not taking it too seriously. If you don't take it too seriously. You're probably smile at some of the, what goes on in there. Some of the directors in the mind, you know, boy, where did they come from? And now humor is good. My heart is relaxing is good. Relaxing is the partner to mindfulness. It's hard to be mindful. Unless you're in Hard to be mindful without some degree of relaxation. Thank you. I hope this has been useful Hope it helps your mindfulness practice.