

2005-04-27 Concentration (Week 2 Part 1)

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SPEAKERS

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Welcome back to our second class of our concentration series. I'm feeling somewhat happy to be few and some of you came back, it's very nice. I didn't know what to expect. our capacity to get concentrated is meant to be a happy capacity, sometimes in distinguishing the path of concentration from the path of mindfulness, or Vipassana mindfulness is called a dry path. And concentration is called the Wet path. Mindfulness is dry because it doesn't have the joy and the happiness of concentration as its partners that comes along with it. And whereas concentration is wet and that it's saturated, with experiences of joy, happiness, well being, sometimes, rapture, ecstasy is quite good can be quite strong. And so we're talking about Developing capacity that involves happiness and well being. It's both the result of concentration practice and this temporary happiness, or you're concentrated. But also, it's the foundation for concentration practice. One of the conditions for getting constant concentrating on the age of supports, is feeling happy. And some people feel that's a little bit of has it backwards, because the reason that we're wanting to meditate is to get happy because we're so unhappy. So then you totally have to be happy First they get concentrated. Don't worry about it. But as you do the practices, they're purification forces, this force of change to happen. And that sense of well being welcome. Every human being has the capacity for concentration. And what we're doing in this Buddhist practice of constant practice, is taking in developing a very common human capacity. And Buddhists find it very useful to do that. And it's beneficial for the Buddhist path. Many people are interested in concentration because it helps them in their daily lives. Usually, we noticed that the absence of concentration is a source of difficulty in our lives of some sort or other. Some people who have scattered life scattered minds and daily life, need to look at their life and see if their life isn't too fragmented. In order for the mind to get settled enough or concentrated and add concentration meditation on top of a very fragmented life is maybe just makes things worse. You know, just sometimes doing one more Dharma activities on dharmic because it just you're filling up with more and more activities, even though it's supposed to be good for you if you stick to my chest now healthy so Anywhere concentration practice is a path of involves happiness and well being and, and it was nice for me to kind of be reminded of that and sit here with you and think about that is what we're kind

of addressing and looking at here. One of the descriptions of the joy or the happiness of concentration is that it's a happiness which is very different from many places, maybe the way people normally get happier associated with happiness or what they seek for in order to get happy. So for example, the happiness of concentration practice, is said not to be the same happiness as happiness of sensual pleasures. So getting a massage or eating good food or, you know, all the things that can be sensual pleasure, sometimes, scientists, I know thinkers have great, wonderful ideas. And part of just the attraction for that for them is the joy the delight, they feel in your mind kind of sensual pleasure that comes from seeing or figuring out negotiating these wonderful ideas that sometimes involves a mental kind of sensual pleasure. So the pleasure of concentration is not meant to be not that doesn't come out of sensual pleasure. The senses are not being stimulated. In other words, by something external, that makes us happy. It's also not the happiness of ego, in the sense that you know, or ego or sense of self isn't being pumped up in some way or praised or validated in some way that makes us happy. The cost of the happiness of concentration is the happiness that in a sense, arises. Some people say it rises from with no cause at all. It doesn't make any sense, normal causes nothing external enough. Good events are a good situation of stimulated, but rather it's a product of concentration itself. It's a product of the mind itself, settled on itself. As the mind gets quieter, more relaxed and settled on itself can post on itself. It seems to generate sense of feelings of well being of happiness and joy. And that sense of having a capacity for happiness, which is independent of what happens in the world around us independence of things we normally seek for to get that happiness is very educational for the mind. And so concentration practices off is described as a reeducation of the mind, with the mind breaks its habit, sometimes it's addiction, or looking externally outside of itself for happiness, as a reliable happiness is the only place we know that happiness is available. And if we only think that happiness is available externally, by things in the world kind of organize themselves in a certain way or from sensual pleasure, then you were at the kind of whims of the world and the changes of the world. And that's quite fragile at times. But if you have some sense of happiness that can be born from inside, that intense kind of is intense, natural or kind of inherent or just arises kind of from the deep integration of the mind Concentration does, then a person doesn't feel so much at the whims or at the mercy of the all the different forces of the world as they go up and down. So in talking about happiness as being an element of concentration practice or a sense of well being or joy, I say that now at the beginning so to remind you that in order to become happy or to feel a sense of well being, you can't be grim. And I know some people who try to get concentrated by being grim you know, if they take it really seriously, negative concentration practice so serious, you know, this is so important. And sometimes they're, they judge other people or, you know, someone comes into the, you know, someone comes in, it's really noisy sit down next to them. They get so upset, you know, how could you just say My Samadhi and this is you know, and they're just so, you know, wrapped in themselves and wrapped in, you know, the grimness of their endeavors. And it turns out that it's a lot easier to develop a healthy sense of concentration. If you're kind of kind of light hearted about it. Maybe Maybe it's really, you can be really serious in certain sense really intense really see this is extremely important and significant, be highly motivated to get concentrated to develop concentration, but without any sense of heaviness or grimness. Or, you know, like, you know, got to do it.

You can be very light about it

serious in life at the same time is a nice way. And then also want to say underscore nine parts out of the 10 things you need to do to develop concentration, nine parts or whatever nine parts of concentration is patience. Now maybe more useful tactic five requests and patience as a as a you know as a way of getting concentrated but to tell your patients is really essential. And if you're getting impatient, lighten up, it's a sign that maybe you get taken too seriously, lighten up. And it takes a lot of patience. In order to work with the mind and develop, we have these really important skill spiritual skills is learning to listen to silence. So if you could turn that up the assignments up please. They're really loud. Is that any better? Okay? Good. Anybody memorize the Metta Sutta? This week? So you'd like to volunteer to recite it? One of you or you would like to try Okay, please. Or maybe if you don't mind using this. And, and the way to use it, those of us is, is you hold it kind of vertically this way, because somehow that goes into the microphone. Better than this. And the reason to use it is primarily for the people in hearing system devices. And also other people's everybody here but but there are some people wouldn't hear otherwise.

Metta Sutta,

to reach the state of peace, one skilled and the good should be capable and upright, straightforward and easy to speak to.

Gentle and not proud,

contented

and easily supported.

Living lightly in with fee duties, wise and was census calm, not arrogant, and without greed for supporters, and should not do the least thing that the wise would criticize.

One should reflect

they all be happy. Secure.

May all beings be happy of heart.

all living beings, whether weak or strong, tall, large, medium or short. Tiny are big, seen or unseen.

Near or distant Warren are to be born.

They all be happy.

But no one to see another

or despise anyone anywhere.

Let no one through anger or aversion, wish for anyone to suffer

as a mother with

risked her own life

to rescue her child her only child. So toward all beings should one call today a boundless heart. With loving kindness for the whole world, should one call the abundance heart without obstruction without hate, and without no will, standing or walking, sitting or lying down, whenever one is awake may one remember this recollection. This is called a sublime abiding, hearing no one who is virtuous, endowed with vision not taken by views and having overcome Oh, read for sensual pleasure will not be reborn again

to keep keep the mic for a moment, and then Did you learn anything about your mind how to work in memorizing that?

Well, I learned I need to tie those various lines together.

What do they require? What a requirement? What did it require mentally of you to hold that in mind to learn that in the mind to bring it into the mind so it stays there?

Well, I really had to focus on each line, figure out how to tie them together, so I wouldn't forget. Good.

Thank you. Anybody else has any comments about what they learned about their mind? How they use their mind in order to develop memorize the text like this. Someone over here I don't know. Anybody want to say anything? What I took

I'm not particularly good with concentration. So for me, it just takes sheer repetition, repetition. So I tape it and make a tape of it. And I played in the car over and over and over and then I start saying it with the tape. And then I get to reconcile it without the tape and then I just keep saying it over and over and over 500 times.

So nine parts patience, repetition. Perseverance. Over here.

I decided to take it slowly. And so I found out if I do about three lines a day, then it sticks and I it's true. You have to tie it together. You have to tie the last line with the next first line. But I did find as the week went by, it got easier. It didn't take as many it didn't take 500 repetitions maybe it only took you know 50 but and I also found there's a great pleasure in memory. Something which I had forgotten about.

Okay, so to speak more about that pleasure.

Well, I actually began to experience it in Shyla Catherine's Udāna class because she asks us to memorize a shorter verse, usually four to eight lines. And just as you said, the last time I found that what I had memorized, would pop up in some appropriate situation. And I could, I'll never forget the ones I've memorized because they apply so well. And I expect the same will happen with this one. And certainly when I first began memorizing it, I began to think well, you know, you could aspire to be this way. It's not just a lovely description, it could be an aspiration, and it's so it does work down through levels. And there is something I don't know what the magic about memorizing is, but it does become a part of your thinking rather than just a rote piece. It begins to sort of inform your your thinking And, and in that way I could sense it could inform your behavior. Awesome. Beautiful. So I think we should be careful what we memorize.

And the other comments about Halloween the back

I found it easy if I wrote it out over and over again.

And I found that my visual memory

it's a little easier for me to do it visually than mentally you know where it was spoken. And I also thought it was very an enjoyable experience.

I'm so glad you asked us to memorize this with my 63 year old brain, I have thought for a while I couldn't do this anymore. And I've gotten to the place where I factor in stupid time, you know, for what I can't do, cognitively, that I used to be able to do. And I was utterly amazed that I could do this. And so that was very, very wonderful. And the way that it worked for me was, I found that I could remember what the words looked like on the line. And as I walked or ran or just, you know, did daily things I would repeat, and just did it stanza by stanza. And it made sense of me. I would memorize, because be able to memorize because certain things fit together like, well, if I live lightly and had few duties, maybe I wouldn't be wise, you know, that sort of thing. So thanks. You for the assignment. Thank you.

So did you notice that a little bit loud? Did you? Did you notice that you needed to be somewhat intense, in order to memorize has to be some intenseness in the mind, you notice that? Did you notice that there had to be perseverance to memorize? Anybody memorize without some degree of

perseverance? Did you notice that there has to be effort? You have to make effort. Did you notice that but maybe a little bit different perseverance that you had to kind of apply yourself first to what you're going to do through the phrases. And then you have to somehow, you know, or bring them praise up, and then somehow hold it. That'd be some kind of sense of holding it in the mind. You're gonna hold this here. That's a part of the focus. So it makes sense that we're holding, hold it there. Because what would the mind do on its own If you weren't what it would go off. So there's different is a kind of mental different mental factors that come into play. When you are trying to memorize something, these same factors need to come into play. When you develop, do concentrations practice. Some people are somewhat passive by concentration thinking, Oh, I just sit back and just kind of focus in some abstract kind of vague way. Somehow it'll happen. But these different qualities of the mind somehow has to be aroused. And so there's an arousing of the mind and alert alerting of the mind arousing and energizing of the mind. different factors of the mind that are required to get concentrated. So there has to be effort. without effort, there's probably not going to get concentrated. There has to be perseverance. There has to be intent is the intent part. Maybe Maybe it's a little bit different than intense, maybe not. There also, I think it has to be some sense of desire. You have to want to do this. Did you feel like wanting to memorize was a useful thing to have when you're trying to memorize any of you really not want to be good if someone said that? You said he didn't want to now in enough wanting to do you think that made it harder to do it? That sounds like a obstacle like yeah, made it very hard to find that to make it harder. So that I think it really helped if you want to do it. If you have a desire, desire, having a desire and wanting to do it doesn't mean you're good at it. But there has it really helps to have a desire. Yes, I want to do this. And that's a little bit different than the message that some Buddhists receive Buddhist teachers sometimes give where, where you think not supposed to have desire. If you're a Buddhist practitioner desires, the problem, somehow somehow you're supposed to do this without having a desire. The desire is actually a very important part of the path. But you need to have the appropriate desire. And one of the, you know, healthy desire, and by the desire to get concentrated, can be healthy. Now, sometimes desire for being concentrated, is mixed up with ego and ambition, you know, escapism and other things. So then it's not healthy, but there needs to be some kind of desire. Okay, so I want to I want to do this. And hopefully it's open ended without demand or expectation. Yeah, I really want to do this. And desire can be inspiring, you know, yes, it gives energy. And then there has to be the applica applying of attention to whatever you can do to the object of concentration. And then you have to hold your attention there, that the or elect expression Hang in there. We're going to hang in there with it. Just like you have to hold those phrases hold your mind engaged with the memorizing, so it doesn't drift off. So there's this arousing energizing aspect of practice at the same time There also has to be a relaxation. arousing, energizing without some relaxation will just probably get you agitated. If you only practice relaxation, you probably go to sleep, and you won't develop the clarity you won't actually develop the power of concentration that's available. And so relaxation and engagement and effort has to be kind of balanced and work together. And part of what a person is developing concentration and doing is monitoring themselves, monitoring their subjective experience monitoring what's going on within them as they do this practice. And then beginning to some degree, adjusting them so that they become more favorable, my helpful for the process of getting concentrating, getting concentrated. If you really don't want to get concentrated, this

lack of desire for it, then maybe you need to look at that and work that little bit. Inspire yourself in some different ways. Try to figure out why the lack of desire is there and see if you find out some way that you feel inspired you really want to do this? If there isn't the intent? What gets in the way of that? If there is a factor of perseverance, adequate or patience? Or is there is the effort, good effort or continuous effort? What is going on in the mind? And can you arouse something and engage yourself more actively? And maybe the same way you have to engage yourself, you really want to try and memorize something. So part of developing concentration practice is developing the ability to monitor your subjective state, monitor the different qualities and aspects of your mind, your mental and mental factors. And a little bit I'll try to explain what some of those are. And a lot of it will be that as you develop concentration, you begin, part of what you do is you begin learning and studying what is going on here. What's going on my own mind here? I'm on Arrow life, and how can I bring a line that so that helps me to get more concentrated helps develop concentration. Now this is very important because some people when they try to develop meditation practice or concentration, practice, leave out the self monitoring aspect, and just kind of hold their, their, their attention on the breath and find goes away to hold the breath. It's kind of like maybe almost like, like brute force, which kind of kind of mechanical thinking or magical thinking, but I just kind of locked myself on the breath, everything else will follow. And occasionally, that can be the case. But, but I think more realistically, you want to be able to have this monitoring, you're watching and seeing, and then as it becomes more second nature to monitor yourself, and notice, it's called riding a bicycle. And after a while, you can do it without your hands because you know, you know all the things you know, you kind of, you know, you don't have to think about riding a bicycle anymore because you've figured it all out. It's kind of in your body. And then at some point you can actually drop As as the concentration builds builds up, you drop some of the things you might even drop the monitoring at some point. But initially, when you first begin, you got to kind of be engaged in the process of developing concentration. And you want to engage as much of your, of who you are as much of your capacities as you can, in this process. How can I engage in this in a way that's helpful in some of the engagement is relaxing certain things, and other part of the engagement is arousing certain factors. So monitoring yourself engaging, adjusting little bit what's going on is part of the process. So in a few minutes, I'd like us to do a meditation practice. And I'd like to convey one more concentration teaching and I'll do this for a little bit of the wordplay the little bit of the richness of the English word concentration, to concentrate, one of the meanings of concentration is you take a liquid for example, like orange juice, you can concentrate it and get by you can buy concentrated orange juice, right. And it's a lot of the waters taken out. And so, really the essence the juice, the flavor and sweetness is really concentrated and, and then in order to drink it, you add water and dilute it again. So part of concentration is to is to is to condense something to concentrate a fluid to its essence essential qualities. One of the ways this is done in Buddhist idea of concentration is through a word called seclusion. It's a very important word in Buddhism for developing concentration is it concentrated mind is a mind that is occluded. Mind. Usually when we talk about mindfulness, we talk about a mind which is inclusive, that's open, expansive includes everything's ready to be attentive to everything. A mind is developing concentration is a mind that's developing a certain degree of seclusion, from all the different sensor, sensory input and all the different activities of the mind that can normally go on. So little bit, it's done physically if you can, where you go into a room and close the

door, so you don't hear a lot of noises around you, you go someplace where it's quiet, so you don't have a lot of auditory impact coming in. Some people like to close their eyes when they meditate, so you don't get a lot of visual input coming in. So you should cluding your visual field a little bit. Some people like to just meditate in a room where or situation where the temperatures not too hot, not too cold, so that the temperature doesn't kind of create sensations in your body. So there's some, it's some attempt to kind of, kind of limit the amount of sensory input coming in. So that so that the mind is not going out from all kinds of directions. And another another setting that is you're beginning to seclude yourself from everything else. So that your attention, your concentration, your mental monitoring, engagement, is getting concentrated, getting condensed. So you're not diminishing yourself in the sense that you're becoming less of who you are. But in essence, you're letting yourself become more concentrated, more condensed to your, the essence of you who are the fullness of yourself. There's nothing no diluted by all the different places the mind can go and scattered and engage in all these different things. Because beginning to getting concentrated so we get more of the essence of who our fullness of who we are. One of the ways of seclusion is we begin secluding the mind or separating the mind From a lot of it's normal thinking, everyday kind of thinking. And this is a very important to understand that this is essential in order to develop concentration. If you sit down to meditate and are still really motivated, consciously or unconsciously, to solve your life's problems by taking them out. You might, you know, maybe you'll maybe you'll be successful this particular city, finally get it. And so that's good, but you're not gonna get concentrated. If you want to develop concentration, if that's what you want to do. You have to be willing to at least be interested to feel like have any intention, have the desire, have the wisdom, to let go of your concern. You're preoccupied with thinking about problems thinking about life thinking about things that anything else, but what you're doing in that moment. So no matter how important it might seem to you, who don't you realize right now, this is not The time in place, we're thinking about things which are not having to do with meditation practice. Now, that's in some ways, quite obvious, but it's not obvious to the little mind. And the mind is very thinks that it's really important to think about things. So but if you kind of get it kind of grok, the idea that that's not what you're doing here, that's not the purpose of what you're doing here, then maybe you're more willing to temporarily put those things on hold to clewd your mind from those kinds of mental considerations and thoughts. A lot of people are not going to be very successful at first, that's including your mind from all the different thoughts that we're thinking about. That's okay. It's really important part of developing concentration practice is learning to let go of our thoughts. Okay. And even if you can just let go for half a second before the things can come back then You still exercising that muscle of letting go. And the more you can exercise it, in a sense of the stronger the muscle gets. And the more and the more the softer that muscle gets, it gets easier and easier to do it. And eventually you'll find it easier and easier. And there's other factors, other kind of mental factors that support concentration get stronger, they'll all work together to help you develop somebody. So one things we're doing is occluding. But not to live not to diminish who we are, but actually feeling of condensing who we are. condensing means, in my mind also that it's it's everything's included still. So there's a feeling of when I translated somebody last week, his composure is we really want to be composed and ourselves the best we can. So in the initial stages of developing concentration, we still have a kind of full, open awareness of, of our physical and mental world but we're not interested in the

world. Outside of that, so they're kind of an alertness to monitoring what's going on feeling what's going on to take in what's going on. So secluding the mind being willing to seclude another word. We're another way of saying the word seclusion. The Pali word is the Becca. And a word that works a little bit better in American culture that would inspire us better feel like that's right, then it feels right. seclusion, people have a little bit Wait a minute, what is the seclusion thing in denying stuff? Is it repression? Is it like turning away from the world or something? Another way that's maybe more American is reading, calling. It's a clue secluding the mind or seclusion called independence. We're helping the mind to become independent from its preoccupation with the world and sounds and things around there. And as the mind gets more concentrated, then it's a natural process. That's occlusion, getting stronger and stronger, so strong that people in strong states of concentration sometimes won't really hear anything around them that you know the sounds around them are really not really being registered because they're so secluded, because the concentration is so focused. Okay, a lot of ideas. Okay, so far. So if you'd like to stand for a minute to stretch, and then we'll do a sitting