

2005-05-09 Sustaining Practice

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SPEAKERS

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Good evening. Yes. In this yesterday what I should do tonight here. I was thinking maybe it was time to do questions is that we haven't done that for a long time and just have an open type of questions. She said, Oh, no, give a talk on how to sustain practice long term. And so I thought, well, so thinking about that today, and then I thought, well, I think I'd better maybe give a talk on it as his idea. Because if I asked her a question, she'll ask me that question. So I thought about it today and have some thoughts about the topic, but she's not here. How is it that tomorrow sustains any spiritual practice. But how does one sustain Buddhist practice or meditation practice over the long term? It reminds me of the kind of cliché or joke about mindfulness practice, where it said that mindfulness practice is quite easy. What's difficult is remembering to do it. the easy part is just kind of note being attentive and noticing what's happening now. But it's not so easy just to show up and pay attention to what's happening now. So the idea of how is it one sustains the practice nourishes, maintains it keeps it going over a long term, a long time. I think it's an issue which faces a lot of people, especially people who live lay lives, lay urban lives with work and family responsibilities. And there's so many pulls and pushes on our time and on our interests and effort. And it can be quite hard to sustain it practice to sit every day or keep it going for a long period of time. At one point today while I was thinking about this topic, I smiled to myself thinking, Oh, Ynez basically wants me to give away. Or she's kind of pointing to, you know, one of the secrets of this kind of practice. One of the keys secret, kind of like keys of how mindfulness practice or meditation practice works. And it's one of the secrets that Oh, we don't say very often. It's an open secret, right? And now and some of you might be new here the first time today and I don't know if you're here, you know, you're ready for this the secret teaching. So the one of the real secrets of my practice, and how it works and how it develops over time is continuity. So to maintain the continuity of practice over time, whether it's to sit every day, day after day, or to have continuity and bring your mindfulness to your daily life, continuity of, you know, whatever way you practice, whatever your practice might be, to have the continuity of repetition, do it over and over again, to practice. So how does one do that? what sustains that what keeps it going? And when I thought about this today, it's, I thought about it in the terms of that there are many variables. And the

way these variables work, you don't have to have all of them and you don't, and you don't need to have them all strong. You need to have one of them or some of them strong enough to be good enough to do enough. So it's kind of like If there's a five foot chasm to jump over, and so several, several variables need to kind of be in place to kind of allow for us to jump over there. So for example, you need a certain amount of strength in your legs, you need a certain amount of running space had to be able to jump far enough, get enough speed going. And you need to have a certain level of confidence that you can do it. And say that each of those, you have to have those have to each of those, you can give them a number of value number, how strong they are. And you have to get up to 10. If you get 10, then you strong enough you can manage to get over that five foot chasm. So it doesn't matter how you get to 10. So if you have nine parts, strengthen your legs and one part they've been running distance. Maybe you don't need any confidence at all. You have enough you've got a 10 But if

you get in, you might get three parts strength in three parts running distance. And then you better have four parts confidence, or you're not going to make it. Or you have nine parts confident, maybe nine parts, confidence is enough. And one part strength is enough. Or maybe you don't need any strength at all if you have enough speed. So the variables and what sustains and maintains a spiritual practice over a long time is kind of like there's all these different variables and, and for different people and different people at different times. different ones of them are strong, different ones of them are enough to get you up to 10 or whatever the number is to make, maintain the practice. So I'm going to give you a list of variables for spiritual life spiritual practice. And as I give them to you, you might listen about which of these is your strength, which of these kind of is works for you the strength longest hours present for you listen and see which of them might be the weakest for you. And, and see which of them maybe you can strengthen, you can work on which of them you might as well just forget because it's not your cup of tea. And you see kind of where it fits for you and how to work. So

the first two, all this together, because it's kind of a little bit clear to me a little bit how they work together or how they kind of add up together. The first one is intention and the second is having time. So what sustains practice over the long term, if you have a very if you have strong intention, strong motivation. then nothing will get in the way, your way you'll just do it. Your motivation will be there. You'll get up in the morning and sit or you apply yourself in practice and whatever way practice means for you, you'll be motivated, you'll do it. The other is having the time for people if people have a lot of time, they don't need to be very motivated. I mean, have to have some motivation of course, right? But if you have a lot of time, you know, you're retired or who knows what the reason is. And you don't have a lot of projects, a lot of things you're doing and like dizziness, live a quiet life. And you know, just all practicing, it's such a great thing so easy. I just roll on the bed, I sit on like breakfast, I come back and I sit, you know, I clean up after breakfast and then I sit and you know how much is going on, right and you have to be so motivated, just what's happening. And whereas if you have very little time Then the issue of motivation becomes really strong is your motivation, intention strong enough to sustain the practice, given all the other things that you're motivated to do or the other obligations or demands on your time. And I would say for people who are really busy, or have a lot of projects, a lot of ideas what

they want to do, it's really important to look at not just your intention to practice, but the intention for your life, what are the most sustaining important intentions that you want to base your life on? And then prioritize a little bit or look more carefully and see, you know, what, what is it that's really doable and workable? If you have too many things going, you won't do any of it well, and if you want to receive some benefit from a spiritual life, you maybe need to do it well, in some way. You know, you could be a weekend Buddhist. And that's very nice. No one's gonna knock you for doing that. But, you know, if you just do it on the weekends, or do you know, you know, once every great while you do a little bit of practice, it's going to be, you're not, it's not really going to the practice is not really going to sustain you. In times, for example, times of great crisis and difficulty. When type of difficulty arises in your life, like you get sick or you're dying, or some whatever crisis it might be, it really helps to have built up some momentum and practice some stability, some ability to get concentrated, some strength of patience, some compassion, some, you know, some skills with working with one's mind and hearts, so that we're not completely derailed in the time of crisis. It's a little bit of a, you know, sometimes you will come to me in times of crisis. And I'll offer what advice I can, but it's a whole different discussion with the person if the person has had a strong meditation practice leading up to that leading up to the right word meeting. Prior to that, time of crisis that Have they have some resources then that a person who doesn't have a practice doesn't have? So, you know, the more busy life is, the more important intention is? And do you have the intention to practice when you're tired? Or the have the intention to give a little extra time that it needs to kind of make it work? Or do you have the intention to simplify your life a little bit to make the space in time for meditation practice or for the whatever the spiritual practice you're doing? I've known people who have wanted it all and then wanted to add spiritual life on top of that, you know, this kind of like, you know, to be interesting to see what do people want at all there's a lot of wonderful things to do in life and wonderful things to attain and get to have and one human being can't have it all. All the things that are promised to us are dangled in front of us like carrots by consumer culture and popular culture is not calling For any one human being to do, so there has to be some choices there is to make and looking at our intentions and making choices and having sense of purpose for our life as part of that, that sustains practice. If we're not being realistic about the practice and what we can do, then I think it's all too easy to get discouraged. So then the second one is time having the time and I think it's actually very important.

The there's something happens to the heart or the mind or the inner psyche, spiritual psyche, when there's time for it to unfold. I'd like to think of the kind of spiritual core of our being as being something that's often quite shy. And it doesn't really show itself unless we have the time to it to kind of bubble up and show itself and, and, and kind of keep out kind of I get activated. I like to think of the kind of this spiritual side of human growth as being very inefficient. phenomenally inefficient, especially in the beginning. And for people who want to be efficient, it's just a drag. Because, you know, it'd be nice to sit down, close your eyes and enter into a one point Samadhi just like that's another good. I mean, that would be efficient writing get done with and, you know, I've heard people tell me tell me things like, you know, I really want to get enlightened so I can get on with my life. I have a lot of I have a lot of things to do. places to get people to meet. Let's get this enlightened part lighten it over quickly. You know, unfortunately, I think that for the efficiency kind of approach to life, that spiritual especially is blessed to

think it's best to think of spiritual life as being inefficient. So we're Be sure to give ourselves a Lots of time, lots of redundant time, lots of repetition, lots of hanging in there lots of kind of making open space for something to show itself and open space for us to unwind. The good part of, of a meditation like Buddhist life has to do with unwinding ourselves from being bound up and unwinding need time for that. So what sustains practice over the long term, long term is ensuring that we have the we give ourselves time for it open time possible times with spacious time. I think it's not a foreign idea to a lot of religions. A lot of religions have the idea of a Sabbath. And I love the idea of a Sabbath, you know, and some some some religions have this idea of you on the Sabbath, you don't do anything, you don't work. And, and, and it's kind of ensures guarantee protects you from all the different ways that our society tells us we do do do and accomplish and get something clean. It's really wise to do something like a Sabbath. So come to the one day sitting on Saturday. Come and do nothing per day. Another thing that sustains practice is faith and inspiration. Confidence. Some people are allergic to the word faith. And if that's the kind of person you are, then listen to the other variables, make sure they're strong enough. Some people have a lot of faith and carry people really far I'm really amazed at the strength of faith that some people have that sustains them through times of great difficulty. There ending any spiritual life, spiritual practice, it's worth its grain of salt and words, it's valuable, it's valuable, will present the person with times with tremendous challenge and difficulty. And so what is it that sustains you through the lows, the periods of discouragement and both the dark nights of the soul periods of practice and one of those things is faith or confidence or inspiration. And that can be some real inspiration in what's possible, where the path is going to real inspiration in the value of what you're doing some real faith in, in what the teachings are so real faith in the exemplars of the teaching those people who have gone really far and matured in the practice, I have a lot of faith in that person. And I don't know about this, but that person, you know, gives me a lot of confidence. I'm going to hang in there because of what I've seen this person. If that person could have done that, then maybe I could do too as a path that's worthwhile to follow. And there are many sources for faith and inspiration. Occasionally, some people have too much of it. And that's a problem. But, but faith is very important thing sustains and so if a person has trouble sustaining a practice over a long term, they might look at their inspiration in the faith, you really have faith. And you could turn this question about upside down. And you can ask, if you don't have a lot of faith in the practice you want to pursue, then you can ask the question, what is it you really have faith in?

And chances are that you have faith in something else. Some people have faith in making money. And that's where they put their faith in. Some people have a tremendous faith in, you know, owning a house, or a career or in relationships. And that's going to put a lot of emphasis their life, kind of in making certain things work or succeed, or they believe it's really going to burst, where their happiness is going to come from. Part of the sustainability project is to really look at what we deeply believe, and evaluate. Is it really realistic? Is it really going to provide the kind of happiness that I can depend on and is that useful in the long term? And if not, is there something else which is more reliable, more helpful and I would hope that if someone hasn't gotten the spiritual life has some inkling at least, that the spiritual life points to some kind of very deep, reliable form of well being, happiness, peace, that is independent from the conditions in the world. If we're always looking for the conditions of the world, to

provide us with peace and well being, then it's a setup to probably be disappointed at some point. But if we can learn to find a sense of well, being a peace is not dependent on the conditions of the world, then it's a whole different game with what life is about.

So related to this thing of faith and inspiration, is to have a clear sense of the importance of the spiritual practice that you're undertaking. So that requires that part maybe comes from study from listening to talks, partly from your own experience of practicing, but to really understand this question, orphans. And maybe it's important for you personally, may be important for your family, some people practice for their families sake for the sake of their children create a better world, or maybe a sense of importance for the world we live in. You know, it's maybe it's happening every generation but but there's a, you know, the world goes through tremendous crisis, tremendous difficulty suffering and pain and war. And I think it's a tremendous gift to the world, to have people who can overcome their hate, their greed, their confusion, so that we can go into the world with with kindness, love, compassion, generosity, and wisdom. It's, you know what, I can't think of anything better. And so how so important that some people do that. We have some people from our sitting group here, go set a three month retreat. Right after 911, and we've got a left in the new week or two weeks after 911, to go sit this three month retreat, and I made a point to go up to them before they left and said, you know, some people might have some doubts about going and going in this kind of reclusive, silent, long term retreat, in contrast to the tremendous or in crisis of 911 in this country, maybe we should stay, you know, somehow get involved and stay involved in politics or do something, you know, defend the homeland, or I don't know, what should we stay here. And, as I said, I want to reassure you that I think that one of the most powerful responses to 911 is for some people to go and clarify their own hearts. If no one did that, clarify their hearts, then I would feel I kind of lose hope. But the fact that some people are able to kind of do that deep deep work and really get into the roots of greed and hate and delusion and Reminds, then there's hope for everybody. And so I feel I want to encourage that this is a really fantastic response. It's really important that people do this. Someone does it. So, it clear sense of the importance. And there's two sides of this importance. One is, could be said more more positive and one is more negative than positive one is a very clear sense of the benefits and the possibility from a spiritual life. And the benefits can be long term, and the benefits hopefully are immediate. It's not so uncommon for me to meet someone who has done a lot of practice in a lot of retreats, and whose practice was directed towards attaining some enlightenment. And after some years of practicing, the Enlightenment they are pursuing didn't happen. And then they felt angry. With all their years of practice, they felt angry with their teachers. They felt angry, angry, you know, upset, you know, they felt discouraged, disappointed, depressed, you know, I did all this work and nothing happened. Most common response to that is to ask them if they find any value in one moment of mindfulness, independent of getting enlightened, was it valuable to be mindful and attempt to be present for your life as it is right now? And so far, none of them have disappointed me the PPC people. We've always had, oh, no, one moment mindful. I know the value of that. Isn't Isn't that enough? Because if you're if you're really mindful of the present moment, I think there's a kind of freedom there. There's a kind of a joy there. There's a kind of peace this there just isn't moment, nobody it is limit the present sense of immediacy. So to have a sense of the possibility and benefit of practice, I think it's really important to

have a sense of its benefits in the immediate present. And people who are engaged in mindfulness practice to really study this issue carefully, and see, can you find the benefit, a benefit of mindfulness practice where the reward happens instantaneous, with a practice the goal and the means and the goal of the same are attained at the same time. Because if you can find that sense of immediacy and value in the immediacy of presence right here,

then you might have hopefully have a sense, well, this is good enough. But this was valuable in and of itself. You won't be disappointed in having done that effort. Even if you don't get in like whereas This is Vicki Roshi once said, if your practice is sincere Almost as good as getting enlightened, and that sense, both are possible, having a sense of the benefits of the present moment, the immediacy of practice, and the possibility of some kind of opening realization experience down the line. But just to experience the benefits of it, and have a sense that you're moving towards something beautiful, something marvelous, sometimes spiritual practice and meditation practice, for some people can be like falling in love, where it just you sit in this kind of the sense of wonderful opening, heartfelt opening sense of joy, a sense of kind of inspiration that just comes from sitting down and opening up and being present. And it feels like you're moving into something really wonderful. The sense of that direction to the benefit is so obvious. Sometimes there's a vision that people have and what's possible. They sense you know, how much they're suffering now, and they have a vision that it's possible to be free of the suffering and so they see that ability that they feel how important it is to do that work. That's kind of the positive side sense of the importance of it. The negative side of the understanding the importance of practice is to have a clear sense of danger. The danger of not practicing. And some people, this works really well, they've lived a life which has been very, very difficult. For example, maybe they've been addicts of some form or other. And they see if they're not really practice, they don't practice really carefully and diligently. that they'll fall back into the old habits. And for some people, it's a matter of life and death. I've known people for who is a matter of life and death with their practice or not. If they didn't practice, their old habits would take over and they would just slide right down. And some of the most motivated people to do practice that I've known and heard about have been prisoners and they probably gotten prison because they get some You shouldn't have done. And they probably didn't have enough ability to be present for this themselves have self control, track what's going on. And so they feel it's really important to find those resources. So we don't make the same mistake again. Sometimes it can be, you know, saying something to a friend. There's a little cliché is it to take take 20 years to create a really good friendship and one sentence to ruin it. One moment of you know, being careless. This last week I someone forward an email, I think it was meant both for me, I guess, someone who said that. Mostly she enjoyed my talk. You listen to my talk on the web, but that she was really disturbed by something I said. And, and so I read what she said to say, and she quoted me back. And I said, you know, she's right. I really blew it. I shouldn't have said that. I was being careless. I, you know, I was probably kind of flippant or too casual in the seats sitting up here. And I shouldn't have said that. And I felt, oh, there's a big responsibility sitting up here. And there's some danger. It's, you know, if I say the wrong thing, you know, it hurts people causes problems. And so I need to be more attentive, because a sense of danger, I become a little more cautious here. And what I do some people the sense of possibility is really what inspires them. For some people the sense of danger,

which really gets gets them going. And for some people, it's both. For some people, the sense of Danger is nine parts out of 10. It's good enough. That's what just give some going. And for some people they do danger is zero or 10. They haven't. That's not how they live their life. Maybe different personalities, different backgrounds. Who knows, you know. Another thing that sustains practice over long term is having support. Some people need a lot of support, and some people don't need much at all. When for many people when they try to practice alone, without support of other people,

it's impossible. It's really hard. I would say that for myself, I could not have practiced alone. If I'd read a book by practice and got the basic ideas and tried to practice on my own, I wouldn't have I would have been I would not have been able to sustain it. I was really dependent on my teachers and my other friends who were practicing at the same time, carrying me along and encouraging me via giving feedback to me inspiring Me, setting support is really important. And one of the ways it's important is that as people begin to practice, sometimes their interests and values begin changing. And if their co workers or family or friends, don't change with them, there can create some dissonance. And you can start feeling like you're weird or strange or feel like you don't have the courage to make that to keep developing and changing yourself in the direction you feel is right. If it's going to make you so different from from the other people. But then if you have other friends who are practicing or community like we have here, you realize that either you realize that there are other people who are weird and it's okay then. Or maybe you realize that maybe it's not so weird. Or maybe, you know, anyway, he realized that, you know, you're not alone and you have the support, then it's easier to maintain it and sustain it. When I was living in monasteries, there was a whole you know, large group of people practicing together and It was really powerful the sense of the sense I had, of being carried by the collective energy. People get up early in the morning, we wake up at four o'clock in the morning, sometimes for long periods and just get up and sit. And, you know, practice throughout the day and go late at night and sit and, you know, all this practicing going on in the monastery. And it was easy to do, because that's where the bus was going. That's what was going on, you know, you get on that bus. And that's where you go, you know, you get on, you're there and all these people around you are doing that and they say, Come along, and you know, the bells ring and, you know, it's it's just, it's really easy to carry it along. And, you know, I don't feel like practicing today. You know, I think I'll rest you know, come on, come on, let's go, you know, momentum is there. And, and then, when I went to Asia, the first to practice the first time

Thailand I showed up a little funky meditation monastery temple. And I introduced myself to the abbot and said, I'm here and learn whatever kind of meditation you're teaching. What should I do? He's like, Great welcome. And he said, there's a little hot one, one little hut on stilts up on top of all swamps in the edge of the monastery. And you have to walk across these wooden planks across the swamp, up to this little hut. You go out there, and you practice and come back and see me tomorrow. So I went out there, and I was all alone. Practice sit there. And I realized I'd never sat alone for any extended period of time I've done sits out for an hour or two at home, but to sit you know, 15 hours a day, Sydney walk, do walking meditation for long periods of day alone. I've never done that. And I'd always relied on the Mont monastic kind of support that I got All these good people around me. By the time I

got to Thailand, I've done all this monastic practice, I had a certain amount of strength and momentum and discipline and, and capacity that I developed there in the monastery when I had the support of my friends. When I showed up to be alone, in Thailand, I recognize this as being Oh, this is what comes now for me. Now I need to learn how to do this alone. I have to learn to have the motivation, the intention, the sense of importance on my own, and without the group without the support, and it means I need to look at myself, I had to develop those resources with myself. And that became extremely important. And then, later when we got going back to Burma, to Southeast Asia the second time, I did a much longer retreat. And then after about a couple of months into the long retreat, I was amazed. How much my thoughts had to do with my old spiritual community where I used to live in San Francisco Zen Center. And the people, the practices, the, the, the culture there had somehow burrowed itself deep into my psyche. And I was sitting there, you know, half a world away, sitting there, minding my own business. And I was still thinking about promotions at the Zen center, you know, getting a better job there and you know, you know, and, and having conversations, my teachers and you know, wanting to impress them and I just couldn't believe it is amazing. And so then, so then part of the task there was okay to do this practice so I can become free of all those social concerns that I still carried with me and I made a kind of Commitment are a vow that I would not go back to the San Francisco Zen Center until I had Zen center out of my psyche and the anyway there's is tremendous value in having support from other people is tremendous value in practicing alone and you know different times in their life different things are necessary. Some people need a lot of support more than others, it's fine to get it. And I've known people who've come here to our group, and they would come to every sitting every event we had here and they just seem to need a lot a lot of support. They need a lot of encouragement and a lot of it's okay and reassurance and, and, you know, sometimes I felt I was gonna have a baby, the baby will along and now they grew up, they grow their spiritual grownups. I'm just so happy that this place Could be this, you know, promote, you know, that was where they got that support when they were kind of spiritual babies and now they're like, not just grown ups like elders, and they don't need us anymore. They don't come anymore. You know, they've they've, you know, they're off someplace else. But it's just so great to see that you know how things change and how to develop. So it's fine to get support, if that's what allows you to sustain the practice over time.

Then another thing, which is important, is having some wisdom, some understanding about the suitability of practice. And it's a strange term suitability of practice, what practice is suitable, which is suitable practice for you. So, if you're overly idealistic, and I can remember sometimes I had these crazy ideas and everyone's flying back from Asia. And I've been practicing Japan and Southeast Asia and knew a lot about the monastic practice there and I read this book about this marathon runners of non TA, you know what the marathon runners and they run these marathons, they run you know, all through the night. They always do. So they're just, you know, great athletes and their spiritual discipline practice for like three years is all this running around the tempo is huge mountain. And they carry a knife with them. Because if they falter and fall or they falter and stop, don't finish, you know, the run, and this was to kill themselves. So that's one way of getting motivated and sustaining your practice. And so I remember reading, you know, reading all this stuff and being on the plane back to America and, and creating this list of I was going to be the super Yogi practitioner, I was going to get

up early on everybody else and I was going to, you know, do my running first and I was going to, you know, and this and that and you know, it's kind of embarrassing to tell you

And you know how long I managed to follow my, my schedule, not one day,

get back to that big idealistic idea, never even actualized at all. And so you have some sense of, you know, balance some sense of what's appropriate for the kind of life we live. And so that involves, you know, in terms of time in what you do, the kind of practices you do with the practices most useful. And also how you live your life. So for example, someone who has, like, for example, when my kids were really young, we're still kind of young, still a little bit an issue. But I used to get up every morning to sit that was my thing to do for years and years and years. I would sit first thing in the morning, and I loved it. It was kind of like part of my my life to do that. And then when I had These young kids at home, you know, we did get up early, you know, we got up at one o'clock, then we got up again or two o'clock, we get up at three o'clock, and then the four o'clock. And so then you know, getting up at five o'clock, it just didn't make sense. You know, then it was just asleep. And so it wasn't suitable given that kind of life to get up early in the morning to sit. So I found other ways to sit every day I would sit later in the day, sometimes I was opportunistic. I would sit you know, I didn't, because the schedule was so variable I would sit at different times. So to have a sense of what kind of practice is sustainable over time, if it's too idealistic is too too ambitious is not going to work. So what is it that actually you can do and keep it up repetition? continuity is really important. So what can you do continuously? What can you do repetitively day after day. And if you can't do half an hour meditation, if you say I'm going to do half an hour, every day And you only get around to do it every fifth day. Maybe you set yourself up too high a goal. Maybe if you said, Go 15 minutes a day, then you can actually do it every day. So what is it that allows you to maintain a regularity over and over and over again. Given the life you have given the inspiration, the faith, the sense of purpose that you have for your life. And then it's useful to have what's called a toolbox toolkit of different practices you might want to use, so that in different situations, you can call forth different practices. If you only have one kind of practice, then it might always not always be suitable, given where your life is at. Sometimes it means more useful to loving kindness practice, or sometimes so when, for example, when I was pushing my kid in a stroller sometimes because you know, got to do it, you know, you wouldn't sleep or nap or whatever the reason was. I found that was a really great time to do loving kindness practice. And I would just love going for these walks in the stroller and, and I would just run this running, loving kindness phrases going through my mind. And I would think about all the different people I've met that day or anybody I can think of in my life, and send them loving kindness, sending my good thoughts and wishes. And I used to love you know, stroller rides, because I had that as a practice that I could do. And then the greater range of practices that a person knows about, the more than the corners of the day in different situations, you find yourself in the day, you can apply them and use them. If you only have one practice, maybe, you know, maybe it's you know, like mindfulness is said to be applicable in all situations. But realistically, you know, maybe some things are more useful to do. So ways of practicing. Sometimes having doing a concentration practice is helpful. Sometimes memorizing some

texts like spiritual text and having available and reciting it yourself is really helpful in different sorts of circumstances.

And the other thing is a corollary of not being too idealistic. The opposite is not being too. Nothing idealistic enough, or not being being filled with too lazy and complacent. To think, you know, that's sometimes also a way of getting discouraged or not having to practice be sustained. If you think Well yeah, I'll get around to it. I'll do a little bit here and there, I'll do some practice. And then it doesn't really go anywhere. And one of the ways isn't going to you don't feel any momentum building up any strength or any change or any sense of growing calm or growing confidence or growing concentration or growing sense of mindfulness. If nothing begins happening, then you know, you could slip off the slip off the path really easily. But if you have enough continuity, and you're tracking yourself to see Oh, there is some kind of momentum building up here, then you won't likely you want less likely to get discouraged or give up because nothing's happening. So one of the part of the value of regularity is to create momentum. And just like you know, you go to the gym, or you exercise some some kind of way, that if you only exercise on January 1 every year, you know, you get discouraged after a while. But you got to do it kind of regularly in order to feel some of the benefits and they can feel how they grow and how they did over time as you kind of keep the exercise going. Same thing with meditation practice is going to exercise and you feel the benefits as you do it. And as you feel the benefits, the benefits themselves will feed back into the inspiration loop feedback into the motivation loop and make it easier and easier. Sometimes it's very hard for a period of time and person's new work. But then if you keep doing it becomes easier and easier. Sometimes just doing it every day, day in day out. And not giving yourself any escape clause is really helpful, so that it becomes as commonplace as brushing your teeth. And I think there's a lot of value, there's a lot of importance to developing a meditation practice. On such a regular basis, that it becomes like brushing your teeth, and part of the value is the self consciousness, the sense of, of, of that it's special. falls away, just that easy. So here's what happens. And when it says a specialist drops away, it's sometimes it's possible for the mind to settle much quicker and much more deep. It's only two things kind of special, the minds a little bit excited, and kind of deeper levels of letting go can happen. When you feel the meditation practice nothing special. You just keep doing it and doing it doing it. Probably this quick my last point, I realized making these lists. There's no end to this list of variables. So it's kind of arbitrary when you stop. And another thing that some people find very helpful is to periodically go on retreat. Whether it's a one day retreat, like we haven't Saturday, or it's a non residential retreats like we have here a couple times a year, it's a residential retreat, have some experience of going on retreats where you're practicing in a more sustained way throughout the day. Many people find that kind of jumpstart to practice. And to do that periodically, it's kind of like getting to know you do that and then you're good for a while. And then after a while, maybe your inspiration dries away and you do it against going retreat and kind of keeps things going in a nice way. Three more things very quickly to kind of list thing that is very helpful in order to sustain practice over time is having Your sense of integrity and practicing with the precepts practicing with your ethics, so that you feel like you're living a clean life. A clean life clean, ethical life is a life sustaining practice much more easy than an unclean ethical life. And then patients without patience, there's no spiritual life. You know, someone once said, we simply think Taan Geoff, in a meditation

record acquires nine parts patience, you know, in one part, something else. So patience is so important. And if you haven't learned it yet, you better learn really soon. Because otherwise, you'll suffer a lot of patients. And as I said, in the beginning of the talk, meditation practice is inefficient. And it has all kinds of ups and downs, and you can be sure that's gonna be downs, there's going to be difficult times and what sustains you through those difficult times. And one of those qualities can be one of the variables can be patience. And then the last one Not the least one that can sustain a practice over time is a sense of love. And that's

a very, very vague word, but a sense of deep joy, well being the light kind of real appreciation for the practice room itself, for the spiritual dimension of life, and to feel that there's that sense of that kind of sense of spiritual love is present and available and close by. Some people get fed by that out of a sense of devotion. And they have their Bhakti orientation kind of sense of devotional practice. Some people do devotional practices every day to feed and reveal and express the love they feel. That's so deeply connected to it, I think spiritual life. And so that's really keeps the juices going, keeps the inspiration going to him that there are periods when meditation becomes very dry, and periods of time when I think there's gonna be some great love The love of spiritual life. I, you know, I kind of like to think of it like a marriage in that there's, you know, honeymoon phases and there's, you know, times when we're really it's really great. And sometimes it just lousy, it isn't, you know, not working so well, but you're married, so you hang in there and just kind of stay there and you don't see it through and, and, you know, I don't know, I don't know that many people who their marriage or their partnerships, you know just kind of goes to do some from better to better, better, better, better, better, better better you know, just like in some linear way right? They live happily ever after. And, you know, marriages can be quite trying at times. So when there's love and commitment in spiritual life spiritual practice, it's the same thing. The only one which makes it really hard though is in that kind of life spiritual practice. There's only going to be one partner at one you know, person you know to you. So if you're having difficulty The relationship it's with you.

So anyway, I hope that this has been helpful. I don't know if this was interesting even but I was a little worried was gonna be boring. Go through a list like this. But I hope gives you some idea that that spiritual life is sustained by many different variables. You don't need to have all the variables you just need to have enough to get to 10 or whatever the number is in the spiritual world. And look at your variables and see what needs to be adjusted and tuned and developed. If you want to have a strong practice, that's your motivation, then see what needs to be tuned so you can have it available to everyone. Thank you