

# 2005-05-11 Concentration (Week 4 Part 2)

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joy, people, teachers, concentration, mind, absorption, jhana, equanimity, states, deep, retreats, feeling, happened, rapture, talk, clinging, concentrated, rupa, space, infinite consciousness

## SPEAKERS

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Now when now, there are categories or different levels of these jhanas. And in the Buddhist tradition, they enumerate eight. Sometimes they have nine, but for our purposes we talked about eight. And now different teachers of jhana of these absorptions have different criteria for what constitutes a jhana. What qualifies. So if you read different books about this topic, you'll find different teachers have different ideas about it. Some people it's not really fair to judge, you judge different people, but they have some people. Friend of mine kind of evaluated different teachers of jhana. And he says, most of this teacher, he has john alight, what qualifies? What qualifies him JOHN has really liked, and he allows a student practitioner to still have some thinking going on in that state. And then this teacher here, he's jhana, heavy. And not only is no thinking, but there's no self awareness, you don't even know you don't even realize what happened and he tell you come out of the state. And so it's that power You're so absorbed that you could have the sense boss, you were, you know, be really present, but you're not exactly aware of what's going on. So when you come out, then you can review what happened and you realize what was going on. So there are different teachings different ideas about what it is probably my theory is that because I haven't studied all these teachers don't know what their story is. But my kind of theory these days is that each of these eight jhanas can be experienced at different levels of intensity. And so some people are experiencing it at the mild intensity summit a strong intense City, but it still involves the same qualitative shift. So there are eight jhanas, eight absorptions some teachers will refuse to talk to their students about about them. The students will say, if I reach the first jhana yet I'm in the second or third. And there's there's a there's there's someone wrote an article recently called jhana without numbers. And, and there's some sometimes rather unfortunate things that happened about jhanas and ambition and measuring where am I in this level and where are you and I'm better than you and all this stuff, you know, neurosis around anxiety around jhanas know that some teachers don't talk about it at all, but rather what they focus on is, is paying attention to what are the mental factors that come into play, as a person gets concentrated, and then beginning to To help the student work with those factors, so, that concentration gets deeper and deeper without putting it into some, you know measurements categories for a second or third

absorption. But the principle behind going deeper and deeper into the states of absorption is going from more from coarser mental activity to more refined and so, as we go deeper we will learn to do is to let go of coarser and coarser but relatively coarse, coarser mental activity until the mind gets more and more refined, more still more verified. And it's amazing the verified, all estates that can that can arise that can occur. So, at the first absorption There are five factors which are a present that are important there for their record. Nice. And these are the five that we focused on access concentration. So it's the initial sustained application of attention, joy, happiness, and one pointedness. Of those five, the coarsest is the initial and the sustained application of Attention Attention, which takes intention takes directing the mind to doing what you do. So in order to go from the first to the second that doing this of the mind has to fall away. And mostly and it's kind of relaxed the various way that different teachers have different systems and how to get a person to go from one to the other. But, but it kind of relax that course that we thought that course but the relatively course as a course of thinking, relax it. And then we'll open up into the second and that's characterized by the presence of For now we can just say the other three. And in particular, Joy seems to be really strong. And so it's characterized by a lot of joy. And some teachers will actually encourage this point the student to cultivate and strengthen that joy and really pervade it through the body, kind of just kind of like work it through the body and expand it and grow it intensify the joy. And this is where the joy can reach levels of rapture. Proven phenomenal rapture, that can happen. You know, it's it's better than any kind of rapturous kind of experience that you could have in any, you know, non meditative life. Some people don't have, you know, peaks of rapture in this some people it's much more kind of mild, but there's this kind of joy. That's part of it. The tradition has five lists five different kinds of joy that can happen. I don't remember all of them right now. But there's momentary joy just kind of like there's cascading joy. There's kind of flashes of joy. You kind of just flashes sometimes flashes all over the body. There is pervading joy, different kinds of joy. Life's wonderful like the Eskimos have all sorts of snow supposedly, the Buddhists have always words for joy. and discuss getting joy I remember once I was going through very deep states of concentration like this and a lot of this joy coming up and the sitting ended it was time to go have lunch. And I went to a dining dining hall, caught by food I managed to get my food because sometimes when you when you're some, some people when they go into these deep states of altered altered states, the sense of being altered, stays with them after they come out. Some people seem to pop out pretty easily. But some people stay in it was kind of to kind of end it you know and finish get my food and sit down and then The act of being focused on picking up the fork of food up into my mouth, you know, takes take some concentration, right to do that. And so somehow my seemingly my system kind of locked back into the concentrated state. And I had these waves of joy just washed in my body. And it was so intense to put the fork down. And I sat them down even for a long time without being able to eat because you don't know. So it gives you maybe a little bit of sense of you know, what can happen. And some people get frightened by this. They never had something so powerful, you know, what's this going on? Sometimes the symptoms of this rapture this joy, the Pali word is pīti, which is p i t i and sometimes has some physical symptoms in the body which are not People normally wouldn't identify with joy or rapture. And so it's a little bit strange when you go to a teacher and they say that you say these things are happening my body and they said Oh, that's good. Are you having joy having watch and so that's what happens to you maybe sometime and sometimes

it can be shaking in the body sometimes there can be the body jerking in the body when I mean I don't want to tell you because it's not so usual and if I tell you then you get frightened and think that you know, oh, this is supposed to happen whatever but but I tell you what, when I one of the retreats, I sat in Thailand there was a good nice teacher there I sat with for a month but he had a little bit he a little bit strange in the way he was guided me and I showed up there I was introduced himself myself as a Zen priest. In Japan, I had my Zen robes and, and so I guess he had a lot of hope from my building. Get concentrated so good alive one here you know he's gonna and so I had to go and I'd still hot and they sat alone day after day, but every day I had an interview with him and so the interviews went along fine for a while and after a while he started saying things like shaking it are you bouncing around yet? I think no nothing's happening you don't have any specialty report and find it Oh yeah, just a few weeks ago there was a Brazilian woman here and she was just bouncing off the wall you know as if you know this you know symptoms as rapture. Some people wouldn't have a strong reaction to feel as if their bodies floating like just gets really light and comes like lifting. Maybe that's where some of the stories are people kind of saying they can fly when they meditate. just consume simple lift. If you open your eyes maybe you so one of the one of the some teachers when they want people to work with In a second jhana with a lot of joy, when you really get not to go through too quickly, but stay there, stabilize and get used to it. Until such a point we begin thinking, realizing that this joy is a drag. Can you imagine that? This is a drag. It's like too much, it's like almost energy happening all the time. It's like always being kind of wired or kind of, you know, kind of feeling really good. And it's kind of like if you always have a smile on your face if you You know, I've smiled so much like tired. You know, it's enough of this smiling please. You know, you get so tired, smiling. So, so, like in some social situations where they smile, smile, smile, smiles. And so it's kind of like it's too much after a while and so that that when you finish feeling that's too much, then some of the enchantment some of the attachment some of the, you know that we that joy begins to fade and at some point person, let's go Have the joy. And then what's what's, what's left is is happiness. And the happiness is much more sublime much more satisfying than the joy. And you know, it's much, much better. Now there's a kind of progression that happens, you know, that's going on here. And I wanted one retreated try to bypass that progression because I thought the joy was kind of getting kind of old, I knew it was kind of like, you know, kind of, you know, relative, right? It was kind of, like, more near the surface, it's kind of not so deep. So I could feel the joy was gonna start happening. I don't want to do with this. I just want to I want to go for the deeper stuff. So I kind of held the joy at bay. Can you believe it? You know, I'm not gonna have this joy, you know, no dice. And, and remember, I was doing walking meditation, and this was going on, I was just kind of keeping it down. And after a while, I started getting a headache. And so finally said, This is ridiculous. That's all Okay. So the joy happened, kind of pseudo that happened just. And then she was I happen, it passed really quickly too. And I've dropped into deeper states. I didn't eat, you know, it was all this time spent repressing my joy, you know, was just a waste of time. So so this progression goes on. And then at some point you stabilize to happiness, and at some point you're trained to let go of the happiness. What isn't that the whole point? But there's nothing better than happiness. And that is a state other than the fourth absorption, state of equanimity, profound equanimity. And where there's no there's very little or no pain in the jhanas. But in the fourth jhana is none at all. There's no such tremendous equanimity. There's tremendous balance sometimes. Some

people the sense of the body disappears, you kind of you kind of your eyes are closed. So you can't, you know, your eyes closed, you kind of try to look around or feel around to see if you still have a body. And you can't. There's no evidence you have a body anymore. You know what happened? You mean you can open your eyes still right there, right? haven't gone anywhere. But But empirically, the way you kind of like sitting there, you just can't identify body. Sometimes if this if it hasn't done happened earlier. So at this point, sometimes the breath seems to stop or I stopped, and you don't even notice your breathing. Maybe there's no breath happening at all. And so it's tremendous sense of peace of coolness of equanimity. And you might have to take my word on it, but it's much more satisfying, and happiness if you had just like, oh, so it's pretty great. Some teachers who are into this kind of stuff will stop at that point. That's enough. You get to the fourth jhana that's more than you need. This is fine. Now let's get Now let's do the real work. You know, this is just kind of this is kind of warming up. Now let's start doing the mindfulness work. Let's just switch over to Vipassana. And that we'll talk about next week a little bit, how the concentration practice is an integrated with Vipassana practice. Some teachers will have students go continue and go further into what's called. So these first four habits as a group of four are called the Rupa jhana. And Rupa means form. But for this purpose, it might be better Well, you say you don't have to you can forget it if you want it here, Rupa might be better translators concept. It's meditations of conceptual meditation in a certain way. The then you go into the our Rupa or formless jhanas, or concept plus jhanas in a sense, I'm not sure I'm a little bit anyway, the next 45678 called the honorable john or the formless jhanas. And here is partly foremost because there's no body, there's no form, there's no objects anymore that you can identify. And, and the first one is infinite space. So you're sitting there and your body disappears. And when your body disappears, what's left? space. So you let go of the equanimity and you slowly let your attention get filled or sink into or disappear into the sense of just in space that's left and you become more of infinite space. It's pretty far out it's kind of like acid, you know, just like this far, but it's but it's legal. So far and then And then. But then in order to know that there's infinite space, there has to be consciousness. So then you let go, the sense or the experience of space, in tune into consciousness, and how consciousness feels like it's infinite, then what's left in his infinite consciousness, boundless consciousness. And you've heard sometimes it's spiritual, some spiritual traditions, he talks about having cosmic consciousness or infinite consciousness. And I don't know what those people are talking about. But Buddhists will often say, oh, that what they're doing is they're falling into this seventh jhana of this infinite consciousness. And it seems so far out a lot of these stages of the jhanas sometimes people will come and say, is this enlightenment? Or they're convinced I got an enlightened because it's so you know, it's so compelling and so different from ordinary life. So then there's infinite consciousness. And then from infinite consciousness, if you let go of consciousness I mean, first you had space right? And you let go space. So the conscious of the new The space is left right. But if consciousness you take away consciousness, what's left? What's left Kelly? Well, what do we say? Nothing right? So nothing is left. So then is a state of nuts, no thingness doesn't doesn't doesn't you can't talk about space because space is kind of like a thing or consciousness, no thing is. Now what happens you've let go of that. So see the mind is getting more and more refined more and more simple. In a sense, you could say there's less and less activity going on in the mind and there's so a lot of a lot of things. We normally take as being natural or, you know, just inherent part of the mind are

actually involved functioning of the mind, for example, time or in space. So sense of time kind of pretty much disappears in the states of absorptions. The sense of, of space spatial sense disappears. Because it's an activity of the mind that creates time and space. So what happens when there's no activity, time space disappears. And so when you let go of no thingness statement, then there's a state called neither perception nor non perception, because you can say there's perception there. But you can't say there is no perception there. You can't see kind of like cancer, per se what it is, but it's, you know, the mind can very, very simple. Now, you might be asking, What in the world is this about and why should Buddhists want to do this You know, and, and it's so different from ordinary life. One is because like, you know, like Hillary said, Sir Edmund Hillary, you know, because it's there. And other is that there are benefits from the States as a concentration, especially the first four are very, very healing. They're phenomenally healing states. And if you can access to them, it's kind of like you're, you're, you're accessing, you're kind of separating yourself from the world, of suffering, of pain of illness and sickness and into a state of tremendous sense of well being. And you can sometimes almost feel that the healing and the goodness kind of moving through the body in some of these states of concentration. But the Buddhist reason for it, also it's it starts to recondition the mind. Most of most human minds are conditioned phenomena for the most part. We have certain kinds If stimulus and we've developed certain conditions in response to it, if, if every human being you meet for the next year, yells at you. And then a year from now you walk down the street, and you meet a new person, you're probably going to brace yourself to be yelled at, again. Because you've been conditioned by all those thousands of people during the first year, but maybe that person is going to whisper, right? So you don't know what's gonna happen. But the mind is conditioned in some way. And so we conditioned ourselves in all kinds of ways. Some of those are very unfortunate. And it's really amazing to begin discovering, how much how we see ourselves how we see the world around us, our perceptions of things, our values, our attitudes, our conditioned phenomena, and then not inherent, the natural part of the health system. And some of that conditioning is very unfortunate. We've had a tremendous feeling of You know, you have neurosis and anxiety and psychosis and feeling this lack of self worth and feeling of self criticism, self hate and a lot of unfortunate things can be conditioned in mind. It's as we get into these states of absorption, this the suffering of the psychological states are replaced by a tremendous sense of well being. And that well being is like you being bathed in goodness. And it's reconditioned that we educates. The mind. We educate the kind of the cells in cellular level they say sometimes, and it's very helpful for some people to have a reeducation process and to realize to get a sense of themselves, perception of themselves as having capacity of having all this goodness and joy, and begins to kind of loosen up the grip of the old identities and when we have who we think we are In the final thing, the reason for these deep states of concentration is so that the mind is stable enough, clear enough, focused enough and simple enough that it could, it can identify the most subtle or the most salacious core places of clinging in the psyche. Somehow we address those. It's one thing to address, you know, our clinging to the clothes we wear. You know, that's kind of relatively easy, right? But there are deep, deep clinging in the psyche that's usually not known by, you know, the mind at street level street consciousness that we wrote while we walk around. That is really only accessible when the mind is really concentrated. And so, this deep concentration gives us both the stability to see it and gives us a sense of what Being. So when we look at this part of us look at the clinging and

letting go of it. We're doing this from a position of feeling good feeling, feeling delight and seeing something beautiful. If you see the depths of clinging, and the need to let go of it, but you're feeling really afraid in general in your life, you might feel really afraid to let go then. So you so it's a really wonderful system, we have you, you brings you up to the edges of the deepest clinging, but you have a sense of well being all around it as you do that. And then it gives you access to this deep states of clinging, and then the opportunity might arise to let go. And now it's possible to let go at the deepest levels without doing nice absorption stuff is very deep absorptions. Some teachers will don't really care if you get absorbed or not, or did not even teach you to do that or some teachers occasionally even tell you to avoid doing that. Focus directly on doing the deposit network. Some teachers will say no, you should be for me personally, you should do this, this absorption work get that under your belt first. There's different theories. And different theories are useful for different people. So it's not like one shoe fits all different. There's different minds. Some people have really good concentration minds. Some people have really good mindfulness minds. So a little bit depends on you know, what's suited for each temperament, each kind of person. I wanted to give you the image for each of the first four jhanas it's used in the ancient discourses of the Buddha. The first jhana is a member in order first, John China is, is like having a soap powder nation when they have so far like we have flour. And in order to make soap you would they would moisten it and need it until it got equally moist throughout and you got this workable pliable kind of kneadable ball of soap, it's kind of like making bread dough, get just the right amount of moisture in there need it and if it's pliable and workable. So, first you kind of saturating the mind with moisture. So the mind is pliable and workable, soft, luminous. And the second jhana is like with this, this joy that arises is like this is like the mind is like a clear mountain lake or pond that has no water coming in from the surface, like no rivers going into it, but it's fed, fed from From the inside and from the bottom of the pond by this cool refreshing spring, the waters flowing up and fusing through the, through the pond to the lake. So just enter kind of suffusion inner kind of movement of refreshment. And the fourth jhana is the same lake. But here the mind is likened to a lotus pond, which is floating on top has roots going down into there refreshing, the refreshing kind of refreshment of the pond, but it's kind of a little bit above it all kind of floating peacefully on top. It's not in the currents. And then the fourth jhana and equanimity part. That's where the image of being wrapped in a soft cotton blanket, kind of soft white clean, pure cotton links kind of enveloped in that. It's very soft, it's very nourishing, it's very comforting. It's very present. And there's also in the being wrapped. There's no stimulus coming in From the environment around, when nothing's coming in pinching and us we're not aware of sound so much or sounds or, you know, smells or, you know, things things outside, because we're kind of contained in this very, very peaceful the quantum mistake. Some people fall into these jhanas, seemingly accidentally. They're sitting there minding their own business and poof what happened was that and then they pop out. Some people are frightened by this because they're so different. Some people are delighted. Some people get really attached to it. And some teachers say we have to be very careful with the jhanas because you shouldn't get it you can get really attached and get in trouble. I've known people who've gotten seemingly stuck in them. And some people say teachers say don't, you can never really there's never really, really a problem. You can get temporarily attached. That's a good attachment. Because you have this really good thing going and then as you continue practicing You'll work through the attachment you'll self correct with

time. So for most people, these absorptions are not something you can just sit down and, you know, sit half an hour a day and expect that in a few weeks, you know, 12345 days, right? There must be there are a couple of kinds of people who have tremendous capacity for concentration, who can do it very easily. But it's rare. Those are very rare person, I think ordinary or regular person. Usually, it takes a lot of it takes a lot of dedication, a lot effort. Usually something happens on retreats, you go on long retreats, and that's where the deeper these deeper stages might begin happening. Some people will go on jhana retreats in specific retreats are kind of meant for the developing concentration. Some people who will develop a daily sitting practice in a very consistent basis day after day after day, in sit long enough I mean hour each day or day after day, sometimes maybe after many, many years, their mind is stable enough and concentrated who has the abilities there. So maybe they can be in touching into some of these jhanas some people will develop the capacity to concentrate deeply on retreat. And then once they learn it there, then it becomes easier to do it in daily life. Today, more excessively kind of doors been open, you know the route, so then you can kind of do it more easily afterwards. So the last thing I'll say, is for the purposes of liberation, for the purposes of mindfulness in the past, now It's not essential to go into these deep states. But one of the principal that, that some of these five factors come into play as you get concentrated, can be applied and used for developing concentration well before getting into the jhanas. So one of the things to do is if you want to develop concentration is to try to cultivate or develop or arouse or evoke, or tune into feelings of well being of joy. And then let that joy grow as part of the effort of being concentrated. you're encouraged to feel joy when you try to jog concentration. It's not always easy, but it might take a long time, but at some point, we start feeling some inkling of sense of well being or delight. joy that might be associated with the concentration. Let it be your cheerleader that's cheering you on encouraging you on this is great. Keep going. Like a kinda like a biofeedback system. I'll stay, I'll stay focused on the breath and kind of keep using the breath, keep working the breath to see if I can let this joy grow. As a joy grows, it's incentive to stay focused on the breath. That makes sense. Today, I think give you a chance to ask questions. I hope that was okay. It was a lot to offer. I hope no one's confused or discouraged. But it's kind of late. I tried to lay it all out so you'd know what that's about. And next week, we'll talk about the integration. A few other things but it's the integration of this concentration, emphasis with the B POS network. Thank you.