

# 2006-06-09 Seven Factors of Awakening - Introduction (Part 1)

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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## SPEAKERS

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Good morning. And welcome to our dumber practice day. And he's dumber practice days are meant to explore the Dharma or the practice in a variety of different ways. Different days are different. Sometimes it's not a meditation, sometimes a lot of discussion, sometimes teachings, right, if things depending on the topic and everything. And, and the theme for today is called the seven factors of awakening. And it's part of a particular discourse of the Buddha gave one of the discourses that probably gave the clearest instructions the Buddha gave on meditation practice. And so if you want to know what the Buddha had to say about meditation, you'd read the Satiputthana Sutta . And this whole series of instructions there of how to do meditation practice. Starting with breath, meditation and be centered on the body. For variety of things that we've gone over this last year, we've kind of gone over much of that, those exercises that approach to meditation. And then today, we come to almost the penultimate right away the penultimate, the second to last kind of approach to meditation, which is that of the seven, seven factors of awakening. And one of the ways of understanding them, this this course, this instruction is the Buddha gave a mindfulness is that usually when people related to their life, relate to life, we do it not neutrally, in an unbiased way, but we usually have a bias or we have a framework or understanding view through which we see or experience our life. And so if you're you know, If you're 16, and mostly you're interested in sex, then use levels to orient yourself towards life around that particular framework, perhaps much of the time or if you're interested in money, then you're kind of always looking at how this relates to my acquiring money or keeping it. And that's kind of like the frame if you're looking, or if your frame might be safety, and some for some people that may be traumatized. And so they're always looking at things through framework of how can I be safe here? Or there's through the framework of some sense of self, this is who I am. And this is how my self image needs to be near something. And so how does it support? How does this enhance How does this threaten my sense of self in any situation? So that's a framework that we look at the situation. And so the idea is that we are very seldom that we're actually present in a neutral way and just present for

how things are. The Buddha recommended that there were certain frameworks They're helpful and useful if you're interested in the duration, full awakening, and, and one of the threads. And so there's this seven day, the four foundations of mindfulness that we'll be talking about over the year is offering a variety of frames of reference. To help us kind of orient ourselves understand what's important in the present moment when we need to look at. So the frame of reference of our breath, looking at looking at experience, from the point of view of our breath, breathing in the middle of our life, and what happens to our breathing, what goes on with our breathing, working with our breath. That's much more important than focusing on our finances, for example, if you want to attain liberation, so also our body's tremendous emphasis on mindfulness of the body. And so to constantly come back and use the body as a reference point, for our experience, rather than our self image, our inner sense of the body, not the self image of our body and To use the reference point of the feeling tone of our experience, the immediacy of the feeling tone, to use their frame the reference point of the mental states. And for today, the reference point is that the seven factors of awakening and these are the wholesome qualities of mine helpful qualities of mind that get developed as people do Buddhist practice, and which are intentionally cultivated and encouraged and enhanced as we practice. And so you can sense these are the kind of the mental qualities that either they need to be in place to let it person have the foundation for awakening and freedom. So these seven factors are, these are all qualities of our own mind, our own hearts. They're all qualities that are available to all of us. And some of us have them to small degrees, maybe present for ourselves. And as we practice the ideas to Let these become stronger and become strengths within us more prevalent pervasive experience in our lives. And, and so, in order for them to get stronger and become more readily available, first we have to be able to recognize them and we have to be able to value them and value them enough that we become a frame of reference that become a reference point for understanding our experience. So, when you go into some situation, you can ask yourself, are these present How are they present? Can I cultivate them? Can I tap into them? Can I evoke them? You know, these. So rather than again, looking at the experiences, what it will adjust to this do for myself image? What will this do for my reputation? Will people like me or not, that's all you know, put those things aside and look at how does this relate to the cultivation of these beautiful qualities in myself. So these seven qualities are first is mindfulness. The second is for now call it investigation. investigatory mind. The third is energy or effort. The fourth is joy. The fifth is tranquility. The sixth is concentration. And the seventh is equanimity. The seven factors of awakening and the teachings of the Buddha, these seven factors are extremely important. So what we're going to do today is I'm going to introduce you to these seven factors of awakening in the form of basically guided meditations. So today will be made up of meditative kind of videos, more or less 45 minutes of meditation, and 15 minutes to go walking for from the bathroom, whatever else you need to do, and then coming back and during another 45 minutes or so of meditation, it will just do that through the day and we'll take 45 minutes for lunch. So shorter than usual, I hope that people have lunch with you. If you don't, then maybe sometimes you can get a quick bite nearby. And the encouragement at lunchtime will be that you eat a light lunch. Because we're going to continue this practice right into the afternoon. And we don't want you to be kind of really lethargic, meaning having overeating at lunchtime. And it's better to be kind he's likely to be have more energy, be kind of more alert. And so as we go through the day, we'll go progressively through these seven factors of

awakening. So but hopefully by the end of the day, you have some experience, hopefully some experiential sense. In your own experience, your own life, your own mind and heart, your own body of these seven factors as it sounds so we'll keep the day except for my talking We'll keep it in silence for lunch and silence. Just keep in silence and engage in this practice. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, Bruce is recording it. Okay. So we'll begin. So, take your comfortable, alert posture. And perhaps the operating word is overt. Sit up straight. And use your posture care, taking care of your posture to begin cultivating a sense of presence in your body. Since being here, if you've ever been experienced someone who was really present for you, you really felt that their, their attention, their interest, their attention, not theirs, their kind of their eyes or their attention, but their whole being was kind of really their alert presents engage with you. In the same way, take a few moments to enter your posture, your body to see if you can find a sense of presence being present in this body. And a huge part of what mindfulness is, is presence. The presence of mind the presence of attention and presence of attention that we can Apply to our breath or our body are different things. So we need to somehow find presence of mind, presence of attention. help with this might be useful to take some long, slow deep breaths. Really let the feel that almost like the breath or the movements of breathing, feels your body. breathing. Almost like the air of the breath is maybe something clear and refreshing. It's going to refresh move through your body and refresh your whole body. And as you exhale, you can allow whatever concerns worries anxieties preoccupations. You have Whatever negative feelings you might have, let them kind of just kind of flow out with the breath. Breathe in refreshingly and then breathe out, whatever is there that might be standing in the way getting in the way of being here I know. Breathing in deeply and then as you exhale, softening your body. Then your belly, be relaxed your chest Perhaps a softening of the shoulder blade area and then that's your breath returned to normal Hear You are here. There's something phenomenally precious and important about here, where you happen to be having a sense of presence or attentiveness always involves here. And as a synonym for mindfulness. presence is nice because it's something embodied. It's not the mental knowing in and of itself, but a kind of a physical knowing. As you breathe in. Notice how the body experiences breathing in. Notice how the body experiences breathing out Notice how the experience of breathing in is different than the experience of breathing out In being mindful There's a choice that's being made deliberateness to being present engaged with attention with awareness with presence hear this time in place with mindfulness there's presence. So being present for the breath, presence from the inside the experience doesn't matter how you're breathing, just the essence of presence for how it is. There's also a very simple knowing it goes a little Without presence can be as simple as knowing your breathing in. Knowing your breathing out can be very simple knowing that the mind wants to drift off into thoughts or other concerns. can be very simple knowing feelings emotions that might be making it might be helpful or hinder your ability to be present for the brand whenever you know You also meet it with the presence being really present for it. embodied way, clear way, relaxed way. If there are ways you feel uncomfortable notice the knowing of that. To be unknowing of a very simple mindfulness, knowing that's not for or against, and then coming back always to the breath. The breath within the breath. Breath. That's just the breath. With a sense of presence and body presence with a breathing, very simple knowing. Knowing that, you know, knowing your presence knowing that you're engaged knowing that this is breathing and this is breathing out If the mind wanders off before coming back to

the breath, come back to a knowing knowingness presence. Knowing this is thinking mind is wandering off This is being present for that. Another way of talking about mindfulness is talking about attending, attending to something. Our presence, our attention, tends to the breath tends to breathing in, breathing out You can also attend to the judgments you might be having expectations now it's calling for quality of attending almost like Compassion tending to your experience, but not caught by it being for or against it With a foundation of presence, mindfulness, knowing you can use that knowing to look more closely to investigate almost with a question What is this? really look carefully so you can look at the breath Not to simply be present for it but add to that presence of discerning awareness that discerned sees the sensations that go with breathing. Here there's expansion movement, pressure, tautness warm coolness. Then there could be contraction. Didn't go lightning can be an investigation into what parts of the body moves in relationship to your breathing. Knowing the quality of those movements, the texture of those movements Thinking about the breath, and almost like having a little magnifying glass to begin seeing some of the details, details of breathing the physical details of sensations in your body details of the felt sense of whatever you're paying attention to It said that investigation is a beautiful quality of the mind natural quality to be present and then allow whenever Present four, to reveal itself more clearly, more fully. You start seeing the details here and now. Felt sense experiential details not what you think about it. That's what you prefer. But the immediacy of the details Whether It's Your breathing, body sensation, sounds or the traffic what's going on in your mind can be kind of childlike wonder. It allows you to take it in, see it clearly. Sensing it feeling it with more intimacy. The details is a really beautiful quality. And it's a whole study a whole long process of learning how to cultivate it, appreciate it or even what it is. But one way to understand it is that it's something very simple that just bringing a presence or mindfulness to what is. And one way of going with that is to have this idea that in each moment of life, each living moment there's always something which needs attention is attending to us our presence in the present moment. If you're drifting off in thoughts, you can't be that presence. So what is it that these are attending to my presence? Could be the breath was very helpful. It could be It could be your feelings could be our thinking mind. And then learning to attend to what is part of the art. The beauty of this mindfulness is that it's not for or against what the experiences we can sometimes talk about having nonreactive awareness is a beautiful thing to learn to have quality of nonreactive awareness and awareness, just kind of learn to hold what's there. And if you're struggling with the mindfulness practice, then it's interesting to back off back up to kind of bird's eye view and see if there's something that you've left out something else actually needs attention. What is it that needs attention here? Because when you find what really needs attention, chances are that you're not going to struggle. So if you're trying to deal with a breath, but really you're feeling irritated There's going to be a tension between the breath and the irritation. So it's kind of sometimes back off, back off, like a bird's eye perspective and just kind of take, you know, what needs attention here is irritation. And you have a very broad non acceptance or a broad accepting way, kind of nonreactive way for against the irritation. But then being with without experiencing present for that, broadly spaciouly openly, what's this like? And then as mindfulness becomes stronger, and you're able to stay in the present moment, it becomes like a muscle that's become strong, that you become stabilized in the present moment, you're not always wandering off or lost in thoughts. That gives you the opportunity to use that as a foundation to look more carefully to investigate. This is a very

important quality of the path to awakening is that we are being to see more deeply more clearly. what actually is what our experiences sometimes just wishful thinking That, oh, if I just be present and get concentrated, some things will happen, I'll get enlightened. But actually, it also requires learning to see more deeply to look at the details of our experience with clarity, whether it's the experience of looking very clearly at a flower or thick that Han has you feel, you know, tasted orange really clearly really sense that orange is something orange was listening to the details of a car that won't start or that you're really getting sense of the details, your breath. You know, so there's there's that mindfulness quality, and then that's somewhat established and there can be this investigation. And like to think of investigation as being a kind of a natural thing. Many of us has atrophied or, you know, feels like work because we're not used to it. But if you see a young child, it's very natural to kind of be completely Kind of involve sometimes in the most simple kind of things which we don't take for granted. So that's enough for now. And I'll talk more about, we'll do another little exploration investigation in the next city. But as you take this 15 minutes now to go to the bathroom, or do some walking meditation, to walk around the block if you want to quickly, or whatever you feel like you need to do before the next sitting, see if you can do this for the next 15 minutes, with a sense of presence. This is a pretty here and there's like a presence, presence, not thinking it's kind of it's a presence that emanates from you flows from your presence perhaps is not even personal. It's almost like you don't even do it. That's why people talk about the presence of God. Because it's not like you know, it's not I'm not doing this with this sense of presence of being here in your body and feeling you know you're here and then keep it silent.