

# 2007-08-20 Mindfulness of Thinking Week 2

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

thinking, thoughts, mind, meditation, life, people, attention, consequences, silence, clench, kinds, sit, neighbor, unhelpful, stillness, cow, guest, herder, buddha, tension

## SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

So the idea was to continue the theme from last week and the topic, which is thinking, to explore the some of the aspects of thinking. Thinking is a, certainly a very important part of human life. It's unthinkable not to have it. But it's also something which meditators. And I think people who don't meditate have to somehow contend with, and that some form or spiritual maturation or human maturation involves getting some better, some good understanding, wisdom, of the nature of thoughts, the activity of thinking and how we relate to it all. So we started talking about last week, and, and continue today, and we'll see how it goes all together. At the end of today, like at the end of last week whether we should continue the topic further because I have a lot to say.

I spent three years of my life living at Tassajara which is a Zen monastery in Big Sur mountains and it's steep down the Ventana or national or I guess it's been Tonto national wilderness same with deep down the mountains there and long 14 mile dirt road it takes you up over a very high kind of pass and down down down into the this little valley, narrow valley and it's far away from you know, except the dirt road it's far away from roads. There's an electricity that comes in. Nowadays they have a telephone, satellite phone. It's they make their own. They do make electricity they have generator and during the wintertime It's close to the public from about late September to end of May or so ended April, mid April to be close to the public. And there's an intensive period of Zen training that goes on during that time, wintertime, fall and winter. And there were so many, many hours each day many hours spent in meditation. And it was a very pristinely quiet place, kind of place where, you know, you spend much time there you naturally get quiet, very quiet. The person who drives the guests in during the summer says the guest talks a lot going in. But after they're there three or four days, they leave, they don't talk. You know, they smell happy. It isn't like they're not they got depressed, they're they're all happy but they're very settled and calm and that calmness translates to another's boss chatter in the car, and so No, it's kind of very quiet places I spent hours in the valley, this beautiful, natural, natural setting. I spent hours in meditation hall with other people meditating, sitting, you know in something about when people sit and meditate together, that they can, at times be kind of stillness or silence in the room that is like a presence. It feels very palpable, and so wonderful to feel it. And that can be a kind of wonderful resonance between a kind of sense of outer stillness and silence and some inner sense of stillness and silence. And it's just wonderful to be bathed in that to sit there and kind of be there and feel that stillness, the silence. It can be very rich, it can be very nourishing, to be in that kind of sometimes in that kind of silence or stillness. So with that kind of stillness, as a contrast, which I valued so much When I was Tassajara, I want to offer you something coming to contrast that, and that is that I also spent many, many hours at Tassajara. Eating every pretty much every meal, most meals were eaten in the meditation hall. And we would sit in the very place we'd meditate, we just turn around face out towards the middle of the room. And we would sit in a meditation posture like this, and some hippies bowls and we in silence, basically, except for some chanting, we would put out the bowls, we'd get served. And if any of you have done

Japanese tissa tea ceremony, a little bit like that, it's very elegant. It's very simple. And it's a very nice and people come to serve you and you'd eat and probably spent two and a half, maybe hours a day, as part of these three meals we'd have because it's a ritualized meal and was part of the practice. So we had all this silence. Much of the time silence in the room is silence. in the valley, silence or meditation time, turn around, sit and have these hours of having our meals. And during this time of eating my meals for one whole kind of cycle from September to May, I spent most of my meals, planning menus analyzing the food, but how I would use differently and in one way or other planning for the what I thought was going to be inevitable situation that I would be appointed to be the guest cook the following summer, summer that guests and have it's kind of prestigious to be the guest cook one of the three guest cooks and make this wonderful guest food that they make then there's famous for two down there

and I spent a year in the kitchen and I've been It should kind of manager and I pride myself having learned to be a good cook and very capable in the kitchen and loved being in the kitchen. And I thought looked around and no one else is capable as me and of course, you know, they're going to choose me next year to be the guest cook who you know nobody else and so I prepared by thinking and planning the menus for the summer from September to May planning all the different menus I would do for the guests and you know, all this. So then come end of April, it was time to announce people's assignments, and but what their job was going to be for the summer guests season. Gil Fronsdal they say their foremost kinds of ritual will be listed in everybody's jobs and no one told me before nobody talked to me. What would you like to do? I just knew I was going to be the guest cook and to my surprise I was not assigned to the kitchen. I was assigned to be the guest manager to take care of the other guests, not the gimmick, not the paying guests, but the guest students, the people came down to experience the Zen life. And it was a bit of a shock to me. But the biggest shock was what I've been doing this whole year. All those hours of thinking, and thinking, and thinking and planning and menu planning and thinking about food and all this. You know, what a waste of time. It didn't go anywhere who said no purpose. There was no, you know, here I was doing this, you know, this is wonderful Zen training. My Zen teacher sometimes had said we were getting this very expensive Zen train and he said to us and And so here I was, you know, spending all this hours, two and half hours each day at least, thinking about imaginary future about things like food, and menus. So I was kind of embarrassed and kind of shocked. It kind of was kind of kind of a kind of taught me a lot about my mind and how I can get caught up in thoughts. And, and this contrast between the stillness and the silence and the mind that's busy and active and thinking and thinking and planning, imaginary thoughts that never turn out to be the way imagine, was such a stark contrast for me. And what I've seen many times, is that, you know, it's not so easy to turn off the thinking mind. It's one thing to, you know, sit and experience the great majestic silence of some natural setting. It's Wonderful to experience the silent stillness of meditation hall that can be quite still sometimes. And it's another thing to quiet the mind your mind and have it be silent. There's an expression in Buddhism called noble silence, which is, refers primarily to the silence of a deeply meditative mind. The mind which is not caught up in all its discursive thoughts that involved the surface chatter of the mind. The surface chatter of the mind quiets down. And there's a kind of mental silence that developed it's called noble silence in Buddhism. It's so rewarding. It's so healing, because the one of the things to study and be aware of with thinking is the consequence thinking has on us. And last week I talked about all the tentacles or the connections that thinking has to our body, our emotions, our energy level, our motivations, our wishes in life. beliefs, it's connected attention strike, there's so many different things are thinking. And because it's so connected to so many different things, you can feel the consequences of your thinking. And the more sensitive Are you more strongly feel the consequences of how you're thinking, you know, thinking is not doesn't often happen without some kind of consequence for you to be thinking this way. So I saw very clearly again at Tassajara when I was doing a one year old when I was in the kitchen that year. It was some time where I was a very intense time of intense retreat time extra intense, and I was working in the kitchen and I got a

really bad cold. I probably shouldn't have stayed in the kitchen, being sick. But in any case, I stayed in the kitchen I somehow have to work and keep going. But I was quite sick. And

and I noticed that in order to keep doing my work, I had to be very attentive to what I thought. Because certain thoughts because I didn't, my system was quite fragile, because I was sick. And so I didn't have any much extra reserves, it was a very sensitive, being sick too, you know. So I had to be very attentive to what I was thinking. Because if I thought something's, my energy level would kind of drop, and I wouldn't quite have the energy then to kind of keep doing the work. And if I thought other things were more beneficial wholesome things, then I would have the energy to be able to work. So there's a definitely consequence between my thoughts. Another time also Tassajara. We do that they do this kind of, they don't call it this, but it could be called a hazing. When you first get there. You're supposed to prove your mettle. Is that the right word in English and metal? Oh, you know, you kind of show that you're really kind of up to snuff with the Zen monk. And also, you know, to kind of really reflect on what you're about to do and how do you know, Are you really a fourth and right reasons for this. But there's this, this way of sitting. When you first arrive there, where you sit, you're offered a seat, the meditation hall, and except for half an hour after each meal, and for sleeping at night, you're expected to sit in that seat, meditate. And so there's a long period between your break and the next meal. It's like three, three and a half, four hours sometimes. And you're actually just to sit there. You know, we weren't just, you know, walking meditation. And you weren't allowed to go to the bathroom, but you have to go quick. You know, you had to sit there. And if you went to the bathroom a lot, then there was consequences for that. Because they're watching you kind of and he's fidgeting a lot. You moving around the fidgeting a lot, you know, because the how long you sit in this rite of passage is anywhere from five to 10 days. And it's dependent on how still you sit. So if you sit Whoop sits well still, then they come and tap you on the shoulder and say it's over. And you can kind of get up and join the monastery. But if you don't sit so well, you have to sit through the whole 10 days. So needless to say, it is quite painful to sit that much, especially for knees hurt quite a bit. And, and it was actually a very good experience for me. So I wanted to kind of put it down. But it was a very rich experience for me, but it was quite intense. And one of the things I learned was, again, the consequences of my thinking. And if I had certain kinds of thoughts about my knee pain, the knee pain, what gets worse. I allowed myself for example, I have thoughts of self pity. For Gil I could feel the pain getting worse. But if I let go of those thoughts of self pity, the pain would lighten up a little bit. I wouldn't tend to clench around the pain might use my muscles. And so I learned I had to learn To survive this grueling rite of passage, I had to watch my thinking very, very carefully. And not letting my thinking get the upper hand and kind of take me off in some direction where I could feel more pain. So, you know, I'm sure that most of you have had experiences in your life where you can feel the consequence of your thinking, because you don't have to go sit to this intense rite of passage. You can probably just feel it and, you know, one on one during rush hour, you know, and then you could blame the traffic on your attention and your headache. But that's not really honest, is it? I think that that's the condition for your headache. But the cause of your headache has much more to do with how you relate to the traffic and you're thinking I'm late, I can't get you know. So there's always ways of thinking and relating that has constantly cause tension in your body, or can cause relaxation, can fill us with love or compassion or can fill us with hate and I can feel in my own body. You know that if I think, you know something, continually, regularly long period of time, it has long term consequences in my body, I can feel certain kind of tensions in my shoulders, my stomach that don't just let go that easily, you know from holding it for a while, then it takes a while for that tension to release and relax. So, you know, it's possible that certain kinds of illnesses that arise from stress, tension, has Genesis in what we think how we think. It's also that some of the most beautiful aspects of human life come from thinking as well. Great experiences of great experiences of inspiration, of realization of joy, of understanding of wisdom. I could come also from the realm of thinking, creativity from thinking.

So it's very helpful to kind of tune into the thinking and the consequences of thinking and then learn how to work with it. And anybody certainly can be a meditator, learn meditation has to somehow become wise to the world of thinking and learn about it. And in the world of meditation itself, one of the, one of the, there's a variety of skills that need to be learned in relationship to thinking. And one of the ones that's most commonly mentioned, I think, is that of letting go of your thoughts, not having your thoughts have the upper hand, but have you have the upper hand to for you to be in charge of your mind, in a sense, rather than your, your thinking mind, be in charge of your mind, your mind. And it can be hard to do that because you can probably see that in some of us tonight, it's probably found that you let go of some thoughts for a moment, but then it came right back in just quieting the mind wasn't that easy. The mind has a mind of its own. And so. So in that sense, you're not free. And one of the one of the aspects of freedom is if the mind is really free, you can choose whether you pick up or put down some training. Thought, and even the most beautiful, important, necessary kinds of thinking that we do. Important kinds of thinking wonderful kinds of thinking we do. The fact that we are slave to it is camouflaged, we don't see it, we just do it. This isn't necessarily supposed to do this. And, and but we don't see that we can't actually easily put it down to a momentum. That clinging to it, they obsession with it is there. And one of the things that meditation is trying to help us do is to develop the fluidity of mind the flexibility of mind, the freedom of mind, so that we can begin choosing where we put our mind who are thinking, so that we can put down things we don't want to focus on, and perhaps pick up things we do want to focus on. And I do this in my life all the time. I choose what I focus on. There are times I decide this is not a useful line. It's not what I want to be thinking about right now. I'd rather focus on this and focus and have some some focus on this. And it's been a very useful skill to have that fluidity. And there have been some times in my life where I've been really caught by something. And I haven't been able to make that switch, I really want to think about x. But y is just bugging me and I just can't get out of my system. And that times in that kind of situations, I'm kind of, in a sense, caught in the thinking mind, the thinking mind has the upper hand. So meditation can show us how unfree we are in relationship to thought. But it's not necessary to despair. It's just very important insight to see. And then we begin to learning how to work with the realm of thinking. And so in the world in the realm of meditation teaching, we put a lot of emphasis not so much on how to think or what to think about, but a lot about how to let go of thoughts or become free of the grip grip of thinking. Maybe another day if we continue this series of thinking, I can talk about some of the aspects of wise thinking, you know how to engage in thinking in a wise way, which may be a little unusual for Buddhism because Buddhism being a meditation tradition, focus so much on That aspect of thinking has to do with becoming free of them. But it's also important to do to address the question of what is wise thinking? How do we engage thinking a useful way. So in the teachings of the Buddha, there's a wonderful discourse called two kinds of thoughts. I think it's called

two kinds of thoughts. And here the Buddha recounts the situation before he became enlightened, because before I became enlightened, it occurred to me suppose I divide my thoughts into two classes, two categories of thinking. This is for the middle length discourses number 19. And in one category, I place where to place thoughts Have sensual craving, ill will. And, and, and cruelty, thoughts of ill will thoughts and hatred. So on one hand he had these unskillful unwholesome kinds of thinking, aversion, strong desire and clinging. And the other class he put a category of thinking that he called thoughts of renunciation, thoughts of non ill will and thoughts of non cruelty. Non ill will, is understood by tradition to mean explicitly to mean thoughts of loving kindness. Non cruelty is explicitly understood to be thoughts of compassion. enunciation is considered a very positive thing in Buddhism that's not conveyed very well with English word pronunciation, because the Pali word doesn't mean give up something. And the Pāli original like renunciation does the Pali word means The Buddhist word means to go out, to go forth go out into the open air, after being confined in some dusty, you know, confined, you know, dusty

household life, like cabin fever, you have been a cabin for a long time, then, you know, you go out into the open air just feels great that freedom, that openness. So, the Buddha is putting it This place is dividing up his thinking into two categories into what can be called healthy or helpful thinking, and that which is unhelpful or unhealthy unskillful So, helpful and unhelpful, healthy, unhealthy. And, and then he thinks the end reflects what are the consequences of these kinds of thinking? Do they lead to my own benefit? Or to my affliction? Do they read to the to the benefit of others or to the flick them? Or does it lead to my own benefit my own and others benefits court My own or others affliction. So we just asked you what choice to ask interest interesting question now that I've recognized these two categories, what are the consequences of these? And you recognize that some one category of thoughts are afflictive cause suffering of consequence on us that it cause suffering for us another category of thoughts which are beneficial, please, dividing up these two classes of thoughts. And then he says it has been he says, that it's very interesting, this is a very famous little quote. Whatever a person frequently thinks and ponders upon, that will become the inclination of mind. So if you think about the same thing over and over and over again, you develop a habit of mind and inclination, you might tend to go in that direction more and more. And so you want to be careful with what you say. So what are the consequences of what you think is it it's That's kind of a disposition in your mind, and how you shape your disposition yourself. Almost, you know little parts of your personality. And what because dispositions are closely connected to personality is perfectly shaped by what we repeatedly think over and over and over again. So if we constantly thinking thoughts of ill will, or hatred, or anger aversion, it actually shapes our disposition. So we're more inclined to think that that way in the future, if we're if we start thinking more and more in friendly ways, looking at the good aspects of people, not in an idealistic or simplistic way, but actually looking at kind of noticing, you know, the beauty of people in this inner beauty and people, then it inclines us to see the beauty of people. And I've known in my own life, a big shift in my life that I really found. Very important for me, is that shift to be able to see more and more and incline myself more more, to appreciate what's beautiful about people and You know, it's easy enough to incline the mind to look at what's not so nice about people. Everyone has something which is not so nice about them, isn't it true? I mean, you know, maybe I know that maybe one or two exceptions here. So I don't want to you know, you know, generalize for all of you. That's bad, right? to generalize anyway. But everyone has something that you know. And so I, you know, I could fixate on that.

Start fixating on that people wouldn't hang out with me much. But, you know, I find myself fixating on I find myself now inclining more and more to appreciate which beautiful people, so you have to pay attention to what you think, because there are long term consequences besides just the consequences of tension here now. So the unskillful or the afflictive thought thinking we might have you need to be in the guard. And the Buddha encourages us to kind of drop them to somehow let go than to somehow be on the lookout so they don't have the upper hand. And then he had an analogy. He said, If there's a

cow herder, someone herding cows, and it's the growing season in India, so the rice is growing, the plants are growing. And the cows you know, are out there eating the weeds and the grass stuff. You have to be very attentive and alert as they walk around the rice paddies to make sure that the cows don't eat the neighboring farmers rice and seems to be right there with it'll kind of kalpoe kind of pushing them all the time and, you know, don't go there and just always kind of be right writing and really close to make sure they don't get into trouble. So in the same way, sometimes if we have an inclination or tendency to think certain kinds of thoughts, Tripoli certain extreme thoughts. Sometimes it takes a lot of mental discipline and effort to keep saying no to them. Don't act on that. Don't say that. Not now. And you know, not normal life perhaps, but maybe in certain kind of extreme situations or certain people have have strong addictive qualities or strong something, sometimes you have to be very vigilant sometimes with your mind not now.

No for the other class of thoughts, when that are skillful or for your benefit, certain thoughts are beneficial for you. Then the Buddha referred to them as being He said, If I think and ponder upon these beneficial thoughts, even for a night, even for a day, even for a night and day, I see nothing to fear from it. I think if you have no problems with it, and when those kinds of thinking are there good thoughts helpful thought the official thoughts then in relationship to them. You can be like the cow herder in after the harvest after the rice has been harvested, no stumbles left in the rice fields, then the cows can roam around and eat whatever they want. And then the cow herder has to stay mindful, aware. But the cow herder can rest up against the tree, the trunk of a tree just to keep their eyes open and look out across the fields. But to make sure they don't wander off or the tiger starting to eat them or something, but then also go kind of riding and poking them avoiding the rice paddies. So you can be much more relaxed that he's, well you know, playing those thoughts can be very different relationship to our thoughts depending on what we're thinking. But then he goes on to say the very interesting thing. It says certain kinds of thoughts are beneficial. There's nothing to fear in them. There's no blame. There's no problems with having those kinds of thoughts. But if I think and ponder upon This thought even for a night, even for a day, even for a night and day, I see nothing to fear from it. But with excessive thinking and pondering, I might tire my body, when the body is tired, the mind becomes disturbed, when the mind becomes disturbed, is far from concentration. So, I studied my mind internally quieted it brought it to singleness and concentrated it, why is that? So the so that my mind should not be disturbed. So this is a very interesting statement, that even if you have good, healthy, wonderful kinds of thinking, one of the consequences for it is it can be tiring. Now normally in life, we don't necessarily see how much energy goes into thinking. One of the like I said earlier, you can see that sometimes if you get sick, you can or if you're really tired, sometimes you can see you know, that day Even the more tiring thinking can be. But you can see it very well on meditation retreats. And because somehow the stillness is stillness, the calm that comes in, and the refinement of attention that can come on meditation retreats, you can actually see much more highlight the consequences of your incessant thinking, your ongoing thinking, as you can see how tiring it is. Sometimes on meditation retreats, where people are really spending a lot, it can be a surprise to discover how there's an underlying layer of weariness in the mind of tiredness in the mind, that maybe they had no idea was there was a tiredness from the mind always being busy thinking and thinking and thinking and thinking. And it's never occurred to the mind. It doesn't have to think, you know, there's actually a second it could be the addictive quality, the addiction to thinking. It can feel our relationship to thinking can be so intimate that we think That we are our thoughts. That if we don't think then we don't exist. And so it's very important to keep thinking it's very important to figure things out. It's planning our future is all this stuff. And it's actually a tiring thing for the brain to be doing. And I don't know so much about the physiology of the body, but I've heard a read that the biggest it's usually a normal kind of life unless you're marathon runner perhaps the biggest expenditure of energy in the human body is used by the brain. And I suspect a lot of that has to be used with thinking because I've seen myself and other people who begin to kind of meditation retreats, quiet the discursive thoughts. So the ongoing level of there sort of things not thinking is like running away and going on and on. That the need for food drops down. The need for oxygen drops drops down you know oxygen is needed to process the energy right and get the energy coming through the body. And so it's quite common phenomena for deep meditation for people's breath like it's still there and still there till finally it seems like a person not breathing at all. And I suspect that part of the reason for that is that it's you simply don't need so much oxygen anymore because you know expanding so much because your mind is becoming stilling acquired. The

and also, people in meditation retreats generally, especially long ones really long ones and get kind of get settled into it will find that they don't need as much sleep anymore. And likewise, when I sit my long retreats, I usually do really well with about four and a half hours of sleep. Whereas in a normal life, you best for six and a half or seven hours of sleep. And I've known people on meditation retreats, who for

long periods of time, weeks on end have gone with two hours of sleep and Remember once I said a retreat, and as far as I could tell the woman sitting near me, I couldn't see it that she ever slept. Except every once no a couple of times, few times during the day, she was just kind of fall forward. However, the forehead would be on the floor for a while. And you know, for under 1015 minutes, maybe she's in a catnap. And then she'd sit up, and you seem to always be practicing. And now in normal life, if you don't go without sleep, we have such low sleep, the danger of psychosis. But meditation retreats where you don't need as much sleep, you're getting plenty of rest from this deep meditation, then that's, I don't think there's a problem, the psychosis so. So even even thinking about healthy things can be a disturbance to the mind, tiring to the mind, if you really want to cultivate the deep still mind, necessary to begin to learn how to let go of it. Any thoughts at all? And then you can be freer for your thinking. So then what are the strategies for learning to work on let go or stop thinking certain things. And so there's lots of different strategies. The most common one, you know, as I've said, is learning to let go of your thoughts. And you probably want to use common instructions in meditation is, if you notice your thinking, just let go of it and go back to the breath, just like go is if it's easy to do, what and easy for you to say.

The Buddha gave five I want one discourse, discourse 20 in the middle length discourses, gave five different strategies for how to remove distracting thoughts. So I'll go through this somewhat quickly. You start with me was just getting too boring. You stay with me? Yeah. Sometimes I never know you can be some monologues. You know, if you like to have monologues and become a meditation teacher,

go to parties and stuff, you know, I couldn't do it there, you know, wouldn't get away with it wouldn't get away with it, but this way just talk and talk and talk. And if I go to some places, some Buddhist cultures, you know, you, you know, the Dharma talks are really long. You know, here it gets 45 minutes, but, you know, sometimes in Thailand they go on for hours. So, if I really had a big need to talk, I'll go there.

So there's five techniques for removing thoughts diskurse distracting thoughts.

So the first is to have some sense of why you are thinking Getting unskillful unhelpful thoughts, what stimulated it? What is there some idea, some concept that you're focusing on that's kind of stimulating them. And if it is, then one idea is to switch focus on the mind and focus on some concept and idea, which is helpful, wholesome. So you actually changing the direction in mind. So if you're spending a lot of time planning how to read get revenge on your neighbor, if you have trouble with your neighbor, this is not a good thing to do. You know, after a while, you realize this is not a good thing to do. I don't want him to think this way anymore. So rather than kind of have this idea of neighbor, you know, maybe your neighbor on your right hand side is just a real problem with the neighbor on the left hand side, that side is a saint. So you've switched, he's like, let me think about the other neighbor, the saint for a while. Or let me think about, you know, Dalai Lama, or let me think about you know, Somebody who inspires me, I just shift the focus on something which is, you know, more positive. And that's one way. So you know this. So the first thing that Buddha offered is not let go of your thoughts, but shift the focus of what your mind is concerned about what it's thinking about what's on his mind. So that could work. Sometimes. However, if this doesn't work, then you should reflect a little bit about what he calls here the danger in these thoughts. So or the downside, the disadvantages that come from this thinking what you're thinking about. So this involves a little bit and analysis, discursive analysis, but what I'm thinking about my neighbor, I'm thinking about planning my revenge. And you know, this is not healthy. For me. This is creating a disposition for me, it's causing stress for me. It's causing me to have reinforced this idea that my neighbor's a terrible person. And if I keep dwelling on these kinds of thoughts, I might do something unplanned. Next time I see my neighbor, I might punch him out. So I don't think this is a good lunch is dangerous think this way is dangerous for me, it's dangerous for him. I think that and you get a sense of

a danger, sense of the consequences not beneficial, sometimes just that you'll just naturally kind of want to pull away from this. I don't want to do this anymore. And sometimes it might I know I've known people and I've done this where it takes a long time to realize enough of this is not good. Am I really got a clear sense this is not good. Then there can be a release letting go. Okay, enough of this. So this can be held by some kind of examination.

If that doesn't work, then

The meditator should try to forget those thoughts and should not give any attention to them. So this is kind of like letting go. This is kind of trying to let go and not give any attention to those kinds of thinking. There's a variety of ways of doing this. One way is to pour your attention into your breath. If you're doing breath meditation. If you're, you know, our attention is kind of like fuel. Our attention is kind of like energy, fuel, food. Maybe food is a good analogy. And, and what we put our attention to feeds was getting the attention. So if what you're if your attention, your primary attention is going to something unhelpful, unhealthy, you're actually in some ways, fueling that tendency. So if you're thinking a lot about your neighbor, and all your attention goes into revenge for your neighbor, you're fueling your sense that you're you're ready denseness you're fueling your animosity, you're fueling your, you know, your attention, you're fueling all kinds of things that's not helpful. If you take the effective Will you take your attention and shift it to focus on your breathing. Some of you might some some aspects of you might still be thinking about your neighbor. But you know, a majority of your attention to food is going into feeding the breath meditation, that is what's going to get fed, and not so much food is going to go to your unwholesome thinking anymore. And so some people can have a very disciplined mind and able to just redirect their attention to something like the breath. And just ignore those thoughts. And there's a great wisdom to just ignoring what you're thinking about. And meditation, just ignore it. Just focus on something else. And I've had great success just letting thoughts be kind of in the background, and not given much credence so much importance. The mind like mind, do what it wants to do with thinking I'm just going to focus myself on sitting here meditating, being with the breath. This is an advantage. Because you kind of severing the, the relationship you have with the unhealthy, unhealthy thinking. And whenever you're relating to something, you you're actually still feeding it because attention is going into it. So if you're relating, generally, if you're relating to something unhealthy if you're doing, you know, you're engaging, I don't like this and trying to get rid of and try and stop it, you're actually in some ways perpetuating it. Giving a food and sometimes if you stop relating to it, judging it, criticizing it to try to push it away, trying to stop it for what energy is or stop it. If I stopped this thing. Just ignore it. Then, you know, don't be bothered by it. Don't let yourself be bothered by those kinds of thoughts. Just let them be in the background like pesky little flies, and you can put your your attention on your breath or do loving kindness meditation or something else, then they just quiet down on their own. But if you're yelling at them Be quiet, stop thinking, you know, they're you think they get fed? happy, right? So then if that doesn't work so this is that you can't let go them you can't forget them if you can't ignore them and focus on something else. Then the Buddha says, you should focus on calming the thought formation of those thoughts, thought formation is interesting term. Thinking does not happen in isolation with other aspects of our psychophysical being. And so if there's a lot of persistent thoughts that you can't let go of, chances are that there's other aspects to that for nomina that involves some kind of tension, pressure, stress and tightness. And so you know, your cotton says something so you're thinking about something a lot, you're probably you know, your eyebrows kind of bunched up, you're probably your jaws might clench. Sometimes I've noticed how the my nose kind of tighten up with I think certain things, my neck, my shoulders. My diaphragm area. Occasionally, I felt that in my rib cage, I felt that in my stomach area, occasion, I felt it in my back. You know, there's, but in particular, for me, I felt feel a lot, an awful lot, but I feel like sometimes in the kind of inside my skull, in the area that, you know, we call our brain and it's almost as if the brain is a thinking muscle. It's like a

muscle in there that gets really tight or feels a lot of pressure, if I'm really caught up in some kind of thoughts or thinking. So if you can feel that tension, the pressure that's connected somehow,

to your thinking, that's supporting it, that's part of it, then the focus can be ignoring what you're thinking about. But focus on that pressure, focus and attention. And then relax the thinking mind. We like to thinking muscle, soften, maybe every time you breathe out, smooth it out, every time you breathe out, soften around it, soften the middle of it, relax it. So your shoulders, relax the shoulders, relax the jaws relax the face. And sometimes that's a much more efficient way to let go of thinking. Then, like Berlingo the thoughts themselves, I think like letting go the attention, because attention if it remains, it seems to be kind of like a factory to pump out new thoughts. And if you leave the factory on operating, then it's going to spit out your thoughts. And you can let go of thoughts forever, but just spits out new ones. But if you can go and kind of turn off the, you know, the motor in the factory, then it you know, new thoughts don't get produced. So you find where the tension or the pressure or the stress is in the system and start smoothing and relaxing it. That's another way. And then finally, the last way that the Buddha offers and this sutra is not for the faint hearted. It's it's only to be done in really extreme, extreme situations should be done wisely. Maybe we can maybe talk to my teacher before you try this way. It's dangerous. It's, it's, but there might be, you know, an occasion or two, where this will save your life. So if doing these previous strategies, having worked with unwholesome Thoughts connected with hate, clinging and delusion, then with teeth clenched, and a tongue pressed against the roof of the mouth. Once you beat down, constrain and crush the mind with the mind when were the teeth clenched in the tongue pressed against the roof of the mouth. When beats down constraints and crushes mind with mind, than any evil unwholesome thoughts connected with clinging hate and delusion are abandoned, and subside. With the abandoning of these, the mind becomes steadied internally quieted, brought to singleness and concentrated trust is a strong man might sees a weaker man by the head or shoulders and beat him down, constrain him and crush him. So too should you

he's non violent Buddhists. So it's pretty extreme. But I think there might there might be occasion where the mind has such power over us such motivations, such intensity to it that you know, that's something really powerful medicine is needed. And negative here sometimes you're filled with anger. I remember once being in the Zen monastery in Japan and there was this monk next you know, we slept in that meditation hall we ate the meditation hall we meditate Invitational, we're always there. And there was a smoke next to me, who hated me. And I'm not sure why but he hated me. And, and he was doing to him sit there meditating, he poked me or he would do all kinds of things to me. And now you're sitting there And, and it kind of got to me after a while. And, and there was one time where I almost punched him out. I don't know if I was the first person ever to punch someone out in meditation hall, but, you know, I just due to the heat, the heat started rising and, you know, and it you know, it took effort, you know, not to get into that, and I'm glad I did, it would have been probably legal for me to done that, in that context. And, but the, but, you know, I had to kind of, I had to kind of restrain myself constrain myself beat down that strong impulse, because this was not going to be healthy for anyone, especially me. And so, I don't know if you've had that kind of situation. But or, remember many years ago also. Maybe I shouldn't tell the story.

But I succeed in strictly spreading myself to good outcome. That's all you need to know. And so it wasn't wasn't hate this time. So, you know there's times when the mind has tremendous you know, power and sometimes you know, the wise thing is just kind of hold it in check. And so five different strategies. So the Buddha divides thoughts into two categories which which are helpful notes which are not even doing the even the healthy ones, even the helpful ones healthy ones if you do it a lot, doesn't give you the deep kind of peace and rest that we're all capable of deep sense of well being deep inner peace and stillness doesn't open the doors to this realms of liberation and freedom. So important part

of a meditative life, a Buddhist life report and part of the life of becoming free is to learn how to become free of even healthy thoughts, good thoughts. And so how do we do that? Here, there's five different ways that were offered. And think about something else. Or they think about something else. forget those thoughts, ignore them. Now my mind would investigate the danger behind them kind of analyze what you're doing and what's going on here. And calm down the thought formations, the inner kind of physical kind of aspects of physical manifestations of thinking their attention to stuff that might be there. And then, and then in the very rare occasions that necessary you really Have to kind of hold tight and clench down and not give in. Occasionally that's the right call. So that's some more thoughts about thoughts. And, again, as I said last week, part of my motivation in talking about thoughts like this is to provoke because it's the right word, to encourage, provoke, inspire you to give renewed attention to your thinking, and how you relate to that your world of thoughts. And so one of the things you might do over this next week, is look at your thinking. And just notice what you're thinking in the course of the week different times, and then see if in a very kind of easy way, you can start creating some categories, some some thoughts, some into the unhelpful category. These are unhelpful thoughts to have. And other thoughts in the helpful category? Just a very simple analysis. And if you can't decide just, you know, really don't agree with it, it's neither helpful or unhelpful, then just let it be. But see if you can, what happens to you if you start kind of just have very simple analysis. So this is unhelpful. See what goes on? And then the final question for you. Would you like, more discussion about thinking next week, or is this enough? You're saturated. For tonight you are but it's a week away. More thinking? Yeah. So those of you who don't think Can you can come Sunday morning and it will go and so

thank you very much.