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SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

So my way of understanding this kind of breath, meditation and 16 steps, is that all along, there's a whole series of things to pay attention to pay attention to. Breathing in, breathing out to pay attention to calming, the breathing, settling it, attention to your bodily formations, the bodily activity, what's going on attention to holdings, things going on in the body. You pay attention to the joy that comes up, happiness, pleasure. The variety of other things we go as we go along here, and this is 16 steps. And all along. There's a constant rhythm. The music has constant rhythm, custom beat, does in the background or in the foreground, depending. And that's the breathing. And as you get good at this, you won't you won't miss a single breath you speed with all the breath in, breath out, breath dissolve As constancy is there, and then, and then with that constancy there, by where the mind takes in awareness takes in other aspects of your experience besides the breathing. And it isn't something you have to kind of scan around and search for to understand. It's more like, you're very present for the breath. But then you're taking in. Other things come in to awareness, or you allow other things to come into awareness, you become aware of the tension in your body holding, you're aware of the tension and the mind activity of the mind. movements of the mind for and against things. And so So, so, part of the value of this consciously with the breath is the breath is kind of like the lubricator. The breath is constantly moving and oscillating and rhythm. And so you stay with that. You still get as long as that stays with the rhythm of the breathing. It's still a bit harder to get stuck on something. Because if you get stuck, chances are, is your breathing will somehow Be interfered with to hold your breath a bit more, or you'll tighten up in some way. If you can keep your breath relaxed and smooth, then I call it the lubricator. It kind of keeps everything lubricated and relaxed. You'll notice when you get caught and, and so for a lot of people, I think just a tremendous amount of benefits come from just staying with the breath. And in your, in your own time, you'll become aware of other aspects of your experience. If you just keep staying there with the breath and the breath, you're staying with the breath that kind of frees up relaxes a lot of the things but in addition to that, it's also possible then to intentionally have this practice of calming, relaxing tranquilizing these different things. When it's, you do that practice when it's possible, it was not possible to do it, then you don't do it. And you don't try to, you know, force the issue or feel discouraged All I can't, you know, I can't seem to relax, my body just doesn't want to relax. Sometimes you can't be in charge. And so part of meditation that is, you know, giving up your agenda and just learning to just be with what is ease with what it is rather than trying to make things to be different than how they are. So this constancy of breathing in breathing out, and that's something that's going to be very helpful in daily life as well. And developing a touchstone with your breathing. So on a regular basis are quite a bit at a time. You actually know what's going on with your breathing, you're in touch with your breathing, it's kind of up against the rhythm or the speed that's always there in the background. And so there's many situations in life where talking to people or driving or cleaning dishes at home or something, that part of me is in touch with my breathing knows what's going on there. It's helpful, it's helpful West grounded are centered or present with that breath. And some Buddhist

traditions I know they really emphasize a lot. No matter what you're doing, you're always in touch with your breathing, breathing kind of like this. So your, your attention is a little bit divided in the sense between the part of you and the breath in the body and part of you with whatever else you're doing. When I know it reminds me a little bit aside when I was in Zen monasteries. We were expected to continue meditating during Dharma talks. sit there and Zeiss Polska Zen posture and stay with a breath in what I learned was that that if I stayed very present, my body and my breathing as I breathe,

that I was still my attention so open to hear what was being said. But it wasn't focusing on it wasn't thinking about it. We just Come through me. And out here at the very end, I didn't miss a single word of the talk. Whereas if I was listening to the talk, and then trying to, you know, oh, that's a great idea and go off on a tangent about that. I just, you know, wouldn't go off I wouldn't do anything with taco just use common sense come through or come in to me, can be very, very present for the talks. And the idea that sometimes was was taught to me was that in that kind of state, what you need to hear will sink in. And what you don't need to hear you probably won't remember. And so often, too many times, I wouldn't remember some of the talk. But it was always I always loved the talks. So anyway, so the constancy staying with the breath, the breath be in the middle of it. So do you have any comments or questions or any reports you'd like to make about how this has been today, so far? Meditation, anything at all?

Excuse me. So there was some interesting contrasts from this morning when we had the blowers going on the blowers in my neighborhood go on Thursday. So I said, Oh, isn't this interesting? It's day after we heard it yesterday. And my mind was reacting to it. Just said I came here for this, you know, and then as I settled in, there was this feeling of in not quite enjoying it, but sort of that misery loves company and I'm here with this wonderful group, experiencing it so it's not so bad. And then in the last two sitting meditations, the one on We had us focus on joy one before this one. I was really feeling like a ball of joy and he was really going strong. And then the back started going in the knees. And I said, Oh, this would be great if I could just get rid of that pain. So I had these preferences come up, and then all sudden that joy disappeared. So I said, Okay, Dennis, you blew it. Let go. So I like them and then I settled into a lesser intensity, but it was still cool, you know? And, and then this last one. When the pain started coming on, all I did was adjust. I brought my knee up. Wasn't the mind the complaining mind wasn't coming in. I just adjusted, used a great metaphor about the boat, the sailboat and I just adjusted my knee and settled in right to the end that was quite, quite beautiful actually. And so this past week, in reading a lot of I joined Chas works in, in Sumedo, and so forth. And I quite, I don't quite or I didn't quite get the part about that the joy is going to pass so don't get attached to it. And of course, the suffering doesn't last, you know, and don't get clinging to that state. But I had a real experience today of what that really is. So I sort of feel like beginner's mind experience. I know this to be true from previous experiences, but we quickly forget and we shut down and it was nice to re experience

that so more deeper experience of how things pass and change. And so you can be a little more ease with how it how it is whether it's pleasant or unpleasant,

right? Because you could easily get a little disillusioned with the part about not getting clingy with the good stuff. You can get to a point where well done, why bother if it's going to go away, you know, but I can see it where I started more clearly.

There's there's two sides of it going away. There's a side natural, everything, everything is impermanent so that sooner or later meditative joy will pass as well. Just the normal way you go back to your normal state of mind perhaps. But it's also it goes away when the practice deepens. So it's not just isn't only a sign, it's not only a sign that you know, just that you've got back to your old way. But it also we're hoping

his invitation deepens we're hoping your joy goes away. It gives it gives away to something that's much more satisfying. Thank you. And also when you're practicing more of concentration practice where You're really kind of cultivating the joy and the strength of it, then it's completely appropriate to very gently change your posture. So that you can kind of stay in that flow. Whereas often when you do straight, straight mindfulness practice, then the instructions generally would be more you stay with whatever's there and you don't have to adjust your dress and that was great.

I found the

visual and, and the visual imagery that came up in the analogies and metaphors you use today. very calming, and almost in essential way, just very calming for me and very pleasurable. And it was very easy for me to still busy thoughts that might start by thinking of that clean white cotton blanket around me after just coming out of prison. And I built on these images using places I actually had been like a particular lake where I remember swimming after a hot hike. And this was very pleasurable for me today and but a little bit something was nagging and wondering whether I was indulging too much in fantasy or

I just wanted your ideas on that

means possibly you're indulging is not the worst thing in the world. And if and if the indulging was keeping you connected and involved in deepening, then maybe it's okay. indulgent gets in the way, then you want to let go of it. But every attachment we have isn't necessarily a hindrance. If you're having joy and delight in meditation in your little bit attached to it so you stay more connected in nice way. You No, it's helpful. If you get too attached, you'll kill it. So indulging mine might have been okay. And if you pay attention sooner or later, you'll notice you'll find out when what you're doing is not appropriate or when it's off, you know, stressful times in my life. And so I would just be relaxed with it all until you get the signals excused, clear enough, this this is something's off here. And sometimes you discover you're off when you're indulging and it goes fine, then it stops going fine. And then you left you know, hanging on to nothing, you know, you know, oh, no, you know, I guess I was thrown overboard there. So that's simple. That's one answer to your thing. And, and the other is that I was actually trying to use images for people who for him images, a helpful way of learning to get out of visceral or image or image or sense How to go forward here in the practice. And so I'm glad that it worked for you. And, and so it might be simple ways to use imagery for you to help you get more connected. But when you do vipassana practice, it's okay to use that. But you have to be, you have to be, you don't want to use it too much either. You don't want to make a habit of using it. Because using kind of a kind of a crutch them and so maybe to get you started, it's okay. But then what you want to do is drop all images, because images are always in with an image. You're always experiencing your life through the image. It's mediated experience. So what you want to do in the past as you want to be much more intimate network director was directly what's happening not through the image

was that mediated experience that you said, mediated, mediated, or something between myself and the experience by having this

metaphor? What comes to mind is a summit many years ago someone I asked them and what they were feeling But they're experiencing. And he said, I feel like I have these heavy football pads on my shoulder. And so that's an image. So he was experiencing something. He was reporting something real, but the way he was experiencing or understanding it was through the idea of football pads. And then I said, Well, if you drop the image, what are you actually experiencing? Are this heavy and tight, sensor protected. And so and so that's, that's closer, that's more closer. And so you're passing when you get

closer in than you can if you stay with the image, but for the purpose of getting concentrated, getting focused and present, initially, some people find helpful to have an image to kind of get get there. But again, the warning is, don't rely on it. Don't get dependent on it, just use a little bit and then be willing to let go of it.

Sophia, how would you then contrast this, this felt in some respect as a guided visualization. And I, when I teach yoga sometimes I'll say I'm going to take you through a guided meditation on the breath, but I'm really using a lot of visuals. Because a lot of people who, who maybe do yoga don't necessarily sit, have a sitting practice. And, and then my mind shifts to what the Tibetan Buddhists do. They use a lot of visualization. So it seems to be effective for them. I just wanted your comment about the contrast between the two,

whether they're, they're all out visualisation factors. If you can do In Tibetan Buddhism, they have a variety of different functions. And in Theravada, Buddhism, there's some visualization practices as well and have particular functions. As I said earlier, I mean, generally be part of that practice, we don't use visualization, because it's visualizations are taken to be kind of another form of thinking. And we're trying to get more direct than through thinking. And part of the reason I did the visualization, these images today was that I was trying, I wanted to try to convey some of these teachings in a way that was, you know, that kind of went deeper, more understandable. And my hope was that by doing a guided meditation this way, some of you would get more settled more concentrated more into the deeper way so that some of these instructions would make more sense that would be abstract or distance. And I have no very little expectation that some of you some of you did get steel and concentrated some ways. I have no expectation that it's gonna be that Again, you know, and for some people, it's a lot easier to do a guided. And I would be, I'd be doing a very poor job as a teacher, if people started getting dependent on a guided guidance to do this work. And when the guidance stops and you're left on your own, that's when the work really begins. And then you kind of back to square one, you have to have to work through all this stuff. And, but that's really healthy stuff to do. But so to repeat myself, part of the hope with a guided meditation was to give you a visceral sense of some possibilities and deepening understanding of instructions, where's all going? what's possible. So that's maybe another day long, you sit all day without instructions or retreat or sometimes sometimes at home and home practice. Maybe you drop into some deeper place, and then you're familiar with it from what we did here. That was kind of behind what I was doing. Does that answer your question? You want to ask again? Yeah, nobody answers

and then on on the interview doctory

meditation sessions so do you think you tend to use more visuals for people who are just getting into this? Or

when I do my intro class? I do. I do some little bit of visualization, but not not as much as today No way. Okay. Because I think for an intro intro class where you kind of kind of giving people that basic instruction, I think it's important to try to do to do it more accurately to get the get the get the habit or get the idea that you know, some iconic get imprinted first. And if, if what they get imprinted is a lot of guided visualization meditation, they're gonna get a whole different understanding of what mindfulness is.

Okay, thanks.

I just I just wanted

It was really interesting from this morning, to this afternoon in terms of really noticing how much energy goes into the thinking process. And how painful that was. I really noticed it this morning. Wow, you know, there's a lot of energy in, in keeping the thinking going, you know, and as soon as you can let go of the thinking and just letting the botting go. It takes much less energy. And so this afternoon, it was really a nice contrast in terms of how quiet and how calm everything can be, and how much less efforting is required.

Yeah. Sorry. People who are all of us guess when we're completely cut cut up Our thoughts and thinking a lot know that we're kind of distracted, distracted from distractions by distractions. And so distracted, we don't really see the cost, the energy cost, the effect it has so much concerned with, you know, the shopping list we have to get. We don't realize that being so concerned getting all this stuff is very tiring, because we're focusing on the things. So when you stop and pay attention like we do here, you could start feeling the cost or the impact, it hasn't been tiring. And it's a into this quieting tranquilizing of the mental activity. Nowadays, you can hopefully feel very pleasant and nice, but also you conserve a lot of energy. And so that's places especially meditated a lot that plays itself out in a number of different ways. One is you don't need as much sleep, especially on retreat, we've meditating a lot. And the other is that as I don't know exactly what the physiology of this is, but I do know that As people get concentrated in meditation, the breath gets more and more subtle, with less and less most, until at some point, you can't be aware that you're breathing at all, just in some simple, there's no movement, no activity of breathing at all. And, and so what's the physiology of that? And I suspect that some of it is that because when you really concentrated the mind is still that you're not using so much sugar anymore. You know, you're using as much energy in some, Somewhere I read that the major energy sink in the body is the brain and uses a lot. And so if your brain activity is not so active and busy, that you don't need as much energy if you don't have need so much energy, you don't use much sugar in your blood and your blood doesn't need to course you know, provide you with so much and so everything quiets down, calms down, and you're still everything else is taken care of well enough, you know, you have plenty of energy, nourishment for the ordinary normal thing, but you It's you know, you don't need it for your neurosis anymore. And so breathing comes down quite a bit. And some people find also that eating is like I'm retreats that they're eating drops as well. They don't need to eat as much because they don't have much need for energy anymore. Some of us do because they're not being active. But again a lot of us if I asked you with the mind beings, more at ease, more rested. Yes. pass the mic

last enter bye

Beautiful, beautiful.

So this is more energized state did it feel clean?

comfort in it. So yeah, so. So I think that I think I tried to say that earlier today is that as as we get more relaxed and more concentrated, more present. It's not just a sinking energy thing. There's just kind of clean or kind of more energized, lifeforce energy that kind of comes up and often it becomes really easy to hold the body straight then you know before until the kind of the, the energy is going where the concentration is going because of slumping elements. sticking up, and then it's effortless now to keep myself up, it's kind of effortless feeling but there's energy there's Christmas there clarity is coming happening. And, and that's kind of energies a whole different thing the kind of energy is required for a lot of thinking or reacting or liking or not liking. I'm happy for you. Some people it's like, sometimes I talk about desire and aversion being the castine of the soul. And it keeps people energy going and going

and going. And then when you stop drinking caffeine, some people have this withdrawal period of a few days and they get headaches and low energy and all that. And then but they wait, they wait three or four days and guess the system clears out, then this natural energy can be there. It's not there if you're always dependent, you know, pumped up caffeine. So same thing with people you being pumped up by desire and aversion. And you stop using that to compete for source of source of energy, then the Might be a period withdrawal refers and actually gets kind of dull and tired and depressed and kind of low. And then once the withdrawal passes, then this will beautiful energy, natural energy comes up. Thank you.

I hope you all know that there's no shoulds in meditation. So the only one there's one should and the one should generally is just be with how you are and, and how you are is the door. And so rather than thinking you have to change yourself or measure yourself against some standard of heist, what's supposed to happen if some of you, you know, I was asking you to feel some joy and the joy didn't happen or I feel stillness and the stillness didn't happen or, or if nothing that I talked about was happening for you today. That doesn't mean that it was a mistake or failure or a problem for you. Just what's happening, the winds are blowing a particular way today. And so you have to, you know, you have to move the sails in a particular way. And so the practice is, is to always, always you practice always how you are, not how someone else was talking about it, not how it's being guided here today or something. And hopefully the guidance is helpful and useful and carries you along in some way or teaches you something. But please, please, don't hold something up as the way you're supposed to be what's supposed to happen. I have tremendous trust and confidence in the value of just just being present with how you are and be having a lot of respect for how you are. And the word respect. Means in Latin America comes from Latin means to look again. So respect, just look again, that's enough. look more deeply. So thank you. And then in next month we'll do. We'll start with the third tech dread. The third aspect of we're halfway through these eight steps, the 16 steps. And the next time we have this is the end of February February 29. So thank you very much.