So again, Good morning. Welcome to our Dharma practice day. For those of you who might be new to Dharma practice days are designed so that we can explore Dharma and practice in a variety of different ways. The principle, the idea being that, if you do monastic practice, live in a monastery, you might spend a fair amount of time meditating. But you also spend a lot of time exploring the Dharma and other ways, studying, reading, there's discussions. There's a lot of discussion. In fact, a lot of the way that people learn in monasteries, is not even from the teacher of the monastery, but rather from the conversation with other people, other practitioners, other monks and nuns. And so a lot and also the Sangha practice, that you're practicing the song and having a community of people who pass to swim is a very important part of practice. And it's sometimes a practice people intentionally avoid because after all, it's people. And that's messy or difficult. And, and it's, you know, some people prefer the privacy of their own meditation practice. But actually community practice practicing with people and knowing people is a very important part of the overall unfolding of practice and how we learn about ourselves and get to see ourselves in some deeper way. So in different different demo, practice days, we do different things. But often there's ways of just involve discussions and breaking into pairs and having some kind of conversations about some of the topics. And some people find it very valuable because it gives you a chance to discuss important areas of life, that in normal life, you never have a chance to really have a concentrated focused discussion about these particular things. The theme for this year is the hindrances. And we are, we started last month with introduction to the hindrances and then started with sense desire, sensual desire, the first hindrance and we'll continue with that today. Next month we'll do ill will, with the two months in your will. And in we're kind of doing two months on sensual desire. And now a little bit of background for the hindrances, the hindrances, that that would hinder and I like to think that it hinders. One of the things that hinders is our sense of purpose, that we have a purpose that we want to engage in. It can be sitting down and meditating, staying in the present moment being with the breath, it can be this purpose of, I want to make I want to meditate every day. I want to make meditation a regular part of my life. It can be the purpose of Buddhist practice, you know, more generally Always a big part of my life. It could be other purposes, or, you know, everyday kind of purposes. And as we kind of set ourselves, of course, to do follow a certain purpose, there are things that come along that can hinder that. And we can't necessarily do a lot about the world things that happened. But we can do a lot about art, the inner psychological forces that come along that might hinder or interrupt or distract us from our purpose that we have. In terms of meditation practice, the Buddha emphasized five particular psychological factors that he emphasizes being particularly important for hindering the unfolding of meditation in partly because these hindrances also hinder our ability to see clearly, they're talked about in the tradition sometimes as blinders that which blinds us. And so when they're present, we can't really see what's going on in some honest way or clear way. They're distracting, they're agitating. And they. And so both the agitating quality of them and also distracting quality of them, keep us from our purpose, like staying on the breath, keep us from getting
concentrated and present. So, it's a task of anybody who does it does meditation practice, especially Buddhist meditation practice, to become really familiar with these five hindrances. And familiar and the unfortunate news about becoming familiar, means that you have to experience them a lot.

And so we have to allow ourselves to not be it's important not to be dismissive of them or overcome quickly or, you know, look for the key to the kingdom that just kind of vanishes and once and for all, but rather, to take the time to explore them, contemplate them. And there's two primary ways of doing that. One is to certainly do it in meditation practice and see how they come up there and how to work with them there. But Others spend time in daily life with them, certainly seeing how they arise in daily life, but also, in daily life kind of outside of meditation, spend some quality, time reflecting, contemplating and thinking, thinking about discussing with other people, these hindrances. And so one of the things I offered here last week, last month, which I'm offering you, again this month, are a variety of reflections that contemplations you can take do at home. And some of these questions are things you can discuss with friends. Because if you explore and think about these things outside of meditation, what you learn and what you contemplate, will come back to you will be kind of in the background of your meditation, and support your meditation practice, you'll be more familiar with a territory and how it all works. If you just rely on meditation to deal with hindrances, you shortchange yourself a lot of how rich the human mind can, the rich possibilities of your mind to explore and develop and become one around these areas.

So, here today we're going to continue with sense sexual desire, sense desires. Which, in some one impression that people get from Buddhist teachings is that Buddhism has a very negative view of sense desires, sensual desires, and you shouldn't have any of that stuff. And I think that's a certainly a simplification, but I think it's a not really appropriate impression. Even though there are teachers who seem to have that kind of attitude towards sensual pleasure, all sensual pleasures should be kind of denied or pushed away or not included. So I'd like to start today with a discussion about nuts around sense of pleasure and its usefulness it's healthy aspect of it. appropriateness of it, rather than being quick to talk about how to overcome sensual desire. In doing that, I want to make a distinction between sense pleasure and the desire for sensual pleasure. That's a very important distinction. The desire for sense pleasure is much more likely to be a hindrance. And that's what it is a sense of desire. That's the hindrance, not sensual pleasure in and of itself. So since pleasure can be very useful for so I want to list some of the things ways it's useful. When you have sense pleasure, you're in the present moment. The pleasure itself is a present moment phenomena. And so if you're in the present, which maybe is useful. Another thing is that certain kinds of sense pleasure have can affect us in beneficial healthy and healing ways. This morning, For example, small thing I was here at the center, I was doing things a little bit for a few minutes here. And then I walked out the back door. And, and there was just cool refreshing air out there just really, you know, felt really pleasant to feel the coolness and the freshness of the air. And as I took in the pleasure of that the air, I could feel a little Ah, happened. A little relaxation of kind of opening and kind of settling into my body a little bit more was pretty subtle. You know, it wasn't a big thing, but I could feel it. And there's some way in which taking in some of the simple sense pleasures of life can help us to relax to settle in and not just be present, but the present in a way that softening. And so the pleasure of sitting and having a cup of tea. This is not just simply that the relaxing unwinding by just being doing nothing at all, but sometimes the pleasure of He or the coffee, the smell of the coffee is more than you know, it's more than just pleasure, sometimes it kind of makes us feel kind of more relaxed and more present in a nice way. This is not to justify drinking coffee. You know, some of you are nodding already. But it's, uh, you know, I'm trying to say that, that there is something quite wonderful about sense pleasure. And it's can be very helpful. And I think sometimes it's actually can be to some
degree healing of a lot of the ways we're fractured or divided or upset or angry or, or to just kind of take in the simple pleasures of life. And, you know, a sunset, sunset is a sense pleasure thing. And some people are more than just relaxed. They're deeply inspired. It's very meaningful. Have that, partly because maybe it's tied to beliefs or other ideas. So, in so then there's also what we call maybe an English refined, sense pleasures, you know, arts, you know, you have music, music, you know, maybe it's more than sense pleasure involved. But it there's a lot of sense pleasure involved in this into certain kinds of music. And it can have a very refined, very kind of subtle, a deep moving effect on us to sit there and just feel music in certain ways. Or to look at certain works of art. Certain things are done creatively can have more than just a relaxing effect that can do other things to us as well. Maybe because things are communicated is there's more going on but I think when the when the, when the colors colors are lined up just right or the lines are just drawn just right. It has another other kind of effect on us. That the is very meaningful. So

I think it's very important to include opening and allowing for sense pleasure in our lives. And I think it's supportive and helpful for meditation practice. And then there's a sense pleasures that come from meditation itself. There can be physiological changes that happen as we relax in meditation. And those those relax, those sensations that come from being relaxing, are pleasant. And feeling those pleasant sensations, then helps us to relax more, and there to some degree, that can be a nice little loop that happens there. Sometimes you do feel warm or tingling or feel light as they relax and that those warmth, that warmth or tingling or lightness expensiveness feels very pleasant. And that pleasure allows encouraged us to stay more present. Especially if you notice that it's not as pleasant to wonder often thought you so Oh, by the way, I want to thank you know if I'm losing touch with this thing as feel so good here. Isn't that interesting question. So why do you

so eating, so eating can be totally neurotic?

Well, I wasn't joking about the neurotic part. A lot. A lot, a lot of these pleasures since pleasures. They can be mixed. It can be mixed. The effect can be mixed. I can I've enjoyed food and really enjoyed it a lot. Why do they great until I finish the meal. And then for the next two hours, I wish I hadn't. One night What was I thinking? You know, the end I was seduced by the pleasure of the moment to not take into account the effect that was going to have on me. And there's a lot of people in society in the world who are seduced by the simple How could something feel so good be so wrong? And, and, you know, now I've been to my meditation class and he said, you know, enjoy your sense pleasures. So, I'm just gonna dive right in. And, you know, and, and now I've created devastation everywhere. Yeah, you know, my spouse is going to leave me now because, you know, you know, so, so. You know, so you have to be careful with you know, so you don't want to be naive, but the food, the pleasures of food, the sense pleasures of food can also have a beneficial effect. They can be nurturing. It can be feel relaxing, it can be healing, certain pleasures, you know, and they often sometimes it comes with associations. foods have with us eat the foods of your childhood. And it's more than just a sense pleasure but also the Association of nurturing and things that might be there. But yes, being present for food can be very wonderful thing and refined food to subtle, subtle sensations of food, for some people can be very, very, very good. And then there's a lot of suffering in our society, around people who are addicted to the sense pleasure of food. So I don't want to sit I want to make sure you understand there's two sides to it. And your wisdom will hopefully distinguish. So then there's a then there's also the, as a bag, open the door, that suffering that comes with the pursuit of sense of pleasure, or the addiction to sense pleasure or the overindulging in sense pleasure. There's there there's some people who think that sense pleasure is where it's at that if you have enough sense pleasure you're successful person. That's where it's at. Some people who for whatever reason, have grown up thinking that since pleasure is evil and bad, and you shouldn't have it, then actually you should deny it and somehow if you feel a sense of
pleasure, there's something's sinful about yourself. And, and so there's kind of a, you know, not just an avoidance but a running away from any possibility of experiences pleasure you know, you spend a specific experience since pleasure but you're better off experiencing pain. Until you extract the, you know, this victims and people who strap needles around their legs or something so that they have you know, constantly reminded of pain rather than pleasure. So people's relationship to sense pleasure can be complex if we mix the different relationships there. People will learn from their childhood certain gifts or messages about sense pleasure from the religion they learn about sense pleasure. They'll learn about from experiences in life. They'll learn from From disappointment to learn from the suffering that they encounter through it. And so some people are very hesitant. Some people jump in some variety of things that go on. Some people's personalities seem to be driven much more. They're kind of kind of sore personalities. They're just they're ready to enjoy everything, everything is essential pleasure just coming at me just, you know, and consume. You know, that's how they are. And some people couldn't care less, liberalism's pleasure just like, I have more important things to do, you know, take times have such pleasure. You know, I, my projects, you know, or the newspaper to read or something, the world to save. So, there's a whole range of relationships, people have to sense pleasures, as we explore the center, the center and the hindrance of sensual desire. Sense desire for sense pleasure. I think it's helpful. To understand our relationship to sense pleasure itself, before we talk about desire for it.

That makes sense, isn't it? So that's the first discussion we're going to have today. So what I'd like you to do is to divide up in pairs. And hopefully there's an even number, if not, they'll be, let's see, there's one left person leftover, I'll assign you to another group two, or three. So pair up. And what I'd like you to do is one person be the speaker and the other person be the listener, and the person who speaks you're talking to someone who's there. But it's not really important that you convey something to them. You're not telling them anything for their sake. So it's very different than normal conversations where you're concerned with getting something across to the other person. The person is there as a witness, as you explore for yourself out loud. This quiet this question I'm going to give you and if you're Speaking, remember, you're really trying to explore something for yourself. So if you find yourself telling a long story about something that happened to you, you know that punch line, you know the results of the story. So it kind of make it brief. So you're not spending a lot of the time, you know, doing something you maybe didn't have to do go. And hopefully, because time is long enough for this discussion, you're going to reach the edge of what you normally would talk about or think about it, and then you get to explore beyond the edges of your normal. And in your mind, maybe a couple of you, I don't know. But one option you have also some people find it helpful is exploration is to when you're talking to actually close your eyes, then you're not pulled into the world of the other person so much in the first and agreeing, are they nodding enough? Or, you know, are they frowning or, you know, but you know, you close your eyes, so you're really kind of exploring it on your own, if you like. And the role of a listener is just to listen, not ask questions or you know, Say right on, just just listen. And you could nod, you know, you know, close your eyes, the listener shouldn't close their eyes. I think they really do offer their presence. And so the question is, is two questions. So what is your relationship to sense pleasures, pleasures of the senses? And it kind of is a subset of that is what's the history of your relationship? to sense pleasure? So what's your relationship to nowadays to sense pleasure? I love it. What's the history?

Oh.

I used to be really troubled by it used to be hard for me. I didn't know you know, I, you know, I avoided as much as I could and my parents thought That was, you know, evil thing, you know? And so those are the two questions. What is your relationship? And what's been the history of your relationship? Has it changed over your lifetime? Perhaps? Is that clear enough? And so how you navigate those two
questions is, you know, just let it kind of happened, whatever. And so what Um, so each person is
gonna have 10 minutes to talk.

And that's doing you a favor, because these exercises actually designed to be 15 minutes long. Yes,
please.

Yes, the way the way that you negotiate these two questions is up to you. And and, or the way or not
even up to you it's up to your mouth. No I you mind me kind of you kind of chain a chain a chain of
associations kind of leads you leads you places that you're even surprised by if you prefer to do it
reversed. Whatever you want to do is fine and, and I hope they I mean it's very nice when you get
surprised by what comes out of your mouth because you're really kind of allowing and don't don't be too
cconcerned about getting it right. You know you might even some things are a little bit exploratory. You
know, let me try this out and see what this How does it sound Oh, me too. So turn off your phone. Yeah.
Somebody say phones are very pleasant to listen to in the ring. And in my mind is not pleasant.
Someone said your sounds like someone banging on pipes or someone's hurt it's they just nodded and
said yes. I had one before. Someone gave me a new phone recently and the one before I regret not
just the old one because I figured out recently that I could the ringtone can be roosters crowing. And
this one can't do that. And the roosters crow Normally, I wouldn't know that it was ringing the phone and
people wouldn't even blink an eye they just thought it was the neighborhood's So,

so so

so so, you know, as the 10 minutes goes along, you might even find, you know, moments of silence as
you kind of reach the edge of what's obvious and then silence kind of percolate some new things kind
of have a chance to surface come up Yes, yeah, I'll ring the bell after 10 minutes. So you notice which
I'll say something like just a pause for a minute. And then that's a second 10 minutes we're gonna bail
on give us a little different instruction. Yeah.

Well, no, no, you have 10 minutes to talk. And in your 10 minutes, those are your two questions. You
might end up answering only one. You might do both. You know, so how you work with these two
questions is up to you. You know, don't worry about doing both. There's no set way. Just those are the
two questions that are kind of in the in the mix.

Yeah. I think for the purposes of this discussion, I think it's good just to do this five senses. There is a
sense pleasure of the mind as well. But I think it's probably more useful for this discussion here to stay.
Stay with us. Okay, so why don't you pair up and then if there's an odd number once you come here
and they'll help you

come back

So we're just going to spend another just a few minutes before taking a break.

So before we take a break, has anybody like to say a little bit what that was like to have that
conversation at discussion? So, Victor

it's very interesting. process

I discovered that I possibly we are willfully owned by our senses. And that
certainly my life and I’ve seen it in others.

My life is subtly but distinctly been guided by those things, the reaction to the sense pleasures, and I include my mind in that. And it's until one can see how there's attraction or version, or whatever to those who don't really see how you're reacting in the long arc of your life. It's very interesting. Great. Thank you.

Well, it was a good process. At first, of course, just talking about what I already know. And then the whole time I was talking, there was one, one thought that was sort of turning, turning underneath that I didn't get to, but came up in our two to three minute debrief. And that is that living. This is a cultural that living our whole life, my whole life, driven by sense, pleasure and attachment to them. And then as they gradually start to drop away, there's a feeling of disorientation when they're not there, because I'm so used to them being there. And generally, I'm surrounded by people who are so relating to since pleasure. And it's not until I can stop now I have a frame for it. And years ago, I didn't and I just felt disoriented if I didn't feel pleasure. But now if I come back to my center, is where I find the peace of not having the attachment but it really takes some effort to get back to that That was my discovery. Great, thank you. out there.

Thank you.

It's a delight for me to again find in this tradition and inclusiveness of the body, and of the senses. And the breath of course, because since pleasure in my history was to be denied, and so to include sense pleasure, as another way of the AHA or the release in the body, and the inclusion of the body in the census is so wondrous and in this tradition, Again I am drawn more and more to it because it has such a basis in my reality, which comes to me through my senses. Great.

I give you we're not called sentient beings for nothing. So maybe one more.

I had a little difficulty with

trying to focus on the five without the six the mind and that,

for me, it was really hard when I was talking to

about my own experiences to really

locate the sense of pleasure in one of those senses without the mind to sort of mold them all together and tell me what it was about. That was that was interesting experience.

That's very interesting. So that's probably could have explored some more. So okay, so

so I think since pleasure is so is a wonderful thing to experience and certainly a role in the wise life role on the path. But you know the body the it's mostly an element issue of the body, you know the fight especially the five senses and the body in and of itself doesn't have much wisdom and so and so the one of the interesting questions is what's the relationship to have wisdom mind desires, motivations value Use beliefs on what happens with the body. It's not the issues maybe interesting to think of the body is kind of like childish, as wonderful as it is. And as profound as it is. It may be childish in the
sense that it doesn't have the, you know, in and of itself, direction, and purpose and value. And so what happens when the overlay on top of that, what could be called the mind or the wisdom or understanding or beliefs, and sometimes what's overlaid on top of it is very harmful, painful, you know, rejection of the body rejection of sense pleasures and senses. And so the whole range of things can be overlaid on top of it. And so that's the adult part or the potentially the adult part if we use that kind of language.

So

let's take a break and let's do it for 15 minutes and hopefully that's long enough. And please feel free to keep talking about these topics or anything else you want during that break.