began with us sitting, sit for maybe 10 to 15 minutes.

The last minutes of this meditation I'd like to offer you some questions for reflection. You can think about them any way you want these questions or you can listen to the questions from deep inside and see if something bubbles up from the depths of your mind your heart, your stomach.

So the first question is to reflect on what concerns worries. uncertainties doubts you might have about meditation practice. What are some of the doubts, concerns worries that you have about doing meditation practice gauging meditation practice? Results of meditation practice.

Is there any way that your concerns are inserted These are doubts cause you to hold back in doing meditation practice and the way in which they hold you back.

Perhaps you do less meditation because of these concerns or perhaps you don't throw yourself into it as fully. Perhaps you just kind of hover your uncertainty. there any ways in which you're held back or there's a lessening of engagement or commitment to the practice?

So welcome to our Dharma practice day. And for those of you who are new to this, these are days where we engage in the practice of meditation or the practice of the Dharma in a variety of different ways, often with much more discussion about things than we would normally do if it was just a talk. And the idea is the days for you to explore some topic, and hopefully a very personal way rather than the abstract. So just discover how it's meaningful for you or your relationship to certain areas of practice. And also to do so in relationship to other practitioners. And so to have a chance to talk to others and hear other people about what's going on with them and their concerns or their, their experiences. The and the topic for this year is the five hindrances. And the five hindrances are these forces in the mind activities of the mind that are selected by the tradition as being the most, some of the most significant hindrances are detriments, to being able to pay attention, to be concentrated, to be mindful to be aware. They are sometimes described as causing the person to be blind. Because when you see when the hindrances are operating, you're blind to your own self interest was what's most beneficial for yourself and for others, what's best for others. So, I think probably the first hindrance is desire. And I imagine that a good percentage of you, if not all of you, have acted on some kind of strong desire and later regretted it. And, and so your own self interest and if it wasn't seen, you wouldn't even see the full picture. And you were kind of caught in some strong pull up into the world of desire, where the desire had its own rationale or its own strength that kind of carried
you along. So the same thing with aversion or ill will, that will also, we're kind of caught in the grips of ill will. We often don't see what's best for ourselves, and we often don't see what's best for others. I suspect Some of you also have had the experience of acting on lol and later regretting it realizing what a mistake it was. And then there's sloth and torpor and be caught in kind of lethargy or kind of depressed energetic state is the third hindrance. The fourth one is restlessness and remorse. And the fifth one is doubt. And each of these in different ways have different dynamics that may be interfere with our practice, mindfulness can concentrated interfere with our ability to feel stable or settled in ourselves and alert. So a big part of meditation practice, especially and kind of in the long initial stage of meditation practice is to come to terms with these five hindrances are these forces of the mind that keep us distracted or make difficult for us to stay present? And it's common enough for people to think that the hindrances are bad or evil or something awful, and try to dismiss them or be angry with them being there. So it's common for people to kind of have a kind of adversarial relationship to the hindrances. And I'd encourage I encourage people to not be adversarial towards them, but rather to get to know them, become familiar with them. Because the more we can get familiar with them, the less power they're going to have over us. The more we understand how they work, the tricks that they detail, and the more we'll see the different aspects of that, the conditions that prompt them to come into into play. And so it might be a longer route to get rid of them and just kind of suppressing them or pushing them away. But it's wiser and it has a more lasting benefit, to really be familiar understand how they work. So in that regard, when you visited by hindrance by strong desire, ill will Meditation approach would be you don't necessarily act on it. But the meditation approach would be to stop and pay attention to it, get to know as well explore it, feel it be a naturalist of these things. And in the process of doing that, you'll probably understand it much better how it works. And, and that understanding will make you free or have it, we're able to work with it, not be caught by it.

But also the very engagement with it, where you use your will your choice, act of free choice, to turn towards it and investigate it. That act of free will and that act of investigation is itself, a movement of freedom is itself a stepping back and not being caught in its orbit. Not being kind of have to be in charge. By using your free will to investigate it. You're not you're in charge, in a sense, and so you're not caught as much by it. So that very investigation helped us become familiar with it, but also helps us develop some kind of strength of independence. Have not, you know, being swept away by it. So today the hindrance is doubt. At least that's the way it's usually called in English. The fifth hindrances doubt. The Pali word is bitchy Keisha Keisha. And it's, some people prefer when they translate from the Pāli directly to translate it as uncertainty or vacillation. And one of the reasons to be a little bit more to choose a different word is that there's also a healthy doubt and, or appropriate doubt. And so when I left the house today, I had some doubts about how wise it was to leave in the rain just in a sweater without a jacket on or umbrella. And I it's, you know, I had doubts about what the weather was going to do. And that seems fine. You know, that's not a problem with having those kinds of doubts. And, or to hear certain kind of teachings, and doubt what you hear, so you can investigate it more deeply or explored more. I think it's healthy to have doubts about religious teaching spiritual teachings, when you hear them if they don't really work for you or don't seem rational or don't feel right. It can be very healthy to have certain kinds of skeptical doubt that you investigated or questioning or fully or explored more. And, or, or if you're in the throes of some powerful feeling of lust for something, and to have some doubts, you know, I don't know if this is the best thing to do right now. You know, let me make it live in the system, you know, that can be held, you know, I don't know You know, let me spend some time kind of investigating this before I act on this. That's also, you know, maybe healthy kind of doubt. The doubt that we're talking about in the hindrances is a doubt that interferes with our engagement with the practice interferes with willingness to be present interferes with being mindful, interferes with being concentrated and focused in what we're doing. So So, some indecision is sometimes a translation of this, this hindrance, indecisive, you don't
know, should I be with my breath right now or should I do metta? So do loving kindness, or should I do compassion? Should I maybe now that's not the right time to do sitting meditation, maybe I should do walking meditation. When you do walking meditation as well. I don't know if I should do walking meditation, maybe I should be doing lying down meditation. Or maybe it really needs a bath. You know, and so there's an in in decisiveness. uncertainty about what to do. And the result of that is we kind of don't commit to anything, we don't engage in anything. So this inability to commit or to engage fully is part of the function of this hindrance we call doubt. So therefore, uncertainty or desolation are in decisiveness, are often good synonyms or maybe sometimes better than using the word doubt. The hindrance of doubt is the one that's most closely connected to the practice itself. It can be dealt with many things, and anything you do in life, can doubt can interfere. I can have doubt I could wake up one morning and doubt my ability to make breakfast for my kids. And so I'll just stand there in the refrigerator with the door open looking well, what do I do you know, I don't know if I, you know, I don't know how to crack those eggs and you know, and then we don't get breakfast. So that's doubt Reading. But in terms of this, the Buddhism in terms of the practice of Buddhism, meditation practice, doubt, is the one hindrance that's specifically has to do with the practice itself. So the hindrance of desire, you know, you could be trying to practice meditation, and then you start thinking about how much this is the perfect time for chocolate cake. And you might start having chocolate cake thoughts and you start meditating. And so it's that essential desire is taken over. And so it interferes with your meditation practice. The doubt you could have done similar things you could have sitting in meditation doubting whether you should have chocolate cake. So doubts could operate on certainly but but the general is understood that in hindrance of doubt, is specifically having to do with uncertainty and decision in decisiveness doubt about the practice itself, about the teachings or you know, something, and so there's a variety of things you might have dealt with What to do in practice? You know, metta loving kindness walking, sitting, zen, Sufi dancing, you know, what should What should I be doing? And so some doubt about that what's what approach to take? There can be doubt about one yourself, your own ability to practice. You know, I can't do this. It sounds kind of lofty, and I'm just kind of like a klutz here. And you know, I don't know, you know, I'll go to meditation, but I don't really expect much of myself and, you know, I'll just look at the cracks in the wall. Because, you know, I can't really do this. They're asking me to do so there's doubt about oneself. There's also doubts about the teachings that the context for the practice, well, you know, this mindfulness, that seems good to me, but they keep talking about not, not self, and that just is frightening kind of teaching. And it seems to be the key Talking about it when you have my mindfulness. So there must be some connection. So I don't know if I can do this mindfulness thing, because that's going to make me go into some kind of strange, kind of disassociated state of not selfishness. And so there's a hesitation then to engage because of this amount of teachings. There could also be hesitation around the results of the practice. Well, you know that mindfulness is good. And I've had some benefits from the practice, it seems to help my daily life a little bit, but to really do it to go, you know, meditate regularly or to go on retreat. I mean, I'm a little bit worried or afraid that I'll have altered states of consciousness, a little bit worried that I won't be able to operate at work when I leave when I go back to work if I meditate too much. I don't know if I could, if I really have to really face what's going on inside of me. really honest and realize that we're really struggling with my choice of livelihood. really sit down and face that, then I might have to change my job. And I can't do that that's too frightening. So I don't think I should meditate much. So it's just so the So, over a whole series of kind of anticipated consequences of practice, can we have doubt or fear or concern about that? And so people hold back and not commit not engage. And then there can be also doubt about the teacher or the teachers. And so, you know, you hear some wonderful thing and, and teachings seemed like a good teaching, but they say you're supposed to have a teacher and, you know, who is this guy up there, you know, and he doesn't seem to know what he's talking about and, and this and that, and so, and so because the teacher had doubts about the teacher. It translates to an
unwillingness to commit or engage and do the practice for oneself. It's been said that of all the hindrances doubt is the most dangerous one for a practitioner, or in relationship to practice, because if you wanted to practice, doubt is the one that's most likely to get you to stop practicing, give up the practice. Whereas if you sit and meditate and have chocolate cake thoughts, you know, you might actually, it might keep you from practicing today, you might leave here and go to a pastry shop and get, you know, two pounds of chocolate cake and then realize the next day you know, that's enough. And the next day you practice because you realize how sick you are and realize that but with doubt, you know, if that persists, you just kind of interferes and you just, you know, and so, some people are more prone to doubt than others. Some people

you know, their minds the way their minds works, especially Not to say they see this take this as personal, a personal failing, just different minds work differently. But some people's minds tend towards more confusion. Maybe they don't, there's not as much clarity in their thinking. And so when there's when there's a fair amount of confusion in the mind, then it's much easier to have doubt or uncertainty. And so, people who are prone to confusion, this becomes often becomes their specialty is to looking at doubt or uncertainty and understanding how it works. With all the hindrances, including doubt, but maybe more so with doubt. They, they sometimes has an amazing capacity to camouflage themselves, or to or to close themselves with rational beliefs. So, you know, I could be sitting here very quietly and thinking, Well, you know, they're getting pretty sits idle, pretty concentrated here. And it's going very pretty well, but I think to really kind of feel The intimacy and the connectedness, and the kind of whole body kind of feeling of meditation, I think that, you know that the chocolate cake would really be helpful. You know, and so then, you know, so then I believe it and then off I go, you know, get my chocolate cake. So there's a, there's a strong that can be a strong sense of belief or kind of way, which the hindrances are good camouflage, and we don't see how they operate. So doubt in particular, because that can come with a lot of belief. And we believe whatever doubt tells us, and it can seem very, sometimes can be very rational. And so, you know, but the way it's the big issue around that is not the doubt itself or the uncertainty itself. The big issue, I believe, is the way in which it operates, to cause us to hesitate or hold back from engage, engaging in the practice. And so somehow we're not willing to commit or engage or do it. And so this idea of being held back, holding back is a very important one. So then it then is that what you want? Do you want to hold back or you want to address the uncertainties, the decisiveness, and the strong beliefs that come up might come along with that they interfere with our engagement. Finally, some of the doubts that people have some of the uncertainty that people have about practice and all that can also be quite Reasonable Doubts to have. And so, not to assume that necessarily, you know, bad to have doubts. A person might not be committing to practice because there is in fact, genuine, genuine uncertainty or lack of clarity, about something about the practice are about to do it. And so sometimes it's good to really become clear about the questions people have The uncertainties. So we can you can ask a teacher about it or you can read a study in a book about that particular issue, and try to resolve the uncertainty that you have. And once the doubt has been settled, then perhaps you can throw yourself into the practice wholeheartedly. And sometimes the issue is not one of clarifying something, but rather it's a matter of seeing the doubt or the uncertainties for what it is and not believing it. And not being caught in its orbit. And then being able to kind of commit to the mindfulness to the presence more, more wholeheartedly. So that's the introduction to the topic for today. The hindrance of doubt. Before I go on, do you have any questions you want to raise? Anything you want to bring up here at the beginning of the day, as we start this No doubts at all. No concerns. Okay, so during the meditation I asked you to reflect a little bit about what doubts and uncertainties concerns you have around meditation practice, and how those might operate as are to interfere or with your engagement in the practice caused you to hesitate to hold back, or how might they work to hold you back? I'm sure there are concerns you have that don't cause you to hold back. Not every concern holds you back. But perhaps there are some that manifest in your life is kind of, you
know, prevents you from being as committed as you may be. You could reasonably be committed, maybe has to do a daily meditation practice. Maybe it has to do with how long you sit. Maybe has to do with going on retreats. You know, I don't know about this retreat, maybe meditation every day is good. But this retreat thing you know, and it just so I have doubts about removing myself from society, it seems like it's a world renouncing world negating kind of thing. I'm really feel it's important to be connected to the world. I have doubts about this retreat thing. And so there's doubts there the concerns there that would keep you from engaging more fully in the practice. And maybe some of those concerns are reasonable, and some of those concerns need to be addressed and questioned. So that was the kind of the question I had for you. And I'm hoping that something came up in your minds during that meditation. And what I'd like to do is to have you break into groups of four. And in your groups of four, simply go around the time that you have and say, of the concerns that came up in your mind, that you feel like sharing with someone, you don't have to share things you don't want to share. But other concerns, the concerns, the worries, the doubts, the uncertainties you have, especially those that relate to practice and interfering with the practice. Share with those are to the group. And as you can maybe go around the circle a few times, and maybe as you hear other people, maybe, you'll realize maybe you have other concerns that you hadn't thought about yet. And this is just the time to name them. Not not to fix them, not to give feedback about them. But rather, just to kind of name these are my concerns, and maybe a little bit why those are concerns and can I speak about them for a while. And I thought we would do about 10-12 minutes of that. And so, you know, you just choose someone to start and just go around the circle and take turns speaking and just see how far I mean Time's up. Around, you share with that I'll make a bell at the end