So my friends, so. So today what the focus is going to be is on introducing to you mindfulness of the body mindfulness of physical experience. This is an extremely important part of mindfulness. So much so that sometimes I think we should call this practice body fullness instead of mindfulness. That a big part of what we're learning to do in Buddhist training and in mindfulness is to become embodied, to be present in the present moment. With our physicality, our body. Our body participates in the process of waking up, being present and really connecting to the fullness of the present moment. And in my training in Buddhism, through the monasteries in the United States, in Japan and Thailand. Emma, whether it's explicit or not, a lot of the training happens through the body. And there's a kind of engagement and an activation or awareness in the body. So the body becomes full and active and in being aware and supporting awareness, one of the advantages of being aware through the body, feeling and sensing how the body is experiencing whatever's going on, is the body is not a story. The body is not an interpretation. It's not a desire, usually, it just kind of it's, it's quieter, it's more peaceful in a certain kind of way, then the minds kind of activation around things. And so to kind of begin feeling things with the body begins to free us from the overinvolvement of our thoughts, our ideas and our concepts. It also gives us a lot more information about what's going on the body is a is almost like an antenna or an expression or manifestation of so much of our psychological, emotional, intentional lives. And the way we react and respond to the world around us is mediated so much through the body. That is a heightened awareness to the body gives us so much more information about what's going on within us and around us and makes life more three-dimensional or more active, full. So wonderful thing. So one of the principles of this mindfulness practice we're teaching is that we are learning to bring a special kind of awareness, a calm, attentive, nonreactive awareness to whatever is happening in our lives. And we cultivate that capacity, through mindfulness of breathing. We're always ready to leave the breath. If something else is more compelling or more predominant. So we'll do that slowly over these days.
today the expansion of the instructions will be around the body. And, and so what that means is that if a body sensation becomes stronger and more compelling than the breathing, then bring your attention to that body sensation. If, if you start feeling attention, like you're trying to stay with a breath, but something else is pulling your attention, there's no need for that tension. As soon as you feel that kind of pull and push and pull, kind of let go of the breathing and in a calm way, bring your attention to the other thing. So in this a situation that today the body sensations themselves. It's not uncommon for people who are new to meditation, maybe you're sitting in a meditation posture like cross legged, that sooner or later the body will be uncomfortable and within reason as you feel some benefit and idea that this is a useful exploration, we sit with and meditate with that discomfort. We bring our attention to it, we feel it. And we learn to just slowly learn to discover how to have a nonreactive non contracted awareness towards what's uncomfortable to have kind of an open attention. And as I think I said, if we're only free when we're comfortable or not really free, so we're also trying to practice with the discomforts see how can I be present for it in a free way. To do that it helps to have an understanding of how to bring a nice attention, nice awareness to all body sensations when they are predominant. And also want to say that as we learn to bring attention into the body into the body sensations, it adds a kind of anchor kind of stability. For mindfulness practice, it's sometimes easier to stay present in the moment. If awareness is mediated through the body that's rooted in firm and here in a good way. So mindfulness of the body is very important. So what I'll do now is to do a guided meditation. That's a little bit of an exercise on helping you understand what I might mean by bringing awareness to different parts of the body, different sensations that go on. And so it's an exercise to get this idea and this exercise thing can be applied to all kinds of other aspects of our physical experience. So to sit up right and one of the reasons is set up right is it's a little bit easier to be alert and stay fresh and not become sleepy or be forgetful the to doll by being too relaxed. It's a little bit intentional to sit upright. And that little bit of intentionality supports mindfulness. But of course, with mindfulness, you always want us to take a posture that works best for you. And so there's many postures you know, infinite number of postures to take, adjusting and finding what's appropriate for you. The So, sitting upright, and gently closing your eyes and quietly taking a few long slow deep breaths connecting to your body relaxing settling in And gently bring your attention to your right hand and feel the sensations of your right hand. Feel the tingling the vibration, the pulsing. Feel the sensations of the palm of the hand. The back of the hand. Fingers might be tempting the theater sensations of warmth and coolness. sensations come with a contact of your hand against some other part of your body pressure and weight and the sensations of your hand might kind of be flowing or moving around or, or just in a natural way your attention moves around your hand and picks up different sensations at different times. And see if you can let your attention the way in which you're attending to your hand. Not the forceful could also not be lazy or held back in an open, relaxed way. Then you're just feeling the sensations of your hand letting allowing them to be the way they are. And now with a calm, deliberate way, switch your attention to your left hand and feel the sensations of your left hand in the same way. I never like how does your left hand experience itself? What's inside ones are appearing. That let you know that this is a hand this is the sensations and see if you can adjust your attention so that you're willing to be present without being for or against what's happening, just allowing the hand to be the hand, allowing those sensations to show themselves and be there. Then you might move your
attention now calmly and deliberately to wherever in your body This sensation is our strongest, strongest sensation. It doesn't have to be a very strong British place of strong sensation, maybe the uncomfortable sensation to bring it to that part of the body. And then just feel that part of the body the way you felt your hands. Not only the strong sensations, but whatever sensations exist in that part of your body. Allow them to be there. And then allow them to show themselves into your awareness. Whatever the sensations they are, and you might notice that they sometimes they shift they move. They oscillate. Noticing if there’s any changes in those sensations if they go away, go to the next strongest sensations in your body. And now bring your attention to that part of your body who You usually experience your breathing or the breathing is most pronounced or easiest to notice the movements of the chest or the belly, air going in now through the nostrils. And the same way that you experienced your hand allows you yourself to experience the sensations of that part of the body where you feel the breathing. And then continuing, being mindful of your breathing. But if anything becomes predominant in your body, some strong sensation be content to leave your breathing and bring your attention to that part of the body and experiment with having a relaxed open, permissive awareness where you're not making it a problem. But you're just allowing yourself to feel it more fully. Perhaps relaxing the reactive mind relaxing your thoughts To better feel and sense and when the other sensation is become no longer compelling and you feel ready, you can go back to your breathing If you find yourself thinking, to simply recognize your thinking, no need to make it a problem, to say what to say when you notice it. Begin Again with your breathing. Perhaps allowing yourself to feel the physical experience of breathing in a fuller way. Feeling the play of sensations in the body that occur as you're breathing, resting with those sensations If something else in the body becomes predominant, calmly, switch your attention and experiment with having a relaxed attention. for however long it's useful and then you can come back and begin again with your breathing. If it helps you to stay present in your body, you can gently use a mental note in out for breathing and then breath out for the out breath then if you feel a sensation elsewhere in the body The bullets in the simplest label That's obvious. Pressure, pulling, tightness, discomfort, pain, softness, tingling, pulsing. And that simple act of recognition of mental noting is both a way to be aware of something in a relaxed way, but also to be stabilized there to really remember here's where I'll stay and feel this experience rather than having your thoughts take you away And then to end this sitting. You might take a few deeper breaths feel your body sitting in your chair cushion And when you're ready and you hear the bell, you can open your eyes. So one of the ways of understanding what mindfulness is, it's an awareness that is not in conflict with what it knows. And that's not an easy thing to come with when there's discomfort and so to learn how to be a of the body and all its different manifestations. Without being in conflict with it is a little bit difficult thing to do. And know for me when I was beginning my meditation, I had a lot of challenges with a lot of physical pain and knees were on fire and a lot of pain and, and it took me a while to learn how to be with it without being for against it or feeling self pity or getting caught up in fear and all kinds of things that made it hard the old habits I had of reactivity and habits or beliefs of what discomfort meant. And I had this idea sometimes that if I was uncomfortable in meditation, that I was failing as a meditator, like, if I was a good meditator, I wouldn't be uncomfortable. And what I eventually learned is that discomfort is part of human life. Of course, it comes with meditation, too. It's actually possible to sit and be very peaceful, calm and even joyful and meditation and have physical
pain at the same time. And to separate out our inner emotional life, from physical discomfort, so the two aren't kind of yoked together or, you know, caught in a grip between each other is a great blessing of this kind of practice to be able to respect the body feel the body fully, but not have it automatically affect our inner emotional life and mental life. The one of the things that gets in the way of this kind of non conflict of awareness, just being with it, is the commentary and the stories and ideas interpretations. We have a voice going on. And one of the things we're doing is to learn to see that that it's awkward This commentary that's operating, and learn to know what's there, but then not see the world through that lens. Maybe we put it down. But if we don't see the commentary becomes like the colored glasses through which we see the world. And the example one example I use for this is mood music. In a movie, there might be a beautiful idyllic shot of path in the woods. It looks it looks beautiful, like Park like setting. But then the movie has an ominous music that begins and the you know, the sense of own fear comes up in something terrible is about to happen. The music then is like the mood, that kind of weight on top of the scene. And so our commentary and ideas and even kind of our moods sometimes is the lens or they're overlaid on top of what's going on. We're not necessarily seeing what's there, enough reacting to what's there, we're reacting to the mood music or the commentary we have inside. And to be able to distinguish that is a very important thing. So, a story I've always, always been telling it this when I do enter the meditation class is this wonderful lesson that I received many, many years ago, where I was teaching a meditation retreat with some fellow teachers. And it was teachers here in California and some of them loved watching American football. And it was the local team was doing very well. So was they're very keen on watching it. So I got went along and watched during the breaks and the retreat, we would go to the teacher lounge and, and watch these games. And, and it was on TV and back then and we had a mute for the TV. One of the teachers mindfulness teacher, when the advertisements came on, push the mute button. And I thought that was kind of interesting. And so, you know, we've talked then it was nice. And then when the game came on again, the teacher had to mute did not unmute the TV. And since he was, and we were watching the game, and since he was a mindfulness teacher, I thought, well, he knows what he's doing. So I didn't say, you know, turn on the sound, I became very interested in what it was like to watch the game without the sound. I didn't know a lot about American football, but I could kind of follow the game a little bit, then it was kind of matter of fact that the ball was moving down the field and that was nice. And then at some point, the, the teacher did unmute the sound. And then I was struck by how radically different The experience was of watching the game. Rather than being kind of Matter of fact, which is watching this game happen. The big change was the commentary. And the noise of the fans, and the enthusiasm, the commentator, the sportscaster that really gave kind of like emotional juice motional energy to the whole thing. And I could feel myself my whole relationship, the game shift and change as I got ride, riding along the emotional energy of excitement that was coming with from the commentator, sometimes speaking breathlessly when there's something exciting happening. And I saw the difference between seeing the game without the commentary, and with the commentary. So same thing with us that we can. There's a big difference between seeing an experience experience of our body or discomfort and our breathing experiences in the world. With our commentary, and without the commentary that we have in the mind. Our commentary can tell dire stories of danger. Our commentary can tell us great stories of promise delusions of grandeur are where this is going. All
kinds of things we can say. And that colors, our experience of what is actually going on. What mindfulness is trying to do is find a way to be attentive to what's happening without the filter of that commentary about the filter of the bias, that prejudice without the filter of the mood that we have that we sometimes overlay on top of it. And you just see something in simplicity of itself. Now, with the body, for example, this is a can be a very interesting thing. I think a lot of people have parts of their body that they're not particularly happy with. It's too small, it's too big, it's too long, it's too short. It's too This to that and that's the commentary, that's the what the overlay on top of it and it can affect Our moods big time, these kinds of things. And, and so there's a hope so like, for example, if someone feels their hand is too small or too big or something, or just their hand is something, you know, they feel like it's not quite, you know, right or something, they could feel very bad about their hands, they'll hide their hands from other people don't want to show it, feel embarrassed by it or all kinds of attitudes about the hand. But if you close your eyes, and just feel the sensations of the hand, in and of itself, so unless you have some kind of injury in your hand, then the sensations of the hand, the hand by itself, has no problems. It just is the sensation is just a hand. The experience the eyes closed and not remembering that what that hand looks like and the ideas of what the head is like, but just the experience of hand is much more peaceful. The hand is In and of itself might be peaceful. Where the agitation comes is with the ideas, the judgments, the fears that come in with our what we think is the thing. So, to separate out the commentary, the mood music from the actual experience of the body in of itself is a radical act. And it begins often shifting our relationship to not only ourselves, but also to our life itself. Because we're starting to learn to see more clearly what is going on to see the body to see what's happening. The so, too, so there are comfortable sensations in the body that arise sometimes there's blissful sensations that bubble up in the body and sometimes Especially for beginners, uncomfortable sensations that come up in the body. And the idea is to not have preferences for one or the other. Because awareness by itself has no preferences. Awareness by itself just knows what's happening to us is present what's happening just like this, just like this. And then as I said in the guided meditation, that one of the ways of, of supporting this mindfulness practice is to use the mental noting to recognize a little more acutely within with a word. You know, itching, tightness, ache, warmth, coldness, and, and that mental note is really a very soft, gentle whisper. It's like almost like we're not doing it at all, but it's just enough to keep us on track so I don't get pulled down to thoughts very easily, but also take Keep us there, it's kind of a little bit of an anchor, stay there, stay there so you can feel it, feel it better, feel it more fully. If you start getting tired of feeling sensation in your body, then come back to your breathing. For people who find breathing difficult objects for meditation, what I'm teaching now about the body gives you an alternative. And that is to use the body as the anchor to go and feel the strongest sensation in your body. And feel it for a while until that's enough. And then let allow your mind just move into other parts of the body and other parts of the body. It can be a relaxed, roaming around just touching into the body. It could just be intentionally going to the strongest sensation and being there and then going to the next strongest but the body becomes the anchor, rather than the breathing. The idea is to have an anchor or to have what I call is a Home Base. If the breathing is the home base, then when things happen outside the home, we go and investigate. And then we come home. So if it's strong sensations in the body, we go out and see it and know it for what it is. And then we come back, then something else happens and we
go out and then we come back and anchor to the present moment, which is keeps being the breathing or keeps being the body. So with that, I thought we could do another short meditation, maybe 10 minutes or so. So if, once again, you can take a posture that you think will help you be more present for your body to really kind of inhabit your body, feel your body, experience it more fully. So take a posture that Maybe connects you with your body more, maybe sitting up straighter. And then as a way of really connecting with your body more, you can take a few fuller breaths to feel the ribcage expand and stretch your torso and feel the relaxing contracting as you exhale. And then like your breathing returned to normal with your eyes closed for a few moments, allow yourself to feel your whole body in a way that you felt you're right Hand in the exercise. Feel this sensations of your body and whatever way they appear, wherever they appear. And if some of the sensations of your body are more predominant or more compelling, maybe settle your attention there for a bit using a mental note to stay with it. seeing if you can feel your body from the inside. So not so much like you're watching it from the control tower or more like you're sensing and feeling how the body is experiencing itself. And as you do so is there commentary? Is there a mood, mood music that might be influencing how you experience your body. If there is see if you can put that aside just enough so you can have a more direct experience of the body In feeling the body and how it experiences itself, perhaps your attention roams around your body. Helping the different parts of the body become awake. A greater awareness. Some parts of your body have more sensation than others, some maybe or even offline. That's okay. And then you might for the next few couple of minutes. settle your attention on the sensations of breathing, sensations of breathing as part of your body. And perhaps let that part of your body be at the center of all things. Experiencing feeling the body Putting aside your commentary, ideas and preferences, to feel, where's the body most alive? What are their sensations experience like that the body has in that place of aliveness or vitality in what's it like to have a quiet awareness of that awareness that does not for or against, just aware allowing it to be the way it is. And then taking a few long deep breaths to end the city you're ready you can open your eyes. So many things qualify as the commentary that we overlay on top of our experience. Boredom is one of them. Boredom does not live in anything in particular. Boredom is an activity of the mind that's overlaid on what's happening. We often just think that things are boring, but nothing is boring. That's a judgment of the mind. We might overlay ideas of success and failure, what's going well, and what's not going well and all kinds of ideas that we keep adding. Some of those ideas can seem second nature. Like, you know, like, we don't even know we're doing it. As we begin to become quieter in meditation, we start seeing even the subtle, habitual kind of commentary that we have. And it's quite powerful to keep getting quieter and quieter, and start seeing some of the deeper operating systems of thoughts, ideas, stories, commentary that's always kind of there, the background or shaping or influencing how we see things and how we experience ourselves. And it's a gift we give ourselves to be able to experience ourselves physically in our body. Without much commentary, without much judgment, without boredom, without it needing to be different without feeling without feeling somehow we're off or wrong, or we're not doing it well. In mindfulness practice, the idea of not doing it well. It's not really useful. It's a question always is, how am I experiencing this? What's the Experience now of this, how is it now? And if we can do that, without the commentary, or at least have a gap between the commentary and the experience, we can't stop the commentary always. But we can see the commentary is not the experience. The thoughts,
the stories, making up the predictions we have is not the physical embodied experience we're having of the moment. And to have a gap between them or a pause between them, so that they're not, you know, caught in each other. It's really good. So part of what mindfulness does, is it starts giving us breathing room. It starts giving a little bit of space for our experiences to be itself without our involvement and interference with it. And over time, hopefully you'll begin to discover what a gift this is to yourself into the world. To not be always fixing, interfering, making better avoiding, but to really just learn to offer a kind, open presence that allows something to be itself. To train ourselves to do that with what's happening in the body is a really useful training to take the experiences the sensations of the body as they become strong and compelling. And learn how to have a non interfering awareness, make space for them. The idea that I like is that we're giving it permission to be there, as it is. Now, the value of this is that as our as mindfulness awareness gives room to things give space for it to be itself, then it allows that itself notice that thing that it is whatever it is, to begin to unfold, to shift and to move and most things inside the will begin to change and shift on their own. There is a momentum towards Change in a good way that begins to happen and unfold. When we give breathing room give space and time for things to be as they are. Very few things stay fixed. Most things start to shift and change. And we don't have to be the one who's changing it. We have to one, mindfulness, we're the one who makes space for the interchange to happen. And we'll say more about this as we go along. So tomorrow in the tomorrow's teaching, I'll talk about mindfulness of emotions. And you'll see when we start talking about the emotions, that the body has a very important role, to help create, support us to be mindful in a wise way with emotions. That one of the reasons we're cultivating this strong capacity to be in the body since the body is so that we can be present for our emotional life. valuable and important, useful way. So that's a topic for tomorrow. But in the meantime, if you have some chance, I hope that you're able to meditate for 20 minutes between now and the next class. And maybe do it. Meditation, which is live, keep it to just being with your breathing. And then if there's compelling sensations in the body, practice mindfulness there, until you feel like it's time to go back to your breathing. And also in your daily life as you go about it. Maybe there's ways that you can tune into your body more often. Maybe doing simple house job house tasks, if you're doing them. What happens if you do them and not in the stories and thinking and planning but really feel it physically, like you're almost like a, like a dancer being in the body, feeling and sensing the dishes and the broom sweeping or whatever you're doing. really stayed feel discover what's going on in the body. Be curious in this next 24 hours, to what's like when you tune into your body over and over again, what do you learn? What do you see? And can you learn to feel the body with the generosity of just a bit of a non conflict of awareness, mindfulness. So thank you for being part of this. And I'm sorry about the sound at the beginning. And I delighted in having this exchange when I saw this started seeing the notes the chats that said no sound and and what I like this is that this is how I know it's interactive. So I feel like I'm you know, connected to all of you and not just talking to an empty room to myself. And I really value that little exchange and that we had so thank you and i will see you tomorrow for us. Your names and some of you and I look forward to this opportunity tomorrow as well. Thank you