So good morning and welcome back to our fifth day on the Intro to Meditation Part Two and talking about the hindrances. And we have about five minutes before the scheduled time to start. And if any of you would like to take the opportunity for a question, I'm happy to try to respond. Maybe there'll also be some time at the end, maybe to ask, you can ask some questions on the chat here.

"After many years that you have practiced, what would you say the impact of practice has been on your life?" Oh, there's been so many big impacts. If I was going to say with a few words, I would say I'm much happier than I used to be. I think that's something that feels more profound to say is that there's much more peace here. And so the peace that kind of lives inside of me, that's somehow more ... is a kind of happiness but maybe more a little more profound than conventional ideas of happiness.

"Good morning Gil, could you please share practical tips on what to do when you try to control breathing while meditating?" So I like to say that first and foremost is that the practice of mindfulness is to use whatever's happening to cultivate greater clarity of attention, clarity of recognition of what's happening. And so it doesn't really matter for the purposes of mindfulness whether or not you're controlling the breathing. So some people when they realize that just go along controlling the breath, but they just use that as a convenient object to cultivate mindfulness with. And with that kind of ease and not being bothered by it or troubled by it. Paradoxically, sometimes it just relaxes by itself over time. As soon as we're kind of navigating, negotiating, fighting it, it tends to make the controlling stronger. Another kind of an added part of that is to not only be mindful of it, but become a connoisseur of a controlled breath. Really kind of feel the ins and outs of it, feel where it's most controlled, where it's least controlled. What emotions come along, what attitudes come along with the control. Just kind of make it all kind of an area of study. And then in terms of maybe not doing it if you can, sometimes I found it useful when I used to control my breath, to focus on the movement of my back ribcage. That back ribcage is much more passive, the muscles of the diaphragm aren't really directly active there. So, my tuning in there I was focusing on something which wasn't being controlled, just kind of going along. And that made it easier to relax. Some people just avoid the breath entirely and find some other objects...
of attention. Listening to sound. Sounds are always in the present moment. And relaxing the hearing muscle, in a sense, and just taking in sounds receptively. And almost as if your hearing is as wide away as where the sounds come from. And just relax and open and spacious. And just completely ignore the breathing. Some people focus on other parts of the body, rather than the breathing. There's something called in Burma, called sitting touching. And that was to feel the physical contact of the body against, the feet or the body, against the floor or the mat. And then alternate between that and feeling the hands touching each other. If you have the hands together or your hands touching your thighs. And maybe in the same, not coordinated with breathing, but in the same kind of ease, maybe an easygoing way, kind of alternating between sitting, feeling the contact point so the body against the floor, and then touching, feeling where the hands are touching. So these are ways of ignoring the breathing. And then over time, you can maybe return to the breath when you get more settled and focused. And the active busy mind, controlling mind, is not operating. And then one more thing to say about starting at the back rib cage, I used to kind of imagine I was doing that I was kind of sneaking up on the breath, coming from the back, and then when I got settled there, then bringing it in from the back door in a sense, and gently. And then I wouldn't control the breath so much. So those are a couple of things.

So today's topic is sloth and torpor. Someone's asking you about coffee drinking. And when you say something needs to be addressed, what does it mean? So these are both question that maybe will come out today and we're talking about sloth and torpor.

I'm happy to be here with you and seeing your names. So, welcome back to the second day of this eight part Introduction to Mindfulness Meditation Part Two. And it's building on the part one, a nine week course that I recently taught here. And the topic for this part two are the hindrances, those things which challenge our meditation practice. And it's considered to be some of, not all the challenges for sure. But as the mind gets settled, even starts getting approaching concentration, there's something about these five which are pretty primal, pretty basic, that can operate even without a lot of stories and concerns from our daily life coming into play, but just kind of almost occur with the moment to moment experience itself, with breathing or with anything that's happening in the moment.

The five hindrances are sensual desire, ill will, what's usually called sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt. And these five, there's number of similes or metaphors that Buddha used to describe these. And one set of them goes that when there is strong sensual desire, it's like looking into a body of water, a pond, that's been dyed red. In other words, in English we say seeing through rose colored glasses. If you look at your reflection in a pond that's red, it itself will be red. And you'll see yourself that way and so you don't see yourself as you are, but you see yourself through the promise, the allure of the sensual desire. Ill will is like the pond boiling over with heat. So the heat, the energy of ill will is like into boiling water. And you can feel the energy of it and bubbling over. And then sloth and torpor is likened a lake, a pond, that's covered with algae. And when covered algae, you can't really see your reflection either. And going through it this kind of like a little bit of a fight. It's hard to get through it and get pulled down, pulled back. There's a lot of resistance operating when you're trying to go through algae and certainly you can't see. And then restlessness and worry is like the cover of the lake, the surface of like, is like the wind, strong wind blowing across it and it's all churned up. And so again, you can't see your reflection because of all the churn churning up you can't see clearly. And doubt is like a lake or pond that's filled with mud. So the water is very muddy and lots of mud in it. And to make your way through a very, very muddy pond or lake, it's really slow going. It's slogging, you step in and your
foot gets kind of sucked in and takes a lot of work to pull it out. Only to get sucked in more. You pull out
one foot, the other foot sinks in deeper and slow going. So doubt is a very slow going and it pulls us
into it.

So five metaphors to get a little sense of what these are. And all these metaphors, one of the
commonalities of them is we can be have trouble seeing things as they are, seeing ourselves, the self
reflection, or seeing anything when we're trying to see it through that kind of water.

So, the topic for today is sloth and torpor. And this is probably a Victorian English translation. I
sometimes like resistance and lethargy to kind of capture a little bit more the inner psychological
meaning of these sloth and torpor. Sloth is more physical, physical lethargy or heaviness or slowness or
weariness. And torpor is mental. It's kind of a mental heaviness, dullness, mental fog. And so we can't
really get going, we can't really see like that when the mind. Dullness in the mind.

Now sloth and torpor belongs to a little family of things which is involves low energy in practice. And so
it's important to distinguish between the different kinds of low energy that can happen in practice. The
first is plain and simple physical tiredness. And we natural get tired. And in many people in the modern
world are so sleep deprived. They probably need to sleep more than they need to meditate. And so if
that's the case in trying to meditate, then they might be really sleepy. And certainly I've done plenty of
my share of falling asleep in meditation. And some of it was because not getting enough sleep. The
other reason for kind of a dullness that can kind of look like sloth and torpor, is as meditation deepens,
as we get more concentrated, it's very easy to get an imbalance between calmness and energy,
engagement. And if the mind gets calmer and calmer, but there's not sufficient energy to kind of keep it
alert, at first people will get into hypnagogic states, dreamlike states. And it's usually it's very pleasant
at this point, but kind of pleasant, kind of dreamlike images and things will occur, and they can be very
alluring, very captivating. One of the earliest experiences I remember of doing this in meditation, was
sitting in the evening by myself meditating after a full day of meditation. And sitting there and being
convinced that I was following the breath, in breath and out breath. I was right there for everyone. And
at the same time there was this huge scene in front of my eyes, that image that I was creating. Not a
hallucination, but kind of like a visualization of this whole theater with a stage and people doing
something on the stage. And somehow my sleepy mind had confused what was happening on stage,
my breathing, and they're one and the same. And at some point I just went to sleep, because you know,
went to bed. But even when we're not sleepy, there can be this very calm state, but we kind of soothe
ourselves into deeper, deeper meditation. And there isn't enough alertness. So if that's what's
happening, the thing is to bring more energy into the system, sit up straighter, maybe open the eyes.
Use mental noting a little bit more energetically just to kind of keep bring more alertness to the mind.
Brighten the mind. One of the instructions to sit in front of a window where there's sunlight or a bright
light to kind of have, even the eyes closed, to have light coming into the eyes and maybe can awaken
things a little bit. And so the idea that we need more energy because we are too calm. It's also possible
to have too much energy and what we need is calm. So finding that balance is kind of part of the art of
meditation.

So those are the first two of three causes for tiredness when we sit. One is not enough sleep. The other
is imbalance as we practice. And the third is the sloth and torpor. And sloth and torpor has nothing to do
with not having sleep, you can have all the sleep you need, feel really refreshed, all the conditions are
right, sit down to meditate and things get heavy and dull and kind of weary. It has nothing to do with
kind of the balance of things. There's a deep kind of thing. I think of all these hindrances as this
strategies of how to deal with challenges in life that are not so functional, not too helpful these
strategies. And sloth and torpor is a strategy of the system, not necessarily consciously, of shutting
down, of going dull, of becoming wary. And it can take the form of discouragement, weariness,
disappointment, dullness, kind of a depressed state. There's many kinds of ways that things get
dampened down for us. But it has to do with some kind of attitude we have. Some reaction we have to
what's going on. And a common way it goes is a reaction to frustrated desire. We feel like we're not
getting what we want, so we just kind of shut down and feel disappointed, discouraged, a little hopeless
perhaps. And we just give up. Kind of a giving up of energy and just like, oh, why bother? It could be
that there's ill will. There's kind of resistance and hostility, a little bit very, very faint to what's happening,
that lends itself to this idea of why bother? Why should I? It's too hard. No, I don't want to do that. Why
should I? I think that when I was a kid, I used to have that when my parents would take me certain
places. Some long drives we had, I get so sloth and torpor. I was just, "oh this was so boring." Or going
to some stores, like clothing stores I really didn't like. And I would be filled with sloth and torpor. It was
difficult to kind of drag my feet across the floor. I was like so weary and tired and so impossible to be
there and I must have been a drag my mother because I had an attitude of weariness, tired, sloth. And
it was an attitude. It was a resistance to what was going on.

Because many of us live by the caffeine of the soul, but certain things like desire and aversion keeps us
going and energized. Sometimes if we're used to that, then the absence of that can cause sloth and
torpor. Kind of a psychological weariness and dullness and lack of inspiration, lack of motivation that's
there, or excitement or interest. And in that case it's a transition time. And sometimes rather than
working with it, we have to be very patient and work through it.

Another thing that can cause sloth and torpor to arise is that anxieties are also kind of a caffeine of the
soul. That some people are constantly energized by their fear. And it keeps them alert and keeps them
looking and aware and all that. And if in meditation the fear abates, then we discover the underlying
weariness that's there. The underlying even exhaustion that can be there from chronic fear or chronic
anger or chronic desire, wanting. And sometimes there's a, like I talked about last time, kind of recovery
time that's needed. It's not a problem, but we have to be patient with it.

And then there's other reasons for sloth and torpor. It's kind of different attitudes that come into play.
One form it takes is boredom. And it's useful to realize that boredom, nothing in the world is inherently
boring. It's the mind that makes it boring. It's an attitude of the mind. That boredom is an activity of the
mind. The mind is actually doing something to make itself board. An evaluation, a judgment. So that
can make us weary and tired and kind of kind of give up our energy. And one of the very sad things that
can be boring is that if people are praised or if people are criticized, that's energizing. But when there's
nothing is in it for the self, or against the self, or self image. And we get nothing out of it for ego, for self
enhancement, or being praised or something. Or we getting our desires met. There's nothing
challenging us, challenging our self concept, challenging our conceit, challenging our ego, challenging
our desires. There's nothing. Then some people will turn off. They'll shut out. It'll be boring. Oh, this is
such a bore. This is a boring person. This is a boring event. And there's a kind of a dullness and
dropping of interest. And the idea that things would only interest us and give us energy if it does
something for us personally in our self concept, our conceit, our ego, or our desires or something, is
kind of sad. And part of mindful life is to be able to come into the world with interest and curiosity and care and respect from a natural vitality that's not dependent on something outside. Not something from the outside, but also not dependent on things like desires or aversions or fear to be there.

I've known people who've intentionally gone to make themselves afraid, like horror movies for example, because it was energizing, and they like the sense of aliveness and energy that came. So it's probably fine. It's probably innocent enough in and of itself. But this idea of always being propped up by these things, and then what happens when they all goes away and we're just left with ourselves? That's what we want in meditation. We want to finally be able to be left alone, completely leave ourselves to ourselves. We want to discover what's here for us. Who we are and what operates in us when we no longer are propped up or supported or stimulated from everything outside. Or even our psychology, the surface psychology, of our mind from the inside. But we want to see all this, what's goes on here? What's happening here? What drives me? What motivates me? And eventually kind of go through the layers of the mind, the heart, and discover some natural vitality and natural lightness that we're capable of.

So, BELLA. The five practices for working were the hindrances. With sloth and torpor, the letting it be, being still, with it is certainly interesting and sometimes it's important to really let it be and so we can examine it, step two. And learning how to let it be, not to be bored with sloth and torpor. Not to be angry with it. Not to be pulled into the world of desire because there's sloth and torpor. But just allow it to be. And some sloth and torpor are actually a very important part of life. I think some people who are depressed might think of themselves as having sloth and torpor, no energy, no inspiration, no motivation. I'm not saying all depressions are a good thing. But I get the sense that most people these days are very impatient with their depression. Because it's uncomfortable, they think there's something wrong, something personal failing or something, they shouldn't be depressed. There are times when depression is actually very important. It's part of the deeper processing, deeper unfolding, deeper way in which the heart, the psyche, is working something out. And only by giving ourselves lots of fallow time can we start seeing what's deeper and deeper, and what the deeper vitality, deeper motivations that one comes by. And so we don't always know what's being worked out when we're kind of depressed. If it's, you know, not a common, not a regular depression and constant, but there are times when that's actually quite important to give ourselves time, the fallow time and let something develop. And not to make the situation worse by being reactive to the depression. So whatever the reason sloth and torpor is there, you want to let it be a little bit just to see it and recognize it.

Sometimes letting it be too long is not so useful for sloth and torpor. Sometimes more is needed. And sloth and torpor, perhaps more than the other hindrances, do well with some kind of serious reflection. Actually thinking about what's going on, contemplating it. Not in meditation so much. But if sloth and torpor is a regular part of your life, you might go for walks, you might journal, talk to a friend to see what is it that. Just kind of explore it. What are the attitudes there? What are the beliefs there? What's your relationship to the sloth and torpor? Why might it be there? Where's that coming from? And it's not that it'll reveal itself quickly. But sometimes sloth and torpor is like a little bit of a message, little bit of a door. What's really going on here? What's deeper here? And since we don't want to use meditation for a lot of contemplation and thinking, do it another time. Spend some time really understanding what's happening if you can.

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And then examining sloth and torpor. Be curious about it with respect. And sometimes, I've done this sometimes with sloth and torpor and also with physical tiredness, is to really get curious about what's the symptoms in the body-mind of being tired? What are the sensations? What's the dullness and heaviness in the eyes and the cheeks? The grittiness sometimes was sand for me in the eyes that I feel when I'm really tired. Where is the sinking feeling? What happens in the shoulders? For me sometimes sloth and torpor has a kind of heavy leaden feeling sometimes in my body. In the mind it can feel like a lot of dullness and cloudiness almost in the mind and difficult to get going. Or if I do kind of do mindful mindfulness, it doesn't really feel like it's working. It's not really connecting to anything. And this feeling of kind of vacuousness of mindfulness of attention, or absence of it, or dullness of it. These are all ways that it can feel. They're all uncomfortable to feel this way. But part of the, you know, kind of the adventure of mindfulness is to be curious and feel the discomfort and really be with it and really get into it. And what that does, we're beginning to shift our attention away from reacting, or being discouraged by sloth and torpor, to bringing some choice and control and agency into the mind, into awareness, to explore and look at it. And occasionally, that kind of exploration of energy is all we need to kind of wake up, to go further.

Someone asked earlier about caffeine, drinking coffee, and sloth and torpor. I think that within reason it can be fine to drink coffee to be alert in a natural way. Kind of in more of a natural way. Over caffeinated is not good for meditation. But an ordinary day if there's little sleepiness or little tiredness or even a little bit of sloth and torpor and the caffeine kind of bumps you up a little bit so that you have a more productive meditation. For some people, that's fine. I didn't drink coffee for probably the first 30 years at least of my meditation practice. And I seem to have done fine. What I find, I drink coffee now in the morning, but on retreat it's often good not to drink anything. And then people have to kind of prepare themselves some days ahead of time so they don't go through the withdrawal at the retreat. But as the mind settles and get quieter, we don't want any kind of artificial stimulation of the mind. Because of this quiet, very quiet, peaceful, natural vitality that comes. It's nice just to allow that to begin living rather than having a little too much activation of the mind. And this is a very personal issue of caffeine and coffee and what to do not to do.

So BELLA., So, let it be. Examine it. Feel it. And examining also means looking at some of the attitudes, some of the beliefs that are operating, and the boredom, the conceits, where where we get our energy from, and what what our needs are to be stimulated, and have something and have something all the time. And begin exploring that, but also exploring is there anything that you would identify in yourself that could be a natural vitality. A natural kind of energy that seems to well up or be there. Maybe quieter then how you usually are, but sometimes recognizing a sweeter, deeper flow of energy and vitality, maybe physically In the body. And allowing that to surface in a deeper, peaceful way, in a way it never has before, can somehow wake up or move us beyond the sloth and torpor.

Part of the investigation of it, the examination of it, is to feel if sloth and torpor is resistance. Is it a giving up? Lethargy, I think sometimes comes from a give up, it's hopeless, I can't do it. And so these attitudes. I can't do it. It's hopeless. It's just too difficult. Our sloth producing. Resistance. No, I don't want to do it. I can't do it. It's too hard for me. I'm not going to do it. Can also take the form of lethargy. This examination is also important because occasionally sleepiness, tiredness, sloth and torpor is a symptom of going asleep, turning off, going numb, so we don't have to address or be aware of difficult emotions we're experiencing. Sometimes you see, especially with very young kids like babies, if babies
are overstimulated sometimes they fall asleep. It's almost like a protective mechanism. They can't handle all the stimulation, the noise or something. So they go asleep. As adults, the overstimulation of difficult emotions, difficult memories that come up can be difficult, painful things. Can be too much for our system to handle. And so our psychophysical system will fall asleep and go dull or good numb. And that's not necessarily wrong. It might be your inner life understands that you're not ready to really feel the difficult emotions that are there. And I don't encourage anyone to rush past that or rush into experiencing what's difficult, or what's been unattended and all in it's good time. Wait until you are ready. Wait until you're ready then maybe only do it in small dosages. There's no need to rush. No need to open all the floodgates. Take your time until you really feel ready if that's the case.

And then lessening, the third step of BELLA, perhaps with sloth and torpor the lessening primarily takes the form of increasing the energy level. Maybe do walking meditation instead of sitting meditation. And that walking gets a nice energy going. And maybe then more alertness to see more clearly what's going on. Or do some fast walking before you sit. Sit up straighter. Open your eyes when you meditate. Use mental noting. This is one of the great uses of the mental notes, which is to say a one word thought in your mind that labels or identifies what's happening in the moment. And if you do that little bit of energy, that can begin to brighten the mind, clarify the mind.

And then letting go. We can let go of sloth and torpor if we really see. If our mind really sees what it is we're holding on to. What the attachment is. And then oh, that's what it is. And I've had sloth and torpor in meditation. And only when I identified what was going on, did the whole body release something. And I remember once having a lot of sloth and torpor, feeling kind of off and lousy. And so I laid down on a couch and just felt the experience and felt experience. And at some point, I recognized that I was depressed, and the word depression came up. And as soon as I recognized what it was, something released inside. Some resistance perhaps, or some bracing myself for something. And that made the world of difference, just to have that release happen. When I clearly identified, recognize what was going on. So recognition, letting go, letting go of the attachments, letting go of the attitudes we might have, if it's possible.

And then appreciating. Appreciating the absence of sloth and torpor. And this can mean more than just appreciating. It could also mean to examine that. What is that natural vitality? What does it feel like, the energy in the body? What's activated in a nice way without there being slopping torpor? What's it like having a clarity, like a clear pond, a clarity of energy, vitality, in the system, in the chest, in the shoulders, in the belly, in the head. What’s that like? Because by appreciating and recognizing it, it actually supports it and strengthens it and helps us to recognize it in the future. So it becomes a resource for the meditation practice.

So that was a lot. I hope that you haven't gotten sloth and torpor on me hearing all that discussion about it. So we will now do our meditation. And if you feel like you're now just been sleepy just listening to all this, you might want to stand for a minute, stretch, shake out a little bit in order to be a little bit refreshed. And then you can take your seat again.

And then before you do too much work and changing your posture any more than you have Just tune into yourself right now. Notice what's happening for you without any attempt to try to now meditate on
your breathing or anything else, just kind of check in with yourself in the broad general way How are you? How do you feel? What's happening for you?

And is there any way that what's happening for you? Feels either do tired draining horse energizing and alert and with interest and maybe even excitement in that range. What how you are right now where do you fit more in the adult side, the low energy side, more in the high energy side.

Allow it to be whatever way it is just for a minute or so. And just explore it and feel it as if you're getting to know it for the first time and you know, trying to make it go away, you're just getting to recognize it.

And then you might begin with adjusting your posture, sitting up maybe a little bit straighter. So there can be maybe a little bit more energy of alertness. Gently closing your eyes.

And then you might begin doing the three breath journey. Just do three breaths, counting them from one to three.

And then you might do the same thing again, another three breath journey. This time, breathing a little bit more fully. Sometimes a deeper breaths can be a little bit energizing, which is nice, maybe. Just count three breaths, but gently. Take some deeper breaths.

And then let your breathing returned to normal. And if there's any obvious places of tension in your body that are easy to relax, you might relax them. Maybe as you exhale, Relaxing muscles of the face. Relaxing the shoulders. Relaxing the belly.

Very occasionally relaxing into where there is sloth and torpor allows us to relax through it. Allows something to release, some tension or holding. That's part and parcel of the sloth and torpor. Look through your body and mind. And is anything that you think needs to be released, let go of, softened?

And then within your body, letting yourself experience how the body experiences breathing.

The movements of your body as you're breath.

The changing sensations as you breathe.

Perhaps as you exhale, see if you can either relax, let go of your thinking or quiet your thinking as you exhale. So the mind gets quieter and stiller.

Let go or quiet you're thinking, the exhale. And let there be an alertness, a clarity. And then feeling, experiencing the inhale.

And then as a little exercise sitting quietly with your eyes closed, explore through your body to notice, where is it the most satisfying kind of energy, vitality? Aliveness of sensations? What part of your body seems to express the best, not over activated, but something that's satisfying and maybe both energizing and satisfying and settling.
Maybe an easy vitality in your body or your mind or your heart.

In feeling that vitality in your body, maybe breathe through that or imagine your breath goes through that, or comes from, that returns to it. Letting the thinking mind be quiet, softer, more gentle. So you can better feel and sense and experience breathing and this place of vitality, of energy.

In the experience of breathing itself, as you breathe in and breathe out. Is there any particular phase of the cycle that breathing in and out, that has a nice energy to it? Nice vitality to it? Maybe even a pleasantness in vitality. Some people it might be in some part of the in breath, some people some part of the out breath. What part of the cycle has a nicest form of vitality, aliveness?

And perhaps whatever vitality or nice energy, no matter how small it is, maybe as you breathe, you can gently allow to spread a little bit. To grow or ...

And to help the mind become quieter and stiller. A quiet mind that is energized or alert or clear. Clear to what's happening.

Now look around and is there anything at all that corresponds to sloth and torpor? Any dullness or anything that feels like it's draining or weary? Too much, any resistance or boredom or any kind?

Any lethargy or weariness? It could just be in a small place within. The middle part of your body, your mind your heart.

And then as if your awareness can be very permissive, give permission for that experience to be there. Aloath and torpor to be there. Let it be. But feel it and be with it. Examine it a little bit. Get to know it better.

Breath with it.

And as you feel whatever degree of sloth and torpor that might be, is there anything you can let go of in relationship to it? Any releasing of something that releases a natural vitality so it's not dampened down. What can you let go? So natural energy has a chance to flow.

Letting go.

And allowing maybe a natural vitality, natural vitality of attention to be receptive to breathing. So then vitality and natural energy that's part of breathing has a chance to flow and appear together with a natural vitality of attention. Being present. For a short while for another minute or so.

And then to end this sitting. You can take a few long slow deep breaths. Maybe three deep breaths.

Feeling your body. Your body against the chair, your cushion. And then when you're ready you can open your eyes.
So because sloth and torpor are generally uncomfortable and because they're kind of get the away, an obstacle of clarity, of really being present in meditation. There can be a strong bias against them. A strong kind of feeling that they're a problem. One of the principles of mindfulness, and the obstacles to mindfulness meditation, is to drop, let go of the idea of obstacle. Let go of the idea that anything's a problem. From one point of view, they can be a problem from that point of view. So it's not like I'm dismissing that mindset. Just that there are other mindsets. Other attitudes that are useful. And the one for mindfulness practice is that rather than seeing something as the obstacle, we see it as the subject of mindfulness. So we turn it upside down in a sense and make it the practice of mindfulness rather than the obstacle to it. So if there is lots of sloth and torpor, rather than seeing it as a problem, we turn towards it to experience and be with it. There's no need to see it in personal terms, like it's a personal failing or I'm wrong because I have it. Any of these hindrances or all these hindrances are ordinary human phenomena. All human beings have them. And different intensities, in different ways, but don't take it as a personal failing. It just comes with being a human being. And when we have challenges, these hindrances are the strategy sometimes. They're not so helpful, but strategies to try to do our best. Try to figure out how to deal with it.

One of the interesting questions to ask yourself, if there's a lot of sloth and torpor – it's a regular thing, comes over and over again – is to ask the question. And maybe in meditation it's a contemplative question, which means that you drop the question into the heart, into the mind, and then just see what responds. See what emotions, feelings, thoughts, ideas, surface on their own. It's not a question then to ask and then try to analyze it. And so the question: if I did not have all this sloth and torpor, what would I be experiencing instead? And sometimes that's enough to open the gate to show what's going on more deeply. It might be to feel sadness and grief. It might mean to feel confusion and we have a lot of doubt and uncertainty. It might be there's a lot of fear. There might be something deep, something really deep that we're trying not to address. We're trying to avoid, that we're resisting. And so this question, what would I be experiencing if it wasn't for sloth and torpor? If you're system, if your mind and heart is ready, just asking the question and receptive way, receiving the question receptively might be enough for something to be revealed. So maybe to ask yourself that in the middle of meditation. If you sit for 20 minutes, maybe have a little bell that goes off after 10 minutes, and then ask yourself the question.

Generally I think of all these things, including sloth and torpor, as things to respect. To have a lot of respect for how our system, our mind, our hearts, our bodies, is really trying to do what's best to work with very difficult materials, challenging stuff, stresses in our life. And to not kind of make it harder by judging it or negatively. But really just positive message. It's all for the purposes of mindfulness. It all, everything, is an opportunity to deepen, to open up, to find out how to be free. And if at a minimum, free in having it. To have a certain freedom and ease even to have sloth and torpor. That is a small step in the direction of freedom.

So, I know the sloth and torpor can be particularly strong for some people and some people at certain phases of their life. And I hope that I convey that you can have a lot of respect for it, a lot of care. But at the same time, not give into it, not collapse into it. But to have some agency and bring up curiosity or practice to work with it.
So now if you'd like we have about eight minutes left. If some of you would like to ask a question, I'd be happy to try to answer. And maybe some of you have particular questions or issues around this sloth and torpor thing that you'd like to ask.

And as I kind of said earlier, I kind of think of sloth as being more like lethargy. Which is an attitude, kind of, I think of. And then torpor as being more like resistance. But you know maybe, each of you might have your own association with these Victorian English words sloth and torpor.

"So I noticed I do much better with guided meditations than on my own. I think that is not the best practice. And the ideas? Thank you for your talks." I think that is not the best practice. The best practice is what is helpful for you at any particular time. So if what's most helpful is guided meditations at this time as a beginner, by all means, it's helpful to get this way of learning. It's a way of understanding the instructions. It's a way of getting pulled in. And so to get some general idea, to get into the territory of meditation. For some people, it's really helpful to do guided meditations. When there's a lot of stress in our lives and difficulty it might be very helpful. But just the principle is that sooner or later, you want to also learn how not to require guided meditations. Sooner or later, you want to be able to be self reliant, and learn how to be free and meditate mindfully, without any kind of external support for it. But once you've learned that there might still be times in your life where it's nice to do guided meditations. Might be an enjoyable thing to do. It might be particular guided meditations have their own lessons, there are so many different types. So you can be relaxed around it.

So, I'll try to do it in order. "Do you have advice on distinguishing more mental and body components of sloth and torpor, or tiredness?" Yeah I don't know if my what I have to say will be useful, but the bodily components really feels physical. It feels like a heaviness in the body or a tiredness or a dullness in the body. There can be sometimes, the body can feel fine, but really the strong component part is mental resistance. It feels dull, the sensations are dull. So physical sensations of dullness, the mental is mental sensations. They both have to do, sloth and torpor, have to do with an added mental attitude. So sooner or later, maybe you start noticing there's a mental attitude connected to it. That's those sensations. So in that sense, maybe all forms of sloth and torpor have a mental component to it. So that's where we find our freedom.

"Sometimes I nod off many times during a meditation. After half a dozen, I sometimes get up. Is that okay?" Well, depends how often it's happening and what your analysis of the situation. It might be you're really physically tired and you're better off take a nap before you meditate. Do a power nap, if that works for you. 10, 15 minutes and then get up and meditate. And maybe then you're clear. But maybe you take a nap and you're completely clear and you meditate and you still doze off. Then it might be a form of resistance, kind of like little babies who go to sleep when there's too much stimulation. And if you feel like you're interested in going deeper into it, you could ask yourself the question, you know, what would I be experiencing if I wasn't nodding off? What am I resisting? Maybe something shows itself. And the other possibility is if you keep nodding off half a dozen times, dozen times, don't give up your meditation. Don't think of it as a bad meditation. Maybe learn what it takes, figure out what it takes, to be sincere in practicing the best you can. And being at peace with the fact that you're nodding off. Not making it a problem. Maybe your meditation is then nodding off meditation, you're going to become the world class expert on what it's like to nod off. Just before you nod off, just after you nod off, what goes on there for you? What's happened? Then you understand it deeply. And it
might be, there was a time in my meditation many years ago. I would come back from work and then meditate 5:30 or 6 or something for 40 minutes. And the first 20 minutes, the weariness of the day maybe caught up to me. And I would spend the first 20 minutes just nodding off kind of constantly. And then it was kind of like I was taking a nap. It was kind of like a high quality nap. I wasn't trying to take a nap. Wasn't trying to get into it. But then after 20 minutes, it passed. And I was so alert and concentrated, that it was really, you know, wow, what a difference. So.

"I had trouble trying to find out where I was feeling it in my body. It's all over. Then I was thinking about that being all over. What is that about?" Maybe it's curiosity. Maybe it's worry, and trying to understand something. Maybe it's over reliance on intellect to try to figure out. But all over the body. Yeah. That's completely valid to feel it as a global thing. Just feel like, Oh, this, you know, feel the totality of the best you can. And as you kind of hang out with the totality of sloth and torpor in the body, then you might ask yourself, not so much to analyze it, but say, is there any one place that's most compelling? Any one place that's most active. Where it's strongest, or you know where there's the most collapse or as most sloth. And then you can bring your attention to that place where it's concentrated. If it's equal everywhere, just, that's fine. Just breathe with it, breathe through it, just feel it fully.

Let's see. "How to release". It jumps around, so I can't necessarily go back so easily. "How to release continual self doubt?" We'll talk about doubt in a couple of days. But to answer very briefly, its an important question. Maybe releasing it is not the first thing you should do. Maybe the first thing you should do, if it's continual self doubt, is experiment with doubting the doubt. Just do better. Maybe just do a better job doubting. And don't be just satisfied with the degree of doubt that you're doing and like self doubt, doubt the self doubt. I'll say more in a few days.

"I don't know if this counts, but I sleep too much. I often feel a need to sleep more, but I often feel worse after." So I certainly want to be very careful and respectful of that kind of question. I don't know what's going on, physically, emotionally, psychologically. I can't really know, many possibilities. But I do know that for some people that sleep is kind of an escape. It's kind of like life is too much or feelings are too much, psychology is too much, is kind of an escape. And then that kind of sleep can feel like too much afterwards Actually, we feel duller because of it. And a wonderful way, a wonderful important way of trying to find our way with all these things, rather than a teacher assuming they know or saying something, is to experiment. Mindfulness practice does really well with trial and error. So you might try, if you haven't already, try finding a day when you're not working, not doing a lot of things, maybe a day off. And then try not sleeping so much and see what that's like. And maybe do something nice for yourself that day. And see if that doing nice would you still get sleepy if you're doing a nice thing? Or try meditating instead of sleeping and see what comes alive. What you discover that way.

Same person asks, "Is there any way to work with this with mindfulness in order to have healthier sleep?" Some people, their sleep is pretty restless. Their sleep, there's a lot of tension and stress, because people carry a lot of anxiety and worry and anger and all kinds of things within them. That as the mind quiets down, the surface kind of cover, what covers it or keeps it at bay, kind of settles away and the deeper anxieties we have will surface. And I have a particular concern I have for a relative. When that concern comes up for me, I wake up. It seems like I wake up at 2am. And if I wake up at 2am in the morning, I know I'm concerned about that relative. It's like kind of during the day, I'm busy and doing things and it doesn't really surface in the same way. So one thing to do is to meditate before
you go to sleep at night. Some people will do loving kindness meditation or go make sure they meditate in a way that makes them feel really cozy and safe and comfortable. And if fears are really big issue, then also prepare in the morning so when you wake up, you wake up to a situation that's inviting and nice and satisfying. Maybe have breakfast ready or something's ready or just clean or nice. So how you prepare to go to sleep and how you prepare to wake up are all goodness, all just good things. And then do some nice meditation, or loving kindness, or read something that's very comforting for you and satisfying and inspiring before you go to sleep to see if you can prepare yourself for a nice sleep. What you do just before sleep, for the hour before, can have a big impact. Don't read the news, don't read emails. Just do nice things that are supportive for your inner life.

So I'll see if I can do one more. "I find sloth and torpor arising after a strong emotion." Yes, sometimes we shut down, we have enough strong emotion. Sometimes it's kind of self protection. It's a way of kind of recovering and just I can't, I can't handle much more now. Or I need to recover, I need to do very little. I need to kind of chill and take naps, take care of myself, have food, have tea, drink water. Go for a nice walk. Do something that's kind of refreshing and nice. It could also be that sometimes when there's strong emotion, there can be a lot of tension that builds up in the body. And sometimes movement, going for a walk, going for a run, dancing, dancing alone in your house. Doing some kind of movement that allows, kind of shakes off some of the residual effects of the strong emotions, will sometimes help us recover more quickly. But I think that having sloth and torpor after strong emotions is a pretty normal thing. And then be wise about how to work with it. But I think it's probably your inner system taking care of yourself.

"I realized that my weariness comes from an inability to meet the incessant demands I make on myself." Endless Oh, yes. The endless desires, endless demands, the endless self criticism, the endless complaining, the endless anxiety and fear, is a huge toll. And there can be such deep weariness and tired and exhausted from that on and on and on doing that. And we don't see because there's something about the energy of anxiety, the energy of these demands, that's we're focusing more on the results, what's supposed to happen, what we're afraid of. And we're activated. And that tension is outward direction. We don't see the toll. Or we actually are more alert sometimes, more energized. But it's a kind of caffeine kind of energy. Sooner or later we might crash. So part of what mindfulness can do is help us to really see what we do incessantly. And then learning to quiet that down and not do it so much. And find a different way to live. That's not going to be so exhausting.

So, my friends, thank you. I probably missed some questions and I value all of them and I'll try to go back now and go back and read all of them so that at least know what you're interested in. And so tomorrow we'll do restlessness and anxiety. And worry. And thank you and I look forward to tomorrow.