"What is the difference between exploring and contemplating thoughts in insight meditation? When is it useful to do each?" So a great question. A wise life, both is mindful of thinking, and also is reflective and with thinking. Thinks about things wisely and learns critical thinking skills. And spends times contemplating subjects, things going on. Things are important for us. The thing is that many people have a strong habit of thinking. And so even when they are going to think about necessary things or useful things to think about. The way that they think, is somewhat addictive. And it reinforces the strong emphasis that some people have that thinking is important, we're supposed to think. And reinforces the habit. In mindfulness meditation there's very little we need to think about. And mindfulness meditation, some teachers like to emphasize the difference between content and process. With thinking, in mindfulness meditation we're moving away from content, the things we're thinking about, to being aware of the process of thinking. And so we're not using mindfulness meditation to think better, think deeply, to reflect on things, contemplate things. We're using it to see things. And seeing is a little bit more silent than the mind that thinks and has conversations. And we're not necessarily getting rid of all thinking and not thinking at all. But it's helpful to maybe distinguish between different kinds or levels of thinking. There's discursive thinking, which is having a conversation in one's mind, holding forth and commentary about things. And that's much more involved and complicated forms of thinking. Thinking about the future, thinking about the past. And that has really no role in meditation practice. It might at other times in our life. And then they're very similar kind of thinking, that might still be a little bit like in sentences or multiple sentences, that are commentary about the present moment experience. And some of that might be a little bit helpful at times to find our way, but we don't overdo it. We want to let the thinking become even quieter. And a quieter thinking is to think very simple thoughts. Maybe of giving yourself instruction. Like, let me feel the breath now. Where's that inhale? Where's that sensation? What are the sensations of inhale? Where does the inhale begin? What happens if I just kind of ride the inhale from beginning to end? So there's very simple kind of instructional sittings kind of open questions that are encouraging not more thinking, but are encouraging a quieter observation of what the experience is. And then there's quieter thinking even still of a single words, the mental notes.
And so we're using the thinking mind so it's employed. But it's very, very simple in support of getting calm and settled and still. The mind can get stiller. And that is to use with an inner voice, that is quieting or calming voice, to have a single word for maybe a breathing in, "in", breathing out, "out". Or if there's a desire hindrance that arises, in a calm voice, not an alarmed voice, "desire". This is desire. This is a version. This is ill will. As opposed to "oh, no, this is terrible". So thinking can be part of it. But the the direction, if we're using thinking as part of meditation, it's all for the purpose of becoming quieter and stiller. All for the purpose of seeing directly the experience and not thinking about it. And so a lot of discursive thoughts we let go of, relax. Or if we're caught in it, we focus on the process, the activity of thinking, not the content. Outside of meditation, I hope all of us become wiser and wiser thinkers about things and we take time to have tea, go for a walk and and have have profound thoughts.

So that maybe took quite a bit of time to answer. And so that's the only question I see. So that's convenient. So then I think we'll start.

So, thank you for being here and coming back. And this is the second to last day of our Intro to Mindfulness Meditation Part Two, where we're looking at the hindrances. What hinders clarity, what hinders concentration, hinders a clear presence and being connected to our life as we live it. And it's important as I've been saying to not see the hindrances as problems, but as something to turns towards. If you turn towards a hindrance and really recognize that it's there. It's no longer hindering. It's a hindrance because it hinders our ability to see what's happening. But if what's happening is desire, is ill will, is sloth and torpor, is restlessness and worry, or is doubt. And we really see it clearly, oh this is what's happening, then it's no longer a hindrance. Then it's kind of been transformed from the hindrance of desire, to just desire. The hindrance of doubt, hindering doubt, to just doubt. And that's the power of mindfulness is to transform something from a hindrance into just being itself. And when it is just itself, then we can begin finding our freedom with it, our wisdom with it, and have a different relationship to it. As long as something is a hindrance, meaning it's hindering us, it's hindering us. There's no way of getting around that. And that's why we keep coming back with the practice of clear recognition. And we're learning through time how powerful it is to kind of step back and clearly recognizing, this is what's happening. We might at first recognize that "I'm feel restless, that's terrible. I'm restless and I shouldn't be restless. And what am I going to do about my restlessness?" There is a kind of mindfulness but we're caught up restlessly about the restlessness. To step back and see, "oh, this is restlessness." And maybe the first time you're kind of still caught in it, "oh, this is restlessness." But we keep saying it, "this is restlessness." Restlessness. Until we kind of see, "oh, this is what's happening". No doubt about it. This is clearly what's happening. There's restlessness, but the knowing of the restlessness has become calm. The knowing of the restlessness is not restless about the restlessness. Or not aversive to the restlessness or something. Running away from it. So over time to learn this art of the part of mindfulness that has to do with with clear recognition. At that point, a hindrance is no longer hindering. And then we don't call it a hindrance anymore. Then we just call it desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness, worry, and doubt.

The topic for today is doubt. And there's a long tradition of seeing this particular hindrance. Hang on a minute. There's a long tradition of seeing a doubt as the most dangerous of the hindrances, in terms of the meditation practice and maybe other things. Because doubt has a way of camouflaging itself. Of coming with tremendous authority about what we're doing, questioning it, doubting it, having no confidence about it, not being able to commit to it, thinking there must be another way, there must be
something else, not this. And when doubt is really strong, we don't do the things that we should do. That things that are healthy for us or beneficial for us. We might give up on things prematurely or unnecessarily. And so from a practice, Buddhist practice point of view, doubt is the most dangerous because if we doubt the practice, or doubt ourselves in the practice, we can give it up. We can leave our meditation, we can just stop meditating. We can just walk away. And I've known people who've had very strong. I know one person who had very strong doubt on a retreat. And she said she had a multiple hindrance attack, meaning all of them were there, but that was a strongest. And she was doing a long silent residential retreat. And at some point she doubted being there, the importance of being there, being uncertain about being there, and decided that was not the place for her. And decided to leave. Flying cross country back home in the middle of that flight, she just suddenly woke up and said, "wait a minute. That was a multiple hindrance attack. I got caught up especially in doubt, and I didn't need to do that. But that got the upper hand on me and here I am flying home."

So, the word doubt. Maybe another word is uncertainty, indecisiveness. So we're uncertain what to do. We don't know what to do. Should I be paying attention to my breathing? Or should I be doing loving kindness practice? I don't know what I'm going to do. And should I sit on this retreat or that retreat? Should I read this teacher? Listen to that teacher? What should I do here? Is this the right time to practice? I don't know if this is the right time to practice. Maybe tomorrow is the right time. Tomorrow comes. No, I don't know, I'm not sure what's the right. And one of them kind of very insidious doubts. That's kind of interesting, is having a lot of doubt that the practice is going to work that I can do the practice for example, I don't know if I can do This practice is not good practice. I don't know if it's for me. I don't think it's going to work. If we're caught up in the hindrance of doubt, but those thoughts spinning around and going, you know, mile a minute, then it's a self fulfilling prophecy. Of course, it's not going to work if we're spinning out and thoughts like that. And so there's a kind of a paradox or irony that the very questioning about this or doubting that this is going to work or they're thinking this is not going to work, this very thing that causes it not to work, so called. And then people give up the practice. I think it's useful to distinguish between hindering doubt and questioning doubt. There is doubt which is healthy to have. There is doubt that questions things. Is this really true? What I'm hearing? I don't know about this. Let me question it and reflect on it and think study it and see what I think is really works for me, what is true. The difference between hindering doubt and questioning doubt. Hindering doubt disconnects us from experience, pulls us away, shuts us down, creates a veil, creates a distance in our ability to see and be present for something. Questioning doubt in a healthy way is one that opens us, moves us towards something, engages us to look more carefully, more deeply. So, that's how we distinguish between the two. And I think questioning doubt, that often involves thinking outside of meditation and thinking about things and questioning and all kinds of things, is a healthy thing to do. But being very careful. Does it involve uncertainty? Does it involve indecisiveness? This hindering doubt tends to be very discursive. Tends to be a lot of thinking and ideas. And this is where mindfulness of thinking becomes very useful. As the basic instruction practice I gave in part one, included instructions for how to be mindful of thoughts and thinking. As we get skilled in recognizing thinking, the different kinds of thinking, we start feeling that certain ways of thinking are distancing. Certain way of thinking disconnects me from myself, disconnects me from what's going on. Certain kinds of thinking puts me up my head and spinning around in an agitated way. And I'm not settled. I'm kind of agitated. And as we learn something about the quality and the effect of thinking has on us, then we can see at
some point that certain way of thinking, the process of thinking, is not so useful. It's not settled. It's not relaxed. It's tense. It's agitated. And rather than judging the kind of thoughts, or being concerned with what we’re thinking, we can see this is not a healthy way to be. To be always so tense in my thoughts. Let me get reconnected. Let me come back to breathing. Let do the three breaths journey. Let me settle down. Let the mind, thinking mind, settle down. So my thinking can rest in the mind, rest in the brain, or rest in inside of me. I can still think, but I'm not spinning out and caught up in them.

So if we can learn to recognize the difference between settled, easeful, relaxed thoughts, thinking and agitated ones, then we have a better opportunity to notice when we're in doubt. And a better ability to question the validity of what doubt is saying or the authority of it that we're supposed to be caught up in all these thoughts. And instead of being staying caught, we can try to settle the mind. And one way to say it to oneself is, to the thoughts, let me consider you later. Let me first get settled. You might have some interesting point. You might be some validity, but this doubt that there. But thinking about it in an agitated way is not helpful. Let me calm down and settle down. And once I'm settled and reconnected, then let's look at it. And chances are that when we get really settled, if the doubt is kind of hindering doubt or involves this kind of fear based uncertainty or fear based questioning, then if that's quieted then we'll think about it more accurately. More usefully. We might feel in the calmness of our being, that there is a natural confidence to practice. There is a feeling in the calmness of it all, this is right to do this, to practice this way. When we're agitated and caught up in these thoughts of doubt, or caught up in fear, and caught up in expectation and striving and wanting something else, it's very uncomfortable. And it lends itself to a lack of confidence. And it's hard to find confidence in those states. So to repeat what I said, to learn the basic practice of mindfulness, including learning how to be skillful and to recognize thinking and the quality of thinking we have, can show us when the ways in which we're thinking is not really that useful. And not dismissing what we’re thinking about. But knowing that it's useful to calm down, to settle. And then maybe reconsider what the concern is. But then we consider it from a very different vantage point. And we might see the situation very differently from this new calm, settled vantage point.

Sometimes doubt arises when we have our goal in practice is too grand. We have very lofty goals or expectations. So it could be as simple as, for this meditation session I'm I'm going to be with every breath and not miss one, not to wander away at all. That might be too big of a goal. And so because with that kind of expectation that you can do that, and then the mind keeps wandering off even if it wanders off only 10 times in the 40 minute meditation session, it might be discouraging. And we start having doubts about can I do this? Is this the right practice? Maybe I should do something else. And it had a lot to do with that it was an unrealistic goal. To be full time with every breath in a sitting, maybe is unrealistic until the mind is really well settled and concentrated. So what can be helpful is to have a much more modest goal. It might be to do the three breaths journey. Maybe we can have confidence that you can, more or less, do the three breath journey and then do it again. And then you do it again. And then that might build confidence. I can do the three breaths journey. I know how to do that. And if three breaths is too much, then maybe just be satisfied with one breath. If one breath is to match, just do the inhale. And then do the exhale and build confidence on these small steps. And with small steps, it builds over time. Don't set up too big of a goal, high expectations. So you're guaranteed to have self doubt. Be content with a small goals, being present for this this moment, this moment. The walk up a very high mountain is done one step at a time. Each step, stepping, stepping. The goal of practice
Buddhist practice is pretty great, pretty lofty in a sense. But the way there is only one step at a time. And that's where the confidence gets built up over time.

The other thing that's helpful for a doubt I said, understanding and being sensitive to the different ways, qualities, of thinking is helpful. The same thing, it's useful as we develop practice to become a connoisseur of the quality of our physical being. Of how we feel in our body, what gets tied, what gets agitated in our body, what collapses in our body, where the energy in the body goes. And start recognizing what's happening in the body. Because that can be very quickly a first clue that somehow we're losing touch with ourselves. I've been sitting and meditating and feeling very connected, very grounded, kind of like the energy in some ways of attention, of awareness, was centered in my torso and my belly, and kind of felt very stable. And then I had one single thought come up that was so captivating and arousing, that I almost feel like this energy inside wooshes up into my head. Wow. And with some emotion or some preoccupation or thought. And to have noticed that difference, that change, of how things change, what's activated. Oh, this is a time to be mindful, I think kind of something radically changed. Let me be cautious here. Let me bring attention to what just happened. And if I don't do that, then it's very easy to get pulled into those worlds of thinking. So the more familiar you become with your body, and the changes in your body, able to track it, the more you get the clues that supports you to notice when you get pulled into doubt. So what I'm pointing to here is not directly addressing the subject of the doubt, but rather addressing how we feel mentally and physically and maybe emotionally when doubt happens. Turning the attention back on that. And then looking at this carefully. And maybe settling it, relaxing it.

Now some doubts we have maybe can't be settled that way. Some doubts, maybe about the practice, about the teachings, it's best to go find someone to talk to you about it. Could be a friend. Sometimes just talking it out and hearing ourselves talk, we come to a better understanding ourselves. Or maybe the friend has some perspective to offer. Or go talk to a teacher. And sometimes doubts are very valid to have and those can be clarified in talking with the teacher.

So doubt, uncertainty, and indecisiveness can come up in this practice. And when it does, it is just as valid focus of attention as anything else. It's just as valid there to step back and clearly recognize, oh, this is doubt. This is indecisiveness. This is uncertainty. And keep a kind of relaxed, open, step back recognizing there, until you start feeling that you're a little bit free or a little bit separated from the doubt itself. You're not entangled with it. It's almost as if this metaphor of stepping back and stepping away and looking back at where you were, or looking back at what was there, and then seeing it from some objective distance. And not being entangled and caught in it. The metaphor that I like, a little more visual for this idea, is being with a group of people who are all arguing, talking at once, you're participating in the whole thing. And for some reason you have a reason to step away, 10 feet or 15 feet, and then you turn around and look at them. You're no longer participating in the animated conversation and argument. But now you're just watching it. And you say, Wow, that's a lot of energy over there. Wow, they're really caught up. And it feels kind of nice to be away from the fray and just kind of watching it and looking at it. And maybe you care for it. You're not being aloof. But this stepping away, oh doubt is happening. This is doubt. Clear recognition.

So with that, maybe we could do a our meditation today. And I'll say before we do one more thing about doubt. If a doubt is not too strong and we recognize it, sometimes it can be useful to use discipline to
settle it, to overcome it. To just say, Okay, I know there's doubt there, I'm just going to be committed to just being with my breath. Just doing my practice. And not give it a lot of energy, not give the doubt a lot of attention or energy, but put the attention energy on just doing the practice. And if you don't have enough confidence in the practice, that's what doubt can mean. But you maybe think, I'm going to try just being disciplined. Then what you might also do, if it makes sense for you, is to borrow the confidence of another practitioner. Maybe you know a person, another meditation practitioner or you know a teacher, and they seem to have a lot of confidence. And so try to borrow it. Try to kind of pick it up and kind of borrow it. They have confidence, I'm going to borrow theirs and really get myself over for these minutes that I'm here and see if that can overcome this minor doubt that I'm caught in.

So, I will offer you my tremendous confidence in this practice as we do this meditation. So, if you can take a meditation posture and for this purpose today, you might take a posture that expresses confidence. If you can do that without any tension. Sitting with confidence and gently closing your eyes. And taking the three breath journey. Counting to three, one for each of the next three breaths.

And then maybe doing it again this time taking some fuller breaths. Three full breaths in a gentle way. Breathing in fully and exhaling fully.

And then letting your breathing return to normal. And taking a little bit of time now to look around your body, feel around your body for any place where you feel tense or the muscles are held tight. And see as you exhale, whether you can relax that a bit If it's not easy to relax, it's fine. Doesn't matter too much. But maybe relaxation means being accepting of yourself as being tense. Shoulders are tense. If they don't relax ,the relaxation is in the mind. Accepting the fact that there’s tension in the shoulders.

And then one more thing to do in preparation here, if you could look around your body. And is there any place in your body that you associate with confidence and is a place of confidence.

Some people that can be their feet, their legs. Some people, their hands. Some people, the chest, the heart. Some people, it's the belly area, wherever it is for you.

And let yourself kind of explore and feel that part of your body where you feel some kind of confidence. Doesn't have to be strong or dramatic.

And even if what you discover approximates confidence, that's good enough. Perhaps breathing with this place, feeling or imagining that you breathe in and out through this place of confidence.

Then maybe with some perfume of confidence in the background, let yourself settle in to the experience of the body breathing. Perhaps as you exhale, letting go of your thoughts. Quieting your thoughts. And letting go into the exhale. Letting go into breathing.

Rather than trying to attain something in meditation, to make something happen, maybe you can allow your meditation to be very simple. To simply recognize what is happening. And then try to have that recognition be relaxed, calm, but also clear and allow the recognition to be recognizing what is easy and obvious to recognize. As opposed to thinking about it, analyzing it. And if it's not clear what's happening, it's completely appropriate for the mental note to be something. Something is happening. To
be clear, oh yeah, something is happening. I don't know what it is, but something is happening. And that
might be all you need to do to be mindful.

In this central role that recognizing has, means that the practice is successful each time, each moment
where there is some kind of clear recognition.

Then as you're sitting here now, is there any degree of doubt? Even if it's very teeny. Any uncertainty?
Any in decisiveness? And if there is, recognize it as such. And as you recognize it, notice what
influence it has on you're thinking, on your feelings, or on your body.

If there is any subtle forms of doubt and indecisiveness or uncertainty, feel it in the body. Feel it in the
mind. Notice the quality of the thinking. Notice the quality of the process of your body and mind involved
in doubt thoughts without giving too much attention to the content of the doubt.

As you exhale, release yourself into the exhale. Allow the release. Letting go of the exhale. To continue
to the very end of the exhale. Not straining to do so, but relaxing to do so.

And then to end this sitting in a gentle, kind way, to take a few longer, slower breaths. As if you're
waking yourself up from meditation in a shower of kindness. Of caringness. Breathing in deeply, letting
go as you exhale. As if you're stepping into the world again with kindness, with care, with calmness.

Having let go of doubt the best you can. Maybe opening your eyes now with the eyes of trust, of
confidence.

One of the important or significant causes or conditions for the arising of doubt, is fear. And part of the
path of mindfulness is to learn to become well familiar with how anxiety and fear works for us. And that
takes being willing to stop and look at fear. Perhaps the bumper sticker for mindfulness practitioners is
"I stop for fear". Stop and look and get to know it. Because that's one way to become free of fear. Not
free because it's absence, but free because we're no longer caught by it or limited by the fear we have.
One way to do that is to study it, get to know it, to understand it and understand ourselves in
relationship to it. So fear can come up as a doubt. There can be fear of how we're going to be changed
by meditation. Fear of altered states of mind. Fear of really looking at ourselves deeply and uncertain,
doubtful whether that's really worth doing or can I do it? When there's a lot of doubt, sometimes you
want to ask yourself, is there fear? And then one of the, I think one of the powerful things to do when
there's anxiety and fears are regular companion for oneself, it's likely that that fear needs something
from you. Rather than dismissing it, or trying to fix it, or trying to solve it, or trying to analyze it, to try to
talk to us to talk yourself out of it. Sometimes this powerful thing we do in mindfulness of turning around
and looking at something and really recognizing it. There it is. This is fear. But might be important once
we do that can really see it there. Maybe the fear needs something from us. And one of the things that
fear often needs, our fear, our especially anxiety, and chronic fear that goes on gone for years. It
needs to feel safe. And our task is to help our fear feel safe. And that means that if you're trying to fix it,
to get away from it, you're embarrassed by it, you're angry at it, you're trying to overcome it. It's not
going to feel safe, it's going to feel like it's not wanted. It's going to feel like it's wrong or something. But
to imagine that the soft palms of mindfulness, you come from underneath the fear. You find where it is
in the body, feel the sensations of it, really recognize it as a physical aspect of fear. And come with
awareness and just hold it in the soft palms of awareness. And try to make it feel safe. And one of the
great mantra to do this is say to it, it's okay. You don't have to explain what is okay. That's a very
powerful mantra. It's okay. And one of the things you're trying to convey to the fear, it's okay to be
afraid. I'm here with you, I'll protect you. It's okay for you to be afraid right now. And when fear starts to
feel safe, then it begins to thaw. Then it begins to open up, then it begins to relax. And some of our
problems we have in life and problems, some things were afraid of, are not things that need to be
solved, but rather is to represent something that needs to dissolve. And if we're always solving, we
don't allow this deeper interpersonal process of dissolving happening, that can happen if we get out of
the way while at the same time holding it in awareness. So experiment with that. Those of you who
have chronic fear, anxiety, and it's a regular companion. It's very common for humans to have that. It's
completely worthwhile and useful object for mindfulness, fear. And you can develop a lot of
mindfulness, strengthen it with fears as the subject. But see if you can hold it and help it feel really feel
safe. Like maybe like you've never done this before, allow the fear to have its time in the sun, in the sun
of awareness. So I say this because sometimes doubt, is prompted by fear. And the real issue is not the
doubt, it is the underlying fear and to look at that.

So we have about 10 minutes before the end. And I can take some questions if you'd like to ask some
and try to respond to something that's particularly useful for some of you. And while we are waiting for
the questions, I could say that tomorrow is the last day for this hindrance series. And there has been
some requests for Introduction to Mindfulness Meditation Part Three. And one person sent a very nice
message suggesting that that could be in what the Buddha's teachings is called the Seven Factors of
Awakening. Which in the Buddha's teaching, it's kind of these two teachings – the hindrances and the
seven factors of awakening – are kind of paired up like two sides of a seesaw. And as the hindrances
go down, these seven factors, good factors of mind get stronger. When the hindrances get stronger, the
seven factors of awakening disappear. And so the Buddha clearly paired them up that way. So it might
make a next one. So I'll think about it about doing it, then I might need to wait a while now maybe I
maybe have to wait until June. We'll see. You can look at IMC’s website to see. Keep an eye on the
schedule there.

So that answers one of the questions that was here.

"Thank you, Gil, any insights on how to handle overwhelming thoughts of doubt about the future?" Well
chances are there's a lot of fear then if they're overwhelming. And maybe what it needs to addressed is
the fear about it. And if it's really overwhelming, what you might do is write your fears down. Write your
doubts down. And maybe do a kind of stream of consciousness writing about what you're afraid of and
then after you've done it for that for maybe 15 to 20 minutes, you might go back and reread it a few
times. Or maybe even copy those doubts down on a second piece of paper. And just getting them out
on paper and being really clear about them, might give your mind a different relationship to them. You
might understand them in a different way. Something I've done in the past, when I had not doubt so
much, but I was really troubled by something and a lot of grief and sadness. When I was driving and I
was alone, I would talk to myself out loud about it. And I found that when I talk out loud, I access a
different part of my mind when I quietly think to myself. And it turned out that there's more clarity, more
wisdom, more objectivity, more access to a wider intelligence sometimes in talking out loud than just
getting caught up in the mental chatter that goes on. So writing, journaling, talking out loud, might give
you more clarity and a little bit not caught so much in it. And it might give you an opportunity to think
more wisely about what you're doing. So if you're overwhelmed by the future and you're constantly reading the news, stop reading the news. Most news is actually old. Things haven't really changed so much in the thousands of years. It's just old in a different form, a different shape. And so it might be helpful just not to read so much, for example.

Okay, "I'd appreciate anything you have to say about trust." So trust, I love the word trust. I like it more than faith, for example. And trust, what can I say about it? Certainly trust is confidence. But trust is an openness and allowing that there's something good here, that something is right here, something is supportive here. And you don't just trust blindly or trust anything, but to trust the mindfulness. To trust meditation, to sit in meditation, and learn that being clearly recognizing what's happening, being present, for what's happening in the present, and kind of opening to it, to keep opening to it. That's a very trustable process, meaning it's okay to open to it. Okay to allow it to move through us. Good things come when we open up and allow it to move through it. Even if what happens is more intense and more difficult at first. I've learned you can trust that process, keep opening. So trust for me has this connotation of it's okay to hang in there with this. Something is supporting us, something is moving through right now. That's not always the case in all human situations. But if you practice mindfulness, most situations work out for the best. That's what I found. But that means really practicing mindfulness and not kind of getting tripped up by reactivity.

"I have a doubt when I use RAFT and BELLA during meditation." Well, maybe if you need some clarification about how this practice of RAFT or practice BELLA work and you need to ask some questions. Or in order to sit down and come up with different explanations for these, or different understandings, or different acronyms even for yourself that work for you. You don't have to stick to actually what I'm teaching. And the other thing is maybe you say, I have doubt when I use these practices during meditation. Maybe what really needs attention is to turn away from the those practices and focus on the doubt itself. Just be mindful of doubt, until the doubt has abated and quieted. And then you can use these other practices in some way. And also, these practices that I give with the acronym RAFT, which I did in part one of the Into to Meditation class. And then BELLA for this one. They are not always the best thing to use. So even though I've taught them, I think they're useful and useful for me and for many people, they're not it's always the right call and what's needed for me. And sometimes I shouldn't be trying so hard. Sometimes I shouldn't try to always be doing practice and techniques to try to figure out how to make it work and get ahead, find my way. Sometimes mindfulness is not so much about getting something or acquiring something or becoming something. The heart of mindfulness is this recognition, just clearly recognize. And this BELLA and RAFT are supports for what to recognize, but not meant to get over something. So maybe your doubt has something to do with using them as a technique, or avoiding what's really happening, or maybe you're using them too much. And sometimes you just want to sit peacefully with what is, even if it's difficult.

"I can't find the archived versions of this series of talks." It's should be on YouTube. We have a YouTube channel for IMC. I think it's called Insight Med. But you can get to it through IMC website. On the YouTube channel, there's a thing called playlists. And under playlists, I think it should be there as its own playlist, the Introduction to Meditation playlist. On Audio Dharma, we are doing the audio recording. It should be there, but it's not in any kind of list. You have to look by the date; my name and by the date. So if you do hindrances as a search, you can probably find it. And I might have missed one. There might be one talk that's missing from Audio Dharma that hasn't made it up yet.
"Thank you for differentiating the two kinds of doubt. I was not able to articulate them before. Now I feel more legitimate in having questioning doubts and test them out." Great.

"The guided meditations that relate to the topic each day have been helpful. How do we transition that to meditating on our own without guidance?" Great question. You could re-listen to some of these for a while until they become a little more second nature and more familiar with it. So you know how to do it for yourself. Or you can alternate days. One day alone, one day with guided meditation, so that you're experimenting and exercising your ability to find your own way. And in the long term, you want to find your own way. Long term you want to become your own teacher. So yes, transitioning is actually part of the process. But how you do that? It's probably individual for each person. And if you ask yourself that question, maybe the answer will come easier if you think of this path of mindfulness as being a path of trial and error. There'll be plenty of error, because that that didn't quite work. But try trial and error, see what works for you. Because one of the principles of mindfulness meditation and Buddhism is to ask the question, is it helpful what I'm doing? And is it helpful for, in Buddhist terminology, is it helpful in the process of becoming free?

"How does procrastination lie in the hindrances?" Yeah, I don't think I've ever thought about this, but thinking about it now. Maybe it might be interesting to look at when there's procrastination to see if any one of the hindrances underlie it. I could well imagine that aversion, resistance, might be there. I don't want to do that. There could be desire to enjoy the comfort of whatever I'm doing. I don't want to leave that, I'm going to hold on to it and that's why I don't do something which is more uncomfortable perhaps. It could be sloth and torpor. It could be there's too much restlessness to get started. Worry. And there could be that there's a lot of doubt. And so you might look and see what is underlying it, procrastination.

"What's your recommendation was staying open with fear and not closing down during meditation? Thank you." The question of trust before, when there's a lot of fear and some fear is really strong. Some people have terror inside of them. And things happen in life that there's good reason why people have very strong fear that lives in them and can be reawakened pretty easily. So it takes a lot of care and wisdom if that's the case. And so then there are times when it's important to practice at the speed of trust. You don't have to go any faster than the degree to which you have trust and confidence that you can be with what's going on. And don't go deep into fear or strong fear, unless you have the trust to do that. And of course fear represents a lack of trust, but you only go into it with at the speed of trust. And even if takes days, weeks, years. Take your time with it. And don't think you have to stay open to fear continuously. Sometimes it's enough and very powerful, very useful to open to it briefly. Maybe that's okay to do. And then step away and reground oneself, recenter oneself, even if you have to distract yourself for a few minutes, open your eyes and look around. Come back into your body and get centered again. And then at some point when you feel like you have enough trust, enough confidence, enough stability, then go and open to it again. If it's a big issue in your life, don't go for very long. Just tap into it. And I've sometimes given people the instructions to imagine awareness is like soft cotton balls. And just come and tap the fear very gently, and then pull away. And then over time, things might open and it feels safer to go deeper and deeper into it. When the trust is there, then we can open more and more and more. And if we feel like I can do this. I can do this. Sometimes with really difficult fear, it's the fear of fear which is the big issue. And so we wait until we trust that it's okay to be with a fear.
And then in terms of paying attention to the obvious or paying attention to what's the primary thing, sometimes what's useful is to not to bring attention to what we’re afraid of or to the primary central fear, but rather to bring mindfulness to the fear of the fear. And once that fear or the fear has quieted down, then it might be easier to be present for the central fear.

"Is it possible that you experience at the same time desire and aversion towards the same object situation? I think it might be and this leaves one very confused?" Yeah, I think so. And I think confusion, yeah that's part of human life and easy to get confused. And easy to have many multiple conflicting kind of things going on at the same time. One could have a strong desire for a committed relationship and a lot of aversion to it. And fear and that confusion around wanting and pulling away. Pulling forward and putting away can be only confusing for you. I'm not saying this is for your issue, but it can also be confusing the people you're with. And confusion is not a sin, is not a crime. What we're trying to do in mindfulness is to live an honest life. And if what we really feel is confusion, really stay with that. Oh, this is confusion. If you're in a relationship or doing something in the world where an honest relationship is what's needed, then be honest about the confusion. It might be very different interpersonal process that talks about the confusion around desire and aversion, then to talk about either one by themselves. I think people are more sympathetic if they realize you're confused. So I'm not sure if that addresses the question, but I maybe apologize if I didn't. That's what occurred to me kind of extemporaneously.

I think the the chat thing is jumping around a little bit so I apologize that maybe I'm not reading them in order. Oh, "how to deal with delusion in general and in doubt related thought?" I think delusion can be treated very similar to practice with how I've been talking about doubt today. But I think one of the ways to recognize delusion, to recognize delusion, it really helps to have a quiet mind. And so to know when your mind is not quiet. And know how to get some semblance of a quieter mind, a more settled mind, more mindful mind. Because if you're mindful strong enough, your mind is quiet enough, you can see the beginning point of a rising thought. And if you could see a thought when it first arises, then you're more likely to notice it. It's just a thought. And you can put a question mark next to it. Is this accurate? So for example, there can be some delusion about some other person. You have a judgment about a person. Or a bias about a person. But if you can notice when that bias, that judgment comes just up for the first time, then there might be enough space to put a question mark. And is this really so? And you look more carefully to see if it's the case. To see if you're operating on some kind of bias or preconceived idea or something, prejudice or something. So we're working with delusion, to just talk to someone who's spinning around in their thoughts and agitated and all that, notice your delusion. It's very hard to do. But if you practice, if you really want to get underneath and really want to not live a deluded life, become calm. If you become calm, then you can be wise about it and see how it operates.

"Perhaps tomorrow you could address the best way to deal with our suffering sense of loss due to impermanence of people, of things we love. People and things we love, we lose them. People die, things disappear." Yeah. Sometimes the mindfulness practice, learning to be present, honestly with what's there. But without resistance, without clinging, without being for or against. Learning to trust just being open to it. The sense of loss, the grief, what's needed is, what's best is to just let our hearts break. Sometimes this life of ours is heartbreaking. And I've certainly learned through this practice to allow my heart to break many times. Sometimes it breaks many times a day. And I've learned to kind of be at ease with that and to allow it. And doing so, it's kind of clean or it's kind of clear. I don't get stuck in it so much. I don't see it as wrong or mistake. I did give a talk two days ago on Monday, Monday
evening, here IMC on grief. In particular, addressing what's going on with COVID-19 and tremendous amount of grief and loss that's going on. And I think many people are feeling some level of grief these days. So you might want to listen to that talk and maybe that would be nice for you, helpful.

So this is great. I very much appreciate the questions, the thank you's, the little statements about this has been useful for you to do this. I feel that two months ago, I never would have thought that I could be talking to a camera and with the computer on. And felt such warmth from all of you. And also my warmth for you and my care and my sense of connectedness and my delight at what we're doing here and how we are together. So I thank you all very much for this time and this opportunity. And I look forward to being with you again tomorrow. Thank you.