Greetings. So today is the first day of a series of talks on the seven factors of awakening. And those talks, these talks, there are seven. So I believe the plan is I'll do be able to do seven days in a row, including Saturday and Sunday. And so for those of you who would like to do the whole series like that. The seven factors of awakening are to introduce them, that Buddhism is less at teaching, as it is an instruction and it's an instructions of how to wake up. And these are these seven factors of waking up are the inner capacities we have mature and grow in this process of becoming awake. However, the word awake, often the translation of Bodhi and Buddhism comes from this idea of Bodhi, Bodhi-ism Buddhism, awake-ism, the ism of being aware, but the word that Bodhi also means wisdom and understanding and knowledge. And sometimes just the word awake, becoming, you know awakening in Buddhism doesn't leave any clear kind of not so solid, it's not so it doesn't really have a rooted in something substantial in a way that the word bodhi is knowledge or understanding or wisdom has a little more feeling that we're connected and involved and seeing the world in a clear way. These seven factors of awakening are part of not only of the goal of Buddhism to become free and liberated, but I also see them as a wonderful framework or exploration for how to enter into the world with capacities to live in the world in a healthy, balanced, supportive way. We bring these best qualities with us into our attention to the world, our witnessing of the world. And perhaps we can call them the seven factors of witnessing, that if we really want to see what's happening in our society, you might want to consider how we see it. It's very easy to get caught up in our opinions and our thoughts and our reactivity, our fears and our anger and our distress and lose touch with a deeper capacity to really know in a qualitatively wonderful way to really see deeply and experience it deeply in ourselves so that we become changed, so that we are really touching into the depths of our capacity to care, a depth of our capacity to engage in ways that are free, that are not caught by hate or caught by greed or caught in fear. So I'm hoping as I go through these seven factors this week, that we can consider that, how they might come into play, as we read or watch the news or as we encounter in a neighborhood, some
of the challenges that exist and as we reflect on our relationship to this world that we live in, that we can reflect more deeply and more fully, from this place of that the seven factors of awakening point us to. I think of the seven factors of awakening as being the sap in the tree of Buddhism, the Bodhi tree is kind of represents Buddhism the tree of the ficus tree that is called the Bodhi tree that the Buddha sat under. So this idea of a tree represents Buddhism and then the, the nourishment for it, what keeps it alive the sap of it are these seven beautiful qualities inside that get awakened in practice. And these are mindfulness, usually called Mindfulness, investigation, effort, joy, tranquility, concentration and equanimity. And, you know, around the edges of those are other important qualities of mind and heart as well. But these are kind of the core that the Buddha emphasizes seven factors of awakening. And he, he sometimes gave a very simple kind of path of practice from beginning to end. And that would be a person who would first let go of this five hindrances. Then cultivate the four foundations of mindfulness, and then develop the seven factors of awakening. And often the, the juxtaposition is that as the five hindrances decrease, the five, they're filled that space that's created in the mind is filled in by seven factors of awakening. So when forces of greed, of ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and regret, and doubt, decrease, then they, they that space is available for in the mind and the heart for mindfulness, investigation, effort, joy, tranquility, concentration, and equanimity. So, the first factor of awakening is mindfulness. And, and it's not simply just being mindful. But it's really being really settled into the mindfulness, really having it beginning to flower and, and awareness begins to have a little bit of a life of its own. Where it's really up to us. When it's really strong it's really hard not to be mindful. It's kind of like this is what is coursing through us. This is what's most alive. This is what's your most this lifeforce of awareness is what has space and what everything has been cleared away. And it's a fantastic feeling to have really be really established in mindfulness. This idea of Sati mindfulness, the way it's talked about is that it's not just mindfulness we're cultivating. But it's also mindfulness awareness, centered on four subjective areas of our life. And these subjective areas of our life are not meant to be at exclusion of the world around us, but rather to really tend to the subjective way that we are. So that how we are subjectively can be in harmony with the external world or be connected the external world, in a good way and, and hopefully attuned to the external. So the inner and the outer, become attuned to each other an important way. But the idea is to start here, in this subjective experience, and there are four areas. There's the area of our physicality, be attuned, be aware of our subjective experience of being in a body. The subjective experience so the feeling tones, the hedonic tones of pleasant and unpleasant. The subjective experience of states of mind how our mind is. And the subjective experiences of the inner processes that come into play, that keep us either contracted and caught, or which allow us to open up and be free. These subjective experiences then the Buddha called the ancestral homeland, they're the place of refuge, that we have a refuge inside, in a certain way, being with our subjective experience in a certain way, is a place of safety, is a place of deep home, being connected here. And so and so what is it to really rest or be at home, in oneself? It's an experience that not many people have. There's a lot of challenges that people have and tremendous challenges in this life. That sometimes make it very hard to feel that you can rest or trust to really settle in to your direct experience here and really feel it. And part of the process of practice sometimes for years is this noble and wonderful path of awakening. The deepest capacities we have to be aware. Exactly what awareness is my favorite translation for Sati is not mindfulness, but rather awareness.
But what Sati is, what awareness is, we probably don't want to specify too exactly. Because it's probably some combination of all the different attentional faculties we have, this miracle of attention, this miracle of how our psychophysical bodies can have the capacity to register, to perceive, to take in a tremendous amount of information that we call that through through the vehicle of attention or awareness. And so we have the ability to know in our mind, we can know what's happening, we can recognize something. We can recognize that I'm breathing. We can recognize that this is an inhale and this is an exhale we have the ability to feel, to sense the experience of breathing, we can sense and feel the pressure and the release of pressure, the movements of the body as we breathe. As we breathe in, we can feel the expansion of the ribcage perhaps and as we exhale the collapse of it. And, and so this idea of we can sense physically, almost like we're getting a massage is another attentional faculty we have, we can be aware of the, the feeling tone of the experience, we have these nerve endings that allow us to feel pleasure and pain. And so to feel what's pleasant and unpleasant, the experience is a very important part of the human experience. And that also, we can tune in to the pleasant and unpleasant of is that allows us to make adjustments sometimes and to appreciate more it's pleasant and nourishing and supportive. And, and even with the breathing. It's possible to sense what's pleasant in the breathing. And what may be is not so pleasant and uncomfortable, and to learn how to be attuned and aligned and is aware of these pleasant and unpleasant in a supportive way, so that our willingness to be here and present for it all is stronger. It's also possible to just settle back and observe the experience. Vipassna means to see clearly. And the idea of seeing is a metaphor which the Buddha used a lot and very prominent in Buddhism. And so the idea that somehow with the inner eye, we're kind of settling back in the image that is used actually, sometimes in the sutta is leaning against the tree with a pasture in front of us, and just kind of allowing the mind to gaze and be aware and, for me, it's kind of like leaning against a tree and watching a river go by. The sense of ease and relaxation, settling into oneself. And this just watching the phenomena flow and in a nice, comfortable, easeful way that will watch you as you watch a river go by. So this capacity to observe is also part of mindfulness. In fact, traditionally, the capacity to observe is considered a very advanced form of mindfulness practice. So in saying all this, I'm saying that we have a lot of different attentional faculties. Another one that the Buddha didn't talk about, is appropriate perception, we have awareness of where our bodies is in space and where the different bodies are in relationship to each other in space. So when we say the word here, but that's, you know, something, what I'm pointing to is the capacity to settle back, open up and allow all the doors of perception, all the ways we have to be aware to open to not go out to experience not try to make something happen. But to see what you know, all the windows are open, what what breeze is come into the house, what smells from the garden come into the house. So when you sit in open here, and it's for me, it's kind of like a movement of both opening and settling, to say that here and just like here. And then when I open my hand to here, then the sensitive part of the palm is available to feel and sense what's here. That it can't feel when it's closed up. And so for mindfulness to be this natural capacity for attention, to give it a chance to operate, to give it a chance to be here. And so though the single word that I like to use to represent the practice of Mindfulness is the word here. And you might as you go through today, say the word not the regularly to yourself, not the way that you would say, command to a dog to come here, but rather almost like a lover almost like a some you know here, here, like a gift here, here I am as a gift, and an
experience, whether it is what's here. And if you're reading the news, or watching the news, is there
some way of watching deeply and fully and even feeling all the difficult emotions that might come
challenging, strong emotions might come. Is there some advantage, some benefit to waking up to here
in the middle of that, that gives more space for that, that allows you to be there somewhat independent
of the reactivity and rush to judgment, the rush to contract or give up or something here. And then
each day I'll give a different word for the seven factors of awakening, a little practice word that kind of,
hopefully can open this experience for you as you go through your day. So the seven factors of
awakening are in you. They're part of you, they're in you, and may this practice, awaken what's in you,
these wonderful qualities, so that you can be a benefit to this world. Thank you.