So we're looking at fear these days. And there are two kinds of fear. The fear which we are trying to become free from, and the fear that we want to listen to. There's the fear that is motivated by attachments, by greed, hatred and delusion. And the fear that arises out of even freedom, a sense of from our wisdom, our love, our care, the healthy fears, the fear of causing harm. And so the fear of ourselves causing harm to others, fear of ourselves causing harm to ourselves. And to watch and see and be mindful, know when we're about to cross that line. And that hesitation, that feeling, uh oh, that's not a good place to go. That's a frightening. That is considered in the Buddhist tradition, a very healthy kind of fear. The fear that arises out of greed, hate and delusion, to support the greed, hate and delusion. That is what the practice is really trying to address and learn to be free of. So to learn to distinguish between these two. And of course, it's not always so clear that they're separate or there is often kind of a mixture of wisdom and confusion, certain kind of greed and generosity that can be mixed up. And so to sit quietly and begin to kind of unpacking the layers or teasing apart the different aspects is very, very helpful. Sometimes fear is the motivating force for greed, hatred and delusion, for being attached. And sometimes when there's a lot of anger, for example, it can be useful to notice the fear that might be underneath it. Because if you can see the fear, then it's a whole different way to work with it. Then we work with a fear. That's the primary thing and the anger and hostility is just a symptom. It's a messenger. And they say, you're not supposed to kill the messenger. You want to go look at the message is. And sometimes anger is the messages that we're afraid and that's what needs to really be addressed. And sometimes greed, hate and delusion is the cause of fear. We want something so strongly that we're afraid of not getting or we're afraid of losing, we greedily want to hold on to what we have and we're afraid of losing it because it's whatever reason. So to look at this and to tease it apart is important. And one of the ways of thinking about this, is we want to understand our relationship to fear. How do we meet fear when it's there? I believe that all of us, just about all of us, will have fear of some kind of other, whether it's healthy fear, unhealthy fear or combination of both.
And the question is, what is your general attitude towards yourself and towards the fear that might arise for you? And to begin looking at that. Answer that question your for yourself. Spend a day a week, a year a lifetime looking at what is the fear that's here? What is my relationship to it? How do I generally act? How do I generally meet? How do I generally react to fear when it arises? So do I believe it automatically? Do I recoil from it and shutdown and there's you know, pull away, avoid everything that makes me afraid. Do I just put my head in the sand like an ostrich so that I don't have to look at it? Or when I'm afraid do I attack? Do I get angry? Do I get become critical? Do I blame someone else for my discomfort or something to maybe to deflect the attention from myself or deflect my own attention to my fear and some idea that I have to kind of overcome it and, but not look at, not be with it. When there's fear, do we feel bad about ourselves, that we shouldn't be afraid and if we were a different kind of person, we wouldn't be afraid. And so we begin kind of oppressing ourselves and making life difficult because these heavy burdens of shoulds and how we think we should be. Are we afraid of fear? If we feel the fear come and we pull away. How are we with fear? How do we meet it? Of course, the answer, I think, has a lot to do with the intensity of the fear. And there's a wide wide range of what people can feel. And it all should be respected. And depending on the intensity of it, we might relate to it differently. But one area where it's always useful, I think to think of is it a laboratory, to discover and explore and work with fear is the minor fears we have. When I started looking at it myself, I was really surprised how it was such a constant companion and the smallest kind of ways. If I was standing in line in a store, I had a teeny bit of fear about, you know, who was behind me, in front of me, what they would think of me, fear by what they thought it was in my shopping cart. And this idea of fear, in all these small ways was there. And as I looked at it more deeply for myself, I saw that by looking at the fear, I saw that for me that particular kind of issue was fear, particular fear was fear of rejection. Somehow people would either reject me or they wouldn't like me. And then that became really, to see the specific city have it, really helped me to look at it. And it was relatively very mild in this and you know, in supermarket lines, or things like that. But mild and small doesn't mean that it's inconsequential. It sometimes often is when you look at it, taps into something which is really important for us in deeper, a root in a sense. So I would really encourage people to spend time getting to know and working with the small anxieties, the small nervousness happened through the day, and try to understand what's going on. Try to find a different way to be with it. So one way of relating to small anxieties is just ignore it. To not think it's important or let it have kind of influence on us but not really understand it. And then on the other end of the spectrum, then there's fears which are very, very intense. People can have panic attacks, people can feel terrorized. And it's so strong that sometimes the very idea of being mindful of it or being present for it, or letting just be the river that flows by, could just actually make it worse. Sometimes intense fears, self reinforcing, and we spiral out. And so we have to see by asking the question, how do I relate to fear? What happens to me as I meet fear, we can also begin learning when not through trial and error, that this is not that kind of fear to meet. This is not what to bring mindfulness to. This now I need to I need something else I need to ground myself, I need to even distract myself, I need to get some fresh air or the equivalent. Maybe I need to find a friend to talk to. I need to do something that stabilizes me. Something that allows my whole system to come into seclusion, more equilibrium by not paying attention to it right away. And of course, with certain kinds of intense chronic fears, sometimes we need help from other people. But in between the,
you know, very mild and very intense things, there's a whole range of things where it's really fascinating and very helpful to sit and meditate with it. And sometimes even when you feel some fear in your daily life and it feels like this is a good one. Sit down and meditate that there and then and really be with it. But rather than investigating it deeply what's really going on, investigate your relationship to it and try to understand how your attitude you have towards it, the beliefs you have towards it, the reactions you have to it. What are the secondary emotions you have about the presence of fear? And all those things, many of those things, those attitudes and stuff, might be like a branch sticking out from the island, on which passing log gets hooked on and just doesn't get stuck on. That if we could understand the attitudes, the relationships we add to fear, then it might be easier to let the fear leave it alone and let's let it go by, not to react to it or get caught by it. And one of the ways to discover kind of a useful for kind of hands off attitude towards fear is to imagine that maybe you're an island and it's just going by, or maybe it's a very big island. And there's a big mountain on the island, a big hilltop. And you have to be way up on that hill looking down at the fear far in the distance, then it's okay to be with it. That somehow being too close to it is too difficult. And we have the ability with mindfulness sometimes to adjust the distance from which we look at something. And sometimes with fear it's better to be far, far away. Just far away so we can just leave it alone. If we get too close, then it can be agitating or worse. We can get frightened by the fear, the discomfort of it. And so how close can you be or far away do you need to be in order to really feel what's going on. Other times the relationship we have to it is can be very intimate. And there are times when I've had fear, where I kind of place myself right in the middle of it. And really allow the fear to really kind of be, you know, flowing through me, and mindfulness, the island, was right in the middle of it. And then I really felt that flow. And there are times when that was not appropriate, that's too close. So to look at our relationship to fear, how do we meet fear? How do what do we do when there's fear? And one of the goals and might be a long term goal of mindfulness practice is to meet the fear with simplicity, with just allowing it to be there. But not just allowing it to be there so it runs us and controls us, but allow it to be there. So we can see it clearly. The fear is part of who we are, it is not who we are. And if anything, who we are is the awareness of what's happening. But even that doesn't work in the end. But provisionally, that's a useful way of seeing it. That we are the island upon which everything else flows. And that simplicity of just being simple and relaxed and not being troubled by fear. To learn how to be comfortable with fear. And in a certain kind of way the relationship that we're looking for in practice, that can be very helpful, is to help our fear feel safe. So rather than fixing the fear, getting rid of the fear or solving the fear, maybe the fear we have inside, what its greatest need is, is to have be able to spend some time so that it feels safe. And so what we can do from our island or from whatever wisdom and place of stability we have, is that we can find a way to hold the fear, be with a fear, so what's frightened inside of us doesn't feel criticized, doesn't feel like we're poking at it, or running away from it. We have all these unhealthy ways of being with it. But the fear begins to feel it's okay to be there. Finally, it's safe. And for me the image of holding our two cupped hands together like this, and then just holding the fear, like we'd hold maybe a gentle little gently holding something that is precious or caring or maybe a little bird that's been stunned and we're just holding it to bring it outside the house. That maybe we can learn how to help our fear feel safe. And then the fear we have can begin to do what it needs to do. It can begin to thaw, relax, settle, unwind, and maybe even dissolve. So to
spend time looking at your relationship to fear is one of the great things to do. So thank you for today and I hope that these exploration consideration of fear gives you something to consider through your day and in a way that helps you not be limited by your fear. Thank you