So what I was saying is that the subject of today's talk is impermanence, inconstancy, and that this is one of the three characteristics, one of the three insights that gives insight its name, insight meditation. That for the purposes of a deep spiritual freedom, freedom of the heart of Vipassana practice brings us to a point where we're able to have a kind of a deep perception of these three different characteristics in such a way that they are catalysts for liberation. They help free us from the ways in which we are caught, ways which we resist, the ways that we are pushing things away. The ways that we don't let the free flow of life and emotions and experience kind of move through. Also the ways in which we then interfere with our own natural maturation process as we move to greater and greater freedom.

And so there's three characteristics that have that set to characterize all experiences. And I use the word experience very carefully, because often a tendency in Theravada Buddhism, to say that this is a characterizes all things, everything is impermanent, everything is not self, suffering, and everything is not self. But it's not quite right to call it everything. It's rather how we perceive and how we experience everything. That's what we're focusing on when we're doing insight practice. We're not making a metaphysical claim or a physics claim about what's out there. What the nature of reality is. But rather it's the nature of how we experience reality, how we participate with reality, how we react to reality. That is what where we have deep insight. And to really see that the way that we take in and experience and perceive and, and participate in the world, that that has a deep quality characteristic of being something that's changeable, impermanent and constant, constantly flowing, that has an age something to do with the idea that it's stressful. It's it's unsatisfactory in a certain way. It's, there's a certain kind of suffering in the nature of experiencing itself. And there's something about the nature of experience and experience and perception that it's not something to take as a self and so this thing of experiencing rather than seeing reality He makes this practice points this intimacy of this practice. This
practice is something that's very close in are very intimate and integral to ways in which we live in this world are in this world. And these things are seen as being constantly changing. And it's changing in many ways. Now it's not unusual for many people are not Buddhists also emphasize impermanence change changing nature of things. Here cleitus in ancient Greece said, you cannot step in the same river twice. What human beings will do is they maybe don't step in the same river twice or twice or try to, but sometimes we try to dam the river and stop it and resist it from changing. Sometimes we appropriate parts of it to take a bucket and pick up the water and try to go back to the village and say, Look, I have the river, but it's not the river. It's just the water. The river stays where it is and keeps flowing can't stop the flow. Some people run away from impermanence and change the river of time the river of change. But you can't really do that. There's no place you can go. You can't go to the desert. Many years ago, some friends of mine went to yucca Valley and, and they stood there on the out in the desert during a big earthquake. And they could watch the desert floor, pick up in waves across the desert across the plains. And so they hadn't gotten away to how things change.

And some religions, some people and Buddhists, even their solution to the world of impermanence, which can be a world of suffering, tremendous suffering, is to transcend it is to really leave it behind. Maybe not but going to the desert by going to some kind of transcendent realm of experience. transcendent realms of the mind. They are really separated, removed. In a sense, the the, the equation that they're doing is that the world of impermanence equals suffering. So you have to kind of get rid of impermanence be away from it in order to not suffer. The Buddhist equation is that the world of impermanence is not the problem. What's the problem for human life is the attachments we have to it, the clinging we have. And for the Buddhist equation is impermanence, time times attachment, equals suffering. And if you don't want if you don't want to have the suffering, you the idea is you don't remove the world of impermanence because that takes everything away. We'd rather you removed from the equation, the attachment, and then it doesn't lead to world of impermanence doesn't lead to suffering. So there Recognition of this world is impermanent, changing in constant is fairly common. And we have many different relationships to it. Sometimes we will celebrate it when flowers of spring come forth. Sometimes we agree that when the flowers were built and pass away in the fall, for example, we celebrate sometimes the birth of a child. And without the, you know, oftentimes, we kind of know but without the recognition that with the birth comes, someone who's going to die, that inherent to the anything that is born will die. It's not a crime. It's not unnatural for that to happen. It's part of the natural process in its own way. Just like flowers come and go. There's so much change some of it was Celebrate some of it, we grieve. Some things pass, and we celebrate their passing, where we've been sick and then we're no longer sick. And we're so glad that things change and become impermanent. And in the Buddhist practice point of view, is to learn to have a very realistic attention and very realistic recognition of the nature of this world that we live in nature of ourselves what experiences it is to have a clear sight that clear seeing of how things actually are. That's neither seeing with rose colored glasses, nor seeing with tinted glasses or things that obscure vision or with angry glasses or hateful glasses, but to be able to really see with clear glasses with clear perceptions and then that's not colored by our preferences or emotional reactivity. Bye bye Just to really see. And so that certainly means we have to learn to see the changing nature of reality and to be to witness it,
as people do the personal meditation, putting themselves really closely in touch with their direct experience, the intimacy of how thing, perceptions and thoughts and emotions arise and they pass. It's a very intimate thing to do this because the practice, the intimacy, that's not quite possible. If we're living in our stories about the past, the stories of the future we're living in are the ideas that we've somehow locked in place because of something happened in the past. There are people who lock into the idea that they have to be a certain way, locked into the idea that there have to now be angry at someone because they can never let go of that anger or they're locked. into their grief they can. That's who they are. And they cannot ever not be that or there's no way out. Because some people identify strongly with being a victim. Some people identify strongly with being the one in charge and dominant and powerful, all kinds of ways that people try to hold on to some idea of who they are some story of what is or was or will be. That in some ways doesn't really allow us to ride the river of change to see it as it unfolds moment by moment. And

that's one of the functions of meditation practice that we're doing is to see clearly enough that we can see through the veil, the filter of the stories that we live by, the identities we hold on to, and grasp the emotions that were stuck in some ways to begin to See below that level. And that goes below that intimate level that's kind of below that is the constant world of how things arise and past sensations and thoughts and feelings and perceptions, emotions, all this stuff. There's a way in which experience is constantly flowing. The river of experience, that you can never step in twice. It's constantly moving and flowing. And on the way to that is to begin understanding how we resist that change how we stay away from this intimacy and closeness to how things come and go and arise and pass. And, and that's where we feel. that's usually where we feel stuck, where we suffer where we feel stress, where we feel contracted, we feel small, where we feel somehow removed from our experience, sometimes very dramatically disassociated, disconnected, lost, confused all kinds of things. As we sit in meditate or as mindfulness grows, we start seeing how we are resisting the river or doing something with a river or expecting it to be one way, not another way, or only looking at things from the point of view of what's lost, and are only looking at the point of view of what we can gain. But we're not really just being in the flow and the change of this moment by moment as it actually unfolds. But it's a it's a beautiful and profound and deep, difficult process to really kind of open up and allow the flow of the river of life to move through, over and over again. One of the reasons for that That for many of us, there are all kinds of ways in which not being open to this intimate arising or passing a phenomenon has meant we've bottlenecked or we've repressed all kinds of unresolved emotions and feelings. Things that are never gotten complete are things that we hold in check. There can be deep grief, deep sadness, that for some reason or other is not allowed to flow. grief that there's been stuck, anger which has been somehow you know, stuck into almost into our character, it's so common, or fear which is ever present in people. And, and so somehow we've resisted somehow we've bottled it up or picked up the bucket and go around holding it and so too This practice then is to feel and see where these difficult places of being stuck reside in us. And this is where the kind regard of mindfulness, the generosity towards herself in our experience, that compassion and kindness by which we can hold all this realizing that life is difficult for everyone that were willing slowly, slowly, do the powerful work of holding our pain or suffering in kindness. So that that pain and suffering we have can begin to flow and move and break
up. The hard crust can dissolve the ice can thaw the fires that burn inside of us can begin to no longer be more fuel added to them and the fires can cool down in this process. Opening to our inner life, the depths of things sometimes people have been open to for decades. We learn slowly with time through mindfulness, that it's a trustable process. Slowly, bit by bit, maybe support of others, we can learn that to bring a certain way of bringing mindfulness to our experience, its trustable, then to be with it and allow it to flow through us. And that's one of the great gifts that I feel I've received from this mindfulness practice

is the ability to really have a deep trust that when things are difficult, that mindfulness is the way out. Mindfulness really supports and helps in times that I can't figure it out. There's something about being really present and mindful in a nonreactive way, opening to the situation. It's amazing how many times something begins to find its way and find its way to healing and resolution. To really trust this mindfulness that opens on the way there. It really helps to have a cultivated a lot of stability, to cultivate it a lot of steadiness and ability to persevere to kind steady away, so we don't get knocked off the road or off track. The cultivating stability and practice of steadiness in practice is kind of like a sailboat that has a deep keel that has a lot of ballast, the deep keel and the heavyweight the ballast of the keel keeps the sailboat from being knocked over too much and capsize even it makes the movements of the boat and the wind and the waves to be slow, manageable. That Captain to the boat can adjust the boat accordingly has time to do to be responsive. Getting out the sail, turning the both little bit all the different things that are needed to keep the boat upright. And it's very hard if the balance is really strong, it's really hard to tip a boat over. Because that ballast, you know, is stronger. So to have it to create stability, that becomes a ballast, where no matter how difficult life gets, that we don't get blown away by it or don't get tipped over by it. We have the ability to stand open and experience it. And it can take quite a while to learn that stability. And so meditation is one of the place to do that. If that's, we know we need that. And we can use meditation for that purpose. We can feel ourselves grounded, rooted in the place where we're meditating, we can feel ourselves rooted in our body. Sometimes, maybe it's just feeling our legs, feeling the feet on the ground. The legs and the feet are kind of a neutral place for some people or a place of confidence or less complicated than other places in the body. And just feel the rootedness, the groundedness of the legs on the ground or on the floor as we sit and meditate and to help stay in the present moment and not be swept away by the thoughts and emotions that might come. As we become more steady, steady and stable, it comes along with becoming calmer. The ability to be more at ease with our experience. And as the mind becomes calmer. There's less discursive thought less story making and attends to come in with a greater intimacy, to our real moment moment experience what's happening here for ourselves. And that can come with new waves or new emotions, new experiences that come or sadness In more fear and more anchor, this is not a mistake. But this is learning slowly learning to open to the river of change and how things change, learning how not to block the river, how not to resist it, how not to run away from it. But slowly, slowly learn, it's safe to let the river run through. Sometimes if there's a lot of sadness, that river burning through means that there'll be it's endless tears. And there might be a long period of just crying backlog of tears that need to happen have to happen. So to allow this stuff to flow, and to be free with all this is certainly healing emotionally, but it allows things to settle and settle even
more. And as the practice continues over the months and years, there's a greater and greater settling and quieting steadying that goes on and that steadying, and stability as it gets stronger and stronger, supports us to see more and more the changing nature of phenomena.

And how that is liberating, is that as we can start seeing how perceptions is the moment to moment experiences, thoughts, the moment moment arising and passing of how we perceive and experience emotions, all these things is a kaleidoscope of shifting and changing things becomes clear and clear. Where we are clinging, where we're resisting where we're pulling back, where we're making ourselves really small, or where we're getting angry and blaming where we're criticizing yourself. All this stuff that we do that in Buddhism is called attachment. The more we can see and allow for things to change, the more we're able to start noticing where the wind drag is, you know, I guess water drag, if you put if you're in a boat and you, you know, put your hand in the water, it slows down the boat a little bit. If you and so, attachments of all kinds are kind of wind drag or puts a drag and slows things down. And we start feeling that and seeing that. And as we get more and more stable, more still, and it feels so good. It becomes obvious that what is better than clinging is letting go the clinging, holding on to something needing to always be exactly that way. Holding on to me being exactly this way. This is who I have to be this who I am. And to hold on to pleasure, hold on to an opinion, hold on to a story. Hold on to a preference. You can feel the unsatisfactoriness of that clinging that holding on. And that's how this deep insight into impermanence is a catalyst support. Because if we see the clinging, then we might at some point, be willing to start relaxing, to not always go around with a fist, but to trust it's okay to open the fist of the heart, the mind to relax and open. And but it only really works to open to the world of change and constancy and things coming and going. If we have the inner support to do so. And so, it's so important then to cultivate those inner supports. And for Today the topic was stability, steadiness, capacity for a certain kind of stillness, a capacity for non non in particular ability, non activation, non reactivity. To be, imperturbable can also mean to be non bother a ball, not to be bothered by things so much not to ride everything as being so significant than every little. Every little wave of thing that happens is interpreted with meaning and purpose and taken personally, but to be quiet and become a little bit more like many things like it open window that lets the wind go right through. And, or to be like a, you know, yeah, open frame where you know, things the birds fly through. everything just goes through, there's nothing It blocks it. It turns out that what blocks things flowing through the empty is what in Zen they call the gateless gate. What blocks the things flowing through is in fact our attachments. When a lot of experiences that we don't like or trouble by, or they want a lot, when we experience them, they kind of stop with the places where we get attached where we hold on, we resist and they just stop and they get stuck there and they hurt. But as we begin quieter, more open, things still come and go and come and go. But then there's, there's nothing to hit. There's no attachments, and the coming and going starts flowing more and more freely in terms of our emotional life, in some ways it becomes richer.

And in some ways, there's less highs and lows. They just the kaleidoscope of motion still occur. It may be a bigger range. But some of the highs and low have a lot to do with our attachments, our preferences, our identification, the ways in which we react to them and overreact and the pendulum

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swings one side to the other. with greater calmness, stability, openness, having a heart doesn't that's porous. The heart is an open window. Life can flow the river of life can flow and people Very, very meaningful, everything. The Fall, flowers that grow can somehow be very significant than deepening in maturing and, and enhancing a certain kind of freedom of heart. And when the flowers fall, and whether in the in the fall in the autumn, that also has a place in the open heart has a different response in the heart, which has a similar you. It opens and reminds us to come to be touched into the place of freedom. The place with that too is included in the kaleidoscope of what it means to be human being. Freedom does not mean in Buddhism that we don't feel it means that we feel really allowing the feelings to come and go completely freely. And if we do that, the tendency is that our feelings, the emotions we have, creates responses we have, they tend not to get exaggerated. They tend not to be artificially lengthened and prolonged. And sometimes these things are prolong for decades, because we keep fueling them and holding on to something. But it's richer freedom is freedom hearts freedom is a richer state. So, insight into inconstancy, into change into impermanence. It's a little unfortunate that in English we most commonly English the Buddhist English, we translate a nature the Pali word as impermanence. impermanence for many peoples means that things are here now and they're going to disappear. They're impermanent means they're going to pass away. Sometimes the primary ik catalyst or insight that Buddhist tradition has in this, you know, these three characteristics, the insights of insight meditation, that leads to liberation is not the recognition, the intellectual recognition that things will pass, so don't get attached. That's a little bit too coarse or even callous. I think you can say it that way. But rather, is to notice the constancy. of moment to moment experience. A constancy means that they don't necessarily have to disappear once and for all, but there's a way in which things come and they go in perception. And this way, even the same thing can keep being repeatedly reappear, reappear, reappear, And even something like pain, physical pain, when we have a story about the pain, when we react to the pain or tightness around the pain or tighten up around resisting it, that pain can seem like it's constantly permanent. And it can be reassuring, be told, so all in permanent sooner or later will pass. And then you reapply, you know? Yes, a better be sooner. But in constancy with a pain is that if you're really if you don't have a story, you don't ever resistance to it, and really feel it very intimately. The pain will be felt as a kaleidoscope of little sparks of sensations that are coming and going, rising and passing. Or you'll be with it for a few moments. And then you hear a sound and your attention goes there. And then you'll have a thought. And then you'll be aware that if you're hungry, and then you come back You're aware of the pain, the way we perceive is in constant. But things don't necessarily have to disappear once and for all. It's the perception of them is moving and changing and shifting.

And to begin to rest in that river of perception, how things are rising pass does take a fair amount of stillness and quiet. And so the paradox, or the irony of this practice, is the more stable we can become. The more Still, the awareness becomes, the more we see that everything else is changing, is flowing and moving. And this balanced seeing both them together is what is liberating is freeing. And as some of you heard, as I talked to earlier, that That one of the things that we release, when we really see how inconstant things are, is we release our experiences, from the stories we project on them. From all the projections of judgments to projections of bias projections of preference, the projections of
the past that we paint on top of experience of the present. It's called in Buddhism, liberation to
signless. liberation, which I think in modern English, maybe we can call that projection, less liberation,
liberation that comes we no longer project our ideas on top of our experience. So finally, I'll say that
these that the first insight, insight into inconstancy and all the others the other two Well, they're not
things that you should be trying hard to perceive. It isn't how you should go and just start, you know,
strain and try to see how everything is constantly changing. It's more like revelation, you're, you're
making yourself putting your you're doing your practice to create the adequate stability and stillness so
that the inconstant nature of experience reveals itself to you. And you don't want to be ahead of
yourself. Just keep wanting to learn how to be in the present moment. Learn how to hold yourself
steady. Learn how to take refuge in your body, your mind your hearts ability to be stable. Can you find
the stability that's it within you and grow and enhance it? Can you find whatever Ability that's there,
and make it a resource and a support for you. And as you do that, I hope that you'll feel the
wonderfulness of this intimacy and closeness and subtleness that can happen. As we free ourselves
from the frozen river, we pause and opens again. We allow things to flow. And with time, you'll see the
inconstant nature of phenomena. And the more you see it, the more that'll support you to see deeper
and deeper and deeper ways in which you still cling and hold on in this wonderful and profound and
happiness producing process of being free of our clinging, free of attachment. Letting Go. So for this
retreat that we're doing Please trust yourself. Trust your practice, trust the mindfulness Trust that you
have within you the resources, the capacities, or stability and stillness, stability and steadiness and
see if you can drop into it, see if you can find it, see if you can be supported by it. And in doing so, the
story making mine through reactive mind the discursive thinking mind, maybe can finally rest, finally
come to be quieter and as it becomes quieter up there's more intimacy with now in the present
moment. So thank you. And I look forward to in this any constant retreat, the sittings and teachings,
they come and they go, and now this one will pass and polarize again At 730 is our next sitting. For
those of you who are new to the retreat, new to retreats, first retreat or second newish,

if you would like to come at seven o'clock because a different Zoom Room in which you can go to I
think it's on your announcement page somewhere and, and have a chance to have more discussion
little more q&a if you'd like. And if you'd rather practice or take it easy and just have a nice
contemplative time over the next two hours, please do so. And then, for the people on the retreat also,
there are more. There are some extra spaces that were made on the practice discussion. And if some
of you would like to have a second practice discussion in the course of this three days, you can go in
and back on to the Sign up system and look for a blank space and sign up if you'd like. And it's on the
Announcements page. On the announcement, the top of the instructional page with the
announcements is the link to back to the signup place if you'd like to do that. So thank you very much.