So today is the second talk on mindfulness of breathing. And one of the, one of the kind of goals of mindfulness meditation or many kinds of meditation involves one way or the other, to really be centered in the present moment, to really be here in a continuous way.

So awareness is really present for life for experience. And the contrast to that are all the ways that we’re not present, that we’re not really here in some qualitatively heightened way to really feel and experience this life, to really notice what’s happening in a deep way. And one of the probably most common ways that we avoid really being here is to wander off in discursive thoughts, to wander off into commentary, telling yourself stories. Stories about the past predictions, about the future and the mind kind of wanders off there. And it can feel sometimes very pleasant to do that, very enjoyable. Or it can feel a drag or you know, challenge or not pleasant to interrupt that. But it's little bit like water. If water is flowing down a mighty river, and it can be quite beautiful to see the power of the river, the strength of the river and knowing that it's going and going where it's supposed to go and if someone comes along and dams that river then the river stops is no longer a river. But then as the water builds up behind the dam, it starts spilling out across the countryside, and spreads out across the plains and the lands and through the towns and cities and everything. And that water now is very free to, has a certain kind of freedom in going over the banks of the river and flowing out across the plains, but in doing so it's doing a lot of destruction, is no longer a river, is no longer what it is.

There's a feeling of freedom there for the mind to wander off into thought and do so freely. But in doing so, we've left the primary river of life, the river of our being, beingness in the present moment that has a flow, has a vitality or has a preciousness that can be lost if we allow the dam to interrupt and let everything overflow the sides and cause all kinds of problems be caught in the floods. And to not have the floods go over into the countryside can feel like a loss of freedom if we identify the flooding, with freedom, and there is a kind of you know interruption of that if we release the dam. But that's what the river wants to do. It doesn't want to it's blocked behind the dam.

So this idea of continuity of attention in the present moment is, is kind of like opening up the dam so that our life can flow freely in the present moment. And we’re really aware of it as it comes and goes, things experiences come and go. And now to really be to stay in the present moment. We all have the
capacity, but sometimes where it's most activated, where it's most utilized or occurs for people is one sometimes when they're afraid. Fears are really heightened present moment awareness sometimes. And a mountain climbers climbing a cliff is, you know, maybe have enough kind of concern that they're really going to stay present for it. Recently read a personal account of a surgeon, a neurosurgeon, brain surgeon, spending hours doing really refined their microscope surgery and how crucial it is not to have the mind waver and that can imagine there's certain amount of fear there. You know that this really keeps your attention, your interest because so important, or playing tennis. Imagine playing championship game of tennis and wondering often thinking about what happening in high school and your resentments about your high school partner or something, and the ball just goes right by you. But you know, the interest in the game and the enjoyment of it keeps you're right there in the present moment. Reading a good book, maybe or watching a really interesting movie. The mind doesn't waver, it really stays in the present moment. Because it's interesting and engaging and interesting entertaining.

When we start doing meditation practice, part of both the gift of it and the challenge of it is that sooner or later, it turns out it's not doesn't involve, it doesn't engage our fear, doesn't engage our desire for entertainment. It doesn't engage sometimes, you know, sometimes naturally interesting. And so because of all those things, what it requires of us is just us to develop our natural capacity, to strengthen our natural capacity to provide that continuous awareness ourselves rather than having something that is the prompt or the impetus for it. And so this continuity of breathing of attention comes from a variety of different functions of the mind. So one of them is relaxing. It's very hard to be in the present moment, if we're not relaxed. So, and but certainly there can be tense attention to the present moment. That's continuous. But that's exhausting and it is counterproductive. We're looking for a soft, relaxed continuity of present moment attention, that doesn't waver from the present moment, doesn't wander off a lot. And so, but that can come from relaxation. And some of that relaxation, why it works is that it's the very tensions we have in our minds, our hearts our body, that is often the input, the fuel for the wandering mind. And so as the relaxation kicks in, that is less and less impetus to wonder often thought.

It also comes from from present moment attention, the continuity of it comes from a real dedication to do so to engage and tender intention of faculty to be that sense of purpose. This is what I'm doing. That also can be overdone. But without some sense of purpose, you know, that the mind won't, will drift off too easily. It has no anchor, has no balance to keep us present. There's also developing strength in mindfulness. Mindfulness is like a muscle. And the more we practice it, the more it becomes stronger and it's easier to stay present and present. It also comes to this heightened alertness, where we notice where the mind begins wandering off. And it could be that people will feel, well with this heightened awareness is work, it's a little bit stressful to me, you know, to put the energy into being a little more alert to notice when the mind wanders off. And that could be initially but to to get a habit of doing that turning on the light in the mind and keeping it on to notice if the mind wanders off. In the long term actually it lets the mind be much more at peace than if we freely allow the mind to wander off, flooding the plains all around us.

And so the idea is to and so what we one of the ways to develop this continuity of attention in the present moment is to stay with the breathing. And as we do it, we want to be alert enough, attentive enough to know what it feels like to really be with a breathing. So we know what it's like when we've lost
touch. So that takes familiarity it takes really registering with that experiences ally is like to really stay present with the breathing. And also we want to notice what it's like to heightened awareness to notice what it's like when the mind begins to wander. off, how when the mind wanders off, there's a loss of intimacy with ourselves, certain kinds of intimacy with breathing with the direct experience, and to be able to notice the mind wandering off, and then not jerk the mind back, not be upset with ourselves for wandering off, but lovingly kind of recognize. That's not what I'm doing now. I don't need to pick that up. That can be for later. Right now we're staying here with the breathing. And then kind of, you know, just don't, don't wander off. Don't follow the floods. Come back here. Stay inside, stay with yourself, the breathing.

And as we develop more and more continuity with the breathing. It isn't so much that continuity, the breathing is the main point. But rather the main point is developing the minds capacity to have continuous awareness of what's happening. To really be here, present here for the experience of a, for the experience of now. And that's kinda like opens up the floodgates of something deeper to flow, some deeper sense of aliveness, connection. Some deeper sense of flow of the very nature of the changing nature of this life of ours. To really live in that river and find the freedom that's possible there. That can't be found. It's not really freedom to have the waters break over the banks of the river and flood the lands.

So to practice continuity. And as I think in the springtime, I talked about one of the ways that images I've had for that tie, connect with the breathing is that of petting a cat. That we don't pet the cat 100% continuously, but it is intermittently, continuously we stroke the cat, we lift your hand up, bring it back to the front of the cat and stroke the cat again. And so same thing with a breathing, don't expect that it's absolutely continuous. But we are kind of coming back and stroking the breath or being stroked by our breathing, being stroked by the inhales and exhales and allowing ourselves to feel and experience that in an intimate and close way until something inside begins to occur. So whenever we need to remember to come back we just contentedly come back to the breathing. Mind wanders off we contentedly come back and stroke the cat, stroke the breath or be stroked by the by the breathing. And if the mind is really kind of strongly pulling itself into discursive thought, then one of the great ancient techniques is to spend a little time counting your breath. And you might want to keep it really simple and count 1, 2, 3. You can count to one, every exhale one, then next one, two, and three, and then start over again. Or some people will do one for the inhale and say one again for the exhale, two for the next inhale, two for the exhale, three for the inhale there for the exhale. Just so that the thinking mind has something to do to rather than wondering often thought. Or the more strictly Vipassana technique that's closer to mindfulness than counting is to simply name or label, have a note. In as you're breathing in, out as you're breathing out. Or the rising as the belly or chest rises and falling as it falls. And that little note to note, that counting. The idea keeps you on track, stays there. And you might notice when you stop saying that count or stop seeing the note that now you're beginning to wonder off.

So this is part of the nuts and bolts of meditation that we want to develop and strengthen and over time. And the way that's done is by practicing and practicing and practicing it. And with a lot of generosity to oneself, a lot of forgiveness, a lot of non striving, just starting over and over again and really kind of developing the capacities we have. We have tremendous capacities for practice that will naturally grow if we just keep doing it and doing it.
So mindfulness of breathing, planning mindfulness of breathing, support the development of continuous attention to be really here in this time and your experience.

So, thank you