So certainly here in California and elsewhere, our sympathies go out, our love goes out to the people who are displaced from the fires and lost their homes and struggling with the smoke and challenges of the heat is such a big part of our world.

That learning how to be with our emotions is such an important skill. Because as we get wiser with our emotions, it allows us to offer, be present, and offer more of our care for the world rather than our distress.

So, this is the second talk on mindfulness of emotions. And one of the things I tried to say yesterday is that the English word emotion, it doesn't really have a clear definition. No one really knows exactly what it is. Or it's a vague kind of category term. And many people assume they know exactly what emotions are. And they take it for granted that this is a huge part of human life. But there's a number of things that we take for granted, we assume it's just built into the nature of the universe, that are really partly a product of our conventions or culture, ideas, or concepts that we use to organize our life. And there's nothing wrong with that. But sometimes we are limited by the concepts, the ideas of stories we have.

And it turns out that maybe it's useful to think of emotions, that emotions are not what you think they are. And just that little phrase, emotions are not what you think they are might help you to kind of open up to be more with a direct experience, rather than being little bit removed with the thoughts, ideas, opinions, stories about the emotions that we have.
Now, one of the ways the Buddha has for breaking up, he didn't do it this way, but the alternative in the Buddhist teachings for how to be with something we call emotions, is to look at our experience through these four different perspectives. To look at it through the perspective of our body, how is it being experienced physically; to what he calls feeling, which means the subjective experience that leads to senses a pleasant and unpleasantness, liking, not liking; to look at it from the point of view of the mental state that's present. And then some of the activities of the mind and reactions and response to the emotions that are there, or whatever's there.

So today The topic is to look at the use of the body and to really feel experience in the body. So when the Buddha started teaching about mindfulness of the body, he first taught mindfulness of breathing. And I see can kind of see breathing, if our life is a mandala, or concentric circles, that breathing can for a meditator, breathing is at the center. And then, as we expand outwards from that and hold more of our experience, we hold the next concentric circle, which is our embodied physical experience. And the next concentric circle is the mind states. And then it's the activities of the mind that lead to suffering or lead to freedom.

And so that with that kind of image, the idea is that we stay at the center with a breathing and just breathe with their things. And as I said, in meditation, that if we can breathe with the emotions, that can be a great support, to not get pulled too far into the worlds of thinking about emotions. And that's why the statement, emotions are not what we think, is meant to kind of little bit, this large, this kind of strong pull that we sometimes have into the world of thinking stories that we have in relationship to all this and meaning, but rather, to learn to use breathing as a way to be a little bit free of our thinking, not focused on our thinking, but rather focus on breathing and keeps us fluid and relaxed.

And then to begin feeling a wider field of experience. That wider bodily experience happens in the middle of that breathing. The Buddha called it the experience of the whole body and as we start feeling the whole body, there's a reference point for our emotions, which is phenomenally useful. And that is to feel the physicality, in the present moment, of the emotions we're having. Our involvement with emotions, especially if it's involves stories and ideas and events of our life, might be not really focused on the present moment. But who said what, what I said, what happened, what the person did, what I want? And is a whole world of stories that keeps the emotion stirred up. And, in fact, the French word from which English word emotion comes from. I think it's pronounced émouvoir, apparently means to stir up and to set it in motion.

And so we keep stirring it up with our thoughts and ideas. The physical manifestation of an emotion, the ways in which our stomach gets maybe tight or butterflies in the stomach, if we're afraid, the ways our shoulders go up if we're angry, or the ways that we eyes go wide, or if we're afraid, or there's all you know, all over the body, there are muscles, which have direct lines to what we would call our emotional lives. And those muscles are being tugged and pulled and energized and activated in different ways.

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And there are some people who've said that, we probably wouldn't be able to recognize the emotion we're having, unless we had the physical evidence for something happening on our body related to it. Some sensations that are expression, are a manifestation of that emotion. And so what we do in meditation and mindfulness is we center. We bring our attention to the physical component of the emotion. It's a way of respecting emotion and feeling it, allow it, and then we allow it to be there.

And so what are we doing, we're stepping away from the thoughts about the emotion, the stories. And we're offering a profound kind of respect to the emotion, allowing it to be there. But we're allowing it to be there as a present moment phenomenon, as it's manifesting in the present moment, and we can start to feel it in your body. And the Buddha talked about feeling the experiences of the body, through the sensations of the body, all the different sensations that come into play, as we so in relationship to emotions, all the emotions that come into play.

So there's a few advantages to bringing attention to the physicality, the physical experience of emotions. One is that emotions are not a story. So it's a way of connecting to the emotions without continuing to fuel the can stir it up in the body is very honest. And sometimes you can feel more clearly and more honestly what's happening that we can, if we're looking at it through our filter of our thoughts, ideas, meanings, associations, biases, and all kinds of things. But one of the most important parts of experiencing it in our body is that the body has a lot of intelligence in a sense, the body is not a thing. It's not like a hunk of meat. The body that the Buddha talks about, is the dynamic and active field of sensations and nerves and activities and movements that are going on. And it's a process. Just like emotions are processes that move and unfold. Unless the we they get stuck or they get into a loop going around and around. So as the body is a process, and as we make room for the how the emotions feel in the body, feeling in the body, it's kind of like the body's giving room for that process of the emotion to unfold.

It's like the psychophysical body, the somatic body, if if really left alone is really allowed to left alone in awareness, it often knows what to do, what needs to relax, what needs to unfold, what needs to, what direction the emotion goes. That doesn't mean that necessarily difficult emotions get better right away. Sometimes difficult emotions need to get stronger. That's the movement. They have until some kind of resolution comes, grief might need to be stronger for a while. It needs its time, fear might need to be stronger for a while, it needs its time. Anger might need its time. But we get out of the way, in the sense of our thoughts, our ideas, our projections are to it. And we just feel it in the body. That's not always easy. And if there's really intense emotions, or very, very difficult kind of painful emotions that have a long history or difficult associations with events in our lives, then doing this might not be the right thing to do.

And there's other ways of working with mindfulness of the body in relationship to things which are, you know, too difficult to touch directly. But it was not too difficult to bring your attention to the how
emotions are feeling in the body. And for difficult emotions, I think of them for myself is I'm composting them in the body, I just keep coming back and feel my body feeling. And it might just be for a few moments, because I'm stirred up by something. But then remember, I come back and compost it in the body, feel it in the body, and allow the body to handle it. It's kind of trust the body to handle it. If it's some of the more beautiful emotions we have, it isn't so much they get composted. But by feeling them physically in the body. It's like you give more room for them to grow and unfold. They also want to move. And so they also can kind of become more expansive. Joy and happiness. When we start feeling them in the body. The deeper kinds of joy and happiness actually get limited by thinking about things And the deeper joys and happiness come more expansive and grow in a certain way, as we keep relaxing into the body and feeling them and feeling them.

And to end this, I want to say that one of the great ways that the body can support emotions, both the difficult ones and the ones that are quite wonderful to experience is that the idea is that we're trying to help our emotional life to feel safe with us and letting the body be that place of safety. That the body hold it open to the body and allow the fear to feel safe within you. Allow the anger to feel safe, allow the joy to feel safe, allow the love to feel safe within you and hold it and be with it. So that can mean breathing with it through the body, feeling in the body and breathing with it, or accompanying it with breath, or simply really, in a loving, caring, soft attention. Just feeling where this emotions is present in the body and make room for it. Give it permission to be there and see what happens. And that quiet mind that's not preoccupied by thoughts. Whenever you start thinking about things and about the emotions, take all those thoughts and compost it back into your body.

So this idea of coming back to your body back to your body is one of the great skills in meditation practice. And it's a skill that takes a while to learn and learn how to be safe, feel safe about and learn how to be wise about but this is one of the component parts of what the Buddha had to teach. One of the four big areas of where we bring attention is attention to where things are in the body. And the more we're in our body, the more it's a foundation for the next three, so called foundations, the next three other ways in which we can bring attention to the emotions which I'll continue with tomorrow.

So, thank you so much for being part of this and and I hope that in this process, you become friends with your emotions that that then your emotions feel that you're a support and a friend of them. Thank you