The theme for this week is mindfulness of the body. And so over these last three weeks has been three important areas of mindfulness, mindfulness of breathing, mindfulness of thinking and mindfulness of emotion. And now we come to mindfulness of the body.

And perhaps one of the rationales for that sequence during this this time this last month, is that everything we learned about mindfulness of breathing, thinking and emotions, sets the stage for to really be able to enter into mindfulness of the body. For the Buddha, mindfulness of the body was one of the most important practices. He emphasized it tremendously. He talked about how much goodness, so many benefits that come from mindfulness of the body, that it's it's a protection from all kinds of unsavory forces that come our way or arise within us. It's an incubator for some of the best qualities we have, the wholesome qualities we have. It's where we could discover the path of Dharma that unfolds, the deepening and opening of the path. The Buddha even talked about awakening itself happens. He said this way, that there is no awakening without there being mindfulness of the body. There is no experience of the deathless without mindfulness of the body.

So some people find it perplexing that the body is emphasized so much. For some people, the body is just a hunk of meat that we it's useful for carrying us around and the body is kind of senseless in some pointless and senseless But as the meditation practice deepens, the body becomes more and more, it makes more more sense, in the sense that it becomes more sensitive. And the heightened sensitivity of the body this heightened attunement with a body provides a tremendous amount of information, a freeing of energy, a vitality, a real steeper sensitivity to where freedom can be found. Where clinging and contraction exists and how to release it. The what's very interesting about the Buddhist teachings...
on the body is that in when he talks about the body, he's not talking about the physical body in and of itself, but rather the physical body, but in how it's expressed

And it's the experienced body that we're practicing within meditation, not strictly speaking the physical body. And so it's the sensate body or the somatic body, the conscious body, the animated body.

The contrast that that's it doesn't do it explicitly, but one set of teachings. The contrast the Buddha seems to give is between a corpse that has no sensations, and no thoughts, no, not impacted by any means. It's not conscious, there's no consciousness there in the corpse. And all the sensations that we experience, all the subjective experience to the bodies we have, are there because we're alive. They're part of our animated system, the vitality of our nerves and nervous system that we have.

And so from a Buddhist point of view, the mind and body are not so separate, perhaps the mind spreads out throughout the whole body. Because it's the how we're conscious, how we're aware of the body, which is the body that we actually can know. Maybe a researcher, scientist or a doctor might know something about your physical body. But from the inside out to how we experience our body, how we feel and sense our body is a subjective experience, deep subjective experience. Of course, we can live in our heads, live in our thoughts and ideas. And because of that, treat the body as an object, think about parts of our bodies almost like they're external from us or there's a thing out there we think about them in the control tower. And we have all kinds of ideas about the body and we don't like parts of it, we like parts of it, we have concerns with it. And it's treated little bit like in an object, a thing that we can think about it. And it's back in the world of aboutness we talked about some weeks ago when thinking is often about aboutness. We're thinking about the body, and therefore a little bit removed from the body itself, from the subjective experience of the body.

And meditation is to drop into more and more deeply the subjective experience of the body, how the mind is aware of the body, the conscious body. It turns out, there's a world of difference between the body that we're aware of, from the inside out, and the body, that we're not aware of. The body, that we're mindful . The breathing that we're mindful of, is very different than the breathing that we're not mindful of. That it's almost like we have two bodies. The body that we go about without much consciousness about attention to, without much being centered in the subjective experience of it. And the body that we're very conscious, where consciousness, awareness diffuses the body and we're centered and aware of what goes on the body. It's so radically different these two modes, it's almost like we have two separate bodies. And I kind of believe they, to some degree, they operate differently. The more conscious we are and relaxed we are, the whole system works in more healthy, harmonious way.

For the purpose of meditation, this deep subjective experience of the body that's possible starts giving us the feedback loop or the understanding of how we're changing, how we are developing, how meditation deepens. Because the experience with the body is not a fixed thing. The way that we have
the subjective experience of our body is intimately connected to the state of our mind. The more concentrated we are, the experience of the body changes. People who don't meditate might feel or sense their body is a solid hunk of, you know, hardness or something, unclear boundaries, but as the mind gets concentrated and still, more mindful and more sensitive, the body becomes more fluid, more receptive, more softer, more spacious, more open and a fantastic kind of way. And it stops being hard or fixed. One of the things that was interesting for me and I'm early years of meditation was, my body would get very relaxed and soft in meditation. But there would be some little play, some little lump of hardness of tension somewhere in my body. And I would go over there and bring attention to that. And then with time it would begin to dissolve as well. But it was like I was going through the layers in the body of where attentions were held. When I first started meditating, I had a lot of tension in my body. My stomach was always tense, my jaws were tense, my eyes were kind of tense, my shoulders were much higher than they are now. And, so as that begin softening, I started seeing the kind of more and more subtle places of holding, and then they would dissolve. And so as they dissolved sense the body being hard, lumpy and kind of receded in the body started feeling like a dynamic fluid, open field of energy with lots of space. Is that experience of the body more or less accurate than the experience of the body we have walking around being tense and upset and feeling hard and boundaried? There are all just products of the mind to a big degree, the quality, the state of the mind. And one is not better. One is not to, you know, I don't know right or wrong in a sense, but one is conducive to greater freedom and compassion and love. This ability for the body not to be tight and the armored, opens up so much potential that's needed to awaken in order for this path of practice to unfold.

So in this last guided meditation I did, one of the primary points I was trying to make is that the more relaxed the body can be, the more receptive it is. And this idea of meditating with receptivity is a very important quality for meditation. To meditate with assertiveness, like, you know, I'm going to make something happen, I'm going to get something to happen and it's all about me, kind of controlling and directing my meditation, it tends to create more tension or limitation. It doesn't create the room for the receptivity. To focus instead not on being, you know, assertively focused, but to focus on being receptive, to be relaxed. And then as we get concentrated, like, for example, on the breathing, it's a receptive concentration. And it's a settling on it.

The word that there often is translated as concentration in the teachings of the Buddha, samahita different than Samadhi. But often, they're very closely connected. And so the translators translator it as concentration. It literally means to settle. And so there's a settling that can happen. We receptive to relaxation, receptive to settling, receptive to take in and experience what goes on, and relationship to breathing. We're receptive to the influence the breathing has on us. Breathing is not a neutral thing. It's not just a mechanical thing. It's at the nexus of so much of our whole life. And to sit and be receptive. To allow yourself to be receptive to the influence breathing has on you. Allow the breathing to condition your body. To open your body. And to begin showing you more and more how much and how wonderful the conscious body is. This somatic body. The body that's suffused with awareness.

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from the inside out. A place to rest, place to trust and a place that greater and greater freedom can arise.

So, thank you for this and that's the theme for this week mindfulness of the body.