So this is the second talk on the topic of being mindful of ourselves, understanding seeing being present for ourselves. And it's touching on a very important Buddhist topic on the self and what's often called not self, some people call it no self. And this teaching of not self, sometimes called no self lends itself to the idea that Buddhism, the important part of Buddhism that there is the idea, teach the idea that there is no self, which is very perplexing for people to hear, sometimes.

And that's not really the question, is there a self? Is there no self? Is not really the question that early Buddhism, the Buddha was interested in answering. And partly because that question, what is the self and various ideas of what the self is, is belongs within more to the realm of philosophy, even to metaphysics. What is real, who is the true, what is the real self? And in the statement that there is no self is also a metaphysical statement, philosophical statement about what the nature of the self is that self, in fact, does not exist. So it's a metaphysical ontological statement. Early Buddhism interest is not who we are, but what we're doing, and especially what we're doing with our minds. So in that sense, instead of being philosophy or metaphysics, the Buddha was really a psychologist, in the sense that he was interested in being aware of what the activities that the mind is doing, and to begin shedding those activities that cause suffering. To be able to direct the mind to do those activities which are beneficial, that lead to a sense of abundance, to lead to sense of freedom, possibility of freedom, and take us away from those which drain us, are that those which diminish us, are those that leave us with a lot of suffering or distress stress. So the question of what we're do, what we're doing is more important for the Buddha than who we are. And I wanted to read a passage, where this I kind of find this amusing, but a passage where the Buddha makes a statement that is quite surprising for people who may are used to the idea that the Buddha said there is no self. The Buddha says, How does one attend unwisely? So attend How is one paying attention to oneself in an unwise way. So this is a way
this is an activity of the mind to pay attention to the particular way. And so, what is unwise? Is this, is ways that are trying to answer these questions, was I in the past? Was I not in the past? Did I exist, for example, in a previous life? What was I in the past? How was I in the past? Having been what, what did I become in the past? Shall I be in the future? Shall I not be in the future? What should I be in the future? How should I be in the future? A lot, if for some people, this represents all the plans they make about the future, future selves. How should I having been what what should I become in the future? Or else one is inwardly perplexed about the present as follows. Am I? Am I not? What am I? How am I? Where has this being come from? Where will it go? So these are some questions that many people occurs to many people it's reasonable to have these kinds of questions.

And but for the Buddha here says these are not wise questions to be engaged in and to answer. The Buddha goes on to says when someone attends unwisely in this way, one of six views, views or means philosophical philosophies arise in the person. The view the self exists for me, arises as true and established. The view no self exists, arises as true and established. Or the view I perceive self with self arises as true and established. I perceive not self with self arises as true and established. Or the view I perceive self with no self arises as true and established. Or else in this self of mine that speaks and feels and experiences here and there, the result of good and bad actions, but this self of mine is permanent, everlasting, eternal, not subject to change endure for as long as eternity. These philosophical views are called a thicket of views, the wilderness of views, the contortion of views, the desolation of views, the feder of views. Fettered by the feder of views, the person is not free. So it's a bit of a mouthful, but the idea that all these especially idea of am I or am I not, is there a self is there not to self. Instead, the Buddha is interested in seeing the process by which the mind operates, seeing how we cling and how we let go of clinging, how we can act in the world and speak in the world, skillfully, wholesomely in beneficial ways, and how can we can avoid the unwholesome and the harmful ways.

And so this relates this idea of self. Many of the self is often more often than not the way that people operate around a self, they are selfing, is a kind of modern English interpretation. That self is not an activity, self is not a noun, a thing, but rather, is an activity, something we're doing. We're selfing. So if someone is very conceited, they're selfing. They're making up a self, they're actively involved in creating a self. If they're arrogant, or if they're selfish. And these are forms of suffering for oneself and for others. And in their earliest strata, of these early Buddhist teachings, before it kind of started to address the really the philosophical issues around them. The idea of self and no self, not self, was not really present in that strata, wasn't really a teaching that came out. What was the focus on was in that group of self, was has to do with the activity of selfishness, the activity of arrogance, the activity of conceit. That the mind is doing something, it's actively involved. And then when we study this, if we get quiet enough to really see what is this activity of selfishness that goes on? Self preoccupation, self obsession. What is that? And one of them we go to meditation this one of the things the meditators begin to discover. They begin to discover how much selfing there is, meaning, how much of them, their
mental concerns and thoughts are swirling around the topic of me, myself in mine. And you can see that if you track that you're the content of your thoughts, what you're actually thinking about. The chances are, for most people, a very high percentage of their thoughts have to do with themselves. What, you know, what happened to them in the past, what they're planning for the future, the fantasies they can be part of. And, somehow or other the self is a main character, in the mind's thoughts. And it's not necessarily an innocent involvement. But those thoughts and those concerns are driven by all kinds of obsessions, drives, desires, aversions, that in themselves are agitating, they agitate the water on top of the lake so we can't see deeply into the lake. And meditation is the idea of quieting. Not just not doing away with the lake, but rather quiet quieting this very, very, very thin layer, the top of the lake, where the water is choppy and agitated, in the wind or something.

And when that gets quiet, then what's available in a clear, beautiful lake is all the life and the clarity in the in what's underneath the water. There's much more available under the water of the lake. Then there is just on the surface of it. And so to be able to see deep into the fish and to be able to see the rocks and the seaweed, the plants, it can be really inspiring. And so the same thing with the mind. Things like selfishness, conceit, self preoccupation, arrogance is really kind of keeps the surface water of the mind agitated, and caught up in its preferences, it's once and it doesn't allow us to see the depth and fullness of what goes on here.

So to start noticing the activities of the mind, that are called selfing, making yourself, imagining yourself, defending yourself, apologizing for self, thoughts of self aggrandizement, delusions of grandeur, delusions of miserableness, and being bad, being awful. There's all these ideas, that we glom on to the self. So, as people get deeper and deeper, and practice in Buddhism, they are especially when people get enlightened, they get enlightened, they get liberated from many things, but one core list is called in English can be called the three influences. And it's it works as a very well translation for āsava because one of the meanings is an influx, what flows in and the word influence actually comes from the word to flow in. And so the things that influence us.

And if we start having this idea of me, myself, and mine, it's heavily influenced by three things, by pleasure, all kinds of pleasure, and some people really organize their life around pleasure. And it's almost as if, who they are, is the pleasure or the recipient of pleasure, how they get confirmed who they are, how they know, they're successful, as human being, how they really enjoy who they are, is to have pleasure. And the desire there, even the greed for pleasure, then, is a strong influence, for helping to form and shape our ideas. Our view, our understanding, and our feeling, the inner felt sense of this is who I am, I'm, there's a self here. And the more that greed is, the more that desire for it, or the more the aversion to discomfort is there. That tension, that constriction, that pressure of those kinds of motivations, translate to tensions and, you know, to contractions of the muscles and, and kind of constriction different parts in the body. And that doesn't isn't necessarily unpleasant. But that coagulation that coming together, concentration, in a sense of this can give people a sense that, oh, there is a self here, that's the feeling of I Am. And but sometimes it's a feeling of I am this is just a
gathering together of these tensions we have around desires and aversions and stuff. So early Buddhism says that this idea, their big influence on on where the self ideas of self can arise is this pursuit for pleasure and, and, and getting away from discomfort.

The second has to do with our ideas, or views, the strong idea, they need to know and to have certainty and to have a philosophy and to be right. And so we love to glom on to ideas of self, both philosophically but also psychologically, or socially, or our identity, for example. So people can have very much the idea of some people that they form the idea that they are bad, that they are inadequate, that they're somehow an embarrassment to the human race, and they don't want to let people know who they are, because they feel very inadequate or insecure. And that's an idea that the mind shapes with the help of maybe what happens around us in our society and what people tell us and treat us. But still, it's an idea. And people glob on to these ideas, and then that becomes their self organize around an idea. And because again, there's tensions that arise and holding on to that arises, that can seem like a like I am this or this is solid, this is really where it is. But we're influenced by these ideas of who we are.

So ideas that I am a great and then we go around with a high kind of self esteem. That is easily threatened very fragile. And you know, it's unrealistic the delusion of grandeur, how special we are, or I'm a person who is powerful and who I am is my power and I need to have power over people to kind of feel good about myself because that's who I am, or I am smart, or I am beautiful, or I am kind, or I'm just a lot, you know, mean SOB and that's who I am, it's we lob on or people who have suffered a lot, sometimes kind of locked into the I'm the victim, or, on and on and on all these ideas. So ideas of who we are, have a tremendous influence in the selfing, creating of selfing.

And the last one, that the Buddha talked about these three influences is the attachment to identity or to identity, to become something. And it's related to the first one, but it's much more simple and direct, is just the idea that I exist. And, you know, so the attachment to life, not wanting to die. So it's very closely related to attachment to be conscious and identifying myself as consciousness.

And so these three influences, pleasure, philosophies of self, ideas of self that we've created and adopted, psychological ideas. And then this drive towards just feeling like we exist, we're alive, the attachment to being alive. These are forces that drive us and move us and our influences on us, drain us, that the Buddha says are not necessarily to be there. And so meditation practice is to and Buddhist practice is to, is to end the influence of these things, on our fullness, on our sense of abundance and our liveliness, and our freedom that we have. And someone who's fully enlightened, no longer is influenced by all these forces. And that's a kind of good thing to do become independent have to exist and breathe and think and see, independent of these forces of selfing creating a self being itself, me myself and mine is that's really the primary focus of early Buddhism, much more so than coming to an understanding that there is no self that's not really there, as we'll see as we go on further in this in this week.
So, hope that was clear enough and I look forward to coming back here tomorrow. Be well.