So, this is a third talk on mindfulness of oneself. And so what are we mindful of, in the self. And one of the things I talked about yesterday is we can be mindful, become aware of all the selfing, that goes on, all the activities of constructing a self, asserting yourself, defending yourself, attaching to ideas of self, acquiring ideas of self, we acquire ideas of who we are. And that sense kind of put on a coat or clothes of self with those ideas. And there could be layers and layers of these coats that we wear of different selves. And some of us aren't quite, enough innocently or easily, or someone tells us something like I was told in seventh grade by an art teacher that I just casually as I was drawing on my desk, that I had no artistic ability. And I didn't, there was no sting to that, there was no idea that I should have artistic ability, it just was a simple ordinary fact of the universe since it came from a teacher. And that became a coat that I wore, I'm personally have no artistic ability. And it was held lightly and but I didn't know any better and turned out I had some when I went to college, I discovered it, and took art classes and things.

And so someone, we have some experience in our life, that is maybe we do something that hurt someone, we make a mistake. And that becomes a coat that we wear that now I am this kind of terrible person. And that one event then becomes this heavy coat that, you know, we apply everywhere we go everywhere with the idea, I'm a terrible person or someone raises us with lots of self esteem and telling us how great we are. And so we put on this coat that I'm great. And then we end up as an adult in situations where it's the work or school or something that is really tough for us, really hard. And maybe we fail or don't do it, we do or we do poorly. And that challenge is this idea that of self esteem. And suddenly, we thought we were a certain way, but turns out maybe we're not the way we thought we were. That coat was really heavy, and it's hard to take off.
So it's we carry it around hurting, being angry or something. And so, this idea of selfing we have these ideas and attachments to me, myself and mine. In teachings of the Buddha, the idea of self, any kind of idea of a self, idea of self is seen as an idea is seen as a concept. And the word for that is saññā. And saññā is is usually translated into English as perception. But perception in English suggests kind of an innocent, neutral, pure kind of taking in a sight the sound just as it is. But the saññā word implies not just the not the not the taking, in this sense, sensory perception of it. But once there's a sense sensory perception, then there is a label, an idea, a concept of what that is. And sometimes it's accurate, sometimes it's not. So like the example I gave a few weeks ago maybe is I'm seeing hiking in the trails up here and seeing a root poking out of the ground or a stick on the ground, kind of curving like a snake and my first see it as a snake. My mind now has made a concept of snake that wasn't there. And so, this idea of the conceptualization and in modern terms, its projection, we also project. So I projected the idea of a snake on that little twig. And so, that turns out for the Buddha and the ideas of self notions of self. What we what we many of us perceive innocently or not something they perceive as self, which is really through the filter of these ideas these constructions are can be seen as projections. We project self on things, on ourselves, project certain kinds of cells and other people.

And one place to see it is if you go to, you know, someone's house for maybe a little party and dinner party, and at other times of COVID-19 maybe, and there's not too much of people around, it's time to go sit down and you take a seat, and you sit there, but then you excuse yourself to maybe to go do something and then you come back three minutes later. And lo and behold, someone is sitting in your seat. There are other chairs around and you hadn't touched the plate or anything there. You hadn't used anything. So other places are just as clean and ready for you as where you were. But they're in your seat. And then there might be anger, self righteousness, despair, discouragement, possessiveness. Wait a minute, that's my chair! And maybe going over there and telling person, excuse me, but this is my chair. But if you know, if someone hadn't taken that chair, if you sat there for the time, and then you left and some weeks later, someone, you came back and someone said, which is your chair, oh, I don't know, I don't care, I don't think I'll sit anywhere. Before you came to the house, that chair was not your chair. But somehow the mind makes it mine in some way or other. And that making it mine is a projection. If you took off your shoes before coming to the house, with your eyes, you came into the entryway of the house, everyone took their shoes off. And then if everyone left with different shoes, and they came with the shoes wouldn't care. There's a projection of self mine onto the shoes.

And it's practical value to to be able to put on the shoes which fit you when you leave. So it's good to have some conventional sense of mine. But these are projections. And so if someone is a as a profession, like maybe a person is a plumber, and other people might see at the same party, that's a plumber, and they enter they're projecting plumber hood on that person. And so if something's clogged up in the sink in the kitchen, they go find the friend who's a plumber, because that's you know, and that's innocent enough to have that. But some people project that on themselves, some profession, some role, some idea, they have to be this kind of person.

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And so in the teachings of the Buddha, the idea of self is considered in modern terms of projection. Sometimes he calls it an upside down projection. topsy turvy, some translators call it idea, the idea of the self, because it tends to limit people, it tends to be a magnet for all kinds of suffering, all kinds of stress, all kinds of other ideas, associations of what a self a good self, a bad self is how we should be.

And so, you know, I was told, you know, that I had an artistic ability. And so I was now a person with no artistic ability in my mind and my projection. But then I might have gone a little bit further in life. And maybe I went to a class where they said, you know, of course everyone has artistic ability, and we want to celebrate every artistic ability. But I've gotten this idea that I have none. And so suddenly, my idea goes counter to how you're supposed to be a successful good person who's supposed to have artistic ability. And I know I don't because I was told. And now this gets more complicated and now other selves get formed. Other projections. Now I'm an inadequate self because of not fitting in to the artistic ability thing that I'm supposed to have. And so now I'm projecting something. And these projections sometimes are acquired, internalized from what people say around us and treat us. And sometimes they're just born out of us. Like, for example, the chair, that's my my chair, you know that we get a lot we can get quite attached to that for a few moments, few minutes for the dinner. And so becoming more sensitive to the day, the activity of selfing is one of the functions of mindfulness and that sense in that more kind of in some ways in a more kind of basic way. The Buddha never really asked asked Question, who am I?

What he asked is, well, he didn't ask literally, but more, what of his spirit of his instructions are, not discovering who you are, but to discover what you're doing. And sometimes for some of us, the question maybe more appropriately is, what in the world are you doing? What are we doing? What are the activity of the mind? What are the projections of the mind that we're involved in? And this is where meditation becomes very important. Because as we meditate, we get calmer, quieter, and more. And as we quiet down, we start seeing the activity of selfing. More and more, we see the thought, we see the idea, we see the judgment, we see how a thought comes up, and how we latch on to it or hold it or troubled by it, or pushed around by it.

So for example, as we get quieter and quieter, we can see more and more subtle, more more basic and foundational projections of self that we've been living with. This is not a rejection of any kind of idea that there is a self, whatever that might be, especially if we don't have thoughts to answer the question. It's not a rejection of it. It's not a claim that there is no self. But it's an idea that a lot of what we work with self is for people, is an activity of the mind that projects and creates ideas and concepts, in even feelings around this thing that we identify ourself.

So it's subtle, it's become more and more subtle. And subtle doesn't mean inconsequential. It's actually sometimes more consequential when you go down the layers, to the places where we usually don't see. So if the activity, the agitation or activity level of the mind, it can be rated from one to 10.
And mostly, we're going around that level of 10. Then there's, you know, layers in the mind. And so subtler things that are more active at a level of three are not seeing because they're kind of covered over it's like the agitated waves on top of a lake prevent us from seeing what's deeper down, which maybe there's a swirl of fish that are swirling around, or maybe there's an under water current that's swirling around, that you could see if you could see look through the top of the lake. And you can see the grass underneath, the seaweed kind of moving. But then when even that gets quieter than you see, oh, in fact that in between the grass, there's a little quiet, slugs moving around very softly. So you start seeing more and more as things get quieter, you see the quieter things.

So if selfing is an activity level number three, you don't see it if you're busy in life, and level nine, one to 10. But if your mind gets quiet enough, it gets to a level two, then you see more clearly, overall the mind to two, but you see kind of the movements of three, you see how it's born, how it appears how it goes. And to be able to watch the projections, the idea is the concepts of self appear out of nothing in a sense that we were minding our own business, and suddenly, there's a thought that I'm x. And where did that come from? And is that true? And that's a thought, who am I if I don't use that thought to say who I am.

So part of what Buddhist practice is about is quieting down. So we can find see through and this these projections of self, see what they are see them clearly. Some of them are useful, some of them are useful coat to put on when for the circumstance. And so to start seeing them as being provisional, seeing them as being contextual. Seeing them as something that we have choice about, what we pick up and put down is part of the freedom of Buddhism. And also part of the freedom is to put them down completely. And to have an experience of ourselves of being free, being alive, being vital, being upright, maybe even a certain kind of strength. But without any projections of self, any associations on it. That makes things so much more complicated so quickly, if we're attached to it if we're caught in it.

So projections of self. I think that all of you are pretty wonderful. That's what I've seen. I've seen a lot of people over my lifetime and as a teacher, I get to meet people all kinds of ways. And it's a wonderfulness that you can discover for yourself if you can put down take off some of the projection coats that you've overlaid on top of your wonderfulness. Thank you.