So welcome back to our introduction to mindfulness meditation. You might want to keep in the back of your mind a very simple definition for meditation. Not that it's the by any means the final definition of what mindfulness is. But it's a nice kind of reminder of a possibility. And that is that meditation is the continual act of befriending yourself. That ideally there would be a sense of, of kindness or kind regard towards oneself when we meditate. And of course, that's not always going to happen. But can there at least be some kind regard some friendly, even towards that which is difficult, even the difficult feelings and we might be having, that we're not trying to avoid what's really going on for us. But over and over and over again, we're trying to meet it in a way that is kind or friendly or caring, and not dismissive, not disrespectful for ourselves. So with that kind of general introduction to mindfulness, the one of the important characteristics of mindfulness is what's called recognition or comprehension. So it's not only being aware of what's happening, but having a relaxed, easy capacity to run. recognize what's happening as it's happening. So many times we live in the generalizations of life, generalities of life. And with mindfulness, we're beginning to create more clarity in the mind. So we see moving more, this specific city of the moment, what's actually happening moment by moment, that would be invisible to us if we're living in the abstract ideas of what's happening. And so an example that I've used before is that of someone tells you that
they're having a bad day. In a certain kind of way, maybe they're having a lot of difficulty, don't want to deny that for them. But to label and call it a bad day becomes Can you to easily become a self-fulfilling prophecy, in a sense that it becomes the lens through which we see everything And then how we understand ourselves understand the day, that it's a bad day. But if you, you know, you might be walking with a person in beautiful park with blue skies and sun and nice kind of day and, and so certainly it doesn't seem like it's a bad day, that particular moment. But maybe they're having a really hard time at work and something big is going on or who knows what’s going on. So it’s bothering them a lot. But, but it's not the whole picture. And so to begin kind of breaking up the hold of our big picture view of things, and seeing what’s happening in the moment. So for example, there's a world of difference between being swept into the view to bad day, and seeing everything through that lens versus having the mindfulness the clarity to recognize those are my thoughts that it's a bad day and to really see this clarity that are those that's a way of thinking that's an understanding. That’s a, that’s an interpretation that I put on top of it in more detail. I’m feeling afraid, oh, and that fears in my belly. There’s other thoughts about the future and predictions. There are, my breathing has become shallow and tight. And the sky is blue. And I'm feeling comfortable in that just had a nice meal and I’m comfortable in my stomach. I was hungry before. And so as

Gil Fronsdal 04:33

mindfulness gets clear, as we get in, we’re able to be in the present moment. Then we there’s greater clarity about what’s actually happening. So that we can see what is a thought, What is a feeling? What is interpretation, what is actually that kind of the details of the moment. And that begins to kind of create a little bit can curate a lot more freedom. them. In our experience, when we see each thing for itself, I like to think of it as being also very respectful for everything we’re aware of. Everything is allowed to be in its, in its own kind of simple way, that we can't let each thing be its own thing. If we had this generalizations, oh, it’s a bad day or whatever it might be, it's a good day, that there’s something that's lost in the generalization of, of how we see things. So the same things true for ourselves if we have generalizations about ourselves. And that's how we see ourselves, then we're missing something. And we're missing the ability to connect to actually the unfolding of what's really happening moment by moment in all the different ways and aspects of it. So one of the ways that we do this in mindfulness practice is with with a conscious moment, not just to be aware of something but to recognize It is in the simplest possible way, not analyzing it or probing into it to find out what it is or they're looking into the causes and effects, causes and conditions. But to really just be and see what that's what it is. That's the experience. And, and kind of like what's obvious about it as opposed to something sophisticated. And so the way that's done in mindfulness practice that some people find very helpful is something called a mental note. Label. And
that is to use a thought to help you be present and to recognize what's happening with a little bit of specificity. People who don't use the mental noting will sometimes find notice that their mind all too easily wanders often thoughts and if there's a lot of if there's a lot of thinking going on then it might be nice to, in order to kind of maybe kind of redirect the thinking in a way that supports meditation. We use these one word thoughts. So you're still using the thinking mind, but you're using it to connect to the moment to be mindful. And so if you're breathing, you might say in as you breathe in, out, as you breathe out, if you are hearing a sound, you might say, hearing, hearing, if there's a thought, you might say, thinking, sometimes some people like to repeat the label a few times thinking, thinking, thinking, and the reason for the repetition is that by the third time, maybe we've managed to find some freedom from it, where we really kind of step back in a sense and really see clearly what that's what's happening. As opposed to being in it then entangled in it. And it's an art form to do this mental noting not everyone does it that everyone finds it. Useful some people discover over time, it's useful sometimes and other times. But it is it is something that, you know, like anything we learn. It's kind of like riding a bicycle at first, it's wobbly and nutso, and kind of awkward. But after a while, it becomes second nature to ride the bike for some people. And so, after a while this mental note and can be second nature, and can really help us stay on track in the present moment. I've known people who have thought that it's their minds too busy if they do mental noting. And then, but really, if they look at their mind, they see actually, they're just drifting kind of effortlessly, often thought, in a very habitual way. That's comforting even, but they're not really present. And that bringing in the little recognition, the mental note can make a big difference. So we'll do a little meditation now. And what I'd like to suggest that you do is when we settle down and start practicing with breathing that you might want to try use a gentle note, a soft little whisper in the mind. It could be in as you breathe in, out as you breathe out. The classic label is arising as the chest or belly rises as you breathe, and falling as it falls. So whatever, whatever you find useful and, and then experiment with the tone of voice in which you use the mental noting.

Gil Fronsdal 09:29
Let it be kind or relaxed or simple. It's not like a sledgehammer that's kind of you know, you're supposed to hit everything over the head are supposed to be, you know, forceful, and it's also not supposed to be reluctant. Just epic Matter of fact, oh, that's what's going on. Soft, quiet, relaxed way. Partly the tone of voice that we use is a tone of voice that you for you for who you are, is supportive for you to become a little bit calmer, more settled and to be interested in coming of seeing things in the moment little bit more clearly. And then if we can add to that, if you do find yourself drifting off, drifting off in thought a lot, you might add to this just mental note thinking, well, you clearly acknowledge that you're thinking, there's something about the clear acknowledgement of things, that helps us
become a little bit freer for them. Maybe the third time you say it, thinking, thinking, thinking, maybe relax the thinking muscle and then come back and begin with your breathing. So if you could take a posture for meditation, that certainly will be comfortable for you for the next 20 minutes, but also a posture that maybe expresses a little bit of attendance. deftness, like you’re going to be attentive to what’s happening here. Now. Taking a little bit of time to settle into that posture, make small adjustments to be a little bit more aligned and balanced. And then to softly close your eyelids.

Gil Fronsdal 11:41
and then very simply become aware of how your body’s breathing. With no concern about right or wrong with breathing, just a little connection with your breathing.

Gil Fronsdal 12:05
And then taking a few long, deep in breaths and out breaths and as you breathe in, feel the expansion of the ribcage, expansion of the torso, the lifting of the shoulders and as you exhale, and everything gathers back together contracts, feel a settling in. Breathing in deeply and then settling in as you exhale.

Gil Fronsdal 12:50
And then if you can return your breathing to normal it’s useful to scan through your body to see if there’s some simple places in your body that you might relax. Perhaps you can relax the muscles of your forehead,

Gil Fronsdal 13:27
around your eyes, cheeks. Even your jaw maybe can soften a bit.

Gil Fronsdal 13:41
Enter relax your shoulders.

Gil Fronsdal 13:54
They can be particularly useful to soften your belly, in your belly, hang forward and out. Maybe two or three times in the course of meditation, check in with your belly and relax it. Don’t worry if it gets tight again. But a few times it’s nice to relax it and feel the weight of your body settle a bit further down into the pelvic cavity.
and then within your body as part of your bodily experience to become aware of the body, breathing.

Become aware of now, maybe more subtle expansions and contractions of the grip of the torso as you breathe.

Or if it’s more comfortable for you to feel the air going in then in and out through your nostrils to feel the tingling and warmth and coolness of those sensations.

And a way of getting settled into the recognition part of mindfulness. To gently simply recognize how the experience of inhaling is different than the experience of exhaling. Different sensations come into play different kinds of movements.

You might take a moment to relax your thinking muscle, any pressure or attention, energy associated with thinking maybe behind the forehead and inside the skull, maybe somewhere else at that relax and soften a bit.

and then relax into the experience of breathing. Perhaps every time you exhale let go of your thoughts.

And then to start the mental noting very quietly, softly, calmly. Use the note in or rising for the inhale and out or falling for the exhale.
Gil Fronsdal 18:39
If there's a loud sound that pulls your attention you can use the note hearing and if you really get pulled into the world of thoughts you might note thinking, thinking, thinking and then begin again with your breathing.

Gil Fronsdal 21:20
If thoughts take you away from the breathing, no need to be disturbed by that. The idea is to recognize that that's what's happening maybe with a mental note thinking sometimes if it's acknowledged clearly and it can be easier to begin again with the breathing.

Gil Fronsdal 23:13
If you find yourself repeatedly being pulled into the world of thinking, then perhaps with every exhale relax the thinking muscle.

Gil Fronsdal 23:30
Every exhale let go of your thoughts and let go into the experience of the body breathing.

Gil Fronsdal 26:47
And if anything is happening for you now it makes meditation a challenge maybe sensations of your body restlessness, emotions, thoughts take a few moments to recognize it with a mental note. This simple doesn't have to be to have accurate mental note. And repeat that note a few times. The relaxed way to see if you can feel yourself to discover how to be a little bit step back that's entangled with what's happening to be able to view it as if you have an overview of it as opposed to being caught in it.

Gil Fronsdal 28:58
And then for the last minute or so the sitting, returned to your breathing. And if possible, letting your mind become quiet. Give yourself over to the breathing for one minute to feel maybe every breath like the breath breathing is massaging you from the inside.

Gil Fronsdal 30:35
And then to end this sitting. Take a few long slow deep breaths. Feel connected to your body. Feel that contact with your chair or your cushion the floor and then as you hear
So one of the things I'm emphasizing today is that basic mindfulness practice includes the recognition of what is happening, but it's always recognizing what's happening as it's happening. And so this is a little bit of an Arthur learning curve of mindfulness is to learn what it really means when it really means to just stay with the present moment experience. One of the things it means is we do very little retroactive thinking or analysis when we're doing mindfulness. We don't even if it happened three seconds ago, five seconds ago, we don't dissipate. We try not to spend time thinking about that. Because then in a sense, you've kind of staying in the past. And you want to be always ready to step up and just feel what it's now just now a little bit, it's very forgiving the mindfulness, because for example, if somehow it wasn't going quite right or something five seconds ago. minutes ago. That's ancient history, the practice is just to be ready to meet the next thing and not carry the weight or the burden of what happened or not carry the expectation of the past into the future or not hold on to it, if it was happening before was good or nice and try to get back there. Just to meet the next moment, oh, this is how it is to recognize it. The recognition factor is also very important because because whatever is happening, the present moment, if you recognize that it's happening, you're doing the mindfulness successfully. And, and it kind of means that mindfulness works even when it doesn't work. And what I mean by that is that if you have some idea of what mindfulness might mean that you can calm or stay with your breathing, and you're not able to do that, if you can recognize what is happening instead That's mindfulness. So it still works, even if your idea of what's supposed to be is not what it is. So it's very forgiving. It's very freeing, in a sense, just a simple act of recognizing, oh, it's this now. It's this now. Oh, like this. It is. It takes a while for practitioners, to learn how significant it is to keep coming back to the simple act of recognition. There is a kind of freedom to be found in the act of freedom of recognition. There is a kind of easing up on what's going on there is a kind of kind of relaxing or calm, calming of situation, to simply recognize, oh, it's like this. This is what's going on. So in terms of breath meditation, I like to offer that as the kind of default it's kind of kind of the baseline of what we're doing. And mindfulness meditation is to kind of practicing and developing mindfulness with breathing but breathing functions that will get like a, like this analogy is that there can be a very clear river Creek, maybe a stream with shallow water with very clear water where the water's flowing very slowly and, and I came across this analogy when I was in such a situation and in looking at the water, I couldn't tell that the water was moving it looked to me like was standing still. So I took a stick a little twig and put it in vertically into the water. And then I saw that then there was a little wake that was formed in the edges of the, of the stick, and I could see actually there was movement in the water. Sometimes it's hard to see the movements of our own
mind to really see what's going on. We might know some of it, but to really see what's going on and some deeper away. It was so sometimes in meshed in the river on life we don't see sometimes with clarity And what's happening, how much energy there is how much tension there is how much feelings There are all kinds of aspects of it, we don't see. But the coming back to the breathing and lead and trying to stay with your breathing over time and continuity with the breathing is kind of like putting that stick into the stream. You might not be successful at staying with the breathing. Don't worry about it. It's enough that you're trying and as you're trying because you're trying, only then you might start seeing Oh, there's this thinking mind is very powerful. I had no idea it was that powerful. I'm easily distractible, I'm really caught up with

Gil Fronsdal  36:47
x, y and z, that I didn't realize how much I was concerned with X, Y and Z. Oh, I didn't realize I have all these emotions that are going moving through. I didn't realize how tense I'm holding my body There's all kinds of things that kind of show themselves. And on one hand, you might say, well, it's thinking about what making it possible to stay with my breathing. And therefore I'm not meditating, right? For mindfulness meditation, you don't have to stay with your breathing. The breathing meditation has done its job, if it highlights for you, what is going on that you hadn't seen clearly before? And then to recognize it, oh, this is what's going on. And this attitude of Oh, this is what's going on. This is what's happening. Oh, it's like this right now. As opposed to Oh, no, or Oh, yes, I want more of that. Just Oh, this is what's going on. This kind of open handed recognition. It's like this. It's so can be very, very powerful to do. As a person does this mindfulness practice and includes this recognition factor as part of it. My hope Is that over time, the person learns that even a moment of recognition is quite significant? That, you know, I've seen that books and articles about, you know, 10 minute mindfulness, one minute mindfulness and seems like being efficient with mindfulness is the name of the game. And so a little bit, come back with the idea that yes, there's also one moment mindfulness. And that is that you can just take a moment. And if you have a clear recognition, oh, that's what's happening. There, you can find some time some freedom in that. Maybe some of you have had the experience of someone the language, that languages, they've named something, let me name what's happening here. And you say, you know, everyone is afraid right now or everyone is excited. And everyone's so afraid or so excited that haven't even noticed. As soon as someone names that everyone's Oh, yes, that's what's happening. So we can do that for ourselves, this act of recognition. So I hope that what you feel from this or pick up from this is that this mindfulness practice is very forgiving. It's very broad. It's really allows us to be present in a friendly way, with all our experience. Because one of the principles of smartphones, meditation I'm teaching is we're building over these days, we're doing this to a capacity to have a heightened awareness, a useful form of awareness, that
can be used in all circumstances, that we have a capacity for clear mindfulness, clear recognition, a settled awareness, that is, in some ways, is strong enough so that when when we’re aware of any part of our human experience, there is a sense of the little bit of freedom, some complex space in it, some way of not being distracted or caught by what’s happening. And that makes a huge difference in everyday life. If you want to know so they say it this way that that, as I said earlier, the default that we’re trying to do is or they’re kind of for mindfulness meditation if is keep coming back to the breathing. And it is nice to also cultivate some continuity with the breathing, to hang in there with a rhythm of breathing in and breathing out. Not to expect to not to require it not to feel like it's wrong if you're not able to do it. But it is useful to kind of make an effort to kind of do that to some degree. And when it’s possible, because the breathing can be for some people relaxing, it can be focusing, it can be settling and a lot of benefit and mindfulness. Come To mindfulness comes when we’re focused when we’re calm when we’re settled. Also, it's just a wise thing to do in life is to have an ability to calm ourselves down. And, and to do it somewhat quickly. And breathing is one of those things.

Gil Fronsdal  41:19
Yesterday, I taught you the practice of the three breath journey. I hope some of you have tried it this last 24 hours, and found it useful that too, just in three breaths, it’s possible to settle oneself. And I’ve done it in situations where social situations where I kept my eyes open, and no one knew I was doing it. But I found that after three breaths, that I was so much more attentive and present in a good way than if I hadn't done it. So the benefits of a combination of is mindfulness and breathing meditation is really great. And we will do over these, these next days is what keep using breathing as a foundation, but we’re always ready to leave it. If something else needs to be acknowledged, something else needs to be recognized. So, in that line it might be because having you know, do this experientially is often more useful than just listening to someone talk. I'd like to offer you just a teeny little exercise that that maybe I can show you some of you at least a little bit how simple this can be. Perhaps you can just close your eyes the way you are. And then discover for yourself the answer to this question in the present moment, what are you primarily aware of

Gil Fronsdal  43:02
What’s the clearest experience of the moment and then use a single mental note label to clearly recognize what that is. And you might repeat that mental note a few times, as if you’re kind of like taking two or three steps back to see objectively to get an overview to be a little bit spit, make space around the experience without being too caught up in it, or involved or reactive.
And then open your eyes so I don't know if that was The idea was to do that shorter than the three breaths journey with this simple act of this is what's going on. And then to name it, to recognize with their over time, our ability to recognize becomes stronger. And one of the consequences of stronger powers of recognition is the everyday experience. Moment to moment experience, what's happening in the present, becomes clear and clear. Often, the mind when we're kind of is claustrophobic with thinking. So a lot of thoughts, a lot of desires, a lot of concerns that come one after the other, we get involved with them, and a little bit obscure, that sharp clarity of the moment. As we relax and mindfulness gets stronger and the powers of recognition becomes second nature, then it's kind of like we've I don't know if you've had this experience but hopefully you can get this experience maybe you've had something similar of waking up in the afternoon from a nice nap. And everything just has gotten calm, peaceful inside enough kind of feel refreshed. And I look at things in the room or go outside and look at things outside. And the individual things I look at, stand out in highlight. There's a clarity to each thing that I see that that particular flower that tree, that sidewalk and even sometimes the piece of candy wrapping on the sidewalk kind of stands out. Not as a problem but it won't Collison the silver and the colors stand out and highlight is pink. Wow, look at those colors. There's something about the busy mind, the cluster phobic mind, the reactive mind that is hard to really See the beauty or the clarity of the specificities of each thing. As mindfulness gets stronger, it almost becomes synonymous with becoming clear, greater clarity. And, and a lot of that comes from being calm, calmer. But it also comes from the ability to begin to stay in the present moment and recognize what this is what's happening. This is what's happening. Look at that. There's that thing, that thing. It's not that conscious. It's not that kind of mechanical like that, maybe. But it's more like Wow. It's kind of like, more like, wow. It is a bit of a miracle. That we are aware that we are conscious. Normally, I think it's fair to say we're very busy. With what we're aware of, it's kind of like thinking, we're very consumed by what we're thinking about. We're seldom step back, and, and are amazed that we've been thinking to begin with. I mean, it's the 5 billion years of evolution have brought us to this point that we have these kinds of thoughts. We're thinking about having pizza for dinner. Wow, that's an amazing thing. As opposed to be lost in the menu or ideas of what we want. Just affected, we think it's kind of a miracle. Even more of a miracle is the fact that we're conscious. And if we can step back, and not be too preoccupied, what about what we're conscious about? But no, we're conscious It becomes a kind of a game changer. Wow. We live in amazing world. even more amazing is that as we become more mindful, more aware in the present moment, and more appreciating this miracle of being conscious conscious, that that spaciousness of being aware, becomes an open door for wisdom, for a clear understanding of what's happening, how we respond what to how we can respond, and it's an open door for some of the deeper beneficial emotions impulses we have to come to the surface.
When we're preoccupied with what's going on, caught up in our thoughts and activities and all that. It's kind of like that those doors are closed. There's no space for something deeper to arise and to be present. And so this idea of being mindful of the present moment, recognizing what's happening in the present, being a little bit calmer can lead to a quality of amazement, to be amazed that we're conscious. So, I would like to suggest that we end with a five minute meditation. And if you would, you don't have to change your posture if you don't want or take a meditation posture if you'd like. And then gently, just close your eyes. And with nothing more, you have to do take a few moments to recognize how you are right now. What's up for you? What's going on? Are you restless or you're settled? agitated calm content discontent? Is your body more relaxed or is it tense? To your thoughts your thinking have the upper hand and your thinking is racing along and you're following your thoughts or or do you have little bit more space from your thoughts? It can be many things just recognize how you are.

See if as you recognize how you are right now. Can you be in a few moments, very spacious and allowing for it allowing in the field of awareness. Just let it be the way it is. One of the great mantras for meditation is the words. It's okay.

And then in the middle of what's happening, middle of how you are, as if it's at the center of all things. Become aware of your breathing.

Become aware of the rhythm of breathing in and breathing out

and perhaps As you're breathing in and out the rhythm of breathing, you can almost imagine it's like a wave or a massage. That's moving through how you are what's happening for you. So you're not so focused on what's happening. But you are kind of recognizing it, almost as if you're recognizing it with your breathing, massaging it, moving through it. So you're bringing these two things together, breathing and recognition of what's happening.
And then to make yourself ready to open your eyes again come out of the meditation we'll end it with this little bill.

So then in the last five minutes of our time together, say a few things. Often when people are new to meditation like this, there's a fair number of people who asked questions about sleepiness. I get so sleepy when I meditate. Some people are sleep deprived, some people need to sleep more than they need to meditate. So, you know, sometimes maybe should go back to bed. But there are other reasons why people get sleepy when they meditate. And so sometimes working with sleeping And is part of meditation. It's one of the things we can recognize. In a mindful meditative way. Oh sleepy, this is how it is. A few simple things you might do is open your eyes. Sometimes eyes that are open, maybe half open, looking down at the 45 degrees to the floor is enough to bring enough alertness. Sitting someplace where there's a little bit bright light also can make it a little more alert. And also sometimes sitting up straighter, or even doing standing meditation. Because that has more energy in it, then maybe it helps us to stay awake. So there's a little practical things you can do. And there's other things I can say. But for now, that's what I'll say. The second thing I want to suggest is that we're doing this series, you know, 24 hour cycle every 24 hours. We do this for every day and it's be helpful if you practice Some of the things we're doing, I'm teaching in the intermediate time between. And so for continue with a 20 minute meditation, try to do at once between now and the next time we meet. And if you can't, that's okay. But I would encourage you to try and using what we've talked about so far. And, but also, what you might want to do in the next 24 hours, is, look for a situation in your ordinary life in whatever whatever you're doing, to see if you could use the little recognition practice. Just kind of stop in the middle of what's going on. If you can, if it seems appropriate, and maybe maybe close your eyes, you don't have to, and just notice what's happening in the present moment as it's happening. And then use a mental note. To recognize it clearly. Maybe say the minute notice a few times in saying it in a relaxed way. See if you can begin finding some freedom or space around what's happening, that you're not entangled with it. So run that exercise a few times and see what you'll learn about yourself the present moment, but also about the usefulness of this exercise. And finally, if, if you so we're going here, tomorrow, I'm going to introduce mindfulness of the body, we'll do two days on mindfulness of the body. And some of you have already I'm sure already are uncomfortable, knees hurt back hurts different things go on your body. And, and the learning how to be mindful of both the discomfort and the comfort of the body is part of mindfulness meditation, and it's actually a very important part of it. So we'll talk about mindfulness to the body tomorrow. In the next day, and so, thank you for being part of this and thank you for listening and ban pretend you know, and
participating in this. And I look forward to our time tomorrow, same time, same place for me at least. So maybe you’d be well thank you