

2003-12-01 Satipatthana Sutta (Week 12) - The Seven Factors of Awakening

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SPEAKERS

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For the last few minutes of this sitting as part of the sitting I'll lead a little guided meditation. You'd like to make yourself a little bit more comfortable than you are welcome to make an adjustment I'm going to mention a few words. Sometimes I'll mention synonyms or close synonyms to go along with it. And as I say each word or each concept, let it kind of reverberate within you and see what associations you have with it. What feelings that might arise within you memories perhaps In particular, see what it evokes for you, or see if you can evoke, evoke the state that the word is pointing towards. So the first concept is mindfulness attentiveness. And the second concept is investigation in query insight The third is effort, engagement, applying oneself energy the fourth is Joy, the light exuberance fifth is tranquility or calm This peacefulness the six this concentration collectiveness focus. And the seventh is equanimity a balance of mind There's a tradition in Buddhism, that these seven qualities are kind of medicine to be evoked at times of illness. And, and other times as well. Don't go through the list one more time. Keep your mind relaxed, suspend all disbelief and receive these words as seeds that somehow flower within the words to evoke something about this state within you Mindfulness investigation effort joy tranquility Concentration equanimity these seven qualities are known as the factors of awakening. So I could have almost asked another or God good do another kind of guided exercise and that is to to ask you or ask you now remember some time when you were most when you woke up from a nap or woke up in the morning and perhaps you were really awake. You woke up and maybe took a few minutes to wake up properly but you felt really kind of so awake that just kind of like when the air in the Bay Area is completely clear. And you can see across The Bay and it's so amazing to have that clarity and you forgotten that's even possible. Wow. And so you realize that when things are really clear, there's nothing interfering. It's because he's not there's nothing there. Remember some time you're really awake? What are some of the qualities that were present for you together without wakefulness? How would you feel besides being very awake? Yes. exuberant. Okay. refreshed, okay. Yes. alive. How does that how does it feel like to be alive full of it. Energy. Okay. Yes. tranquil. certain

kind of tranquility. Okay. Yes. sharpness or acuity of perception limitless limitlessness yes suspension of time. kindness towards the whole world We gonna settle for that. Although there's more the so there certainly are states that we experience that where there are a lot of wonderful qualities states of mind states of being that come along with them in wakefulness is one of them. And as many of you know, in the Buddhist tradition, being awake is one of the main goals or games of the whole tradition, the whole point is to wake up. The word Buddhism comes from originally from the word Bodhi, or Buddha, which comes from the word Bodhi. And Bodhi means to wake up to be awake. And I'm very fond of the word awake, almost as a substitute to mindfulness. That rather than becoming more mindful, we're trying to be more awake to our experience. And for me the connotations of being awake to ourselves. perience awake to our breath awake to our sensations awake to the world around us has a sense to it that our experience doesn't have to be different than what it is you simply awake to it. And in that wakefulness there's a kind of clarity, a kind of freedom, that kind of independence are kind of some of the qualities that you all described here, in relationship to what we're experiencing. We're simply awake. Also, when you use the word awake, in my mind, at least, it comes along with a lot of other connotations and suggestions. It's a state of being that is somehow independent of what you're awake to awake of. But there's this clarity, this wakefulness, energy, this vitality, this joy, perhaps tranquility, perhaps some some of these factors of awakening that come along with this state of being, you know, awake to the experience. And so the goal of practices can you be awake to this rather than mindful, sometimes people use the word mindful this kind of feeling of maybe sometimes bearing down or kind of pressure or trying to be cognitively aware. It's sometimes kind of feels like a bit too much activity of the mind to be mindful of this. But to be awake. I don't know if it's true for you, but for me is as a situation of almost like, yeah, I settle back, I relax, I become more open, more spacious to the experience, rather than trying to bear down to kind of see it more clearly exactly what it is to be awake to what's there. So there are these, in this list called the seven factors of awakening. There's some indication in the discourses of the Buddha, that these were not original to the Buddha, that they pre existed him in in the in his middle year, his time in India, other religious teachers or practice practitioners knew about the seven factors of awakening. And I love it when we find out that certain teachings of the Buddha that we now associate with Buddhism is what the Buddhist Buddhist teach at the time of the Buddha is not what the Buddhist taught it. But it wasn't a monopoly. It wasn't only only only what the Buddhist thought other people taught it also. So I liked that because it has kind of universal quality to it, then it's not something that, you know, is only us or we have it or something. And what I've been doing for the last couple of months, is slowly going over a discourse of the Buddha called the Satipatthana Sutta, the discourse on the establishing of mindfulness. Sometimes it's called the foundation of mindfulness, or the four foundations of mindfulness, which are given as the body, the feelings, the mind, the mind, and mind, states or content of mind or something like that is forced But, and it's just itself when you call it that way that the place we, we established mindfulness or the foundations of mindfulness referring to things are nouns. But when you read the discourse itself, what's being referred to is not nouns, but rather processes. And the whole focus is learning to pay attention to processes that are going on. And the suggestion in Buddhism is that the understanding is that our full psychosomatic being, or all of life that we can experience is constantly in process. It's always in movement, it's arising and passing. It's certain causes and conditions come together to allow it to arise, because then

conditions passed and it passes away. And we live in a world of causes and conditions and processes are constantly in flux and moving somewhere quite slow. The Rise and Fall of mountains are pretty slow, relative to human life, but other you know, timescales. It's pretty fast that this year is pop up and disappear. I don't take some 40 million years or something like that. It goes pretty quick. And, but everything is in a process is in movement. So part of what Buddhist practice entails is being to tune into that process that makes up our experience of life. And so we pay attention to the process or physicality, the physical experiences, our bodies not a thing. A body is a series of processes, sensations that arise in the past that move and change in flux. Our activity of our body or movement, it's not a you know, it's not a thing. It's you know, things have moved. One of the jokes that I have with my son, we talked about, you know, what happens to your fist when you open your hand or the lap when you stand up? Where does it go? You know, they're there. I don't that relates exactly, but And so a lot of this whole discussion or these last months is learning to pay attention to processes. And in learning to pay attention to processes, processes, in a sense, calling us to be more mindful, more attentive, if we're going to be attentive to that we know them to be attentive. And since they're moving and changing, we've become aware we train and develop our mindfulness in being aware of this flux in this change. We're now at the fourth foundation of mindfulness, which is the foundation that that area of mindfulness will be developed in mindfulness. with what's called damazer the contents of the mind are the qualities of mind those qualities of mind of processes of mind or inner processes that come into play. And have a direct effect either on keeping us in states of suffering, keep us sad or depressed or angry or hateful or somehow suffering Are those inner processes which move us towards greater freedom or wakefulness, or freedom from suffering greater happiness, and suffering, and happiness are also processes. And since their processes, their processes then which are affected by causes and conditions. And getting a sense of how causes and conditions bring about suffering, and how causes and conditions bring about that bring about happiness or freedom is part of the task of mindfulness practice. I've known people who practice mindfulness for a long time and hadn't gotten that message. And they had this idea that was kinda like magical thinking. If they just sat down and close their eyes and kind of in a general way was mindful of what was going on moment by moment. Then magically, they'd be transformed and changed in some way. And they sat for a long time and nothing happened. Like or something happened but not that much or like our Jensen NATO says, If sitting was where it was at Chickens would be enlightened. And there is some it's some attention given to begin to understand what is happening there. So yesterday I talked about difference between looking and seeing the possibility Vipassana, which is a whole practice of mindfulness involves seeing clearly. But seeing isn't necessarily just a, you know, the picking up the raw data of what's happening in the moment by moment, even though many of us teachers, including myself, sometimes give that impression. But it's also being aware a little bit of the processes of how things arise and pass. So with the hindrances that we talked about, being aware of how central desire arises, because you've seen an ad for the next generation of palm pilots, or whatever it is that you know, excites you, and then the mind because Have that condition being there. And because of other conditions existing in your mind what you know what palm pilots mean to your ego, perhaps off the mind runs is caught in a cycles of desire, which involves certain kind of suffering can involve. And so you can be aware of that process. If you're aware of the process of how to work that works, then you can be aware in the future of how

this might lead to suffering. Next time you see an advertisement. And since all of us have been around advertisements for long enough, none of us to come to advertisements anymore, do we? We have enough wisdom and clarity now we see how it works. And we see the causes and conditions that our mind how we grab on and we've done it so many times that we've learned the lesson, right? Right. But being aware of these processes, and the so that one of the processes for today, the focus today is the seven factors of awakening, these are processes also. And these processes that come into play as mindfulness get stronger, and as we get more awake to our experience and this suggests, your says that as a person that says that Buddhist practice is a developmental as a developmental model of spiritual growth, that or spirituality is involves growth and cultivation, development of ourselves over time. There are forms of spirituality forms the Buddha spirituality even which poopoo any idea of change of growth of doing anything engaging and cultivating ourselves in some way. They have sometimes they they have the expression of instant, instant but sudden enlightenment Or the city of the non dual. It's not about you know, it's very dualistic to be involved in, you know, trying to get someplace to develop oneself. And rather you should wake up to this the non dual reality which is right here. They're very profound teachings this way. And I don't want to, you know, you know, it all suggests any kind of criticism of them. But in the early teachings of the Buddha was very clear, there was much more of a developmental model that goes along very much with what we see in human beings, that even non dual people, as they get older, mature, hopefully, there's change and development that goes on over the years. Human beings are processes we are, we can't get away from the fact that we're processes and the fact that processes change and develop according causes and conditions, the right causes or conditions come into play. Then, we develop in healthy ways, the wrong causes and conditions come into play, and we develop in unhealthy ways and we can affect We don't have to be the victims, we don't have to be the puppets of causes and conditions influencing us, we could have something to say about which causes conditions affect us, and in, in shape this process of who we are. And that's one of the fundamental teachings of the Buddha, about karma is that we can affect the processes of what shapes us. It doesn't mean we can have control over it ultimate control, but we can have some effect over time, we can develop ourselves. So as as the Buddha spirituality is much more than just developing kind of accepting mindfulness of our situation as it is, but rather moving from states of being in suffering to states of happiness or well being, or as maybe some like Maslow talked about. Not peak experiences the right right word here, but two experiences have great sense of well being. So moving into great states of health psychology. Health well being, of, of. It's enough to say that. And so the seven factors of awakening then are description of some of the things that come into play. As we move into the state of well being psychological well being. It doesn't have to be a permanent thing, you know, like, but rather some of it has is temporary because it comes together for causes and conditions, but has a lot to do with what happens in really strong meditation practice is that at some point or other, these seven factors of awakening can kick in, and they become stronger and stronger, and they come in, they can almost have a life of their own, they kind of have to take over as the right word. But maybe some of you have had the experience of learning some kind of skill or sport or something they'd be going running or maybe running is a good example but could be many other things. where, you know, initially it's kind of hard to do and there's resistance to doing it. And you'd rather not do it, then you're lazy, you're tired, you know all the hidden

riches come up. But at some point, the body the mind is conditioned gets into it gets into the flow of it. And qualities that are not necessarily some qualities being taken over just kind of a lightness, perhaps what kind of engagement to kind of have the joy of being involved and engaged, the body's running by itself on almost. And it's kind of joy and happiness in that and the mind is engaged in the activity the mind is not thinking about yesterday or mind not thinking about, you know, how wonderful would be when you finally get there, you know, can run well, but the mind is now engaged in the process of running itself. You're attentive, you're energetic, the energy seems to just flow kind of effortlessly, in a sense. There's various processes within us that kick in and have kind of effortless quality to making some sense what I'm saying. So as we meditate, the same things can occur. Now it takes certain amount, momentum and regularity. practice and doing meditation, and sometimes going, you know, to intensive meditation retreats for some of the great fruits of this to occur. And they happen at different people at different times. There are some people who get some of these benefits very quickly. And some people have the very slow tortoise approach. And then it takes 2030 years. I don't know who why it is different for some people. And sometimes it's better the slow approach as we know from the story, the tortoise and the hare. But when we started moving it, but start moving into this state of well being and having these factors begin, arising in the mind rising in our body, and influencing who we are and influencing the course of the practice itself. Part of developing certain factors of awakening is that helps support them is recognizing their presence. And the suggestion is that the seven factors of awakening are probably here more often than you realize. If you're busy engaged in life and focusing on the task at hand or palm pilots next generation, whatever and obsessing about it, you might not notice that you're actually feeling quite good that day. Or maybe you're feeling kind of energetic or you're feeling kind of a little bit happy. And because you're so obsessing on getting that Palm Pilot or whatever it might be, there might be a very easy to overlook, sort of states of well being that exists. Part of the way of developing greater states of well being or supporting these seven factors is by recognizing their presence when they're there. recognizing what brings them about recognizing what sustains them when they're there, and recognize when they're gone and what were the causes and conditions that made them go away. You feel you know, great joy. You're driving down one on one and there's an advertisement it all goes away. Everything, the advertisement is proof that you failed in your life. You're not going to make it anywhere, you know, you're not going to be able to get whatever. b2b right? It's not that sort of I don't see that so much anymore. But a year ago, a lot of b2b advertisements business to business every time you software. It's interesting to watch the trends of advertisements, billboards over the over the years, but two years ago, it was all about how great it is to make money. Because, you know, they don't say that anymore. And so you see this b2b sign it says deal. I must have chosen the wrong profession. How can I How can I be such a failure? And there goes, your joy, you know, so you see how that happens. And because you see it happen, you're not caught by it quite as much. So a lot of you know, so a lot of this is beginning to catch what's going on. track what's going on being mindful going on as it's going on. So a lot of understanding a lot of wisdom and come from that. And we can begin taking responsibility a little bit then for what is happening to us in the moment of how we react to it, how we relate to it, are the more helpful ways of reacting, are we going to be carried along? victims, puppets of causes and conditions. So then mindfulness is a very important central aspect to all this and certainly to the Buddhist tradition. And so this discourse that

we're talking about these months focuses on areas of ways to develop this mindfulness practice this mindfulness. One of the ways to develop mindfulness is start paying attention to the seven factors of awakening as they arise in our experience, they will arise as meditation practice deepens. But they can also as I said, appear often in daily life in subtle ways or strong ways for whatever reasons, and then recognizing and appreciating their presence. their importance is very important and to fuel them to feed them little bit is very important. If we do that with expectation or attachment, or judgment or you know, there's all kinds of ways we can do that, that's causes more suffering. But they're also healthier ways of relating to them that kind of lets them be there. So I'd like to read now, this paragraph from the discourse on this section on the seven factors of awakening. By now, I think some of you could probably read it or just recite it on your own because it's getting to be quite repetitive. But repetition has in many spiritual traditions, has certain benefits. It lets you kind of sink in deeper that you take it in and kind of you know, so this is what it says. Again, monks, a monk contemplating mindful mind, objects as mind objects, in terms of the seven enlightenment factors? And how does a monk abide contemplating mind objects, his mind objects in terms of the seven enlightenment factors here, there being the mindfulness enlightenment factor in her. The monastic understands there is mindfulness enlightenment factor in me. There's the factor of awakening of mindfulness in me. Or there is no mindfulness factor in me or when understands or, or there being no mindfulness factor and he or she understands there is no mindfulness factor in me or he or she also understands how that comes to be the arising of the unresolved mindfulness factor and how the arisen mindfulness factor comes to Fulfillment by development. So you see how now the arising of Mindfulness, but how through the practice and cultivation, you see how that mindfulness gets stronger and stronger. There's a wonderful experience that happens in strong mindfulness practice that sometimes described as snowball effect. Where you know, you use a big snowball, and you're rolling it down the hill, and it gets bigger and bigger and bigger on its own faster and faster. Well, mindfulness has as quality also, that as we have to do an initial effort to get up the hill and to make a snowball with push it first. First is too small and it's kind of giving more pushes. And eventually, there's a snowball effect with mindfulness, where something seemingly, the mindfulness gets stronger and stronger, stronger on its own. It's like you're downhill from there on. And you see the development, the strengthening of it as we go along. And then this paragraph goes on to the same thing for the other seven factors of awakening. So mindfulness is the first. The second is investigation. The third is efforts are Energy. The fourth is joy. The fifth is tranquility. The sixth is concentration, and the seventh is equanimity. Now, there's different ways of understanding these seven. Sometimes people will take them as all kind of hologram, they all arise together, and they balance each other in various ways, interplay with each other. But there's one traditional way of seeing it is that their development, it's a developmental sequence. And you've and this turns out that this is a quite classic movement in Buddhist spirituality, to to where our spiritual development follows certain stages or certain certain factors or for the inner states develop in sequence to each other. So you might listen a little bit to that sequence. Mindfulness is the foundation of it all. It said that mindfulness has an essential cause and condition I mean, it's the right thing to say. But that mindful that there's no no basis for mindfulness except by being mindful. So you just kind of cultivate your mind, and she's gonna apply it. How do you Be mindful and being mindful? By paying attention? We're doing it. As we cultivate the mindfulness that lends itself as a base or support, for

investigation, for seeing more deeply, to begin seeing, rather than just looking. And seeing investigating is not just taking the surface of what's given as given. But begin to understand the process element of what's going on, to be getting understand the causes and conditions to begin as many ways of understanding that are much more than just looking. We have the expression in English. Oh, I see. Someone says, Look over there. And then you say, Oh, I don't see anything. Or I do see something. Or I see what you mean. Seeing is more than just looking at There's a kind of a penetration or it's perception plus a cursor with certain kind of understanding that goes together with seeing. So the investigate investigative aspect is that part of the mind is looking to see more deeply to clearly comprehend what this experience is, is right now in this moment to investigate what's happening. I think of investigation as a normal human faculty, you see it in children. They seem very inquisitive. They just kind of my little baby he was one years old picks up, you know, the most common objects you can household objects you can imagine, and will stand Miss spent time mesmerized, investigating what is this thing here? And I think as adults, we don't, you know, behave exactly the same way. But certainly there are times when we you know, investigation is quite strong. When I was introduced to be possible in Thailand. I did this long Retreat near the end of the retreat. My Thai teacher took me to a funeral of a Thai general. I'm not sure why it took me to, you know, why I left the retreat to go to this funeral, but everywhere. And it was all in Thai and it was very gaudy and glitzy and you know, it was, you know, and, and so sitting there, and I was really bored. And after a while, wait a minute. Boredom is suffering. There must be a better way. Another way. I just been doing all these weeks of Vipassana practice, why don't I just pay attention. And, and suddenly, I started paying attention investigating, investigating what's going on the sounds and the colors and the activities and I didn't understand anything much was going on. But just the quality investigation was awakened in me. And there was, you know, that was enough to keep me from being bored there. I was engaged and was going On. It said that investigation is a good foundation for effort. If we're inquiring or curious, and this kind of effort or energy that arises, to apply ourselves to look more deeply to be engaged in the practice of what's going on, without some application of ourselves in the practice, there is no spiritual life. And again, this magic thinking, Oh, if I just read enough Dharma books, something will happen to me. It'll be great. And but you know, it can't just be Dharma books, you have to actually apply it to the spiritual life is a life to be lived in because life to be lived. You have to apply yourself in some way. And the question isn't, how do you apply yourself? In what way? Do you apply yourself just once a day in meditation? You apply yourself in your conversations with the people at work, do you apply yourself? When you go shopping? Do you Where do you apply yourself in a spiritual way? The suggestion is, it's a life and it's your whole life. Someone wants said You're you're asking the wrong question if you're asking how can I bring spirituality more into my life? Rather, you should ask the question, How can I make my life more into my spiritual practice has little to do with your priority, right? So the application, the energy, the effort, the that the effort is directly connected to joy, because probably you had the experience of being wonderfully engaged, lost in engagement, perhaps in some activity you're somewhat skilled at or and you really, you know, enjoyed. If you're really engaged, applying yourself in a wholehearted way, it tends to bring a certain kind of joy. And that kind of joy varies quite a bit from time to time in situations such as But some kind of delight, perhaps or contentedness, or sense of well being, exuberance, rapture, at times, there's a whole range of the kind of happiness that can happen.

Then very interestingly, in this sequence, the Buddhist tradition suggests that, based on some sense of well being joy, there can arise a healthy kind of tranquility. The tranquility follows on the basis of well being. So we're looking for a sense of well being, as a foundation for further practice. Now, there's plenty of times when we don't feel well, and sense of well being we feel miserable or suffering a lot. And then it's very important not to measure yourself against some standard of you're supposed to feel good and feel joyful, and artificially make yourself that way, but rather have the wisdom of how to bring mindfulness to feeling awful or bad or depressed or whatever and to hold that non judge Mental away in a useful way, and not expect that it should be any different. But this is what it is. Now, this is the process. This is what I'm called on to pay attention to now. But there are times then when that shifts, and there's a sense of well being that arises. And knowing that we can cultivate that there's appropriate and let that arise, can be very helpful. Because there are times we can influence little bit, the arising of well being within us, there's only so much you can do. But there's things you can do to help that. I mean, very simple things. I mean, this example I give a lot when I lived in San Francisco and come down, come down to Palo Alto, I would drive on to at random one on one. Because very clear to me, I would feel better when I arrived. Going down that beautiful, you know, you know, very small thing that I could do. There are things that we can do that can you know and if you know that sense, having sense of well being is important for your spiritual life, then maybe you're more interested to kind of support them. More often in your life to make it happen more often. So a sense of well being leads to tranquility, a sense of calmness and serenity or peacefulness. Sometimes it can be understood as not being in conflict with oneself anymore in conflict with the world. I like it. I like the idea that mindfulness is a practice of non violence, to have a non violent relationship to whatever rises in the moment, as part of the spirit of mindfulness, you have some ugly thought. And the idea is to have a non violent, non violent awareness of that ugly thought. I like it. I like the word non violent these days better than acceptance, which is kind of, you know, used a lot in our tradition. I talked a lot about it. As we tried to develop accepting awareness accept whatever is arising, but it's just a little bit kind of complacency or condoning of experience, but be non violent to it means not to be in conflict with it what arises, but you might still have discernment that But you know various ways about it. So based on your sense of well being, and then tranquility, it's a lot easier to develop concentration, to have a focus. The word for concentration is Samadhi. And Samadhi means it's actually probably miss translated as concentration, because Samadhi is a state rather than a 1.1 pointedness. So based on their sense of tranquility, or not being in conflict with oneself in the world, it's a lot easier than to collect the mind to collect their body in mind. So the whole recomposed on what we're focusing on. So all of us is is focused and we're not fragmented, don't have the various centrifugal forces taking us away. We're not trying to pay attention to the breath. And we have this conflict with at work that keeps pulling us away or keeps pulling us away or some strong desire or some strong aversion that arises. But because we must have some level of tranquility, it's a lot easier for the mind to get settled and then get relief. focused, only concentrating. Having the mind concentrated and able to see what's going on more deeply in the moment is in a fantastic aid to having the mind be balanced. We have the expression in English, you know, my, you know, someone has an imbalanced mind, or, you know, I lost my balance, you know, you know, I was right on the edge of, you know, managing a situation and I just lost my balance because, you know, somebody somebody said something to me or the computer

crashed one more time. And so, but they have a balanced mind, right equanimous mind, then is the seventh of the factors of awakening. And it's a lot easier to have a balanced mind if the mind is collected and composed. The mind is concentrated in mindfulness in mindful with a composed concentrated mind, the mind is less likely to react for against what the experiences, which is one of the definitions of equity equanimity, we're not for or against what's going on. We just allow What's there to be there, as As we allow things to be there as it as, as they are, this seems to be this is also one of the optimal conditions for helping the mind to finally relax. Not just on the surface of the mind, but deep at the very core of the mind, the deepest place where the mind holds on to identity to being somebody to holding on to whatever it holds on to at the core, in order to let that mind really relax deeply. At its core, the mind needs to be deeply settled, composed economists at peace. And then finally the mind could have the trust or the FE or the wisdom or the insight to see what's at the root of our suffering. And then kind of relax there also. And that's a fantastic thing to feel the very roots of the mind. Let go Relax. So the seven factors of awakening are very important in the tradition of Buddhism. They're considered by some people to be the sap that runs through the tree of Buddhism. The tree has made different branches, different schools of Buddhism, different traditions. But in all those different branches, the same SAP runs through all of them. And it's the factors of awakening. Because we all share the qualities that get developed through any practice that we do in a deep, sincere way. So that's the penultimate exercise in the Satipatthana Sutta. Next week, we'll do the last exercise, which is the climax, the most difficult one to understand, but the most profound, also the easiest one to understand. And if you don't understand it, any other way, the most superficial one it's up to you. But that's for next week. So maybe the seven factors of awakening. Follow you along this next week in May you think about them and reflect on them for the week. Make them your top your seven days until next Monday, right? Maybe each day, take one of them. Does anyone need a refresher which seven there? Let's do them all together. Then we'll then we'll go home. Mindfulness investigations effort, toy, tranquility, concentration. Go for it.