

# 2016-01-25 Four Foundations of Mindfulness

## Mindfulness of Body

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### SPEAKERS

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to particular set of instructions from particular discourse of the Buddha, which is considered to be the foundational discourse for our particular meditation tradition. And it's a way of establishing or developing awareness, and to the point where it helps us become free becomes a certain kind of spiritual liberation, liberation of the heart. And the text is made up of 13 exercises, all towards this idea, developing awareness, attention, mindfulness. And they these 13 exercises can be understood as a progressive path of going more deeply, using a metaphor more deeply into ourselves into the world of awareness, into what really kind of makes us operate, the underlying operating system, or the depth of, of the heart, where things are really kind of really important about what happens there and what we do and how we respond and how we live our lives. And it starts the text. The first exercise, which I talked about last week, is a simple meditation practice on mindfulness of breathing. And it's relatively simple. And that's simplicity is one of the hallmarks of this practice. In fact, it was a one of the early teachers in our particular tradition, it was an Indian man named Munindrajī. And he was famous for saying that if it's not simple, it's not Vipassana. And so even though it's 13, different exercises, and it's possible to explain practice in Buddhism, and increasingly complex ways, the actual practice is meant to be very simple, just to be aware, to be aware of what's happening as it's happening, doesn't require analysis, it doesn't require detailed teachings to hold it up. Everything that you need to learn, can be learned by just paying careful attention to what's happening here. And now simple attention. And so it begins with a simple meditation practice, that you would sit down and establish yourself here in the present moment, which is probably the most one of the more challenging things to do. To establish yourself here in the present moment. The idea is simple. But to somehow be able to put aside the distracted mind, mind that's caught up in preoccupations, and really be rooted here be rooted in the present moment of your whole being your body, your mind, centered here, established here, so that your mind's not wandering off or preoccupied. But you feel like there's a stability here. So it says you begin by establishing yourself here. And then to help you that process, then there's instructions of becoming aware of your breathing, it's a remarkable thing to be aware of your breath, the more you can be aware of each breath, one number at that to the other, the less Your mind is going to be invested in your thoughts and your preoccupations and your feelings and what's going on in the world. And to stop that very expensive investment, which has usually poor returns is part of the task of breath meditation, you kind of come back, just be here, just be in the present moment, come back to this very simple thing. And one of the most important forms of wealth that all of us have is the ability, our ability to direct our attention someplace to pay, give attention to something and, and you'll get much better returns on your investment. If you invest your attention into your breathing, then you're invested into fantasy and arguments and repeating conversations and planning for the future and justifying who's right, you're right, right. All these things so just very simple. Come back to the to the breathing. And one of the

reasons why there's such a good return on the investment of the effort and time to do so is that it's a wonderful way to get out of your own way.

And if you have too many cooks in the kitchen that messes up the dinner, they say if there's too many cooks in your mind, it messes up the mind. If you have too much going on too many preoccupations too much worry too much resentment, too much fear too much anxiety, all these things that go on whirled around and And then if we've constantly wanting, wanting things and not wanting things, wanting things to be different than they are wanting to keep what's here as when they start slipping away, constantly involved in kind of manipulating working the system trying to make it, you know, work for us, then we're not, we haven't left things alone, we're not leaving ourselves alone. And it's a hard lesson to learn that the inner system, our mind, our hearts, our bodies, have a capacity to reach, come to harmony, to come come equilibrium, to come to balance, to come to healing, to come to release and freedom. During to remarkable degree, if we get out of our own way, if we're not constantly involved in making and doing and trying to make things happen. And so one of the ways to leave ourselves alone and not kind of be kind of mucking up the water, is to just come back to the breathing. And every time the mind wants to do something, you come back to the breathing, come back to the breathing. And get familiar with the breathing, develop your awareness with the breath. And then as that meditation practice goes along, then the idea as I said last week, they start becoming aware of your lived experience of your body. Keep breathing, to start, become aware of what's happening in your body, kind of wake up a certain kind of awareness in your body, what's happening in your chest, what's happening in your, in your belly, in your stomach, what's happening in your face, your head, and your arms and legs, and what are the sensations? What are the attentions? What are the joys, what are the pleasures that come in the body as you sit here, maybe tuning into some of the pleasure that's here. And then the instructions are that you sit, centering yourself in the present, be with your breathing, feel yourself what's happening in your body, and then relax the body, relax the holding attention that might that be there. And a very important part of meditation is the ability to begin relaxing, letting go to become calmer. So that's a basic simple meditation practice that's offered in the text. And in a way, it's the own, it could be seen as the only instruction which is specifically for meditation. All the rest of the instructions may or may not pertain to meditation, but can equally pertain to daily life, and, and how we live our lives. And in fact, the second set of instructions in the text is about what we do in our daily life more, it's much more, I think, and I'll read it for you for an image for you in a moment what the instruction is. And you'll see that how simple this mindfulness practice can be. And how simple the instructions are, it's almost so simple, that, you know, maybe we'll won't feel it's important at all, why bother doing this, this is so obvious and so nothing. And on the but sometimes the simplest exercises of practices, simplest ways of showing up waking up being here are the ones that are most effective for helping us not be distracted, not caught up in their world around us. Some of us, maybe pride ourselves of being very sophisticated beings. And so we have a lot of important things to think about and figure out and, and to do something so rudimentary, what I'm going to read to you just might not you know, the up to your Stanford PhD or something. And so, see here, here, so, this is the, so come, maybe think of this coming out of meditation also. So how do you bring continue the attentiveness, the centeredness, the calm of meditation, into your daily life.

So here, when walking, one understands, I am walking, when standing when understands, I am standing, when sitting when understand I am sitting when lying down when understands I am lying down and you and want to understand accordingly However, once body is disposed when everyone's body is positioned, when understands and pretty basic stuff, you know, just a few sittings. I think all of you currently are sitting. And so if you just could recognize take a moment to recognize you're sitting, you've succeeded in being mindful for a moment. Now in some situations in life, being paying attention to what's going on with your posture is really helpful. You know, the, we have this wonderful expression in English about posturing, they were posturing he was posturing or something, it you know, it's means

you kind of position yourself socially in relationship to other people. But it's using this word that's off you most commonly used in reference to physical posture. Because often, we posture ourselves socially with how we hold ourselves up, we puff our chest up, we sit up straight, we take a power pose, we do something. And so a lot gets expressed in our postures. And the more you can be aware of that, some of this details of your posture, the more you get information about how you are emotionally, how you are intentionally what you want, I saw that in my first retreat in Thailand. And then my first retreat, but one of one of my early retreats in Thailand, where the emphasis was a lot on being present for your body, being mindful of the body. And so I was, you know, practicing somewhat, and, but then it would be, the bell would ring for lunch. And we didn't eat much in the monastery. So lunch was a major attraction. And but the place for lunch was, you know, the other side of this very large monastery through the woods, we had to go and it was kind of a monastery in the forest and had to go through. And I started because I was paying more attention to my body than I usually do. I noticed that, that as I walked to lunch, I was always in front of myself. I, you know, it was like, I was like, one foot in two feet in front of me, my center of gravity, my attention, someone else out there, no, sorry, noticing that was leaning, you know, it was like ahead of myself. And because I was so focused on where I was going to get for this very important thing, the lunch. And then I would, I would bring my attention back, straighten up a little bit, and kind of bring my kind of psychic energy or attention here in this body. And that felt better. But then after some steps, I noticed I was again, going for that lunch and come back. So it was an indication of how I was involved was relatively innocent, maybe to be interested in lunch. But you know, I kind of lost myself in that my posture revealed that to me how I did, or I've been angry at people and kind of leaned forward a lot. And only because I noticed my posture that I finally noticed that I was angry, you think that would, you know, I would have noticed the anger first. But the anger itself was so compelling. I was right, and they were wrong. And we had to kind of duke it out. But when I noticed my posture, then I noticed again, that was contracted and tight in a way was very uncomfortable. And only then that I really understand that I was being angry. So there's a lot of luck, luck can be revealed, pay attention to your posture. I've told this story a few times, but haven't it hasn't happened for some 20 years. But there was a time when happened to series of different people, where we'd be standing facing each other, are we initially you know, stand there and face them. And maybe I'm an intimidating person. But anyway, I like to kind of face people when I talk to them usually. And the person would turn around 90 degrees to me kind of look kind of like to the side like this. And I thought that was kind of I didn't think about it much at first, except I wanted to face them. So I can't turn around and went around, you know, to be there. And then they would do it again. And literally I walked 103 60 degrees all the way around them. And what was I think more remarkable than that was I don't think they had a clue. They were not aware they were so unconscious about what they're doing with their body and their relationship to me. And because people have very different attitudes about, you know, different cultures, different ways of, of eye contact of how to face people, body distance between people. And so maybe we had very different kind of parameters for that are ways of being, but things were expressed, you know, and so to understand people to understand yourself by their posture, I think is a great thing. But in terms of the simplicity of it of it all. There's something very simple about knowing what that when you're standing you're standing.

And, you know, it seems like it's such a simple thing to know that you can kind of check that off quickly and go on to more important things, you know, yeah, and I'm standing you know, what's the big deal. But I think as a serious exercise for developing a heightened sense of awareness, a heightened connection to hear in the present moment. It's not a matter of just checking off the mindfulness checkbox. It's a matter of have really knowing repeatedly and fully, yes, here I am. And it's so simple. I'm standing, I'm sitting, I'm walking. This is where this is where I am now. And it's a way of grounding oneself, it's a way of interrupting the usual flow maybe, of distracted thinking, and waking up being here. And I found that a tremendous benefit from having the ability not to be lost in my thoughts, not to

be caught up not have my thinking kind of run the show. And something as simple as just knowing where you're standing and knowing that you're sitting is as effective because it's so simple. I've met people who say that mindfulness is too difficult for them. I'm standing. Is it difficult to realize you're standing, I'm sitting, it's not really difficult. It's meant to be simple. And this kind of this little exercise here represents how simple it can be. Here, I'm standing and walking, sitting. It also speaks to the idea that we can bring the practice into our daily life, it's not just about sitting in meditation. But wherever we are, we can just tune in. No, we're here to ground ourselves in the present moment. And the simple acts of just standing, sitting walking. Then the third exercise continues in this theme about being mindful in our daily life. And this is a little bit more involved, because our life activities a little bit more complicated at times. And but here the verb is to clearly comprehend to clearly recognize a clearly know what's happening, not just even, not just to kind of know something general like I'm standing, but to recognize the activity we're doing to really kind of be present in a fuller way to what's happening. And this is the description.

So a person who practices is a person who acts in full awareness, when walking forward, and coming back, walking forward and backwards. When acts in full awareness, when looking ahead and looking away, when acts in full awareness when flexing and extending one's limbs. When x in full awareness when, when when, when wears one's puts on one's clothes, whereas when clothes and carry here it's for monks and nuns, and one carries one's robe and bowl. When it acts in full awareness when eating, drinking, consuming food, and tasting, when acts in full awareness when defecating and urinating, when acts in full awareness when walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep, waking up, talking, and keeping silent. Probably if the Buddha was alive today, he would say sauce, if you add a few things like full awareness, when you're driving, or full awareness, when you're using your phone, you know, some of the common activities we do. And here it's engaging in the world and sit very simple activities that we all do. And, but to do with not just with a general awareness as I'm doing these things, but the it's a little heightened, where there's a clear recognition, a clear understanding, clear comprehension, that this is when really, I'm doing this now. And the one of the ways this was trained in us when I was in Burma was that we would do things in the monastery, not context slowly. And so when you were going to open a door, you would actually be so attentive, that you would know that you're lifting your hand up and touching the door, he would clearly know that and it wasn't a subconscious act, it wasn't a kind of, you know, you know, automatic pilot act to reach out and hold the door and, you know, open the door. It was you know, because you have important things to do the door is just an obstacle, right? So just get out of the way as quickly as you can and move on to important things. But the opening of the door, became the full meditation, practice those few instances, and you would just really feel and be present for that for that opening the door. And, and, and as if there's no hurry, you're not trying to finish it. You're not trying to get through the door. At that moment. You're only opening a door and you're fully present for that experience knowing what that is. Again, this is a way of interrupting the thoughts streams of mind, which are often keeping us distracted from ourselves, we're not really present and right mind is rushing off, you might have important things to think about and do. And it might seem like it's a hindrance to stop and really be present for the door. But the ability to develop a heightened sense of really being alive and present, and living kind of awareness and presence, that can take in so much more of the information can take in so much more of the living situation we're in. I think everyone benefits, then if we're kind of living on automatic pilot, and most of the things we do, and we're, you know, thinking about something abstract or something distinct, or what we want or something. So, again, mindfulness is not meant to be so difficult. It's, it can be practiced and cultivated in the ordinary daily detail activities of everyday life. And it's very interesting to look at one of the fascinating things to pay attention to, is all the thoughts and ideas that you have, that these simple exercises are not enough, or there are more important things to do. Or it can't be that simple. There has to be more going on or something. And part of the value of being mindful for very simple things is they can sometimes highlight to us all the

centrifugal forces that take us away from that. So it might be it might be that we notice how much we're distracted, how much we're thinking about, you know, particular themes. And so it's a reference point to catch ourselves. Because if we don't have a reference point to notice what's going on. It's I think it's very easy for people to spend hours, involved in thought without really understanding what's going on. When we people do this on retreat, where people are practicing mindfulness throughout the day, for some people, it's only then that they see how repetitive certain thoughts and emotions are. Because in daily life, somehow, we're not tracking it that well.

And, and it's not uncommon for people to come to talk to a teacher and say, I had no idea how pervasive I fear is, or there's always fear there in the background, always these kind of ideas, I had no idea. Now I see it's always there. But, but because of the kind of heightened attention to what's going on, we see this much more clearly.

So the simple act of knowing what we're doing when we're doing it in the simple activities of daily life, builds some kind of momentum builds a kind of habit of being present, and hopefully, in appreciation of being of being present. And in order to do that, in order to really get the benefit or really feel appreciation. So you want to do it. It's not just a duty and exercise by itself. One of the little tricks of the trade and one of the things that's very useful, is to spend some time when you're in the present moment doing this simple things, to notice the pleasure of it. Notice the enjoyment of it. And so it might be sound silly, maybe, but you're opening the door, and you feel the pleasure of the smoothness, coolness or the whatever of the handle of the door. Or you've or you open the door, and you feel, you know that pleasantness of looking through the door and seeing the colors of the room you're walking into. Or more valuable is that there's a lot of pleasure in our bodies that we often don't pay attention to. Sometimes we prioritize what's uncomfortable in our lives, sometimes we just simply not giving much attention to our body at all. But if you can use this present moment awareness, when you're standing, knows you're standing and as you're standing there, is there anything that's pleasant in this standing, even if there's some pain and or aching involved, is there something pleasant and enjoyable by just being there is there's when you're eating Is there something enjoyable about the food drinking something enjoyable about it, because if you can start including the enjoyment or the pleasure of it, it isn't just that hedonistic, but it makes it more interesting for the mind to be in the present moment. But more important, there's a certain kind of pleasure that is not, it's not exactly sensual pleasure that comes from the senses being stimulated. But there's a certain kind of deeper and more satisfying pleasure, that is the pleasure of vitality, or just kind of life where the nerves firing or just kind of vitality of being present here, that, that might be very subtle, initially, but the joy or the delight, of being just kind of just letting the energies of the body kind, of course through them, and be here and kind of the lightness to be here and, and move through us. And kind of tune into that and let it grow and develop is a wonderful antidote to the way we prioritize our, our thoughts or judgments or worries, or our self pity or fears, and all these other things where the mind tends to go. And, but is there pleasure in this simple actions that we do. So the mindfulness in the simple activities of daily life and to do it, often, whenever you have the opportunity, maybe there may be you, you would benefit from doing it more often. You know, it could be that you're standing in line, and maybe in the market waiting for the, for the checkout counter to be to be free. Or maybe any kind of situation, we have to wait. You could wait. That's fine. But a waiting is a lost opportunity. Because waiting, what is waiting, you know, waiting as a router is a pretty abstract idea. It means your mind is expecting something in the future. And it's not happening now. And you're evaluating it, you have to be patient, or you have to wait. And they're off, all you're doing is a waiting, I mean, what is like nothing. I think waiting is basically a waste of time. You know, I think I hope you have much better things to do than to wait. I mean, you could just sit, you can, you know, close your eyes and meditate. And when things finally start so it's you know, then they'll tell you, you know, or you know, you can you can do it, but don't just sit there and wait, meditate. Or if you're

standing in the grocery checkout line, don't wait to get to the front. In don't crowd the person in front of you. Just stand there and do standing meditation. Look, I know I'm standing. This is ridiculous.

I'm a sophisticated person, just know I'm standing. But you're really no you're standing really be in the standing. See the pleasure standing see the vitality really gets really drop in to just fully there. And then you know, if the people around you say, hey, it's your turn. No, thank you, and then you go up and you didn't wait. Waiting is uh, you know, if you spent too much you can you can kind of conventionally wait, just say I'm waiting and then meditate or do something but, but if you're caught up in waiting, you're, you know, playing with your fingers, tapping your fingers and looking at your watch and you know, you're just wasting your time. No waiting. So there could be in simple moments of the day, throughout the day, there's gonna be lots of opportunities to drop in and be present for yourself in a simple, very ordinary way. And my hope that over time, you'll come to really appreciate the power of that the value of that, how it really supports a, a much more greater sense of well being greater wisdom, greater self understanding, greater ease as we go through our lives. And it starts with these simple things. Walking, standing, sitting, lying down your posture, moving your arm forward, bending it, drinking, eating, defecating, urinating, there's pleasures there too. So those are the styles. Now we've covered the first three exercises. And one of the purposes of all these exercise is to establish Sati Sati is the word for awareness, to develop it and heighten it, so that your awareness becomes a living presence in your life, that awareness becomes something that is really receives or holds or opens to what is going on for us in our lives. Awareness is one of the great things. And the simple exercises a way to heighten that awareness and develop it. So it's probably enough for me for this evening. So you have any questions or comments you'd like to make any of this? Or testimonials, about how the simple act of mindfulness can be helpful.

Turn down the wrong one and how it works?

Is a Real simple question. It's easy to talk about this when you feel okay.

Yeah, it's really easy to talk by that's why my job is easy. It's doing it which is, you know, when you have the flu, yeah, you know, a lot of pain. Yeah. You're in Er, yeah, you're worried about what are you gonna make it whatever your kids? Yeah. Then, how do you deal with all this make it?

Well, it helps a lot. If you're fully nebular. If you've learned if you've trained yourself, to know yourself, well, you're familiar with the process and develop skill and how to be present for what's happening, then you can learn to be present for the worry in such a way the worry doesn't have the upper hand.

Like that's a lot harder.

Because right now it's said, again, it's easy to say that it's a lot harder,

yes, but it takes a while. That's why we have that doing this over and over again, the mindfulness in the practice. If you wait to practice, until you have a crisis, you're not going to have much support for yourself.

Practicing and peace is practicing under a lot of tension.

Few way to be mindful. And when there's a big crisis, then you might have had the strength of mind to be present, you might understand how you react to challenges, you might not understand how not to buy into the reactions, how to be swept away by them. And so practicing in times when pre crisis and

developing self understanding that will support you through it is really important. That address your concern are not quite to the point. It's my

question is, let's assume you do all that practice. Yeah. And when it around here, you are in pretty good touch. Does that mean it's directly useful in the other kinds of practice won't help you feel better when you're in a crisis? Seems like there's crisis management that's different than just daily management. Hmm.

I think it's just a variation of the same. I think that it's more any more intense. But it's the same mind it's the same kind of reaction. So we have it just more stronger. And so the attachment the drive, the concerns are much more powerful, the emotions can be more powerful. And but I think it's all the human human condition is not that much different. Though, sometimes.

Sometimes, what I've seen is that some people when there's crisis, maybe because adrenaline goes or because there's so much more important that their mindfulness gets my attention becomes much more acute. And it supports them much more, they can never have imagined how much they learned how much they're present, how much they're able to step beyond themselves, because they have developed a little bit of sense of what it takes, and then all gets channeled in in a very powerful way and they can stay very present in the middle of it. We had a I'm teaching a retreat right now. And we had a person at the retreat in the middle of one of the sittings faked and fell over and looked like maybe it was having a seizure. And so there were luckily we had some Doctors and nurses there and we attended to him and, and he went to the hospital get checked out and he's fine. But later we talked about the retreatants. And some of them been talked about what a remarkable experience it was for them to stay calm and economists in the middle of this crisis, because they knew they couldn't do anything about it. It wasn't their job, there were 40 people there, right. And they were people taking care of them. So we had a Roman, so people that hadn't had that experience of staying calm and settled in their life. And in the middle of a crisis, usually they were running around and try and take care of it. And that was, you know, a real learning experience, because if everyone had run around would have had a real crisis. And so I think I, you know, I would say that this practice that we're doing here, was designed to address some of the biggest challenges in our life. This is not meant just to be stress reduction. This is meant to deal with issues like sickness, old age and death, real, real, real, real important issues. But you can't expect it to do too much for you. If you haven't trained and developed the capacity used to wait for the crisis, it's not going to work.

One more here.

So one of the things you mentioned was

the energy being more free, when you're more aware of the breath, or many are more aware than the mind is not taking into the energy. So I was just wanting to understand a little bit more from you on what you feel the relationship is between the mind the body, the awareness, and the breath, like all these, like how do they kind of

impact each ally, awareness, body and breath, we don't have to separate them from each other. They're also they're all a hole that work together. And so when they're harmonized when they work together, or say differently, that when when the mind creates a very sharp separation, or holds on to some things more than other things, then it creates, then there is not a flow between them that are working harmoniously together. And so if we're preoccupied with our thoughts, then we're kind of locked, sometimes locked in their thoughts. And there's less attention and less connection to our body and our

breath. If we're locked into parts of our body, say we're having some kind of pain, and we're really worried about if we occupied it, we can lock in, and then in that lockness, in that kind of contract, contraction around it, there's not a lot of movement or, or flow of energy, or blood or nervous, I don't know what goes on in there, and where they're all kind of works together. But I think the psychophysical being as a whole. And as we begin to relax and not create boundaries, or have an awareness, which is open to it all, then it all can kind of flow. See, awareness is a cultivation of awareness is a phenomenal thing. Because it's kind of like making space, or tying together bringing together unifying all the different parts of our being. So they're operating together in harmony. And in fact, one of the words for one of the kind of understandings of concentration, concentrated awareness is a unified awareness. And the idea of being unified. So our thoughts, our emotions, our body sensations, our intentions, our feelings, you know, all these things that we have, are working together, rather than cross purposes to each other or fragmented from each other is one of the things that can happen when we have the awareness that holds it all. And has space for it. I don't know what a good analogy would be in ordinary life. But what comes to mind at the moment, is a good example. But back when my my son was in preschool it was remarkable to watch these great, wonderful teachers. They were like my heroes, and great, great profession, preschool people under appreciated, I think, how important they are. And but sometimes I'd be there in the classroom, and it would be all chaos. You know, kids are running around doing all kinds of stuff. And then, but something different had to happen. So sometimes I watch the teacher standing right in the middle of the room, upright. And then I just talk very, very softly so you've no one could really hear. And then you'd watch the kids. Notice and get curious and All the kids would start settling down and eventually sat down and face and look towards the teacher. They all got unified. There's something about the teacher holding the presence hope being centered, that and kind of maybe having a span of all everyone that brought everyone together into harmony and peace. So same thing with our whole being. And so the mindfulness is a little bit like that. Mindfulness is the quiet whisper that says here, let's pay attention to what's here. And then all the things that then show themselves to us at our whole, all the different aspects of our life, have a chance to show themselves and wake up and be present. And then they have a chance to come into harmony. When you're standing know you're standing, and then all this other stuff can happen. Okay, so our plan is to continue this series next week. And actually next week, there's more about the body and then going deeper into the body and our experience. So I hope that this is something you find useful. Thank you.