

Mindfulness - a Key to Happiness-JBC London2015-Glen Svensson

So, Good evening everyone and welcome to *Jamyang* and welcome to this evening's talk titled: Mindfulness a Key to Happiness. So, again, we've got 90 minutes this evening to look at this topic and we're going to go through a few points.

First, we're going to look at defining what do we mean by happiness, then we're going to define mindfulness, because there's some confusion about that word as well. And then we're going to look at how mindfulness is a key to happiness. And then we're going to look at how to cultivate mindfulness, to be able to strive for happiness. So, and then time for some question-answer at the end, as well. So these are some of the points will be going through.

So let's start by looking at this word: "happiness". What do we mean by happiness? In fact, we can talk about two types of happiness. The first is often called 'temporal happiness'. What we're talking about here, of course, is our experiences of pleasure. So this is often what we identify as happiness, is our pleasurable experiences. So that's one type of happiness. And the second type of happiness is what's called 'genuine happiness'.

The difference between these two is: the first one 'temporal happiness' is a what's called a 'stimulus based happiness', meaning: we have some sort of stimulus, and then we have some pleasurable 'happiness-experience'. That's why it's called 'temporal' happiness. Whereas, 'genuine happiness' is a type of happiness that's not stimulus based. It's a happiness that does not require any particular stimulus to be present.

So, this one - often what we identify as happiness - is: simply we want more and more pleasurable experiences. Whereas the one that particularly we focus on in a Buddhist context is the second one, this state of 'genuine happiness'. And this is a state of happiness or well-being, that does not require any particular stimulus to be present for us to experience that. To strive for this state of genuine happiness, there are three elements that we need to cultivate. And they are called: the 'three higher trainings'.

So, the first is: ethics - effectively, avoiding harming others a non-harmful, ethical lifestyle. On that basis, the second core element of the training is: 'concentration' - simply cultivating a calm, clear focused mind. And then on that basis, the third element is the 'wisdom practice'. This wisdom practice is to come to realise the nature of reality. Because from a Buddhist perspective, the reason, (the) underlying source of our suffering is our distorted view of reality. So, if we want to overcome our suffering and find this state of genuine happiness, we need to overcome our distorted view of reality, through the wisdom practice. So, these are the three core elements of practice that we need to engage in, to strive for genuine happiness.

So these are the two types of happiness that we're going to be looking at, this evening. So, we're going to look at how mindfulness is a key to both of these. That if we want to have either temporal or genuine happiness, then mindfulness is a key element striving for both of those types of happiness. And so that's what we're going to be looking at, this evening. So, before we look at that, how it's a key to happiness, we need to of course, define what we mean by the word "mindfulness".

Mindfulness - is a very popular term these days. But how mindfulness is defined in a lot of modern day traditions, is a little bit different than how it was originally defined within Buddhism. The word 'mindfulness' is coming from the original Sanskrit word 'Smṛti', or the Pali word 'Sati'. And both of these words literally mean: "to remember". So, mindfulness is: 'remembering'. So, how the word "mindfulness" is defined in Buddhism, we can go to an early Indian scholar, Buddhagosa from about the fifth century, and he defines mindfulness, he says: "Mindfulness has the characteristic of remembering, its function is not to forget, it is manifested as guarding".

And so in simple language then, mindfulness is our faculty, is the faculty of sustaining voluntary attention continuously on an object, without forgetfulness or distraction. So it's our ability to hold or focus on an object, without becoming distracted. So, this is mindfulness how it's originally defined within Buddhism, is: 'remembering the object'. Whereas in a lot of modern day traditions, it's defined a little bit differently. Often you'll hear mindfulness being defined nowadays, as: "a non judgmental awareness of whatever is arising in the present moment". That's often how it's described. Of course, there's nothing wrong with that. But this is not really how it's originally defined. So this in the modern tradition is really talking about applying mindfulness in that way.

Whereas mindfulness originally is defined simply as: 'remembering the object', the 'ability to hold the object without becoming distracted'. And also, unfortunately, in some of the modern day definitions of the word, we see this: 'non-judgmental awareness of whatever is arising'. Again, it's very good to be non-judgmental of whatever is arising. But unfortunately, people misunderstand what that means. And they interpret or they think 'non-judgmental' means: 'don't evaluate anything, accept everything'. This is a disaster. This is not mindfulness. So, simply accepting everything and not evaluating whether something's beneficial or harmful is not mindfulness. And that's not the intended meaning of 'non-judgmental'. So we need to keep that very clear in our mind.

Now, here in our talk this evening, the title is: Mindfulness, "a" key to happiness, not "the" key to happiness. Because, again, often what we find these days is, that mindfulness is taken out of context and as giving us the whole solution. If we just develop mindfulness, everything will be fine. From a Buddhist perspective that's not really going to work. Because we need to integrate mindfulness, we need to have a framework, particularly if we're talking about cultivating genuine happiness. So here, if we want to strive for genuine happiness, we need to integrate, we need to have this framework of three areas of practice. So we definitely need an ethical basis. The concentration practice is where we're actually cultivating, developing mindfulness. And then we apply that mindfulness in the wisdom practice. And also, together with the wisdom practice we often have the other wing of practice: the 'compassion wing'.

So if we want mindfulness to be a key to happiness, we need to have an integrated approach. If we just simply strip out mindfulness, and use mindfulness on its own, we're not going to be able to have...., is not going to be a key to genuine happiness. And what will happen is, that in a lot of the modern traditions is, mindfulness seems to be used as a way of trying to get more pleasure. But then, of course, we're not fixing up our elements of our life, our worldview and all these things.

And actually what happens then is, that mindfulness simply becomes a way of feeding our neurotic habits, feeding our greed, feeding our ill-will, feeding our delusion. So, rather than being a key to happiness, it becomes simply a way of getting more ingrained in our current habits. And so we don't really want that, because it's not going to get us anywhere. Also, what we saw, those of you who were here last week, in the talk I talked about a framework. Similar to these, we talked about those four elements of balance. And this was from a more sort of psychology perspective.

But the first aspect was 'motivational balance', meaning: to have healthy aspirations or desires for happiness. So if we don't have this, then of course, we're not going to achieve any meaningful state of happiness.

And then we had the second element: 'attentional balance', which is again, developing our attention skills. So this is where mindfulness is actually cultivated, in this element. But then on this basis, we engage in the other two elements of balance: cognitive, and emotional.

So again, if we want mindfulness to be a key to happiness, we need not just to engage in this practice, but we need to engage in all of these, together. Because if we don't have healthy aspirations or desires for happiness, we're not going to achieve our goal. If we don't have cognitive balance, meaning: if we're not seeing reality as it is, if we're distorting reality, we're not going to achieve happiness. And if we're emotionally unbalanced, of course, we're not going to achieve happiness. So, we need to make sure that we have an integrated approach, then mindfulness can be a key to happiness.

And so we're going to have a look at this evening, how mindfulness is a key to happiness, assuming we have these elements within what we're doing. So, let's have a look now at how mindfulness can be a key to happiness. So we talked about the two types of happiness: temporal happiness and genuine happiness. So, let's see how mindfulness can be useful in striving for the goal of both temporal and genuine happiness. Because, even though - in a Buddhist perspective - the main goal is this state of genuine happiness, that's not at odds with temporal happiness or pleasure. So we're not somehow abandoning pleasure, it's not like a 'choice': "...either I go for pleasure or I go for genuine happiness". Pleasure or temporal happiness is actually the basis for genuine happiness. So we need to be using mindfulness as a key to striving for both. But of course, the longer term goal is the genuine happiness. So let's first see how mindfulness can help us in terms of temporal happiness or pleasure.

Now, of course, in terms of temporal happiness, or pleasure, what - unfortunately - we do is: we often think or believe that these pleasurable experiences are going to fulfil us and satisfy us. So we grasp onto these experiences as the source of happiness. So, we grasp onto the pleasant experiences, hoping that they will give us happiness. And we try to avoid or push away the unpleasant experiences, because we think they're the source of suffering. So actually what happens now is, we tend to be 'stimulus-reaction-machines'. We have a stimulus - if it's pleasant: we grab, if it's unpleasant: we push away.

And that's generally how we tend to operate. If we are in this mode, it leads to a number of problems. The first is: we end up with attachment and aversion. Attachment and craving for pleasant things, aversion for unpleasant things.

And this attachment and aversion often leads to a lot of suffering in our life. And secondly, we also then tend to identify or suppress our thoughts and emotions. So again, we tend to then, if some thought or emotion comes up we tend to identify with it, follow it, get caught up in it. Or if its some sort of unpleasant thought or emotion, we don't know how to deal with it, we try to suppress it.

So, identifying and following our thoughts, emotions and memories or trying to suppress them leads to a whole lot of problems. And we really become the slaves of our mind, we often become tormented and overwhelmed by our thoughts and emotions. So from this, we really end up as being the slaves of our mind, and (it) also induces a lot of unnecessary suffering. And also, through this attachment and aversion, we end up engaging in quite inappropriate behaviour, which often leads to a lot of problems and suffering.

So with all of these elements, they come from this 'stimulus-reaction', you know, wanting good things, trying to push away unpleasant things. What we're going to do now is have a look at how - with mindfulness - we can avoid all of these things. We can really help to overcome these elements here, which lead to a lot of unnecessary suffering. So, let's first look at how mindfulness can be a key, in terms of here, overcoming attachment to pleasant stimulus.

So generally, if we have some sort of pleasant stimulus, we identify that with happiness, we try and grab it, we try and hold on to it, we have a lot of craving and attachment. So of course, when we have craving and attachment for pleasant stimulus, what happens is: if we don't get it, we get frustrated. Even if we get what we're craving it never really fully satisfies us, we simply end up craving for more. And often, if we have strong craving for this pleasant stimulus, then we often have a lot of fear and anxiety about not getting enough or losing it and so forth.

And then also what happens, of course, is that if we have strong craving and attachment for something pleasant, unfortunately, that craving and attachment is always looking for something bigger, better and different, bigger-better-different. Which means: if there's something now pleasant that we enjoy and we keep getting it, craving and attachment after some time goes: "Oh, that's boring! Give me something bigger, better and different".

So actually what happens is, not only don't we enjoy pleasant things because we're worried about not getting enough of it and losing it, but after some time, attachment goes: "Wah, that's not interesting anymore, give me something different". So actually, we lose out on pleasurable experiences. So therefore, if we can cultivate mindfulness of pleasant stimulus, what's going to happen is that we are going to simply observe that pleasant experience, without having attachment to it. So, simply observing that pleasant experience, we can overcome attachment or reduce attachment.

We can simply enjoy the experience while we have it, and of course, then we won't have any frustration if we don't get it. And we won't have a lot of worry or anxiety about not getting enough of it. So by simply having mindfulness, being present with our pleasant experiences, we can really reduce our attachment and craving for that pleasant experience. But also, of course, we're going to enjoy pleasures more.

Because, again, if we can simply be present with our pleasant experiences, we won't have that craving and attachment. And we will simply be present and enjoy things more than we do now. And to really highlight that, I've got a very concrete example, which I think I used last week, but I'll mention it again here. And that was some years ago I went on my first long meditation retreat, solitary retreat. I was in Spain, I was on the side of a mountain, beautiful view out, all my meals were provided, very nice conditions. The meals: very healthy, but it tended to be the same menu every week.

So, even if there's some food you enjoy but you keep eating it every week, then usually after some weeks you go: "Oh, not that again!" - even though originally you did enjoy it. My experience was that after about four or five weeks of eating the same food, I thought: "Wow, the cook's really putting a lot more effort into the cooking, its tasting better now than it did at the start." And then a few more weeks went by, and then I realised: "No, it's exactly the same food now as I ate a month or six weeks ago!"

What I realised was actually happening was: because I was cultivating mindfulness, my mind was coming down, my attachment and craving for pleasant stimulus was settling down, I was actually starting to enjoy the food, I started to actually taste the food, not sort of getting agitated about: ".....is this good enough, or am I going to get enough of this?am I going to really enjoy it or not?...." And so actually, I started to enjoy the food more and more.

Not only the food seemed to taste better but everything around me seemed to be getting more beautiful. But again, it wasn't getting more beautiful. What was happening was: I was in a place, it was a beautiful view, but of course if we're in a place with a beautiful view and we're living there day after day, week after week, month after month, after some time we just take it for granted. It's just like ordinary. Because attachment's always going: "Give me something bigger-better-different, bigger-better-different".

If it's the same even if it's beautiful, after some time attachment goes: "That's just ordinary". Whereas my experience was again: same view every day, things got more and more beautiful, or they seemed to. But again, what was happening is: my attachment and craving for pleasant stimulus was settling down and I was actually appreciating the things around me. And even little things, even tiny little things, normally which we don't even notice, I thought: "Wow, that's so beautiful!" And so, that was my experience.

And that's what we can get if we simply cultivate mindfulness. And to be present with pleasant stimulus, we can simply reduce our craving and attachment for them and we can actually enjoy pleasant experiences more than we do now. So, this is how we can use mindfulness in terms of - as a key - for temporal happiness, in terms of simply enjoying pleasant experiences more than we do now. Let's see now, how we can use mindfulness with regard to unpleasant stimulus.

Now of course, when we receive some unpleasant stimulus, we react with aversion. And all that happens is, that when we react with aversion, what we do is: we actually magnify the amount of discomfort we experience. And this was very much highlighted to me in a study that they did recently where they had a medical study, where they had a heat-pad applied to the leg of people and they had an intravenous drip in their arm.

And initially they just had saline solution going in and they asked people to give them a number of how much pain they had, from zero to 100. So, on average it started off as 66, the average pain level of people monitored. And they kept telling them to keep telling them: how much pain. What they did then, after some time, was: they started - without letting them know - introducing painkiller into the drip. But they didn't tell them.

But because of that they started reporting average 46 instead of 66. So, but then what they did was, they told them: they were getting painkiller - so nothing changed. But they (were) told that they were getting painkiller. So they went from 46 to 32. But then here's the... here's the... here's the point here. So it was at 32. They kept giving them painkiller but now they told them: they were going to stop the pain killer and to expect pain. It went back to 64. So, simply having aversion to discomfort there magnified the amount of suffering they experienced. So this was a scientific experiment that they did.

So, if we have some unpleasant stimulus and we have aversion to it, all that's going to happen is: we're going to magnify the amount of suffering we experience. So, what we can do here then, is: with unpleasant stimulus - with mindfulness again - simply be present. If we can be present with mindfulness in the unpleasant experience, we can stop having the aversion.

And if we can do that, then we won't magnify the amount of discomfort we experience. So that's the first step, is: simply - through mindfulness - being present with unpleasant stimulus, we will not magnify the amount of suffering or discomfort we experience. We can practice what's called 'acceptance'. But acceptance, here doesn't mean 'resignation'. Acceptance here simply means: "Currently, I'm experiencing this unpleasant stimulus or unpleasant experience, I can either accept that fact or I can try to deny it or suppress it". But doing that, as we saw, it just magnifies the amount of suffering we experience. So this is the first point we can use here, having mindfulness of unpleasant experiences we won't magnify suffering. But on top of that, what we can do is, use mindfulness as the basis of seeing that unpleasant experience not as a problem, but as an opportunity.

Because actually, I think, if we really look at our lives, the times when we most developed as a person, was not when things were going well. Usually, we just sort of float along and we don't develop. It's only when we're faced with something unpleasant, something challenging, that it forces us to develop. So if we can stop having aversion, then on that basis, we can see this as an opportunity. That we can see this as an opportunity to develop as a person. That we can use this as an opportunity to develop perseverance and patience, for example. And then on top of that, we can use this as an opportunity to then develop empathy with others and compassion for others.

So therefore, we can use unpleasant experiences faced with mindfulness as opportunities for growth in our lives. So, that's how mindfulness can also be helpful in terms of when we're faced with unpleasant experiences. Of course, if we have no mindfulness, we just have aversion, we see it as a problem, we suffer even more than.... we, we induce a lot of unnecessary suffering. So, this is how to use mindfulness with unpleasant stimulus. Now, we'll look at - remember back here, we said that often we identify with our thoughts and emotions, and we end up with a lot of unnecessary suffering because of that. So, let's see how we can have mindfulness of our thoughts and emotions, how that can help.

So again, what we tend to do now is that, one of two things when a thought emotion or memory comes up in our mind. Most often, of course, when a thought emotion or memory comes up in our mind we identify with it, we follow it, we get caught up in our stories. And often we get overwhelmed by our thoughts, emotions, and memories. So we really are the slaves of our mind.

Also, what we tend to do now is: if something unpleasant comes up, an unpleasant thought, emotion or memory arises in our mind, often we don't know how to deal with it. So what do we do? We suppress it, we try and stuff it back down. So both getting caught up - identifying with thoughts and emotions and memories, getting caught up and trying to suppress them - leads to us being really the slaves of our mind. Because when we try to suppress these negative thoughts, emotions and memories, that's not dealing with them.

What happens is, they often manifest as a lot of physical problems in the body. And then we project a lot of this negativity on to the people around us. So therefore, both identifying with our thoughts and emotions, or suppressing them leads to a lot of unnecessary suffering. So here, of course, if we can simply develop mindfulness of thoughts and emotions as they arise, we're going to overcome a lot of this unnecessary suffering. So, the first thing is by simply observing thoughts and emotions and memories as they arise, we won't identify with them.

Because whenever we identify with thoughts and emotions and memories, and we get caught up in them, they often really then just overwhelm us. For example, if we have some anger arising in our mind, often what we do of course is, we identify with that anger. And we unfortunately have that in our language as well. Usually, if some anger is coming up in our mind, what do we say or think? "I am angry". So we've just identified ourselves with anger. So all we've really done here is we've said: "There you go, anger, you're the boss, away you go".

And then of course, we get overwhelmed by our anger, often. Same goes with jealousy, all other mental afflictions, we identify with them and we get overwhelmed. And so of course then, if we identify with these thoughts and emotions, you know: "I am angry", - we often then also say: "I'm an angry person, that's me". So of course, if we identify with these and we say: "I'm an angry person, I'm a hopeless person, I'm a lazy person..." - then of course, we're going to feel stuck, we're probably going to suffer from a lot of low self-esteem and self-hatred. So, these are sorts of things can happen if we don't have mindfulness, and we identify with our thoughts and emotions.

If we develop mindfulness of our thoughts and emotions, then rather than identifying with these things, then we can simply be observing them. So when anger is arising, rather than identifying: "I am angry" - we will be able to observe that anger arising with mindfulness and simply see: "There is some anger arising in my mind". And then anger is an object. Because when we identify with anger or any other thought or emotion, they become the subject: "I am angry, I'm an angry person" - it becomes the subject. Whereas with mindfulness we can observe these mental events as objects, which is what they are, a thought is an object in our mind. And emotion is an object in our mind, a memory is an object in our mind.

So with mindfulness, we can observe them in that correct way, then they can't overwhelm us. Because a thought emotion or memory in itself has no power, it can't do anything to you. It can only do something to you if you give it power. And you give it power by identifying with it or trying to suppress it. So, if you can develop mindfulness and simply observe these thoughts, emotions and memories as they arise in your mind, then they have no power, they can't do anything to harm you. And of course, every time you identify with a thought, emotion or memory, you are feeding it.

So, the habit of this stuff coming up will get stronger and stronger and stronger. Whereas, if we have mindfulness of thoughts, emotions and memories, we're not feeding them. So, the habit of this stuff coming up will get weaker and weaker and weaker, our mind will naturally become quiet, and still. And we're going to instead of being the slaves of our mind, being tormented by our mind, we're going to become the masters of our mind. So, simply by developing mindfulness of things like: thoughts and emotions then we won't identify with it. And as a result, instead of being the slaves of our mind, we're going to be the masters of our mind.

And similarly, we won't need to suppress them. Because now when something unpleasant comes up we often don't know how to deal with it, we don't know what to do with it. So we stuff it back down. But again, suppressing these negative thoughts, emotions and memories is not resolving them, they just often manifest as physical illness. And then we project a lot of negativity on to others. So, simply being mindful of them simply arising and passing, then simply acknowledging them, not identifying with them is a healing, is a great healing. Because we're not suppressing, we're acknowledging these. But because we are mindful of them they have no power over us, we can simply acknowledge them arise and pass and we can let them go.

So, this is very much a healing practice. And unfortunately, in our modern society, there seems to be an epidemic of this suppressing of these negative mental events. Now, unfortunately, of course, there are a number of modern therapies which acknowledge that suppressing thoughts, emotions and memories is harmful, is not good. But unfortunately a lot of these therapies as a way of overcoming that, simply go to the other extreme of expression.

You know, some of the anger, for example 'anger management therapies', say: "Don't suppress your anger"! Of course, we shouldn't, but then the solution is: express your anger! - which is tantamount to identifying and following your anger. So, you've just flipped from one extreme to the other. So from a Buddhist perspective, that's not a solution. Because every time you express the anger, okay, maybe they say: shout to the wall, or hit a pillar or something. Maybe today you're doing that, maybe tomorrow is coming you're smashing someone's face, because you're in the habit of expressing anger. So that's not the solution to suppressing.

We don't need to express to overcome suppression. All we need to do is mindfulness, is simply observe thoughts and emotions arising, we don't need to express them, just observe them arise and pass. And that is overcoming this suppression, without expression. So mindfulness of thoughts and emotions is really a very good tool to become the masters of our mind.

It's a healing practice, to overcome being the slaves and being tormented by our minds. Because our mind can either be our worst enemy or our best friend. Without mindfulness, often it tends to be our worst enemy, tormented by our mind. With mindfulness, it can become our best friend. So this is how mindfulness can help us with things like thoughts, emotions and memories.

Now, the other point now is then: in terms of behaviour. So, we saw that before, with our stimulus reaction habits, we often end up engaging in very inappropriate behaviour, that leads to a lot of problems and suffering for ourselves and people around us. So let's see how mindfulness can help us with our behaviour.

So again, often what we do of course is, now we're not mindful of our behaviour. And because we're the 'stimulus-reaction-machine', when we receive some sort of stimulus, what we tend to do is: automatically react out of habit. And often our habits that we've developed, are from attachment and aversion. So, often our habits are not very constructive. They often are based on a lot of attachment and aversion, anger, jealousy and so forth. So, often our behaviour is quite inappropriate and often quite harmful to ourselves and others. So again, here then, if we develop mindfulness, how that can help us with behaviour of course, is that we can - with mindfulness - we can become ethical.

Meaning: to be mindful of any behaviour that we're about to engage in or that we're currently engaging in. So therefore, with mindfulness we can avoid reacting in a very harmful, inappropriate way. We can notice that if we're about to react, then we can catch ourselves and stop reacting in that very harmful way. But also, of course, we can...., mindfulness here can help us to - like the thoughts and emotions - to not identify with our behaviour.

Because similarly here is: we tend to identify with our behaviour, just like thoughts and emotions. Like, when anger comes up, we often identify with that and go: "I am angry". But likewise in our behaviour, we tend to identify ourselves with our behaviour. For example, if we've done a harmful action, often we simply say: "I am a bad person". Don't we? Don't we often think that way?

You know, if we've done something harmful: "I'm a bad person". So, what we've done there is: we have identified ourselves with our behaviour, our bad behaviour, and we see ourselves as a bad person. So, this is going to lead to a lot of problems for ourselves. Because if we see ourselves as a bad person, then of course, we're going to have low self esteem. Of course, we're going to attack ourselves and think bad about ourselves, because "I'm a bad person". And it's going to be very difficult to have forgiveness or compassion for ourselves.

Because we feel we don't deserve that, "I'm a bad person, I don't deserve forgiveness or compassion". And in fact, we often feel like it's not appropriate to have forgiveness or compassion for a bad person. And if that bad person happens to be ourselves, then we don't have kindness and compassion for ourselves.

And we beat ourselves up, we have low self esteem. So with mindfulness, we can avoid this identifying ourselves with our behaviour. And simply with mindfulness, acknowledge - rather than I am a bad person - with mindfulness to simply acknowledge: "I have done a bad action or harmful behaviour".

So, with mindfulness, we can simply acknowledge that. And if we do like this, then we won't have low self esteem, we can still feel good about ourselves but at the same time address our harmful negative behaviour. So, we can have forgiveness and compassion for ourselves and at the same time address and not accept our own bad behaviour, regret our bad behaviour and look at ways of overcoming it. Whereas if we do this, it almost becomes impossible to do that. And it doesn't feel like it's right. And therefore we suffer also from low self esteem. So here also is the difference between guilt and regret. If we've done something harmful, and we feel guilty, what are we doing? "I'm a bad person".

Guilt is: "I'm a bad person" - we feel guilty. So 'guilt' is coming from a false perspective. This is, in fact there's no such thing as a bad person. A bad person doesn't exist. Because there are two elements here. There's a person and behaviour. What we've done here is we've fused the two together, we've made them one thing. So technically speaking, there's no such thing as a bad person. There's only people who sometimes do bad behaviours. So if we see the correct perspective then we won't have guilt.

If we see: I have done a bad behaviour, then instead of feeling guilty - which simply paralyzes us and doesn't help in any way, it just makes us feel bad. Instead, if we had mindfulness and simply not identify with our behaviour and simply see: "I have done something, a bad behaviour" - then instead of feeling guilty, we can have regret, we can have regret for that negative behaviour and look at ways of overcoming them.

So that's the difference between regret and guilt. Guilt is based on false perspective and doesn't help anything it just makes us feel bad. Regret really comes through mindfulness and not identifying with our negative behaviour. And that is something very healthy. If we have regret from a behaviour, we can look at ways of overcoming our negative behaviour and at same time have forgiveness and compassion for ourselves. So with mindfulness, we're going to avoid a lot of these things.

So if we're mindful of our behaviour, we're going to avoid guilt, low self esteem, self hatred. And instead, we're going to have good self esteem, we're going to have compassion for ourselves and we're going to be addressing our bad behaviour. So, this is what we can do in terms of using mindfulness in terms of our behaviour; is to not identify with it.

Similarly, we can use the same thing with other people, mindfulness and their behaviour. Because again, what we tend to do is - without mindfulness - if someone's behaving in a bad way, what we do is, we automatically react and go: "There's a bad person!". Don't we? Don't we often do that if they're behaving badly? "That's a bad person!" We're doing this. If we do this, we're in trouble. Because in any given situation, we've got two choices: accept or reject. If someone's behaving badly, normally, we reject. But if we do this, and we reject, what do we end up effectively doing? We end up attacking the person. Don't we? We get angry at them, we attack them.

Or if we understand that attacking the person and getting angry is not the right thing to do, the only other option is: accept. So if we don't want to reject, we accept. But if we do this and we accept, what we end up doing? We end up accepting their bad behaviour, which is also not helpful.

So we are stuck in this dilemma of either end up attacking the person or accepting their bad behaviour, if we identify them with their behaviour. So this, of course is a problem, you know, either of those is not helpful. And then of course, if we do this, and it comes to forgiveness and compassion - you know, we often hear we should have forgiveness or compassion for people, it's a good thing - but if we do this, that becomes nearly impossible.

Because to have forgiveness or compassion for a bad person, feels like what we're saying: "What you did is okay, I don't mind". Of course, we should mind! But if we do that, then we're stuck. We can't...., forgiveness and compassion doesn't feel right. But the problem is not that we shouldn't have forgiveness or compassion. The problem is this. So if we stop doing this, if we have mindfulness, and simply see: there is a person who is behaving in a bad way, then we don't have this problem.

Because we can reject the behaviour and accept the person, we can have forgiveness and compassion for the person, but at the same time, not tolerate the negative behaviour and be very forceful about that, not accepting that negative behaviour. So therefore, if we have mindfulness, we have this correct perspective, then forgiveness and compassion becomes easy. And at the same time we will not accept their bad behaviour. And we'll do whatever we can to stop that negative behaviour to help that person to overcome the negative behaviour. So again, if we have mindfulness in terms of behaviour, in others' behaviour, we're going to avoid all of these problems. And it's going to be very constructive in terms of helping people to overcome their negative behaviour. So that's a little bit how mindfulness can help us in terms of behaviour, our own and others behaviour.

So what we're seeing so far, then is that in terms of temporal happiness, then mindfulness is going to be very helpful. Because in terms of pleasant stimulus, we're going to enjoy them more, we're not going to have craving and attachment for them. In terms of unpleasant stimulus, we won't have aversion, we won't magnify the unpleasant discomfort we experience, we will be able to see unpleasant experiences as an opportunity for growth. In terms of our thoughts and emotions, then if we have mindfulness, we won't identify or suppress, in terms of we won't become the slaves of our mind, we won't be tormented by our mind, we will become the masters of our mind. Our mind will become our best friend instead of our worst enemy.

And in terms of our behaviour, if we adopt mindfulness, (we) will become much more ethical, we won't identify with our behaviour and then end up with all sorts of low self esteem, guilt, self hatred issues and also with the same with respect to others. So, we can see how here, simply in terms of temporal happiness, how mindfulness can really be a big help to us. But of course if temporal happiness or pleasure is our goal of happiness, then mindfulness can only take us so far, because we're still stuck in terms of temporal happiness or pleasure, is never going to fulfil us. We're never going to find that state of lasting happiness, we're always going to continue to be subject to unpleasant experiences, and suffering. So, even though mindfulness can be very helpful in this regard, then if that's all we do we're leaving ourselves a little bit short in what mindfulness can deliver to us. So what I'd like to do now is have a look at how mindfulness can be a key to genuine happiness.

So again, here when we talk about 'genuine happiness', we're talking about a state of happiness or 'well being' that does not require any particular stimulus to be present. We're simply in the state of inner well-being, regardless of the stimulus. How to get into that state, of course, we need to understand what is obstructing that state of happiness. And so here from a Buddhist perspective, if we investigate, we will come to see that the source, the underlying source of our suffering and the source of this state of genuine happiness lies within our own mind, not anything out there.

So what we will come to, if we investigate, what (we) will come to see is that it's our mental afflictions, things like anger, jealousy, craving, fear, anxiety, these mental afflictions are really the source of our suffering. And if we eliminate these mental afflictions from our mind, then there's no longer a source of our suffering. And then we can be in that state of genuine happiness, that of not reacting to stimulus, of simply being in a state of inner well-being.

So, how to achieve that state is: - from a Buddhist perspective - our mental afflictions are coming from our distorted view of reality. It's our mistaken way of seeing how we exist and the world around us exists, this is what's leading to our distortions of attachment, aversion, and so forth. In fact, to keep it very simple, it's this sense that there is a 'me here' and an independent objective world 'out there', that is the problem.

Because if we see this subject-object duality - "there's a me here and an independent world there, then automatically we go into this: "I want the good stuff that seems to be there and I don't want the bad stuff or the unpleasant stuff that seems to be there, that seems to be causing suffering". So, from that apparent subject-object duality, we end up with this attachment, aversion and then all of our other mental afflictions: jealousy and craving, they all come out of this initial reaction. So if we are to achieve a state of genuine happiness, we need to overcome this distorted view of reality and thereby overcome all our mental afflictions.

How to do that, were through those three areas of practice I mentioned at the beginning. The first was ethics - is to have an ethical lifestyle. So here, of course, mindfulness is going to be key. Because here with mindfulness - as we saw just now - if we are mindful of our behaviour, we can avoid engaging in harmful behaviour. And also here, if we have mindfulness, we can be mindful of the things we need to avoid in the future and the things we need to engage in. So if we have mindfulness of the harmful actions to avoid and the beneficial actions to engage in, then it's going to make it a lot easier to develop an ethical lifestyle as the basis. So, a key element of developing this ethical lifestyle, of course, will be mindfulness.

And then in the second core area of striving for genuine happiness is: concentration. So actually, this practice is where we actually cultivate mindfulness. This is the practice where we strengthen our faculty of mindfulness. Because in the concentration practice we are cultivating a calm, clear focused mind. Because we need this practice, we need a calm, clear focus mind if we want to come to penetrate the nature of reality. If we want to come to realise how things exist, we need a very calm, clear, focused mind to do that.

Which is the 'wisdom practice', which I'm going to talk about shortly. So, in order for us to realise the nature of reality, we need this very stable, clear mind.

And this is actually where we develop mindfulness directly. Because the main tool in this concentration practice is mindfulness. So in this concentration practice, we are cultivating or developing a calm, clear focused mind. So actually, in this concentration practice there actually are three qualities we're trying to develop.

In this concentration practice we are trying to develop these three qualities of: relaxation, stability, clarity. We are to have a basis of a relaxed mind, we are then trying to stabilise our mind, meaning: to be able to focus on an object without becoming distracted and then to be able to focus on it in a very clear way. So the two main tools we're using in this concentration practice, is: mindfulness and introspection. So here, again, mindfulness is our ability to focus on the object without becoming distracted. So, this is the primary tool. So, what we're doing in this concentration practice, is: we are strengthening our mindfulness. Because now our mindfulness is not very well developed.

Of course, with all of these other - we looked at the previous... in terms of the temporal happiness: to be mindful of our behaviour, to be mindful of our thoughts and emotions, to be mindful of pleasant and unpleasant stimulus. And we try to do that. But the reality is, of course we try to do that, but it doesn't work very well, does it? Because our mindfulness is very poorly developed. So, even though mindfulness is a key element even in terms of our achieving some sort of temporal happiness, if we don't develop mindfulness, then of course, then to actually be mindful of our thoughts and emotions and our behaviour and be mindful of pleasant and unpleasant stimulus - is going to be very difficult.

Because something's going to happen and we're going to react. So it's all well and good to say, "Be mindful of this.....be mindful of pleasant and unpleasant things.....be mindful of your thoughts and emotions.....be mindful of the behaviour". It's all well and good to say that, but when it comes to actually trying to do that - if you've ever tried to do that - it's not easy, is it? Why? Because mindfulness, our mindfulness is very poorly developed. And unfortunately, our modern day society, the way our society is structured, is crucifying our mindfulness.

Our mindfulness is actively being degenerated through all of this bombarding of stimulus in our modern society, we're all over the place. So on top of normal lack of development of mindfulness, unfortunately, our modern society seems to be making our mindfulness even worse. So we tend to be in a very poor level. So therefore, we need to strengthen our mindfulness. How best to strengthen mindfulness in this concentration practice is, to simply focus in meditation on an object. So in this concentration practice, of course, what we're doing is we're focusing on a single object.

And there's any one of many things we can focus on in this practice. Probably the most common one that's recommended is: the breath. And some of you who've done this sort of practice, probably have done this sort of practice, you know, mindfulness of breathing. Focusing on the rising and lowering of the abdomen or focusing at the nostrils here. So any of you who've done any of this mindfulness practice, concentration practice, have probably been introduced to that. This is the most common object to use.

But based on what we have been talking about this evening, another object that can be very helpful to support us in the earlier practices is: to look at our own mind.

So, in this meditation practice instead of observing the sensations of the breath, is simply observe your own mind. Observe your own mind and observe thoughts, emotions, memories as they arise and pass. Because remember, before that's what we're trying to do in daily life, instead of getting caught up in them, instead of being the slaves of our mind and tormented by our mind, in daily life to help us is to simply observe thoughts, emotions, and memories as they arise and pass.

But of course, if we haven't developed that habit in meditation, I think you can try as much as you want in daily life, you're not going to get very far. So here in meditation, with a very relaxed body and hopefully a more stable and clear mind, then we can start to get in the habit of observing thoughts, emotions, and memories as they arise and pass in meditation.

And once we strengthen our mindfulness in meditation, particularly here with focusing on the mind, then in daily life - where we want to observe our thoughts, emotions and memories - we have some ability, because we've been training this in meditation. Our mindfulness is stronger and we already have the habit of observing thoughts, emotions, and memories in meditation, without reacting to them, without identifying, without suppressing. So if we do this practice, this meditation practice - particularly here observing the mind - not only are we strengthening our mindfulness but we're strengthening our habit of not getting caught up in these mental events.

So, I think for many of us in our modern society, we really do tend to be the slaves of our mind. So, if we engage in this concentration practice, observing the mind, not only are we going to strengthen mindfulness - which is essential for everything we do in life - but also helpful in daily life in terms of observing our mind. So therefore, probably one or two, one of these objects is going to be the one that we would use, using this practice that can be most helpful.

So if we can really cultivate, strengthen this mindfulness in daily life and in the meditation - and introspection here is the other tool, introspection. So, mindfulness in his practice is simply holding the object, focusing on the breath or the mind, not becoming distracted. Introspection is 'quality control'. Introspection is monitoring the mindfulness, how are we going. Are we still holding the object? Or are we getting distracted or dull? And then introspection is, to notice when we've become dull or distracted. And if we have, then to reapply mindfulness.

So actually here, the principal tool is mindfulness. And the more we develop, that the better introspection becomes, automatically. So again, the key tool here is mindfulness. And this is where we can best develop, cultivate mindfulness in meditation in this way. Then we can apply this mindfulness in daily life, in terms of the temporal happiness. And also here, we can apply this mindfulness or use this mindfulness in our wisdom practice. The Wisdom practice is to come to realise the nature of reality.

Because now - from a Buddhist perspective - we don't understand the nature of reality, we misunderstand. We believe that there's an independent me and an independent, objective world there. Now here, we need to come to realise how things exist, not just intellectually understand.

Because our behaviour is not driven by our intellectual understanding. If it was, a lot of our problems would be sorted. Our behaviour is driven by our instinctive habits, and our instinctive habits is out of sync with reality.

Like a simple example in this regard, in terms of the wisdom practice, is the idea of 'impermanence'. You know, the idea that things are changing moment by moment. I think we all intellectually accept that, don't we? Science has proven it, we learnt it at school. I think none of us have a problem with the idea that everything is changing moment-by-moment. But, is our behaviour driven by that understanding? No.

Our behaviour is driven by our instinctive habits. And our instinctive habit is telling us: this cup is the same cup that was here yesterday, it'll be the same cup tomorrow. That's how we relate to this cup, as if it's somehow stable. Don't we? Is that how it really exists? No. We know that intellectually. We know intellectually, that there's no stable cup here. We know intellectually that this is changing in every given moment.

But our behaviour is not driven by that intellectual understanding. That's the problem. Our behaviour is driven by our false instinctive habit, the instinctive habit that says: "This is stable, it's more or less the same yesterday, same tomorrow". And from a Buddhist perspective then we are out of sync with reality and because of that we have mental afflictions and suffering. So therefore, in the wisdom practice its not just about getting a correct intellectual understanding of how things exist. What we need to do, is to bring our correct intellectual understanding of reality into experience. We need to realise directly how things exist. To do that, we need a very stable and clear mind, we need concentration, we need mindfulness.

If we don't have very highly developed mindfulness, there is no way that we're going to have stable enough mind to come to realise reality in meditation. So therefore, if we want to achieve genuine happiness, we need to be mindful of ethical behaviour, we need to develop mindfulness, strengthen it in the concentration practice. And then we need to use that strong mindfulness in our wisdom practice. But also, of course in other practices: to really fully develop compassion, we need mindfulness to be able to really realise, to fully develop that. So we can see here that mindfulness is a key element in the wisdom practice. And without that we're not going to find genuine happiness. So this is how mindfulness is also a key element in striving for genuine happiness. On that note, maybe I've said enough, so maybe we've still got 15 minutes left. So maybe if there's some questions anyone would like to raise regarding anything we've covered this evening.

Student: (question inaudible)

Glen: Yeah, see this is the key, again, the key is, you know, we're talking about here being mindful of emotions, and thoughts, and so forth. The problem now is for us, our mindfulness is not very well developed, we don't do any of this concentration practice, our mindfulness is tends to be quite poor. Which means: that when something is coming up - let's take anger as example - we have to be in a sort of fairly, already well developed level before we realise we're angry. And at that stage, we're already out of control. You know, we're already out of control. And so then, what can we do? I mean, pretty well the only thing we can do is: cut from the stimulus that's feeding the anger.

Of course, that's not a solution. But that's sort of the last ditch thing, because we don't want to react from the anger. So, if we're already out of control, what are we going to do? We really just need to step back and get out of there. So, the key element here with mindfulness is: not to get to that point. Because, anger doesn't come instantaneously. Sometimes it's quite quick, but there's always a build-up. That build-up may only be one second. But usually it takes a little bit longer. And so when anger comes up, usually it starts with a bit of tension in the body, maybe the breathing starting to get a little bit rough, maybe a bit of agitation in the mind.

If we notice those markers, then we can go: "Hang on, what's going on here?" - then we have a chance of observing, because we're still in control. But we can only pick those things up if we've developed mindfulness. So it's all well and good to say: "I'm going to be mindful if I get angry". But the chances are, we're probably going to explode. And then it's too late, we're out of control. What to do? We just need to get out of there. So again, if we really cultivate the mindfulness in the concentration practice, then what you're going to notice is that you're going to pick up that your body is getting a little tense, that your breathing is starting to get a bit rough, your mind is getting a bit agitated. Then you can go: "What's going on here?" - and then you can observe. And then you can be mindful of the tension in the body agitation in the mind.

And if you're mindful of it, then it can't go anywhere, it'll just pass. Because if you become mindful of, let's say, the agitation in your mind, you're not focusing on what's feeding the agitation anymore - because you're looking directly at the agitation itself. So there's nothing feeding it anymore. So it can't go anywhere, it can't develop and it will pass. So that's the key, is: if we strengthen the mindfulness in meditation, we have this ability in that little window of opportunity before things get out of control, to do something. If we don't..., too late, then not much to do, we just have to get out of the situation. So that's why if we don't meditate and strengthen mindfulness, simply in daily life saying: "I'm going to be as mindful as possible". It's not..., it'll help but we won't get very far.

Whereas, if we meditate this becomes instinctive. If we meditate, then you'll instinctively notice these things and instinctively just observe them pass, it won't be then even an intellectual thing. In fact, sometimes what you'll find is, if you've developed mindfulness in meditation, sometimes you'll find: "Wow, this thing that used to irritate me doesn't seem to irritate me anymore". What's happening is that a little bit of irritation is arising, you're noticing, and then it's passing. Yeah?

Student:in meditation or, or when you're practicing, something comes up not even an emotion. When you're just sitting with it, you can really feel the discomfort in your body, and it can come out as an emotion, like tears. So there's a release that comes into a thought, so there's a release..... (rest inaudible)

Glen: Yeah, right. And often, you'll find that this release - and often it can come in terms of tears and so forth - is a good sign. It is, you are seeing it and acknowledging it and letting it go. So you know....yeah. But again, there's a difference between releasing and expressing and getting caught up. There's a big difference. Big difference.

Yeah, so sometimes..... You're right, when we do that release, acknowledging and releasing, there can be a lot of physical things, you know, tears, and a lot of things can happen, but they are usually a good sign. Because usually we're like this. And then when we release, then we often have a lot of things happening, but it's usually a very good sign.

Student:if you can achieve mindfulness in every environment? Like some environments can be very negative, so there is a lot of negativity, or need to have a very strong mind I guess? Or just change the environment? (rest inaudible)

Glen: Right. Yeah. So, of course some stimulus are very strong and some not so strong. So of course, as a beginner, our mindfulness is very poorly developed. So usually, most stimulus if it's pleasant, unpleasant, we just react and,mess. So if we develop mindfulness in meditation we're going to initially notice that we can pick up the things that are not too heavy. So to think that, if we develop it, a bit of mindfulness will be able to be very present with very heavy stimulus, - that's unrealistic.

So, what you'll find is that the more we develop the mindfulness, the more we get in the habit of observing and not reacting, the more you'll find bigger and bigger and bigger we can be present with. If we want to be, if we want to have that as the highest level, then we need to start to go to here. Because the primary reason we react to begin with: is a false sense of 'me'. You know: "This is 'me' here that's being attacked" or, you know, we were holding on to this, me, me, me, me here. As long as we do that, then we're not going to be able to 100% get rid of reaction. With mindfulness we can really bring it down to very acceptable levels. But if we want to get rid of reaction all together, then we need go here.

And but again, remember, mindfulness is the basis of this. So, in the long term to be able to be hundred percent present, no matter how strong the stimulus, will need to really end up going here. But in the short to medium term, then simply through strengthening mindfulness we can start to be able to be present with not such strong big stimulus and be able to deal with them. But that's why this also, that's why we need this integrated approach. You know, see, that's the thing is, a lot of mindfulness movements today, take this out. And they look at all these other elements, and they go: "Oh, that's that religious stuff, you know that ethics stuff and compassion, well, that's a religious stuff, let's get rid of that".

And then they just strip out mindfulness, on its own. And then it becomes quite ineffective. And actually, it can then....., people use mindfulness to be more mindful about how to make more money and be more greedy, and, and so forth. And that's a tragedy. That's a tragedy, and then it loses its efficacy. Whereas if we have a framework and mindfulness is in that framework, then we can really achieve a lot with mindfulness. So we need to....., with this and related questions we need to understand: mindfulness on its own is never going to get us to that longer term result. We need to have all these elements around it, then we can really go somewhere with it in a good way.

Student: (question inaudible)

Glen: Yeah, I mean, this idea here, I mean, not third person, but like this instead of this. I mean, the thing is that our language is, is all this. And that's what we've learned since we're this high. I mean, this is tragedy. I mean, no wonder.....

But I mean, how often do you see if a little child is misbehaving, the parent or the teacher goes: "Bad Girl, Bad Boy." I mean, that's a disaster.

Student: (comment inaudible)

Glen: If we use this sort of language, then it's going to be very helpful to educate the children. So you know, to use this sort of behaviour language, rather than this sort of language to the child. And also like, actually reminds me when I was teaching something like this some years ago, there was a lady, and you know, not just behaviour but thoughts and emotions, you know, "I am angry".

There was a lady in the class, and she said that she had two very young children, three and four. And she said, when they used to get angry, rather than saying you're angry, she used to say: "Look, there's that anger thing in your mind again!" - and it forced the child to look at anger as an object. And to not identify with the child's anger, the child was trying to look at this thing called "anger". And she said, it was very helpful.

That's what she said. She said, it was very helpful to say "Look, there's that anger thing in your mind again". And she said, it was so helpful to help the child not identify with their anger and to see anger as an object, which it is, it's not us. And so she said, it was very helpful to say things like this, not instead of "You're angry".

Student: (question inaudible)

Glen: Let's say, that if you really develop mindfulness well, what you're going to find is, that some of these other elements you may intuitively start to develop. But the reality is, as a beginner you're not going to be able to fully develop mindfulness without attending to these other elements. You know, also in Buddhism we hear the idea that, you know, "...when you realise the nature of reality, compassion will spring forth automatically". We hear that a lot. And so people think: "Oh, I don't need to develop compassion, because all I need to do is realise reality and compassion will come automatically".

That may be true. But what the fine print says is: "You're never going to realise reality unless you work on compassion now". You're never going to get there, because we have so many bad habits now. So yes, it may be true that if we have fully developed mindfulness, maybe some of these things develop. But we're never going to get there if we don't develop these along with it. Because, also often people develop mindfulness for not very good reasons. And, you know, these things will only develop if initially you have an idea of what mindfulness can take, where it can take you.

So already you have some framework. And then if you really want that mindfulness to develop, you need to work on the other elements. Like as I mentioned in last week's talk: we talked about these four elements - motivational, attentional, cognitive, emotional. Mindfulness is here. But if we don't attend to these now, where we misunderstand reality now, we react with anger and jealousy now, we have not very good desires and motivations. If we keep those dysfunctional elements, that are going to sabotage this. We're not going to be able to develop mindfulness in any significant way.

So yes, if we have full mindfulness, maybe these things get sorted out a bit, but we're never going to get there. So what you'll find is that each of these elements supports the other. So if you can now develop mindfulness and work on these other elements together with it, then when mindfulness becomes more strong - as you suggested - it's going to feed into these. And that will be back in again, so that it'll be supporting each other. So you'll find that if you tend to these elements, you'll be able to develop mindfulness much more quickly, much more effectively. So that argument, I think, there is a small element of truth, but it's very misleading. It's the same with Buddhism. If you realise the nature of reality, compassion will automatically come. It's true. But then, if you don't develop compassion now, you're never going to get to realise reality.

Student: (question inaudible)

Glen: No, it will have a positive effect. But again, it depends what the goal of that mindfulness is. Unfortunately, a little bit, what I see is that sometimes corporations are using mindfulness, so that their employees work harder and more effectively for them, so they can make more money. You know, is that really what we want to do with mindfulness?

Student: (inaudible)

Glen: See, I mean, I mean, that's why it's modelled, this is the first element, you know: what are our aspirations and desires in life? If our desire and aspiration is to feel a bit more calm and make more money and enjoy more pleasure, then that's what's going to feed into the mindfulness. And if you use mindfulness, you may find that..., you may find you're a little bit less stressed at work, a little bit more effective. And so you work longer hours to make more money, to not be able to enjoy the house that you can now afford. Is that really what you want to do with mindfulness? Okay, if that's what you want to do, okay, but I mean.... Buddhism says, well, you're sort of cutting yourself a little bit short there, you know, you're using something potentially transformative for a very little thing.

You know, if you integrate these elements, not only will your mindfulness become more effective - and actually then - your original reason to be more calm, less stress, more effective will happen more. But on top of that, you're going to be then enjoying the fruits of more genuine happiness, as well. So it's a win-win situation. It's not like: "one or the other". It's not like: "I want less stress, more money, more pleasure" or "I'll take this". If you take this, you get this as the byproduct in bigger quantities.

Okay, any other last questions? Yeah. Last question, then we finish.

Student: (question inaudible)

Glen: So with the meditation, particularly this concentration-meditation, the key, the key phrase is: "quality over quantity". So it's much better to do this mindfulness meditation 20 minutes in a focused way, then sit there for an hour, allowing yourself to get dull and distracted. Because then you're just weakening your mindfulness, in fact. So, "quality over quantity". And then of course, like any training, as you become more proficient you need to extend it. It's a little bit like going to the gym, you start off, you go short sessions, low weights, and then you build up.

Similarly, here if you just do 20 minutes, it's a start. But if you only keep doing that, like doing a short gym session, not going to really fully develop. So you'll need to then over time, extend that a little bit more. But again, the key also here is then what we do for the rest of the day. So, not only are we developing mindfulness and meditation, but we're trying to apply mindfulness in daily life and further cultivate it in daily life. So if we just sit down and do this mindfulness thing for whatever, 20 minutes in the morning but then we jump up and rush around like we normally do mindlessly for 14 hours, which is going to be more strong: 20 minutes of mindfulness or 14 hours of mindlessness?

So what we need to do for the rest of the day is: keep working on the mindfulness. And here, we can use modern technology to help us for a change, instead of interfering. We can use actually our smartphones in a good way instead of a distracted, mindless way. There are plenty of apps that do this, these mindful apps, like one simple one "Mindfulness Bell". Program it to set off a bell at regular intervals through the day. When you hear the bell, you stop whatever you're doing and do a little mindfulness exercise, mainly just focus on your breathing for three breaths. And you'd be surprised if you do that in regular intervals during the day, how you then start to become more mindful in the day.

And that's going to feed back into your meditation, and that will feed back into the daily life. So we need that both approach. If we just try to be mindful in the day, or we only meditate on mindfulness in the morning, we're not going to get very far. If we do both together, then we've got a chance of developing. Okay, I better stop there, we've run over time. So the last point is: if anyone wants to know more about mindfulness and how to practice it, I have a lot of short talks and courses and retreats on my website: **Glensvensson.org**.

So you can help yourself to whatever you find on the website, there's plenty of audio, materials and so forth on there. So, this practice, this mindfulness practice in the Mahayana Buddhist traditions often is called: 'Shamatha' practice. So, on my website that's what it's called: Shamatha practice. It is one of my favourite types of retreats to lead. I'll be leading some more of those in the coming year. If you're interested then come along. So, thank you very much.

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