Eightfold Path of Practice: Right Effort and Mindfulness

Carol Wilson · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Carol Wilson · 1:42:09

So again, let yourself sit, listen. And the spirit of listening is a kind of meditative one in which what I'm saying is not necessarily true. It might be. But it's really more to test against your own experience and your own innate and fundamental wisdom, to look and see what you discover to be true that really works in your own life.

Over the course of this winter on Monday nights, since the beginning of the year, we've been working with a series of fundamental teachings called the Eightfold Path—the Buddha's instructions from the very first day of his teaching on how one can live a life of liberation or awakening, of a freedom of the heart. This Eightfold Path in some ways seems sequential, one after another, but in another way it's like a lotus flower with eight petals, or a mandala in which every part comes back to the center. And in the center is that possibility of the freedom of the heart, here and now, wherever we are. Wise understanding, wise intention, wise speech, wise action, wise livelihood—all of them are both vehicles to free the heart and expressions of our understanding in this world.

Now this week we get to the next step, the sixth of the Eightfold Path, which is called Right Effort or Wise Effort. How to make wise effort is a key to spiritual life. Wise effort, or right effort—energy—most fundamentally is the effort to pay attention, the effort to be present and awake and see what is true in front of us. Of all the kinds of efforts we can make, the most fundamental wise effort in spiritual life is to be where we are and see it clearly, to be conscious or mindful.

From the Buddha: "Master your senses, what you taste and smell, what you see and hear. In all things be a master of what you do and say and think. Be free. Are you quiet? Quiet your body. Quiet your mind. And by your own efforts, waken yourself. Know yourself and live joyfully. Follow the truth of the way. Reflect on it. Make it your own. Live it. It will always sustain you."

In a certain way, the teaching of right effort or wise effort is a reminder of our nobility. It is a reminder of the human inspiration of spirit—not just to get through our life, but to honor it, to respect it, to be present for it, to delight in it as well. Yes, we have to be present for the sorrows of life, but also, if you look at figures that we commonly admire, like the Dalai Lama or my own teacher, Ajahn Chah, they have wonderful senses of innocence and humor and joy and presence and delight like a child, as well as deep compassion and wisdom.

Don Juan, in his teachings to Carlos Castaneda, said, "There are some people who are very careful about

the nature of their acts. Their happiness is to act with the full knowledge that they don't have time. Therefore, their acts have a peculiar power. Acts have power, especially when the person acting knows that those acts are their last battle. There's a strange consuming happiness in acting with the full knowledge that whatever one is doing may very well be one's last act on earth. Only as a warrior"—as a spiritual warrior, he goes on—"can one withstand the path of knowledge. A warrior sees everything as a challenge while an ordinary person sees them simply as a blessing or a curse. For a spiritual warrior, there are only challenges, and challenges cannot possibly be good or bad. Challenges are simply challenges."

So there's a quality of impeccability that is invited, reminded in this wise effort. For all of us, we know the sense of joy that comes when we live with a whole heart. And if you reflect back on how many things we've done half-heartedly—whether work or school or family, all the things that we do while sleepwalking or not so present or not giving ourselves to—reflect on those and feel the energy of that. Then continue to reflect and remember those times and things to which you have given your whole heart, which you did as fully as you could. What's remarkable is that it doesn't even matter how they turn out. What matters underneath it all is how much care and attention and love and wholeness we bring to that relationship, to that moment, to that garden, to that event that we are attending.

I just finished teaching this last weekend with Luis Rodriguez, Latino poet; Malidoma Somé, a West African medicine man; and Michael Meade, a mythologist. We were teaching and talking about what we learned from almost ten years of doing retreats for young men from Chicago and Los Angeles and Oakland—young men from the inner cities, many of whom are in trouble or in danger. They're in trouble or danger sometimes because they seek out danger due to the usual things: being abandoned, or poverty, or maybe being tested in the wrong way like standardized tests, as if we're supposed to have standardized people and standardized children. Or maybe because of the racism they encountered, or the laws like three strikes that fill our prisons.

But one thing that's come clear in working with these young men, these young people, is that if you listen to them underneath a lot of defensiveness and withdrawal, they care passionately about their life and what they do and who they are. To work with them requires meeting their passion and their fire, and even their love of danger, with something equally filled with fire. You see it in the Palestinian youth throwing rocks and Molotov cocktails, in the revolutionaries in the mountains in Mexico and San Cristóbal de las Casas, among the Kurds, and up in Seattle in the demonstrations last year. There's a certain kind of passion and fire and aliveness.

Now if you look in the monasteries that train these practices of awareness and compassion—

They also have a lot of fire in them. One monastery I practiced in, they would tell the story of how after the Buddha's enlightenment—in the myth of the Buddha, after his night of enlightenment and being under the tree, the Bodhi tree—he then stood for seven days and stared at the tree in gratitude, kind of just gazed

on the tree as if to bow to it, with affection for sheltering him.

Well, standing seven days, it sounds kind of nice, you know, tree gazing. That's okay for the first hour or two. But in these monasteries, you would actually learn to sit for an hour and then for three hours and then for twelve hours and then for twenty-four hours or forty-eight hours. Or you would stand for twenty-four hours and not move. It's called mastering a posture.

My teacher Ajahn Chah said there were two kinds of friends. In Thai it's called *phuon kien* and *phuon tai*. *P huon kien* are friends that you eat with—they're basically party friends. And *phuon tai* are the ones that are there with you until death. They're life and death friends. And he said there's the same thing in spiritual practice. There's that which is done kind of for comfort: quiet yourself down, be a little more kind or ethical—all very good things. Your life will be better, more in harmony with the Dharma or the Tao. But the second kind of practice doesn't have anything to do with comfort. And it doesn't matter what happens. It is the dedication to freedom. Or as one Zen master says, cut all your bargaining. Just do it.

Now, I worry sometimes—or I wonder, because we're in Marin County here at Spirit Rock—about it being too comfortable and kind of sugarcoating the teachings. Because in the monasteries you do a year retreat or a three-year retreat, or you go in a cave, or you sit out in the jungle in the forest where there are still tigers and a lot of wild animals and mosquitoes and malaria, or you sit all night in the charnel grounds watching the fire of the funeral pyres, or you sit with your boredom and heat in the tropical mosquitoes for weeks and weeks, and you hear the same dharma talk that's incredibly boring over and over again—the Eightfold Path for the ten millionth time. And in it somehow it awakens a steadiness and a fearlessness and a courage and a centeredness on the earth.

And certainly the two-month retreat that we teach, sitting and walking in silence for two months, begins to offer some of those practices. But I guess the question for us is: what would allow us to practice in a way that is truly wholehearted? To be reminded that we have a courage and a love of courage. O nobly born, O you who are the sons and daughters of the Buddha, remember that no matter what circumstances you're in—sorrow and betrayal and loss and praise and blame and anger and all those things—it is possible to awaken. And right effort or wise effort is that willingness to take the circumstances of our life and bring to them the spirit of attention and compassion. This too.

And in the Tibetan tradition, you pray for suffering. May I be granted appropriate sufferings, enough sufferings, so that I can truly develop patience and love and compassion, and truly develop a wise heart. Imagine asking for it. It's not our usual prayers.

So how to do this? There is in the ground of wise effort or right effort the need for acknowledging the suffering of this human realm. And its impermanence—that circumstances are always changing and they are not in our control. The eight worldly winds: praise and blame, gain and loss, fame and disrepute, pleasure and pain, are changing all the time. This is the truth. To reflect deeply on it. And also, for wise effort, it's said to remember our own death, the brevity of life, like Don Juan suggests.

Here's a poem from Galway Kinnell. I think about it. I was talking to my daughter the other day, and something came up in the conversation. Someone had died, and so we were talking about death and the end of life. And I said, you know, I remember when you were really little. You were just two years old. And the first time I had to tell you about death. And it was actually quite scary, I said to her. Because you were in your bedroom where you had this little bed. By the window there was this great big moth that had died and it was dried at the bottom on the windowsill. And you saw it and you wanted to pick it up, and I picked it up and showed it to you, and you wanted it to fly.

And in that moment I realized that no one had ever told you that things die. And it was a real moment for me. And finally I said, well, you know what happened—this died. It had a life for a time, and everything does. And then the form that it takes and the life that it lives ends. And you looked at me and you smiled and said "oh." You weren't disturbed about it at all, I said, actually. It was all right for you. But I think that's because when you're that little, you might say that they don't understand, but actually I think it's that you live in a world that's beyond birth and death, that you're still connected to that sacred time, that timeless reality.

This is Galway Kinnell facing death with his daughter: "I've heard you tell the sun, don't go down."

I've stood by as you told the flower, don't grow old, don't die.

Little Maud, I would blow the flame out of your silver cup. I would suck the dirt from your fingernail. I would brush your sprouting hair of the dying light. I would scrape the rust off your ivory bones. I would help death escape through the little ribs of your body. I would alchemize the ashes of your cradle back into wood. I would let nothing of you go ever—until washerwomen feel the clothes fall asleep in their hands, and hens scratch their spells across hatchet blades, and rats walk away from the cultures of the plague, and iron twists weapons toward the true north, and grease refuses to slide in the machinery of progress, and men feel as free on earth as fleas on the body of man, and lovers no longer whisper to the ones beside them in the dark, "Oh, you who will no longer be."

And yet perhaps this is the reason you cry. This is the nightmare you wake crying from: being forever in the pre-trembling of a house that falls. Being forever in the pre-trembling of a house that falls.

Because death is stalking us, life is mysterious and alive.

So what does wise effort mean? It means to come into the reality of this day, which we are given once, and use it to reawaken our own nobility, our Buddha nature. Traditionally, it's said that one dimension is to disentangle ourselves and stay free wherever we get caught—wherever we're obsessed and fighting and entangled and lost and frightened. That is the place to make the effort to release, to let go.

Again the Buddha says, "I know of no other thing, my friends, that brings as much suffering as an untrained mind. My friends, I know of no other thing that brings as much happiness as a cultivated and developed mind."

Or again, another passage: "If you are filled with grasping, your sorrows swell like grass after the rain. Like a monkey in the forest, you jump from tree to tree. But if you learn to release your grasping, your sorrows will fall from you like drops of water from a lotus flower, and you will rest free."

Disentangling. We are here in the present moment, and experiences come—sights and sounds and tastes and smells—all the time touching our senses. And here we are, sitting and breathing. It's possible to meet those experiences and get lost in them, entangled, fighting and struggling and needing. It's also possible to bow to them, to see them as they are, touch them with compassion, and release them—in any moment, to be free.

I was reading the account of a Vietnam veteran who every year, in a certain month, would go out and rob a store. He was put in prison a couple of times for this. He was living on the edge anyway, sometimes homeless. And finally it dawned on the people who were trying to work with him and help him to get the story. The story was that that particular month, that day in March, was the day when he had gone out with his platoon and everybody but himself and one other man had been killed. Every year that day would come. He didn't even use a real gun—he used a play gun—but he got a gun and went out and had to reenact it, because he didn't know how to let it go, that trauma.

And yet one of the great gifts of our humanity is to learn that it is possible to let go, that it is possible to heal, that it is possible through attention and compassion to touch those patterns that we've been caught in so long and release them. That's the first strong teaching of wise effort: to disentangle ourselves and stay free.

The opposite side—well, here's a little line from Hafiz. He says, "Dear ones, it is the time to end the mental lawsuits that clog your brain." Let go, he says. "Dear ones, it is time to end the mental lawsuits that clog your brain."

The opposite side that the Buddha speaks of: one is the effort to disentangle ourselves from greed and fear and obsession and entanglement. The opposite is that of nourishment—to nourish presence, to nourish equanimity, to nourish ease and loving-kindness and beauty and joy in the heart, to do that which brings those alive in our life.

Again, from the Dhammapada: "The farmer channels water to his land. The fletcher whittles his arrows. The carpenter turns his wood. And the wise direct their minds."

There is a training, or a remembering, or a directing—to live our life and attend to each moment as if we were planting seeds in a garden. To nourish in this moment, no matter what the circumstances: clarity, kindness, freedom, respect. Sometimes we do it from the inside; we remember it. And sometimes we do it through outer circumstances, by placing ourselves where we're called upon to love, to be present for another, to be noble in ways that we may not even be sure we can do.

The Dalai Lama puts it this way: "The moment you think of the well-being of others, your mind widens."

That is to say, concern for others is not just the result of freeing oneself from self-centeredness; it is also a means to do so. The moment you think of the benefit and the blessings that can come to others around you, your mind broadens and widens.

As we free ourselves from the patterns of fear and grasping and clinging that keep us from our true state, out of that experience arises a natural compassion. The small sense of self dissolves, and you see the interconnectedness of beings.

You're less preoccupied with your own problems and therefore much more connected with the blessings and the needs of all together.

To disentangle ourselves and release, to nourish and plant seeds of that which is beneficial. Certain texts emphasize this kind of effort. What is wise effort? The effort to avoid, the effort to overcome, the effort to develop, and the effort to maintain, says the Buddha.

The effort to avoid: herein the practitioner rouses their energy to avoid the arising of unskillful things that have not yet arisen. Possessed of the noble direction of the senses, they inwardly experience instead a feeling of freedom and joy into which these entanglements cannot enter or stick. The practitioner rouses their will to overcome those unskillful things that have already arisen in them. They do not remain in the energy of greed, of hatred, of clinging, of delusion, but abandon, release, dispel them.

And what is the effort to develop? Herein the practitioner cultivates and nourishes through their energy those wholesome things that have not yet arisen and makes the effort to plant the seeds, rouses their energy for that which is beautiful to grow in them. And the effort to maintain is to maintain those things that have arisen and let them blossom into full perfection and maturity.

Now sometimes the texts become a bit more fierce. The Buddha says: "Truly for a disciple who is possessed with faith on this path, who knows that awakening is possible and has penetrated the teachings, it is fit to think: though the skin and bones wither away and the flesh and blood of this body dry up, I shall not give up my efforts to attain that liberation of heart that is possible for human beings." This is called right effort. I don't usually read that passage. This doesn't seem to fit our culture here in the Bay Area so well. Ramana Maharshi said of enlightenment that those who succeed do so only with proper effort.

But there's a danger, the reason I hesitate to read it, and that is that wise effort needs to be balanced in the culture in which we live—a culture of ambition and striving and self-judgment. The danger being that we can and do easily make things worse, tie knots in ourselves, increase our struggle, reinforce our unworthiness, repeat our trauma by trying to be somebody that we're not through the misuse of effort.

So wise effort also needs to be balanced. And almost everyone knows the parable of the lute, where the Buddha is sitting in the cool forest with Sona. Sona, his disciple, is thinking, "I am filled with energy, yet my heart is not yet free," and goes to speak to the Buddha, saying, "Can you assist me?"

The Buddha said, "Tell me, Sona, were you not a player of the lute, skilled in playing music?"

"Yes, I was, sir."

"And tell me, when the strings of the lute were too taut, was the lute tuneful and easily played?"

"It was not."

"And when the strings were too loose, was it then tuneful or easily playable?"

"Again, it was not, sir."

"But when the strings of your lute were tuned neither too tight nor too loose, but to the perfect pitch, then did your lute not have a wondrous sound that was easily playable and pleasing to the ears and hearts of those around?"

"Indeed it was." And so that was the instruction he was given in meditation.

We need to be wise about wise effort. What it asks of us, in some way, is an impeccability, a courage, a willingness to take the difficulties of life and make them into the place of compassion and wakefulness. But it also requires constancy, a steadiness, and a kindness or mercy, because awakening doesn't come by wrenching the heart open. Flowers don't open by pulling on the petals.

A Japanese proverb puts it this way: one kind word can warm three winters' months. Even a moment of kindness can make all the difference. There you are struggling, whether it's in meditation or in work or in a relationship, and just the moment of bringing that tenderness can transform it all.

So there's a paradox. One way of understanding wise effort is as a development, a practice to nourish, to let go, to abandon, to purify, to cleanse, to plant seeds, to become better. We do that and it's helpful. But this places it in time.

The second dimension of wise effort is that which is timeless. A young man came to a Zen master, very avid, the way only young men can be, and said, "I'm here and I'm going to really practice. How long will it take to attain enlightenment?"

The Zen master took the measure of the fellow and said, "Ten years."

"Ten years? What if I really give myself to it, really work at it?"

The Zen master said, "In that case, twenty years."

The young man protested, "Wait a second, that's not right. Why did you double it? I mean, if I really do it..."

And the Zen master said, "Ah yes, in your case, it might take thirty."

It's not about grasping or becoming something.

It is about the end of grasping, to be with what is true.

Remember this passage from Krishnamurti: "When the mind is still, silent, open, neither seeking nor resisting, then it is possible to see what is true. And it is the truth that liberates and not your efforts to be free."

Sacred effort is the effort to open and be aware of what is true. What we seek is what we are.

There's a longing for home, a longing for approval. The universe obviously approves of you—that's why you're here.

The traditional image is of this old pot that's being used by some homeless person. It was a beggar in the old Indian story, but it's a homeless person now on the streets of San Francisco or San Rafael or Berkeley, begging with this old pot. And then someone sees it and gives the beggar a little bit of money and sells it at auction. And it's this priceless antique. It's not what's in it that matters, but the pot itself. And we are the pot. We forget who we really are.

The sage Ramana Maharshi says, "There's no greater joke than this, that being the reality ourselves, we seek to gain reality. We think that there is something binding our reality and that it must be destroyed before reality is gained. It is ridiculous. The day will dawn when you yourself will laugh at all your efforts to be free and simply let go, and that which is on the day of laughter is also now."

In a much simpler way, everybody knows the old story of the Hasidic rabbi. A man came to see him, one of his disciples, and said, "I have a great unhappiness where I live, in my house. It is too crowded. It's too busy. The people are getting on my nerves. I don't know how to live with all this. It's terrible. What should I do, Rabbi? How do I live a quiet, contented life?"

And the rabbi said, "Have you any animals that you keep?" It was a village, of course.

"We have some chickens and a pig, yes. We have two goats out in the yard. And then, of course, the donkey I use."

"Well, it's quite simple, my friend. I give you a prescription. Bring the chickens, the goat, the pig, and the donkey into your house. Bring them in and have them live with you."

And so, of course, the man did. However bad it was before, it became dirty, smelly, raucous, horrible. And the master said, "We have to do this." This is sort of like, take two aspirin and call me next week, right? "Bring them in the house and visit me in a week."

The man came back. "Oh, it's horrible. I can't sit. However bad it was, it is so much worse now. What are you having me do this for? Oh, Master, why did you make me do this? It's so terrible."

The master said, "All right, now take them out."

So the man went home. Chickens in the yard, goat in the backyard, donkey tied up where it belongs, the pig back in the pen. He came back to visit the master a day or two later. The master said, "How is it at home?"

He said, "Oh, Master, it is so quiet. It is so spacious. It is so easy."

We go around looking for something that we don't have and not wanting to be with what we have.

My teacher, Nisargadatta, used to shake his head. He said all the time, "You are wanting what you don't have and not wanting what you have. If you wish to be enlightened, it's so simple—just reverse it. Why not want what you have and not want what you don't have? You could be free."

There is a simplicity and a balance in this wise effort. Not straining, not retreating from the world, being with just this much—that was my teacher's phrase, Ajahn Chah: "Just this much." This moment as it is. The suffering of this moment—to awaken to it, to bow to it, to give it its respect. The joy of this moment, the beauty of this moment—to bow to it, to give it its respect, to honor it. To be with things as they are. So simple.

The Gettysburg Address: 226 words. The 23rd Psalm: 118 words. The Sutra of the Buddha on the nature of selflessness, which was given and a thousand people sitting around him became enlightened: 86 words. The U.S. Government Department of Agriculture pricing directives for broccoli: 16,539 words.

Wisdom is really a simple thing. Love is really a simple thing, isn't it? Either it's here or it's not. It's that simple. Either the heart is open or we're frightened.

There is a simplicity and balance in wise effort—not by strain, nor by retreating from the world, but by taking the seat in the center of all things. As the Buddha: "O nobly born, you who are the sons and daughters of the Buddhas, of good families, remember who you are, moment by moment."

And then from this simplicity we respond. In the spring we plant seeds, in the fall we harvest. When there are people who are hungry, we try to feed them. And when there's injustice, we do our best to help.

Notice, if you will, in your own work—with your boss or your employees or with money. Notice in your family, with your parents or your children, in your love relationship. Notice in your meditation with your own breath or body or mind. Pay attention. When is it too tight? When are you really struggling? Too ambitious, entangled, caught up, too much judgment. It's pretty clear. It doesn't take but a moment to notice that.

And notice in your work or family or love relationship or money or meditation when it's too loose, when you give up, when you're without dedication, depressed, doubtful. Just notice that. And take a breath and then come back to that center, because we know inside this ground of nobility. Unclench the heart. Steady

yourself. Be present for things as they are. And then your activity becomes an expression of your awakening. It becomes a vehicle for the Tao.

And we all know this sometimes—you know it. I mean, you hear about it as the perfect game that some tennis player or basketball player describes. But you all know it, the perfect piece of music where the music just became the players and the players the music. We all know it. It's so simple.

From the *Tao Te Ching*: "If you open yourself to the Tao, you are at one with the Tao, you can embody it completely. If you open yourself to loss, you are at one with loss, you can accept it completely. If you open yourself to insight, you are at one with insight, you can use it completely. Open yourself to the Tao, to the way things are. Then trust your heart's response and everything will fall into place."

Or another: "Fill your bowl to the brim and it will spill. Keep sharpening your knife and it will blunt. Chase after money and security and your heart will never unclench. Care about people's approval and you will be in their power. Do your work, then step back—the true path to serenity."

When you are content to be simply yourself and don't compare or compete, everyone will respect you, and the Tao fulfills itself.

There's something mysterious about this effort or energy in spiritual practice. Yes, there's a part of dedication—purifying, abandoning things that are harmful, nourishing things that are good, changing and serving. But there's another part in which it really does it itself. All we have to do is love and be present.

"The bee gathers nectar and perfume from the flower without marring its beauty," says the Buddha. So the wise one learns to wander through this world bringing harm to none and blessing to all. And in the end, right effort is not about fixing ourselves or the human realm, but being with and seeing the world as it is—and loving it, caring for it as it is.

There's an old Apache story that Michael Meade told. The Apaches of the White Mountains tell of an old woman—the oldest woman, the grandmother, the great-grandmother—who lives far away in a cave, a mysterious cave where they haven't yet built roads into that part of the wilderness. And in fact, President Clinton signed an order saying there should not be roads built into the old woman's wilderness, I'm happy to say. She's been in that cave since the beginning of the world. Maybe she is the world.

This old great-grandmother is weaving, and on her loom she weaves a great cloak—the most luminous and radiant imaginable piece of fabric. Its radiance matches the world. She sits there and slowly weaves and spins and puts the most beautiful colors into this rainbow cloak. Then she starts to work on the edges. Into the fringes she ties eagle feathers and porcupine quills, fresh branches from the willow trees, and weaves them in.

But every once in a while she has to get up from her loom, this old woman who weaves the world, and go over to stir her big pot. You know, the great grandmothers also have the pot that cooks everything

nourishing in the world. So she has to stir the pot that brings nourishment to all.

And as she's stirring, there's an old black dog lying by the fire. It gets up while she's stirring and walks over to where she's weaving, grabs the porcupine quills and the eagle feathers and the fresh willow branches, and pulls out all her weaving. Then she has to go back and start weaving it all over again.

Now the old ones, the elders who tell this story and who love the grandmother and the great-grandmother who made the world, also love the old black dog—because he's equally strange and mysterious as the woman. And the elders who tell this story say that it's possible that if this old woman ever finishes weaving the cloak of radiance, that will be the end of the world. So sometimes it is the old black dogs—troublesome, pulling things apart, making things more difficult—that are the very things keeping us alive and keeping the blessings of this world unfolding in the most amazing and creative ways.

The idea in the deepest place of this wise energy or wise effort is not to fix this world, because it's far too mysterious for that. But to see it as it is—the ten thousand joys and the ten thousand sorrows, the weaving of beauty and suffering, the unbearable sorrows and the unspeakable beauty, the mystery of it—to see it as it is and to offer your compassion. Sentient beings are numberless. I vow to bring awakening to them all.

Let's sit for a minute. As you sit, a little reflection—just the tuning of your lute. Reflect on the key places in your life where it might be time to loosen the strings a little, to let go, to not grasp so much. You can know what they are. Then let yourself reflect and remember those places where your lute is too loose and you need dedication, impeccability, more care, more alive energy. Remember that you have this capacity to tune your instrument so that beautiful music comes even in difficulty. There can be wisdom and compassion. Do you think there could be a world without trouble?

Over the past eight weeks, we have gone through the fundamental Buddhist teachings of the Eightfold Path—a path laid out in the very first teachings of the Buddha, also called the Middle Path, the path of perfect balance between detachment and attachment. Neither detached nor attached, but perfectly in the midst of things as they are. This path is an invitation for those who would follow it to discover a liberation of heart.

It begins with what's called right or wise understanding: to see suffering and its causes in the world, and to see the possibility in our own hearts of greater compassion and greater freedom—to know that this is possible in us. Then wise aspiration, which is the openness and intention to direct our lives toward this possibility of freedom and compassion. Then right speech, right action, right livelihood—living in words and deeds, in conduct that creates harmony inwardly and outwardly. And then right or wise effort, which is really the effort to pay attention, to be where we are in a full and present and wakeful way, to see when we're entangled and to release that.

Last week I spoke of the two final steps of the Eightfold Path: wise concentration and wise mindfulness.

Having spoken of concentration, tonight we conclude with right mindfulness—or wise mindfulness.

Mindfulness is better understood as fullness of mind. Sati is the word in the ancient Buddhist language of Pali. "Mindfulness," said the Buddha, "I declare to be all helpful." In every situation, the quality of mindfulness—of listening, of awareness, of remembering, of what one might call a sacred attention to life—is what brings us to awakening.

The art of living, as Alan Watts said, is neither careless drifting on the one hand nor fearful clinging on the other. It consists in being completely sensitive to each moment, regarding it as utterly new and unique, having the mind and heart open and truly receptive. This is the quality of mindfulness.

Now, if we look at our lives—our daily experience with the people around us, where we live, where we work, how we move—we discover as human beings that we can be asleep while we're awake. You know the life that's on automatic pilot. We can be identified and caught up with things, entangled in them, grasping for pleasures over and over, avoiding what's unpleasant. And we can be asleep in relation to our own bodies, not attentive or aware. Asleep in relation to our feelings, to our children, or our lovers, or our parents. We can be asleep to the injustices of the world, to the war, or racism, or hunger, the needs of those around us. All of that we can just block out—or we can pay attention.

I remember some years ago being at the Menninger Foundation in Kansas, invited to an international conference on the nature of consciousness. There were all these presentations by various psychologists and psychiatrists and religious experts about the nature of mind. And finally it was time for one of the invitees to address the group. His name was Mad Bear. He was an Iroquois Indian medicine man. And he said, "I can't speak in here. Come with me."

He led the whole group outside. We were in this retreat center in the midst of the Great Plains of Kansas. He had us stand in a circle and first just stand silent for a long time. And then, after that great silence under this huge Midwestern sky, vast, surrounded by the grains that just went out to the horizon, he began to offer a prayer—a prayer of gratitude.

He thanked first the earthworms for aerating the soil so that the plants could grow. Then he thanked the grasses that cover the earth for keeping the dust from blowing, for cushioning our steps, for showing our eyes their greenness and beauty, and for nourishing the creatures that live on them. He thanked the wind for bringing rain, for cleaning the air, for giving us the life breath that connects us to all things. Then he thanked the trees for cradling the birds, for granting us shade, for filling the air that the winds carry with sweet oxygen that fills our bodies and refreshes us. He thanked the stones for the foundation they give under our feet, for the steps of our life—the stones for remembering the ancestors, for holding the memories of human beings. He thanked the birds for singing to us, for showing us that the spirit can fly, for singing when we're happy and for singing when we're sad and keeping singing anyway.

And he went on and on, probably an hour of prayers while we stood out there. The wind was blowing on

our faces, the sun was beating down, the insects—it was summertime—were making all their buzzing noises, the grain was blowing. And by the end of it, the whole conference was in an entirely different place than all those scientific words about consciousness. They were kind of erased and swept away. What it was, was a practice of mindfulness—the mindfulness of sacred attention.

In the Buddhist tradition, mindfulness is said to be the gateway to liberation, the gateway to that which is eternal, to the timeless, to the deathless. When we get entangled in our thoughts, in our worries, in our imaginings, in our fears—the author and psychiatrist Robert Hallowell finds that most people call themselves moderate to severe worriers in America; I don't know who he's talking about, but you can guess—when we get entangled in all these imaginings of how it's supposed to be and could be, the feelings and fears and thoughts, mindfulness allows us to let go of that and come into the reality of the present.

As the Buddha said, do not pursue the past, and do not lose yourself in the future. Rest where you are, here and now. The past no longer exists. The future is yet to come. And in this present moment you will find the freedom that is who you really are.

So mindfulness is the practice of being here in the present wherever we are. The poem that you've heard many times, but it captures it so well it's worth another reading, from Rumi:

This being human is a guest house. Every morning a new arrival—a joy, a depression, a meanness, some momentary awareness comes as an unexpected visitor. Welcome and entertain them all, even if they're a crowd of sorrows who violently sweep your house empty of its furniture. Still, treat each guest honorably. He may be clearing you out for some new delight. The dark thought, the shame, the malice—meet them at the door laughing and invite them in. Be grateful for whoever comes, because each has been sent as a guide from beyond.

When Thich Nhat Hanh, the Vietnamese Zen master, has come to teach at Spirit Rock, he usually arrives in the summer, and we've had two or three thousand people gathered out on the hillside for his presence. They'll do some chanting, some meditation, perhaps a meditation of eating an apple or an orange mindfully. He's kind of the king of mindfulness, in a way. Everyone's sitting there, happy, chattering away. It's somewhat like a Grateful Dead concert, only quieter.

And all of a sudden it's time—not for Jerry Garcia, but for Thich Nhat Hanh to come on. He's usually somewhere meditating, or whatever he does. And he comes out to these two or three thousand people sitting there, and Thich Nhat Hanh walks out, taking each step so mindfully. He looks up so mindfully, smiles so mindfully, sits down so mindfully, takes the microphone so mindfully, then closes his eyes and breathes a little bit so mindfully—and everybody changes. He doesn't even have to say a word. Just by the way he walks in, the quality of attention he gives to his steps, to his body, to the earth, transforms the whole environment of everyone else's consciousness. This is what it means to really pay attention to the body.

When we do pay attention, instead of fighting against the body and wanting it to be different, instead of being filled with desire and aversion and lost in things, the more deeply we attend, the more we can honor the body and care for it properly. And the more we also see that it is always in change.

You sit in meditation and your body hurts. There's a pain. You say, "Oh, that's pain. I want to get rid of it." You move. You go away from it.

But pain is just a word. What is pain? You pay attention. Oh, it's tingling, it's throbbing, it's vibration, it's heat, it's fire, it's twisting. And the more deeply we pay attention, pain becomes a whole world, a river of sensations.

And pleasure—oh, this is joy. But what does joy feel like in the body? Some of us are afraid of joy. Oh, I expand. There's a different kind of tingling. There's pleasure, there's light, there's ease. We have the names for things, but the more deeply we feel, we discover that what we are is a river of life, and we can enter and rest in that river.

Also, as you pay attention, when you feel the pain or the feelings or the joy, after a while you begin to realize that it's not just your pain, and it's not just your joy or happiness, and it's not just your feelings, but it's the body in the body, the feelings in the feelings. It's the feelings, it's the pain that human beings have, it's the joy that human beings share. It is the life that we have been given.

To be mindful of the body brings us freedom. Freedom to be where we are, freedom to care with compassion, and also freedom not to be afraid of this body for what it is. To be mindful of feelings is the same.

To practice mindfulness of body in the body, to practice mindfulness of feeling in the feeling, means to be aware of what we feel without reacting so much. When we're not aware and pleasant arises, we tend to say, "Oh, pleasant, I want more of it." We cling, we grasp, we want more and more and more. When unpleasant arises and we're not aware, we tend to withdraw and shrink away and move. "Oh, aversion, I don't like this. How do I get rid of it?" And so we spend our lives trying to avoid half of life and trying to grasp the other half, all the time off balance.

When we become aware of feelings—pleasant, neutral, unpleasant, the ten thousand joys and the ten thousand sorrows—then we are free. Without awareness of body, without awareness of feelings, we cannot be present, we cannot be free.

So you sit or walk in meditation, and love comes or pride comes or delight comes or worry comes or grief comes. Someone said that in some way, to really be free, spiritual life is a long process of grieving—of seeing all the ways that we wanted it to be, and then realizing that it is the way that it is.

Some years ago in New York City, there was a professional seminar given by the senior analysts of the Jung Institute, together with Marie-Louise von Franz, who made a series of wonderful movies about the

nature of dreams—one of Jung's great disciples. This panel of analysts sat up there, and after the films, they were going to answer questions about dream work. The audience sent up little cards with all their dreams written out on them.

After a few questions, the main analyst picked up a card that told the story of a recurring dream in which the dreamer was tortured and put through the atrocities of the Nazi concentration camps, stripped of all their human dignity. One of the analysts read this dream out loud. This story is being told by a psychologist who attended the conference. She said, "I thought, well, I wonder how they're going to respond to that. The dream could speak about so much of this woman's own childhood, because it was a younger woman, and all that it might portend in her life."

Once the dream was read, there were no explanations given. Instead, Carl Jung's grandson stood up and said, "Would you all please rise?" And so the whole room of people rose, and he said, "We will stand for one minute in silence in response to this dream." And then everyone was invited to sit back down, and they went on to the next card and the next dream.

The psychologist in the audience was frustrated because she had all these interpretations and ideas—why didn't they do anything with this dream? Finally, someone raised their hand and said, "Doctor, why is it that none of you analysts had anything to say about the dream of this woman?" And Carl Jung's grandson stood up and said, "There is in life a vulnerability so extreme, a suffering so unspeakable, that it goes beyond words. In the face of such suffering, all we can do is stand together in witness, so no one need bear it alone."

To become truly mindful of our birth and our aging and our death, of our joys and our sorrows, means to allow the grief of human existence, the suffering that inhabits this realm—and the joy equally.

The poet Ryokan, the most beloved Zen poet of Japan:

Spring has begun.
Jewels and precious gold everywhere.
Please come visit me—
only two in the garden:
plum blossoms at their peak
and an old man full of years.

How can we ever lose interest in life?
Spring has come again.
The mountains are covered with mist and blooming cherry trees.
Gaily the warm spring days pass.
The children run to greet me the first time this spring—
how they have grown.

So here is the grief and the sorrows and the joys. We become aware of the body as this human body in its true nature—birth, aging, death, the senses, the life of the body. We become aware of the feelings, feelings in the feelings. We become free when we practice mindfulness of the mind.

The mind is such an amazing thing, especially the thought mind. We have picture thoughts and word thoughts. Sometimes on a meditation retreat, I'll have people count their thoughts. See how many thoughts you can count in one sitting. Hundreds of thoughts. It's phenomenal how many thoughts come trooping through. Thought is a wonderful servant. It is a very poor master.

Lama Yeshe puts it this way: "To become your own psychologist, you don't have to learn some big philosophy or go to graduate school. All you have to do is examine your own mind. You already examine material things every day. Every morning you check out what food is found in your kitchen, but you never investigate your own mind. Checking out what's in your mind is more helpful."

What you begin to discover as you pay attention to the mind is that the mind has no pride. It will do anything. It tells phenomenal stories. It's full of ideas and plans and memories and opinions. And the reality of your experience is not the same as your thoughts of it. The invitation of mindfulness is to come into the reality. The thought of your mother is not your mother, right? They are different things. But you have this thought and then a whole huge story comes.

The Zen ancestor says, "The great way is not difficult for those who do not cling to their opinions, who can see things as they are." In our mind are so many ideas about how the world is supposed to be.

Here's a story for you. One day, the manager of a store heard his salesman say, "No, ma'am, we haven't had any for weeks now, and it doesn't look like we'll be getting any soon." Horrified, the manager rushed over, took the arm of the woman, and said, "That isn't true, ma'am. Of course we'll have some soon. We placed an order for it a couple of weeks ago." Then he grabbed the salesman, dragged him to the side, and growled, "Never, never, never say we don't have something. If we don't have it, say we've ordered it and it's on its way. Now—what was it that she wanted?"

"Rain," he answered.

The poet Hafiz talks about ending your mental lawsuits. Chögyam Trungpa talks about stepping out of the bureaucracy of ego, which is all the constructs that we make about who we are and how it's supposed to be. Instead, with the mind observing the mind, seeing all the thought constructions—which is what the mind does; it just secretes thoughts. It's an organ that secretes things. It secretes thoughts and you say, "Oh, that's very interesting. There's a happy thought or a sad thought or whatever." Don't believe it. I mean, it's very unreliable. I'm sure you've noticed that already. With the mind becoming aware of the mind, tremendous freedom comes when we're not identified with the mind.

And then, mindfulness of the dharmas. From Krishnamurti: "Dharma is the word that means the laws, the way things are, the truth. To understand truth, one must have a very sharp, precise, clear mind—not a

cunning mind nor an ambitious mind, but a mind that is capable of looking without distortion, a mind that is innocent, open, vulnerable. Only such a mind can see what is true."

Learning, deep learning, is a radical openness to this moment, and this, and this. The invitation again is to see the Dharma in the dharmas, to see the laws of things in our direct experience. The Buddha goes on to describe how we notice when the mind is expanded, notice when it's contracted, notice when the mind and body and heart are entangled, notice when they are free.

To allow ourselves to rest is the invitation. To rest in the space of pure awareness. To swim in it. To relax in mindfulness.

To become aware of consciousness itself. Because as you start to see thoughts come and go, and feelings changing like the weather, and sensations of the body rising and passing, and days and nights coming and going, the body and mind doing what they do—from the place of awareness, it can feel like, okay, I'm the witness. I'm the one who sees all of this. It's a certain step to sense that.

But then, if you turn your awareness back to say, well, who is this witness? Who am I who's looking? Look for a moment. See, who is it that's listening just now? When you look really directly, you begin to discover that nobody's listening. That there's nobody there. What you find is openness, is space, is a consciousness that is knowing without a single person being there. Not me or mine—this is my sound, this is my feeling—but just a pure, open awareness.

And this freedom that is discovered by all who look comes in any moment. We realize, oh, I took it all to be mine. I took it all very seriously.

Here are the words of the Buddha: "When body and mind dissolve, they do not exist anywhere, any more than musical notes lay heaped up anywhere. When a lute is played, there is no previous store of sound, and when the music ceases, it does not go anywhere in space. It came into existence on account of the wood and the structure of the instrument and the exertions of the performer, and as it came into existence, so it passes away. In exactly the same way, all the elements of your own being—physical, feelings, perceptions, mental—come into existence having not been existent, arise due to certain causes, and then pass away. There is no self residing in body and mind. But the cooperation of all these co-formations produces what people think is me or mine. Paradoxical though it may seem, there is a path to walk on but no one there who travels it. There are deeds being done but no one who can claim them. There is the blowing of the air, but there is no wind person who blows it. The thought of who you are, of this self, is an error, an artifact. And as you pay deep attention, all existence becomes hollow as a bubble, as an echo, a rainbow, a flash of lightning in the summer cloud, a dream."

This is not a philosophy that someone is supposed to believe or not believe. It is really an invitation to look into this human experience. Where is your childhood? It is gone. What happened to the twentieth century? Went out with a bang, more or less, right? Gone. Never to happen again. I mean, it was quite a

century, remember that? All that's left is just an imagination. It is gone. This moment is here, and then it is gone. Reality comes out of nothing, exists according to certain patterns, and then disappears. To know this frees us. To not know it, we are bound.

It brings us face to face with the mystery. Mindfulness could also be called, as one Zen master called it, "don't know mind." Not knowing, not claiming. And there's a real happiness in not knowing. Who are you? I don't know. I mean, yes, I know my zip code and my phone number, but who are you really? I don't know. Oh, well, how about being in that not knowing? It's wonderful to meet somebody who's open like that. And the masters that I most loved, the ones that I studied with, they were so joyful.

And it wasn't by being something—"I'm an important master." They were just present and happy. They didn't cling to being someone. They were just alive.

To train in mindfulness is to remind the heart and mind that we can be free. And it brings a wonderful balance. We stop the struggle the minute we become mindful. You know, there you are with your teenager, or with your partner, or whatever it happens to be. And you're all conflicted about something. And then in a moment, with mindful attention, you can say, "Wow, I'm really caught in this, aren't I? Really caught in that one." And in just that moment's attention, like a bubble—"Oh, I really wanted it to be that way. I hated that. I could never forgive that." Oh, I was really caught in there. And then it's gone.

You're sitting in meditation and your knee begins to ache and your back hurts and you're like, "I'm getting older and God, what's going to happen?" And then you start to worry about your money and pretty soon you're a shopping bag lady out on the streets. It's only five minutes from when your knee began to hurt and you have this whole life scenario. And then you wake up and you say, "Caught in that one, wasn't I?"

Zen Master Ryokan never preached to or reprimanded anyone. Once his brother asked Ryokan to visit his house and speak to his delinquent teenage son. This is in the 1700s in Japan, just so you know that certain things are eternal. Ryokan came but did not say a word of admonition to the boy. He stayed overnight and prepared to leave the next morning. As the wayward nephew helped Ryokan place sandals on his feet, he felt a warm drop of water. Glancing up, he saw Ryokan looking down at him, his eyes full of tears. Ryokan returned home, and the nephew changed very much for the better.

There is a tenderness in this attention, a sweetness and compassion that comes because we're not trying to get or be something. We can see this person, this plant, this car that's moving in the traffic pattern that we're in, as they are now—and not with all our ideas and judgments and ambitions. It is so freeing.

And this liberation is both practical and radical. It's practical. You know the story I like to tell of the army officer who was studying meditation for stress reduction in his army unit. It happens now, you know. It's gone beyond these weird Buddhist places. Mainstream. So there he was in line at the grocery store with all these groceries, in a hurry—always in a hurry, trying to get somewhere—and very irritable. Then a woman in line in front of him, he noticed, had just one item and she wouldn't get in the express line. She

was waiting in his line. Why didn't she go in the line that was meant for people like her? You know how it is. And then she got up to the cash register. She was carrying a baby and she handed the baby to the cashier, and they were cooing over it, you know, coochie-coo, nice baby. The guy was just going ballistic. "Hurry up, I'm in a hurry, you're in the wrong line, don't you see there are all these people," and so forth.

But because he'd begun to study mindfulness, he felt how much tension he was making, and he took some breaths. He just let all that frustration and anger soften a bit. And then he looked for a moment—he saw it was actually kind of a cute baby. So he gets to the cash register. He'd released all of that tension, or some of it, and he said, "You know, that was a really cute kid that she was carrying, that woman before me." And the cashier said, "Oh, did you like him? He's my son. You see, my husband was in the air force but he was killed in a plane crash this last year. So I've had to come to work and my mother takes care of our baby, but she brings him in once or twice a day so I can see him."

We have so many stories about who's doing what and how they're supposed to be. Liberation is so immediate. There we are, and then we can let go.

It's also quite radical. A poem from Wendell Berry called "The Mad Farmer's Manifesto"—which he is:

Love the quick profit, the annual raise, the vacation with pay. Want more of everything ready-made. Be afraid to know your neighbors and to die, and you will have a window in your head. Not even your future will be a mystery anymore.

Your mind will be punched in a card and shut away in a little drawer. When they want you to buy something, they will call you. When they want you to die for profit, they will let you know.

So, my friends, every day do something that won't compute. Love the world. Work for nothing. Take all that you have and offer some to the poor. Love someone who doesn't deserve it. Ask questions that have no answers. Invest in the millennium. Plant sequoias. Say that your main crop is the forest that you will not live to harvest. Put your faith in the two inches of soil that build under the trees every thousand years.

To become mindful is to become free, to have the capacity to step out of the rat race, the speed, the complexity, and be who we are, be true to our hearts. And there comes a great balance and ease with that. In any moment, we stop the war, we stop the conflict, we come back to be as the Buddha sits, as the Buddha walks, as the Buddha speaks—where we are, just present and alive. So simple, to be with things as they are.

A silly poem for you, from Bob Munson: Once upon a time, before time was invented, there was no daytime or nighttime. And yesterday, today, and tomorrow weren't here yet. There were no watches, clocks, sundials, no hours, minutes, days, seconds, years. There was no fast or slow. And everything just was the way it was when it was that way. And things happened in no time—they just happened when they did. Flowers bloomed when they did. Morning and evening just came and went.

Once upon that time there lived a frog who lived in no time. He wasn't fast or slow. When he jumped, he jumped, and when he didn't, he didn't. He got to where he was going in no time, because in no time it took no time to get anywhere. And anywhere was everywhere, so he was really where he wanted to be all the time. And he was always on time wherever he went. He got where he was going before he left. He didn't have to rush or hurry because in no time he could never be late. Wouldn't that be fine, to live in no time and be where you are all the time?

It's really natural to us. This is not foreign. It's as near to us as our own breath, as near to us as our own body. And when we practice mindfulness, we come alive. Our bodies come alive, our senses. Our food tastes different because we actually taste it. The people around us—their eyes, their spirits—are alive for us. Our words become more alive. The clouds and the earthworms, as Mad Bear said, our silence is more alive. We're present when we come, we're present when we go. We're aware of birth and we're aware of death, of joys and sorrows. We enter that which is timeless.

What a gift. Even a few moments a day is great. Practice is not to make perfect, but to remember that freedom is possible where we are, that our heart can open in this very life, in this very moment. The body in the body, the feelings in the feeling, the thoughts in the thoughts. You discover the body lives its own life. The feelings feel themselves. The thoughts think themselves.

So we see it in meditation. It's really just a little reminder, a reminding meditation. We feel the breath and the mind quiets and the heart opens. And things start to open up—all the things that come and go.

My teacher Nisargadatta used to talk about it this way. He said, usually we only see a small distance bound by our desires for what we like, our ambitions, and our fears and dislikes of what's wrong with this world. We create a net that entangles us, confines and limits our consciousness.

This is not who we are. To free ourselves, it is necessary to look beyond the net. And yet it is simple, for the net is full of holes. Any moment we look, any moment we bring mindfulness to, there is space, there is openness. We are not entangled and identified. And there is a tremendous joy in discovering this and remembering this.

Mindfulness is something like Sabbath. Six days you work and then you get a day off. Actually, in the Old Testament as it was written, not only was there a Sabbath every seventh day where you got to rest and simply appreciate life and not have to do things, but every seventh year was a fallow year where things were not planted, and you got a whole year—a sabbatical. A year off. Doesn't that sound fine? And every seventh seventh year in the grand cycle, all property was returned to its original owners, all debts were forgiven. It was like Monopoly—we did it for forty-nine years, and now we go back to square one again. Isn't that great? Mindfulness is like that. It is the get-out-of-jail-free card. There is an ease, a graciousness when we remember this mindfulness or heartfulness, where we can bow to this life as it is with its joys and its sorrows.

And we somehow sense the small sense of self, the body of fear that we talk about, the ambitions and confusions. We remember that this is not really what it is about. It is not who we are. Like Zen Master Suzuki Roshi, when he was dying of cancer, called everyone together: "If when I die, if I suffer, that's all right, you know. That's just suffering Buddha. No confusion in it. Maybe everyone will suffer from the physical or spiritual agony. If when I die, if I suffer, that's all right, you know. That's just suffering Buddha. Moon Buddha, Sun Buddha, Happy Buddha, Sad Buddha." The way things are is what we are given to awaken to. Through mindfulness we can bow to what is and be free.

The words of the Dhammapada, the Buddha: "How can they lose the way who are beyond the way? Their eyes are open, their feet are free. Who can follow after them? For the one who is awake, attentive, mindful, the world cannot reclaim them or lead them astray, nor can the net of desires hold them. They are awake, even the gods delight in watching over them."

There is not one moment that you are far away from this freedom. O nobly born, it is said, O you who are the sons and daughters of the Buddha, remember your own true nature. Remember that you can awaken and be free. Remember the path of awakening, this Eightfold Path of wise understanding—the potential for liberation and compassion in your own being. Of wise intention—to bring your awareness and care just where you are. Of wise speech, action, and livelihood—to make the very words and deeds of your life the place of practice, the place of awakening. Of wise effort—the effort to stay awake and present. Of wise concentration—that wholeness of heart and body and mind when we come into the present. Of wise mindfulness—that ability to be present and let go into the great space of awareness that neither struggles nor resists but is free in the midst of all things.

"Just as if, my friends, one who was faring through the forest, through the great woods, should see an ancient path, an ancient road traversed by people of former days, even so have I, O monks, seen an ancient path, an ancient road traversed by the rightly enlightened ones of former times." And it is this road that I invite you to walk.

You cannot do it wrong, you know. Either you are present or you are not. Either you are awake or you have forgotten. And then a moment later—oh, here we are again. It is great. You cannot make a mistake in that way. The path is immediate. It is inviting. It is generous. You are invited to participate, to remember, to follow the path of the awakened ones, to develop the heart of compassion, to quiet the mind, open the heart, to taste your own freedom.

I end with a little chant. And this chant is an offering of gratitude and appreciation for your attention over these weeks, and for the care that so many people in this room give to their lives and to those around them.

Sabbe sattā sukhitā hontu, sabbe sattā averā hontu, sabbe sattā anīghā hontu, sukhī attānaṃ pariharantu.

Sukhitā kayena, kobhā abhivādanā, sīlena saṃyutto bhavatu, dhammaṃ carantu, āyu vaṇṇo sukhaṃ balaṃ.

This talk was given by Jack Kornfield at Spirit Rock Meditation Center in March 1992.

Transcriptions produced locally using Swiss low-carbon electricity. Corrections and rewriting by cloud-hosted AI.