

The Eckhart Tolle School of Awakening

Session 3

Eckhart Tolle

SIBYL CHAVIS: Welcome back. We hope you had a nice little break. We're ready to begin the final session of the day with Eckhart.

ECKHART TOLLE: Thank you, Sybil. Here we are again.

The most advanced practice is stepping out of thought-- but not by going to sleep-- the ability to be aware with little or no intrusion of thought. Initially, very short periods of time, a few seconds, and never use willpower to stop your mind. It's not advisable. It could work, briefly, in the same way that you could put a lid on a boiling kettle. It can stop the steam for a little while, and then finally, it'll burst through even more strongly than before.

There needs to be a certain degree of readiness for you to even know what I'm talking about and certainly to be ready to go beyond thought. And it may start with little glimpses of no thought, which before you might already have had but didn't even recognize it. And that's an important part of the practice, too, is to become aware that probably, for short instance during a day, you have already little spaces of pure awareness or no thought.

Now that's easily overlooked, because it has no content as such. It's just this consciousness, space of consciousness. You can't remember it because there's nothing to remember.

Let's take an example. You get up in the morning, open the curtains, look out of the window because you want to find out what the weather is like, assuming that you haven't already consulted your smartphone and the weather app to find out what the weather's like. Then you don't even need to look at the sky anymore. You conceptually already know what the weather's like.

[LAUGHS]

So you open the curtains. And you look at the sky or whatever else, sky, whatever you see. And in that moment of wanting to find out what the weather's like, for the first two, three seconds, you're not thinking yet. Because you have to take in the sense perception first. Before you can interpret the sense perception, you have to take it in.

I'm looking this way because I've got a window here. And I'm actually looking at the sky now. It's cloudy. But there's quite a bit of light coming through clouds.

So this is an interpretation. But when I look, first look, the first look, if you can capture the first few seconds before you interpret what you see, you will notice that while the perception happens, you're not thinking. Because you have to take in the sense perception.

So you're just aware. And the awareness is behind the sense perception. You're taking in whatever your senses are perceiving. Then after, I don't know, two, three, or four seconds, maybe even five, probably your mind will say something. "Oh, it looks like rain. It's going to rain." Or, "Oh, looks great. Nice. Looks good." Or your mind has even more negatively charged interpretations, like, "Not another rainy day. Can't take any more of this."

[LAUGHS]

And then you're already confusing your interpretation with what's going on out there. And you don't realize that in the many instances when you first look at something, or you first listen to

something, the sound arises, a bird's song. The first few seconds, you're just listening. You're attentive. And you're not yet interpreting because you have to take it in first.

Then the mind starts working. And then it finds a label, or mental label for it, or has an opinion about it, or interprets it in some way. So that's normal. But most people miss, they don't realize that when they first perceive something, there must be a moment of pure perception against the background of awareness.

Now if that can happen consciously, something that, before, you always overlooked, then what happens is that the silent space before the mind comes in gets a little longer. And so you may be looking at the sky for 10, 15 seconds and the mind hasn't started up yet. And then, maybe, finally, it says something.

But for the first 10, 15, 20 seconds, you're not just looking at the sky, you're aware of the sky and you're aware of yourself looking at the sky. Not yourself as a person, but yourself as the awareness.

And that is a very joyful thing, strangely. You can sense that consciousness in you without which you would not be perceiving the sky. And the two kind of merge. There's no separation between the observer and the observed. The sky arises in the field of consciousness.

So you're not there as a person. You're there as the observing presence. You're not there as a man or woman, or as a young person or an old person, or somebody who has greatly succeeded in life or failed at everything in life, to take two extremes. You're there as a Presence.

And to be able to feel that Presence that you are is inherently joyful, to know yourself as consciousness, you feel alive. And not only that, you acknowledge what you see in its Beingness, in its beauty, its simple Beingness. No idea what it is, you acknowledge it and you appreciate it, but without context.

Then you see a beauty. Even in a sky that's gray, you can see a beauty. And even in seemingly insignificant things, you can see beauty. So it could also be listen to-- the two predominant senses are the sense of sight and hearing.

But then there are, of course, other senses, too. You can also practice with other senses. You go out. Spring is approaching in the Northern hemisphere. And you can breathe. There may be some flowers already appearing on trees. And there may be a scent of flowers if you step out into the natural environment. And you smell, mm.

After you smell something, the mind usually begins to ask, "Oh, what is that?" That's a natural thing for the mind to do. You want to figure out what it is. The mind is immediately looking for a label. But let go of that search. It'll come soon enough. But you let go of that search for what it is. And just perceive it fully against the background of that alive awareness.

And so that is a practice that is-- I call it practice. Eventually it becomes your natural way of being to not necessarily always immediately interpreting what you are perceiving, but allowing a space for the perception to deepen. So not only what you are looking at or hearing or whatever, perceiving, deepens you, yourself, discover a dimension of depth within yourself. The two go together.

And when you deepen, I mean, for example, these lovely flowers here, you can look at these flowers without calling them anything. And in that when I say deepening, you can sense something in whatever you're looking at. That is, this sounds a little mystical. But it's not. Well, you can call it mystical or whatever.

You can sense something that is beyond what you see or hear. There is a Presence. This flower, in a way, you could say, oh, you always perceive the surface of things. Whatever you perceive with your senses is a surface phenomenon. It's that there is more beyond the surface that you perceive.

But you can only sense that when you know in yourself there's more to you than meets the eye, so to speak. When you can sense that there's more to you than the physical body and the psychological entity that is conditioned by the past is when you can sense the invisible you that no surgeon could find if they opened up your brain. They cannot find you.

They can find certain correlations between your state of consciousness and things that the chemistry of your body and whatever happens on that level. There's a correlation. But they won't find you. Not a single memory that you have would they be able to find. Because all these exist not in the realm of physicality.

So you are essentially invisible. The body, and even the psychological entity of the mind, is the surface phenomenon. So when you can sense the invisible Presence that you are, then you can sense something deep in whatever you perceive. And that is a deepening of everything that is around you.

And now I'm reluctant to use certain words. But let's just use one word, sacredness. You can sense, when you look at the flower or especially natural things, a flower, a tree, a plant, there's something that you cannot name, but there is a sacred Presence.

There's something that is very hard to talk about. And with that comes a lot of enormous respect. And reverence, I think, is the word, a reverence especially in the world of nature, when you can truly perceive it deeply. A reverence that perhaps people a long time ago had instinctively without really knowing that they had it. Now we may be able to regain it. And then we know that we have it, that reverence.

Before, it was a natural thing. In ancient cultures, nature was treated with reverence. There were sacred forests, groves, places, lakes, water. Even the Romans, the ancient Romans and the Greeks, they talked of spirits. They perceived everything as being inhabited by spirits. They talked continuously of spirits. They thought every house, it had its own spirit. Now that may not be literally true. But there was an approximation. They could sense something that was beyond the sense perception. So every place had a spirit.

Even at a crossroads in Roman times, a crossroads had a spirit. And sometimes they put even a little figurehead, a statue there to represent the spirit of the place. So the ancients, before the humans completely lost touch with nature, they could sense something that is beyond sensory perception, however they interpreted it.

The ancient tribes in Northern Europe, what is now Germany, Northern France, England, when the Romans came to occupy those lands, and the first accounts you heard of, they had virtually no writing. They had runes, but not real written records. The Romans started writing things down. The Romans reported of the ancient tribes in what is now Germany and Northern France.

Nature was sacred to them. And they had many-- and some places in nature were particularly sacred. They had trees, especially, they had groves of trees where they would go for whatever, to have ceremonies. And certain animals, particularly, were sacred, like certain horses and so on.

So just mentioning that, as we lost that. And now, because we lost that, nature became a commodity, something to be used because we lost the empathy that we had with-- we became psychopaths or sociopaths, which is usually the word described for people who have no empathy with other human beings. But we lost empathy with nature.

So with reference to nature, we became sociopaths or psychopaths. And so that was lost. And now we see the consequences of that. So it's vital to find that again.

And this is why we're here, one of the reasons. And then, we regain a reverence for nature. And when you regain something that you lost, you regain it at a deeper level. So that is the good news. When you've lost something and then you return, then you appreciate it with an added dimension. In this case, it's the added dimension of knowing.

So it all starts with this little thing, like, how did we start here? You open the curtains, you look at the sky, and you give it some space before you impose interpretations. And when you walk in the forest, even if it's an urban park, even if it's just your backyard, or wherever it may be, with a

lot of nature or a little bit of nature, perceive it with this alertness and refrain as much as possible from labeling, unless you have to communicate with someone.

At some point, the label may naturally arise. That's fine. But prolong the time before you call it something. Allow yourself to perceive without immediate interpretation.

Then you deepen. You become more aware of this deeper level within yourself. And then you see the deeper level within whatever it is that you're perceiving. And then you might even question-- you see how important your consciousness is.

I say your. It's not yours. It's consciousness manifesting through this form. But you can see how important consciousness is. You can ask philosophical questions, like, well, you've probably heard of the question, if a tree falls in the forest and nobody's there to hear it, does it make a sound?

A tree falls in the forest. No one is there to hear it. Does it make a sound as it falls? And of course, the answer is no. Because for a sound to exist, it needs a sensory organ, this one. And it needs a consciousness behind the sensory organ that is invisible, of course. So there's a consciousness behind the sensory organ that perceives what is called the sound. And then it makes a sound.

If there's nobody there, there may be a sound vibration that happens as the tree falls. But it doesn't become a sound. If you see a rainbow, if there was nobody there to see a rainbow, would there be a rainbow? No, of course not.

I mean, it's very easy to see with a rainbow. Because a rainbow has no existence unless there's an observer in a particular location where you see the refraction of the light and that creates the impression of the rainbow. If nobody sees it, there's no rainbow.

Does the sun rise in the morning? Well, yes. If there's nobody there to see it, it doesn't rise. Because it needs limited-- a location with certain limitations on the planet in order to believe that the sun is actually rising.

But it's not even rising. It's only because you are in a certain place on the planet where the sun appears to be rising. If nobody is there to see the sun rise, there is no sun rise. It's because the sun never rises. It's always just there. It only rises from the perspective of a limited observer.

So in other words, there would be no sunrise without you, your consciousness. There would be no rainbow without you. There would be no sound without you. Would there be? What would there be without that consciousness that you are? Would there be a world, a universe without you? Would there be anything?

These flowers, without anybody perceiving them, perhaps there would be, yes, molecules and atoms that make up this flower in constant motion with vast spaces in between. Perhaps, yes. But a flower? A flower appears only when a consciousness comes that interprets it. And then a world arises.

So you and the world go together. You create the universe. Your consciousness creates the universe. This is how important it is. It seems so unimportant when you look at how vast outer space is and how tiny, even, this planet is.

If you go far enough away from the planet, you can see it's a tiny dot of light. Even from the planet Mars, I saw some photos taken by the thing that landed on Mars recently. And there's a photo, it can show Earth. And it's a tiny spot of light in the vastness of nothingness. That's our planet. That's Earth. And if you go away further, it disappears completely in the vastness of space.

So we are seemingly extremely insignificant from that point of view. And yet, the universe is conscious. And you are an essential part of the consciousness of the universe. So you may be

physically very small. But you represent the consciousness of the universe. Of course, it appears in many forms.

But let's go back to simple things. Refrain from interpreting too much. Then you become more familiar with a space of pure awareness. And you're no longer exclusively trapped in thinking.

So there's then two of you. Temporarily, let's call it two of you. There is the unconditioned being. I sometimes call it the "Deep I." And there is the surface you, which I sometimes call the "Surface I." Not this eye, the I pronoun, "I," me.

The "Deep I," the "Surface I," when you open the curtains in the morning, you look at the sky. And you just become aware of the sky and of yourself as the consciousness. That's the "Deep I."

In that moment, those first few seconds, you are not a person. The person comes as soon as conceptualizing mind arises. Then the person is back. But whenever you are perceiving without interpretation but alert Presence, in that moment, you are not a person. There's something deeper. Another term I use is human being.

The "Surface I" is a human, the conditioned you with the psychological, the personality, the psychological entity. That's you. That's the human.

But you are not just a human. You're a human being. The Being, the way I use those terms, the Being is the unconditioned consciousness that is the essence of who you are. The human is the form identity, the body and the psychological form.

Everybody is-- I am a human. But I'm also being. You are human. But you're also being. Now for most humans still, the human is so dense and overpowering that they lost awareness of Being.

I believe if you go back far enough in the past, humans had it in ancient places. They had a natural connectedness with Being. And then gradually, it was lost. Because the mind became

more and more powerful. That was a great thing, too. But we have to pay a heavy price. For every gain, you lose something.

So the ability to think more and more, more and more focused way, to accumulate knowledge, to analyze, that was, in a way, a great thing. It created a kind of civilization. But then gradually, connectedness with the Being was lost more and more. Religions arose. In their essence, they tried to help people not to lose that deep awareness completely.

So we are at this point now where for the large majority of humans, awareness of Being has been almost completely lost. I say almost, not 100%, perhaps. Well, if it's 100% lost, then you're insane. Then you probably couldn't function anymore.

Little remnants of awareness remain in almost everybody, little, little glimpses of light, for brief seconds, moments. There are sometimes moments when you feel, "Ah." And you don't know why. Or you're engaged in some sort of strenuous activity which stops your mind. And you feel suddenly more alive for a little while.

But the connectedness with Being has been lost. And this is why we're moving into a very difficult age, an age of breakdown. Because no life or civilization can survive for long if it is disconnected from source. If we see a relation becomes disconnected from source, the collapse will not take very long.

In the same way, if a single, an individual human being, becomes disconnected completely from the source, their life is going to become very unpleasant. And then they die, if they don't go completely insane. So this is where we're at. More people are awakening. That is true. And others are not awakening.

And another segment of the population I have observed is actually regressing. They're becoming more unconscious than before. Certain segments, with all kinds of-- we may be talking about this at some other time.

But it seems that a certain segment of the population is losing the ability even to think rationally. I'm not giving any examples right now. But maybe you know what I'm pointing to.

So we are at a very critical stage. And that's a wonderful stage to be at. Because it's only when you reach a critical stage that something, that a shift becomes really possible. As long as there's a comfort zone for humans, they're not going to make that shift in consciousness. So many, many humans are now taken out of their comfort zone. And that's a good thing, spiritually speaking. It's a bad thing for the human. It's a good thing for the Being.

[LAUGHS]

There's another saying that is, "When the ego weeps for what it has lost, the spirit rejoices for what it has found." So that the loss to the human is an opportunity for the arising of Being. And so that's why we're here.

I will be going more into this practice in the next few weeks and so on, so that you become familiar with that beautiful state of pure awareness. And you're no longer going to be burdened by your mind and the self, the sense of self that is derived from the thinking mind. But we are here to ask questions. I just remembered.

It's very hard to predict these things. I just remembered that we are here, we have some questions. If your question has already dissolved, feel free to say, "I have no more questions."

And so let's perhaps go to our first question. Sibyl, who is our first questioner?

SIBYL CHAVIS: The first questioner is Mallory from Blaine, Washington.

ECKHART TOLLE: OK. Mallory, I see-- Mallory-- oh, there you are.

MALLORY: Hi.

ECKHART TOLLE: Hi. From Blaine, Washington. You're just a few steps from the Canadian border.

MALLORY: I know. I think we could see each other from our houses, probably. [LAUGHS] Nice to see you, Eckhart.

ECKHART TOLLE: You, too.

MALLORY: So my question is-- I'll just read what I wrote to begin with. And you can ask follow up questions if you have any. It can feel selfish observing the "Deep I" while having a husband and children. And yet, it helps my reaction and relationship with them in the long run. How do I maintain my personal worth while engaging with my children, while maintaining a relationship with my husband, and continuing to work and be the breadwinner for my family?

ECKHART TOLLE: Right. Anything you want to add at this point? Or is that--

MALLORY: I am a mental health counselor. So I also have a lot of relationships there as well. So I think that's relevant.

ECKHART TOLLE: Right.

MALLORY: Yes.

ECKHART TOLLE: But you've already recognized there is a benefit from being anchored in your "Deep I." Because it does change, to some extent, the way in which you relate to your family members, like your children, right?

MALLORY: Yes. I'm more regulated. And I slow down and am more conscious of the way I respond to them.

ECKHART TOLLE: Yes. So mainly your question is about sustaining that when daily life becomes challenging at work and so on?

MALLORY: Yes.

ECKHART TOLLE: Yes. Yes. And the practice is bringing together the awareness practice and bring it into your daily life. There are many people, traditionally there have been people who have a spiritual life in a separate compartment from their daily life. So in the past, I've met people who were regular meditators for 20, 25, 30 years, every day, one hour a day or more.

And yet, it did not seem to bring about much change in the way in which they relate to people. Their daily life was just unconscious as everybody else's. But they became very good meditators. For an hour a day, they could really do meditation.

So that's not-- it's fine that they can meditate. That's beautiful. But you have to bring this meditative state into your daily life. And that's the challenge. But without that challenge, it would not deepen. Let's call it-- the awareness would be like a flower that grows in a greenhouse, a protected environment in a nursery. So it's protected in a greenhouse.

It has a good temperature, optimum temperature for the plant to grow. It's protected from the elements so it grows more quickly, more vigorously. And protected from extremes of heat and cold, getting the best possible nourishment, one would think.

Well, that plant has very good karma. But if you put that plant outside into the so-called real world, it would quickly die. Because it has not developed the inner strength to survive against the elements. So it's ultimately a weak plant that does not have the strength, because it didn't need it. It did not have to call for that strength, because the strength, the influx only comes when it's needed.

And this strength could be up here on many levels. There is the physical level. Sometimes these are different vibrational frequencies of the one consciousness, different vibrational frequencies. So on a physical level, you do not become strong physically unless the body begins to be active.

So either you are forced by life circumstances to work hard, physically work hard. The work itself, you need to work hard, there is a demand for more energy. And then more energy comes and flows into the body and it gets stronger.

And if you are not forced by circumstances, if you want to make your body stronger, you have to exercise. Now when you exercise, means in many cases, or in most cases, especially initially, I call it you have to make life difficult for your body. Because if you go jogging, or you go weightlifting, or whatever it is you do at first, the body doesn't, at first, like it at all. In other words, you're making life difficult for your body.

And so the body encounters a certain limit. And now the body begins to demand more energy. And then the influx comes. And then the body gets stronger. If you had been sitting on your couch instead, there would have been no demand for more energy to flow into and become converted into physical energy. It comes when it's needed. It doesn't come when it's not needed.

And that's why, sometimes, people who have a pleasant life, let's say they were born into a relatively wealthy environment and they have a trust fund, famous word, trust fund baby. Actually, I knew some, several people in England some time ago who came from a wealthy background. And, actually, there was a trust fund. And they knew they never had to work. If they didn't want to work, they didn't have to.

And often they didn't achieve much. They became very dissatisfied after a while with life. Because they didn't have to work. So it probably would have happened to me, too. If I had a trust fund, I would still be sitting on a sofa somewhere and whatever, probably drinking beer or wine.

There's no demand. Demand, there must be a need. And so the challenges of daily life-- oh, by the way, before I go there, so it operates on the physical level. When the body is taken out of the comfort zone, it's only then the body can become stronger.

Of course, if you go too far, you'll kill the body. You don't want to go too far.

[LAUGHS]

But to be taken out of the comfort zone is necessary. Because then there is a demand. Maybe Jesus was referring to that when he said, "knock and you shall find." There needs to be a demand, then it comes.

Then, on a mental level, it can happen, too. Let's say you're weak. There's a child who has a very weak body, gets bullied by others. And then, to compensate, develops a mind that is very powerful, because he compensates for the weakness in the body.

And there's a demand for something else. Then this person becomes very powerful mentally. And then it can go up to even spiritually. But there must be a demand. There must be a loss of comfort zone.

Now daily life for many people is a loss of comfort zone. It's very challenging. Especially with things happening now, it becomes even more challenging. And that's the area of practice.

So you bring the awareness that you already have into your daily life. Now the question is how. One way to approach it is to say that, as much as possible, and this is a kind of spiritual practice, whatever you're doing, don't make it into a means to something else. Give it your fullest attention.

Yes. You know what it is you want to achieve. That's fine. Because every action that you take has a certain aim, whether you prepare some food, or you go shopping, or you work. Where you work, every action has an aim.

If the aim is to occupy too much in your mind, where you want to get to, in other words, becomes so overwhelming that you miss the present moment because you desperately need to get to the next moment. So the next moment assumes an importance that it should not have. And then you lose awareness of the present.

And this is what lies at the bottom of stress is that there's always-- you always need to get somewhere. But you're not there yet. That's actually what stress is. I need to get somewhere, but I'm not quite there yet.

So it's the gap between here and there or the gap between now and then. That's where stress arises. So if you give more attention to the doing than what it is that you want to achieve through the doing, you know that you don't forget it.

You know it. But more attention to the doing when you are talking to someone, listen to someone, give your fullest attention instead of mentally already wanting to be somewhere else. And that in itself is a very powerful spiritual practice.

So that habitually, you don't reduce the present moment always to a means to an end. Because if you reduce the present moment to a means to an end, you reduce life to a means to an end. In other words, you never really start-- you never arrive anywhere. You never start living.

There are many people who have this strange idea at the back of their mind, "When am I going to start living? I haven't quite started." And then they're 25 years old, they can still think, "OK, soon I'm going to start living."

30 years old, 35 years old, 40 years old, still waiting for whatever term they use. "I'm waiting for the big break," or whatever it is, some kind of freedom arriving somewhere and finally feeling "Oh, I can relax now." And it never seems to come. Because there are short moments when you seem to have arrived, but they are short-lived. And then, afterwards, "Oh, no. I haven't arrived yet."

So it's a terrible life that never arrives for very long. You're never really-- so your practice then could be-- this is recommended, I think it's in chapter six of the famous Indian scripture, one of the most beautiful and profound spiritual books, Bhagavad Gita. I believe it's chapter six but I'm not sure, where he talks about not being excessively attached to the fruit of your action, which is a desired outcome.

Instead, give your fullest attention to the action itself. And that is recommended in the Bhagavad Gita as one of the main spiritual practices. And that will remove, to a large extent, stress. Sometimes you forget. And that's fine. You're only human. You are human. And you are the Being. But the human remains with certain imperfections.

That's fine. You have to have compassion with yourself. And of course, the compassion arises the more you are rooted in the Being, the more compassion you have not only for other humans, but even for yourself. So you're no longer that critical of other humans. And you're no longer that critical of yourself, either.

You're limited. Yes, there are certain significant improvements, even on the human level. The more you're rooted in being, even on the human level, you will find significant improvements.

You don't create unnecessary suffering anymore. You don't make other people suffer through unconsciousness. You don't make yourself suffer through unconsciousness, unconscious identification with whatever your mind is telling you, and so on, reactivity.

So your practice, I would say, is not at the present moment. Acknowledge the present moment fully. Give it your fullest attention so that you're no longer reducing it to a means to an end. And that will, most likely, reduce significantly the amount of stress in your life.

But I can see the light of Presence shines through your eyes already. And that's not a joke. It's true.

MALLORY: Thank you, Eckhart. I feel it.

ECKHART TOLLE: Yes. Yes. So I can see in you, I see the human on the surface, obviously. And I can sense, see and sense the Being that is there. And it's just wonderful.

MALLORY: Thank you.

ECKHART TOLLE: Thank you.

SIBYL CHAVIS: Wonderful. Thank you so much, Mallory. Serena from London, would you like to ask your question next?

ECKHART TOLLE: Oh, can't hear you yet.

SERENA: Can you hear me? Hi, everyone. Hi, Eckhart.

ECKHART TOLLE: You are in London.

SERENA: Yes. I'm in London. It's late in London.

ECKHART TOLLE: Must be late there.

SERENA: Yes. So yes. It's really lovely to be part of this event. And I've got a question for you, which I hope you can help with.

So the theory of *The Power of Now* and *A New Earth* really resonated with me. And I've found that practicing it, though, hasn't actually been so easy. I've tried using awareness to transmute what I've identified as my pain-body to change my life situation. But it doesn't seem to be very effective.

So for the short term, the stress or pressure or anxiety will improve. But then I find another trigger comes along and then it reemerges. And that same stress, pressure, and anxiety in my life situation seems to stay the same.

And I often find myself being aware of it and then thinking that I've managed to get rid of it. But then waking up spontaneously at 4:00 AM in the morning in a panic or full of fear. And thinking, "Oh, God, it is back again." And I'm just wondering how to get rid of it for good?

ECKHART TOLLE: Right. Well, great. Thank you. Well, maybe to make it easier, instead of getting rid of it for good, see if it's possible to get rid of it in the present moment, just now. Because forever is a long time in the future.

So I can really relate to that. Because I have still distant memories of when this happened to me a lot, waking up in the middle of the night in the state of intense fear and panic. And so I would recommend to use that as your spiritual practice.

And I'll tell you, tell you right now, use that as your spiritual practice. When it happens, you will notice that there's an emotion there that is-- we could call it anxiety or fear. It's not pleasant. And emotion lives in the body somewhere, maybe the chest area, or around your stomach. Chest tends to be you feel it, or sometimes you feel it everywhere.

Then there's mind activity. There's certain thoughts in your mind. And they are linked, these thoughts, to some extent are a reflection of the emotion. So I believe, you can probably confirm it if I'm right, fearful thoughts can arise. Anxiety thoughts, anxiety-inducing thoughts can arise. And there's a link between the emotion and the thinking that you do. And the thinking that you do gives even more energy to the emotion. It's called a vicious circle.

SERENA: Yes.

ECKHART TOLLE: But you wake. You become aware that you are experiencing this on two levels, the emotional level as an energetic feeling in the body, and the mental level, so certain

thoughts in your mind. Now if you have some awareness, you also realize, at that moment, you're not under any kind of threat because you're in your bed at night. So there's no immediate threat to your life in this [AUDIO OUT].

This implies, by the way, that you're able to step a little bit behind the thoughts and become aware of the thoughts that are happening to you. I'm saying happening to you because these are not thoughts that you choose to think. These are thoughts that happen to you. It seems that you have no choice in the matter.

And that's how the mind is when the awareness is not yet strong enough. It's even wrong to say that I am thinking when this happens. It would be more accurate to say, "I am being thought."

So thinking happens to you in the same way that the beating of your heart happens to you. And so you wouldn't say, "I'm beating my heart." No. You can feel your heart beat. It just happens. It has a life of its own, so to speak.

But when you recognize that these thoughts are not a reflection of any reality right now, that they are creating more anxiety. So you address it first on the level of thought. You recognize these thoughts as not being helpful. Because sometimes the mind tricks you into believing that you really need to be worried.

SERENA: Yes.

ECKHART TOLLE: "It's vital that you think about this right now. Because otherwise, your life will fall apart. You have to think about this now." This is, of course, a lie. It's a thought that is a lie that tells you unless you think about this now, things will fall apart. They won't. The opposite is true. There's nothing at that moment that you can do.

So when you recognize these thoughts as ultimately not only useless, futile, and creating suffering for yourself, the arising of suffering is there in your mind. At that moment, the element of choice comes in, when you've recognized that. Because you have already, a little, you've

separated yourself a little bit from the movement of thought. And then there's an awareness, now, behind it. At that moment, you have a choice. "Do I want to continue to think these things? Or would I rather not continue to think these thoughts?"

And perhaps, then, you will say, "Well, I would rather be free." Of course, it doesn't mean you're free yet. But the realization that you don't need them and you don't want them, they have no useful purpose. Well, they have one purpose, but it's not a useful one. They strengthen your egoic sense of self.

SERENA: Yes.

ECKHART TOLLE: The false sense of self that loves its problems. So now that an element of choice has come in, and your choice is, "Where do I choose to direct my awareness?" Because at the moment your conscious awareness is being absorbed by thoughts. They gobble up all your consciousness, your attention, like little gremlins, little monsters.

So you have a choice. I have a choice where to direct my attention. Once I've recognized I don't want, I don't need those thoughts, they are destructive. They're making me unhappy. Can I direct my awareness elsewhere?

Yes, I can. And therefore, I recommend breathing and inner body awareness. You did the inner body awareness before? Inner body awareness is taking your attention away from thinking and placing your conscious attention into the inner energy field of your body.

You begin with your hands, for example. Feel the energy in your hands. You're in bed. OK? You've just decided not to pursue those thoughts, not to go after, be dragged along by these thoughts.

Let's say your eyes are closed. And where are my hands? Don't move your hands. Just find out if you still have hands. Do I still have hands? Not looking at them--it's dark, anyway. I'm not looking at my hands. And I'm not touching anything.

How can I know if my hands are still there? Oh, I can feel. There's an energy field there that I can feel. That's the beginning of inner body awareness. You did the meditation before this came.

So you've already taken some attention away from mind activity and put it into your body. Then you go into other parts of the body, feet, feel hands and feet at the same time. It sounds-- the mind may trick you into saying, "You're not solving any of your problems by doing this!"

[LAUGHS]

That's another lie. And then, gradually, you can sense, perhaps, the entire feeling of aliveness in your body. And then you lie there. And you begin to be aware of your breathing, also. Because your breath moves into the body that the two combined can be very powerful to help your being inhabiting your body.

And you will notice there's very little consciousness left for thinking when you're in your body. So by choice, you've now exercised your free will, your choice, not by fighting the mind or making the mind into an enemy, but the simple choice of taking my attention elsewhere. And then after a few minutes, you may find it feels very good, actually, to inhabit your body.

However, there may still be some of this emotional energy. And the anxiety probably will not go away immediately. The anxiety is still there because it's lived there for quite a long time. I call it pain-body. It's an old energy field of accumulated emotion that has lived in you for a long time. And that's still there.

So when you go into the body, you will be able to feel many parts of the body are fine. But here, perhaps, there's still this energy field, you feel pain here. And that's fine. This is part of the present moment.

You accept that this is still there. But it doesn't consume you anymore. It is surrounded by a field of aliveness. So you're not feeding it anymore with your thinking. But it's still there.

For right now, there isn't too much you can do. Sometimes you can see, "Well, perhaps I can breathe it out as much as you can, allow it to be released." That works for some people. And, again, it requires your attention, the attention. You allow it to be released.

[BREATHES OUT]

That may work. But whether or not it completely goes, it doesn't matter. You are bigger than it. You're much vaster than it.

That is a very powerful practice. Because now you're beginning to no longer be the slave of your conditioned mind. And it's a very important step in human evolution, your evolution, to find that freedom from being totally at the mercy of your mind. And there are many, many humans who reach the end of their lives and have never found it.

So I would even suggest, no matter what you have achieved in your personal life, this would be, or is the most important thing that could happen to you, or that you could achieve. I'm not sure if I want to use the term achieve. Because it's also true that it already-- it wants to happen through you.

This realization, this awakening wants to happen through you. So you just have to allow it to happen, get out of the way and allow it to happen. But, again, use those moments at night and make that into a spiritual practice.

I found that inner body awareness, particularly at night, now it's kind of second nature. I don't give it too much attention. But when I first discovered inner body awareness, it was so wonderful. I would sometimes drink a cup of strong coffee so that I didn't go to sleep so that I could continue to feel this beautiful inner body. But I... don't do that.

SERENA: I think my heart rate's fast enough for 4 AM. I don't need coffee.

[LAUGHS]

ECKHART TOLLE: So that's a very, very powerful practice. It's... exercise your choice. I wouldn't say this to anybody. Because there are still many people who do not have this-- there's some degree of awareness is necessary for you to even understand what I'm talking about. So I wouldn't recommend this yet to everybody. Because they wouldn't even know what I'm talking about.

So the awareness needs to be there, that you must realize that this is not what you choose right now for yourself. These thoughts are destructive, make you unhappy, and so on. And gradually, you become free.

So this challenging thing that you're experiencing can actually be the most helpful thing. Because that is precisely where you need to practice and then your Presence deepens and you become more aligned with the "Deep I." Does it make sense?

SERENA: Yes. It does. It does make sense. I think that my challenge, other than that, is then the next day, or the day after, there'll be other triggers that trigger that same point when I'm awake or walking around. So it kind of feels like a vicious loop.

ECKHART TOLLE: But the gain in consciousness that you achieve during those moments at night will be also there in other situations. So if you concentrate on that, you will notice that truth. You will deal with the challenges of daily life with more consciousness than before.

So no matter where you start. But the best starting point for you, I think, is there. And then you will feel it also manifesting in other areas of your life. And your time goes forward tonight one hour.

SERENA: I know. So it's 5 AM.

ECKHART TOLLE: Right.

[LAUGHS]

SERENA: Thank you so much.

ECKHART TOLLE: You're very welcome. Thank you. I wish you well in your awareness practice.

SIBYL CHAVIS: Thank you, Serena. We have time for our next questioner. And it's Mark from Jacksonville, Florida.

MARK: Hi. Hi, Eckhart. Thank you so much. It's good to be with you.

ECKHART TOLLE: Thank you, you too. Nice painting behind you, a beautiful painting. Is it a painting?

MARK: It's just a tapestry.

ECKHART TOLLE: Oh, yes. Lovely. Yes.

MARK: [LAUGHS] So I know this is something that you struggled with. So I feel really comfortable asking you. And so far, everything that we talked about, I feel like I'm on the right path with it.

But I know you struggled a lot with depression and thoughts of, like, kind of ending your life situation. I kind of feel like I'm there. But your teachings have really helped me become aware of the mind chatter. And it does help it, give it a lot of space.

The problem I seem to be having is the intense emotions. I feel like I'm walking around with a broken leg. And it's so hard to ignore or be present with. It's keeping me up all night, too.

I find that if I don't take some kind of sleeping aid, I just don't get to sleep. And then it's hard to carry myself throughout daily life. And I just find that as just so grasping.

And so far, I found that your teachings are what really helps. And it's, like, I get it. But I still feel so trapped in that emotional stuff. And I know this is something that you used to get out of it.

So I'm really wanting to do that, too. I just feel constantly anxious all the time. Like, even when I am just bringing it forward and I'm aware of it, I still feel a lot of uncomfortable wherever I go. You know?

And I know that I'm extremely aware of it. And in some cases, actually, it gets to drive me a little crazy, too, the more I become aware of it. Because it's kind of painful, you know?

ECKHART TOLLE: Yes. So is that associated with certain recurring thoughts in your mind, those emotions? How are they reflected in your mind? Are the thoughts reflecting those emotions? Or what is the relationship between what your thinking mind is doing and the emotions that you feel?

MARK: My mind always tells me, "Like, just give up. It's really, really hard. Life's always going to be hard. It's going to be hard for you to get up in the morning and keep your job, keep your family."

So I sometimes feel it's a thought. Sometimes it's just easily triggered to life's circumstances. And then sometimes it's just the feeling that's there. And then the thoughts just come in, like, "Oh, you see?"

But everything that you've said has been helpful. I'm aware of all that. And I can give it space. I feel like that's kind of just where I am.

ECKHART TOLLE: Yes. Well, that's already an important step in the right direction, to give it space, to become aware of your thoughts without having to completely believe in what your

thoughts are saying. For example, nihilistic kind of thoughts, "What's the point of it all, why am I even here, it's all meaningless," or whatever thoughts are saying, you recognize those thoughts without believing in them. So that there's a witnessing presence behind the thoughts. And there can also be a witnessing presence for the emotions.

So you feel the emotions. You allow them to be there. And you are not the emotion. You're the space around the emotion, which is the space of awareness.

By accepting the emotion that you feel-- accepting means although that you are no longer feeding the emotion with your thinking. That's the one thing you need to cut the link as much as possible between your thought activity and the emotions that you feel. And you cut the link by recognizing these thoughts as not true, futile, destructive, unhappiness-inducing, so that you can deal with the emotion without continuing to fuel the emotion with your thinking.

Now a very important thing also to free you especially from thoughts of-- do you sometimes have thoughts of even despair? Or it seems from what you're saying, you're bordering on feeling desperate almost?

MARK: Yes.

ECKHART TOLLE: Of course, we go back to the primary practice, which is present moment awareness, so that you live less in your mind and more in your body and in your sense perceptions.

So when you go out in the morning, or even when you get up in the morning, giving more attention not only to the inner body, as already described to the previous person, is very important, inner body awareness to free you, so I want to repeat that, because that would be helpful to you also. And in addition to that, become more acutely aware of whatever surrounds you, sensory perceptions, whether it's looking at things, listening things, touching things, give it more attention.

That also brings you more into the present moment where the mind-made entity cannot survive in the present moment. And in the present moment also, there's nothing to fear.

And, again, to come back to what I said earlier, as much as possible, don't interpret the present moment. Don't say it's good or bad. It just as it is, this moment. And you more acutely live in the present as if there was nothing else but the present. Of course, you're fully aware of what you have to do in an hour's time. That's on a practical level. That's fine.

On a practical level, you can use future. On a practical level, you can use the past, if you need to remember something. But other than the practical level, make the present moment the center of your attention rather than past and future.

That's a very powerful thing. That is, sometimes people consider even-- they get so desperate, as I did, I couldn't live with myself any longer. And I considered suicide quite a few times in the distant past.

But that's not very helpful. I would recommend a different, a more positive kind of suicide, so to speak. And that is the suicide of your false self. When really you can't take anymore, then you just become so present that you die to the unhappy self, which is mind-created and has, of course, a strong emotional element, too.

Die to your unhappy self. Don't feed the unhappy self. This is the human. That is who you are on the karmic level, the human level. Die to the unhappy self, for example, by being intensely present. Then the Being emerges more gradually, emerges more fully. And the unhappy human with its difficult karma, just as I had, on the human level, I had heavy karma, for example, a very difficult childhood, a very unhappy childhood. So

I had difficult karma. I was born into a difficult life situation. Other people have even more difficult, but difficult enough. So commit positive suicide by eliminating as much as possible the human, and simply doing it not by fighting it, but by being intensely present. Just live in the present moment as much as you can. Acknowledge the moment, appreciate, acknowledge.

Another word that's sometimes used that may not be acceptable to your conditioned mind, but it's actually quite powerful, too, gratitude is the term. Gratitude. But not gratitude for some abstract idea. But gratitude for the present moment.

All that it means is to appreciate the sense perceptions, to appreciate the aliveness of the world around you in the present moment, to give it attention. That appreciation, that gratitude, starting as I said earlier, when you look at the sky in the morning, give it attention. Really look. Sense it. Feel it.

The tree, the weather, I love weather. I love all kinds of weather. I give attention to the weather. And you are in Florida. You get all kinds of changing weathers.

It's just, you could get, sometimes a tropical thunderstorm, then the cloud formation. And the sun is back, the warm air. Just wonderful to enjoy different kinds of, with all sensory perception, whether it be a present moment, present moment, present moment, that is, you would die to the unhappy entity, the unhappy self.

It's a gradual death. But it's a pleasant, a very joyful death. But the unhappy self in you does not want that. It has all kinds of tricks to convince you that you should continue to be extremely unhappy and that you have ample justification for being unhappy.

It will explain to you. Try to get in your mind why you are entirely justified in being unhappy with your life. They're all lies. But if you're not careful, you believe in what the mind is telling you. Almost anybody could do that. I can find reasons why I should be unhappy.

[LAUGHS]

And some of people have more reasons. But yet recognize this as an illusion, as ultimately a lie, so that the unhappy self begins to dissolve.

So it has all kinds of tricks. It will try to trick you-- when you are-- you lose consciousness a little, like, for example, when you get tired. Or you're very tired after work. Or you've taken alcohol or something else and there's a loss of consciousness. Or even you watch a movie that is very negative or has a lot of violence in it, that can also diminish your consciousness and your vibrational frequency can go down.

So it'll probably take time to wait for moments to catch you, produce certain thoughts that then you believe in, and then you call it my life. The entire thing that you call my life is ultimately a fiction. Because it is your life situation.

Your life is inseparable from the present moment. This moment, me sitting here, speaking, breathing, looking at you, looking at the sky, feeling the aliveness in the inner body, that is my life. And there's no problem in it ever.

My life situation is what happened to me in the past, what might happen to me in the future. That's my life situation. And that is external events. That's OK.

Do not confuse your life with a narrative in your mind that is your life situation. It's a story you tell yourself. And it's not a happy story. Not just in yours, in many people's cases, it's not a happy story. But if you're completely identified with a narrative in your mind, that is you. You think that's you.

It's not. You are the Being. You are the "Deep I." And the rest is your karma, the karmic entity. It's not who you are. I'm saying *karma*. It's Eastern. It's an Eastern term. It's the unconscious conditioning that you inherit, that you're born into and inherit.

So your life is perfectly fine. Your life is now. And what before you called your life is an unhappy story. It was a sense of self that was inseparable from an unhappy narrative. That's an amazing realization when you really see that. You become free. That's freedom.

MARK: I feel like I have been seeing that a little bit. But I guess because it comes back, I feel like I failed or something. You know? Or, like, I'm, like, "Oh, darn it." But then I am aware that that is a thought, too.

ECKHART TOLLE: Yes. Yes. You never fail. Because the moment you realize you failed, you are there. So even to realize that you lost yourself, for that realization to happen is, "Oh!"

So there's no failure. There's only a gradual learning process, not in the conventional sense, but an intensification of Presence. Every time you go to sleep, so to speak, you become unconscious. And then you wake up again. So your karma actually becomes your teacher, then. Because that's the ground for your practice. And you free yourself. And then you emerge as the being.

And there will still be remnants of your karma may still be floating around until the end of your life in this body. That's why it will no longer be a problem. There's still remnants of old karma, maybe, floating around. But they're no longer the source of any kind of unhappiness in you. So that's your past.

MARK: It's OK that it arises. I just don't identify with it anymore.

ECKHART TOLLE: No, that's right. I believe you're already on your way. So I hope this little bit additional what I said helps you, in addition to what you've already been practicing.

MARK: It was exactly what I needed. And I'm so glad that you allowed this opening for me to be able to speak with you. Because I really look up to you like you're my teacher. So thank you for allowing this.

ECKHART TOLLE: Thank you. Thank you.

MARK: Thanks.

SIBYL CHAVIS: Wonderful, Eckhart. That's the end of our time, the end of the session, and the last question.

ECKHART TOLLE: Yes.

SIBYL CHAVIS: So thank you so much.

ECKHART TOLLE: OK. So this is the end of our afternoon-- well, afternoon for me. For other people, it's the middle of the night. Or it might be the morning. Well, thank you. That was a lovely, lovely day spent with all of you. And thank you, Sybil, for your help also and your graceful presence.

SIBYL CHAVIS: And thank you, too, Eckhart. Thank you. And thank you all so much for joining us today for the first session. And we're now going to offer you the opportunity, for those of you who are interested, to participate in an opportunity to connect with your fellow students in *The School of Awakening*.

So, again, you can go to the Community tab on the main page section. And if you click on it and you say Ready, you'll be connected with another participant in the program. And we'll also open up the chat section again, if you would like to just participate with the chat session.

And as Eckhart mentioned earlier today, those of you who are in Europe will have daylight savings time. So just remember that. And please enjoy the rest of your evening or morning, wherever you may be.

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