

FOUR APPLICATIONS OF MINDFULNESS

The first four Wings of Change are the Four Applications of Mindfulness:

1. the body
2. feelings
3. the mind
4. phenomena

When you become a yidam, the four kinds of mindfulness will manifest as the four doors of your mandala. In Vajrayana, each yidam is connected with a tantra, a mantra, and a mandala. *Tantra* is the ritual text and practice, *mantra* is the name and the sound that you produce, and *mandala* is the sacred environment. The *yidam* is the deity—the fully enlightened Buddha—that is the principal being within that pure environment. Why is the environment pure? It is not pure because it dropped out of the air or because it has grown out of a lotus. It is pure because the cause is pure. The cause is the positive work we do. The result is pure because of the positive actions that the individual did to become a Buddha. So our practice of the four kinds of mindfulness actually creates the cause to have four good doors at your nice mandala house later. Maybe they will be made out of brass or oak. (I am joking!)

Introducing the Four Applications of Mindfulness

In brief, for mindfulness of the body, there are three bodies. We have an outer body, an inner body, and a common body. We can call the common body a “secret body,” but since this teaching is non-Vajrayana, we have to call it “common.” It is common between the outer and the inner bodies. For mindfulness of feelings, there are also three kinds. We have feelings of acknowledging joy, feelings of acknowledging suffering, and the in-between or neutral feeling. Mindfulness of mind deals with consciousness. Mind is the same as consciousness. This mindfulness focuses on what we call ourselves: “I,” or “the one,” or whatever. Mindfulness of phenomena deals with every reality or

phenomena outside of us.

Why do we need mindfulness on these four? What do we look for?

We look for our body as a base for our mind or consciousness. We call wherever we live “home,” right? We go home. Home is where our base is. I always say that our body is like our apartment. We sort of sit in there, live in there, use it, and enjoy it. And when the apartment becomes unserviceable and not livable, we have to get out. Just like if we don’t pay the rent, the landlord will kick us out. So, it’s the same thing: if we don’t take care of our body, if the body cannot function, we get kicked out. We have to leave; we can’t live there any more. Since the body is the base of our functioning, mindfulness of it is very important.

But there is more. Who is it that goes to our home or house or apartment? It is “I.” But how do “I” go? When “I” take my body there, “I” get there, right? So our functioning is really limited to the functioning of the body. The body is how we work. We look at it as a base for our functioning. The base is the home of consciousness. And if we cannot stay in our home, we die. Death means the separation of the body and the mind. When we die, we have lost our physical identity. Each person can be identified by a physical shape and face—size, hair color, features. We look at someone’s body and say, “Hey, I know you. You are Joan, and I am Mary.” That’s functioning on the basis of the body. The body is the identity base of the individual’s functioning. So that’s why body mindfulness is important.

The mind or consciousness is the “person who is in there,” the person we mean when we say, “That’s me.” We have to have mindfulness of our mind because we think that’s who we are. I’m not saying that we actually are the mind. I am not saying that. But we think that’s who we are. When we search for this “I,” we’re not going to find it anywhere; we simply live on the idea that the mind is our self. Or maybe, if we are a very intelligent person, we may begin to think that besides the mind, we have another identity. That is a different issue. I don’t want to touch that just now. For the time being, let’s say that we don’t see much difference between the self and the mind. So, for that reason, it is necessary that we develop mindfulness of the mind.

Feelings are the way that every single thing we encounter affects us. We enjoy, we suffer, we cry, we laugh. All that is due to the feelings we experience. We have to pay a lot of attention to mindfulness of feelings because that’s what we consume, that’s what we live on.

Phenomena are the things “out there” that we deal with every day—other people, their thoughts and feelings, our surroundings, objects like eyeglasses and watches, everything. The phenomena we encounter are the basis for our mind functioning. They create some kind of

relationship, a way of communicating with others. We say, “I, my, his, theirs. This is mine. That belongs to them.” Actually, that very connection between “I” and “my” is what creates jealousy and hatred. We draw divisions in our mind between what belongs to me and what belongs to him or to them, right? Those divisions—you, me, yours, mine, all of them—are the total basis of anger and hatred. That is why mindfulness of mind and mindfulness of phenomena are important every day.

Introducing the Four Noble Truths.

Actually, these 37 Wings of Change that you are going to hear about will all be connected with the Four Noble Truths, the first teaching of the Buddha. So, the four kinds of mindfulness will also be dealing with the Four Noble Truths.

You know about the Four Noble Truths. When the Buddha started sharing his experience, he said, “First, I experienced suffering, just as everybody does.” So, the first truth is *suffering*. Like it or not, we all experience tremendous suffering. Either we acknowledge it, or we don’t acknowledge it. That’s a different matter.

Some people even label pain as joy, right? They inflict real torture on their bodies and think it is physical joy. I don’t know whether it’s physical joy or mental joy, but some people enjoy pain and acknowledge that feeling as joy. That’s why we have S&M! In reality, everything we experience is pain. The bottom line, Buddha says, is that we don’t know the difference. Since we have never experienced true joy, we label various different feelings as joy. I believe the true joy is something fantastic. It is beyond our imagination. When we try to look within our experience for an example of joy, what do we get? Each individual will have a different picture. Some people will say, “The beautiful scenery of Hawaii with the ocean and the beaches is joy.” Certain people may name sexuality. We get so many different pictures, because we really don’t know what joy is. Until we are free of certain delusions, we are not going to experience true joy.

Because we don’t know true joy, whatever we experience is suffering. At least we feel a little bit different, and we take that difference as joy, even if it is sometimes a painful difference! Whether it is the suffering of suffering, the suffering of change, or pervasive suffering, basically it is all total suffering. That is the First Noble Truth.

The Second Noble Truth is the *cause of suffering*—where this pain is coming from. Is it just natural; does it pop up by itself? Or is it the result of some cause and effect? Buddha says there is a cause. That is the Second Noble Truth.

Third, a question comes: Is there a way out? Is there an end to that pain? Buddha says, “Yes. I experienced the end.” So the end of suffering is called *cessation*, right? Total cessation of suffering—that’s the Third Noble Truth.

Finally, the method comes, *the path* or way to get out of suffering. That’s the Fourth Noble Truth.

Questions and Answers

Audience: You were saying that pain is pleasure, and there’s some misperception there. When this pain-pleasure is on a great scale, which of course is just illusion, what are some remedies?

Rimpoche: First, acknowledgement. That’s where you need wisdom. Wisdom really discriminates what is what. Our habitual patterns are such a thing that we just take it. No matter whatever it is, we take it, right? We take pain. We take it as pleasure, or we take it as pain, or we are just helpless. That is one of the human qualities. We can really take it. Some people will take pains voluntarily, as we see in society today. That’s what’s happening.

It’s the lack of wisdom that’s the problem here. If they don’t have wisdom, some people would like to remain in jail. They think, “I’m in a prison and that’s OK. I have certain restrictions, fine, but I get free food, free accommodations, my bills are being paid, and I get free medical treatment. I’m going to be better off here than if I were free in society.” If you look from that angle, that guy enjoys living in prison. But it is a prison! Wisdom will tell this person, “Hey, what am I doing? I’m in a prison. This is a prison. This is not right. Though I get food and shelter, this is a prison. It is not right for me.” Without wisdom, you don’t see that. Likewise, pain. If you don’t look at pain as pain, but as pleasure, then no matter how much it hurts, it will still keep on going.

Audience: What about the pain a dancer gets from breaking her toes in order to learn and get a good result, or a violinist hurting in practice to achieve a pleasurable result?

Rimpoche: I don't think the result of breaking your toe is pleasure. You will have better pleasure if you don't break your toe. I think these are separate things. The wisdom of discrimination will see this.

Audience: But the other example is playing the violin, and you do get that pain in your fingers, for example. After a while, you associate that pain with the pleasure response that you get from playing well.

Rimpoche: No. It is a decision you make that the pain is worth it. You do get pain in your finger playing the violin, but that pain is worth it. It is something you can take. The pleasure you get from playing the violin is worth the pain it causes you. It all works that way, but there is a slight difference here. It's not the pain that gives you the joy, but the music. In the process you may suffer pain in your finger, but you decide that it's worth it.

Mindfulness of the Four

So what does mindfulness do here? Mindfulness helps you to concentrate on one of these objects: the body, or feelings, or the mind, or phenomena, or on all four together. It depends on the individual. When you focus on one of these things, you also have the appearance of it. This is a little complicated. After concentrating, you have some kind of observation of what you concentrated on. That again is held by memory, then checked and analyzed by wisdom, and then memory will hold that.

Out of the fifty-two mental faculties, memory and wisdom are the ones we use here. Mindfulness is really part of memory. You remember, you notice, you keep the focus on the mind or body or feelings or phenomena. To be able to focus, you need wisdom. Wisdom will check and analyze to see what kind of mind you are looking at, what kind of body you are looking at, and how that insight is relevant to your spiritual development. And then you fix the idea and hand it over to memory. Memory will watch and focus. Though we call that faculty "memory," it is not memory in the normal Western understanding. The Western understanding of memory is that you put something in a memory bank, and whenever you need it, you take it out. Or, it comes up when you

push a button, like on a computer. I'm not talking about that type of memory.

The type of memory I mean is, "I'm remembering now." That means concentrating now, focusing now. I'm talking about the memory that is held by focus or concentration. So on what do you concentrate? How do you concentrate? For example, how do you concentrate on your body?

The first is body mindfulness

What I'm going to tell you here is not what you hear in the usual teachings on mindfulness meditation. Normally, you hear that you should observe your feelings in your body. I'm not going to say that. I'm going to approach it from a deeper, spiritual point of view. So, from that point of view, before you fix the body in your memory, you do a little analyzing of the body itself.

The outer body I'm talking about here is the physical body. Actually there are three bodies: outer, inner, and common. In tantra, we would talk about the subtle body and the sacred body, and so on. But this is a sutra teaching. In sutra we have to hide a little bit under the word "common." But actually the big idea behind that word is the sacred body.

The inner body is actually the senses—eye, ear, nose, touch, taste, all the senses. And then they say that inside the eyeball that we can see, there is some kind of little physical thing that is light nature, on which the eye consciousness actually remains. They're not talking about the retina. It is rather deeper in there. You probably can't see it in a microscope. In English, we could call this the "eye sense power," which means the base where the eye consciousness remains. It is a psychic form within the eye, ear, nose, or other sense organ that is the base for the sense consciousnesses. In sutra, they call this psychic base both inner and outer, in other words, "common" because it belongs to both the inner and outer bodies.

So, there is an inner physical body inside and an outer physical body outside. When you focus on that, you follow the sensations that you experience within the body. That is the normal thing we do in body mindfulness. Even normal meditation instructions tell you that. But here, we go one step beyond and ask: "What kind of physical body are we talking about? Where does it come from? What it is made of? What is it by nature?" This is the wisdom part that our mind has to analyze.

So what is this body? It is nothing but our own karmic production. Our karma created our physical body. Though our parents contributed their little seeds, the body we have is the result of our karma. That's why our body and appearance are different from other people. Even twins,

although they look alike, also look different. This is because of individual karma. Look at handmade things. Each always has something individual about it. When things are machine-made by mass production, everything looks the same. But handmade things look different. Even if one person makes two plates by hand at the same time, they will look slightly different because of the way they were made. Likewise, our physical body will give us a separate identity because of our individual karma. Our body is not our father's fault, not our mother's fault. They manufactured it, OK. But still, we look different because of our karma. The body is coming from its original karmic source.

So, where is it coming from? Why it is coming? Because we made it, we have the karma, that's why it is coming up. We have the conditions provided by our parents, and consciousness entered into that. So there is an occupant in that body, and then it started growing. We all know that. But what we don't know is whether that body is clean and pure or dirty and filthy. We always like to say that our body is clean and pure. Unfortunately, from the spiritual point of view, it's not. From the medical point of view, I'm sure it is clean. If it's not clean, you're sick, right? But from the spiritual point of view, unfortunately, the body is impure, because it's a "contaminated" body. A body that comes from the karma to be reborn in future bodies is the result of the Second Noble Truth. Its nature is the First Noble Truth. Therefore, it is contaminated or impure. I'm sorry to say that. It is bad news. People don't like that. But it is.

I saw a TV show yesterday where they used a computer to show how a person changes over time. They showed a picture of a baby and then how the baby changes as it grows. So you can see what you will look like at fifty, sixty, seventy, and eighty. If you survive till ninety, they showed what you are going to look like, full of wrinkles, no hair, and so on. I thought it was really interesting. You see the natural process of how the body changes its shape. The program tried to show whether it is possible to stop that process and reverse it. Then they showed two couples somewhere in California who wrote the book *Life Extension*. The whole program was publicity for that idea. The couples were taking a tremendous number of vitamins and some kind of orange-colored drink in the morning. There is this vitamin, that vitamin, this enzyme, that enzyme. Their home is completely filled up with vitamin bottles, and they're constantly taking something, twenty-four hours a day. I'm not against that; believe me. But when I looked at their faces, they didn't look great. They didn't have the shining majestic look of a healthy person. Maybe something was wrong with the television picture, but it was not there. They had nice makeup and hairstyle and were made to look the best ever possible. However, they didn't look that healthy. And then immediately they showed another doctor who said that if you are taking too many of these vitamins, it is not good.

That program made me think carefully, because actually the physical body is like that. That's why it is impure. It will deteriorate. Our peak level is in our teenage time, or even before the beginning of the teenage years. That is the time where you have the best immune system and when you function the best. Thereafter, the body has to go down and down and down. It is the way it is. If you can reverse it, great, there's no argument. We all want that. But the body may not have the capability to function for so long, because it has its limitation. And that's why it is the result of the Second Noble Truth and the nature of the First Noble Truth. It is the body's nature; it will go down.

Then this question came up in my head: "If you are saying the body is the cause of suffering and base of suffering, then what can you substitute for it?" If there is no substitute, then I'd better not talk about it, because we just have to live with it. So, can you manage without a physical body? Apparently yes. There is something called the "uncontaminated wisdom body." I call it "pure body and pure mind." But it is not accessible to us at this moment. I can't get into detail on the uncontaminated wisdom body because then I won't be talking about what I'm supposed to talk about. Only this much: this body will be accessible at the first bhumi stage. There are ten stages. When you obtain the first stage, you have gained some wisdom of knowing the true reality of existence. Then you will be able to access the uncontaminated wisdom body. Normally, this body functions within the individual as part of the physical body. It can almost substitute for the physical body, too. Until you reach the uncontaminated wisdom body, as long as the body is contaminated, it is then nature of suffering, the First Noble Truth, and the cause of suffering, the Second Noble Truth.

Where does that suffering come from? When you really search, the body provides the basis for all our suffering. It is also the body that provides the basis for all our development, all our strength and energy; however, it is also the base for all our sufferings. If I look for the First Noble Truth within me, I will not find anything except this body, whether it is the physical body or the mental body or the emotional body. That is what we have. All of our sufferings, whether they are physical, mental, or emotional, have their basis there. Not only that, the feelings we experience, the physical feelings and the mental feelings combined together, will also deteriorate. When you search for the truth of suffering in yourself, you are going to find it on these three bases. Beyond that, you are not going to find any other suffering.

The body that provides the basis of suffering now also gives us the base to remain in suffering continually. All the good things we do are done on the basis of the body, and so are all the bad things. So if we are mindful of the body, we will be able to stop or reduce the bad things that we have been constantly developing through the body, and grow the positive things we also do on the

basis of the body. So that's why body mindfulness is very important, particularly for us. Mindfulness of mind and mindfulness of body are the two most important things because that is where we get problems.

Mindfulness boils down to awareness. In Tibetan we call it *dren pa*, which directly translated means "memory." That translation doesn't quite work for us. That's why I had to say that it's not memory as in putting things in the memory bank, but actually "concentration." I had to say that because I'm thinking in Tibetan, which is my problem. Translators will translate *dren pa* as "memory." That is also right. But here it is "awareness," the awareness of the body.

The same applies to mindfulness of feelings.

If we didn't have feelings, we wouldn't have suffering and we wouldn't have joy. Actually, most of our feelings are feelings of suffering. We are not very convinced of what Buddha said about our never experiencing true joy, but really, we don't know exactly what joy is. So most of the feelings that we do get are suffering. If people think they should not have feelings or that they should stop their feelings and just feel lukewarm, that's not right. Feeling is necessary. But you have to have mindfulness. Otherwise, feeling just provides the basis for attachment and anger. That's why feeling mindfulness is important.

Mind mindfulness is important because mind changes every second.

It's as if you can't make up your mind. That's a joke. You do make up your mind, but the mind changes constantly, actually seventy-five times in the time you snap your fingers. That's less than a second. It not only changes, but also different minds continuously pop up one after another. Is each a separate mind? No. It is one mind that is constantly changing. Trungpa Rinpoche had a very nice way of expressing that: "the continuation of discontinuity." Basically the mind continues, but that continuity is made up of a series of discontinuities put together. One mind changes seventy-five times in less than a second!

Our mind goes back and forth, back and forth, between like and dislike, enjoyment and suffering, irritation and misery. All this goes on, changing all the time. That's why mind mindfulness is important, because it ensures the continuity. Normally meditation teachers teach you mindfulness meditation by saying, "Watch your mind. Any different thoughts that come up, peel them off. Don't be too hot, don't be too cool, but remain at a reasonable temperature and continue

to move.” That’s what you normally hear from mindfulness meditation teachers everywhere. But the point here is slightly different. Mindfulness should make us able to see the changes more clearly and to be aware of what kind of mind is coming up.

I often say that mind is like a big, colorless crystal lampshade. Mental faculties pop up within the mind, one after the other, like toast out of a toaster. Every faculty that comes up creates a different color in the mind, almost like a light bulb. When anger comes up, a red light bulb turns on. When people look at us from distance, they say, “There’s a big red crystal lampshade.” And when something like attachment or lust comes up, the color changes to green or blue, a cool color. That is how the mind normally functions.

But when we go deeper into it, we see that the mind changes seventy-five times within that period. That is called subtle change. Just now, subtle changes are very difficult to notice. But we can definitely feel and experience the gross changes. We know our mind has changed through feeling the symptoms, like frustration, or sadness, or anger. These feelings are the results of gross changes. When we feel them, we know our mind has moved somewhere else. Just now that’s the level where we are. But that level of mindfulness is very gross. We can go a little beyond that level through mindfulness meditation. We don’t have to wait for the gross symptoms to know that our mind has gone somewhere else. We can learn to be a little alert before that. We can watch the mind and perhaps avoid experiencing the symptoms that we don’t want to experience.

Mindfulness of mind is also considered to be one of the direct powers for overcoming fear. Fear in this case does not mean all fears. Our biggest fear is that of discontinuing the self. Sometimes we get afraid for nothing. We don’t know what we are afraid of, but we get afraid of something. It is actually two things. We suffered tremendously earlier [when we lost our lives] and that experience is somehow knocking on our door. Another fear is of getting completely lost. “I am going to get lost in this whole, huge existence. I’m going to disappear.” Especially when we begin to see that the mind is changing, that it is impermanent, changing every second, we have the biggest fear—the fear of losing ourselves. “I’ll be lost somewhere. I will not be there. I’ll be gone.” Just now somehow we know that even after death, we would like to continue. Believe me, we do. We would like to accept death, nobody can argue with that, but still we are looking for something to continue.

That’s why people like reincarnation. They think they can come back and enjoy life again. A lot of them say, “When I come back, in my next life, I’ll do this and that.” So when we begin to see we’re not going to live forever, there’s a fear we connect with that. The mind is changing, but we don’t see the continuity [between this life and the next one.] The continuity is there, definitely. But

it will be different than we expect. We're not going to come back as we are; that's for sure. We're not going to recognize our friends. Sometimes you read that Tibetan reincarnate lamas recognize the same articles, like the varja, bell, or rosary from their previous life. That's there, but I think we are talking different things. Under normal circumstances, when you come back, you don't know what form you are going to take. Certainly we're not going to come back in the same way. We are not going to have the same friends as we had before. At one time or another, we have had some kind of relationship with everybody else in our lives. No doubt about that. But still, we're not going to come back with the same awareness. We are not going to continue the conversation where we left off yesterday. We are not going to pick that up. That's really true.

So I think we are afraid of disappearing. The moment you talk about reincarnation, people see some kind of escape from the fear of not continuing. But we have to remember that the continuation will be in a different form. The earlier Tibetan lamas used to say, "Today's wonderful looking person by this time next year can have two horns on the head and a lot of hair on the body." There were referring to a yak. Conditions are always different. That is the impermanence point of it. Even the conditions of today's life are different from tomorrow's life. Conditions really change minute-to-minute, second-to-second. We must accept that. We must also learn to live with these changing conditions. The changing conditions are not completely out of our control; we can make a difference. That's one of the advantages of impermanence: you have room to play within that.

The fourth application is dharma mindfulness.

"Dharma mindfulness" here means awareness of all the phenomena we deal with, thoughts, actions, and every physical thing. We look at a glass and say, "This is a glass." We look at a watch and say, "This is a watch." We are aware, "I am now holding a glass. I am now drinking. I am now walking. I am opening the door. I am closing the door." Even the Buddha adds up on top of that when he says, "I am opening the door [to liberation] for all sentient beings. I am shutting the door [to the lower realms] for all sentient beings." That's in the Mahayana sutras.

But here we are not talking about that angle. We have to have mindfulness of phenomena so that we can see what the negative points are and what are the positive points are. With mindfulness we are able to accept the positive ones and reject the negative ones. Again wisdom is needed, and wisdom will analyze. Once we have analyzed, awareness will keep us focusing. Then we can see what to accept and what to reject.

We cannot accept every single thing. Some people think they cannot reject anything because,

“I am committed to helping all beings.” They fear that if they reject anything, they are not being loving and compassionate, that rejecting anything is not right. This confusion comes if we don’t have discriminating wisdom. At our level, we cannot accept everything, nor we can reject everything. We have to be very discriminating. Of course, we have to think about others. But at this moment we have to think about ourselves first, because in order to help others, we have to be able to help ourselves. You cannot forget that. If you cannot help yourself, you’re never going to help others. Even if you try to help, you’re going to cause harm. Why does that make a difference? Because if it’s a positive point, we would like to gain and build it up, and everything negative, we would like to avoid and reject.

Atisha, the great Indian saint and scholar came to Tibet in the 1100s. As the first gift he gave to the Tibetans, he told them, “Unless you are able to help yourself, you can’t help others.” That’s a fact. Charity begins at home, right? Discriminating wisdom is necessary. You should be able to do both, reject and accept. You have to reject all the negatives and accept the positives as much as you can. That’s why mindfulness of the phenomena around with you, awareness of the things you encounter and what’s going to happen, is so important.

Four Applications of Mindfulness and Four Noble Truths

Body mindfulness gives you the basic idea of the First Noble Truth. The body is suffering in nature. It is constantly deteriorating and will lose all its power. Each and every one of us has already passed the peak level of physical power. Our physical power is now going down, year by year, day by day, and hour by hour. Once you may have been able to jump from one boat to another carrying a lasso in your hand. You could throw it onto another boat and pull it in. However, you can’t do that anymore because your back’s going to hurt or you are going to fall into the water. And you may not be able to swim across the lake anymore. All this body power is deteriorating. You may have been able to lift a tremendous amount of weight, but your back’s going to get hurt now, so you can’t take it. The body will go continuously go down, day by day, hour by hour, because it is suffering in nature.

This is nothing unusual. It is absolutely normal. So if we see that is a problem, then we need the idea of separating ourselves from the cause of that suffering. We truly need the idea of having an uncontaminated body. We can do it. A Buddha’s body is an uncontaminated body. I’m not talking about the historical Buddha. I’m talking about fully enlightened beings. They have a physical body-less body that is uncontaminated! It is a pure body, light natured, that does not deteriorate, that will not give you backaches, or headaches, or any other kind of pain. The idea of a looking at your

current body as in the nature of suffering will deepen your spiritual development. It will push your level up from ordinary body awareness, awareness of sensations, to looking at the body's nature. That awareness lifts you to a higher spiritual level.

Mindfulness of feeling relates to the Second Noble Truth. We have strong attachment for our feelings, right? I don't have to explain that to you; you know it very well. We like to touch, to do this, to do that, all of them, because of our attachment to feeling. "It feels great," we say. "It feels wonderful. I'd like to have more." That's what we go on, because feeling is the nature of attachment, and that attachment is the cause of suffering. So therefore, feeling corresponds to the Second Noble Truth, the truth of the cause of suffering.

Concentrating on feeling, mindfulness of feeling, will help you to cut the cause of suffering. The feeling of being attached is not really joy. When we have strong attachment, it is actually pain, but we are willing to take it, right? All the sensitive areas you can pull and push and even rupture, and we are willing to take it because of the attachment. This is contaminated feeling, for which we have attachment, which brings pain to us. So through mindfulness on that, we can separate from it.

Mindfulness of mind corresponds to the Third Noble Truth. We said earlier this application of mindfulness is related to the fear of getting lost, the fear of discontinuation. Through this mindfulness we will gain power, so we don't have to be afraid anymore. Mind mindfulness will give us the strength to be able to face what we are afraid of facing. The biggest fear is the fear of getting lost, that we will be nowhere, disappeared, discontinued. Mind mindfulness can overpower this fear.

The best mind mindfulness is the face-to-face encounter with the mind, recognizing the mind. We will only get to that when we are on the Third Path, the Path of Seeing. This is equal to recognizing emptiness. Until then, we will just be able to watch over it, sort of sit over it and recognize thoughts. Along with that, if there are negative thoughts, we try to block them; and if there are positive thoughts, we try to grow them. That's what we can do at this moment. That is like the beginning of cessation. Once we encounter our true mind face-to-face, then we maintain cessation. That is the Third Noble Truth.

The Fourth Noble Truth is the truth of the path, the truth of phenomena. Knowing this truth,

we know what is negative and what is positive. We can then reject the negative and accept the positive. Negatives are things like the six root delusions. [Positives are things like compassion and wisdom.] They are to be accepted. That is the truth of path.

When you make a vow to Buddha's Four Noble Truths, it sounds very mysterious. You can do that. But if you bring it down to the ground level, where our everyday life is, you can also do that. That's what we try to do here. That's the Four Applications of Mindfulness in relation to the Four Noble Truths, which we encounter within our life every day, twenty-four hours, every moment. We know that. But if you leave it as knowledge, it is not going to help you. Take whatever you understand. If you understand half, fine. If you understand a quarter, fine. If you understand one hundred percent, great! But don't just leave it at the level of understanding. Try to make it part of your life. That will make a difference. Then you are already better off. If you leave it as knowledge, it's not even good enough to become a professor. So, it's useless. You're not going to get the job! So don't leave it as knowledge, really! Take this in life every day. That's how you move. It will make a difference.

Four Applications of Mindfulness and Four Buddhist Seals

In addition there are the four very important points that Buddha emphasized. These are known as the Four Buddhist Seals or Logos. They also correspond with the Four Applications of Mindfulness. These are:

- Everything created is impermanent
- Everything contaminated is suffering
- Every phenomenon is by true nature empty
- Nirvana is peace

Everything created is impermanent. We have been talking about everything being impermanent. Why? Because it is created. For that reason, whatever we experience is suffering, in other words, the First Noble Truth. We do not really experience joy. The joy that we acknowledge today is either

changing suffering or pervasive suffering. Take the weather, for example. When it's cold outside, it is a comfortable feeling for us to be warm inside the house. However, if you stay inside too long, it begins to get hot. So you take off your jacket. That shows you that the comfortable feeling you had before is really suffering, because when it gets too warm, you experience pain. This is changing suffering. If it were true joy, then it would be joy always and never bring suffering.

Everything contaminated is suffering. The second logo is: when it's contaminated, every feeling is suffering. That's what we have been talking about it. The pain we experience today is the result of our karma. When we go beyond that, when we don't have negative karma anymore, everything we experience is joy—joy all the time! We don't know just now what joy really is. When we go beyond suffering, we begin to recognize joy. In this sense, when we are talking about the Four Applications of Mindfulness, it is not just about keeping our mind straight or peaceful, but also about recognizing the Four Noble Truths as well as the Four Seals. When you combine them together and guide your life by them, then every action you take will be meditation. Even if you don't put much effort in separately, saying, "I'm meditating; I'm saying mantras," every action, whatever you do in your daily life is moving towards the positive. So, therefore, whatever you do, you are cutting through the negative and building up the positive. And that's why these Four Applications of Mindfulness are very important, particularly at the beginning level.

Every phenomenon is by true nature empty. To explain emptiness is a little difficult, but I might as well explain a little bit. The Buddhists have a very famous thing called emptiness or *sunyata*. What does it really mean? This is not really the traditional way of explaining emptiness, but the bottom line is that whatever we encounter is due to conditions. When the conditions are right, it happens. When the conditions are not right, it doesn't happen. Conditions are the checks and balances of karma. When you look at karma, you say, "Oh, it is karma," or you say, "Wow, I can't do anything; what's happening is so big!" But when you look from this angle, even if you have a big karma for something to happen, if you don't have the conditions right, the karma cannot function. So whatever is happening—birth, death, sickness, friends, relationships, breaking relationships, new relationships, changes in life, new job, old job, whatever, everything, anything—is the result of karma, for sure. But even you have the karma as the cause, if the right conditions aren't there, the karma is not going to function.

So, for instance, if you don't eat the contaminated hamburger, you won't get sick. I read that

in Washington and Chicago, 250 people ate the wrong hamburger at Jack in the Box. That meat had something wrong with it. If you have the karma to get a stomachache, but you don't eat the wrong food, you're not going to get sick, because you did not provide the condition. So, therefore, every phenomenon, everything, whatever is happening to us, depends on the conditions.

In technical terms, they call it "dependent arising" or "dependent origination." Basically these words means that if things really existed "inherently," then when something comes [as a result of karma], it should always hit and happen. But it doesn't! It depends on the conditions. If the conditions are not right, whatever it is cannot happen. You may have great karma to be the king of the universe. But when the universe does not provide you with the right conditions, no matter how much karma you have to be the king of the universe, you are not going to become that. You may have the karma, but it's not going to materialize because the conditions are not right. So everything depends on the checks and balances. That is why it is called "emptiness" and "dependent origination" or "the interdependent system." All of these words are a nice way of presenting the bottom line: if the conditions are not right, nothing will happen.

That's why dharma practitioners need both wisdom and method. The method side provides the right conditions. Whenever anybody, whoever it might be, hits the right conditions, something will happen. Everyone is bound to have some karma that can be linked up. Something will work, either in the positive way or the negative way. That happens. So saying that phenomena are empty is the other side of the checks and balances of karma and conditions. That's the bottom line. That's not the traditional way of explaining, but that's how I perceive it.

Nirvana is peace. The last seal says that when you have gone beyond that, it is peace and joy. When you cut out everything contaminated, it is peace and joy. Is nirvana something "over there," and you have to go from here to there? No. Nirvana is here. It will develop within us. Is this state something permanent? No, it's not. However, it is peace and joy, and it's the continuation of peace and joy. Why? Because there is no discontinuation of peace and joy. Why is that? Because there are no conditions to stop that peace and joy from continuing. You have cut that; you've gone beyond. The conditions that are the causes of pains and problems are actually rooted in ignorance, hatred, anger, jealousy, and similar negativities. If you've gone beyond those, there's no continuation of negativity.

Since there is continuation, if you don't continue in this way, you have to continue in that way. There's no in-between. If you don't continue in the negative way, you have to continue in the

positive way. You will continue! You don't disappear! It's as simple as that. And that's why the logo says that nirvana is peace. When you have gone beyond all suffering, then there is no problem, no pain. And if you have gone beyond suffering, then it is peace—no problems, no pain. That's why the last of these Four Seals says, when you go beyond, it is peace. Nirvana is peace.

Now, what do you do with the Four Applications of Mindfulness? Mindfulness will observe those objects that we talked about. Wisdom will analyze what you observe, and when you get some understanding of it, you observe that. You not only observe it, but you sort of absorb that within you and make it part of your life. You function in that manner.

Which mental faculties do you use when you are working with the Four Applications of Mindfulness? The faculties of recognition, which is also called memory or remembrance, and wisdom. Those two give you a lot of messages. The faculty of remembering is trying to tell you to be aware and alert and to remember it. It is one of the fifty-two mental faculties. In Tibetan, it is called *dren pa*. If you are used to it, you will know that it means to be aware, to remember and be alert. Then you won't have obstacles coming in. You decide not to do something, but then something else comes in between and carries you away. Don't do that! Just stick to what you decided. And that is what we call mindfulness. So please remember, mindfulness is not only observing your mind, but also keeping awareness of your mind's relationship with everyday life.

THE FOUR PURITIES OR ABANDONMENTS

The second group is called the Four Purities. They are:

1. avoid generating negative states that have not arisen
2. abandon negative states that have arisen
3. generate virtuous states that have not arisen
4. do not allow virtuous states that have arisen to deteriorate and develop them further