

This is an automatic computer translation so is only approximate. But still not bad.

Taking the Tension out of Attention

Mindfulness of Being talk – April 10, 2022. Peter Russell

Peter:

So for those who are newcomers to what I'm doing here very briefly this series it started a year ago. It sort of in COVID one of the things I was missing in COVID was giving talks. Well this is, I'm still not giving a live talk, but what, what I missed about giving talks was it was always a, an opportunity for me to try out new ideas. When I had something that was exciting to me, and I was speaking at a conference or something I'd love to sort of go in or do a workshop or talk about something that was new and exciting me. And I realized I didn't have that opportunity anymore. And so I started these talks with a lot of encouragement from Linda, my techie and supporter here. She said, yes, yes, yes, let's do it. So here I am doing it.

Peter:

We've had five, this is the fifth session, four sessions. So far, the first one was on the title, mindfulness of being, which I should very briefly explain. Mindfulness, I mean, it's such a common phrase, these words these days it's usually mindfulness of something, whether it's mindfulness of breath or feelings or whatever it is, experience, I'm more interested in, in being mind of actually our self the, I that's there. The, if you like the transcendent aspect of ourselves, which most mindfulness doesn't doesn't touch on, it takes us close sometimes. And so the first, first talk I was looking at that mindfulness of being all these are recorded. So you can listen to 'em if you are new, then I looked at oh, rest in natural, great peace that line. Cause I there's so much in that rest in natural, great peace.

Peter:

This exhausted mind, beaten helplessly by karma and tic thoughts, like the wordless fury of the pounding waves in the infinite ocean of Samsara some famous lines by sort of ex on that then looked at, oh, the four noble truths. Well, particularly the eightfold path of Buddhism from a non jewel perspective, which was something I've been thinking about quite a bit. And then all these things, all these talks there, things that I actually haven't talked about before, really. And then the last one was on letting go, which I had talked about. And then this one, I want to look at attention, attention, because it's something I've been thinking about for a long time. It's it's fascinated me. What is attention and the role of attention in awareness? It's, it's such an intimate part of awareness and yet we seldom actually consider attention itself.

Peter:

So that's what I want to look at today. And what do, is I'll talk for a while, don't know, 50, 20 minutes, 30 minutes, something like that, then I'll lead a meditation. And then we'll have time for questions, discussions, and the way we like to do this is if you have any questions, put them in the chat. That's that little hand that should be at hand at the bottom of your screen chat symbol, put your questions in the chat. Or if you want to ask a question and Linder will be monitoring the chat. I can't multitask when I'm talking or answering a question. I just want to be with you and not have half of my attention, distract it over onto the chat and what people are saying. So Linda will monitor the questions and sometimes group them together or whatever. So as I was saying, it's attention is so, so intimate to awareness.

Peter:

In in fact, we often use the words interchangeably. And when we say, you know, I I'm aware of I'm aware of the ticking of the clock is like, you know, my attention has noticed, I've noticed the ticking of the clock. That's where my attention is at the moment. You know, also in your awareness may be the sounds of the birds or what you are seeing or feeling in the body, whatever. There's a lot of other things going on in the awareness, but the tension is like is the bit of our awareness that we're actually interested in in that moment. And it's always there to one degree or another, and this I I've been fascinated by it and the sort of types of attention, but also what it means in terms of our awakening to who we are and how, how we use attention. And those are some things I want to wanna really talk about today. And it's interesting. I, someone saying, we, we never pay attention to attention to what I want to do today is actually pay attention to attention itself.

Peter:

And as most of you know, when I use the word awareness, I'm generally not using in the sense of like being aware of the ticking of the clock or being aware of this or that, which is how we usually use it, often use it. And that's when it's almost synonymous with attention for me, there is the whole field of awareness that is, that is happening at any moment. Awareness is just the fact we are aware. The one thing we know for sure is we are aware beings. And within any moment there is this vast multidimensional field of awareness, which is what I'm seeing, what I'm hearing, what I'm sensing in body, what I'm smelling, the thoughts that are passing through my mind, my feelings, they're all experiences in awareness. They're all things I am aware of if you like. So there's the field of awareness in which experience arises.

Peter:

So that's the way, that's the way I'm using awareness. And then attention is like the spotlight within that. And that spotlight is always on something or other within that vast field of awareness. And it's like, that's the point of all this that we're actually interested in. It's like that, that I am interested in. So it's the spotlight. And it's a bit like, I think if you in, you know, if, if you went out just after dark and it's not completely dark or in a dim room and you had a flashlight or rather I'm speaking American, now you have a torch for English speaking people and you go around looking for things. You, you use it to folk to shine the light on something, to see it, to see it more clearly. And that's in a way what we're doing with the attention we have this vast, the of awareness, and then we're shining the light of our awareness.

Peter:

We're focusing it. If you like to bring, bring into focus a particular part of our fear you would've experienced. So what we're interested in so that we can actually be attend to it more, more clearly and say, bring it into focus. So it's really about how we how we isolate a particular object of our experience from the whole field of awareness. And so it's like, it's almost like bringing, it's like targeting our awareness down to a particular, a particular experience. And generally, and this is very generally I see this there's two, there's two basic modes of awareness. There's over the attention. So two basic modes of the attention, there's the focused mode, which is often the way we use the word attention, pay attention, you know, pay attention means focus in on something or rather hold the attention to this. That's the most common way.

Peter:

And then there's another softer way of attending to something where you're not particularly where you're not holding the attention anywhere. This might be when you are, you know, out in, out in the forest, just enjoying the spectacle of just the trees and the green, where you're not focusing on any particular tree or anything, a bird may come along. And in that moment, you move from this open, expansive, soft attention to something suddenly you're looking at the bird, what is that bird? You've moved into a focused attention, but generally there's this open, soft, relaxed attention. And when you're in that relaxed attention, it's just, it's broader. It's like sort of opening up the beam of your flashlight, the attention's broader and taking in more and, and it's relaxed. And it wanders. If, if you like the attention wanders from one thing here to another thing, there just anything that's That's of interest. And that's really what the attention is for, for whatever is of interest to you is to just let's say, bring it more into focus and It's completely natural to have this automation. I think it's natural to just have this broad open awareness when everything is fine, where you're sitting there in the garden or whatever, you're looking at a sunset or listening to a piece of music, you know, you, you're not focusing on individual notes or an individual instrument. You, you may do, but generally it's like, it's an open, broad, soft attention.

Peter:

And then when something changes, the more focused, deliberate attention clicks in, And it's almost like the, the brain is, is designed to notice change. I mean, this is something that I found fascinating when my, when I was studying neurophysiology psychology,

Peter:

The brain doesn't look at what is it, monitors changes. It monitors any differences. And it's very fascinating if you hold the eye completely still, if you sort of paralyze the muscles so that the image on the retina isn't changing within a minute or two, it just fades away. There's no change. It's like the, it makes more efficiency for the brain to notice change. Or if you go into, you know, a float tank, a sensory immersion tank where you are, you know, the temperatures the same as your body, whatever it is, there's no sound, it's dark within a few moments. You start minutes or two, you start losing awareness of your individual boundaries. So it's, this is a natural thing. When there's change, then the attention comes in and begins to notice the change. So this Orion between a sort of open awareness, and then when something happens, a bird flies by the sum change that Postly of interest or value an opportunity or some danger, then the attention moves into this more focused mode. And This, this, I says completely natural. And it, I think it relates to the left and right brain.

Peter:

And some of you may know, Ian, he wrote this wonderful book about 10 years ago called the master and his MSE in which he was really reconsidering the whole of the research that had been done on the left right brain over the years, when that research first started coming out, which was really in, in the late sixties, early seventies, the research started coming out. The idea was, and it's still sort of the prep on a popular idea is the left brain is language. It's good at mathematics logic, et cetera. The right brain is art music, creativity. That's now been seen to be a very, very simplistic idea and what Ian does in this incredible book, I really recommend it for anybody interested. He shows that at actually the left brain is really good at tasks, which involve the mode of focused attention. So that's, that's the attention style of the left brain. Obviously, you know, mathematics require focus, attention, listening to words, speaking requires focus attention on the flow of thinking the right brain is much better at that more open, relaxed

attention, which I say, that's why, you know, people associate with music with the right brain, because you want, if you're listening to music, you're in that much more open, open way of being with things.

Peter:

So, so some thing else just wanted to mention is the root of the word attention is interesting. This is something Rupert SP who some of you I know know pointed out some time ago, attention comes from the Latin 10 dairy, the Latin, the B 10 dairy, which actually means to stretch to stretch. And so when we're attending to something is like, we're stretching our awareness towards it. And I like that because when we are actually consciously, deliberately in that paying attention mode, holding our attention to something, it almost, it can almost feel like that it almost sort of slight very subtle mental sensation. Like we're stretching, we're stretching ourselves, stretching our awareness towards whatever it is of interest that we want to focus on. And with that, the other side of that is that it also creates a slight tension in the mind. And again, tension comes from the same route to stretch a tension is a stretching.

Peter:

So when we are focused on something, there tends to be this slight, slight stretching, a slight tension in the mind. And I think, you know, some of you have probably noticed this when you've been focused on something or even meditation, when you are focused on a particular, you got focused, drawn into a particular thought or something, and you realize it and you just let it go. You just like realize woo. That was taking some that was taking a bit of energy. There was some tension there in focusing on that thought and we need to, in a way, put effort or tension into it because the, the, the attention is gonna wander off on something else. That's interesting. If you are in know working on, I dunno, writing email or something, that's needs your concentration, and the sound knows the sound of a bird or some music next door, the attention will actually wander off to see if that's more interesting. So we're actually holding the attention to something against that natural to wander off to anything else that may be of interest. And that's why it takes some, some effort, some, some tension in the mind. And that in a way is probably the, the cost of having to paying, paying attention to something, try trying to hold it there.

Peter:

So another way I natural this is thinking with, as, as zoomed in or zoomed out as the two modes of attention, there's zoomed in attention, we're zooming in on something. And then there's a zoomed out like with a camera, we zoom out. It's the wide view. The open software awareness is or wide view what happens. Unfortunately, I would say with us, it's part of, you know, part of the unfortunate personal social circumstances. We all get ourselves in most of the time, which is why we're all here. Looking for some we're of it is spiritual awakening or something or meditation. We end up far too much in that focused mode. And you could say, you know, one of the reasons we may meditate is to begin to relax that focus mode and not be doing this in a meditation in a little bit. It, but we want to relax that focus mode, that doing mode, and actually come back to that more relaxed, open mode of attention.

Peter:

You know, if you look at our lives, you know, probably, maybe I don't know, it's easy to have 90, 95% of the day caught up in that focus mode. We move from one thing. Then something else touches our attention. We're focused on that, then something else, then something else. And we're going through with our attention focused on something or other the whole time. So what is really valuable is being able to step out of the focus mode to zoom out again, zoom out into as Ram dust would put it here now, but that focus mode is also, it's really driven as well, by what I call the ego mode of thinking, which is not

just the ego, the egocentric self-centered mode. But for me, what I call the egoic mode of thinking is the thinking that is looking after ourselves. What do we need is this safe is a great opportunity here.

Peter:

What's this mean or whatever it is, or what do people think of me, all that sort of stuff, which is actually basically there for our safety and our survival to help us be safe and survive that that's the ego mode of thought it's valuable. And it has limitations cuz we get caught up in it far too much. But that, that is that ego mode takes us into this focused attention a lot more. It's like if there's something happening in our life, it's like, okay, what does this mean? What should I do? We get caught up in, in focusing on our thinking about it. But more than that, it's like in our culture, there are so many distractions. It's interesting. The word distraction, you know, when you think about what does distraction mean? It means taking our attention away from something, taking our attention somewhere else.

Peter:

And we live in a continu, a distracting culture, which means what's happening continually taking our attention here, taking it there, whatever. I mean advertising just about every single advertisement you see is wanting to grab the attention, grab your attention about something and then tell you, you can't be happy because you don't have something. And the only way to get happy again is to, you know, get whatever it is they're selling. They draw you into this whole thing. They grab your attention and then draw you into a whole story about how to be happy. Not recognizing that if they hadn't grabbed your attention in the first place, you'd probably be absolutely fine. And this is sad irony of our society, but it's not just advertising. I mean, we live in a culture which is a tension grabbing. I mean, I was reading a post recently. I was pointing out, you know, it's an attention economy we live in now that, you know, we produce something and we need to get attention for it.

Peter:

You know, you make a new, you make a film about something. You wanna get attention. You're on social media, you put it up there, you're looking for attention. You want people to see, it's like, ah, can I get attention or music makers, you make a piece of music. Okay. How can I get a and or me? I mean, I, I write a new book and it's like, okay, I want to bring attention to it. I want to, which is, which is fine. I want to, but let people know. It's like we're continually looking to, to grab other people's attention and, and this post it, it was quite powerful, was pointing out that, you know, more than 50% of the economy is now around, how do we grab people's attention and monetize it in one way or another? And it pointed out which I thought was a nice thing.

Peter:

You all these website companies designing web pages, you know, they could just be a, a basic template, you know, that says, okay, this is the company name, address, phone number. This is what it does. These are whatever it is, but no, we have to go and get better and better ones we're competing for. We're compete, eating for attention the whole time. And I mentioned this not so much just to, you know, as another critique of where our culture has got to, but just recognizing this is what happens to us. Our attention is being grabbed, is being caught, is being take over so much of the time. And so the result is that we end up in this background, state of tension, which comes from focusing here, focusing there, following what the ego thinks is important.

Peter:

And it's almost, as I think I've said before, this sort of background tension in the attention is really the hallmark of when we're stuck in ego sinking. And I always say to people, you know, if you wanna know if the ego's active or if you're caught in that mode, just notice, is there this background sense of attention there? Sorry, tension in the attention is that there? So the other thing I want to look at is going a bit deeper in, into this. There's, there's two ends of the attention. If you like, there's the object of attention, what we are attending to, whatever it is, whether it, you know, an itch in the body, a bird song, piece of music, the road we're driving down, whatever it is. There's always some object of attention, whether, and whether it's a broad open, soft awareness, or whether it's a very focused, concentrated attention, there's always an object it to attention.

Peter:

And the side that is not usually looked at so much or explored, is that the subject, there's the subject of attention, which is, you know, who, who is attending or what is attending, which really comes, you know, back to the essential, I think the essential spiritual journey that we're all on ultimately is like recognizing what is, what is this sense of eye? What is this sense of eye that is, that is aware. That is conscious. That is always, always present though. Very seldom notice. And it that's that sense of eye, which is a tender. We say, you know, the, I is the eye that is aware, it's that same eye that is attending. And by I here, I mean, anybody who's little new to my way of thinking. I don't mean the personal self. It's not the I Peter Russell, British male writer, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

Peter:

These are all things we identify with. These are all parts of my experience. And so you, somewhere, you can say all those things of the personal self or other objects of experience, other things I can attend to, you know, I can 10 to this body or the fact that I'm, you know, I have been a writer, whatever it is I can attend to them. What this is talking about is that sense of the closest I think we can put in simple was just that I am that sense of I am being this that is always there, that is attending. And this brings up an interesting question for me. It's like, this is part of my exploration here, my personal exploration, which I'm still fascinated by. And I want to sort of share something with you, this, and it anyway, just as you know, fuel for your own investigation is, is there some degree of volition here with attention?

Peter:

And I mean, the way I used to put it to myself is like, is, is the attention the, the action of awareness. Now that sounds a little strange because you know, when we're using the word awareness in the way that I like to use the word is just that sense of I of just that being aware, that sense of being, which is just, is just the witness of all experience. It's sometimes called the witness of all experience, the subject that is a, there's a subject, the witness and there's the object. And it's always said that the subject is without qualities, the pure eye, the pure eye doesn't do anything. It just observes. It is aware of what is happening. It is not actually involved in the world, but it is the, And so the word action doesn't really work there. I mean, it's not just a witness doesn't act, but this is the bit I've been playing with here is If I, if I decide to put my attention somewhere, whatever it is, you know, just looking out the window. And I just try to put my attention on a leaf out there, That decision, the decision where to put my attention is coming from according the, you know, the thinking mind, the thinking mind, but the thinking mind doesn't actually put the attention. It is like I then bond and my attention moves there.

Peter:

So there's a way in the sense which the eye moves the attention to different places where it moves it to, I think is decided by, you know, whatever's going on in the thinking mind, whatever, or something that comes in a bird flying by that grabs our attention, But is, is the eye actually in charge of where the attention goes and I'm not, I don't have any answer to this. This is just something I am fascinated with in my own experience, which is why I'm sharing this with you now, something to play with. I mean, something that I've noted when, when my mind is quiet, usually in a, in a meditation or something, And I decide to move my attention somewhere else. It's actually a very subtle sense of movement in the mind. It's like, I can feel the mind or almost moving from one mode of attending, moving into something else. It's very, very subtle, but I'm just Absolutely fascinated by this. And, And I've mentioned it to various people, but haven't got any, any response people, maybe I don't explain it, right? People don't understand what I'm talking about. Anyway. I want to mention it as something, you know, you may have, or to play with to see, to notice this thing of how is it the eye that is attending. Does it, does it have,

Peter:

Is it moving in a sense within the awareness? I can't put it clearly. I'm just mentioning this. Cause this brings us back to the, the whole issue of free will, which people know I've written about. And actually there's a whole section of my site on free will And maybe only, only the attention is completely free. And explain what I mean by this. I personally don't think we have free will in the normal sense that, you know, being able to make a free choice. For example,

Peter:

If I go into a restaurant and I choose something to eat, I look at the menu and I think, oh, I ate that last week. And I don't fancy that. And I'm not eating meat this week. And I don't like basically you narrow it down to one thing and you think you've made a choice, but actually you'd be involved in a decision making process of which you didn't know the outcome. And so we've made, we've made a decision, but that choice has been conditioned by the past and things. And so there's a way in which maybe everything, everything we do, every thought we have is conditioned by the past in some way or another. And even where we place the attention may be conditioned. You know, whether it's the bird flying, bys, conditioning, the attention or something that's happening or whatever it is, something that's moving in or some feeling is conditioning where we place the attention.

Peter:

But the bit that fascinates me is where I think we have, we do have free choice is our ability to withdraw the attention, to withdraw our interest. Our interest may be caught up in some, some thought, some story where we have choice is to withdraw our attention from that particular thought or story or experience, and to just allow it to be, it's not about if we start putting the attention somewhere else, that's another conditioned response. But by choosing to, I wanna say to UN place, the attention is place somewhere just to UN place it withdraw our interest. And when we do that, then what we usually find, well, I usually find, have speak person here, not for you, but firstly, there's that sense of relief. I notice the, the energy, the tightness that's going into the attention. There's a sense of relief also that, that the present begins to reveal itself.

Peter:

Again, it's like, oh, oh, I hadn't noticed that, oh, there's a sound of this. Oh, there's this in my body, whatever it is. And then in that quietness, what I find is my, if you like, my inner voice starts coming

through with what actually I, what would be the most appropriate action or theme to be doing at this time. And so I am not so much choosing to do something. I am choosing to withdraw my interest in deciding what to do and in the spaciousness that comes and that quiet spaciousness that comes arising is whatever I am called to do, which I find

Peter:

Just it's just so, so valuable. It's like the choice not to choose is the choice that can change their life in a way, because what comes out of in a wisdom is so much more, I find so much more helpful. So I've been moving on, Let let's pause and have a meditation here. And then we have some discussion just Want to just take some of this in, into, into a meditation. And what I like to do in terms of when I'm meditating with you in a group is actually our Switch off my video and actually lower my computer screen. So I'm not looking at anything just so it makes me be more internal. You can do whatever you like, but I just like to encourage while we're meditating in a sense not to be on the zoom call in ourselves, just, just listening and and the end I'll ring a bell, which would be a time to come and Come back into visual reality. So,

Peter:

I've been speaking a lot, so let's just pause. I'd actually always take a few deeper breaths, Breathing out more fully. Just every time we Breathe out, it just allows us to relax, just relaxing the body. It's like relaxed breath is a sign to the body that everything's okay. So we just allow ourselves to relax, Letting, letting the weight go be taken by the chair or whatever, if you notice any holding on in the body, just see if that can just soften and let go. And just noticing what is there for you in the present moment? What is there in the body? There's probably a lot of different things. There sensations the touch of the clothes, pressures, warmth, the whatever Little thoughts coming in.

Peter:

Sounds my voice. Other sounds not focusing on anything in this meditation, not focusing on anything at all, or just being with what is not trying to get anywhere or change anything, but just noticing how the attention is just, it just moves around. You may notice something in the body, some sound the attention wanders over there. Some thought temporarily grabs the attention. But when you notice you've actually got caught up in some sort, because it's so interesting. Just this thing of choosing. We have the choice not to follow it anymore. We have the choice to withdraw our interest from it. And just when we withdraw our interest from it, we just come back to here to just being here with our experience and just noticing this quality of attending to something, whatever it is, whatever is taking our interest in this moment. And it moves around. It's noticing that this quality of actually attending to it, it's our interest put this way, our interest is there, whatever it is.

Peter:

And now wherever your attention, wherever it may be, doesn't matter. Just explore, you know, could you, could your attention be a little more relaxed? Could your attention be a little softer? And if you could let your attention just soften and a little bit, just notice, notice how that is. What's it like with some of us there's often a sense of like we come back a little closer to ourself to our own beingness while we let the attention relax. Just feel a little easier, more spacious or noticing read a sense of quiet or stillness or just simply just ease.

Peter:

So we're really in this, this meditation, just noticing what it's like when we let the attention relax from a tighter, more focused mode into just this very open spacious mode of attention in which we just drop back closer to ourself, closer to our own sense of being cause when we're attending to something else, the more we attend, the more in a way takes us away from ourself. So as we let the attention soft and relax, it's like the attention can begin to come back and our own sense of being this, our own sense of, I, we can begin to who attend to that. It's like it's turned, it's turned back 180 degrees instead of being turned out into the world, whether it's even just the world of a thought or some feeling, or just turning at 180 degrees back and just attending to a, this sense of being the sense of me that becomes more apparent as we allow the attention itself to relax. We'll just take another minute or so just, just to be with this practice, just whenever you notice the attention somewhere where it is, however soft, it is just even asking, could it be even more, could the attention be even more relaxed, could be even softer

Peter:

And notice how that is. And slowly begin to close the meditation. Always encourage people to remember not to jump out of it, but just to maybe move your fingers or toes a little bit, open your eyes slowly, let it all light in. You gradually return to being here together in the group.

Peter:

And I mentioned in the description today in the emails that went out, that I find this in my own life. One of the easiest ways, it just coming the back to being in day to day life in like in the middle of anything I'm doing anytime, just to be able to pause two things, one to choose, to withdraw my interest from something. But in this respect, we also just to let the attention relax wherever I am. I can just notice, okay, where's my attention with it. Without even trying to move the attention or change it, it doesn't mean I've gotta put my attention somewhere else, but in this moment, wherever my attention is without putting it somewhere else, can I allow it to relax? Can I let my attention when lacks? And it always does. There's some degree or other. And so I always just come back to myself, there's some degree or other, so that's why I share this as, you know, what I find probably the simplest and easiest, one of the most powerful ways, just coming, coming back to being anyway. And I've gone on longer than I expected. I hope it wasn't too. Wly so it, so let's see if we have any questions, Linda.

Linda:

Yes. We've been gathering a few as you've been speaking. So I'll, I'll run through a few that came while you were speaking. James do you want me to tell you the names of people cause James Monroe?

Peter:

Oh James. Yes, of course. James he's a regular

Linda:

Couple from him. So one was maybe awareness is being aware of everything in general and nothing in particular and not accompanied by thinking The awareness is being aware of everything in general and nothing in particular and not accompanied by thinking.

Peter:

Yep. That's again, we're using awareness in a few subtly different way within one sentence here. I think what you're talking about there is like that open, open, total relaxed awareness where we can,

where there's just awareness and are not aware of any one thing. It's a, it's an interesting question. Can one not be aware? Can one have, can there be no attention in the awareness? No attention whatsoever. I don't know. I might even in the, you know, the quietest still states of meditation, The attention may just be there relaxed, but there's still, it's not focused or anything. Is it something, something I play with anyway? Can there not be, can there be nothing? That's actually the focus of attention? I don't know. But also maybe Linda, maybe if you can, you know, bring the people on, it's easier, you know, speaking directly with the questions on it. Yeah.

Linda:

Right. Well, James can unmute himself. I gotta find him.

Speaker 4:

Yeah. I've yeah, I'm here.

Linda:

Yeah. Hi James. Great.

Speaker 4:

Hi. Hi. no, I was actually thinking Peter that, I mean, as I'm speaking to you right now I'm aware that I'm speaking, I'm aware that I'm seeing I'm moving my hands as I'm speaking, but I'm also have a broader awareness. So I, and one of the other comments I made was whether is that there seems something very nice about that. That I'm not, in other words, I'm not, my attention is not being, I'm not, I used to being captured by one thing. Right. So, or I'm not being overwhelmed by the activity.

Peter:

Right.

Speaker 4:

So right now I have this lovely broad awareness.

Peter:

Yeah.

Speaker 4:

I get you. Yeah. That that's really what I was getting to. Oh,

Peter:

Good, good, good. Yes. Yeah. Yeah. And I think that, you know, that is what I think many, you know, spiritual masses would say is, you know, is an aspect of, of the awakening is being able to be settled in just being aware. And that recognition of just being aware, the open awareness and, and as the world of experience going on within that, and as, you know, become more, whatever the word is. As, as we move along in our journey, more being able to sit, sit in that space of being aware, to sit in that space of being aware and notice, notice what is there, you know, that may be, you know, part of what somebody call

witnessing witnessing awareness. Although I don't like the word particularly myself at a, again, down all the time, but yeah. Yeah. Good. I mean, good to see you again. Thank you.

Linda:

I have another question from Joseph co and Joseph, you can go ahead and unmute yourself and I'll read it and then you can discuss it. Peter Peter's discussion is in my mind, in my, in my understanding with then mindful awareness beyond this is conscious awareness, which is not confined to mind, body interaction. How does the spiritual aspect of our being conscious awareness become more recognized?

Peter:

Where are you, what do you actually mean by conscious awareness? Who, who is it,

Speaker 5:

Jasmine? Yes. I, I think I'm unmuted. No,

Peter:

You are.

Speaker 5:

I, I I'm, I'm probably somewhat on my own with this because I've been listening for, I, I left, I was a science based ecologist up until about 15 years ago. Then I went into what's called deep ecology and also referred to Spiritu ecology, which

Peter:

Your sound has disappeared.

Linda:

Your yeah, Joseph, you can't hear anything.

Peter:

We can't hear

Linda:

Your, your sound went away, Joseph.

Speaker 5:

We're not just a body mind interaction. So the spiritual aspect of our being seems to get sort of put on the shelf in, in most of the discussions I'm hearing about awareness and I just think something's being missed there. I'll leave it at that.

Peter:

Okay. We couldn't hear a lot of you unfortunate, a lot of what you're saying. The spiritual, yeah. This is the whole conversation. I mean, what we mean by spiritual, I, you know, just how I, how I see it and all of this is just, you know, how I see it. There's no absolute truth. You whatsoever is what I call the

spiritual aspect of awareness is our coming, coming back closer to our recognition of ourselves, that in a most aspect of our, our being that I'm changing essence of ourselves, which I would say is, is our spiritual self, our spiritual self. And it's not, it's not something different. I think this is, this is how I see it. Our spiritual awareness is not something different from our day to day awareness it's, but it's much more the essential core of our day to day awareness, which is not normally noticed because our attention is so caught up on all the things we have to do think, worry about plan and distracted by, by our self distracting culture. I sense is something we can have a much longer conversation on sometime, cause like teasing out part of this is teasing out words, how we're using words slightly differently. Probably some ways or that.

Speaker 5:

Yeah. That's, that's helpful. Peter, thank you. It is a huge topic. When you leave, when you leave the mind body interaction and go into the universe, God is somewhat have it. It is, you know, the biggest topic, you know, we could possibly open up, but being in advanced age now I'm less concerned about my body mind. I'm just not that concerned about it that much because I'm looking at okay. When I take that last breath, what's what's my being then. And so I'm kind of in a preparation mode for that.

Peter:

Yeah. Good, good. I think yeah. Coming out of the, Not denial, but I think the, I, we ignore it, I think. Yeah. I think that's really valuable. Good, good. Yeah. Okay. Wish we had more time to chat at Lang I spent hours chatting about these things with friends, but we have to be much briefer here.

Linda:

Okay. Hannah had a quick example that she wanted to give. So Hannah

Speaker 6:

Sure. Let me try to make a quick I have a recent good, somewhat entertaining example of a focus of tension and the way I see it is that I, I hang out in being a lot of the time and I find that my focus attention gets hijacked when there's something in my ego, that's triggered something that is on here. And it happened very recently where I really noticed it. And for the first time was able to work with it in a successful way. It's a very old trigger, a 15 year old anger that came up like, okay, now. And as it was my wish not move on it. And I remembered it. And my attention was hijacked by this strong feeling. I said to myself, this is a chance Hal. Now, if you wanna do it, it's now.

Speaker 6:

And I fell back into being and just watched it and to sum it up, it took four to five days of doing that. I had conversations with a few people. I wrote the letter, which I never mailed, and mostly just used free will to keep moving back loosening up, as you say, attention and falling back into being, and after five days, the anger was completely gone and a new, a with the same group of people. And this time, no anger came. And I said to myself, or I asked, what is my contribution, if any, in this situation? And I just waited. And after two days I don't know if an idea came or, or of how I should contribute and it was so brilliant. I know it didn't come from quote the little me. Right. And it just felt right to move on that. And I, I did, and it had wonderful results anyway, the celebration was, and is that I managed to avoid going. So my theory is that focused attention is, is, is triggered by, were drawn by our aha wounds or our what's left in the ego. It's like a spider web where attention gets caught. I'm talking beyond the basic yeah. I'm hungry. I'm tired.

Peter:

Yeah. Yeah. Now that's, that's powerful. Thank you. Thank you. I mean, that's, that's a lovely description of what I was pointing to. I mean, what language we give to it, you know, and sometimes it may be something from the past, or it could be big thing, small thing, but our attention gets grabbed by something and, and the story is then set off our emotions and we get caught up in them. They become, and they, you know, comes to sort of self reinforcing, but just doing what you were doing, just like stepping out, stepping out, stepping out, which is basically, you know, the thing of choosing, choosing to take your interest away from it to withdraw your attention. And I love the bit you said at the end, this is what I was saying happens. It's like the choice not to get engaged is the best choice we can make. Cuz out of that, you're inner wisdom. This is the thing your inner wisdom comes through and says, maybe this is how I should be seeing things or whatever it was.

Speaker 6:

Yeah. But it took, it took a while and I didn't turn away from it. I, I, I sort of allowed it in being or watched it and felt it. And then it took a few days for to yes, yes, yes. And, and AF after it evaporated then. Yeah. And I could, I could distinguish, you know, what was wise energy and not cook little Hannah idea.

Peter:

Lovely. Yes, yes. It, yes. It takes its own time. Whatever it is, you know, could be longer, whatever it is, it takes its time. But it's beautiful. Thank you. Beautiful. Glad you have the and went through it. Lovely. Yep.

Linda:

Thank you, Hannah. Next question is from Terry Bowen, do we ever have a gap in our attention? Not the focused attention, but the open focus.

Peter:

Ah, interesting. Yes. If I look at my own experience, you yes. It seems to be when we sort of it's, it's an interesting question. I mean, do we, I mean, there's obviously times when we wander off into somewhere else, but then the attention is wandering off. Where we don't know where we, you know, we come back, we don't, we've been is interesting question. Or do you wanna say more Terry?

Linda:

I,

Speaker 7:

I think you sort of answered this at the beginning in a different way, but I kind of visualized a container that's empty and then all of our thought our personalities in this container, of course there's no container cause it's just emptiness. So if that's our, our tension is this whole everything in this container then can it ever be nothing in there?

Peter:

I mean, can you have a completely empty awareness

Speaker 7:

Or is awareness the emptiness of all attention?

Peter:

I'm just thinking, I mean, it's what comes up for me is these, these fine distinctions like this, we can, we can play with it. We can talk about them. And yet I feel if they're not, is it, is it in my, is it actually in my experience? That's what I'm wondering, that's looking is, is the, is, is one of these things. If, if experience is empty, is it an experience that's one of the old conundrums in know, can you have an experience of nothing? You know, these things have been, I mean, debated as a whole book written on this years ago, you know, can there be, can there be complete emptiness, but if you are, if you are aware of complete emptiness, then you are not completely EMP empty. In fact, there's a Buddhist text, which has the 16 forms of emptiness, which is emptiness starts off emptiness, emptiness of the experience of emptiness. Anyway I'm wondering on Don't know.

Speaker 7:

Okay. I'm trying to get your distinction between attention and

Peter:

Oh, okay.

Speaker 7:

I kinda get the awareness emptiness, but can we ever have attention to nothing even the open attention

Peter:

We can have? I, I, I think we can have the, we can have the openness, let me put it for me. This openness, there's the opening to stillness in the stillness. There is nothing happening, but there can be open openness to the stillness that that's what is for me, there's nothing happening. There's complete stillness and there is, and the stillness is in the attention is in my awareness. There's attention to the,

Speaker 7:

Okay. Thank you. I like that.

Peter:

Great. Thanks.

Linda:

I've got, I've got quite a few more questions.

Peter:

One. We often think of an hour, but I'm happy to run on while there's questions for while. Okay. If it gets past four o'clock no.

Linda:

Okay. Well, okay. I do one comment was Simone. Even with this short time, I feel such a sense of relaxed ease, and even a sense of Esty with the feeling I was looking back at the one who was looking as sweet. Thank you, Simone. Another question from Fria was I usually meditate for 20, 30 minutes in the more name. Some days I fall asleep. Do you have a suggestion for a group meditation or a course? I feel like I'm missing out or not doing something right by just sitting without any teacher.

Peter:

Well, the first thing I would recommend is my own course, obviously I have a, an online course it's called how to meditate, even trying. And after, because I find people putting effort into meditation is where we tend to go wrong to begin with. And that's a series of five lessons starting from the very, very, very, very simple and gradually, gradually building up the practice. So a different different lesson each week which I know many people have found helpful. I, I think it's important just if you have a practice just to, just to sit each day and what's important about is not trying to get anywhere. I think that's a mistake that people often make is trying to get somewhere in meditation. And we hear all these wonderful stories about meditation. We think, ah, this is what's gonna happen. And when it doesn't happen, we think we're not meditating properly. We're not getting anywhere. Basically for me, meditation is about allowing the mind to relax. It's not about coming to some new, wonderful, altered state of consciousness, which can happen, but it's really about letting the mind relax. And as we do just becoming to feel more at ease and or peaceful in ourselves, but that's what I recommend the course is maybe you can put in the chat.

Speaker 8:

I have done the course.

Peter:

Oh, you have great. Hello.

Speaker 8:

I, but it was years ago, I think 2012 or 2013. Okay. And I have it, I haven't looked back into my resources now.

Peter:

Okay.

Speaker 8:

But like I said, I usually like, I sometimes fall asleep. Okay. But even today I fell asleep. I know maybe I'm just tired all the time. But I feel lost without having like a community.

Peter:

Okay. Yeah. If it's any sort of fall asleep, sometimes

Peter:

I've seen, I've seen really experienced, well known distinguished meditators who are famous names sitting up there, nodding off to sleep. So if we're, I think in our culture, you know, we are all have some sort of sleep debt. We're, we're tired. And you know, when we're meditating, the way I see it is it's like

the being your body is saying or yourself saying, finally, she's stopped. Finally, she's let go. I can relax and like grab a, grab a bit of sleep. So don't feel sleep happened. Yes. It probably means you are tired. What I always suggest is if you do fall asleep, finish with a little bit of meditation so that when you wake up, just meditate for five minutes what was your meditating with a group you were saying?

Speaker 8:

Yeah, sometimes I just feel like, I mean, I've done like a pasta course I came was so long ago. And you know, but even with that, I don't necessarily keep up with the right Proper practice. Right. So I just feel like I'm missing out.

Peter:

Yeah. I think being, being regular each day is really important. Even if you can't, don't, don't have time for, you know, to sit for 20 minutes, just sitting for five, 10, keeps it a regular practice. So it's a regular part rather than saying, oh, I don't have time today to do 20 and skip it. If you don't have time to do 20, do 10 do five. Cause that becomes important just in terms of just stepping back from the business of life and just quieting down, squatting down. Well,

Speaker 8:

The one thing that I've hung up on, like I, I read your book and I've given is this gift to friends letting go of nothing. And you know, the part where you talk about synchronously and where your your teacher would say, like, are you feeling that helpfulness from life? Sometimes I find myself looking around, I'm not getting it like, so I must be like, not doing it.

Peter:

I'm sorry. I'm sorry. You get that interruption. Yeah. Yeah. I, I wouldn't, wouldn't worry about that. I mean,

Speaker 8:

I think, okay.

Peter:

The main thing is that, you know, how much support of nature. I, I think a lot of people do find that happens. Things seem to work the main, I would say the main criteria is, are you feeling easier in yourself? Are you feeling easier in yourself, more relaxed close, you know, are you the way operates coming home? If, if all you're doing in the meditation is just ending up with endless thoughts or after thoughts after thoughts with no interruption, I would say maybe, you know, go and dig out my first lesson again, if you can, if you can find if not email me and I'll send it to you again. Yeah. Okay. Yeah. Sounds it's just coming back to the basics rather than looking for, I think this is one of the mistakes we make. We are looking for something as opposed to just sitting quietly doing, doing to practice without any, without any goal, just, you know, exploring how it is to just allow things to be as they are, rather than the thinking mind coming in thinking now this is how things should be. This is what I want. This is what should happen.

Speaker 8:

Yeah. Got it. Okay. Thank you. That's what,

Peter:

Yeah. Anymore, if you need anything else just we can always chat. Yeah.

Speaker 8:

Sounds.

Linda:

Okay. How do you think this process relates to seeing things as they are in the Buddhist sense, seeing things without the influence of our assumptions, projections, filters, conditioning, et cetera. That was by Barbara Schultz.

Peter:

Yes. I think it's it. Is that just this, that's it. In other words, it's our, it's our thinking mind that gets into laying judgements, interpretations, putting all these layers on, on things. It's our thinking mind that that does that. And so when we, we take, when we, when the thinking mind becomes quiet, I think we are just experiencing things as they are without all these other layers. So I think that is what the, that's what the Buddhist appointing to and, and many other traditions. I dunno. Do you wanna say ever Barbara, do you wanna add anything to that?

Speaker 9:

You really, you had actually just said that seeing things as they are, but I, I just wanna appreciate the subtlety that you bring to this Pete and the way you unpack things. It it's really wonderful to be with you again, we haven't done this for a long time. We haven't been with you, so thank you very much. That's very helpful.

Peter:

Good to see you both. Yes.

Speaker 9:

See you too.

Peter:

Yeah. We may get those local groups going again sometime.

Speaker 9:

Lovely. We'll try and come, come up to sea reg. Yeah.

Peter:

Okay.

Linda:

Great. Few more. Okay. I, Lee Pollack says I've heard meditation described as simply sitting at the door and we'll, and the mind is the equivalent of standing in the doorway blocking entrance.

Peter:

Yep. These sort of analogies like this, like this can be informative, but in the end it's like the, do they actually, they're not actually the practice. So I think there's, there's a lot of truth in that. And that's why, you know, my, I think the essential practice for me coming back, what I was saying earlier is making the choice to withdraw your interest. And the thoughts, if the thoughts, the thinking mind is the doorway blocking it. Then don't what we, what people tend to do think, oh, I must stop the thoughts. I must control the thoughts. That's the common reaction people have they say, oh, I can't meditate. There's too many thoughts. I can't stop my thoughts. We can't they'll keep coming. But what we can do is when we notice one, we notice we caught up on it. We can just, in this moment, I choose not to follow it anymore.

Peter:

Which means I choose to withdraw my interest from it. And the thought in the doorway will just vaporize. It'll go away. It may come back later, but we actually, we have a tremendous power there in not following the thought. It, it dissolves. We're not keeping it going. Only when we follow the thought, do we keep on continuing it, continuing it, continuing it. So, yes, but for me, the practice is choosing to take our attention away, not to follow it, not to withdraw our interest, not necessarily follow our interests somewhere else to withdraw our interests and the thought and see where we are. Oh, here I am sitting here. That's fine. Then just be with the sitting here. We don't have to. I mean, there are techniques where you take your thought away, take your interest away from the thought and put it on a mantra or your breath or whatever. I prefer just simply withdrawing the interest. And then just being here now to quote, round us

Linda:

For couple more questions. What is this is by Dr. Gilbert. What about when my attention is outta my control and I'm drawn to my hunger and need for sleep, even though I would rather go there. What I mean is sometimes I feel my attention is hijacked.

Peter:

I think our attention is hijacked 90%, 95, 90 9% of the time, probably it's hijacked by things. Whether it's stuff coming up from, you know, you are talking about from the body or advertisements or whatever's going on in, in the media, whatever our attention's always being hijacked. And the first step is, is recognizing it. And then as we've been saying, we have, we have the power to actually place our attention or, or to place it from that and be with something else. It may come back. But I dunno. I mean, do you wanna say any more yourself about it? This may not answer you complete what I said may not be a complete answer for you.

Speaker 10:

Well, especially when it has to do with an addiction, you know, a very, very strong addiction. How, how would I work with that.

Peter:

I'm talking about a physical addiction or mental addiction

Speaker 10:

Thing. Well, I guess it's both, but it's physical a substance, a substance addiction.

Peter:

Yeah. Yeah. Noticing I think the first step, noticing it coming up, noticing this thought that's there rather than it's like taking a little distance from it. It's like, ah, there's that urge there's that thought if we can take a little distance from it and not, not to say it's gonna go away or getting rid of it, but if we can just, just take that dis and almost like saying, ah, here, here it is again, in that distance, we may just better choose for a moment just to step back enough. Not to have it grab us. I know it is difficult. I know, but I mean, Linda, do you want to say anymore on that? So I know you've explored sort of mental this mental side a it,

Linda:

And so I was emailing, texting somebody in the chat. So I, I didn't, I wasn't paying attention.

Peter:

You were paying attention to something else

Linda:

All the time.

Peter:

You were focused completely ignorant to what was going on here, which is how it happens. Great.

Linda:

It's more for me about, and when I, when I see that I'm losing that attention, just being kind about it and bringing myself back. Yeah. You know, you know, focusing to taking a quick focus on something that particularly like an inner sound or for me sound really works. Right. You know, if I, once I realize I'm listening to sound, I have a more focused attention. Right. That's for me, but other people it's the breath coming in the nose. It's some other object to bring it back, but

Peter:

Right. The question was what, when you got an addictive pattern going on an addictive thought, just coming in and taking you over.

Linda:

Oh, right. Well, we're not responsible for that first addictive thought. The only thing we have a choice over is whether we want to continue and get obsessed with it. So there, I just, there, I do have a wonderful little way of working with that is like not ignoring it, like, oh, there it is. There's that addict. There's that wanting of food where there's that, you know, kind of, kind of naming it so that I can greet it. And, but not right now, you know, just like, just not right now. But in a kind gentle way. So cuz I can't ignore it, but typically they go, those things do pass, you know, if, if that's that's helpful.

Peter:

Yeah. Thank you. I knew had something like, cause I know we talked about it before. Thanks. Yeah. Yeah.
Anything else?

Linda:

I think that is it.