



Core teaching Part 1 Meditation

Namaste everyone. Welcome to Satsang.

Welcome to those rejoining us and those joining us for the first time especially. Good to have you with us.

I wanted to shift focus a little bit, and over these next three Satsangs. I wanted to take a look, perhaps a deeper look, at what the core aspect is of this teaching. There really are three aspects of this teaching. If you sort of get a grasp, a hold of, and understanding experientially how to practice then you really, you have a foundation for waking up completely and overcoming any challenge that you may have as part of your awakening and ongoing deepening.

Those three aspects really are... there are descriptions of each one. And I will look at each one in turn. I was going to look at meditation today. What meditation is in its truest form, in its most direct form. Then we will look at, at Thursday Satsang, we will take a look at self-inquiry. And then a week today we'll look at contemplation. The three of them together are not really different. They are really three ways of looking at the same thing, but they are useful in different situations.

People are always asking, what should I be doing to wake up? What did I actually do that made the difference in my awakening? It was these three things. And there is a point, where they all meet, they all come together. But it really hopefully serves us to take a look at each one individually.

So, we will start with meditation today. I'll go through my own meditation that I'm teaching in this teaching, very direct meditation. There are as many forms of meditation as there are seekers. Every one is suitable for different people and different pathways. But the one I'm going to talk about is what I did directly to wake up. I found it to be the most intense, most powerful, most condensed form of any practice that anyone can do, that I've worked with. It's not to say that it's the only meditation, of course. But it is the one that worked for me. And it's the one that I've described in the Dissolving Ego book as well. It's totally in line with those practices.

Meditation is really just a focus on what is real. Meditation is most direct, it's most comprehensive form is a simple practice of putting attention on what is real.

We are going to talk about that a little bit and then we'll do a little guided meditation as part of this Satsang to illustrate that, just how simple and powerful it can be in actual practice.

With any meditation at all, the key is consistency. If you had Monday off and you sat for ten hours, with breaks obviously, and meditated, and then didn't do anything else for the rest of the week, you are going to get less benefit out of that than somebody who can only sit for twenty minutes a day, in meditation. The consistency, twenty minutes everyday, is going to build up, and really start to accumulate something powerful. Meditation should accumulate, the effects of meditation in your own life, your own awakening.

So what is meditation?

I've said this already. It's the focus on what is real. But how do we actually do that? What do we actually do in practice?

The most direct way that I've found is to simply bring attention to that which is in the background of our experience. So right now as you are sitting, as you're listening to this, there is what's going on in your experience. There is what your body is feeling, thinking, any sensations in the body. There are the noises in our surroundings. I can hear the rain falling on the window from the window ledge. I can hear various noises from the room I'm sitting in. And then there is the kind of background of experience.

I found it really challenging to focus on what I was, in terms of meditation, focus on the witness. But I did find a way to focus on what is the background. Because it's the same thing. It's the space in the background. The space the room is appearing in. Or, if we are listening, if we hear the rain on the window, it's the silence which is there which allows the rain to be heard. So anything happening in your experience, we can use that to contrast. So if something is changing in your experience, moving, like your thoughts, you can use that to contrast, to show you that part of you that isn't moving and changing.

So meditation is simply to bring attention, to notice that which is constantly here. But we don't always give it much of our attention at all. Because it doesn't seem to be very exciting when we first start out with our practice. And our thoughts, our changing mind and emotions and experience moment to moment have seemingly so much more hypnotic allure to them than that which is stable and constant in the background.

So meditation is just a simple thing of bringing attention to what is happening in the background of experience. If you notice that attention always goes to what is happening in the foreground, what is moving, what's changing, and by default that's our habit. Meditation, a simple practice in its most direct form, is to build a new habit, to bring attention to what is not changing, what is stable and constant. What is always present. So the real Self, we know, even intellectually, is infinite, is everywhere all the time. That means it must be here in our experience in this moment. It cannot ever be absent, therefore our meditation, we can't fail to find it. Even if we're simply just aware of the spaciousness, the empty space in which this room, which my body, in which these words are appearing in. That's a form of meditation in its most direct way.

So, it's also helpful to know what this meditation isn't. That will hopefully help to clarify. If my attention is on the experience that I'm having in this moment, my attention goes to what is present in this room, what my words are, that are coming out, or something that is going on in my body. Then I'm going to feel like I am separate to what I am experiencing. My attention will be coming from one place, or may be focused on one place only, and I will feel separate to everything else. And when we focus like this, when we focus on our experience, most of us are constantly focused on our thoughts. And then we have to experience those thoughts as true.

This meditation, also we are not trying to change our experience. If some emotion were to arise inside me as I was meditating, or some loud noise in my environment, then most of us have this habit of wanting to try and change our experience in meditation. But what I'm talking about here is even more simple than that. That whatever arises in my experience, just gently guide attention to look at the background of that experience. So I'm not going to try and change anything that's going on in my experience once I'm meditating. Why is that? Because if I'm trying to change my experience, I'm coming from my egoic perspective. I'm coming to my meditation as a separate being who is interacting with the experience. Instead of a much more direct looking at that formless space, the silence, the awareness, the stillness, in which thoughts and sounds and experiences and emotions are all moving and arising. So if I'm trying to change my experience I am going to be the doer. I am going to be trying to get somewhere in my meditation. Instead of just paying attention to that which is constant. That which is always in the background and isn't trying to get anywhere. From that place my meditation becomes increasingly effortless, increasingly simple. And my only task so to speak is to notice when my attention has gone back to something happening inside my experience.

So if I'm paying attention right now to the formless space in which this room is appearing, can't see it, can't grasp it, can't see it with my eyes at least but I'm aware of it. There's awareness of that space in which all this is appearing. Or you could say, I can hear the silence in which these words are resonating. I can recognize a sense of stillness in which thoughts are moving and phenomena are changing.

It's a very simple practice. I can either have my attention on anything that's moving or changing, like my cat. Or I can have attention on the space in which all of that is appearing. And we cannot do both at the same time. I am either focusing on phenomena, objects, things that are changing in this moment, or I'm focused on the formless space in which all this is arising. When I focus on the formless space, the silence, the stillness, the background of my experience, that which is constant, everything happening inside that, is just going to unfold. If my attention is on the background of my experience, my body can still talk, it's still breathing, I can still interact like this. It's not necessary to have attention on your someone-ness for that someone-ness to work. It's just a sense of being someone. All this can just unfold effortlessly and spontaneously while your attention is on what is constant in your experience.

So perhaps meditation can be a lot more simple than what we've come to understand. Perhaps it can be a lot more easy than we thought. Maybe it doesn't have a goal at all. If there is a goal, it's maybe just to build this habit. It's just a habit that we have to always look at thoughts first, and emotions first, and things that are changing in our experience first. And you can simply form a new habit by a little practice each day of putting attention on what is unchanging in your experience. So the space in which your experience is happening. The space in which your body is appearing. The silence in which all sounds are heard. These are all ways of describing the same thing. That which is just present and being about you. That which isn't changing. The being part of your human being. The knowingness that is constant in every moment. Everything that you know, the sounds that you are hearing, your thoughts, your experience, how your body feels, how hot or cold it is in the room you're in, you automatically know. There is a knowingness about you. That's constant and unchanging, that knowingness. What it knows is always changing. The knowingness itself is unchanging.

What if meditation became this beautifully simple thing. Simply placing attention on that which is stable and that which is not an object. The silence, stillness, the formless

awareness is the pure sentience itself. It's intelligence that animates the body and all of this, that makes this all appear to be. So putting your attention on that is going to allow you to begin to experience a stopping, a resting, a real slowing down of the mind. Not by something you are forcing your mind to do. Just by simple placing your attention on that which isn't moving and changing. And it's completely possible to do this, to build this into a habit which eventually becomes spontaneous and effortless. That is the truest form of meditation. And is really what any awakened being has done, is just to cultivate this habit until it just becomes something that's happening effortlessly, continuously. So that they can no longer only focus on phenomena and automatically focus on phenomena happening in experience. The default setting, if you will, the habit is to be automatically focused on the spaciousness that all this is arising in. The beingness, the consciousness, the presence in which all experience is arising and falling away.

So what is the purpose of placing attention on what's real? It's because from that place, anything that we want to change in our experience is going to change by itself anyway. If I simply rest my attention on what's real, then my mind and body are going to become increasingly saturated with the light of the truth. The power, the real self, and anything that needs to right itself in my world is going to right itself. The more consistently I focus on what's real, the more these things are going to begin to sort themselves out anyway. Where my life is tangled up and not working properly will be where I'm really focused on phenomena. Where I'm really focused on an emotion or thought, and I'm trying to change that. If I am resting attention on that which is constant and in the background of my experience, then my experience is going to flow much more effortlessly, in the way that really begins to surprise and delight me. If instead I am focused on the experience and trying to change it, then I'm coming from my egoic sense of self. Which isn't wrong, at all. But for most of us in Satsang, it's begun to feel too small, too constrictive, too limiting, and it's going to really begin to not work to try to change my experience anyway. It's going to have the opposite effect. The more I realise what I am is unlimited and formless and everywhere, the more I'm coming from the perspective of my egoic self trying to change my experience, the less it's going to be in line with what I realize myself to be. So can you simply rest attention on that which is real, and allow your experience to right itself? Yes you absolutely can. And that's the fundamental habit that we're building in the meditation that I'm talking about here.

I rest my attention on that which is real, the formless awareness which this room, my body, these words, are appearing. And I simply notice when attention has gone back to something moving and changing inside that awareness. So a thought, attention drifts to thought, or a sound, or some distraction. When I notice that, I can simply come back to looking at awareness itself. There isn't any end point to this meditation. There is just some point where it becomes automatic and effortless.

Can you imagine, right now, how it feels, what it would be like to live from that, when that habit has become automatic, when you can no longer pay attention to thoughts only. When your default setting is to be looking at the awareness in which thoughts are arising. And it's a choice if you want to pay attention to thoughts. How different is that to our daily experience where, for most of us, and as it was for me at first, there wasn't any choice but to pay attention to thoughts, but as soon as mind spoke, attention went straight to it. There wasn't any choice. Now for me, there isn't really any choice to... It's not possible to pay attention. I have to make a lot of effort to really pay attention to one thought. It takes a lot of energy to do that right now. And it really is going against the habit which is built, which is really to be constantly and effortlessly aware of the silent space in which all this is happening. That silent space is pure sentience, pure intelligence. What you really are is the silent, invisible background to all of this.

So can you just bring your attention to that which is in the background? And do you have to try to change what's in the foreground? Or is that just a habit of perceiving yourself to be someone experiencing something. And do you still feel that need to change your experience if your attention is on the formless background, that which is constantly stable and underpinning all experience. And maybe that is the most effective way to have your experience change the way you want it to. Maybe that is the most effective way to have your world look the way you want it to. Because, no longer will you be doing something to try to solve it. No longer will you be coming from the limited perspective.

So meditation in its truest form is simply paying attention to what is, or to what is real. Most importantly to what is permanent and unchanging in our experience. Very simple thing. Just to pay attention to that whichever way in you can find, whether it's through silence, stillness, presence, consciousness, awareness, the knowingness, being, just anyway in particular, the contextual field. All of them are just names for the same thing, for the Self. So when you hear these phrases in the scriptures, "meditate on the Self", this is what it means. This is what it means to pay attention to that which is constantly here and yet constantly overlooked by our egoic sense of self.

Just this one thing, if you build this habit, it will revolutionize your entire experience of life. Your experience will become more effortless, things will start to come that you need. Emotions will start to be dissipating, and everything that seemingly needs to be fixed, will begin to fix itself. Any problem that's arising will, you'll watch that arise, and there will be a solution to that problem arise, as your attention is resting on that which is stable and real.

And a major benefit, of course, is that when the body disappears out of the formless space, when the body is gone, and there is no more thoughts or phenomena to watch, it won't seem to matter. You won't even probably notice because attention is just on this formless space that you are, and even while the body is still here you can enjoy it, you can move around in the world, you can have that experience too. It's not one or the other. You're not being asked to give up your egoic perspective, your sense of doing and being someone will still be there and available. It just won't be your default setting anymore. It won't be your automatic choice. The automatic choice will be perceiving that space, that formlessness in which the egoic sense of someone-ness is arising and playing. And when it's not your default setting, your egoic sense of self, it will not be a problem at all for you. It will just be another phenomena arising inside the real you, and it won't trouble you at all. In fact, it will become extraordinarily useful. Your someone-ness is necessary while the body is here. But it's just a sense of someone.

So I hope you get a taste of how simple meditation can be. And I thought just for ten minutes we could just, with our eyes open or closed we'll go into a little bit of practice just to show how easy it is, how simple, and how it feels as well. It will feel nice for your body and mind too. So if you want to join in, you're very welcome.

Just with your eyes open or closed, however you're sitting is fine. Probably best not to lay down, unless you have some back problems or something, because we do tend to nod off and fall asleep when the body relaxes.

So just as you're sitting, eyes open or closed, absolutely fine.

And just to notice the space in which all this is appearing. All awareness, your awareness that is constant in the background. We are always aware. Right now you are aware of these words, you're aware of the sounds in the environment. You're aware of the space in the

room that you're sitting in. You're aware of how your body feels. All of that is just happening effortlessly and the awareness is present.

It's just a simple shift of focus to become aware of the awareness. To notice that there is awareness present. Rather than to pay attention to what we're aware of. Just noticing that awareness, and even if you get distracted by a thought, awareness goes to listen to thoughts again, the moment you recognize that awareness drifted to thoughts, you're immediately watching awareness again. You are watching where awareness went. It went to the thoughts, and now it's back to look at itself.

And we can start with a simple question: Am I aware right now? And that question will bring you to a recognition, there is awareness present. And just a simple placing attention on that awareness, noticing that you're aware. Either with your eyes closed, you can just recognize you can't see anything. You're aware that you can't see with your eyes when they're closed. Very simple. And with your eyes open, what your eyes are seeing are reporting back to your awareness, what your ears are hearing, is being reported back to awareness. And from time to time awareness will drift to phenomena to listen to thoughts. It will watch thoughts or it will listen to some sound or you will pay attention to a phenomena arising, a sensation in your body. And as soon as you recognise your attention has drifted, you can just bring it back to that awareness.

Any phenomena that arises can be used in your meditation. I can hear my clock ticking. And I can only hear my clock ticking because there is awareness to hear it. I can hear the rain on the window, and that's coming into my awareness, reporting into my awareness.

Just to ask the question: what is my awareness watching right now? Will bring you immediately back to being aware of this awareness. So, meditation, nothing is going wrong when your attention drifts. It can even become part of your meditation. Aware of our awareness, and then awareness gets lost for 30 seconds or a minute, listening, watching thoughts, completely absorbed in thoughts, and then at some point we recognize that awareness is watching thoughts. It really doesn't matter. As soon as we recognize we are aware or what our awareness is doing, what it's focusing on, when we noticed it's focused on a phenomena we bring it back to look at itself. Am I aware right now? Very, very simple.

We are not trying to change anything in meditation. Just enough to recognize, when you are aware of phenomena, thoughts, objects, things, and to bring awareness back to itself. We are not trying to figure anything out. We are not trying to reach a goal in this meditation. Right now you are aware. That is the meditation, to notice you are aware.

We are just meditating on the awareness such is always present. Sometimes it's watching itself and sometimes it watches phenomena. Just a very simple practice, awareness watches itself. It will feel like, it will just feel like my awareness. It won't feel special or anything, at first. Just, I am aware. My ordinary everyday awareness. And that's enough, just to recognise, there is always awareness. Sometimes it's watching thoughts. Sometimes it's watching the body sleep. Sometimes it's watching the waking state, everything that's going on in it.

During our meditation we are just noticing awareness and it's natural that awareness will drift to look at thoughts, to look at feelings, to look at deep states that arise, peace, something, or an emotion that arises. You just simply bring it back when you notice it's drifted. Bring it back to looking at itself.

Am I aware right now?

So we are not trying to change anything. There is no end point for this meditation, no goal. No finish line. Just enjoying how it feels to be aware of awareness. And nothing is going wrong when attention drifts to thoughts, or to sound. It's natural at first that awareness will drift to look at phenomena. The awareness itself is not a phenomena. It's not moving or changing. It's just very simply: am I aware right now? And then to notice, when you can, when attention wanders to a thought or an emotion or a sound, and just very simply bringing it back to look at the awareness itself, to notice awareness.

Just a simple noticing that you are aware. That is the simplest and purest and highest form of meditation. Enjoying how the body feels, the mind feels, when awareness comes to rest upon itself. There is a natural slowing down of the body and the mind. But that's not why we are doing it. We are just recognizing what is real, what is always here, the awareness itself.

So our meditation becomes a very simple thing, a very easy thing, to notice the awareness, and then to notice when awareness wanders, and to bring it back. And over time, with consistency, it becomes more and more obvious that awareness is you, awareness is silent, intelligent, vast, unending, unlimited, ever present, indestructible, not suffering. All this is just revealed effortlessly, simply from watching awareness. If some emotion arises or some thoughts arise and attention is drawn to them for a long time, it doesn't matter. Just as soon as you do recognize that you're watching thoughts again, that you're listening to emotions, just to bring it back. Just as soon as you do recognize, no big deal, nothing going wrong. And just gradually more and more, this will just become effortless. Attention will just stay on the awareness more and more without you doing anything.

At some point you'll forget how to focus on phenomena only. You'll forget how to always pay attention to thoughts. You'll somehow lose that ability.

If you have your eyes closed, you may want to just open them for a moment as we bring this formal meditation to a close.

It's just important to recognize that meditation, it starts off as something we're doing, perhaps something we bring some time to each day. But it will increasingly become something that you're just being. You will be the meditation itself, rather than something you're doing. So more and more throughout the day, you'll just find automatically attention goes to the awareness rather than what awareness is actually, rather than any phenomena arising in that awareness.

Your mind and body can effortlessly function without your attention on them at all, amazingly. In fact, they will probably function much better when your awareness is watching itself. I know that may seem a strange thing to understand at first but try it out when you're not driving, and not working and things like that first.

Meditation is something we start off by doing but it becomes just being, constant effortless beingness. And somehow you will simply forget how to pay attention only to what's arising inside awareness. So I hope you had a taste of how simple and direct and powerful meditation can be. And it's really, it's called meditation here but really it's being yourself. Noticing the awareness, the silence, the stillness.

During that meditation I was calling it awareness, but we can call it anything. Stillness, silence, presence, beingness, consciousness, knowingness, the sense of now, the sense of here. All of those are constantly present and they are all the same thing. The only job really is to find which one resonates with you and then pay attention to it more than you pay attention to the phenomena, that which is moving and changing. Everything else in your awakening will happen for you, by you, just effortlessly begin to resolve itself.

So if you'd like to ask a question or to share your experience during that meditation I'd love to hear from you. If you want to ask a question you can click on participants at the bottom of the screen, and on the bottom of the participant section there is an option to raise your hand to ask a question about anything really to do with awakening . While we are waiting for those questions, I will talk on Thursday about self-inquiry, which is kind of the same as meditation but it does tend to be even more direct sometimes. A very, very powerful way to recognize what you really are.

If anyone would like to ask a question?

Maybe we are all in a nice deep state after meditation. Okay S. Whenever you're ready S.

S: Good morning.

Helen: Hiya. Good morning. Sorry.

S: So, sorry. The last couple of days something very difficult has arisen in my life experience around my particular issue in my family that's been going on. And the outcome for me, for this life was very disappointing. There was this kind of, having to sort of let go of a certain structure that I was holding on to, a certain desire, or whatever. And really realizing that that was a teaching to go deeper into the truth of who I am, beyond the wants and needs on that level as a separate self, wanting something or wanting some... But the energy around it and the thinking around it has been very, very concentrated for a really long time. But this morning I woke up really early, because there's been a lot of suffering around it, and I went into meditation. But bringing it to what you are bringing today, there was this like, I can't describe it as anything more than like a very strong vibration of staying with an aligned feeling of, of presence. Of who I am without going into... the thoughts then stopped, the feelings then stopped, there was a sense of awareness of the contraction around that trying to kind of come back in, or work itself out somehow, bringing that presence to that sort of... But it took somehow not an effort, but an increased focus of attention. Suddenly I went, oh I'm going to really just focus all my attention on, on that. And it, I don't know if that's an effort, but it took a kind of concentration, a concentration of energy. And, and it kind of felt truer obviously than being kind of always addicted to the issue and everything. So your explanation just now was, again the same but a bit more sort of spacious than that too. Because it was aware of kind of the background, whereas this one felt very just sort of focused in the body, as a kind of aligned feeling. I can't describe it any better really. I just don't think that's any different to what you were just indicating, or is it. I'm not sure. Do you know what I mean?

Helen: Only you know for absolutely certain but it's really, there is no middle ground really. Either our attention is on that which is not changing in our experience, or it's on that which is changing in our experience. And, we all have those places, you know our karmic patterns where for so long attention's just been automatically drawn to these thoughts, these emotions around something or some being in our experience. Whenever that arises, tensions just automatically gone there. That is what these karmic patterns are, where we don't seem to have a choice at that time whether to pay attention to the awareness or the thoughts. It's straight to the thoughts and the charge that's happening around something, whether it's a desire as you were saying, or some sense of needing something, or some particular being or event that happens. Attention just gets drawn there automatically doesn't it. And in those situations it will seem like an effort to keep attention resting on that which is real. And it may even seem impossible at first, which is why we may even look at contemplation as a way to, to work with those particular situations. We will look at that a week today. But if you notice what happens during those moments and notice where

attention goes, it's enough to recognize, am I watching something that's changing here or am I watching the unchanging. So there might be a real sort of charge going on in the body, lots of things happening, a real buildup of emotional experience and all of that, but attention can still be on that space in which it's happening. That formlessness, that awareness that is watching this. You can allow the charge of the emotion, we are not repressing it at all. But at the same time we can be watching that which isn't changing. Sometimes it takes a little practice when something big comes up like that, can you get a sense of it?

S: Yeah. Yeah. I'm not sure whether I was focusing on something that was changing in a sense, because it felt like I kind of... But it ultimately feels like it's a power, an inner power, I know that sounds a bit...

Helen: Yeah. The clarity and the power that comes with watching what is real, you begin to notice that. Some sense of something building, accumulating inside the body, which is really just the, the clarity and the knowingness and the seeing and the power that comes with being yourself. It begins to build up, and even that sense of power or clarity, it's good, but it's still not quite the same as watching the awareness itself, you know. Because sometimes we might feel very empowered. Sometimes we might feel less empowered. So there is still changing, there is still a phenomena, very subtle phenomena that's changing, but there is still awareness of even that. Awareness of that sort of sense of building. It's the natural effect on the body and mind of watching what is real, of paying attention to. This kind of very simple meditation, is that the body and mind will start to feel much more alive, much more clear, much more present, much more happy, all of that which are quite seductive things to look at. In a sense of peace building and all of that. Still if we maintain attention on that which is not changing at all, that which is invisible and intangible about you then, these things will just build up anyway, the peace and the love and the sense of joy will begin to come back into your experience.

S: Thank you very much.

Helen: Very good question. Thank you. Lovely.

Okay F.

F: There we go. Sorry. My name is F.

Helen: Nice to meet you.

F: Nice to meet you too. I'm glad I tuned in this morning. My name is F. I'm in Belfast here in Ireland and you just took me away there. I was sort of captured by every word that you said. There is also a deep, deep, deep, deep, sense of wonder and a curiosity within me, and I don't know why I get caught up on words, but when it comes to mindfulness, which is very sexy at the moment, you know very popular...

Helen: Yeah, fashionable.

F: What's that?

Helen: Very fashionable at the moment isn't it.

F: When it comes to say mindfulness and awareness, so you know it's about that awareness, is there a difference between awareness, in a definition, compared to mindfulness, or vice versa?

Helen: I would say that what we've been describing this morning, again, this is just from my own experience of what worked for me, because that's just my truth, mindfulness did bring some clarity, it did really help, however the only thing I ever found that really did take me beyond all suffering was this very direct practice. Because even if I am being aware, mindfully aware, my attention is still on what I am experiencing rather than the, that which is watching the experience. So, I found mindfulness, and again people may have different definitions of what they may mean by mindfulness, but, for a while I was practicing before I got into this very direct way. If I was cooking a meal, I was just totally present watching my hands chop the vegetables. That type of thing. And that did really, really help, but in the end it was still, I found it was still watching the experience rather than watching the space in which the experience was happening. And again it's horses for courses so to speak. Not everyone is ready for such a direct practice which we are doing today. But I think when you are ready it kind of resonates. In the end we are either watching a phenomena or we are watching that space in which phenomena are arising. Our real being is not changing at all. So there is a difference as far as what I'm teaching and what I've spoken about today, between the two. And it's really just a question of how direct you want your practice, basically. How, every road leads to the same place. It's just how twisty and turny, how quickly you're going to get to that goal. For myself I just kind of fell in love with how it felt to be in such a simple, simple things always work for me. I always love simplicity. It's the only thing that's really gotten me out of suffering if I'm honest. I don't know if that helps you to distinguish between the two.

F: It does. But tell me please, what is your practice?

Helen: Just exactly as we've done today. It's just constantly going on now effortlessly.

F: And does it have a name?

Helen: Say that again, sorry?

F: Does it have a name?

Helen: Well, there are practices, very similar practices to what I've described, exactly the same practices in the Dissolving the Ego book. Like this one would just be called being aware of awareness. There are other one, listening to the silence, resting in the stillness, they are all names for the same thing really. That which does not have a name.

F: And finally, I don't want to hold on here...

Helen: No these are good questions. Very good questions.

F: Thank you. Would the source of your practice, would it be Zen?

Helen: I don't really like to pin it down to be honest, to a name. I don't really think names are all that important. But, I guess, it's a very direct path, what I'm teaching. And it's always based on my own experience. That's about as much as I'd like to pin it down really.

F: And who taught you?

Helen: It's a kind mishmash of every spiritual single spiritual practice and religion I ever studied, which was a lot. I kind of cobbled together little bits that resonated with myself from everything that I studied. I just try to study every single, from Zen like you said, to every possible thing I could get my hands on. I was just like a sponge for about 17 years. It

culminated in what I'm actually teaching. The directness of it that really brought me out of suffering once and for all. You know all the contemporary teachers of course that are round about today. I've listened to thousands of hours of those. I can't really say there is any one teacher in particular. It was more of hearing the same truth through every source I was looking, the same message was coming in different ways from different people.

F: Personally speaking, I'm a Zen student. I've been a Zen student here in Belfast for the last thirty years or so. I've got a great Zen teacher, the [inaudible] San Francisco Zen center and [inaudible] opened the center in Belfast. But I love what you say. And that is especially coming from Belfast, you know where we have orange, green, Celtic, protestant, as you understand. You know the reason why I sort of introduced Zen in Belfast was literally for a middle way, or another way. It has been very successful but I still think it defeats the purpose. And the purpose was, neither this nor that. Because as you say, in order to keep it simple, if you bring about a definition, people are bringing about a definition.

Helen: You can say as well, if you say, you know, if I was to say I am teaching this way or that way people build an idea about it in our mind, and it really just distracts from the simplicity of the practice, which is to, really what we are all doing this for is to come out of suffering once and for all, isn't it. To not be stuck on ideas about particular things. What I try to encompass is the simplicity and the directness of it. It shouldn't be hard to do if it's what we already are. And it's always here. We can't really fail to recognize it once we sort of know how to recognize what's already here. Just a very simple thing to do that.

F: And what we've done today, is it on a recording? Have you recorded this session?

Helen: Yes, it will be on YouTube afterwards. There are loads of other ones as well, on my YouTube channel. Loads of similar things. You can sort of dive in there and explore them.

F: I'll do that.

Helen: Fantastic. Lovely to meet you.

F: And you too.

Helen: Okay M

M: Hi Helen.

H: Hi, how are you doing?

M: Good, good, thank you. I just wanted to say I really enjoyed that experience, the meditation, and coming out of it I felt more me, like really me. And taking my, allowing my attention to go to that form aspect, that infinite presence, the awareness, I really love that nature and that ability to go there. So thank you. I just am sitting in a curiosity about two distinctions. Because I also coming out of that felt quite spacey and dispersed. And my nature is to be dispersed, that's kind of how I flow. And it's not always healthy. So, I'm in the process of exploring what it's like, with breath work, to actually bring my energy to center. So I'm doing another, like a breath exploration and bringing everything to center which is quite different for me. And when my energy becomes aligned and centered I'm actually really connected to the cosmos as well. Like, so they are very different organizations connecting me and I just, I don't know if you have any thoughts on what's more healthy or what's, you know, you are probably going to say neither one is wrong. I don't know what you're going to say. Can you speak to that?

Helen: Yeah, it's uh, just like you said. Whatever feels the best for you, whatever feels right for you of course is right for you. I do understand completely what you were saying about, if I understand you, when I started meditation first of all years ago, I very much used it as a way to avoid life. I was always looking to escape life and, I was cautious when I started a meditation practice that was so direct because it, I was worried I was going to start to hide again, to avoid life again but I actually found it had the opposite effect. When I really dived into it, it made me very aware of the present moment and everything that was going on inside this moment. So there can be, and a beautiful thing that we've done this morning today in this Satsang is, it doesn't contradict with any other experience, any other mediation, any other practice. And it doesn't have to be done exclusively. You know, there's plenty of people that do it, they do another practice as well, afterwards or before. So you can combine both. Not at the same time I would say. One or the other, rather than trying to... One and the other is what I'm trying to say. It's totally fine. They are not going to contradict each other. And whatever helps you to feel... There are some beings where their biggest challenge is they're a little too grounded. And they kind of have a little challenge trying to explore the higher possibilities of experience. And then there are other beings like myself, and I think like you are describing, who are very much already into those places and have trouble staying on planet Earth sometimes. So perhaps both a combination, both of those would be good. You know, whatever helps you feel centered is going to naturally lead to an awareness of what is constantly present, because we are much more present in the moment anyway doing that. You might find that you benefit from doing both. Or you might feel that one day you want to do this one, the next day you want to do the other one. The third day you don't feel like doing any of it. Does that help?

M: Yeah that's beautiful thank you.

Helen: Good question. Thanks.

Helen: Okay D

D: Hey, how are you doing?

Helen: Hello, how are you doing?

D: I'm alright. Long time no see. It's good to see you and some familiar faces, and some new ones. And I just wanted to thank you for the help that you've given me over the past year or so. And I love what you said about abiding in the moment. Abiding in the now and all that stuff. I certainly have been through the washing machine potentially emotionally over the last six months. My son has tried to take his life on a few occasions and I've had a few upheavals of my own, but I'm okay. I'm okay. I'm okay, because of what you taught me. I did want to say, not just as a plug but to anyone who hasn't done the Dissolving the Ego course, I'm not sure whether you're doing it or anything like that but I would highly recommend the book Dissolving the Ego at least, and all your material. I've brought a few friends along today because I have spoken about you on a few occasions and you've certainly helped me with my sobriety. That's for sure. And you've deepened my level of sobriety. I was sober eighteen years, this last week, and that's part of why I was calling.

Helen: Congratulations.

D: Yeah, that's good. I've had to deepen, you know I've found over the last year I've had to deepen my spiritual whatever it is, like you said.

Helen: As you said it's brought unique challenges this year that you haven't faced before.

D: Through self-inquiry, definitely. I'm okay. That's the amazing thing. I can't explain it. I can't explain how you've helped me.

Helen: It's just the power of what's real isn't it? It gets inside you. It gets established, it just undermines your ability to suffer anymore, doesn't it. Whatever is going on there is just this part of you that's okay, and you know, has that stability and that clarity and that firmness. That's what you really grabbed a hold of and really took to heart, and dived in with the practice.

D: I've had a bit of a calling over the last four or five months which has taken me a little bit away from it, but I never felt apart from it, I never felt different, you know, apart from the Satsang or the sangha or anything. But I have had a calling, I've had a major calling, because I put the flag up, I put the sail up and asked god, or whatever it is, to do thy will, to do it's will, or whatever the will is. I don't know. But it's certainly taken up my time, you know. It's been amazing. I'm just very grateful. And I say it wouldn't have happened if I'd not done, been doing Satsang. It's pretty cool.

Helen: Pretty cool, I like that.

D: It's good.

Helen: It's good to see you again. Thanks for sharing that as well. I appreciate it. Lovely.

J: Hi Nice to meet you. I really am grateful to actually get to attend live Satsang. I watched some of your videos and stuff, but honestly I just woke up this morning with my normal Monday morning anxiety attack, you know. And I was trying to work through it, actually using a little something I heard Ian (he's in the little square down there) say a few weeks back. And I was fortunate to look at my phone and see that D had texted me to tell me that at 5AM this is coming on, and I just wanted to share that really I guess since the age of eight or ten I've been a very overly anxiety ridden person. And I got sober almost eleven years ago, and it took a couple years for me to realize that meditation was a part of the program. And I read books on meditation that were that thick, you know.

Helen: I remember those ones.

J: And to watch me try to learn to meditate, excuse me if this reference is somewhat vulgar but it was like watching somebody, you know, have a painful bowel movement or something. Just silly. And I was trying it all at once. At any rate, just to cut short, I was fortunate to be able to attend this morning because the simple things work for me too. And that was so simple, and so direct, and the relief was so immediate that I'm just, words can't express how grateful I am for being here this morning.

Helen: I'm really, really glad you got a lot out of it. To me it has to be simple because that's all we can remember in each of those moments when there is lots of emotion, lots of stuff going on like that. Simple works best doesn't it. It's simple but it's direct, and like you said, the effect is immediate. But it also accumulates in the system. Less and less will you be able to... That fear and anxiety will be there for a while but less and less can you suffer from it. And eventually you won't be suffering at all from it. And then it will just begin to dissipate. It's just this habit of, this thing builds in the body doesn't it, and then attention goes there, and once attention has gone there, what do you do with it then. That's the directness of the meditation is what you can actually do in those moments. I found that extraordinarily helpful. I struggled with a lot of fear most of my life. It was just always there in the background. This underlying dread or something that something was about to go wrong, that kind of feeling.

J: Even when there wasn't anything I find something. Anyway, so your next Satsang would be the same time as this?

Helen: No it's on Thursday evening, which, at 7pm here which is 2 pm eastern time. I'm not sure exactly where you are, but it's obviously central or somewhere. All the details are on helenhamilton.org, times of Satsang, or Facebook if you're on Facebook.

J: Well I'm just really grateful. I had another question but I can't really remember what it was but, doesn't really matter. Thank you very much, I appreciate it.

Helen: Glad you got a lot out of it, it's lovely to meet you.

J: It's lovely to meet you as well.

Helen: We will leave it there for today. Thanks to everyone for joining in. Namaste, thank you.