

The Importance of Seclusion

September 24, 2011

Focus on your breath.

And for the time being, think as if you're the only person here right now, just you and nature: the birds, the coyotes, the chaparral all around.

As for your concerns back home, put them aside. It's good to get out to a place like this where you have some more seclusion. You have a chance to let the mind settle down and gain some respite from all the turmoil of living with other people.

It gives you a chance to look at own life, to see where you're going. Most of us live our lives like a person swimming around in the ocean with our head down in the water: just swimming, swimming, swimming away, not really knowing where the currents are taking us or whether we're headed in the right direction.

So it's good to stop and get off on an island every now and then, where you can get more perspective of where you are, where you've been coming from, where you're going, and what you may need to change.

You don't want to let the currents of the ocean pull you wherever they may go. You want to have a destination: What do you want to do with this life? Where do you want to go? It's good to stop and take stock of these things. The best place to do that is when you're out alone in nature. So even if you can't be alone in nature, try to develop this attitude of just being right here, right now, without anyone else's concerns impinging on you.

It's even better if you take this attitude back with you wherever you go. Back home, whatever comes up—you're in an emergency room, you're in traffic, whatever: Try to develop this sense of seclusion inside. Which goes together with the idea that you know where you're going and what you need to do to get there. You want to make sure that you're headed in the right direction all the time. Don't let other people's directions pull your around, because the currents of society flow in very strange ways.

So step out on the island for a bit, get up high and look around, to see where you're headed. And give the mind the chance to rest in the meantime so it has the strength to continue going on the way you want to go.