

The Craft of Your Life

December 3, 2011

Okay, focus on your breath. Close your eyes and watch your breath.

Know when the breath is coming in; know when it's going out.

Just try to stay with each breath as it comes in.

You don't have to pay attention to anything else. Any thoughts that come into the mind, just let them go, let them go. Try to stay with the sensation of how the breathing feels.

Notice where it's most prominent, where it's easiest to watch. For some people it's at the nose. For other people, it's the rise and fall of the chest, the rise and fall of the abdomen—any place in the body where you know, “Now the breath is coming in; now it's going out,” and you can watch how comfortable it is. If it's not comfortable, you can change the rhythm: make it slower or faster, deeper or more shallow, heavier or lighter.

As you do this, you find that it gets easier and easier for the mind to stay here in the present moment.

This is important because all the important things in life are happening here in the present moment. We think that things in the past are important or things in the future are important, but right here nothing much is happening so it's not important. But actually what you're choosing to do right now shapes your life. Each time you have an intention and you follow it, that's shaping where your life is going to be right now and where it's going to go in the future.

So you want to be very careful to stay in the present moment because it's so easy to slip off. You start thinking about the future and all the decisions that are being made in the present are being made on automatic pilot. You're not fully aware of them. You want to bring full awareness to what you're doing so that you can do it skillfully.

As with any piece of craftsmanship: If you're not paying attention to what you're doing, it's going to get sloppy, the workmanship is going to be shoddy. But if you give it your full attention, it's a lot easier to do it well. So you want to think of your life as a craft, as a piece of art. How are you shaping it? What are you doing with it? Each intention is having an effect, so you want to make sure that that effect is good.

That mean you have to be here in the present moment to watch it. And you have to be solidly in the present, because often these intentions will sneak up on you if you're not fully aware. They make you do things and think things and say

things that you're going to later regret.

So try to be fully aware as continuously as you can. This way you provide a good foundation for your life. The art of your life, the craft of your life, gets a lot more refined: something you can look back on and say, "I'm really glad I made those decisions." Your life will be a life you're really proud of.

And it all starts right here. So pay a lot of attention right here, because everything comes out of right here.