

Enjoying Your Work

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When the mind settles down in the present, it's very easy to just settle in and fall asleep, drift off, because that's our normal reaction to pleasure. We look around us, things are okay, nothing requires our immediate attention: That's what we think, and so we drift away.

You have to remember that the reason we settle down in the present moment is because there's work to be done here. We try to make it comfortable so that it's easy to stay here and you can focus your attention on the work. It's not just to hang out and drift away.

When things are comfortable, at the very least ask yourself, "How can I maximize this sense of comfort? How can I keep it going?" Because if you don't keep the causes going, it's going to run out after a while.

It's as if you a person who works a little bit and gets some money and then stops working and runs out and spends the money. You come back and you're lucky if the boss will take you on again, but you never really get a raise if you keep doing that. So you have to figure out a way to work and enjoy yourself at the same time.

So find a sense of pleasure in the breath, and then work the pleasure through the body. You can play with it. It's an interesting combination of working and playing.

But it's work that's really worth doing: You're trying to figure out what's happening to the mind in the present moment. To what extent are you shaping the present moment in a skillful way and to what extent is it unskillful? If it's unskillful, what can you do to change? That's really worth looking into.

Because the mind does so many things of which is it is barely conscious. As we settle down in the present it gives us an opportunity to bring them up into your conscious awareness. That way, you can see where the mind is headed: where it's heading in a good direction or a bad direction. And you can change it. There are all these intentions moving around all the time. Have you ever looked at them really carefully? If you stay with the breath you're going to get to know your intentions really closely.

We settle down for the sake of doing our work with a sense of ease and pleasure and interest, so that it really does get good results. So it's not all work but it's not all play. You want to learn how to put the two of them together.

That's when the meditation really advances.