

Approaching Your Work

November 16, 2012

Take some time to settle in.

The mind's been running around dealing with chores, dealing with responsibilities. Now's the time to let all of its other responsibilities down and just be with itself, right there with the breath.

The breath is the aspect of the body that's closest to the mind and it's the most responsive to the movements of the mind. That's why Ajaan Lee said that it's a good mirror for the mind. If there are any abnormalities or uneven feelings in the breath, it's a sign there may be something abnormal in the mind. So you should check and see what's going on in the mind right now. If you think the mind is okay, then you turn around and look at the body. Maybe something's wrong with the body. The breath is a good place to check both the body and mind, to look after yourself in the present moment.

When you spend a lot of time with outside responsibilities, one of your big responsibilities is looking after your own mind to make sure it stays in good shape. Otherwise you get worn out after a while, and all kinds of unskillful thoughts creep in. But if you can maintain your energy, maintain your sense of well-being as you do your responsibilities, then it's a lot easier.

Otherwise the mind starts focusing on thoughts like: "This person likes me, that person doesn't like me, this person appreciates what I'm doing, that person doesn't"—all the kinds of things that go through the mind when it's tired. And then, of course, the work suffers and you suffer.

So if you want to look after your work, then look after yourself, make sure that you're in good shape: The breath feels good, the body feels good, the mind feels good. Even if you can't make the mind feel totally good, at least put your mind in as good a mood as possible and the breath as in good a shape as you can.

That way, by looking after yourself, you're looking after everybody around you. That's in line with that image the Buddha had of the two acrobats. Each acrobat has to look after his or her own sense of balance. When you do that, you make it easier for the people around you.

So don't think that meditation is just going off and looking after yourself. In looking after yourself, you're going to have a good effect on the people around you, too. Your work will go better, everything around you will go better, because the mind is in better shape.