

Effort Well Placed

January 28, 2013

We're here because we know we're suffering and we're exploring the possibility that it may be caused by habits in our own minds. So when we're meditating, we're here to change our habits. This is a very basic point, yet so many people seem to miss it.

Over the past week or so I've been reading a lot of articles about people wanting to be told that who they are right now or what they're doing right now is just fine. They're innately good and innately beautiful or whatever. But if that were really true, why would they need to be told? And if that were going to solve the problem of their suffering, all you'd have to do was just say it and that would be it. But that's not the end of the problem. There's more.

It's when you finally realize, "There's something I've got to change in myself, something I've got to change in my actionsmy thoughts, words, deeds": That's when you're ready for the path. This is one of the reasons why we're meditating: to give the mind a good solid place where it can stay and then look at its own faults and not feel threatened by them, not want to cover them up. We can admit, "Oh yeah, there is that habit there and it is causing suffering but it doesn't have to be there." The effort spent in learning how to unlearn that habit is effort well spent. So try to get the mind solid.

This is one of the reasons why Ajaan Fuang used to say he didn't like teach Dhamma to people who hadn't meditated. He said, "There's no way they're going to understand you." But people who have been meditating begin to see what's going on in their own minds. That, at least, opens the possibility. It's not a guarantee that everybody will understand but at least it opens the possibility: "Okay, there's something I've got to do about my thoughts, words, and deeds." When that understanding arises in your mind, that's when you're ready to practice, and that's when you're ready to understand.

So keep that in mind. You're bound to see disconcerting things arising in your own mind as you practice, but you have to learn how not to be blown away by them. Admit that they're there and recognize that they're not skillful. You're working on the tools that allow you to understand them and ultimately see through them.

That's important work. It's work that we usually don't have much time to do when we're out in the world. So take advantage of the time you do have here. There are very few places in the world where they do make that space for you, they

do provide that time for you. But the opportunity to look into your own mind and straighten out your own mind: That's one of the best opportunities there is.