

Irritation from Within

May 30, 2013

Notice where the breath is most obvious in your awareness. Make sure that it's comfortable there.

This is an important principle. You're not going to stay with the breath if it's not comfortable.

And it is something you can change. So you try adjusting it to see if longer breathing feels better or shorter breathing, faster/slower, deeper/more shallow, heavier/lighter. There are lots of ways you can experiment.

If the mind wanders off you just bring it right back.

Meditation is medicine for the mind—because the mind has its diseases.

First there's just general irritation and feeling frazzled. Then there are the deeper diseases of greed, aversion, delusion.

So when you know you've got a disease, you've got to take the medication.

Some people say, "I can't meditate, because my mind keeps wandering." and it's like saying, "I've got a disease, so I can't go to see the doctor, I can't take the medicine." When you've got a disease, you know that if you don't treat it there are going to be big problems. You've got to go do what you can to find the doctor to get the medicine you need—and take the medicine too.

Fortunately with this medicine, it's not always bitter. They put a little sweetener in it as well. The sweetener is the concentration, the ease and well-being that come with the concentration.

But still, this medicine may not be easy to take. Just getting to the concentration requires a fair amount of effort right there.

But when you realize that this is what you really need, this is what's going to cure the diseases of the mind, then this is what you do. Just stick with it, stick with it, stick with it.

And you find that if you give it enough energy, and give it enough enthusiasm, it'll work.

If you just go through the motions and put in the time, that's not going to help much. It's better than not doing it at all, but when you focus on it you really should give it your full attention to see, "Okay, what's working here, what's not working here? What can I change?" After all, you are working on your own sense of wellbeing inside.

This is something you want to get to know anyhow. You've got the breath and you can use the breath to soothe the mind, to soothe the body.

So you need to take some time in order to learn that skill.

Otherwise, you're going around rubbing abrasive into your skin all the time. No wonder you end up saying and doing and thinking things that you later regret. You're feeling irritated all the time, and a lot of the irritation comes from within.

When we complain about irritation from outside, how oppressive it is, that's because we've already got a lot of irritation inside. If we weren't irritating ourselves inside with the way we breathe, with the way we think, that outside irritation wouldn't cause any problem at all.

So we have to look carefully at how we're treating ourselves from within and realize that we can change that.

If we're being abrasive with the way we breathe, we can be more soothing. It's our choice.

Simply pay attention and stick with it: That's what begins to cure the diseases of the mind.