

## *Opportunities in the Present*

*July 29, 2013*

Okay, try to gather your attention right here. Focus on the breath. And as long as you're with the sensation of the breathing, you're here in the present moment.

This is where you want to be, because this is where you have your opportunities. You can't change the past. As for the future, you don't know what it's going to be. But you do know what you've got right here, right now.

And if you're very alert and very mindful, you can figure out what needs to be done with right here, right now. This is how you shape your life.

So always see each moment as an opportunity. There are lots of problems in life, lots of obstacles, but look at them as challenges, look at them as opportunities.

To do that, you need some inner strength. That's another reason why we stay here. If the mind gets to stay here, it's not spinning out worlds all the time. It gets to rest here in this one world of the breath here in the present moment. That allows it to gather its strength.

And it rests in a way that exercises it as well, in a good way. If you just go to sleep, that does rest the mind a bit, but you wake up and nothing has been strengthened really. It's just rest. But when you exercise your mindfulness, exercise your discernment, your mind gets stronger.

That way, when you see what needs to be done, you have the strength to do it. And you have the strength to withstand any other unskillful ideas that may come in and try to take over. One of the most unskillful ones is the one that says, "You're limited in your opportunities. There's no way you can do good in this situation or that situation." Well, there's always something good that can be done, always something good that can be developed. Even if you can't change things outside, at least you can change things inside, change them for the better.

If you meet up with an obstacle, think of it as a chance to develop your perfections. Those are the most important things to develop in life. You start thinking about where your life is going or where your life has been, and you realize that the really important things are the good qualities you've been able to build into your mind—and the opportunity you have now to build some more good qualities.

So use the breath as a foundation for developing those good qualities. When you're here, the mind has a good place to stay and it's right at the important spot. We tend to forget that. The world tells us the important news is what's happening someplace else to somebody else, somebody else is doing something else. We're

never in the news at all.

But that's their news. Our news is: What are you doing right now? What are you saying, what are you thinking? Are you making the most of the opportunity to do something good, in the form of generosity in the form of virtue, all the other good qualities of mind? The potential is always right here.

So look right here. Stay right here as consistently as you can. You'll get to see those opportunities and you'll get to learn how to deal with them skillfully.

This is how you shape a life that goes in the direction you want it to.