

Step Outside the Theater

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Close your eyes and try to be aware of the whole body breathing in, the whole body breathing out.

We've talked in the past of going through the body section-by-section, but sometimes it's good to just hit the whole body all at once, especially when you only have a little bit of time. Try to be aware all around, from the head down to the feet and the feet up to the head. Try to maintain that reference all the way through the in-breath, all the way through the out-.

Have a sense that your awareness is being stretched. You begin to see that as you keep your awareness broad like this, little thoughts that come in are very hard to latch hold of. If you're going to latch hold of them, the awareness has to get small and grab right onto them. But you don't want that.

This is one way of keeping yourself from falling for the thoughts. This is one way of actually overcoming a lot of delusion. A thought comes into the mind and automatically that becomes the new reality. It's like being in a dream and you've forgotten you're in the dream.

So you want to step back. Whatever comes in is just a little thought. Don't make it a whole world, because it's so easy to harass your own mind with these worlds. They take on a reality and then they cause a lot of suffering. Sometimes they cause pleasure but then they can turn on you. So you have to watch out for that. You have to be able to step back at any point.

It's like finding yourself watching a bad movie. Some people think, "Well, I paid the money for the movie, so I might as well sit through the whole thing." But the better idea is, "Let's just get out of the theater."

Having this broad, full-body awareness really helps you do that. It helps not only with your own imaginary worlds but also with the worlds that other people want to impose on you. You want to have a sense that you can step outside so that you don't have to take their values on, you don't have to believe what they believe. You know what they believe and you can function in terms of that, but you don't have to take that on as your belief—because you've got this broader perspective.

So try to keep this full-body awareness going and have a sense that the breath nourishes all the body that you're aware of. Try to make that your framework as you go through the day and see how it shifts the balance of power in the mind.