

An Eye to the Future

September 19, 2014

Each time you breathe in, breathe out, remember: You're choosing to stay with the breath. You've made that choice to begin with: You want to train the mind and then you want to stick by that choice. That requires repeated choices, again and again. This is where you're going to stay.

Your mind could wander anywhere. Nobody's keeping tabs, nobody's keeping track. But you have to ask yourself, "What are you going to get out of it?" Your choices do make a difference. You spend all your time planning for the next day, and then the next day doesn't come. Or things are very different from what you thought they might be and you have to throw the plans away.

But if you focus on the qualities you know you'll need regardless of what comes up—things like mindfulness and alertness— then you've prepared yourself well. So it's not as if we're just sitting here in the present moment and not thinking about the future at all. We have an eye to the future as to what our current actions are going to result in. Then we focus on doing the best we can here in the present moment to influence those results in a good direction.

We always have to keep that in mind. The Buddha's basic teaching is the teaching on karma. Our actions are things we choose to do and they have results. And the results are going to come to us.

So remember there are choices we have to make and things we have to say Yes to and things we have to say No to. Once you get a sense of being solidly here with the breath, it's a lot easier to make wiser choices, because you can see more clearly: where your thoughts are coming from, what intentions lie behind them, what qualities lie behind the intentions, and where those thoughts are going to go.

The Buddha got on the right path when he was able to pull out of his thought worlds and realize that his thoughts were going someplace and were coming from someplace. They were coming from greed, aversion, and delusion or they were coming from lack of greed, lack of aversion, lack of delusion. Then he could see where they were leading. He realized the ones coming from greed, aversion, and delusion had to be brought under control.

That really made a difference. That was the realization that actually got him on the path. So try to keep that realization going in your day: as you sit meditate, as you walk around. You're making choices of what to do with your mind, so try to keep it with the breath so that you can see those choices more clearly.

You'll find that you benefit as a result and the people around you will benefit,

too. There's less greed and aversion coming out through your thoughts, words, and deeds, because there's less of it in the mind. Everybody benefits that way.