

## *A Resting Place for the Mind*

*July 26, 2015*

Close your eyes and watch your breath. As the breath comes in, watch it all the way in. As it goes out, watch it all the way out. And then with the next breath and then the next.

Just stay right here. Don't let anything budge you from this spot. Don't let anything move you from this spot. You want to stay right here and put yourself in a position of strength.

It helps if the breath is comfortable, so if it's too long, you can make it shorter; if it's too short, you can make it longer. Too deep/too shallow: You can adjust it. Experiment for a bit to see what kind of breathing feels best for you.

You want to be able to stay here for a long period of time and you want to use whatever you can beyond just your determination to help you stay here. So you use your discernment as well to help you see what needs to be done, what you can do to make it easier to stay here. The more comfortable the breath, the more you want to stay.

So play with the breath a bit and see what feels good. Then stick with it. Anything else comes up: You just let it go, let it go.

You have to be convinced that what you're doing here is important. You're training the mind in an important skill: the skill to control its emotions, the skill to control its thoughts. If your thoughts and emotions take over, then you become their slave. You think that they're *you* or they're *your* thoughts, but then all of a sudden they do horrible things to you. You don't want that, so you want to be in a position so you can choose your thoughts: which things are worth thinking and which things are not, which things will help you and which are not.

It's important the mind not be hungry because otherwise it goes nibbling after every thought that comes past. So feed it with the sense of well-being that comes from getting the mind to settle in.

The comfort of the breath is one level of comfort, but when the mind has a place where it can stay, it develops a sense of well-being inside itself, and that becomes your position of strength.

We can depend on the body for a while. While it's in good shape, you work with it. There'll come a point, though, when the body itself will have to leave you and you'll have to leave the body, so you want this position of strength to be in the mind. A lot of that has to do with the mind's ability to choose its thoughts: choose when to think, choose when not to think.

If you just think, think, think, and feel, feel, feel, all the time, it's like having a knife that you use and you never sharpen. You just chop, chop, chop, chop, chop. After a while it gets dull, and you have to put more energy in the chopping, and the results get worse.

It's the same with your mind. If you don't give it a place to rest like this to develop its strength, then after a while your thinking gets unclear. You can't solve your problems the way you wanted to, and you can't see clearly what's going on in the mind itself.

So give the mind a place to rest—and not just to rest but also to develop its mindfulness, its ability to keep something in mind; and its alertness, this ability to be clear about what's going on here. There are lots of things we have to contend with outside in the world so you want to be make sure that your tools inside are strong and that you're coming from a position of strength. If you don't have one solid place to stand, then there's nothing you can do to anybody else.

It's like being on a field of ice. You slip around, slide around. If someone comes and gives you push, you just go in line with the push. But if you're standing on firm ground, you've got a good grip. They can push you and no matter how hard they push, you can push back.

So you need a position of strength like this inside to keep you going. So work on this. Make it your place. This is your spot: Nobody else can experience your body from within. You're the only one who can. So make this a position where you come from strength. Whenever you say or do or think anything, you're coming from a good position, so your thoughts, words, and deeds are bound to be a lot better, both for you and for the people around you.

So give the mind a place to stand and gather its strength. That's one of the most important things you need as you go through life. Because as we'll chant today: We're subject to aging, illness, and death, separation from all the things that we love, and all we have is our karma.

Our karma here is the karma of the mind. This is the karma that you can really depend on. This is the only thing that's left for you when the body goes, when everything else goes. You've got *this* still with you. So work on this skill because this skill will see you through a lot of things that nothing else can.