

Resolving to Train the Mind

January 2, 2016

Close your eyes and watch your breath.

As you breathe in, watch it all the way in. As you breathe out, watch it all the way out. And then again and again.

Try to stay right here with the sensation of the breathing. Any other thoughts that can come up, you can let them go. Make up your mind that this is what you really want: You want to train your mind to stay right here. And then you stick with it.

In Pali this is called *adhitthana*, determination. You could also call it resolution. This is the time of year where people make resolutions. So one good resolution might be: "This year I want to train my mind. I want my mind to be under my control and not running all over the place doing things that I later regret."

The mind is like a child. It has to be taught what's right and what's not right. Sometimes it's your mind but it's acting like it's somebody else's. So you have to look into it: Why is your mind doing things you don't want it to do?

Part of it is out of ignorance and part of it is out of just general orneriness. But you want to know. Because after all it is your mind. Your mind is in charge of things. This is what shapes your life. It's because of your actions that you have the life that you have. And where do your actions come from? They come from the mind.

So if the mind is well-trained, then the actions of the mind are bound to be a lot more in line with what you really want out of life. So take some time to get the mind under your control. This is what makes all the difference in a determination or a resolution. If you make up your mind to do one thing and then go do something else, how many minds do you have? And that mind that you made up, what happened to that? How did it get unmade?

You want to know these things, because all too often when a resolution goes bad or a resolution gets forgotten, we tend to blame circumstances outside: You didn't have time; this or that thing got in the way. But actually it's a weakness in the mind itself that can turn obstacles into bigger obstacles than they need to be. But at the same time if you make up your mind you really do want to stick with this, you can turn obstacles into opportunities, into challenges. And you find that you're up for the challenges.

So the difference lies in your attitude. Try to make sure you have the right

attitude toward this, that you really want true happiness and you don't want to be dissuaded by other things. You don't want to be pulled away by other things. Then whatever the true happiness you want, you find that you can do it.

That's what the Buddha's teachings are all about: that true happiness is possible and we human beings can find it. And this is how we find it: by training the mind.

So put this at the top of your list: "Get my mind under control." Take some time every day to meditate. Start out with just a few minutes and then, as you get more used to it, you can expand the time to longer and longer periods.

Then you'll find that you've got a mind that's a friend to you—and not just another animal living in the house doing what it wants—a mind that actually can serve your interests. That's the kind of mind you want to live with.