

## *A Good Teacher Inside*

*April 17, 2016*

Close your eyes and focus on your breath.

With the next breath remind yourself, you're going to stay with the breath. And then the next and the next.

Each time the breath comes in, you've got to remind yourself, "This is where you want to stay."

Otherwise, the mind has a tendency to wander off anywhere it likes, and not much work gets done.

You have to be mindful: "Keeping something in mind" is what mindfulness is. In this case, you keep the breath in mind. You keep in mind the fact that you want to develop skillful qualities there. You're not just staying with the breath. You're trying to understand the mind and the breath together. That means you have to pay careful attention.

Mindfulness is there to remind you of what lessons you've learned in the past so that you can apply them in the present moment. It's like having a teacher inside, always there to remind you: This is the right thing to do; this is the wrong thing to do.

Now, there are teachers and there are teachers. We all have mindfulness to some extent, the problem is whether it's right mindfulness or wrong mindfulness.

Wrong mindfulness gives you the wrong lessons. Or even if it gives the right lessons, it doesn't enforce them. In other words, it rewards you for doing things that you didn't do very well and doesn't punish you at all for things that you do poorly. It's the kind of teacher who gives gold stars to everybody in the class, writes, "Oh, you're a rock star!" on the top of every paper just so that the kids feel good about themselves. But the kids don't learn anything.

So you have to make sure what kind of teacher you've got inside. Is it a good teacher who actually has something good to teach and knows how to teach it or is it who-knows-what?

This is going to make all the difference in your life. You can't have a teacher outside you pointing out everything to you all the time. We do have the Buddha as the greatest teacher the world has ever known, but he's not here all the time in our minds unless we take his lessons and remember them and use them to remind ourselves, "Okay, this is right; that's wrong."

If you start thinking about things in line with greed, aversion, and delusion you're going down the wrong path. You've got to get pulled back.

So the teacher has to know when to give rewards and when to use a switch. In other words, you make sure that the children do the work that needs to be done so that they can grow into responsible adults. That's what your mind is doing: It's learning to be an adult in terms of how it deals with happiness, how it deals with pleasure.

All too often we're children in the way we deal with our pleasures. We just go for whatever we want without thinking about the consequences. Adults think about the consequences. They don't want anything that's going to harm themselves; they don't want anything that's going to harm anybody else. So you're training the mind to be an adult.

Which means you have to take the attitude of a teacher. There are parts of the mind that are still children, so you have to watch out for them. You have to make sure they stay in line. Otherwise, they're going to take over.

So make sure the teacher's an adult and then the mind itself will become an adult. Look carefully into the teacher, make sure the teacher is giving the right lessons and knows how to enforce them properly.

This is why we need mindfulness and alertness and ardency, all working together.

This is how the mind grows up and becomes a real human being.