

Nourishing Intentions

May 1, 2016

Focus on your breath. Watch it all the way in, watch it all the way out.

Adjust it so it's a good breath to feed on. It's like fixing food. Sometimes you get raw food and you can't eat it but you know who to cook it, you know how to slice it, you know how to mix it with other things, and then it becomes edible and actually nourishing for the body.

The same with the breath: The breath comes in and out all the time, but if you learn how to make it really comfortable, focus on being attentive to the breath, that combination of your intention and the breath can make something that's really nourishing for the mind.

The mind is constantly looking for food, something to feed on. Just as the body needs food, the mind needs food—although it's a different kind of food. For the most part we tend to look for food in nice sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensations. And those things provide *some* food but not necessarily the most nourishing food for the mind. The most nourishing foods are your intentions, what you plan to do. So you want to look after those carefully.

Right now, intend to work with the breath. A combination of breath and intention makes the breath really relaxing when you need to be relaxed, energizing when you need to be energized, soothing when the mind feels frazzled.

It's like looking at your body and noticing that you're lacking certain kinds of food so you provide those foods for the body. When it needs salty, when it needs sweet, when it needs something that's more substantial, when it needs something that's just a liquid, you learn to read the body's needs and then you can provide for them. Of course, the problem is that we tend to get waylaid by junk food and end up eating a lot of things that are bad for the body.

It's the same with the mind. We get waylaid by nice sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensations, thinking that those things are going to be good for the mind.

But they're like those potato chips. You can't eat just one. You eat one and it makes you hungry for another one, and that makes you feel hungry for another one. They don't really provide any real satisfaction.

So instead, you want to look at your intentions. What do you intend to do as you go from day to day? And, looking at your life at large, what kind of intentions can keep you going? What do you want out of life? You start by getting your intentions under some control.

This is one of the reasons why we work with the breath: to get the mind under control so that we decide if we really want to do something with it, it'll do it. It doesn't turn into a traitor, running off in other directions.

So learn to work with the breath and realize that the well-being, the sense of ease that comes from the breath, is only part of the nourishment. The real nourishment is the fact that you've got good intentions going here. You want to raise the level of your mind.

And that's really nourishing. That kind of nourishment can keep you going for a long time.