

Clear about Our Actions

May 2, 2016

When you meditate, you're turning on a light inside, lighting yourself up inside, trying to be as alert and aware as possible to what's going on in the mind.

Because this is *the* most important issue in life. The happiness and sadness, the pleasure and pain that we experience in life come from our actions.

All too often we're not very clear on our actions. We don't know why we're motivated to do something. Many times, when people do something and you ask them, "Why did you do that?" they say, "I don't really know, I just felt like doing it," without really looking into: Why did they feel like doing it? Who, actually, was feeling? What was the feeling? There was an impulse and then they just acted on it.

But if you really want to shape your life in a good direction, you have to be very clear about what's going on inside, why you're making your decisions.

That's why you're trying to develop this quality of ardency and alertness together with your mindfulness.

Mindfulness reminds you where to look, what to look for.

Ardency tries to do this well.

And alertness keeps you on top of what's actually happening, what you're doing, keeps you focused at the right place in the present moment. It's not just a general awareness in the present moment. It's very focused: What are you doing and what are the results? Are you happy with the results? If not, turn around look at what you're doing again. See what you can do better.

You can see this best when the mind has been quiet, because then when it moves, you know. If there's a lot of movement going around, it's like being in Grand Central station: people running all over the place, and it's hard to get a sense of who's going where. But if you've been quiet for a while, you can settle things down. Then the movements get less and you begin to be able to detect them, extract them from the background and see, "Oh, this is why I did that and that's why I did this." Then you look at the results of the action. Did you get what you wanted? Was it worth wanting it? These are questions we can ask when the mind's been still.

So take some time to get the mind to settle down in the present moment with a sense of well-being. Breathe in a way that feels good, in a way that the mind can stay with for a quite a while, so that when things move inside, you know. And you're in a position where you can judge them clearly and fairly.

That way the shape of your life gets better and better because of the attention you're giving to what you're doing right now. That's what makes all the difference.