

Controlling Mouth & Mind

May 14, 2016

Close your eyes and watch your breath. Watch it all the way in, all the way out.

If the mind is going to talk to itself about anything, talk about the breath. Ask yourself, "Is the breath comfortable?" If it's not, you can change the rhythm. No one's forcing you to breathe in a way that's uncomfortable.

And when the breath is comfortable, what do you do with the comfort? How do you make sure that you don't start blurring out? These are good questions to ask yourself.

It's good to know how to talk to yourself like this, because we spend so much of our time talking to ourselves in ways that are really destructive. And of course it starts spilling out in our mouths when we talk to other people. We have to learn that our thoughts need to be trained.

We have that big sign up in front of the guesthouse: "If you're going to say something wait until you know that it's true and beneficial and this is the right time and place."

These are useful guidelines because if you can't control your mouth, as Ajaan Fuang once said, how are you going to control your mind?

Of course what happens in the mouth comes out of the mind. So it has to start within. When a thought comes up in the mind, you have to ask yourself, "Is this true?" If it's true, then you ask the next question: "Is this beneficial?" If it's true and beneficial, then you ask the next question: "Is this the right time and place?" Because sometimes there's a time and place to come down heavy on something and other times when you have to be really gentle. You have to know the time and place.

Otherwise, if you can't answer Yes to these questions, just don't speak. It's so easy for people to just let whatever comes into their heads come out their mouths. They seem so proud of the fact that they were able to form a thought, and they want everybody to know. But we should be a little bit more mature than that by now. If we can't figure out what's the right thing to say and what's not the right thing to say, then we shouldn't say anything. It's so much easier to keep your mouth closed. You'd think it would be easier to keep your mouth closed than to come out and say something that's unskillful.

But for a lot of people it's the other way around. The unskillful stuff comes out easily, where it's very hard for them to keep their mouths closed. This points back at the mind. The mind needs training.

So focus on what you're saying to yourself. If it's not true, it's not useful, put it aside. If it's not the right time and place for that, put it aside. Learn how to be more in control of your thoughts.

In this way, you can be in control of your mind and your mouth at the same time—which is important. A lot of the difficulties we have in life as human beings come from our mouths that just go on and on and on saying this, saying that. Sometimes we feel the need to say something, or we feel that if we don't say something no one will pay attention to us, or all kinds of other things can be going on in the mind. A lot of this ends up causing trouble.

So try to figure out how you can live in this life causing the least amount of trouble, and one main place to focus is on your words: both what you're saying to yourself in your mind and what comes out your mouth. These things are really important. You've got this human mind that can form sentences, that can think thoughts. Use it well.

You went to all this trouble to become a human being, so make sure that you at least maintain this status. Once you've got these powers, use them well. Use them for your own true well-being and for the well-being of others. That's what gives you the right to continue having them on into the future.