

## *The Bureaucracy of Body & Mind*

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Close your eyes and focus on your breath.

There's a lot to be learned by looking at your breath. You can see how your mind is moving in the present moment if you get really still.

And the breath is a good place to settle down. It's as close as you can get to the mind in the physical world. What happens in the mind is going to have an immediate impact on the breath, and what happens in the breath will have an immediate impact on the mind. They're very closely related.

So, check and see how your breath is going right now. Is it comfortable? If it's not, you can change it. Try to notice, when you breathe in, where you feel the breathing. Focus your attention there. Let that area of the body be as comfortable as you can get it. See if you can keep it comfortable all the way in through the in-breath, all the way through the out-.

If your mind wanders off someplace else, you say, "This is not the time to learn from your wandering. This is the time to learn from not wandering." Our minds are so used to getting knowledge of the world outside by looking and listening, sending the mind out, that we tend to neglect our big source of knowledge inside: how the body feels from within, how the mind is dealing with itself.

The mind is very complex. It's like a huge bureaucracy, with lots of levels of decision-makers, and sometimes we're at the top and we have no idea what's going on at the bottom. The lower-level functionaries have their agendas and they want you to see things in a certain way and they want you to make certain decisions. So they'll put their spin on the information coming in as they send it up to you. If you're not careful to check things, your greed, aversion, and delusion are the main spinmakers and they can get you all turned around.

So like any good boss, you have to go down and walk through the corridors, check up on the workers, surprise them by the fact that you're there.

The breath is a good place to settle down and do this because once you're aware of the breath in one spot in the body, you can spread it to fill the whole body. Your awareness gets enlarged as well.

That opens up all the corridors in the bureaucracy so that you can visit the various areas in the mind, as well as the various areas in the body, and get to know what's going on. You're more in charge of the decisions that are being made. They're made with a lot more clarity.

With any bureaucrat, its main job is to keep its job, whereas you're the person

in charge, so you have to think about the company as a whole. Sometimes the bureaucrats make some decisions that are not really in the company's best interest. In other words, greed, aversion, and delusion can take over. They don't care about your true happiness. They're just there for whatever they can get.

It's only when you look at them very carefully that you begin to see how the decisions are being made and you can unmake any unskillful decisions.

So it's right here that we gain a lot of knowledge, getting the mind to settle down in the present moment. This is the kind of knowledge that can make a big difference in your life. So much of the knowledge we get in the world outside just washes over us: This politician said that, that politician said this, this event happened here, that event happened there. But we forget it because it doesn't really have that big an impact on us. The things that have a big impact are when you allow greed, aversion, and delusion to take over or when you can learn to fight them off, so that the mind that's with mindfulness and alertness and discernment in charge makes the decisions. That makes a big difference in your life.

So try to get the kind of knowledge that really does make a difference. You're getting it right here.