

Maintaining Control

May 23, 2016

Close your eyes. Notice when you're breathing in, notice when you're breathing out. Try to stay with the sensation of the breath.

How does the breath feel right now? If the breath feels good, maintain that rhythm. If it doesn't feel good, you can change the way you breathe. Make it longer/shorter, deeper/more shallow, heavier/lighter. Try to notice what way of breathing feels good for you right now.

As for any other thoughts, you can just let them go, let them go, let them go.

We're trying to bring some control over our mind. We've seen the damage that can come when things like passion or anger or delusion takes over and causes a lot of damage.

We see that in other people and we have to realize that we've got the germs of those things in ourselves as well so we've got to make sure they don't take over some day. Right now they may be just lying there in suspended animation, but sometimes something will come along and as long as they're there, there's always the danger that they might get brought back to life.

You want to make sure that you have some control over these things, so the first thing you need to do is learn to develop the qualities of mind that give you some control.

There's mindfulness and alertness. Mindfulness is remembering what's right and what's wrong. Alertness is watching what's actually going on in the mind. What is the mind doing right now? What are *you* doing right now? Are you staying with the breath and strengthening these qualities?

It's like exercising the body. You go down to the gym, you get exercise. When you come back, it's not the case that you left your strength down at the gym. You've got stronger muscles that you can use throughout the day for all kinds of things. Just exercising in the gym doesn't accomplish much, but then you've got that strength and you can use that strength whenever it's really needed. That's when your strength can really accomplish things.

And it's the same way with exercising mindfulness and alertness. It may not seem like much that you're being able to stay with the breath. But then when you find that you're able to stay with other things that you need to stay with and remember other things that you need to remember and your memory gets better and it gets more consistent as you do through the day, that's when you begin to realize that this exercise is really good for the mind.

In the meantime, there's a sense of well-being. You work with the breath to make it comfortable. Our main way of experiencing the body in the present

moment is through the breath, so as long as the breath is comfortable that puts a layer of comfort around everything else that we may experience in the body. That way, you've got a good place to stay in the present moment and you're strengthening the mind in qualities that you're going to need in the future.

This is a good exercise to do every day, every day: looking after your mind every day. We look after our bodies every day: We bathe them, we brush our teeth, we dress them up. But if we leave our mind untended, we're ignoring the most important thing in our lives. But if you work with the breath, work with the mind like this, it's as if you're dressing the mind, you're cleaning the mind, strengthening the mind, so that you have a good mind, a presentable mind, to use as you go through the day.

That way it will be a lot more under your control. Anger comes up but you'll be able to see, "This is something I don't want to go with." And you have the strength to withstand it. You have the mindfulness and alertness to say, "No. We don't want this." You can resist its power.

The same with greed, the same with jealousy: all these emotions that can come over and create a lot of havoc in your life and in the life of the people around you.

If you've got some control over them, then life is a lot better. You're a lot safer both for yourself and for the world on all sides.