

## *Firmly Centered*

*June 3, 2016*

Close your eyes and watch your breath. Try to stay centered right here.

We need a center as we go through life, otherwise we get knocked off center. We start doing strange things, things that are harmful to ourselves, harmful to other people.

When you're centered and solid, you're more likely to see what's going on and what the proper response is. In that way, you can learn to trust yourself more.

They talk about how things are impermanent and inconstant. But the most inconstant thing is your own mind—unless you have it trained.

As the Buddha once said, there's nothing that is as quick to change as the mind. He couldn't ever think of an analogy that would be appropriate—and he was a master of analogies. The mind can change so quickly. That's the inconstancy that we've got to watch out for.

So we train the mind in the other direction. Try to give it a constant theme, like the breath, and try to be constant in keeping with it, regardless of the situation outside.

Today's going to be hot but don't make the heat an obstacle. The breath is still there; your mind is still there. The mind doesn't have to be hot; the breath doesn't have to be hot. Let the heat do its thing outside, but the area where you're going to be focused is something that's apart from the heat.

See how steadily you can stay there. The more you can keep the mind with one thing like this, the more you can learn how to trust it. The fact that the mind is so inconstant makes it scary. We build our lives in a good direction and all of a sudden the mind can flip and turn around and destroy what it had.

Or you can hold to the precepts, but if they're not really solid and something comes up, difficulties come up in life and you find it easier to break the precepts, that's scary—that part of the mind you can't trust.

That's what we've got to work on with our mindfulness, with our alertness, by being ardent at doing this. In other words, you try to do it well. You put your whole heart into doing it well.

Figure out where you're creating unnecessary obstacles for yourself or where the mind is not yet fully on board. Learn how to overcome those obstacles; figure out your way around them.

In this way, you develop the habits you need, the skills you're going to need in a changeable world. You train your mind so that even though the world changes,

you don't change with it.

The Buddha's analogy for an awakened mind is a stone pillar, sixteen spans tall, eight spans buried deeply in the ground. No matter which way the winds blow, no matter how strong they are, the pillar doesn't shake. Make yourself that kind of mind, one that's not shaken by things, one that's firmly centered inside, firm in its knowledge of what's right and wrong, skillful and unskillful, and its ability to trust itself to hold to the skillful side.