

## *Full Attention*

*June 4, 2016*

Close your eyes and watch your breath.

Watch the breath all the way in, all the way out.

And give it your full attention. This quality of full attention is one of the bases for success. It applies not only in the meditation but also in all the affairs of life. You've got a task: You give your full attention to doing it well.

Look after the details. Don't let the little details slip past you, because it's in the details that a lot of the important issues lie. They begin to show up first in little tiny things and then, if you don't pay any attention to them, they grow and they grow and they grow. That applies to unskillful things.

Unfortunately, the skillful things in the mind show up in little tiny things as well, and if you don't pay attention to them they tend to die.

So when there's a little bit of disturbance in the breath, you have to notice; a little bit of disturbance in the mind, you have to notice. And ask yourself, "What's going on?"

If you give it your full attention, you begin to understand things you didn't understand before because you see things you didn't see before. You see connections. You see things happening that went under the radar. But now that you've improved your radar, you're beginning to pick up other things.

So try to give your full attention to the breath; give your full attention to the mind.

In that way, the meditation succeeds. What does it succeed at? It succeeds at getting the mind still and at getting things clear in the mind so that you understand what's going on. Then you're in a much better position to adjust what's going on so that it goes in the right direction.

You don't just sit here and watch like a TV show. It's more like an interactive game. Things happen, you make choices, and your choices will make a difference in where the plot goes.

So don't let the little things slip past you. If good things slip past you, they die. If bad things slip past you, they tend to grow. That way, the meditation fails.

Sometimes we're told there is no such thing as a good or bad meditation but that's not the case. When things don't go well, you can *make* them go well, at the very least by paying careful attention to what's happening. You begin to figure things out. Even if you don't figure them out in this session, at least you're on the right track. And that's a good meditation: where you're really paying attention.

A bad meditation is where you don't pay attention. You're there but you're not really looking into the details. Then you don't see anything new.

It's like doing a stretching exercise where you don't stretch yourself as much as you can. You say, "Well this is enough, this is enough." Maybe it's not enough. Maybe the little extra bit of stretch is what's going to make a difference.

So stretch yourself with the meditation as well by paying more careful attention to little things that come up in the mind—and by having a good sense of which little things you want to encourage and which little things you want to discourage.

That way, the larger picture gets taken care of.