

Settle in

July 5, 2016

Close your eyes and find your breath. When you breathe in, notice where you feel it. When you breathe out, notice where you feel it. Don't try to create any sensations that you can't feel. Just notice where the breath is most obvious and allow your attention to settle there.

"Settling" means, one, staying in place, and two, staying in place in a way that's comfortable.

It's like settling into a home. When you get to a new place, you have to make a few adjustments here, adjustments there. You adjust yourself; you adjust the surroundings.

Get so that it feels good to be with the breath. The mind needs nourishment like this. As you go through the day, you put up with a lot of things coming in from the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body: things you may like, things you may not like. You can't let your mind get up and down in line with the things that you like and don't like. You have to keep your mind on a steady keel.

As in Ajaan Maha Boowa's definition of what it means to have the mind one-pointed or the mind unified: not necessarily that you're really deeply into concentration all the time but that you have this solidity, you have this evenness as you go through the day, so that the mind's not always reacting.

When you're still and calm like this, then you can see things clearly for what they are. You have a much better sense of what needs to be changed and what doesn't need to be changed. If you go on your moods and your immediate reactions, you don't really see things. Sometimes your mood and reaction is ready to be sparked even before there's an event to spark it.

But if you make up your mind that you're going to be on an even keel, then you can see that there are certain things that really are causing trouble inside you and they really need to be changed. You've got a better idea of what they are.

This is why when the Buddha was teaching meditation to his son, he started out by saying, "Make your mind like earth. You throw disgusting things on the earth and it doesn't react. You throw lovely things on the earth and it doesn't react. The earth is just earth." And the same with the other elements: wind, water, fire. They don't have their likes and dislikes.

The difference with the mind, though, is that it knows things. The earth doesn't know anything. You know things. But you have to develop that quality of knowing and yet not reacting so that you can see more deeply to what's going on.

Then you can make your choices as to what needs to be changed and what doesn't; what can be changed and what can't.

So try to give the mind a sense of well-being so that it can maintain that sense of evenness, because one of the reasons we go reacting to things is because we're hungry. We want some excitement; we want something for the mind to feed on. So give it this to feed on. Once well-fed inside, it's a lot easier to be non-reactive outside.

So get to know the breath. Get to know the mind with the breath. Get them to fit together so the mind can settle in and be well-nourished as it goes through the day.