

Life Without Regret

July 7, 2016

For the time being, try to put everything else aside. Just you with your breath: breath coming in, breath going out.

This is one area where you can be responsible. There are a lot of things happening in the world that you can't be responsible for. But where you focus the mind, what you do with the mind: That *is* your responsibility. So make the most of it.

You've got the freedom of choice right here: You can focus here on your breath or you could be focusing on anything out there at all. Nobody's keeping tabs. But you can ask yourself, "Where's the best place to be right now? What is the best thing to do with where I am right now?"

That's how we live life without regret. If you just keep putting things off, the time will come when the time is up. You'll ask yourself, "Gee, why did I waste my time doing that when I could have done something really useful?"

So, do something useful right now. Try to get the mind into concentration. Let go of all your other responsibilities. The mind needs time by itself to look after its own needs, to look after its own wounds, to heal its own wounds: both the wounds that come from outside and the wounds that we inflict on ourselves. Greed and aversion come in and they leave scars. So you look after them.

Give the mind a place where it can step back from all of its thoughts. Then it's in a much better position. It's in a position of well-being right here with the breath coming in, going out.

Then you can look at whatever thought comes up: Is this something really worth following or not? It's not the case that all thoughts are bad, but for the time being, you want to have a sense of time and place.

Those rules that the Buddha had for right speech—Is it true? Is it beneficial? Is this the right time and place?—you can to apply those rules to your own thoughts. Something comes up and you know it's not true, it's just made up, so just put it aside. If it's true, then the next question is, "Is this beneficial?" There are a lot of things in the world out there that are true but they're not really beneficial. They're either random or actually detrimental when you think about them. So you put those aside.

Then you ask yourself, "Is this the right time and place for this kind of thinking?" Some things may be true and beneficial but not for right now, like thoughts about what to do for the work period this afternoon, thoughts about

how you're going to plan this, plan that. Put those all aside. Just be right here.

This is the time for concentration. This is the time when you're just alone with the breath. Give it your full attention so that you can get the most out of it, the most out of your mind and awareness in the present moment, the most out of the breath.

There'll be times in the course of the day when the breath has to be put in the background. You don't want it blocked out entirely, but it has to be in the background because other issues come up that demand your attention. But right now give the breath your full attention. Make it number one. That's when you can learn the most from it.