

## *A Better Position*

*July 9, 2016*

Close your eyes and watch your breath. Watch the breath all the way in, all the way out. Focus here inside—you don't have to focus outside—because the goodness of the world starts inside.

We all want to live in a good world. But you look at the world around us and there are a lot of things that are not good. There's status, loss of status, gain, loss, praise, criticism, pleasure, pain. People observing the precepts, people not observing the precepts. It's a pretty mixed bag.

But if we want goodness, this is where it starts: right here inside.

You want to train your mind. In this case, you want to train the mind to stay with one thing. If you can't stay with one thing like the breath, there's not much else you can train it to do because it's out of control, it keeps jumping around. You've got to train it not to jump around so much. Put it on a leash.

Every time the mind wanders off the breath, just bring it right back. Wanders off the breath again, bring it right back again. Reward it when it comes here. Try to breathe in a way that feels really good, comfortable all the way down through the body.

That way you've got a source of goodness right here, a sense of well-being that soothes the mind, soothes the body—and puts you in a position where you can see clearly what can be done: what things in the world can be changed, what things can't be changed—and when you're going to change things, how you do it in a way that's skillful. In other words, you're looking for a way that really gets the right results. You're not just acting on your emotions; you're not just acting on your moods. You're thinking strategically.

To think strategically requires that you be in a more comfortable position. Otherwise, if you feel cornered, you just lash out. But if you can put yourself in a better position—and this is your better position, nobody can reach in and do anything to your breath, you're the one who does your breath, so you work with it—that gives you your foundation of well-being inside.

From there you can think of the other good things you'd like to develop inside so you can develop them outside as well.

It all starts here. The goodness of the world starts from the goodness of the mind. So train the mind to be a good mind: good in the sense of being moral and also good in the sense of having a sense of well-being that nothing outside can touch.

That's when you're in a safe place. And when you're in a safe and a strong place like this, then you can become a safe person to be around. You're much more likely to be able to think strategically and clearly about what needs to be done to spread genuine goodness around.