

## *The Present Moment*

*July 12, 2016*

As teachers are fond of saying, “You can practice anywhere.” But some places provide the conditions to make it easier to practice.

We’ve got a lot of those conditions here: a lot of time to be quiet, a lot of time to be by yourself, very few noisy disturbances from outside. So try to make the most of the opportunity when you have it.

Because it’s not always going to be there. When you get sick, it gets difficult. As you get older, it gets difficult. And when you die, that’s the end of that chapter. So try to make this a good chapter, as good as you can with the time that you’ve got.

When the Buddha talks about being in the present moment, it’s always in the context of the fact that you don’t know how much time you have. It’s not because the present moment is a wonderful moment. It’s because there’s work to be done in the mind and you don’t know: Death could come at any time. Changes could come at any time that would make it really difficult.

The same with mindfulness: It’s not simply being in the present. It’s remembering the lessons you’ve learned from the past that you want to apply to the present wherever they’re relevant.

So meditation is not just a matter of the present moment. You have to think in terms of the past and the future. What you’ve learned from the past and how uncertain the future is: Those are the things you want to focus on in the present moment so that you can figure out, “What is there in the mind that’s still causing trouble? What can I deal with now?” Maybe some of the problems are big. Well, at least you can chip away at them.

Because you’ve probably noticed: It’s like when you’re cutting a branch off of a tree. You cut and cut and cut. and the branch seems like it’s going to stay, it’s going to stay, it’s not going to move at all. Then suddenly you reach a point where what little bit of connection between the branch and the tree is not enough to hold up the branch and then it comes crashing down right away.

So you never know: Sometimes with big problems as you chip, chip, chip away at them, you finally get to a point where what’s holding the problem in the mind is just a little tiny bit and that’s it.

So work at whatever problems you notice are really important ones, the ones where you can say to yourself, “At least I’ve chipped away at something important in my mind, some important problem”: greed, aversion, lust, jealousy, whatever.

The present moment is the best time, the only time where you can do that.

So make the most of this opportunity you have to practice.