

Practice When It's Easy

August 4, 2016

We have a respite from the heat right now, so try to take advantage of it. Evenings are cool, mornings are cool, the days are not too hot: It's a good time to meditate. It should be a lot easier to meditate.

Of course, the Buddha said the kind of person who says, "It's too hot to meditate," or, "too cold to meditate," or, "too late," or, "too early": That's the kind of person who doesn't get anywhere.

But at least take advantage of things when they're pleasant. Give yourself some extra momentum. That'll carry you through when it gets hot again or gets cold, rainy or whatever. Take advantage of the opportunities you've got.

You've got this breath coming in, going out, right now. You can do a lot with the breath. You can get the mind concentrated. You can use the breath to start understanding how the mind and the body are related, how the mind creates a lot of suffering around that issue—and how it doesn't have to. There's a lot to be learned here, a lot to be done here.

We have these resources. We've got this awareness in our body that we tend to block out or blot out as we pay attention to things outside. But this awareness right here, if you give it a chance to grow and show itself, can actually tell you a lot.

Don't go barging in thinking, "Well, this has to be that way and that has to be this way." Just allow this awareness to show itself, and you find that you have things to learn here.

So there's work to be done, and this is a good time to do it. There's always work to be done, and it's always a good time to do it, but now it's especially easy. As you get used to working when it's easy, then you can carry that momentum over to when the times are hard.

You realize that the breath has nothing to do with the heat or the cold outside. It's something separate entirely. And you actually use the breath to help counteract or balance out whatever's out of balance outside. You help to take things in the mind that are out of balance and bring them into balance, too.

So take advantage of the resources you've got right here. You've got this body, you've got this mind. You can do a lot with it.

Look at the human world: A human birth is our opportunity to do good, and what do people do? They kill one another, they steal from one another, they fight one another, and they lie. There are all kinds of horrible things going on all the time, wasting this opportunity of a human birth.

So, we've got this opportunity. This is our birth. Make the most of it. What other people are doing with theirs, that's their business. Your goodness doesn't have to depend on theirs. It has to depend on your own heedfulness, realizing that you've got this valuable opportunity. It's not always here, so make the most of it while you can.