

## *Legal Arguments*

*August 23, 2016*

Close your eyes and watch the breath.

If the mind wanders away from the breath, remind yourself of why you want to be here. Sometimes you have to argue like a lawyer with yourself to convince yourself to stay.

There's a piece by Cicero where he's talking about how a speaker or orator— in those days it was a lawyer—had to think about three things in his audience: their memory, their attention, and their will. You try to draw on their memories, you try to attract their attention, and you try to get them to will something that's in the direction of where you want them to go.

It's the same way with the mind. You have a direction for it, you want it to get toward concentration; you want the mind to *will* concentration. So, one, you get it to pay attention to what you're doing. And then two, if the mind is wandering off, you've got to give it reasons for coming back.

Sometimes, if everybody's on board, all you have to do is give it a gentle reminder. But sometimes the mind is split off into factions, in which case you've got to get the factions back together again and get everybody here with the breath.

So, notice what your mind needs. Sometimes all it needs is just a gentle reminder. Other times it needs reasons. So draw on your memories of what you learned of the Dhamma or the suffering you've seen in the world outside—not only your own suffering but also the suffering of people whose minds aren't trained.

You go to an old folks home, you go to a hospital where people are approaching death, and you notice the ones that are having the hardest times are the who that have no control over their minds. It's not so much the amount of pain or the severity of the illness that makes them suffer. It's the lack of control: The mind is just thinking all over the place and they have no way of bringing it into order.

You want to get some practice with that, so remind yourself of that: This is what happens when the mind is not trained. If your mind is wandering off, that's what it's heading for. It's heading for a lot of distraction and a lot of confusion as your powers of mindfulness and alertness grow weaker.

So, remind yourself. Focus your will, the will to get the mind to settle down. Focus on your alertness, your attention to what you're actually doing. And then draw on your fund of memory when you need it, to whatever extent is necessary

for right now.

That's one of the skills of meditation: knowing how to argue with yourself when you have to and knowing when to just shut up and just be with the breath when you can.

When you put all these qualities together, then the mindfulness will go well, the meditation will go well. The mind will get more and more under your control.