

A Clean Mind

August 26, 2016

Close your eyes and settle in with the breath. Be with the breath all the way in, all the way out. And pay attention to what you're doing.

Pay attention to the mind. All too often the mind gets distracted outside and doesn't see itself. But to see itself you have to get it very still. It's like looking at your reflection in the water. The water has to be still. Only then can you see yourself.

So try to make the breath even and smooth. And watch your mind as it's still. If there's any little bit of movement, you can see it. You want to be able to catch it early on. Sometimes greed, aversion, and delusion come in in very small forms to begin with, they plant their seeds and then they go. Then the seeds grow and grow and grow. By the time we're normally aware of them they've turned into big plants that are threatening to strangle us. So you've got to catch these things early on.

Try to clean out the mind. Someone once complained that the more they meditated, the more dirt they saw in their mind. Well, it's like cleaning your house every day as opposed to not cleaning it at all. If you don't clean it at all, then the dust can come in today and dust can come in tomorrow and the next day and the next, but you don't really notice it because it's just piled on top of the old dust. But when you clean things out every day, then when the least little bit of dust comes in, you know.

This is why you want to clean out the mind every day so that you can get a sense of what a really clean, still mind is. When something comes in, you'll notice it. And you'll be in a position to do something about it.

After all, the mind is what shapes our lives, so we want to make sure the mind itself is in good shape. We've got to get the good committee members of the mind watching over the ones that tend to misbehave—and watch out for their every movement.

Some people say this makes them really tense. But if you can do it with a sense of well-being with the breath it's a lot easier. You find actually that the more you can keep track of the mind like this, the greater sense of ease and well-being there will be.

So the path doesn't save all of its pleasure for the end. There's the pleasure of a mind that's settled in. There's the pleasure of a mind that can see itself, catch itself before it makes some large mistake. You catch the small mistakes and you can

erase them quickly. There's well-being on the path, so make sure you can engender this sense of well-being.

This is why we practice generosity, this is why we observe the precepts: because there is a sense of well-being that comes with these actions. It's not that they save their good results for the next lifetime. When you're generous it feels good *now*. When you catch yourself—you could have said something or done something that was going to be harmful and you say No to yourself—there's a sense of self-esteem that comes with that immediately.

So look for the pleasure on the path, because seeing the pleasure on the path is what enables us to keep on going.