

Safe from Ups & Downs

August 27, 2016

Try to keep your mind on an even keel right here at the breath.

This is a habit or a quality we have to develop because the mind goes up and down quite a lot—usually up and down with the affairs of the world, and the affairs of the world change very radically.

Last week we had a heatwave; this week we've got a coldwave. Who knows what next week is going to bring? And that's just the weather. Lots of other things go up and down as well.

The mind is getting jiggled around all the time, unless we pull out a little bit and say, "Let the world do its ups and downs, but we don't have to go up and down with it."

As when you stay with the breath: Think of the waves coming in from the ocean. You've got a post right there at the edge of the sea. It's planted deep down in the sand so that as the water rises, the post stays right there where it is. When the water goes back, the post stays right there where it is.

Don't let it be a post that's just lying there in the sand. If it's just lying there in the sand, the waves will wash it up, wash it back out. As it gets washed in and out like that, there's a chance it might wash in and break somebody's leg, break somebody's arm. Or it itself may smash against the rocks.

In other words, if the mind keeps going up and down with the world, you can hurt other people, you can hurt yourself, especially when you have people who are dependent on you. Little tiny children need their parents to be dependable.

So try to keep your mind on an even keel. Practice the skills that give you a good place to stay that doesn't have to depend on the ups and downs of the world.

You've got the breath right here. Even though it goes in and out, the breath can be there all the time. Comfortable, at ease, all the time. That can be your safe place. That's the place where your post is planted in the ground.

When you've got a sense of well-being like this, then the ups and downs of the world don't concern you that much, because you're not out there looking for food in the ups and downs.

If you're out scavenging among the waves, who knows what kind of big waves are going to come and wash you away. But if you've got a sense of well-being that comes from inside, a sense of stability that comes from inside, you don't need the ups and downs of the world, you don't need what the world has to offer. In that way, its ups and downs don't affect you that much.

That way you can be more dependable for yourself and more dependable for the people who have to depend on you.

So try to make sure that your emotions don't go up and down with the world, up and down with the other people around you. Try to be as steady as you can. Base your steadiness on being with the breath, being here in the present moment.

In that way, your post is safe. It doesn't get smashed; it doesn't hurt anybody else. It just stays right there with a sense of solidity.

As the Buddha said, when you have this sense of peace and stillness inside, that's what genuine happiness is. In fact, he says there really is no other happiness other than peace.

We might think of a lot of ways where we're happy that are not peaceful at all. But you think about it for a while: The reason we're happy with those things is because the mind can stay with them for a while before it gets pushed off. So it's in this quality of being able to stay: That's where the true happiness of the mind lies.

So try to make the mind stable with each breath coming in, going out. That way it gets to find some of the peace that leads to genuine happiness.