

## *The Perfection of Endurance*

*August 28, 2016*

Close your eyes and watch your breath. Try to stay with the breath all the way in, all the way out.

Don't let the mind wander out after other things. Don't let it get irritated by the things outside. Just hang on with the breath. The noises can make their noise. If there are pains in the body, just let them be for the time being. You stay with the breath coming in, going out.

This is the principle that's really important in the practice: learning some endurance—in other words, not reacting to things that are negative, learning to live with them, and learning that they don't have to take over your whole awareness. There may be negative things happening, but there are a lot of positive things in the present moment that you can focus on.

You can make the breath comfortable so that even if somebody is yelling at you or there's pain in the body, you can take it because you've got a better place to stay. You don't have to go around trying to feed on other people's words.

And you don't have to go around chasing pains out of the body. After all, the body is designed to have pain. So what are you going to do about it? If it's something that's really serious, you work with it, you get medicine for it. But if it's simply the pain of sitting for a longer period of time than normal, put up with it because bigger pains are going to happen in the future.

So it's good to learn to have some endurance. You don't get sparked or set off by little tiny pains here and there—or even big pains here and there.

As the Buddha said, there are two things that you can develop endurance around. One is the harsh words of other people, and the other is pains in the body. Those are the main things we have to learn how to endure. It's part of our development of the perfection of endurance, of the perfection of patience.

There are other things, though, that he said not to endure and those are unskillful thoughts coming up in your mind. When they move in, it's like animals moving into your house. They don't just move in and stay there for a little while. They move in and they take over. They start ordering you around. Greed, aversion, and delusion start telling you what to do. They can make messes all over the house, and you have to clean up after the messes. These aren't the sorts of things you should endure. You should chase them out of your house right away.

So it's good when you're developing endurance to realize what you have to endure and what you shouldn't endure. Learn how to make that distinction.

Otherwise you find yourself putting up with a lot of unnecessary trouble. When greed, aversion, and delusion move into your mind, they make you do unskillful things, and pain is going to have to come back at you. You're just creating more and more stuff that you'll have to sit there and endure.

So make sure that you learn how to endure what needs to be endured and learn how not to endure things that shouldn't be endured. Use your wisdom as you develop your perfection of patience, your perfection of endurance.

That way, it's not just sitting there taking things. You learn that even though there are instances of pain or unpleasant words, there are other places in your present awareness that don't have to be unpleasant, that you can actually make a good place to stay. Hang out in those places.

If you go around feeding on other people's words, it's like feeding on things that they've spit out. And then when you get sick, who are you going to blame? You don't have to feed on their words. Their words are their words. Your mind is your mind. Make sure you keep that distinction clear.

That way you don't start turning their words into your words—in other words, words in your own mind that tell you that you can't stand this any longer. Then they start coming out your mouth, and you've picked up some of their bad karma.

It's as if they've got a disease and they sneezed at you, and you catch the disease. So they may be sneezing at you, but if you put up your resistance—in other words, learn to tolerate unpleasant words—then no matter what other people may think, you know that you're developing forbearance, you're developing patience, you're developing endurance, all of which are qualities we need as we face all the pains and sufferings in life so that we don't have to suffer from them.

That's the essence of the Buddha's teachings. There are a lot of negative things in the world that you have to learn how to put up with, so you put up with them. You learn an inner strength that frees you from feeling weighed down by them. As for things you shouldn't put up with, make sure that you chase those animals out of your house right away as soon as they appear. They don't belong there. They belong outside. You should be in charge of your house. Don't let unskillful thoughts move in and take over.

That's when you're practicing endurance wisely.