

Picking Out Bugs

August 31, 2016

The mind is sometimes like a big flock of birds flying around. Suddenly you see it swoop down on one electric pole or electric line, all lined up.

Try to think of your mind being like that. It swoops down on the breath. All the little scattered points, scattered thoughts, scattered areas of attention for the morning: Think of everything swooping down right here and being fully with the breath. The more you give full attention to the breath, the more you can settle down. And the more you'll see. This is what it's all about.

As Ajaan Suwat used to say, "Don't do this just going through the motions." You really want to look: What's going on with the breath? What's going on with the mind? Get into the details. If you see anything at all that you recognize as a disturbance or anything that's going to cause problems in the mind, just pick it out, pick it out.

It's like sorting through beans or sorting through rice: You pick out all the little bugs and things. Then you can eat the beans and eat the rice with no problem. Our problem is we let the bugs stay there and we eat it and then we complain about getting sick.

In other words, greed, aversion, and delusion come up and there's a sense of dis-ease in the mind. We let the bugs in to begin with. Sometimes the bugs come from outside, sometimes they're already there inside. So sit down and look at your mind. If you see any little bugs there, just pick them out, pick them out.

You're preparing the food for your own mind as you go through the day. We feed on sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensations. We feed on ideas, we feed on intentions. So make sure you have good, clean food to feed on. Anything that's not healthy, anything that's not good for you: Just pick it out and throw it out, throw it away.

Being fully with the breath gives you the opportunity to do this. You can sit and be here with the breath and know that you're in the present moment, and nothing has to pull you away. When you leave the breath, it's not for sure: You get involved in looking at a thought and all of a sudden you get sucked into it.

So stay here with the breath. Give it your full attention. That way, your mind, being fully here, will be open to you to see what needs to be picked out. And that way you can feed yourself to your heart's content. You feed on the breath, feed on all the good things in the mind. That's how the mind gets healthy and strong. And it's the strength of the mind that really matters.

As we get older, the body falls away, falls away, the strength of the body falls away. But the strength of your mind doesn't have to fall away. That can depend on qualities that have nothing to do with the body at all. So make sure that you nourish those qualities and keep them going.