

Control Over Your Life

October 22, 2016

Sit up straight, close your eyes, and watch your breath.

Take a couple of good long deep in-and-out breaths, and see how the breathing feels. If long breathing feels good, keep it up. If it doesn't, you can change: shorter breathing, more shallow, heavier or lighter, faster, slower. Experiment for a while to see what kind of breathing is best for your body right now: energizing if you're feeling tired, relaxing if you're feeling tense.

In other words, use the breath as medicine to bring things into balance. It's a medicine that's free. There are so many diseases in both the body and the mind that we treat in ways that cost a lot of money. But here's a treatment that's free. It just requires that you put some energy into it and you give it some attention. You stick with it and you pay careful attention to what you're doing.

Some of the things that lie really close to us are the ones that can give us the most benefit, but we tend to overlook them. As a result, we don't get the benefit we should. You want the mind as close to the present moment, as close to its present intentions as possible.

The breath is a good place to do that. It immediately mirrors the state of your mind. But at the same time, it can also have a good impact on the mind itself. When you decide to change the way you breathe, it's going to have an impact on how you feel the body, and over time it's going to have an impact on the mind.

So again, you want the mind to be brought into balance, too, so that you can see what's going on. Otherwise if we've got a slanted point of view, everything else seems slanted, and we have no idea what's right and what's wrong because our slant pulls us off in the wrong direction. But if you get the mind into a state of balance, then you can see, "Oh, this kind of thought actually is bad for me or for the people around me. There's no reason to follow it."

And with the breath you have a source of strength so you can let that thought go. You're not forced to ride with whatever thought comes driving past you.

This way you get more control over your life, going with the thoughts that are useful and just letting go of the thoughts that are not.

So it's good to have this sort of control over your mind. Otherwise, if the mind is out of control, it's like handing the keys to your car over to a crazy person. You have no idea where the crazy person's going to drive that car, who's he's going to run into, when he's going to finally drive it off a bridge or into a tree.

In other words, if you just let the mind follow whatever moods go through it,

you have no idea where these moods are coming from, where they are going. It's like winds blowing through the mind.

So you have to have a place where you can step back from your thoughts and choose which ones are worth following. Here's a good place to stand: right here with the breath, with the sense of well-being that comes when you pay careful attention to the breath.

This puts you in a position where you can exert some better control over your life, both for your own benefit and for other people around you.