

## *Straighten Things Out Inside*

*December 17, 2016*

Close your eyes and allow your mind to settle on the breath. Let go of all your other concerns. What's happened since this morning began, what's going to happen for the rest of the day: Just put that stuff aside. Give the mind a time to be its own self, look after its own self, and to get to know itself really well.

We don't know the mind nearly as well as we should, because we're constantly learning about things outside, curious about this, curious about that. Curiosity may be a good thing, but if we're not curious about the state of our own mind then it's a problem. You have to turn around and wonder: What's going on inside the mind? How is the mind dealing with things? How is the mind shaping things? How's the mind talking to itself? Is it adding problems or is it taking problems away?

If this happens in ignorance, the Buddha says it's a sure bet that it's going to cause extra suffering. It may not be heavy suffering, but you're adding unnecessary burdens on the mind.

So try to be aware of what you're doing. And the best place to be aware of that is right here at the breath, because the breath is where the body and the mind meet. If the mind is going to have an influence on the body, it's going to be through the breath. If the body's going to have an influence on the mind, it's through the breath. So here you get to see the traffic going back and forth. What's coming out of the mind? Is it being alert? Is it being wise? Or is it just being its ordinary old self? You can train it, you know. This is why we're here meditating: to train the mind, realizing that the big issue in life is what the mind does.

Each human being, as Ajaan Suwat used to say, is responsible for one person, i.e., you're responsible for yourself. You could say, "Well, this person did that and that person did this," but it doesn't excuse the fact that you may have been doing something unskillful, either in relationship to other people or just on your own.

So you have to turn around and look and get to know your mind really, really well. You want to see when something comes out of the mind, is it coming from a good place or a bad place? If it's coming from a good place, you can encourage it. If it's coming from a bad place, you don't have to follow it. You can drop it. And even with the good things, there are gradations of good.

So you want to make sure that you're doing the best you can. That requires that the mind have strength, which you also gain from the meditation. When the

mind settles in, it's not carrying around a lot of burdens, it has a chance to rest, gather its energy, so it really can be responsible for itself.

Then when issues come up in day-to-day life, you've got a strong mind, a clear mind, a mind that knows itself inside and out. You don't have to deal with too many difficult issues inside because you've straightened things out there. Then dealing with things outside turns out to be not that much of a burden.

So straighten things out inside. And you do that starting right here, being right here with the breath, so that whatever comes up in the mind, it gets broadcast very clearly because you're right here. You're not sending your attention out someplace else, so that what's coming up in the mind gets broadcast but there's nobody to listen and receive to really see what's going on. You're right here now. So whatever comes out, listen carefully. Then do what needs to be done to encourage the skillful things coming out of the mind and discourage the unskillful ones. That way you're taking care of business.