

## *Making a Resolution*

*January 2, 2017*

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

Allow it to be comfortable. Think of the whole body breathing: your eyes, your brain, your neck, your lungs, your stomach, your legs, your arms. Every part is letting the energy flow and is nourished by the energy.

If your mind wanders off, just bring it right back. This is an important principle. When you wander off, you always have an ability to come right back. New beginnings are okay.

As the Buddha said, if there's something you've done that was wrong and you stop doing it, then you brighten the world in the same way that the moon brightens the world when a cloud that's been obscuring it moves away.

It's this principle that we focus on with the new year. It's a time to make a new start. You look at the things you did in the past year that were good and you make up your mind you're going to maintain them and develop them. As for things that weren't so good, here's your opportunity to make a determination, make a resolution that you're going to change.

The Buddha said there are four qualities for a good resolution. One is that you're discerning in choosing your goal, what you want to do. Make sure that it's something that, when you accomplish it, it really will be good. It won't have any bad side-effects in its train. Second, once you've figured out what you should be aiming for, then you also use your discernment in figuring out what's the best way to bring it about.

This is going to involve being truthful. Once you've made up your mind, you hold to that. You're not just going to throw it away.

And you learn how to be generous, to give up the things that are going to get in the way of that resolution you've made.

Then finally you keep your mind calm. In other words, you don't get worked up about the things that you have to let go of; and you don't get worked up and upset when you find yourself slipping of. You just get right back on track.

It's in this way that you're able to develop a sense of balance. You watch people walking across tightropes. They don't walk in a perfectly straight line. They'll shift to the left, shift to the right. But they make their way across. So accept that there are going to be some ups and downs in your resolutions, but don't let the downs get you discouraged—and don't let the ups get you complacent.

After all, this is *your* life that you're shaping. You shape your life with your actions: your thoughts, your words, and your deeds. You always want to maintain that determination to shape it well.

Whether it's a new year or not a new year, try to stick with your determinations. If it's in the middle of the year and you see something that needs improvement, go ahead and make a determination then, too.

But remember, it's up to you to shape your life. The Buddha gives you the principles for doing it well, he shows you how to do it, but it's up to you to actually master those skills. Remember that if you don't master them, there will be dangers. When you *do* master them, they'll give good results.

Always keep that principle in mind. Don't get discouraged. Because discouragement is one of the few things that really can weigh you down and get in the way. So give yourself words of encouragement, listen to words of encouragement from others. If you find yourself slipping off the path, just make up your mind you're going to get right back. It's something you *can* do.