

Resisting Change

February 10, 2017

Close your eyes and watch your breath. Watch it all the way in, all the way out. Give the mind something to hold on to.

There's so much in the world that changes. Look at your body, look at the things around you: Sometimes the changes are positive, sometimes they're not. You need to look for something solid to figure out which is positive and which is not. Which is why you need to get the mind centered. It's from here that you can watch things with a little bit of detachment, gaining a better sense of what changes in the mind are heading in a good direction, which ones are heading in a bad direction. Those are the changes that are really important.

As the Buddha said, the mind is so changeable that there's no analogy for how quick it is to change, so you have to be on top of that. At the same time, he says, if you look for a happiness outside and you try to base your happiness on things that change, then you're going to end up with disappointment. Those are the two kinds of change you have to watch out for.

It all comes down to understanding and mindfulness. If you're mindful, it helps prevent the mind from changing too quickly. It also helps you to remember when you start placing your hopes on things that are unreliable that you can pull back and say, "I can't base my happiness on these kinds of things. I've got to find something more solid."

That's what the Buddha provides us with: recommendations for getting the mind centered and still so that it doesn't change quite so much and so you can see things more easily. Instead of just running along with whatever changes, you step back and try to stay still right here. Then you can see other things change. That's when you're more in control. And you're less of an enemy to yourself, less of a danger to yourself.

So try to have this sense of the center inside. Find a place that's comfortable with the breathing. The breathing comes in, feels comfortable; goes out, feels comfortable. See if you can stay there. Then the mind can resist the temptation to go running off someplace else. This way, even though things in the world may change, you've got something solid inside. And that can be your refuge.