

Your Own News

February 19, 2017

Close your eyes and watch your breath. Keep your attention right here, right where the mind and the body meet, as the breath comes in, as the breath goes out.

Tell yourself, “This is the most important place in the world to be right now.” It’s out of the present moment that your intentions come, and you want to be here to watch them to make sure that they’re going in the right direction. Don’t let your attention wander off someplace else, because otherwise the intentions come out and there’s nobody to check them. They just go through the process, slip through all the checkpoints unseen and come out, and you don’t know what’s going to happen as a result.

Sometimes you do something and people ask you, “Why did you do that?” And if you’re not really sure, it’s a sign that you weren’t really paying careful attention to *the* most important part of your mind: the mind that’s creating intentions. So be right here.

As for the news outside, there’s news all the time. The question is, what is *your* news right now? What is your news in the course of the day? Were you able to restrain yourself from saying things you knew you shouldn’t say? Or did you just go ahead and say them? The really good news is when you’re able to be generous in ways you hadn’t thought of before or you didn’t have to be generous. Or you’re able to restrain yourself from doing and saying things that you knew were unskillful. You felt a strong urge to say them, but you said, “No, I can say No to that urge.” That’s all good news. That’s the kind of news you want to create in your life.

As for the news outside: Last week’s news is already old, so this week’s news is going to be old in just a couple of days. But your news is always going to stay fresh. The fact that you’re able to create better and better habits inside: That’s always good news and that’s good news to think about. It’s always up to date.

Think about the news from the time of the Buddha. What do we remember now of the Buddha’s time? There were kings and they probably had some policies but we don’t remember a thing about their policies. All we remember about them is how much they were connected to someone who was really, really good like the Buddha. It’s the Buddha’s goodness that keeps his news fresh for 2,500 years.

So keep your news fresh every day. Keep thinking of ways in which you can restrain yourself from doing the little unskillful things that you usually let pass. And when you say No to yourself and can stick with that No, that’s good news. As for the things you should say Yes to—opportunities to be generous with your time, with your knowledge, with your forgiveness for other people—that’s also good news. So make sure that your news is good, regardless of what the news is outside.

Because when you read the media, you have to ask yourself again and again, “Who wants me to believe this? Why are they focusing on this? Why are they telling me this?” Somebody’s got some agenda out there. The question is, what’s *your* agenda? They’re basically saying that you’re not important. They’re doing the important things, and all your value is as a spectator and a purchaser of the news. But you can say, “No. I have other important things in my life: the goodness that I can do and the unskillful qualities that I can say No to. That’s my news. That’s what I’ve got to focus on.”

There was a time when King Pasenadi came to see the Buddha in the middle of the day. The Buddha asked him, “Where are you coming from, great king, in the middle of the day like this?” And the king said, “I’ve been dealing with the sorts of things that people in power, obsessed with their power, are thinking about and planning.” He was remarkably frank.

And the Buddha said, “Suppose really reliable came to tell you, ‘Your majesty, there’s a mountain moving in from the east and another mountain moving in from the south, another mountain moving in from the west and one from the north, moving in and crushing all life in their way.’ What would you do, remembering that human life is so hard to come by?”

The king said, “What else could I do but get my mind under control and practice the Dhamma?” That’s the only thing you can take with you. And the Buddha said, “In the same way, I tell you, great king: Aging, illness, and death are moving in on you. What are you going to do?” “Well, practice the Dhamma.”

So the Dhamma’s here to practice: developing goodness in the mind, abandoning the things that are unskillful, and then cleansing the mind so that it’s pure. That’s the best news of all. So make sure you pay attention right here, because this is where all the important news is happening. And it’s up to you to make sure that it’s good.