

## *Learning to Say No*

*May 26, 2017*

Close your eyes and watch your breath. Watch it all the way in, all the way out. Try to be at ease with the breath, so that the mind will be inclined to want to stay here. That's the carrot.

Then there's the stick. In other words, even though there may be a comfortable breath here, the mind can think of all kinds of other things at once. If it starts heading out, to grab hold of those things, you've got to have a stick and say, "Nope!"

In other words, you're not just the student in the classroom. You're also the teacher. The teacher has to be in the classroom, keep watch over the kids. If the teacher leaves the classroom, the kids are going to run around and never get their work done. They can never grow up to be responsible adults. The teacher has to be there to remind them: "Okay, this is what you need in order to train the mind, this is why you need to train the mind." This is to remind you that there's not just strictness for the sake of strictness. It's for the sake of your growing up and maturing, because we need to learn how to depend on ourselves. That's what it means to be mature.

There are these books they hand out at the funerals in Thailand. And usually at the beginning of the book they'll have a little something about the person who died. The life stories are almost always the same. They went to school, got married, whatever. And then they began to notice they had this little disease and that little disease. At first the doctors could help them, but then it got worse and worse and finally it got past the ability of any doctor to help.

You have to stop and think: What's it like then? When the doctors can't help you, when nobody outside can help you, what are you going to do? You have to depend on the mind that you've trained. The mind is going to be out grabbing for all kinds of things at that point, because it realizes it can't stay here. You've got to be able to say No. Now, when the body is weak and you're getting frantic like that, if you haven't had any practice in saying No, it's going to be hard. So you've got to learn how to say No early on. As the mind reaches out for something, "Nope!" It reaches out again, "Nope! This is not what we want, we want something better than this." You direct it back to the breath, because that's where the path to what's better is going to be found.

So think of meditation as a way of making you a mature adult, someone who can depend on him or herself. That way, when the time comes and there really is nobody around who can reach into you, you can be confident that you'll do the right thing. You won't be placing unnecessary burdens on yourself, because you've trained the mind as to what sort of things are worth saying Yes to and what sort of things are worth saying No.