

Bound Together by Purpose

June 12, 2017

Close your eyes and watch your breath. Watch the breath partly because it's a good place to stay in the present moment, and partly because it's good for our future too.

The Buddha's teachings aren't all about the present. They realize that the present moment goes someplace. What you do now is going to have an impact, both now and on into the future. So you want to make sure that that future impact is good.

The Buddha talks about heedfulness, which you can say is the opposite of complacency. It's also the opposite of apathy, that part of the mind that just doesn't care. The complacent mind says, "Well, things are going to be okay." Apathetic mind says, "Even if they're not okay, I don't care." Both of those are your enemies because you're not going to be willing to put out an extra effort in the present moment for the sake of the future. You just leave the future to its own devices, which is not a wise attitude at all. So you think about what you're doing right now and the impact it's going to have down the line.

Getting the mind in a good state of concentration is a really good place to develop all the qualities you're going to need, because there are a lot of things we don't know about the future. We do know there's going to be aging, illness, and death, but the details of that we don't know.

When the body comes up with a disease, often it's a surprise. The parts of the body that seemed to be working all along suddenly decide they're not going to work. They don't consult you and they don't ask you, "Is this the kind of disease you'd like to have?" They just go ahead and do their thing. So the details we're not prepared for. What we're prepared for is just the general direction.

But we realize, okay, if we have a lot of mindfulness and alertness and discernment, we'll be able to deal with whatever comes up. So we develop those qualities right now.

And it's not like we're totally sacrificing well-being in the present for the sake of the future. By getting the mind into concentration we're having an immediate sense of well-being right here. When you get the breath so that the mind can settle down and feel at home here, you've got something that's pleasant now and pleasant in its consequences.

So make sure that you work on this skill. This is the skill that brings us all together. We all want happiness and we all realize that if our happiness depends on being unskillful and harming other people, harming ourselves, it's not something we want. We want happiness that's harmless all-around. That's why we come from lots of different backgrounds, but we all have the same purpose. And the nature of the purpose is something that binds us together, makes it easy for us to live together.

So make sure you're constantly looking at what you're doing and what the consequences are going to be, and try to do it with a good sense of humor so that it's not too grim. Getting

the mind into concentration helps with that. When you've got a sense of well-being, it's a lot easier to step back from your own foibles and laugh at them. But realize they are foibles, things that you have to work through.

And given the fact that we're living here together, let's help one another in this direction. Give one another space, give one another our own wishes for well-being and realize, okay, everybody else wishes well-being as well. Because this is something that ties us together, we want to do it wisely. In that way, our well-being is good for all.