

Proprioception

January 11, 2018

We close our eyes when we meditate to get rid of as many distractions as possible and to get us out of the world of our range of vision.

Think of how large that world is. Everything we know through the Internet, everything we know through the media, all comes through our eyes. If you were to cut off that world, what would you have left? You'd have the world of your sensations here inside the body. And that's yours. The world outside is not yours. You have some control over it, but not much. A lot of things you can't change. But you can change what's going on inside, because this is totally your territory.

You have to learn how to reason with yourself. Because there are lots of voices in here that you've picked up from outside, you've got to sort through them. Not all of them come from outside. Some of the voices of course are ones you've made up for yourself. But you've learned how to talk to yourself from outside, so the language and the ideas come from outside. If you were to put all those aside for the time being, what would you have left?

You've got the breath right here and the sensations of the body. Unfortunately, we don't have much of a vocabulary in English for how the body feels from within. This is why it's useful to have the Buddha's vocabulary about the different properties. There's breath, which includes not only the air coming in and out of the lungs but also the flow of energy throughout the body. Then there's warmth and there's coolness and then there's solidity, and then there's the space that surrounds and penetrates these other properties. Try to get in touch with those properties, try to see how this language applies to you.

When there are disorders in the mind or disorders in the body, you can check the mind first, to see how the mind is thinking, and then look at the body. Here again, we have some control over what's going on in the body—not total control, but we can have some influence. If the body's feeling too cold, you can focus on the warm spots. If it's feeling too hot, you can focus on the cool spots. If you're feeling dizzy or light-headed, focus on the solidity. If you're feeling depressed or down, focus on the energy that permeates the body and is circulating through it all the time.

There's a lot to explore here. There's a lot to take advantage of. But we see it clearly only when we put aside—for the time being at least—thoughts of the visual world out there and be more in touch with what they call proprioception, your sense of the body as you feel it from within. Because it's right here that the mind and the body meet. All the issues of the mind will show themselves right here, in fact a lot more clearly when they're right here than when they go sending their currents outside. Because when they go flowing outside, they pick up a lot of issues from outside to bring them back in, and you're not clear about which issues are the

outside issues and which issues are your own. But when you focus right here, you begin to realize that these are your issues. If you clean these up, then you realize that the suffering you sense, either from within or from without, all comes from within. If you can clear up this issue, then there's nothing more to suffer from. There are pains, of course, but the mind doesn't have to suffer from them if it teaches itself well.

So get in touch with this area of your awareness. Try to emphasize it as much as you can, because there are lots of beneficial lessons you can learn right here.