

In Charge of Your Thoughts

January 22, 2018

Close your eyes and watch your breath.

And try to have some control over your mind. Even though thoughts may come spinning out in different directions, you don't have to follow them. Make sure that your center of attention is right with the breath. Other things can be in the fringes, but for the time being they don't matter. You want to establish your intention that you're going to stay right here and pay attention to what you're doing. Whatever thinking you're going to use, use it with the breath. You want to be in charge.

All too often we're slaves to our thinking. Here they are, tools. Thoughts that should be tools for making us happy—and that's why we start thinking to begin with, we're trying to figure things out so we can get what we want—all too often begin to take over. They take on a life of their own. One thought leads to another and to another and they build and build and build a large edifice that seems so much bigger than us. So you have to learn how to take it apart. Each thought is a separate piece, a separate piece, a separate moment. If you don't go with the separate moments, trying to glue them together, then the edifice begins to fall down. Then your defilements won't have anything to hide behind.

So put your thoughts to good use. Make sure that you're in charge. Don't let them be in charge.

We have that chant, about being a slave to craving. We live in this world of aging, illness, and death. Things are stressful, inconstant, not-self. Yet our craving keeps us coming back to these things again and again and again, getting disappointed again and again. So it's time to find a new path, time to find new friends. That means putting ourselves in charge of our thoughts so that they do what we want, rather than having them push us around. It's in this way that we gain our freedom. All too often we think of freedom as being doing what we want to do. What it really means, though, is doing what's in our own best interest and not being a slave to our cravings.

So meditation is how we develop this freedom, so that we really are in charge. Then our thoughts become our tools. They can be put to a good purpose, a purpose that does lead to true happiness.