

*Pay Attention to What You Are Doing*

*April 3, 2021*

Watch your breath coming in; watch your breath going out. Give the mind a place where it can stay right here, where it doesn't have to move.

As the Buddha said, there is no happiness other than peace. What he means is that happiness for the mind is finding a place where it can stay and it's not likely to be pushed out.

If you take your happiness in sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensations, they just keep running away, running away. As soon as they arise, they're already running away. If you go chasing after them, then you're not going to get any rest, you're not going to get any peace.

Whereas the breath is right here. This is what keeps you together with the body. It lets you know what's going on with the body and allows you to move the body. As long as you are alive, it's going to be right here, so stay with it for a while. Make it your home base.

Notice the variations in the breath, because, sometimes long breathing feels good and sometimes short breathing feels good. Fast, slow, heavy, light: See what feels good right now. That way, you develop a quality called alertness, when you see what you're actually doing, why you're doing it, and you can see the results. If what you're doing isn't skillful, you can tell.

There is a passage in the Commentary that says everybody knows what they're doing and why they're doing it, but that's not the case. All too often, we're doing one thing and our mind is in something else and when the results come out—not what we like them to be—we don't know where to look, we don't know what to change, because we weren't there when the decisions were first being made.

So, try to be right here. Watch what's going on and then you can learn from your own actions. This is how the Buddha gained awakening: looking at his own actions. This is how he taught his son, Rahula at a very early age. He said, before you do anything, ask yourself: What do you expect to be the results? If they're going to harm anybody, don't do it. If you don't foresee any harm, go ahead and do it. But watch the results while you're doing the act and after it's done. If you see that you caused harm that you didn't expect, learn from that. Resolve not to make that mistake again. Talk it over with someone who's more advanced on the path. If you see that you didn't cause any harm, you can take joy in the fact that you're in training, and keep on training.

This is how the Buddha taught his seven-year-old son, but it's a good lesson for everybody. Pay attention to what you're doing, because that way you can learn from it. And the breath is a good way to keep you right here where you can watch. When you're with the breath, you *know* you're in the present moment. That way you can watch the mind, watch the breath, watch your actions. You see where they're connected, and see where there's something unskillful going on that you can change.

It's all very basic, but all too often we forget the basics. We think we're going to move to more advanced things, but you've got to take the basics along with you when you go. Otherwise, you lose your foundation.

So, make sure your foundation is strong. The more comfortable the breath is, more you can have your awareness filling the whole body, then the stronger your foundation. Try to maintain that as you go through the day. Even when your eyes are open and you're moving around, you still have this center inside.

When the mind is centered like this, then it can find some peace. Even in the midst of the world that's not very peaceful, we can have our own peace inside. That's what we're responsible for. When you can maintain that peace, it's a gift not only to yourself but also to people around you. They realize that you're more dependable as well. So this practice is good all around.