

Happy to Be Here

September 2, 2013

Close your eyes and take a couple of good long deep in-and-out breaths.

Make up your mind you're going to stay here right now. You're not going to let the mind wander off. You'll just be with the breath all the way in, be with the breath all the way out.

See how long you can maintain that intention. One of the disconcerting things about just beginning the meditation is how out of control your mind can be. You make up your mind to be here, and five seconds later you're someplace else. But to train the mind, you can't give in. You've got to keep coming back, coming back, coming back, re-establishing the mind with the breath however many times it takes.

To make it easier, we try to make the breath comfortable. Ask yourself what kind of breath would feel good right now for the body:

What would feel good for your chest?

What would feel good for your stomach?

What would feel good for your shoulders?

Go around the body making a survey, each time you breathe in, breathe out. Do it especially for this part, do it especially for that part. In other words, if you use your discernment, you find you can make the work a lot easier.

If you just try to use force of will, you can get some results, but after a while they begin to wear out. So you've got to use your discernment.

Figure out some way that makes the mind want to stay here, gets it interested in staying here.

Otherwise, it's like trying to control your child. If you control your child by locking him into a room, the child is going to rebel. It's going to find some way out. If it can't get out the window, it's going to break through the wall. But if you give the child some toys to play with, something really interesting to engage its attention, then you can leave the windows open, the doors open, and the child's not going to wander off. It's going to be happy to be here.

It's the same with your mind. Make it happy to be here. If nothing else, remind yourself that while you're here the mind is not carrying any other burdens at all. It's not creating any trouble for itself; it's not creating any trouble for anybody else. That right there is a good thing. And if you engage it with the breath, remember that this breath here is what keeps you alive. The quality of the breathing is going to have an impact on the body; it's going to have an impact on your mind. So you

want to take good care of that.

You find as you get more interested in the meditation in the present moment that it's a lot easier to stay here. You keep going from breath to breath to breath. You may drop it just for a second but then you come right back. Another breath, breath, breath. Keep with it.

You begin to realize the advantages of having the mind with a place to settle down, because the quality of your awareness, the quality of your mood is going to change if the mind isn't constantly having to jump around all the time.

So give it this good place to stay, give it an interesting place to stay, and you find that it's a lot more obedient, a lot more tame, a lot more likely to do what you actually want it to do.