

## *Dedicating Merit*

*September 2, 2017*

Close your eyes and focus on your breath. Know when the breath is coming in; know when it's going out. And try to stay right there.

The mind needs a place to rest. It spends its time traveling around so much. Even when we sleep, we dream all over the place. So try to get the mind right here. And protect it. In other words, if another thought comes up, you say, "No, not right now. I'm going to stay right here with the breath. I want to learn what it's like to be with the breath, to get the mind to really settle down and be by itself, have a sense of well-being that comes from within."

Today we're going to have the ceremony for Bev. We can't contact her physically anymore, but there's a contact at the mind. The mind sends out energies, and it's through these energies that we can still contact one another. So you want to make sure the energy is good. This is why traditionally for a funeral there's a gift and there's taking the precepts. We don't have to do that formally but just make up your mind you're going to avoid unskillful behavior, avoid harmful behavior, and dedicate the merit of that to Bev.

And you're going to meditate. You're going to get the mind to be still. This is a meritorious activity, too, because when the mind is still like this, you get to see yourself more clearly. When you see yourself clearly, then you can see when you're doing something that's skillful and when it's not. Now, if the mind is still and has a sense of well-being, it doesn't need to go for the unskillful things. The reason we go for unskillful behavior is because we're hungry. But when the mind is not hungry, it's in a better position to judge and a better position to say No to what's unskillful and to say Yes to what's skillful. The merit coming from this, as the Buddha said, is the highest form of merit of all. We can send that out as a current to Bev and all other beings.

In a certain way, we're all in this together. We're all trying to find happiness. Sometimes we do it well and sometimes we don't, but our desire for happiness is what unites us. If we learn how to do it skillfully, that unites us even more. So if you make up your mind you want to be skillful in your search for happiness, that's something that sends out good energy in all directions. This is the kind of energy that makes life among human beings livable. It's because of our mutual goodness that we can be with one another. So we want to make sure that we have the strength within, develop the strengths within, so that we can have a good foundation for that goodness: Make it solid, make it reliable, make it something we want to share.

So take some time right now to get the mind as still as you can. Keep it with the breath and try to have a sense of well-being. When you breathe in, notice what kind of breathing feels good, so that you *want* to stay with the breath. It feels good, it feels nourishing to stay with the breath.

Then we can dedicate that to Bev and we can dedicate it to all beings, because we want this kind of goodness to continue in the world.