

## *Three Attitudes for Meditation*

*April 16, 2015*

There are three skills involved in meditating, three attitudes you want to create in the mind.

One is being able to gladden the mind. When you're down, how do you lift your spirits? When you're discouraged, how do you give yourself some more encouragement?

This is an important part of developing any skill, because a lot of skills have their drudgery: certain things you have to do over and over and over again to get good at them.

So how do you keep your spirits up and how do you not let the mind get grinding itself down? Think of the good things that come from the practice. Think of the things that you're avoiding by sticking with the practice. As you're sitting here right now, you're not harming anybody at all. It may not seem much, but look at the way the world goes. There's a lot of harm going on, and at the very least you've stepped out of that.

And you're working on path that's been forged by people of real integrity, people with a strong sense of honor and truthfulness. And they're very generous. They teach everything they've learned for free.

So try to think in ways that gladden the mind when you find it getting down, when the meditation becomes a chore.

Other times though, when the mind is scattered all over the place, the skill required then is that you learn how to steady it. How do you give it some weight?

In other words, the first skill is lifting up and the second skill is putting it down—but putting it down in a solid way, not a depressed way but just really being firmly here. Learn to think about the things that would pull you out and pull you away and realize that there's not that much there.

As Ajaan Fuang once said, the sensual pleasures you thirst after are the ones you've had in the past. That's why you miss them. That's why you want them again. But, he says, if you think about that for a few minutes, it's enough to get a real strong sense of samvega.

The third skill is learning how to release, how to let go of things, realizing that you can't hold on to everything you want. There are certain things where you've got to say, "This I'm going to have to put aside because there's something better."

Relinquishment throughout the practice is always a form of trade. It's not just giving up, giving up, giving up, and getting nothing in return. You give up because

you get something better in return: a happiness that's more solid, that's deeper, more reliable, and even more blameless than just sitting here with your eyes closed. Totally harmless because it doesn't require any conditions at all: That's what we're looking for.

So as you go practicing through the day and the mind down, learn how to lift it up. If you find it scattered, learn how to give it some weight to settle it down. If you find yourself trying to hold on to too many things, learn what you've got to let go of so you can continue holding on to things that really are valuable. Otherwise, if you hold on to too many things, they just slip out of your hands. It's like trying to memorize too many things at once: All of them get lost.

So keep these three skills in mind as you go through the day. It's not just a matter of being with the breath, it's also a matter of bringing the right attitude—and maintaining the right attitude as you go through the day.