

## *The Food of Well-being*

*August 13, 2018*

Close your eyes and focus on your breath. Remind yourself that each time you breathe in, you're bringing in nourishment. It's nourishment not only for the body but also for the mind, especially if you can breathe in a way that feels comfortable.

Try adjusting the breath a bit to see if longer breathing might feel good—or shorter; faster, slower; heavier, lighter; deeper, more shallow. Find the rhythm that feels best right now. Because the needs of the body will change. What the body needs right now may be different from what it needed yesterday. So see what gives rise to a sense of well-being, a sense of balance. Breathe in a way that feels relaxing if you're feeling tense. Breathe in a way that feels energizing if you're feeling tired. Because the body needs the breath for its nourishment.

As for the mind, it needs a sense of well-being for its nourishment. When the mind can find no well-being anywhere it doesn't want to live at all, so you have to find a place of well-being even when things are bad outside. This is what the breath provides.

And not only the breath: As you get the mind to stay with the breath, you're developing good qualities. Qualities like alertness, mindfulness; ardency, when you try to do something really well. These qualities are even better food for the mind. You can depend on them for long periods of time. Even on days when the breath seems recalcitrant and doesn't want to be comfortable anywhere, you say, "Well, at least I'm developing good qualities of mind." That's the strength of the mind.

Otherwise, where does the mind go? It goes out looking for pleasures outside, which are like junk food. Sometimes they say, "This is good for you, this is good for you." Well, it's the same with the foods that advertisers say are good for you – sometimes they're right, sometimes they're wrong.

Whereas with the Buddha we've got proof of 2,600 years that the food he recommends for the mind is good health food for the mind, food that keeps you strong: strong in your conviction that your actions really do make a difference; strong in your persistence; strong in your mindfulness, concentration, discernment. These are the real strengths of the mind, and they need to be fed. So feed them by getting the mind a good place to stay, a good place to sit down and have a good meal inside of really nourishing food, food that's good for its goodness. That's what keeps the mind strong.

When the mind is strong in this way, then even in difficult situations you can do and say and think the right thing, the thing that would be skillful, that doesn't cause any harm to you, any harm to anybody else. All too often we may know what the right to do may be, but if we don't have the strength, we just don't feel up to it. So the mind needs to be strengthened, so that what you know is right is what you will actually do. Otherwise, your knowledge of what's

right and wrong doesn't do you much good. So it needs nourishment. It needs the food of well-being that comes from staying with the breath and getting the mind to settle down—because the happiness of the mind is its ability to stay in one place without being disturbed.

So here you are in a place where you can stay. Learn how to stay here with skill and you find that the mind really does become strong and happy, because it's well-fed.