

Commitment

November 17, 2011

Close your eyes. Focus on your breath.

And tell yourself that you're not going to go anywhere else. You're going to stay right here. You're going to content yourself with the fact that you're going to be right here. But that doesn't mean you just have to put up with whatever comes your way. You learn how to make the most of what you've got. That's how contentment works. You limit your options but then you make the most of what you've got.

So with the breath: Try to make it as comfortable as you can. If the mind goes sneaking out to find some other pleasures, say, "No, this is where the pleasure's going to be. If you're going to find pleasure right now, you've got to find here in the breath."

That gets you more committed. The more committed you are to the breath, the more you find. Otherwise, if you don't like this, don't like that, you go running off.

It's like people who can never commit. They meet up with a little something they don't like and they go running away, running away. They end up with not having developed any kind of relationship at all.

But here you can develop a relationship with the breath, and it's a healthy relationship. After all, the breath is the force of life. If you're not on good terms with your own breath, what are you going to be on good terms with? And how do you hope to find any sense of health for body or mind if you're on bad terms with the breath, or if you're strangers to your breath? So try to learn how to get acquainted with the breath.

Make up your mind this is a relationship you're really going to work on. There are going to be difficulties, but if you have a sense of commitment, that's what gets you past the difficulties. And when you get past the difficulties, you find that there's something really good.

As Ajaan Lee said, it's like digging down into the earth. There's gold there, but it's underneath a rock and you've got to get past the rock first before you can get the gold. Now, you know the gold is there, so that gives you the determination that you've got to get through the rock. When you meet up with pains, you meet up with distractions, you don't let them deter you: You try to find some way around them. If you can't get through the rock, you go around it. One way or another you're going to get the gold. But you've got to be committed. If you dig a little here, run into a rock, and you stop, and go dig a little over there, run into a rock,

and stop, you're never going to get anywhere deep at all.

So try to stick with the breath through thick and thin, and see what you learn as a result. Your sense of commitment is what's going to make all the difference.