

An Anchor in the Present

May 6, 2016

Close your eyes and watch your breath.

Notice where you feel it as it comes in and goes out. Try to anchor your mind there, because the mind needs an anchor. Otherwise it gets blown around by winds and storms and currents in the water. It's like a boat out in the middle of the ocean. If it doesn't have an anchor, who knows where it's going to get blown away to?

We need to have an anchor in the present moment so that we can keep our sense of what's right and wrong, know what's having an impact on us and know if it's a good impact or a bad one—and if it's having a bad impact, how we can resist it.

If the mind is well planted in the body, then it has a home. It has a place where it feels like it belongs. It doesn't get blown out away.

So, try to stay anchored right here. As anything comes up in the mind, don't let it pull you away. If it's something you really have to think about, take care of it and then come back.

It's not that you don't think at all when you're practicing. Sometimes you have to think about what you're doing, sometimes you have to think about what you're facing as you're going to go into the world when you leave the meditation. But try to save those thoughts for the end of the meditation. Right now you want some practice in staying right here and not getting blown around by things.

Then you can step back from what's going on in the mind and decide what's right and what's wrong, what's skillful and what's not in what's coming up in the mind. If something seems to be skillful, you can go with it. But you have to check every time. Something that seems skillful may not always be skillful in the end. So you want to check before you go, while you're thinking about doing it, while you're doing it, and then after it's done.

That's how you can learn. This adds to your body of knowledge that you can then hold in mind as to what works and what doesn't work, what really is skillful and what's not.

There are some things we can learn from the teachings as to what's skillful and what's not. Other things are a little bit more subtle: In those you have to use your powers of observation.

But by keeping the mind centered right here, you improve your powers of observation. The more you have some stillness in the mind, the more clearly you

can see when things are moving. Otherwise, everything's moving and you have no idea what's going on.

It's like being in a train and looking out the window. Everything seems to run along. Cars run, people walk. But mountains seem to run too, trees seem to run too, houses seem to run as well. It's when you get down from the train and just stand on the ground: That's when you can see what's moving and what's not. Then you can see clearly what you've got to watch out for, where the storms are coming from, and what you can do to protect yourself.

So try to have this sense of a center right here that keeps you anchored so that you don't get blown away. That protects you from a lot of things that otherwise would cause damage in life.