

Tornados of Drama

August 30, 2016

Close your eyes and watch your breath. When you breathe in, see how far the breath goes down inside. When you breathe out, stay with the sensation of the breath going out.

Try to notice what kind of breathing is comfortable. Try deep breathing or shallow, heavy, light, fast, slow: You have the right to choose the breath that you like right now.

And see what effect it has on the body. Because sometimes what you like right away is not going to have a long-term good effect. So if you see that the long-term effect is not good, you can change. Try to listen to what the body needs.

This way you give yourself a comfortable place to stay grounded. It's your safe place. The affairs of the world and your own emotions are like storms that come blowing through. If you don't have a good safe place to stay, you get blown around. When your moods go up, you get blown up into the sky. When they get bad, you get blown down to the ground.

And then the winds of the world spin you around. There's gain and there's loss. Status, loss of status. People praise you; people criticize you. There's pleasure and there's pain. If your mind doesn't have a good firm place to stay, you get blown around in tornadoes as you spin around.

So take the breath as your safe place to stay so that when the emotions go up, you don't have to go up with them. You can watch them go but you don't go with them. When they go down, you can watch them go down but you don't go with them. This way you can pull yourself out of all their dramas and all the damage that comes when you're allowed to get blown around.

So think of the breath as your safe place, as your safe haven. And work on making it a comfortable place to stay, because it is yours.

The thoughts that come through your mind: You've picked up language from this culture, all different kinds of culture sometimes. Even the words going through your mind are words you've borrowed from other people.

But your sensation of the breath: That's yours. So allow that to be comfortable. That way you have a good bulwark against all the forces of the world and the forces of your own emotions. At the same time, you learn how to step back from it. You're not entirely involved in an emotion. That weakens it so that it doesn't take over.

This is what the Buddha means by finding refuge. We develop his qualities

inside our own mind. He was a person of mindfulness and alertness, so try to be mindful to keep the breath in mind and be alert to stay with the breath. And just as he found a refuge inside himself, you'll be able to find a refuge inside you.

That's when you're really safe, safe not only from the world outside but also from your own crazy emotions. Hold on to the breath as your lifeline.