

Issues Underground

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Focus on your breath.

And check the state of your mind, to see if it's in the right state of mind to be meditating.

Are there things you're anticipating about the future, things you're thinking about the past, things you like or don't like? Try to let them go.

Remind yourself that the opportunity to meditate is a rare opportunity. We're fortunate enough to have it now, so make the most of it.

As for your other thoughts, you can take care of them later if they're really important. As you look at your thoughts, you begin to realize that there's a lot in there that's just random chatter, and this random chatter covers up a lot of things that are moving underground: in terms of greed, aversion and delusion, desires for happiness here, desires for happiness there. There's a lot that we cover up from ourselves.

One of the purposes of the meditation is to let the chatter die down, to let the stuff on the surface die down, so that things that are deeper can show themselves. You begin to realize what the real issues are.

So there's a constant adjustment as you go through the meditation: checking your breath, checking your mind, checking your breath, checking your mind. Ajaan Lee's image is of a pulley: The rope over the pulley gets pulled in this direction, then gets pulled in that direction, back and forth, back and forth. In the same way, you go back and forth from the breath to the mind, from the mind to the breath, to make sure the mind is right for the breath, the breath is right for the mind.

You're also trying to see what you can learn about the mind as you're with the breath. Because ultimately we're not here to get the breath, we're here to get the mind. We use the breath as our means for getting the mind to be pulled into the present and have a good place to stay while it's here. But ultimately, everything turns round to look at the mind.

So make sure that you've got these two things tied together. Check to see in what ways they're not fit for each other. You're improving the breath, seeing what needs to be changed to help the mind to settle down more. And you're improving the mind, to make sure it's not beginning to wander away, it's not getting bored, it's not running off with other activities.

The breath is always here. The question is: Is your mind here? Is your awareness

here? Try to keep them at this point where the mind and the body meet, right there at the breath, because that's where all the interesting things are happening.

That's where a lot of things are covered up right now. But interesting things are happening here if you can have the patience and the endurance to use your powers of observation to clear things away to see what's going on deeper inside.