

The Energy You Broadcast

January 18, 2011

Our minds are both like radio transmitters and radio receivers. We send out energy and we pick up energy from outside. A lot of what we pick up from outside is just the reflected energy that we sent out. Send out a lot of greed, and that's what gets reflected back at you. Send out a lot of anger, a lot of delusion: That's what gets reflected back. So you've got to be very careful about what kind of energy you're creating and transmitting right now.

This is why we try to develop thoughts of goodwill, and all the things that are associated with merit: thoughts of generosity, thoughts of gratitude, thoughts of virtue, thoughts of harmlessness. When you're sending out that kind of energy, that's a lot of what gets reflected back. It creates a better atmosphere, a better environment in which to allow the mind to settle down and really get still inside, so that you can send out even better energy.

Of course, you're not the only one picking up on that energy. People around you pick up on it as well. So both for your own sake and for the sake of the people around you, you want to be really careful about what kind of energy you're broadcasting. The more stillness, the more peace in the energy that the mind is creating, the more you'll experience that stillness, experience that peace, even coming in from outside.

The kind of energy that would bounce back, say, as greed: It's not just that you see other people's greed, but also you see objects outside as worthy of greed. When you're sending out anger, you see objects outside as being worthy of anger. The same with delusion and all the other unskillful mental states.

So you've got to turn around and look inside. How can you create a better sense of well-being, a better sense of ease, peace? To genuinely send out thoughts of goodwill, thoughts of stillness, thoughts of tranquility, there's got to be a sense of well-being inside.

This is why we work with the breath: to create a place where the mind can settle down and really feel at home, really feel connected inside. And this is why one of the steps in breath meditation is just that: getting connected. As you get more and more sensitive to the breath energy, you can begin to see areas in which it's cut off. Parts of the body may seem to be breathing in one direction, and other parts are breathing in another direction, working at cross-purposes. They're not nourishing one another. This is why you have to put so much energy into the in-and-out breath: to compensate for the fact that the breath energy in the body

can't nourish itself, or the different parts aren't nourishing one another.

So once you've found a spot in the body that feels good and you learn how to maintain that spot, try to see if there are other parts of the body that resonate with it, that have a similar kind of energy, a similar kind of well-being. If they seem isolated from one another, trace out the routes by which they might get connected. As soon as they connect, think of them energizing one another. This way, when there's less struggle, less effort put into the breathing, there's a greater and greater sense of ease.

This is something that requires a really fine touch, because we're working with ease here. If you manipulate it too much, it turns the ease into dis-ease, and you find yourself spreading dis-ease around, which doesn't help anything at all. So you have to be sensitive. You have to be gentle with the different energies in the body.

When the good energies do connect, try to be gentle in maintaining them. Try to keep your balance so that you're not pushing things around too much. Sometimes you get the idea that if you move the energy from one part of the body to another part of the body, it's going to have a healing effect, and then you overdo it. You come out with a headache. Things feel tight, constrained in one part of the body or another.

This is where patience comes in. Ease is something that can't be pushed around too much. A sense of fullness: You've got to be careful with that, too.

Try to develop a taste for the subtle pleasures of the breathing, the subtle pleasures of the breath. If you find that you need more energy, okay, focus on that. But again, don't push it too much.

You're feeling your way into a sense of well-being that then creates an energy that radiates out, without your having to think about it radiating out at all. It radiates on its own.

Just like the brainwaves in the body: They say they can measure your brainwaves in any part of the body. Hook up the electrodes even to your little toe, and you can find the brainwaves there.

So as you take care of your own mind, you're also taking care of the energy that you're sending out. As I said, the energy you send out will influence what gets reflected back at you.

So give all your attention to this inner experience of the body, this inner experience of the breath. Listen to its ins and outs and you'll find they have a lot of good things to tell you—if you're sensitive to what they want to say. If you have a lot of preconceived notions about what they should be saying or what they should be doing, it's going to get in the way. All you'll see is what you're projecting. That's what gets reflected back to you.

So each time you meditate, come to it with an attitude that you're going to learn, you're going to explore. And as you project that curiosity, that opens the opportunity for good things to come back.