

# Practice Note: Can You Believe in the Simplicity of Breathing?

**Transcribed and edited from a short talk by Gil Fronsdal on July 14, 2010**

I'm fond of these Wednesdays because they make the day simple. At least, the morning is pretty simple – just sit here, and not much has to happen. I think simplicity is one the important teachers in Buddhism. Not that everything has to be simple, but to use the experience of simplicity as a reference point can be a wonderful teacher to help us question and to look more honestly at when the mind makes our life more complicated than perhaps it needs to be.

One of the interesting areas to look at is the role that beliefs have in making our minds preoccupied. We're sitting here, and generally the idea is to be very simple – just be here when you're sitting, to be here and follow your breath – to be in the present moment in a simple way. As you do walking meditation, just very simply be in the present moment with your steps as you walk. What you tend to find out is how much the mind doesn't do that. The mind has its own thoughts and preoccupations. So then we let go and come back, let go and come back.

It's also useful to look at the preoccupations. An interesting angle to look at this from is: what are we believing in that we are preoccupied? What do we believe is going to be accomplished by thinking and thinking, planning, remembering? Do we believe in the value of thinking, of imagining, visualizing? Chances are the mind believes in something; it believes there's a value there.

In order to challenge yourself, see if you can believe in your breathing more than you believe in your thinking. During this morning, really believe in your breathing. Believe in the steps as you walk. Just believe – believe that this is really the important thing.

It's so simple and see how you complicate things. If your mind is not preoccupied but it's involved in commentary, or interpretation of this moment, then you're believing in the commentary, interpretations, evaluations: "I'm not doing very well." "This is great." Whatever. Do you believe in that activity of the mind?

There's so little activity of the mind that we have to actually do. The idea in meditation is to simplify the activity of the mind so as to know that we can experience some peace, a profound sense of wellbeing, not needing to complicate our lives with thoughts,

beliefs, past, future – all kinds of things the mind gets caught up in.

For this morning, see if you can believe in simplicity. See if you can believe in just breathing, being present for your breath and trusting yourself to your breathing. Or when you do walking meditation, be with your feet as they walk – the simplicity of the feet walking.

If you can't do it, then become interested in why not – interested in what you believe in.