Morning Instructions - Intentions

Guy Armstrong · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Guy Armstrong · 2:48

I mentioned at the beginning that intention is a really powerful factor of mind. After mindfulness, wisdom, concentration, and perhaps loving-kindness, I'd say it's the most powerful factor of mind. This is surprising because, based on this little exercise, it wasn't like knocking you over the head, right?

Intention is the root of karma. The intention behind our actions of thought, speech, and body is what gives them their moral weight and leads ultimately to our increasing happiness or increasing unhappiness. Intention is the influencer of our future well-being.

It is said that when we speak and act from a wholesome intention, this will lead directly to happiness. Speaking and acting from an unwholesome intention will lead to some kind of suffering for us. It is very important that you start to be in the driver's seat of your whole life when you take hold of intention. You shape your future happiness or unhappiness with this factor of intention.

The wholesome roots of action are non-greed, non-aversion, and non-delusion. Put another way, we could say it's generosity, loving-kindness, and wisdom. When you negate greed, it turns into generosity. When you negate hatred, it turns into loving-kindness. When you negate delusion, it turns into wisdom. If we keep our actions of body, speech, and mind aligned with non-greed, non-hatred, and non-delusion, this is what leads to our long-term happiness. This is the principle of karma, and that's why this factor of intention is so important.

In daily life, the first thing we start to notice is when there's an unwholesome intention arising, and then we have a choice to restrain it. Before I found meditation, when an urge would come, action would just follow. Once I started to meditate, the urge would come, I'd notice it, and I could restrain the unwholesome ones. This is a great skill and a great contributor to your own happiness and others' happiness.

Being able to tune into intention in this simple way—changing posture, opening doors—is the lead-in to directing our life's outcome. It all starts here, really simply.

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