



University Learning in Schools

RE

Buddhists in the World



Lesson 2 Handouts

Sheet 2A The Noble Eightfold Path



1. **Right vision**, or understanding: understanding that life always involves change and suffering; realising that following the Noble Eightfold Path is the way to overcome suffering and be really happy.
2. **Right emotion**: committing oneself to wholeheartedly following the path.
3. **Right speech**: speaking in a positive and helpful way; speaking the truth.
4. **Right action**: living an ethical life according to the precepts.
5. **Right livelihood**: doing work that doesn't harm others and is helpful to them.
6. **Right effort**: thinking in a kindly and positive way.
7. **Right mindfulness**: being fully aware of oneself, other people, and the world around you.
8. **Right meditation**, or concentration: training the mind to be calm and positive in order to develop wisdom.

The Dharmachakra is a Buddhist symbol for the Dharma. It usually has eight spokes to represent the teaching of the Noble Eightfold Path.

Although the 'Path' has eight separate steps, they are not intended to be followed one after another. The Buddhist way of life involves all of them and enables Buddhists to train themselves in every aspect of their lives.

All Buddhists should strive to follow the Noble Eightfold Path, whether they live in a remote monastery in Tibet or in a flat in the middle of a city. How do Buddhists follow the Eightfold Path?

On the next page are some quotes from Buddhists who are trying to follow this ancient Buddhist teaching in a modern setting.

Which of these are concerned with ETHICS – and why?

Which of these would help with MEDITATION? Why? Of these, which are to do with TRAINING THE MIND? And which to do with DEVELOPMENT OF COMPASSION?

ANSWER USING PART OF THE QUOTATIONS, in order to give evidence for your reasoning.

RIGHT VISION

Before I can practise Buddhism at all, I have to have some idea that there's something to work towards. When I look at the Buddha image I remember that I, too, can be like that. I can become happier, wiser and more compassionate. I too want to gain Enlightenment. That's my goal, my vision.

RIGHT EMOTION

It's no good wanting Enlightenment in my head, if, in my heart, I can't be bothered. One way I can motivate myself is by meditating. I can also inspire myself by reading some Dharma books.

RIGHT SPEECH

We have a strong effect on others through our speech and communication. I need to speak kindly and truthfully. If I tell the truth, especially when it isn't easy, I can develop honesty and fearlessness. By being truthful I do myself honour....What a challenge it is to be really honest and always kind.

RIGHT ACTION

We're engaged in actions all day. Buddhism says that the key to Right Action is intention. Behind every action is a state of mind. If I catch myself in a negative state of mind, I can choose to act differently and to practise Right Action.

RIGHT MINDFULNESS

Often we are not aware of how we are feeling or what we are doing. If we can become more aware we can live in the present moment and transform our lives. Staying aware is a practice that can lead to happier states of mind. Instead of rushing through a job, I can slow down and even enjoy what I am doing. Right mindfulness makes the most of the present moment.

RIGHT EFFORT

I can find myself in different states of mind from one moment to the next. What can I do about this? My states of mind can affect what I do. So I need to ask myself through the day: 'What state am I in?' Then I can change that by making more effort - I can change how I think and feel. With Right Effort I can develop a more positive and brighter outlook.

RIGHT LIVELIHOOD

We try to avoid any kind of work that might increase suffering in the world. We don't want to harm the environment, animals or humans. So we avoid work involving weapons, tobacco or alcohol. Instead, I want to find work that can help the world. I like to work with other Buddhists because it keeps me on my toes. It's not easy to forget the Noble Eightfold path when your mates are practising it too.

RIGHT MEDITATION

I begin my day with meditation. Why do I meditate? I can only transform myself in all the other steps of the path if I know myself well. Meditation helps me to develop calm and peaceful states of mind. Then I can begin to see myself more clearly. With the help of meditation, I can gradually progress through ever higher states of mind along the path. I can get nearer and nearer to Enlightenment, even if it takes much effort and many lifetimes.

SHEET 2B RESPONSES TO MEDITATION

How might the meditation techniques you experienced/observed link to the Eightfold path?

Stilling the Breath	Meditating with Mantras	Metta Bhavana	Walking Meditation

SHEET 2C

Find somebody who.....

<p>Can tell you something about their experience of watching-the-breath meditation</p>	<p>Can define Samatha meditation</p>	<p>Can suggest why meditation may be useful to non-Buddhists</p>
<p>Can tell you a feature of samatha meditation</p>	<p>Can tell you the difference between samatha and vipassana meditation</p>	<p>Can explain why meditation is key to the eightfold path</p>
<p>Can tell you what Vipassana meditation means</p>	<p>Can give you an example of vipassana meditation</p>	<p>Can explain how the parable of the Arrow suggests a benefit of meditation</p>
<p>Can explain why meditation links to the four noble truths</p>	<p>Can give an opinion on whether or not meditation is a key practice within Buddhism</p>	<p>Can remember what <i>om mane padme hum</i> means.</p>

Sheet 2D

The story of the two arrows

Physical pain is inevitable but the mental pain is optional. (story from the Sallatha Sutta)

*When touched with a feeling of pain, the **uninstructed** run-of-the-mill **person** sorrows, grieves, & laments, beats his breast, becomes distraught. So he **feels two pains, physical & mental**. Just as if **they were to shoot a man with an arrow and, right afterward, were to shoot him with another one, so that he would feel the pains of two arrows**; in the same way, when touched with a feeling of pain, the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person sorrows, grieves, & laments, beats his breast, becomes distraught. So **he feels two pains, physical & mental...**"*

*"Now, the **well-instructed disciple** of the noble ones, when touched with a feeling of pain, does not sorrow, grieve, or lament, does not beat his breast or become distraught. So he feels one pain: physical, but not mental. Just as if **they were to shoot a man with an arrow and, right afterward, did not shoot him with another one, so that he would feel the pain of only one arrow**. In the same way, when touched with a feeling of pain, the well-instructed disciple of the noble ones does not sorrow, grieve, or lament, does not beat his breast or become distraught. **He feels one pain: physical, but not mental...**"*

Commentary from Buddhist Bodhipaksha

Wiser responses to pleasure and pain

Now, the well-instructed disciple of the noble ones, when touched with a feeling of pain, does not sorrow, grieve, or lament, does not beat his breast or become distraught. So he feels one pain: physical, but not mental.

Just as if they were to shoot a man with an arrow and, right afterward, did not shoot him with another one, so that he would feel the pain of only one arrow.

In the same way, when touched with a feeling of pain, the well-instructed disciple of the noble ones does not sorrow, grieve, or lament, does not beat his breast or become distraught. He feels one pain: physical, but not mental.

With the practice of mindfulness, we are aware that we are having a painful experience (this may be either physical or mental — the sutta here is just following through the image of an arrow, which is by definition a physical pain). So we are aware that this experience is happening, and we are aware that it is an experience, and that it's not inherently a part of us.

We recognize that the pain arises, exists, and passes away. And we don't generate a cascade of reactive thoughts and emotions, which lead to yet more pain.

POEM FROM SIDDHARTHA GOTAMA

The discerning person, learned,
Doesn't sense a (mental) feeling of pleasure or pain:
This is the difference in skilfulness
Between the sage and the person run-of-the-mill.

For a learned person
Who has fathomed the Dhamma,
Clearly seeing this world and the next,
Desirable things don't charm the mind,
Undesirable ones bring no resistance.

His clinging
And rejection are scattered,
Gone to their end,
Do not exist.

Knowing the dustless, sorrowless state,
He discerns rightly,
Has gone, beyond becoming,
To the Further Shore.

Equanimity — not clinging to experiences nor resisting them — is key to spiritual practice in Buddhism. We can't avoid painful experiences, but we can learn to avoid reacting to them by giving rise to further painful thoughts and emotions.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the message of the story of the Arrow?
2. Do you agree with it? Why, or why not? Give TWO developed reasons for your answer. Include at least one quote from the texts (either the Sallatha Sutta, or the poem).
3. Do you think that it is possible to practise parts of the eightfold path only, or are they all inter-connected? Why, or why not? Give THREE developed reasons for your answer.