

HOMEWORK

Print off a copy of the “Right Thinking” worksheet.

When reactive thinking arises, (start with instances of repetitive thinking, easier to catch), do a worksheet. Or review the incident with the following principles

- 1) **What am I doing?** (return your attention to the task at hand)
- 2) **What do I think is true?**
- 3) **Am I sure?** (is the information I am, going on truly the big picture? What might I be missing?)
- 4) **Hello, perception (habit energy):** what was my past reaction to this or a similar situation? What ‘becoming’ is being activated now?
- 5) **Find wholesome intention:** bringing renunciation, good will, and non harm to play.

An important piece about reactive (repetitive) thinking: **It happens because there is an underlying emotion that is not being felt.** The force of the resisted emotion is what keeps the thoughts spinning.

Quieting reactive thinking patterns is not found by ‘solving’ the situation. The thinking naturally dies away with emotional presence. Keep this in mind and we will explore this next session.

Two classes ago we looked at wholesome and unwholesome roots. This is about noticing, noticing what motives our thoughts, feelings and actions. Noticing what motivates us can bring more skillful choice into what we say, do, and choose. We will be focusing on that next when we look at the sila part of the Eightfold Path. This is not about cutting off or fixing unwholesome roots, it is about seeing when they are present and not following their outflow. It is possible then to invoke wholesome intentions: renunciation - good will - non harm.

In our last meeting, we looked at 'falling short'. This sense of inadequacy is really another stating of the second Noble Truth, this suffering is not because of who we are, but because we resist, don't accept who we are.

Here's the radical premise of this path:

This inner condemnation is not because there is anything wrong with us. It is because we believe in an ego ideal, a vision of supposed perfection that fights how things actually are.

Instead of questioning this belief, we question our self worth. The dharma path is to begin to question our beliefs and our thinking instead of ourselves.

SKILLFUL (right) THINKING

Right view is understanding what to trust and have faith in, and what to not trust.

TWO PRINCIPLES:

1) Don't trust your perception as reality. We all need perception to navigate life, otherwise we'd all end up wrapped around telephone poles. That said, it's important to understand that perceptions are an encounter with experience, not truth.

A) **Where there is perception, there is deception.** TNH (Thich Nat Hanh) writes about how the seeds in our unconscious storehouse (previous perceptions and experiences) distort reality. We looked at this in the fundamentals class with the Cycle of Dependent Origination, or Life's Little Treadmill. Each time we follow the cycle, we 'become' the outflow of following the push and pull of Pleasant and Unpleasant. We 'become' the person who believes in the perception formed by Pleasant and Unpleasant. Thus, our perceptions are distorted by our afflictions.

B) The illusory mark in perceptions: 3 marks distort our views. (this refers to the 3 marks of existence, we will talk about that in more detail later). Here TNH is talking about living from the dualistic mind. Living in duality, in the ego-identified mind that sees oneself as separate, with a me/you, inside/outside split, distorts everything. We

don't see things 'as they are'. This is huge, but hard to understand at the beginning of the path.

- touching reality deeply is the way to liberate ourselves. Notice in meditation how the mind compulsively contracts around objects, such as thoughts, which is why objects draw us out of our focus in meditation. It interprets the object in a distorted way as it draws assumptions according to past conditioning.
- When we soften this, stop trying to manipulate or suppress things, objects can be left to their natural functioning. We are able to sink back into open awareness. The contracting begins to subside, and open receptivity and silence begin to shine. This resting in awareness is the opening up to non-dual oneness, beyond the small mind.
- In open awareness, we experience the suchness of things, beyond concepts or ideas.

C) Our input is partial, incomplete. TNH: “am I sure?” We only see a tiny part of reality, not the whole situation. We are the blind men and the elephant. We necessarily make decisions based on partial information, so skillful to understand another perception is equally possible.

- With right understanding and right view, we see all views are 'wrong' views because they are views.
- Right view is the absence of all views, or, practically, taking our views with a grain of salt.

2) Don't trust your thinking.

A) All thinking is 'wrong' thinking because it is thinking. Understanding that our thinking is conditioned by the unconscious, past experience and perception, and does not see things as they are. We take our thinking, especially reactive thinking, more lightly.

B) Looking at thinking, especially reactive thinking, we know it drains a great deal of energy, but does not actually solve anything. So right thinking means not following reactive thinking patterns, but abandoning them.

C) TNH: important to have the mind be aligned with what one is doing in the moment. When we aren't in touch with the moment, we are not in touch with reality.

The point of insight practice isn't so much trying to 'shut down' the ego or beat it into oblivion. It is noticing it when it is happening and not following it, because we know it is suffering and does not lead to truth. Reactive thinking is not the way to truth.

Right view is the understanding to not automatically trust the thinking that says "I am thinking this, it must be true". It does not stand up to close observation. Right thinking is to understand the limitations of thinking.

When the mind moves in an unbidden way, this ego-constructing process is happening. You don't need to figure out all the depths, or analyze it. Just see and don't follow it. Come back to the moment.

When you do, the suffering ends. There's just what's happening in the moment.

After the Buddhist light bulb jokes, the question is:

How many thoughts, or circular, repetitive rounds of thinking does it take to solve a problem?

- A. it needs to come up 5 times in the mind.
- B. it needs to come up 50 times in the mind.
- C. 10 times to come up in the mind, plus arguing inside why you are right 5 times, judging it 7 times as completely wrong, and complaining to at least 2 people, and then 20 times worrying about what might happen?

Much simpler to understand repetitive thinking is not effective and try something new. Enjoy the Right Thinking Worksheets.