



Eightfold Path: Right Discipline: Speech, Action, and Livelihood

Virtue is "*right*" because it leads to happiness and freedom for oneself and others. **Nonvirtue** is "*wrong*" because it leads to confusion and suffering.

Five lay precepts: refraining from: killing, stealing, lying, sexual misconduct, and intoxication

Ten Virtuous Actions

Protecting life

Generosity

Sexual right conduct

Truthfulness

Gentle speech

Reconciling speech

Intention, meaningful speech

Kindness and benefiting others

generosity

Right view

Ten Nonvirtuous Actions

Killing

Stealing

Sexual misconduct

Lying

Harsh speech

Divisive speech

Idle chatter

Hatred, malice, ill-will

Greed, coveting, grasping

Wrong View

☸ Reflect on the the [Five Mindfulness Trainings](#) from Thich Nhat Hanh's Order of Interbeing.

☸ Reflect on the [Delusions and other forms of confusion](#) that lead to wrong action.

Three forms of Dharma practice

Study (hearing and studying): The thinking mind analyzes and uses logic to gain a conceptual understanding of Dharma teachings.

Reflection (contemplation): A teaching is boiled down to a pith word or phrase and tested experientially by the heart and planted in memory.

Meditation: Cultivating what is understood in direct experience. Words and concepts may arise, but the cultivating and internalizing are not dependent on concepts.

Meditation: Abiding and seeing the conflicting emotions (*kleshas*) that lead to undisciplined behavior

- ☸ Which of your behaviors feel driven by physical or emotional compulsion?
- ☸ When the compulsion or behavior arises, is there an element of confusion or conflict?
- ☸ Do these behaviors create difficulties for yourself or others?

Step 1. Sit for a few minutes resting attention in the breathing body.

Step 2. Bring to mind a pattern of mental, verbal, or physical behavior that causes difficulty in your life. It could be something you don't intend to do, but find yourself repeatedly doing. Or it might be something you keep intending to do, but haven't been able to.

Step 3. Push on the behavior by imagining behaving differently. Observe the arising of reactions in you. Open to the sensations, feelings, stories, and impulses.

- How does it feel in the body?
- How does it feel emotionally?
- What stories does it tell? What demands does it make? Don't engage in the story, just listen to the story and feel the energy underneath it.
- How does the whole thing feel as it arises? How does it feel as it subsides?

Step 4. Breathe into the whole experience of the habitual reactions. Use meditative stability and clarity to directly experience how the patterns operate.

Don't look for solutions or alternatives to the behavior that causes suffering. Sitting in presence is the alternative. Take refuge in pure awareness and compassion.

The conceptual mind tries to analyze and manage emotional reactions, but again and again simply rest attention in the experience of the reaction itself. As you cultivate a capacity to do that, you'll see more clearly the actual nature of the reaction, and know how unintended behaviors are deeply rooted in the confusion and energy of the *kleshas*. Stability and insight are essential for wisdom.

Step 5. To end the session, drop all effort and rest in open awareness for a few minutes. Then dedicate the effort and virtue of your practice to the genuine benefit of all beings.

Step 6. Carrying the practice onto the path. Several times every day, turn toward and affirm the value of awareness and compassion, Right View and Right Intention.

"Although we may not always live in a steady state of loving feeling, through practice we can learn to touch it many times a day." (Joseph Goldstein)

Reflections drawn from Gregory Kramer's Noble Eightfold Path Scan:

Speech

- ☸ Is what I'm about to say true? Beneficial? Timely? Kind?
 - ☸ For whose harm or benefit am I writing this email, blog post, or other communication?
 - ☸ Am I engaging in gossip or divisive speech?
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Action

- ☸ Am I acting with care for others, creating safety and not harm?
 - ☸ How does this action impact my own mind?
 - ☸ How might this action impact other people or my relationships with them?
 - ☸ What might the social and environmental impact of this action be?
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Livelihood

- ☸ How am I using the requisites of food, clothing, shelter, and medicine?
 - ☸ Do my current professional activities reflect my values?
 - ☸ What is the moral provenance of the money I'm earning?
 - ☸ What is the impact of how I'm spending money?
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Further study and reflection: Gregory Kramer, *A Whole-Life Path*, chapters 6, 7, and 8

"You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make." (Jane Goodall)