INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

DIDACTIC REFERENCES – SECONDARY LEVEL II

OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to . . .

1. explain Buddha's teachings on the Four Noble Truths.
2. understand the path from suffering to liberation and enlightenment.
3. relate the Buddhist explanations to the reality of their own lives.

Since the content of this topic is very extensive, this lesson is designed as a double lesson.

INTRODUCTION

Material 1 provides the impulse for the question of a happy life with the photo of a happy old woman. The other questions encourage reflection on the conditionality of happiness. The students express themselves freely in the plenary.

EXERCISE 1

Worksheet 1 introduces the Buddha's teaching on the First Noble Truth "There is Suffering". Working in groups, students develop an understanding of the three types of suffering using the questions on **Answers to WS 1.** In depth, they reflect on the suffering of ignorance. The **Answers to WS 1** offer possible answers. Open questions are discussed in plenary.

INTRODUCTION, optional

As a preparation for the Second Noble Truth, a small experiment is useful. The students check to what extent they can control thoughts and feelings and whether they can maintain a happy state at will. The teacher gives guidelines:

Try to just be happy! Try that for a minute. Observe what is going on in your mind! Close your eyes and make a line on a piece of paper for every thought or deviant feeling!

As a result, it becomes clear that many different thoughts and also feelings appear in the mind, whether one wants them to or not. An exchange about this experience takes place in a class discussion. This step prepares the understanding of the Second Noble Truth.

EXERCISE 2

Worksheet 2 provides explanations of the Buddha's Second Noble Truth, "There is a Cause of Suffering." The central Buddhist concept of fundamental ignorance is introduced and presented in such a way that the students can grasp the concept, which is not so easy to understand. The related tasks guide the students to deal with the ego-centeredness and the resulting disturbing feelings. The students discuss in the group and fill in the corresponding terms in the chart.

SUPPLEMENT

Worksheet 3 deals with the well-known "story with the hammer" (Watzlawick, Paul, "The situation is hopeless, but not serious", New York: Norton (1983) pp.39) as a stimulus to think about the concatenation of thought processes and the resulting emotions and misbehavior. The pupils relate the story to the Buddhist statements about the cause of suffering. They find possible solutions to end this chain of projections. **Answers to WS 3** give possible answers.

EXERCISE 3

The text of **Worksheet 4** is about liberation and enlightenment. Here the Buddha's teaching of the Third Noble Truth, "There is an end to suffering," is introduced. The students deal with the text by means of the tasks. **Answers to WS 4** give possible answers.

EXERCISE 4

Worksheet 5 contains an overview of Buddha's Fourth Noble Truth "There is a Way to the End of Suffering". Students read the text and relate the Buddhist explanations to Watzlawick's "Story with a Hammer." They prepare a roleplay in partner work and playfully try out different variants of a continuation of the story. **Answers to WS 5** give examples of thought processes and actions.

APPLICATION

Different possibilities are played through and some of them are presented in plenary.

As a result, it should be understood that a conscious decision to weigh the consequences of one's ac-

tions is an essential step. Including others in difficult situations by acting respectfully or kindly rather than reflexively deflecting is the key to happiness-bringing behavior. Detaching from fixation on self is a core message of the Buddhist Four Noble Truths. The topic is rounded off with a meditation, as it is a means/method on this path. The topic thus finds its conclusion.

Note: Buddhist meditation and its effects will be introduced in a separate lesson (No. 9). At this point a first simple understanding is sufficient.