WORKSHEET 3B

THE FIFTH LIBERATING ACTION

MEDITATION

All people desire happiness and want to avoid suffering. Although this is a universal fact, an outside observer would sometimes have to assume the opposite based on our behavior. Neither schools nor parents can teach their children complete and lasting happiness because they do not have it within themselves.

Every strong experience of happiness, no matter what the circumstances, can be traced back to the same state of mind: One dwells in the here and now; past, future, and other places play no role at this very moment, we just let them go by.

Buddhist meditation is a method of making this state permanent, beyond the ever-changing feelings, thoughts and events. The inner freedom to act, rather than simply to react, grows. This creates space in one's own mind. The more often one practices meditation, the more able one becomes in everyday life to avoid that which leads to suffering and instead do that which benefits others and oneself.

EXERCISES

An experiment: Sit up straight, relax, and focus on your breath as it comes and goes at the tip of your nose. Your entire attention is on the airflow coming and going at the tip of your nose. With each inhale and exhale, count: 1, 2, 3 ... until you reach 21.

Buddhist meditation is not about having no thoughts or achieving better thoughts. When thoughts arise, you recognize them and let them move on. When you get distracted by thoughts, you return to the breath without getting angry.

- Did you manage to stay with the airflow and counting?
- What were you thinking about? About something in the future, about something in the past, about this moment?
- Do you think that you also have so many thoughts in everyday life, you just don't notice them? Could there be a connection between your thoughts and actions?
- Now try to concentrate and not think about a hippo for a while.
- Did you succeed?
- If not, what does that mean for everyday life?
- Are there situations in which you wish you had more distance from feelings?
- If so, which ones?
- Briefly note your observations.