5 THE TEN USEFUL AND TEN HARMFUL ACTIONS

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THE TEN USEFUL AND TEN HARMFUL ACTIONS

All beings want to have happiness and avoid suffering. To achieve this, Buddha gave appropriate advice to live a happy and meaningful life for oneself and others.

Through positive actions, good impressions are built up in the mind, leading to deep confidence and the development of all abilities and qualities.

Negative actions are performed out of basic ignorance and dualistic view because one does not realize that ultimately everything we do, think and say reflects back on oneself.

Buddhist teachings on cause and effect are aimed at mindful and conscious use of body, speech and mind. In Buddhist meditation, one practices creating enough distance from disturbing feelings and confused concepts so that stuck habitual patterns accumulated through many lifetimes dissolve. One gains more and more distance from everything constricting and disturbing, and becomes more and more able to experience the fearlessness, joy, and boundless compassion of enlightenment.

Therefore, on the level of the body, Buddha gave the following advice:
1. protect life
2. be generous
3. practice sexual behavior that creates happiness

In contrast, one should
1. not kill
2. not take what has not been given to you
3. avoid any form of sexual coercion (of others)

On the level of speech, which can reach a lot of people and has a correspondingly great effect, Buddha gave the following advice:
1. tell the truth
2. create harmony
3. speak calmly and confidently
4. speak sensibly

In contrast, one should
1. not lie
2. not conspire and slander
3. not speak rudely and hurtfully
4. not talk senselessly

Often people are not aware of the effects of negative speech. For example, lying damages any relationship of trust and also confuses one's own mind. The biggest lie would be the one about a non-existent spiritual realization. A "false" guru builds up negative karma and, according to Buddha, blocks the development of his followers for many lifetimes. Intriguing and backbiting leads to rebirth in completely obscure circumstances and unfavorable living conditions. Meaningless chatter makes people dumb and in the long run one remains unappreciated.

On the level of the mind, Buddha gave the following advice:
1. be frugal and content
2. be benevolent
3. develop the correct view that cause and effect work without exception

In contrast, one should
1. avoid greed and do not envy
2. do not be malicious and hateful
3. not to have wrong views about cause and effect

Malice has a particularly negative effect. It arises from rejection and fear. One can hardly stand to see others doing well and reacts with reluctance and even anger. Hatred and anger destroy all good impressions in the mind in an instant.

Finally, having wrong views means that you think you can trick cause and effect and be right with a truth of your own making. A wrong view is also shown in the assumption that everything experienced is real and permanent.

Disturbing feelings and sorrowful actions result from the fundamental ignorance, because an independently existing I, which is separated from the outside world, is experienced. Once this dualistic view is overcome, liberation is attained. The meaning of Buddha's teaching and the goal of all Buddhist meditation is to dissolve being trapped in this dualistic delusion.

The more body, speech and mind work together, the stronger the results.

Breathing and mindfulness meditations of all Buddhist schools help to achieve more distance from inner and outer experiences in this context. The resulting calmness of mind allows the freedom to leave suffering behind and to decide in favor of behavior that brings happiness. One no longer takes things personally and, through the resulting freedom, is able to act meaningfully and powerfully for the good of all beings.

INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

COURSE OF LESSON – SECONDARY LEVEL I

OBJECTIVES

The students will be able to:

- develop their own criteria for good and bad actions.
- explain the Buddhist system of the ten beneficial and harmful actions.
- compare their own criteria with characteristics of Buddhist ethics.

TRANSFER	How can you take meaningful action in everyday life?	**WS 4 and Answers to WS 4** Students reflect on the Buddhist principle of action and its implementation
APPLICATION	Match the headlines.	**WS 3** Students apply Buddhist systematics **Answers to WS 3**
EXERCISE 2	The ten useful and harmful actions. The Buddhist explanation	**WS 2** Students expand the range of actions Results on blackboard/whiteboard
EXERCISE 1	Formulates the fundamental question about human action. Distinguishes between useful and harmful actions with body, speech, mind.	**WS 1, exercises 4 – 6** Students ask research question and differentiate actions Students collect results on board/whiteboard
INTRO	How would you decide? Examples of human action	**WS 1, exercises 1 – 3** Students give answers to case studies

BASIS

What might interest the students about the topic:

- Does my behavior have consequences?
- Which actions lead to happiness?

INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

DIDACTIC REFERENCES – SECONDARY LEVEL I

OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to . . .

1. develop their own criteria for good and bad actions.
2. explain the Buddhist system of ten beneficial and harmful actions.
3. compare their own criteria with characteristics of Buddhist ethics.

The lesson enables the students to reflect on their own ideas of useful and harmful actions. In a second step, Buddhist values are integrated. The students learn to identify similarities and differences between their own and Buddhist values.

INTRODUCTION

With the help of real-life thought experiments, the students are challenged to take a position on ethical problems. After the individual work, the students discuss the different approaches to the problems in partner work, also considering the effects on themselves and others. For this purpose, the **Exercises 1 to 3 on Worksheet 1** will guide them.

EXERCISE 1

Impulse: "What basic question did we just answer in different ways?"
The teacher asks to first formulate an inquiry question about human action in partner work, which is then presented in plenary, whereupon an appropriate question is recorded on the board or whiteboard (**Worksheet 1**, **Exercises 4 and 5**).

Possible questions:

1. "What is right action and what is wrong action?"
2. "What morals are important to me?"
3. "When is an action good, when is it bad?
4. "Should intention play a role in evaluating an action? If so - what intentions are useful/ harmful?

The teacher should choose an inquiry question that allows for a collection of characteristics of positive and negative actions. The students now find examples of other positive and negative actions (**Worksheet 1, Task 6**), which they write down on small cards. The results are sorted on the board/ whiteboard.

New differentiating categories are introduced:

- with the body
- with speech
- with the mind.

This will lead to the Buddhist content.

EXERCISE 2

In this phase the Buddhist system is integrated into the previous concept of the students. This is done through **Worksheet 2**. The tasks ask the students to check which areas have not been thought of so far. In a comparison possible similarities and differences of the previous view with Buddha's answers are named. Case studies with corresponding concrete actions are written on new moderation cards and added to the whiteboard or blackboard. Old as well as new cards are arranged according to the system on **Worksheet 2**.

APPLICATION

The task format **Worksheet 3** in the form of headlines is intended to motivate the students to apply what they have just learned. The students assign actions to the Buddhist categories, thus securing their understanding. This can be done in individual or partner work. The **Answers to WS 3** indicate the correct solutions.

TRANSFER

At the end of the lesson, **Worksheet 4** returns to the beginning of the lesson. The students understand that it is about their own life. The Buddhist model is played through again, the students are free to express criticism and skepticism or agreement.

From the previous inquiry question, a Buddhist principle of action is formulated in partner work, e.g.:

"Always act in a way that benefits as many sentient beings as possible for as long as possible."

The students apply this maxim to concrete examples. In doing so, they recognize that Buddha's teachings can be applied to their own lives through personal responsibility. Strengthened by motivation, mindfulness and training, their own situation is stabilized and their own freedom to implement useful actions in life grows. The reference to

Worksheet 4 on the importance of meditation is not further developed (see lesson 9). The examples can be presented in plenary or collected by the teacher. The **Answers to WS 4** offer suggestions.

WORKSHEET 1

MIND GAMES: HOW WOULD YOU DO?

EXERCISES

1. . Imagine the following situations. How would YOU act? Explain your reasoning on a sheet of paper.

   a. You find a wallet on the street with ID cards and 300 $ in cash. Do you return it in full?

   b. During recess, your classmates are teasing another classmate about his greasy hair. They encourage you to join in. What do you decide?

   c. A classmate stands out by consuming large amounts of alcohol in a short time at parties. He feels cool because he can drink so much and increases the amount. He brags and sees himself as a winner. He challenges you to keep up with him and taunts those who don't. Are you drinking with him?

2. Now go through one situation after another with your partner, discussing your personal proposed actions and rationales.

3. Now include your emotional state after the action and also the consequences for your fellow human beings.

4. Formulates basic questions about "human action".

5. Present them in the plenary.

6. Write down further actions on sticky notes and fix them on the moderation wall/board, differentiating between positive and negative actions. Also differentiate whether the actions are performed with the body, with speech, or with the mind.

WORKSHEET 2

THE TEN BENEFICIAL AND HARMFUL ACTIONS IN BUDDHISM

All beings want to experience happiness and avoid suffering as much as possible. Buddha gave advice on how to achieve this.

Positive actions build up good impressions in the mind, leading to deep confidence and the development of liberating abilities and beyond-personal qualities.

Negative actions are performed out of basic ignorance and dualistic view, not realizing that ultimately everything we do, think and say reflects back on oneself. The point of Buddha's teaching and the goal of all Buddhist mediation is to dissolve being trapped in this dualistic delusion.

Buddhist teachings aim at mindful and conscious use of body, speech and mind, so that as much happiness as possible is created for all beings.

In Buddhism, the principle of personal responsibility applies. Everyone is responsible for his or her own actions. Thus, with regard to the law of cause and effect (karma), Buddha gives advice on sensible view and behavior. The underlying motivation also plays an essential role.

	USEFUL ACTIONS	HARMFUL ACTIONS
BODY	protect life	to kill
	be generous	to steal and cheat
	happiness bringing sexual behavior	harmful sexual actions
SPEECH	to tell the truth	to lie and abuse trust
	to create harmony	to separate and slander people
	to speak calmly and confidently	to speak rudely and hurtfully
	to speak sensibly	to talk senselessly
MIND	being frugal and content	to be greedy and envious
	to be benevolent	to be malicious
	to develop the right view	to hold wrong views

EXERCISES

1. Which of the Buddha's advice is new and unfamiliar to you?

2. Find similarities and differences to the solutions presented earlier.

3. Add new things to the moderation wall/board.

WORKSHEET 3

WHAT USEFUL AND HARMFUL ACTIONS ARE HIDDEN IN THE HEADLINES?

1. Mark useful actions green, harmful actions red.
2. Match the headlines to the table on **Worksheet 3**, using the letters B 1,2,3 for body, S 1,2,3,4 for speech, and M 1,2,3 for mind.

Scientists find out: Shopping does not make you happy...

Bicycle tires at the train station purposely slit with a knife - Those affected were no longer able to ride home...

German students donate millions: Hospital for children with cancer can finally be built...

Police report: Sexual harassment of minors happens more often than you think. Raising awareness at school is important...

Leo shows leniency! King Leo benevolently waives prosecution for lèse majesté (insulting royalty)

President of Parliament admits: Yes, I made a mistake...

Short-circuited action or premeditation? Frustrated man shoots ex-wife ...

New airbag developed for drivers: Number of fatalities decreases drastically

Doctor educates patients about healthy eating...

Greedy real estate shark takes clients to the cleaners. Family could not bear the costs...

Dissatisfaction factor: Psychological study proves: Excessive expectations do not make you happy

What women want: Emotion and heart must be there! 100 tips: How to become a good lover...

A politician has deceived his voters...

Sect sticks to belief: The world was created from a striped egg 60,000 years ago...

Minister Hellkopf in his speech: 6% illiterates in Germany... We must set the right causes so that our citizens...

Opposition rages! Brazen slander: Minister Meier never took drugs...

Tennis star Bruno and his Bärbel reconciled. Father-in-law mediated...

Dumbing Down the Nation: Too Much Pointless Chatter on Talk Shows...

After the defeat, the coach consoles his team: "You did your best!

New scandal around "Alfons". He insulted King Leo as a nitpicker...

ANSWERS TO WS 3

THE TEN USEFUL AND HARMFUL ACTIONS

WHAT USEFUL AND HARMFUL ACTIONS ARE HIDDEN IN THE HEADLINES?

	USEFUL ACTIONS	HARMFUL ACTIONS
BODY	airbag was developed	partner kills
	pupils donate	real estate shark
	100 tips	harassment of minors
SPEECH	president of parliament admits	politician wishes
	tennis star Bruno	opposition rages
	coach praises	Alfons insulted
	doctor explains	dumbing down of the nation
MIND	shopping	study on dissatisfaction
	king Leo renounces	bicycle tubes punctured
	education minister Hellkopf	sect claims

WORKSHEET 4

USEFUL ACTIONS IN DAILY LIFE



Formulate a principle of action as Buddha advises.

How can you implement this principle of action in your own life? Find concrete examples.

Formulate useful tips for this purpose.

MOTIVATION

MINDFULNESS

TRAINING



Breathing and mindfulness meditations of all Buddhist schools help in this context to achieve more distance to inner and outer experiences. The peace of mind that arises in this way allows the freedom to leave what brings suffering and to decide in favor of behavior that brings happiness. One no longer takes things personally and, through the resulting freedom, is able to act meaningfully and powerfully for the good of all beings.

ANSWERS TO WS 4

USEFUL ACTIONS IN DAILY LIFE



Formulate a principle of action as Buddha advises.

Example: Act mindfully with body, speech and mind.
Act in such a way that happiness arises as much as possible, avoid actions that bring suffering!

How can you implement this principle of action in your own life? Find concrete examples.

Example: Be friendly instead of angry, see the positive in a situation and stop nagging, notice others instead of overlooking them, ...

Formulate useful tips for this purpose.

MOTIVATION – Think of the happiness of as many beings as possible!

MINDFULNESS – Be aware of how you act, what you talk about, and what you think.

TRAINING – Practice what has been difficult for you so far.



Breathing and mindfulness meditations of all Buddhist schools help in this context to achieve more distance to inner and outer experiences. The peace of mind that arises in this way allows the freedom to leave what brings suffering and to decide in favor of behavior that brings happiness. One no longer takes things personally and, through the resulting freedom, is able to act meaningfully and powerfully for the good of all beings.