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 II

OBJECTIVES

The students will be able to:

- understand different interpretations of the ethical term "good".
- develop a personal interpretation of "good action".
- reflect on the ten beneficial and ten harmful actions from Buddhist teachings.
- understand that the implementation of the beneficial actions requires a process of change of inner attitude and practice.

SECURING KNOWLEDGE	Act for the best of all beings.	Students reflect on the Buddhist principle of action and its implementation
APPLICATION	The process of change to happy action.	**WS 3** **Answers to WS 3** Students recognize interdependencies
EXERCISE 2	The ten beneficial and harmful actions. The Buddhist explanation	**WS 2** **Answers to WS 2** Students secure an understanding, also of the effects of their actions
EXERCISE 1	Give a definition of "good action."	**WS 1** **Answers to WS 1** Students recognize contradictions
INTRO	When is an action good? Examples of good action	**WS 1, exercise 1** Students reflect on 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 II

OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to . . .

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2. develop a personal interpretation of "good action".
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4. understand that the implementation of the beneficial actions requires a process of change of inner attitude and practice.

INTRODUCTION

The students are confronted with fictitious quotations in **Worksheet 1**, which use the ethical concept of a "good" action in different ways and stand in the context of a value concept. The students are asked to work individually to grasp and formulate this abstract statement. In this context, they should then also explore the concept of "good" for themselves and illustrate it with their own example.

EXERCISE 1

This problem-oriented approach reveals several possible interpretations. These raise the fundamental question, "When is an action good?" This research question should be discussed in the group, whereby it becomes apparent that agreement is not possible without contradictions. Nevertheless, in plenary a tentative definition is established, which is noted on the board. The **Answers to WS 1** give possible solutions.

EXERCISE 2

Worksheet 2 introduces the Buddhist ethics of the ten beneficial and harmful actions. The students work out a basic understanding in group discussions, also with regard to the division into body, speech and mind. The category of mental action is explored in depth. Likewise, the effects of positive and negative actions are thought through and illustrated with one example each. **(Answers to WS 2)**

APPLICATION

The tasks on **Worksheet 3** encourage you to deepen what you have just learned about Buddhist ethics. It is important to realize that intellectual knowledge alone is not enough to simply change one's actions (e.g., what do you resolve to do on New Year's Eve for the coming year?). Change is a process that requires reflection; one should be clear about how one's actions are motivated and what consequences they may entail. Awareness and repeated practice result in mind training, which is deepened in meditation. The changed inner attitude sets in motion effects that ultimately lead to happiness-creating behavior. Quotes from Buddhist masters illustrate this process. The **Answers to WS 3** offer suggestions.

SECURING KNOWLEDGE

In this last step, the arc to the beginning of the lesson is once again drawn in the plenum. The question of investigation, e.g. "When is an action good?" can now be answered in a knowledgeable and differentiated way and formulated in the Buddhist sense, e.g.: "Always act in such a way that it benefits as many sentient beings as possible for as long as possible." It should also have become clear and evident that motivation, mindfulness and training are necessary for the implementation of useful action in life. That is why in Buddhism, among others, one also meditates, because one can almost never get at habitual tendencies via reason and knowledge.

NOTES

To deepen the ten beneficial and harmful actions, the topic **Karma - Cause and Effect** is suitable. There, among other things, the consequences of one's actions are explained, but also how to remove negative impressions from the mind.

WORKSHEET 1

"WHEN IS AN ACTION GOOD?"

All four statements are about "good" actions. But everyone obviously understands something different by "good.

EXERCISES

1. Formulate a suitable interpretation of the term "good" for each statement.
   Add your personal interpretation of the term "good" and find a suitable example.
2. As a group, find a tentative definition of good action. Can you agree, or are there contradictions?
3. Present your definition in plenary.

An action is "good" for Rosi if it meets the following characteristics:

_____

_____

_____

Rosi: "I do what I feel like doing and what's good for me. Because if everyone thinks of themselves then everyone is taken care of."

An action is "good" for Steffi if it meets the following characteristics:

_____

_____

_____

Steffi: "I lead a good life. Because I base it entirely on the Holy Scriptures."

An action is "good" for Tom if it meets the following characteristics:

_____

_____

_____

Tom: "I am a good person. Because I killed the shooter on a rampage and thus saved at least ten lives."

An action is "good" for Paul if it meets the following characteristics:

_____

_____

_____

Paul: "I am a good person: I take from the the rich and give to the poor."

An action is "good" for me if it meets the following characteristics:

_____

_____

_____

I: „I _____

_____

_____

_____."

ANSWERS TO WS 1

"WHEN IS AN ACTION GOOD?"

All four statements are about "good" actions. But everyone obviously understands something different by "good.

EXERCISE

1. Formulate a suitable interpretation of the term "good" for each statement. Add your personal interpretation of the term "good" and find a suitable example.

An action is "good" for Rosi if it meets the following characteristics:
An action is good if it gives pleasure and joy to the person acting, because: if everyone directs his actions to his own good, everyone is taken care of.

Rosi: "I do what I feel like doing and what's good for me. Because if everyone thinks of themselves then everyone is taken care of."

An action is "good" for Steffi if it meets the following characteristics:
An action is good if it conforms to the views of the Holy Scriptures (or other rules) and would be considered "positive or desirable" by them.

Steffi: "I lead a good life. Because I base it entirely on the Holy Scriptures."

An action is "good" for Tom if it meets the following characteristics:
An action is good when the good of the majority outweighs the suffering of the minority.

Tom: "I am a good person. Because I killed the shooter on a rampage and thus saved at least ten lives."

An action is "good" for Paul if it meets the following characteristics:
An action is good if it strives for social justice. This also allows actions that are against the law.

Paul: "I am a good person: I take from the the rich and give to the poor."

2. In the group, find a tentative definition of good action. Can you agree, or are there contradictions?

"An action is good if ..."
...it is beneficial
...all parties involved are satisfied
...it is in accordance with values
...it does not violate social norms
...its consequences do not lead to suffering
...one does not have a bad conscience...

3. Present your definition to the plenary.

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 to this effect.

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

Buddhist teachings are aimed at mindful and conscious use of body, speech and mind.

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

Read the text and work in the group.

1. Which of the Buddha's advice is new and unfamiliar to you?
2. Explain the category of "mental actions" by showing the consequences of each.
3. Develop ideas about the effects of an action on yourself and those around you, both in the short term and over a longer period of time. Select one positive and one negative example. Present your answers in a Mind Map or table.

ANSWERS TO WS 2

THE TEN BENEFICIAL AND HARMFUL ACTIONS IN BUDDHISM

EXERCISES

Read the text and work in a group.

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

Probably the mental actions are unfamiliar at first.

2. Explain the category of "mental actions" by showing the consequences of each.

be frugal and content: serenity, peace of mind, no competitive pressure,...	being greedy and envious: great dissatisfaction, constant restlessness, great competitive pressure, malaise,...
be benevolent: trusting atmosphere, friendship, relaxation,...	being malicious: distrust, constant tension, lying in wait, gloating, hostility, fighting,...
develop the right outlook: thinking clearly and understanding connections of cause and effect, taking responsibility for one's own steps, learning from experience, basis for sensible decisions,...	have wrong views: not understanding the connection between cause and effect, believing in homespun "truths", basis for wrong decisions, not taking responsibility and not learning from mistakes,...

3. Develop ideas about the effects of an action for yourself and for those around you, both in the short term and over a longer period of time. Choose one positive and one negative example. Present your answers in a mind map or table.

positive example	negative example
being generous	being greedy
for yourself - for your surroundings short-term - for a longer period	

feel rich
satisfaction
friendship develops
good feeling
being relaxed
economic growth
prosperity
joy of giving

feel poor
be dissatisfied
become unpopular
have to compare yourself all the time
never having enough
all skimp
hoarding purchases

WORKSHEET 3

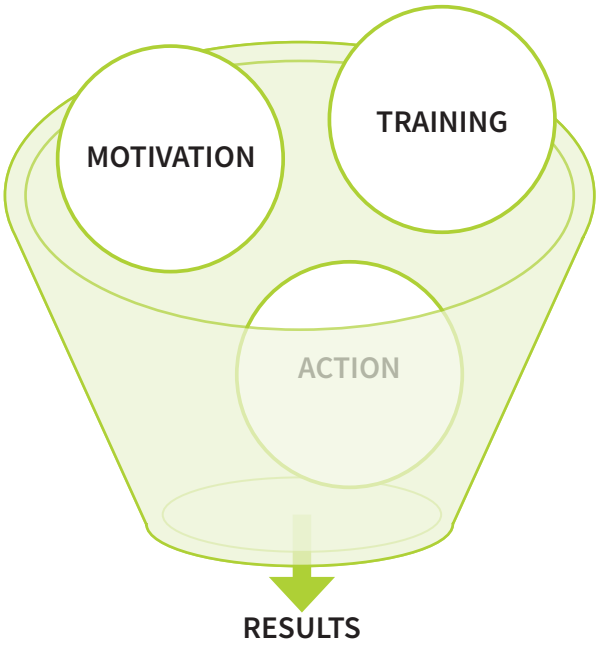
CAUSES AND EFFECTS

EXERCISES

Exchange ideas with a partner.

1. Place the actions in a larger context of effects. How does change occur?
   Think about the interactions between motivation, training, action, and consequences. Create a diagram, comparable to the ones below, and trace the processes of change.





2. Let the quotes from Buddhist masters below resonate with you. Is there a quote you would like to apply?

Whatever joy there is in the world comes from the desire to see others happy, and whatever suffering there is in the world comes from the desire to be happy only oneself. **– Shantideva**

Everything has a cause. The more you understand that negative causes always produce negative effects, the firmer your resolve will be to act positively. **– Shamar Rinpoche**

Our first thought every morning should be the desire to dedicate the day to the welfare of all. **– Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche**

Holding on to anger is like holding on to a glowing piece of coal with the intention of throwing it at someone - the one who gets burned is yourself. **– Buddha**

Hopelessness is a real cause of failure. **– Dalai Lama**

Abilities come from being beneficial to others. - Never give your power to things you don't like - mental impressions of today create your future world. True development happens outside the comfort zone. **– Lama Ole Nydahl**

Thought is the basis of everything. It is important that we grasp each of our thoughts with the eye of mindfulness. **– Thich Nhat Hanh**

ANSWERS TO WS 3

CAUSES AND EFFECTS

EXERCISES

Exchange ideas with a partner.

1. Place the actions in a larger context of effects. How does change occur? Think about the interactions between motivation, training, action, and consequences. Create a diagram, comparable to the ones below, and trace the processes of change.

   Motivation: The basic attitude is to act for the best of all beings with body, speech, mind. One chooses wisely what is useful and avoids what brings suffering.

   Training: In everyday life, this attitude must be implemented. One's own actions are reflected and considered for their consequences. Meditation brings enough distance and clarity so that one does not act reactively and impulsively.

   Action: Every everyday situation is used sensibly and executed in the best possible way. If one makes mistakes, this is not condemned, but seen as a field of experience and development.

   Results: The consequences that occur are not dismissed as coincidence, but the realization is consolidated that everything one thinks, talks, does has consequences, both for oneself and for others.

   Diagram: individual solutions

2. Let the quotes from Buddhist masters below resonate with you.
   Is there a quote you would like to apply?

   This assignment is not about discussion or decision, but about inspiration. The pupils recognize effective connections and allow impulses - or not.