

## Dedicated practitioners Program Homework for July 2002

### Theme: Wise Intention

Wise Intention also called Wise/Right Thought or Right Aspiration is the second factor of the Noble Eightfold Path. It follows the first factor of Wise Understanding because once we understand what brings true happiness and freedom we are inspired to establish a clear vision and intention to create that for ourselves. Intention is the basis of all karma. As the Buddha said, “Intention, I tell you is karma. Intending, one does (creates) karma by way of body, speech and mind.” ([AN VI.63](#)) Through our intentions we create suffering or happiness for ourselves. If our words or actions are based on greed, hatred or delusion they will result in unwholesome karma (suffering). If they are based on non-greed (generosity), non-hatred (kindness) or non-delusion (wisdom) they will result in wholesome karma (happiness). So it is essential to become clear on our intentions if we truly want to be happy and free.

The Buddha encouraged us to continually reflect on our intentions before we speak or act. Why am I doing what I am doing? Will this lead to suffering or happiness?

**Readings:** One aspect of Wise Intention is becoming clear as to our purpose as we practice the spiritual life. Once we get clear what our vision is for practice we can use that as a criterion to see if our words and actions are congruent with this purpose.

The teaching on Clear Comprehension of Purpose is an important one to understand why we are practicing and what really matters to us. Please read Nyanaponika Thera’s words on Clear Comprehension of Purpose, which is from [The Heart of Buddhist Meditation](#) pp. 46-49. Then read Majjhima Nikaya #61 “Advice to Rahula”. This is the Buddha’s advice to his young son about the importance of honesty and continual reflection on the consequences of one’s actions before, during and after they occur.

**Reflections** – Please reflect on the following questions for discussion with your dharma buddy, your mentor and possible discussion in a DPP group:

1. What is your highest intention or purpose that motivates you to practice? (Clear Comprehension of Purpose) Why is this so important to you?
2. What other important motivations do you have for practice?
3. What things are you doing in your life that help you strengthen this intention and purpose? What things are may be undermining your highest purpose?
4. In Buddhist psychology two wholesome mental factors are *hiri* and *ottopam* usually translated as moral shame (feeling unease within us at the thought of doing an unskillful act) and moral dread (feeling unease at the thought of people we respect knowing we’ve done an unskillful act). What internal cues tell you you’re about to do something that

you know you may regret afterward? When are you likely to listen to them? When are you likely not to listen to them?

5. The Buddha talked about wise reflection after speaking or acting unskillfully. How do think wise reflection differs from guilt?

**6. Metta Practice:** The first of the classical metta phrases is “May I (you) be safe from inner and outer harm.” This month as you work with metta, pay particular attention to times when you might be causing yourself inner harm. Bring understanding and compassion to the habits of mind that would make you cause yourself or others harm through your thoughts, words and actions. When you realize that has happened, say this metta phrase to create the wise intention to bring more happiness to yourself by doing things a different way.

**Daily Practice:** Make a commitment with your dharma buddy for some form of daily practice. Make this a month that you keep coming back to your Clear Comprehension of Purpose to see if you are acting in alignment with that highest intention.

The following are suggestions for daily practice weeks 1 through 4.

Week	Focus	Suggestions
1	Wise Intention	Each day when you sit and throughout the day, remind yourself of your main purpose for practicing. Use it as an inspiration and guide to see if your actions align with this highest intention.
2	Hiri and Ottopam	Start to become sensitive to your visceral and mental cues when you are sensing you may be speaking or acting unskillfully.
3	Metta	Work with the phrase, “May I be safe from inner and outer harm.” Practice using this phrase when you are about to do something you might later regret
4	Wise reflection	Pay particular attention to how you feel after you realize you have done something you regret. Practice wise reflection instead of guilt. See what you learn from the experience and re-commit to your wise intention to act with compassion and understanding.