

Welcome to our second Podcast. In this podcast we will begin with a brief introduction of myself, your host, and then follow up with an introduction to the beginning stage practices.

My name is Padmapani and had the good fortune to be a disciple of Venerable Subhadra Bhikku for over 39 years later studying and practicing Oriental Medicine while trying to live the dharma and pass it on to the best of my ability.

Now many years later together with several like-minded individuals from different backgrounds, genders and traditions we have initiated the Path to Wisdom non-profit charitable project. The Path to Wisdom project is a result of our beliefs that truth can be realised by anyone who puts in the time and effort to do so. It transcends, age, gender, culture, belief systems and socio-political systems. If it doesn't then it isn't real truth. To quote Subhadra: "Truth is always ready for anyone, but not everyone is ready for Truth."

Another essential view of ours is that real happiness and real truth are intimately connected. When one realises real truth, happiness is right there. By happiness we mean a deep sense of peace, equanimity, loving kindness and compassion for oneself and all others, without judgement.

But we don't want to convince or persuade anyone of this we want each and every one to experience it for themselves. And to this end we have begun the Path to Wisdom project and foundation.

Let us then begin and introduce you to our preliminary practice.

The first skill is the skill of real open and honest inquiry. For this to be successful I would bring your attention to 2 points of consideration:

1. Try to avoid concerning yourself with things that you cannot influence, it is wasted energy and will also distract you from focusing on what is present.
2. Try to realise when fear is present as it too will be an obstacle to clear heading activity. If fear does appear then rather than trying to avoid or suppress it just observe it and try to let it pass. Think to yourself that, "fear is present and I will let it pass", rather than "I am afraid"

Now onto our first method.

It is based on the practice of 3 questions:

The first question is: "What is the subject of consideration?" This could mean a topic of discussion or considering a response to a question or just a reflection on a feeling or a thought.

The Second question is: "How did you decide that this is the subject of consideration?". This is your rationale for defining the subject in the way that you defined it.

The Third question is: "Why do you believe this?" This is to begin to understand the underlying beliefs or opinions which we may be holding that led to our rationale in defining the subject.

If this sounds a bit confusing, please bear with me as we will spend more time in order to familiarise and hopefully feel comfortable with the method so that you can use it anywhere and anytime. In fact, once you understand it I encourage you to practice it as much as you can on any subject, in your daily life, in your work, in your personal life, so that it becomes easy and fluent and a habit.

Let's review: 3 questions:

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| 1. What | 2. How | 3. Why |
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At first these 3 questions may seem very simple, in fact almost too simple but as we begin to use them, we will be able to see that we begin to peel back layers of perspective to reveal many interesting and even some unexpected beliefs, feelings and thoughts that are influencing our vision of the subject. And not only our vision but even our definition or ability to grasp what we think the subject is.

In order for this practice to be successful there are 3 key essentials which should be considered:

Essential #1 is the Willingness to ask questions. This means that before one even undertakes the process one has to make a decision that they are willing to ask questions, regardless of what answers may arise. This is an 'openness to inquire'.

Essential #2 is the agreement to agree on a basic standardized vocabulary. This is very important so that we can find common ground on general terms. For example, we could agree on the term Freedom meaning a certain spaciousness to make choices and act upon them. Of course, there are varying shades of Freedom depending on where and when you were educated and first encountered the term and then adopted the term in your life. Those would be second level variations however on the first level if we agree what Freedom is essentially and in principle, we

can begin the work. If not then we would first have to find some common ground on terminology and vocabulary before beginning the exercise.

Essential #3. This is the tough one and perhaps the most important one as with it the most benefits to one's daily life will be realised. The 3<sup>rd</sup> essential is the willingness to suspend one's beliefs, feelings and opinions for the duration of the exercise and examine and respond to the 3<sup>rd</sup> question of why with an absolutely open and non-judgmental or preferential approach. Allow any answer to arise for discussion without censoring it or judging it.

One of the most interesting phenomena in life is that two or more completely different points of view or "perspectives" can simultaneously coexist, and both be valid and legitimate exactly at the same time. This is a fundamental truth that can be denied or ignored but never changes. Let me offer an example. Let's presume two people are seated at a table facing each other. And there is a coffee mug on the table between them. In the view of one person he can see the mug plus the handle and a logo, from the other person's point of view all they can see is a mug, one colour, no handle and no logo. Now they are both asked to describe what they see and as we all can imagine the descriptions differ. Yet both descriptions are accurate and valid and legitimate.

If one of the persons was to insist that their view was the only correct view then a disagreement would arise and escalate to the degree of insistence of one claiming exclusivity in being right. However, if after the two descriptions there would be a willingness to discuss and accept each other's views as legitimate and valid then the two viewers would be able explore the difference, perhaps rotate the mug and then understand why the views were initially different. This removes stress and allows both persons to feel validated and confident in their own experience and avoids a conflict.

This is the essential approach required in step 3 of our method for further clarification and understanding of why we believe, feel and think what we do. It also creates space in our minds for allowing others differing belief's, feelings and opinion which although different than ours do not invalidate nor delegitimize or threaten our own views.

Finally, before we conclude this broadcast, I want to repeat that nothing we are discussing here should be misconstrued as medical, professional or therapeutic advice regarding any condition or illness of any kind, emotional, mental or physical.

Here at Path to Wisdom we are not offering therapy or medical advice. That is the domain of professionals who you should contact in case of need. Here we are simply inviting you to engage in a process of inquiry of our opinions and perspectives and how they influence how we live. With a clearer understanding of this process we believe that increased contentment, fulfilment and ultimately real happiness can be achieved.

During our next and final introductory podcast, we will go through a sample trial run of the 3-question methodology. So that you can hear and observe how it is employed, we will choose several subjects and apply the methodology to those subjects.