

The eightfold path

There are seven aspects of life that make or break relationships. Homemakers, like every human being, employ these. They are: *opinions, judgements, speech, actions, moral stance, habits, memories*. All of them can make us take wrong or right decisions. Today, we dislike using the words 'wrong' or 'right'. They seem to be judgemental. This may be so when deciding on behalf of others, but when honestly assessing ourselves we are permitted, and often even helped, by making informed, justly assessed judgements.

To begin with, you must ask the question: 'What is the right opinion, the right judgement, etc. in any given situation? How can I find it?' 'Right' in this context is not a value judgement. It is simply the ability to connect the perceptions of an event to what actually happened so that the resulting concepts are true.

To practise the eightfold path we need to use self-examination as described above so that we can find the 'right' attitude. It is both the first and foremost step on this path, as well as the final and resolving eighth step.

Like all meditative exercises, start slowly and carefully. Begin by working on 'opinion' for a whole month. The next month, take up 'judgement' and so on. When you have practised all the aspects, each for a month, then attach them to the days of the week and practise each in their turn as the days of the week go, as follows:

Saturday: Right opinion

Sunday: Right judgement

Monday: Right word

Tuesday: Right deed

Wednesday: Right moral stance

Thursday: Right habit

Friday: Right memory

Every night: Self-examination

Of course, self-examination at the end of each day will now be focused on the step you are currently exercising.

In practice it goes like this. On waking, remind yourself which step you are pursuing. Resolve to watch your opinions if it is Saturday, your judgements if it is Sunday, etc. and then get up and go about your daily life. In the evening, examine how you got on.

The eightfold path is something to live by. It never ceases to be interesting, stimulating and life changing. It does not require you to remove yourself from life. On the contrary, it asks you to be involved, to live to the full whilst beginning to understand yourself better, consequently understanding others better too.

Tact, patience, empathy, interest, humour, joy, decision-making, all the attributes that make life more liveable will begin to shine within your soul. However, do not think the eightfold path is a quick fix! It is a journey of the soul, one that you can go on without leaving home. It will eventually become as comforting as a much-loved companion.

Equanimity

Every human being is unique. Yet we can recognize the same qualities in every other person that live also in ourselves. We are all subject to faults, and all rejoice in our achievements. We acquire equanimity when the differences cease to irritate us, drawing forth from us negative passions, reactions,