

Inquiry Process for Workplace Suffering

(based in Eugene Cash's Vipassana Buddhist Spirit Rock retreat of 2/01)

Explanation for the process:

An inquiry process is a different way to knowledge; in it we seek knowledge as it emerges within ourselves, our mind/body, rather than from the familiar external sources of teachers, books and empirical research. It's another path to knowledge.

Inquiry teaches us to be present for what's happening: it's 1/2 content, 1/2 present experience: what arises, feelings, kinesthetics, emotion — as a means to finding what's keeping you stuck (Inquiry as a path to right action.) This process in particular will be a way to surface feelings, knowledge and concerns that are normally suppressed or pushed aside in the workplace.

We start by forming dyads of partners who sit facing each other.

The first question asker looks at their partner and inquires:

“Tell me about the suffering that arises from your workplace.” (former workplace).

This can include you, other workers and managers, customer, suppliers, the community, the environment, competitors and so forth.

The response continues until the person seem to have no more to say (don't be too fast to take silence as the end)

The questioner only listens; listening without responding leaves space for the speaker for going further.

Question asker says: Thank you and repeats: “Tell me about the suffering that arises from you workplace.” The process continues for about 7 (10) minutes until the facilitator (teacher) tell the dyads it is time to switch question asker and responder.

1st question: “Tell me about the suffering that arises from you workplace.”

The speaker can wait for an answer to come: no answer is also valid.

2nd question:

“Tell me why it's NOT possible for you to reduce the suffering from your workplace.” Than k you.

Silence can also be an answer as can be that there is no suffering from my workplace.

Thank your partner. Exchange any thoughts or experiences your wish.

Relaxation process:

We will now end with a process for you to further consider the results of your inquiry; we'll start with a relaxation technique to let you focus which I think you will find pleasant.

Find a place on the carpet to lie comfortably on your back (or sit comfortably on a chair).

Close your eyes if you wish. We'll go through the body encouraging relaxation. First give the muscles of the feet and toes permission to relax. Now give the muscles in your lower legs, your calves and shins, permission to relax.

[Continue directing the participants in this fashion through the knees, thighs, buttocks, groin, lower, mid, upper back, stomach, chest, hands, lower, upper arms, shoulders, neck, crown of head, around the ears, forehead, around the eyes, face and muscles around the jaw.]

Now let your mind focus and contemplate the workplace suffering you described earlier and why you could do nothing about it. Now consider now how you might be able to overcome the factors impeding your ability to lessen this suffering. Focus now on one thing that you might be wish to do to reduce the suffering. Ask yourself if you

wish to make a commitment to yourself to make such an effort. If you wish, make a commitment to yourself to take such action.

Now keeping your eyes closed, return your spirit and your mind's mental images to the room in which you are currently resting, the objects and people around you. Allow your eyes to slowly open and, when you are ready, return to the group and your chair.

Share any thoughts or experiences with the whole group. Whole group discussion can follow.

Buddhist Inquiry questions

1. What is your awareness right now?
2. What is keeping you from being fully present right now?
3. What is it like to be open right now
4. Tell me what's right about NOT accepting your experience?
5. What would you experience if you didn't judge yourself?
(critical assessment is different from critical judgments — and we don't want to judge ourselves harshly for having judgments)
6. Tell me what blocks your compassion? (explore this without having judgments)
7. Tell me what it's like to not know?
8. What are you taking yourself to be right now?

Does inquiry practice = reflective contemplation in commitment?

[Formalized] inquiry teaches us to be present.

Diamond sutra: To be a bodhisattva one must save all beings but if one believes there are beings to be saved, one is not a bodhisattva.

Compassion = suffering with passion

Can wait for an answer to come & no answer is valid. LISTENING, not responding, leaves space for going further

Guilt is to shame as doing is to being.

Class:

How do you know that something is true?

What would I be experiencing now if I wasn't judging (self or someone else)?