

This chapter is about the Noble Eightfold Path, a set of eight “purification practices described by Buddha in the Fourth Noble Truth.” Each of these eight practices helps to lead us toward “the cessation of all clinging” (p. 215), and thus helps us “to move from *suffering to joy*” p. 233). We’ll think about what these practices might add both to our meditation practice and to our active lives in the world.

1. The second of the eight practices, namely “right or wise intention,” involves a growing capacity to “live your life moment to moment based on values that reflect” what your spiritual practice has disclosed to you about “the nature of human existence.” This is to say that the insights gained from Dharma study and meditation yield a rich field of *values* that then, crucially, become the basis for the *intentions* that will motivate our *actions*.
 - a. That all sounds (to me) reasonable and indeed compelling. But the advice Moffitt gives, in connection with this power of right or wise intention, is “to cultivate moment-to-moment awareness of your intention” (p. 238). Moment-to-moment? All day, and all week? Let’s reflect on what, for each of us, might be the best way to enhance our ability to practice this kind of self-awareness regarding our (true) intentions, in the moment.
2. In the section on “right or wise speech,” I was moved by Moffitt’s discussion of the need to practice right speech not only in dialogue with others but also in dialogue with oneself. He writes of the “crippling interior speech” that can sap a person’s connection to the values associated with the Dharma. One antidote is “a healthy dose of compassion and loving-kindness as a result of seeing the truth of suffering” (pp. 242-43).
 - a. Let’s talk about the phrase “as a result of seeing the truth of suffering.” This phrase represents an idea that, at least in my experience, one doesn’t find often in teachings, meditations, podcasts etc. devoted to self-compassion. What is the force of this emphasis on “the truth of suffering”?
3. In the section on “right or wise livelihood,” Moffitt discusses the importance not just of earning one’s living in a way that does not harm oneself or others, but

also of avoiding having “a violent attitude in whatever you do for a living” (p. 244). Nor is this approach entirely easy, as there can be significant costs even in a mere shift of attitude. Moffitt gives the example of a student, Paul, who, though a salesman, decided to change his behavior and attitude at work so that he would “take only what [was] freely offered” (in keeping with one of Buddha’s Five Precepts). In spite of this decision and some associated changes, Paul’s competitive spirit persisted, and thus, at least for the time being, he was nagged by a “tension around values” (p. 246).

- a. Where, if anywhere, do you experience (or have you experienced) a “tension around values,” whether in connection with your chosen work or in connection with any other aspect of your daily life?
4. “Right or wise effort” is a practice “classically associated with working with your mind in meditation” (p. 247). Specifically, right or wise effort involves “avoiding unhealthy mind states; abandoning unhealthy mind states once they have arisen; moving the mind to healthy mind states; and maintaining the mind on healthy mind states that have already arisen” (p. 246). One essential feature of this kind of flexible awareness is an ability to stay “curious about your underlying mind states” (p. 247).
 - a. Curiosity is here seen as an essential support for a fruitful spiritual practice. Would anyone like to speak about a time, whether in your meditation practice or in daily life, when curiosity came to your aid and helped you to get unstuck from clinging, aversion, identification with ego, or the like?
5. The last practice the chapter describes is “right or wise concentration,” which is “the ability to *collect and unify the mind*.” We must cultivate this ability “in meditation” (p. 251). I was intrigued to see that Moffitt go on to describe not one but two “types of meditation for establishing” this “steadiness of concentration that allows you to practice mindfulness.” These two are “open field attention” and “deep absorption” (p. 252). Of these, the practice of open field attention was new to me. When practicing in this way, if you happen to be distracted by an upsetting thought, you don’t just refuse to follow that thought so that it will dissolve on its own. Instead, “you can concentrate on the experience of the upsetting thought and know it more fully” (p. 252).
 - a. Is this a mode of meditation that anyone in our group has practiced? Or

for those who haven't formally practiced open field attention, does Moffitt's description of this practice nonetheless correspond to a way in which you sometimes do use your attention, during a meditation?
