

Clear Comprehension

The Buddha's Guide to Making Good Choices & Decisions

Listening Notes

The following notes are supports for listening and note-taking in connection with a talk by Dennis Warren on February 16, 2023. The talk is entitled "Revisiting Fundamentals: Clear Comprehension – The Buddha's Guide to Making Good Choices."⁽¹⁾ These notes are not designed to be a free-standing explanation of Clear Comprehension. Dennis is the Founding Teacher of Sacramento Insight Meditation.

Clear Comprehension (Clear Knowing or Clear Seeing) consists of four (4) experiential inquiries. They help clarify the important role of intention in making and implementing choices and decisions.

At the most fundamental level, Clear Comprehension concerns being clear about our intention; then having that clarity inform how we make choices, the choices themselves and how we embody our choices through our thought, emotions, actions and speech. This happens through inquiry, reflection and discernment in concert with mindfulness. The process has wide application in meditation, practice, daily life and relationships.

Inquiry 1: What intention is guiding the choice making process?

Referred to as Intention, Purpose or Motivation.

Focus: Examining whether an intention helps create the conditions to point the mind and heart towards inquiry, understanding and satisfaction (helpful) or towards confusion, struggle and suffering (unhelpful).

Practices: Pause and Reflect

What is the intention/s guiding the choice? Is it helpful?

Move forward with a choice only when there is clarity of intention and whether it is helpful.

Redo any activity when we wake-up and recognize that it has been done without awareness.

Inquiry 2: How is intention informing the choice making process & the choice ?

Referred to as Domain, Field or Objects of Inquiry

Focus: Bringing to the level of awareness whether the choice/decision making process is resulting from intentional inquiry and reflection, or habit, impulse, reactivity or fixed view.

Practices: Pause – Inquire and Reflect

Is the choice making process, and the choice itself, based on intentional inquiry and reflection? How?

Is the choice making process and choice informed by a helpful intention? How?

Is the process and choice being informed by the psychology, skills, qualities of mind and perspectives of practice? How?

Inquiry 3: How is intention informing how the choice is implemented?

Referred to as Suitability or Appropriateness.

Focus: Exploring the impact on self and others of States of Mind, Timing, Conditions or Circumstances, and Means.

Practice: Pause – Inquire and Reflect

Is the implementation of the choice, in each of the areas of focus, informed by a helpful intention? How?

Inquiry 4: How do we stay connected with intention?

Referred to as discerning Reality or Non-Delusion

Focus: Building in the uncertainty and unpredictability of outcome resulting from the constantly changing nature of all elements of experience. This directly translates into being flexible, adaptable and responsive as well as not attached to outcomes.

Practice: Pause – Inquire and Reflect the entire choice making process & the choice itself

Have there been changes in conditions that require a reassessment of intention, how the choice was made, the choice itself, or how it is being implemented?

Focus: Framing the choice making and implementation processes as an interactive, interrelated, collaborative process with the circumstances of life, rather than through the limiting perspective of management and control by an ego or self? These two ways of making choices and living feel quite differently in the body, mind and heart.

Practice: Pause – Inquire and Reflect on the choice making process & the choice itself

Is the entire process informed by a sense of management and control of a separate self/ego, or is it informed by aware inquiry and reflection based on helpful a helpful intention?

Footnote

(1) This talk can be accessed and downloaded at <https://sactoinsight.org/tag/dennis-warren/> .