

Two Kinds of Thoughts and Questions

When the Buddha explored his thoughts, he found two kinds: those that lead to peace, and those that lead to suffering. His teaching invites us to experiment and see how we can cultivate those that lead to wholesomeness and peace, and those that lead to more struggle. (Dvedhāvitakka Sutta, MN 19) And the Buddha encouraged inquiry into our experience, in order to know for ourselves which thoughts lead to peace, and which to more struggle. (Kalama Sutta, The Buddha's Charter of Free Inquiry).

Research by Marilee Adams looks at two kinds of questions, Learner Questions (leads to choices) and Judger Questions (lead to reactions). She has put these into a chart she calls the Choice Map, and written a book called Change Your Questions, Change your Life. The Choice Map is available on line at <http://inquiryinstitute.com/CM.pdf>

In our practice, we encourage an inquiry style which is light, not heavy, or analytical, or with an aim to figure it out and fix it. We drop the question in to our awareness, and see what rises, and if nothing rises, return to the breath, or your activity, and see what happens in time.

Here are some other questions that we sometimes use:

From this perspective, what am I believing about myself?

What is blocking ease now?

What would bring peace now?

What does the heart need now?

Is there aversion in the mind right now?

How are greed and delusion operating right now?

Am I aware? What am I aware of? Is it ok to be aware of this?

Show me what hasn't been seen

We can use inquiry to help us understand and find freedom from habit patterns. Inquiry is an art, and no example will describe exactly what might happen for you, but here are two examples:

1) Is there urgency in the body? (Yes.)

Is there a thought that is fuelling this? (Yes, the tyranny of the to do list.)

What happens when I notice that and take a breath? (Releases just a little bit.)

2) Is there calm here? What does that feel like in the body? What preceded that? Mindfulness of body sensations. (and then we learn how to cultivate calm).