

EDUCATING THE HEART

Overview

- I. This lesson deals with a key concept in Buddhism and how it can be applied to inter-personal, inter-group and international relations. It couples with conflict resolution in that it offers an alternative way of thinking about and making decisions that may or may not lead to conflict.
- II. Subject area: Conflict resolution, literature, non-violence movement, civics and government.
- III. Grade Level – 6-10 grades.
- IV. Content standards/benchmark addressed: CCG: Describe participating responsibilities of citizens in the community (voluntarism) and in the political process (becoming informed about public issues). (Page 52 of the Oregon Standards Newspaper).
- V. In his book, Kindness, Clarity, and Insight, the Dalai Lama outlines a basic tenet of Buddhism (pgs. 11-12), that is that each person's chief goal in life is the experience of happiness and the avoidance of suffering. A second basic Buddhist idea, having compassion (love of others) for all people seems to be in conflict with the first one. The question is: "Should the happiness of the individual, and the avoidance of suffering at the individual level take precedence over the happiness and suffering avoidance of a larger group, such as a community, nation or region of the world?"
- VI. Materials-Paper, pencil, newspaper articles for students relating to conflict in the school, community, nation or between nations. Background reading from, Kindness, Clarity, and Insight, is a good idea.
- VII. Presentation steps:
 1. Pre-assessment: Use the vocabulary and short answer below to get baseline data on learning as a result of this lesson.
 2. Present the basic tenet: People naturally seek the experience of happiness as much as possible and avoidance of suffering as a natural state of affairs.
 3. Discuss:
 - a. According to this idea, the greatest happiness or the greatest avoidance of suffering determines what decision ought to be made. The greatest number of people and their happiness is the only factor that needs to be taken into account when a decision for an individual, group, community, nation or geographic region of the world.

- b. Example: There is \$500.00 available for the sophomore class to use for a community service project. Some members want to sponsor a candy sale as a fundraiser for a children's hospital that serves 25 kids a year. Others on the committee like the candy sale idea, but want to use the funds they raise for the programs at an elderly care center that serves 30-40 people daily. The elderly care center would get the funds generated by the sophomore class candy sale according to this decision making scheme.

4. Discuss / explore:

- a. Are the most people experiencing happiness and avoiding suffering being served by this decision?
- b. Is this a "long-term appropriate way of making a decision? Is this a short-term appropriate way of making a decision?
- c. What are some possible and probable consequences of this decision? What is the difference between these two category titles?

The following graphic might help display student response:

Probable Consequences

Elderly programs would prosper <u>BECAUSE</u> they got money. Children's programs will suffer <u>BECAUSE</u> they didn't get money.
--

Possible Consequences

<u>BECAUSE</u> <u>BECAUSE</u>

- VIII. a. Divide students into small groups.
 - a. Distribute newspaper articles.
 - b. Ask students to read the article and discuss the "greatest number of people benefiting" format as an adequate way to arrive at a decision in this example. Next ask them to project probable and possible consequences for the decision.
 - c. Share article(s) and outcomes by groups with the rest of the class.
 - d.
- IX. Assessment: Give this prior to instruction and following the lesson (8) to measure growth.
 - 1. Pre/Post Assessment: Vocabulary Words-define these term:
 - Compassion
 - Probable
 - Possible
 - Consequence

Happiness Suffering

2. Short Written Answer Question:

Do you think that using the “seeking happiness and wanting to avoid suffering for the greatest number of people” is a good way of making decisions for people? Explain your answer in a paragraph. You may give one example if you choose.

X. Adaptations

- a. This could be used as a homework assignment.
- b. Students could be asked to change to the individual happiness and suffering as being the key factor in decision making and ask them to consider the consequences of this format.
- c. Design a rubric based on Maslow’s hierarchy of needs.
- d.

- XI. This lesson could be with a current international situation and students could be asked to discuss how the “scale” of the consequence on people involved changes the decision.