



Four Noble Truths Worksheet

Starter...

1. Write down three things or situations which cause you to be unhappy, to suffer.
2. And three which cause you to be happy.



The Four Noble Truths

- The **first teaching the Buddha taught** after his enlightenment was on the Four Noble Truths.
- The word ‘truth’ in this context refers to ‘reality,’ **the way things are** .
- The Four Noble Truths are **realities that we discover for ourselves** .
- They are a framework for understanding Buddhist thought, a tool to help see the **Buddhist vision of the world** .
- All Buddhist teachings fit into these Four Noble Truths.

“He who has gone for refuge to the Buddha, the Teaching and his Order, penetrates with transcendental wisdom the Four Noble Truths — suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the Noble Eightfold Path leading to the cessation of suffering.” – **Dhammapada 190–191**

1. The truth of suffering (dukkha)

- Suffering is **universal** and is experienced by every living being.
- Yet nobody wants suffering, and we all long to find happiness.

Can you think of something that definitely doesn't cause any suffering at all?



There are three types of suffering:

1. **ordinary** suffering
2. the suffering of **change**
3. the suffering of **conditioned existence**

1. Read through the types of suffering info sheet.
2. Write one sentence explaining each type of suffering.

3. Write one example from your experience of each type.

2. The truth of the causes of suffering

- The root causes of suffering lie **within our own minds**.
- The root causes of suffering are craving, aggression, and ignorance – known as the **three poisons**.
- Motivated by these poisons we engage in actions which, through the laws of *karma**, **cause harm to others as well as ourselves**.

*Refer to the Karma and Rebirth topic

Why/how do ignorance, greed, and hate lead to suffering?



Causes of suffering

ignorance = not seeing things as they really are, ignorance about the way things are, ignorance about the nature of reality

greed = attachment = wanting

hatred = aversion = not wanting

What is the point of identifying the causes of suffering?

3. The truth of the end of suffering (nibbana or nirvana)

- It is possible to put an end to suffering by putting an end to the causes of suffering.
- If we transform our actions and our minds and become selfless we can find true and lasting happiness, known as **nirvana or enlightenment**.

Can you imagine what it would be like to have completely overcome the three poisons?

Video: What is Enlightenment? (The Buddhist Society) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LptJULiI-As>

1. What do you understand about enlightenment based on this video?

2. What questions do you have about enlightenment?

As a stretch, have a look at the Enlightenment info sheet and add to your notes and questions.



4. The truth of the path leading to the end of suffering

- The way to **free oneself from suffering** is to follow the Buddhist path of moral discipline, meditation and wisdom, which forms the **Noble Eightfold Path**.
- The Noble Eightfold Path sets out the **main characteristics of the Buddhist way of life**.
- The Buddha presented this path as the **middle way**, a way of life that does not fall into extreme views or extremes of behaviour but cultivates balance and moderation.

Windows into
Buddhism



The Noble Eightfold Path

right mindfulness: continual awareness of one's body, one's speech, and the content of one's mind

right concentration: concentration developed through meditation, an antidote to distraction

right effort: enthusiasm and diligence to prevent unwholesome states of mind and actions and to cultivate wholesome ones

right view: understanding the Four Noble Truths, understanding how things actually are



These eight elements are not sequential, all work together and reinforce each other.

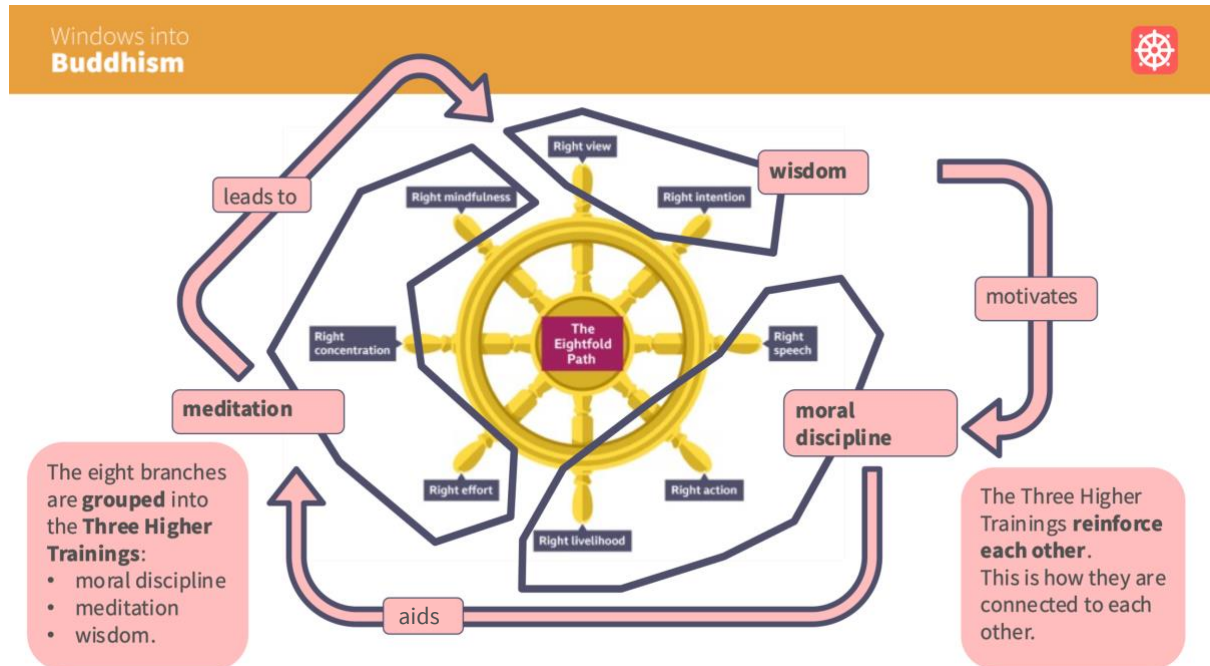
right attitude: includes thoughts such as selfless renunciation, detachment, love and compassion for others, non-violence

right speech: refraining from lying, idle gossip, and harsh words

right action: honest actions that do not harm others

Find an example of the opposite of each spoke.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____



The eight-spoked wheel symbolises the eightfold path and, more generally, Buddhism as a world religion.

A moment of personal reflection...

1. What qualities would you like to develop in yourself?
2. Do you think developing these qualities will help you lead a happier life?
3. Why? Or why not?

Story time

- Let's come up with a **story together to help us remember the elements of the Eightfold Path**.
- One of us starts by describing a scenario which will remind us of one element, then the next person describes the next scene which reminds us of another element, and we continue until we have eight scenes!
- Or: try and write your own story with eight scenes, one for each element of the Eightfold Path.