

Developing an Internal Ethical Compass

“The workshop provided a much more nuanced and personal approach to ethics than would be found in more traditional training on this topic. The discussion was rich and stimulating. Within my personal meditation practice, I integrated the theoretical into the experiential which provided insights about what my own personal ethics entail in my work with clients.”

Buddhism itself is inherently an ethical path, rather than a religious doctrine so what's the connection between meditation and ethics? How does meditation help develop a reliable internal ethical compass?

Ethics are about what we do and don't do, actions which are best rooted in our values. The highest level of ethical development entails grappling with internal values and complex situations rather than adhering to rules or being good. When we act with ethical integrity, our minds can settle and our lives are generally more peaceful.

In Recollective Awareness Meditation, the approach to Buddhist meditation that I teach, we allow whatever occurs in our inner worlds to unfold naturally. This means that we allow thinking, even about uncomfortable or difficult subjects. After meditation, we take a few minutes to recollect, usually by journaling, what happened in the meditation. This reflective process fosters a tolerance for sitting with painful mental experiences and for gaining insight into them. And it can result in both a more settled mind, and more skillful means for handling similar experiences in our lives outside of meditation.

In the ethics CE workshop we'll use this approach to consider a specific kind of uncomfortable or conflicted subject - our ethical dilemmas. Wrestling with complex situations and gaining insight into our own values as we meditate and recollect will help us further develop our ethical compasses.

by Nelly Kaufer, LPC