

Summary of Introductory Eightfold Path Session:

Course teachers Chris Clifford, Liz Powell and Tanya Wiser were there and introduced ourselves. bruni dávila will be joining us later. Probably at least two of the four of us will be at each session.

We began with a short guided meditation. Keeping up (or establishing) a meditation practice will be a valuable support for this program.

Chris gave a brief overview of the Path. You will get the essence of what was said by reading these two short introductory essays from Gil: "[Introduction to the Eightfold Path Program](#)" and "[Introduction to the Eightfold Path.](#)" .

Liz explained how we do breakout group discussions in this class: it's a structured form where we don't engage in cross-talk, don't comment on what each other said, and don't give advice. It's a time for each person to reflect on what they feel comfortable sharing and speak without interruption or feedback, then listen with an open mind and heart as the other people speak. We also request that what is shared in these breakout groups remains confidential and we don't even bring it up again with the person at a later time.

We broke out into small groups and each person spoke for a few minutes to the question: "What is inspiring you to take up practicing the Path at this time?". You might consider that question for yourself if you weren't there.

Then each teacher spoke to one aspect of the program and how to wisely engage with it:

Liz spoke about the reading and study aspect (Gil's short essays and 2 optional books, see info sheet for details). She made the point that some people enjoy learning from reading and study and others do not. The Bhikkhu Bodhi book is very rich summary of the traditional teachings, but quite dense and can take a lot of careful study and unpacking to understand. The Bhante Gunaratana book is an easier read. Gil's essays are the shortest and easiest to read and we highly recommend at least reading those. There are also talks by Gil on each subject if you learn best from listening.

Tanya spoke about the weekly reflections as being the "heart" of the course. She spoke about the art of reading these reflections and letting them sink in and be in the back (or perhaps front!) of your mind all throughout the month. This course is centered around seeing for yourself what you can learn from observing your own experience, seeing how you respond to situations and learning to hold your own difficulties with compassion.

Chris spoke about mentor meetings (for those who signed up for this). This is a time to meet with a fellow traveler along this Path, someone who has been working with it for a while and is familiar with some of the territory. It's a time to share what you observed during the month and bring questions you may have about understanding and applying the path factor. It's ideal if you've had time to do the reflections and maybe jot down some notes. But even if you haven't, please come anyway and we can look freshly at the topic and reflections together.

We broke into small groups again and asked “What will help you to engage with the course and reflections through the month?” This could be practical strategies for simply remembering, like putting time in your calendar, or attitudes and ways of holding your intention that keeps you inspired and interested. Please also consider this question for yourself if you weren’t there.