

THE WISDOM WITHIN

An introductory course
of 10 weekly 90 minute
meetings

SESSION 1 PHILOSOPHY & WISDOM

What is practical philosophy?
'What would a wise person do here?'
Philosophy means the love of wisdom.
Our course is intended to show how
philosophy can help us enjoy richer,
less stressful and more useful
lives. These opening two sessions
consider these aims, and introduce
simple exercises in mindfulness and
the application of wisdom you can
practise in daily life.

SESSION 2 KNOW THYSELF

Who or what am I?
What is my potential?
Who am I, really? My body? My
emotions? My strongly held beliefs?
My soul? Possibly all of these?
Possibly none?
Such questions have preoccupied
philosophers through the ages. We
look at practical ways to explore who
we really are and how to tap our true
potential.

SESSION 3 BEING AWAKE

What is our state of awareness?
Why does it fluctuate during the day?
Often the most notable quality of
wise people is their alertness to the
subtleties of a situation. They are
awake, perceptive and curious.
We look at deeper levels of aware-
ness, and consider how we may
become more awake to ourselves,
our surroundings, and the events
we meet.

SESSION 4 THE PRESENT MOMENT

Living in the now, mindfulness.
What is the potential of the present
moment?
We review our own experience of
attention through a model featuring
attention centred, captured, open and
scattered, and how these each relate
to the past, present and future.
We examine the extraordinary
brightness and freedom naturally
available in the present moment. A
straightforward practice is introduced
to help us experience this more
frequently.

SESSION 5 LIVING JUSTLY

Plato's views on justice.
What does it mean to live justly?
According to Plato, justice and
injustice do not start 'out there'. They
begin within us. For justice to prevail,
Plato suggests that we must learn
to avoid being 'tyrannised' by our
passions and fears to the extent they
overrule our reason.
We discuss the practicality of Plato's
ideas on justice in our daily lives.

SESSIONS 6 THE THREE-FOLD ENERGY

What is energy? Can it be created and
conserved?
We consider the Vedic model of three
fundamental substances or energies.
Sometimes we seem not to have
enough energy, or the wrong kind.
A wise person can act consistently
despite these varying conditions.
We consider how to recognise differing
energies, how to gain and conserve
them and how to use them wisely.

SESSION 7

THE LIGHT OF REASON

What is reason? How can it enrich our lives?

We look at the philosopher Shankara's notion that reason is the ability to discern the transient from the eternal, the changing from the unchanging. This leads to the question of what, in our experience, can be said to be actually unchanging?

Suggestions are given to help further consideration of this question.

SESSION 8

THE POWER OF BEAUTY

What is beauty? Is there such a thing as absolute beauty?

Beauty has the capacity to open the heart and bring delight. In this session we discuss our direct experience of beauty in its different forms: of the sensory world; of thought, of feelings, of the inner nature, and of conduct.

We consider Plato's idea of there being ultimately one beauty – beauty absolute – 'not knowing birth or death, growth or decay'.

SESSION 9

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

Is there a common thread running through all things?

What is the effect of finding unity?

When we look around at nature, we see diversity beyond imagination. The wise person looks for a unifying factor: that which allows all this apparent diversity to be seen as part of a single whole.

Seen in this way, life may have the best chance of being fresh, open and invigorating.

SESSION 10

THE DESIRE FOR TRUTH

What is truth? How does the desire for truth show itself?

Practical philosophy is about discovering the truth of things – not theoretically, but in our own experience.

In this final session we look back and ask ourselves how our search for truth has fared as the term has progressed. We discuss what has been discovered and how, in our own way, we may continue to develop it in our daily lives.