

Work

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Tips of the Day · 2 min read

What does that word conjure up for you? Is it a warm glow? Or do you feel a great weight descend on the chest? Do you find yourself filled with bright energy? Or is it the hot, burning energy of stress, frustration and anxiety? Right there in the Eightfold Path, the Buddha places Right Livelihood. That's how important he felt it was. He could have included it in Right Action, but no, he gives it its own importance. In a broader sense, we need to ask ourselves, what am I doing with my life. My life, for heaven's sake! How serious can a question be? Do I feel I am wasting my life? Do I feel I am wasting my life at work? For most of us that's around 40 hours a week – and our most energetic time. There is within us a spiritual calling. Something within us that demands to be, to be developed. These days we think of spiritual calling as something to do with becoming a religious, a nun or monk. But in the Christian Middle Ages, it was understood that God had called you to a profession or skill, usually what your family was already involved in. It is the modern separation of the secular from the spiritual that has caused so much of our malaise. For once the accent is put on the secular then we are into the 'things of this world' – riches, fame, power and pleasure. A life devoted to these must necessarily end in disappointment if only because it will all pass away. When we put the spiritual back into secular, the whole world of work takes on a completely different place. It becomes a spiritual work shop. How does the spiritual manifest in Right Livelihood? In some people it is so strong, it is felt to be a calling, a vocation. I knew a child of five who told me she was going to be a doctor and that's what she became. For others, it's not so strong, but a general feeling of doing what they were meant to be doing with their lives. Then there are those who live in confusion as to what they should be doing and wait for inspiration, to be told, in hope that something will turn up. And there are those who have no hope of making sense of their work life. It is a means to earn money so they can do what they want to do after work. A great deal of our work life is, of course, dependent on society and the economic situation. We may very well have experienced all four types just mentioned. At one or other time inspired, feeling content, depressed and lost about our work situation. Indeed we may suffer these very same swings in the very job we are doing – even in one day! So the first thing we have to do, if you have not already done so, is to make a determination to turn our present work, no matter whether we enjoy it or not or whether we think it is meaningful or not, into a spiritual practice. How would you go about doing that? The following Tips will centre on work and if there is some area you would like us to explore, do email.

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