

Loving Heart, Peaceful Mind

Naikan Exercises

Exercise #1: Reflect on the past year of your life. What are the most important things you've received this past year? Who made these gifts possible? Make a list of the items you received, and for each, list some of the people that made them possible. As you go through this process, consider what your life would have been like without these gifts. Don't forget those things you might otherwise take for granted. There are no "small" gifts or "little things." And please remember, the other person's motivation doesn't matter—it's still a gift, even if you had to pay for it.

Exercise #2: Spend thirty minutes doing the daily Naikan reflection, spending 10 minutes on each of the following questions:

1. *What did I receive from others today?*

2. *What did I give to others today?*

3. *What difficulties did I cause others today?*

Prepare a report summarizing the high points of your daily Naikan and/or Exercise #1. You can give your report during our next meeting, if you wish. The report does not have to be written, but outline your thoughts so you can present them efficiently.

You will give your report to *one* other person, then listen to a different person give his or her report (or vice versa). This is not a “stand up and give a speech” situation. The Naikan report process is a very intimate, yet very formal, process. You should consider it a religious ceremony, not a social opportunity or performance. There is a formal protocol for these reports:

HOW TO REPORT AND RECEIVE NAIKAN

Giving a Naikan Report: Do not ask for or expect comments from your listener. Keep your report about five minutes in length. Your report should consist only of highlights, a general summary, or perhaps one or two aspects in detail. Don’t cram or hurry your report. If five minutes goes by quickly and you didn’t get to report all you had planned, that’s okay—cut it short for our group’s purposes. Plan beforehand what your main report will include and use secondary or back-up material only as time allows.

Receiving a Naikan Report: Be quiet; just listen. Make a conscious effort not to make any sounds. This is not an ordinary conversation. Sometimes we tend to make sounds to show we are being attentive; this is not necessary in listening to a Naikan report. You might also be tempted to make supportive remarks of understanding or approval, but these are not necessary; please avoid making any comments or sounds. Silently listen! Do give your full attention.

NAIKAN REPORT PROCEDURE

Talkers will be in assigned seats. Listeners will then be seated. Introduce yourself unless you already know one another.

Listener: Hello; I’m _____

Talker: Hello, I am _____; I’d like to tell you my Naikan report.

Listener: It’s my privilege to hear your report.

Gassho to each other.

(Talker gives his report)

Talker: That’s my report; I appreciate you listening.

Listener: It was my honor.

Gassho to each other.