

Naikan

George Dombi
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What is Naikan ?

Naikan (Japanese: 内観, lit. “inside looking” or “introspection”) is a method of self-reflection to explore one's behavior in light of their relationships to others.



Who developed Naikan?

Naikan was developed by Yoshimoto, Ishin (1916-1988) a businessman and devout Jodo Shinshu Buddhist.

Yoshimoto, as a young man, had engaged in an ascetic deprivation practice – mishirabe.

Mishirabe practice involves going without food or water and getting little sleep, while sitting in a cave asking oneself “If I died now, will I go to heaven?”

Yoshimoto tried 4 times to achieve enlightenment using mishirabe practice.

Yoshimoto realize that he was not only connected to the people and the world around him, but that his efforts to succeed were causing his family to be concerned about his health.

He now knew his purpose was to make the activity of introspection available to others in a kinder and gentler way - Naikan.

Yoshimoto developed Naikan to help others find their purpose in life.

Yoshimoto developed 3 Naikan questions as a less difficult method to find one's purpose.

He first introduced Naikan to young men who had been incarcerated for committing non-violent crimes and social disturbances.

Three Naikan Questions

- 1) What have I received from this person?
- 2) What have I given to this person?
- 3) What problems have I caused this person?
- 4) What problems has this person caused me?

Yoshimoto was a business man

Yoshimoto successfully ran his wife's family business which made artificial leather, like Naugahyde.

Yoshimoto became a multimillionaire, which gave him time to develop Naikan and eventually to built a retreat center in Nara, Japan.

It was his business sense that helped him to develop the first two Naikan questions, giving and receiving. (accounts received or payable)

Naikan was first practiced in prisons

Yoshimoto developed the third Naikan question in response to his work with young men in prisons.

Studies in Japan, have shown that juvenile offenders who practice Naikan, while in prison, by reflecting on the problems that they caused their victims, have one of the lowest recidivism rates.

Now to Practice Naikan



Pick People around your daily activities today and yesterday.

Now with those people in Mind:

Question 1) List 5 nice things that were done for you by people at the convention or helping you to get to the convention. (took you to the airport, made slides for you, opened a door for you, smiled at you, lent a pencil to you....

Question 2) List 5 nice things that you did for someone or something today.

Question 3) List 5 problems that you caused someone today or yesterday.

Now pick your cell phone

Question 1) List 5 nice things that cell phone did for you. (helped you to call your Mom, reminded you of a meeting, is always ready to make a call for you, helped you call for a tow truck when you had a flat....)

Question 2) List 5 nice things that you did for your cell phone. (You got a special case to protect it, You charge it regularly, you don't throw it even when angry with it

Question 3) List 5 problems that you caused your cell phone. (You dropped it in a puddle, you forget it in class, you hit something with it.....)

What Naikan is Not

Naikan is not a medical program, but an educational program between the Naikansha (person doing Naikan) and the Naikan guide (person hearing the report).

Naikan is not like Confession. The Naikan guide has no power to forgive or to absolve a Naikansha. Usually Naikan is not reported to the person upon whom one is reflecting.

Types of Naikan

1) Retreat based Naikan – Intensive 5-10 day experience sitting behind a screen thinking about different periods of your life. A Naikan guide comes every 2 hours to hear your reflection, and to bring food or drink.

2) Correspondence Naikan – a long term, 3-6 month exchange of letters including the three Naikan questions to a Naikan guide, who may comment or not.

Types of Naikan

3) Phone call based Naikan – similar to Correspondence but over the phone, 3-6 weeks of 10-15 minute phone calls to a Naikan guide going over your life in 3-year periods with a specific person.

4) Daily Naikan – Each day before sleep think about people or things of that day which helped you, or you helped or you caused problems. This can be a life long practice or just done as needed occasionally.

Husband's Naikan on his Wife

What did I receive from her this month?

1. She came to Los Angeles with me to visit my parents.
2. For my birthday I received a book and a lovely pasta dinner.
3. She picked me up at the train station after my business trip.
4. On a car trip from L.A. she drove more than half the time.
6. She exercises and eats healthy, to be an attractive partner.
7. She washed and put away my clothes at least twenty times.
8. I received her sexual affection and attention on at least 25 times.
9. She handled finances, paying bills and balancing the check book.
10. She agreed to see the movie she knew I preferred.
11. She wrote a nice letter to my father.
12. She took telephone messages for me when I was away.
13. She ironed my shirt for me when I was late for work.
14. She sent a wedding present to my friends who live overseas.
15. She makes the bed nearly every morning.
16. She cleaned the house when I had a business associate visit.
17. She gave me an aspirin when I had a headache.
18. She rubbed my shoulders when I was sick.

Husband's Naikan on his Wife

What did I give to her?

1. I gave her a new raincoat.
2. I gave her a stopwatch for keeping track of her running time.
3. I gave her a rose when she picked me up at the train station.
4. I gave her some cookies when I returned from the trip.
5. I went with her to visited her friend in the hospital.
6. I made copies of some photos she liked.
7. I washed her clothes four times.
8. I took some dresses to the cleaners for her when she asked me.
9. I expressed mailed some important documents for her.
10. I gave her two back massages.

Husband's Naikan on his Wife

What troubles and difficulties did I cause her?

1. I incorrectly washed one of her blouses and the color faded.
2. I yelled at her when I got lost while we were driving.
3. She had to work late several nights on a project before our trip.
4. I argued with her about the merits of a book she read.
5. I caused her to be late for work one morning.
6. I caused her trouble tempting her with cookies to break her diet.
7. I criticized her about how she handled a situation at work.
8. I woke her up when I called late during my business trip.
9. I interrupted her at work six times by calling her to talk to me.
10. I acted angry toward her when we arrived late for dinner.
11. I once claimed that dinner was over cooked, though it wasn't.
12. My train was late, making her wait an extra 25 minutes for me.
13. I flirted with a woman at a conference, then lied about it.
14. I ate the last piece of Lasagna she had set aside for her lunch.
15. I bought the wrong ingredient for a dinner she asked me to get.
16. I didn't return a library book that I check out on her card.

What are the Goals of Naikan?

After doing Naikan for awhile, one begins to realize:

- 1) They take more than they give.
- 2) They are not self-made.
- 3) They benefit from work of others even when not being perfect.
- 4) Many people and things support them in their daily activities.
- 5) One can never fully repay the Universe for all they receive.
- 6) Seeing this web of support some people are moved to gratitude.
- 7) Feeling this sense of gratitude, some people try to repay.
- 8) Compassion becomes a natural response to the desire to repay.

How does doing Naikan promote Peace?

Naikan practice promotes peace and peaceful living by:

- 1) Helps to promote a felt sense of connectivity to the world.
- 2) Naikan helps people to realize that they are not just victims.
- 3) Helps people to balance internal states of isolation with a sense of connection that supports peaceful interactions with others.
- 4) Naikan helps to promote a personal sense of compassion which always promotes peaceful interactions.
- 5) Naikan asks one to see how they may have caused problems to their enemies and possibly help to promote a reconciliation.
- 6) Naikan has no specific religious requirements. It can be practiced by people of all faiths and cultures.
- 7) Naikan helps people to gain a strong, realistic sense of themselves which helps to allow for forgiveness of others.

Naikan in the US?

The ToDo Institute in Monkton, VT practices Naikan.

- 1) Run by Gregg and Linda Kreech.
- 2) <http://www.todoinstitute.org/naikan.html>
- 3) <http://vimeo.com/23340374>

Constructive Living, Coos Bay, OR teaches Naikan.

- 1) Developed by David K. Reynolds.
- 2) <http://constructiveliving2.weebly.com/>

Naikan Center in Germany

- 1) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=et2waSNvrUs>

What are Naikan-like activities?

Naikan-like activities are exercises one can do on particular events.

- 1) Try to think of some thing that you own solely on your own effort.
- 2) Calculate amount of money your parents spent on you before you were 21.
- 3) Calculate amount of money you spent on your parents after you were 21.
- 3) Calculate height of dishes your parents washed for you.
- 4) Calculate the number of people needed to get a hot and ready pizza to your door starting with farmers.
- 5) Recall the number of times you let someone go ahead of you while driving.
- 6) Say thank you to your roommate 10 times a day for things they do for you.
- 7) Do a secret service for someone, that has no social benefit to you.
- 8) Send a card, or email, to your mother on your birthday because she suffered to give you birth that day.