

Naikan – The World of Introspection

Finding Inner Peace and Discovering Yourself

Johanna Schuh

*Excuse me.
Do you know if I can
look inside?*



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Johanna Schuh founded the Insightvoice Naikan Centre in Vienna in 2005, which she has since been directing. She started her Naikan practise in 1993 and has been working as a Naikan guide since 2000.



www.insightvoice.at
www.naikan.ws/english

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FOREWORD by Prof. Akira Ishii



Johanna has accompanied many Naikan participants since 1994.

During the time of her Naikan path, Johanna practised Naikan in Europe and in Japan. This book, about the nature of Naikan, was written in clear terms based on this long-standing, deep experience — so that all people can understand it.

This is an important book that can be read both as an introduction to Naikan, as well as to deepen one's already existing Naikan knowledge.

Naikan is a path to happiness, just because of the fact that one sees oneself. I hope that many people come into contact with Naikan through this book and practise Naikan themselves and become happy. It would be nice if you let yourself get inspired through reading, and discover the ability to be happy within yourself.

Prof. Akira Ishii

Professor at Aoyama Gakuin University, Japan



*Life is like that,
and always has been.
We have to take everything as it comes,
and to find beauty in everything.*

Rosa Luxemburg

© Photo: Dietmar Meinert / pixelio.de

INTRODUCTION

We live in a culture that offers an infinite abundance of external forces. One can very easily lose one's own inner world. I do not mean the desire for what you would like to have or what you wish to be different. I mean the perception of what is. What's going on inside of me? What are my needs? In what direction am I going in my life?

The opinion that a satisfying life is much more than a full bank account and material security has gained more and more followers in recent decades. Whereas in earlier days it was seen as a luxury to take time for yourself, to take breaks or to attend personal development seminars, nowadays it is an accepted fact. Many techniques and methods are now being offered and are accessible to everyone in order to deal with themselves and their own opportunities and goals. But in everyday life, with its enormous demands, there never seems to be enough time to actually take care of oneself. Faster, better, more — that is the motto, both in professional life and in private life. More and more performance is being demanded, regardless of which personal resources are exploited.

Unfortunately, it often takes more than clear signals for us to make a decision about putting ourselves and our actions to the test. Sometimes a physical illness or psychological distress forces us to stop and take a break. Sometimes we are caught in the same old rut for so long that our inner resources get depleted and lead to a burnout.

Don't wait — act now!

This book introduces Naikan to you, a simple method by which you can turn your gaze inwards and find inner peace, on the one hand every day in daily life, and on the other hand as a retreat — one week is ideal.

"Naikan" is a Japanese word meaning "introspection" or "observing the inside". Naikan invites you to turn your gaze inwards, to recognize and better understand yourself.

Normally, our gaze is focused on external things, we look into the world, at the people and things that surround us. We look at what our partner, children, neighbours, and colleagues at work are doing, how they cause us problems, how bad things are at present in the environment and in the world. Rarely do we look at what runs easily or smoothly in our environment and in the world.

Changing one's perspective and looking inside instead of outside is extremely therapeutic, you find yourself again. Taking a break gives one strength. By using the Naikan questions, you recognize your actions and how you deal with yourself and those around you more clearly. This opens up new possibilities for action.

And the best part is: No one else will tell you what is right and what is wrong. Naikan shows you your OWN reality.

Why this book?

For long-term health, it is important to experience tranquillity as valuable and to recognize the care of the inner-being and one's own forces as a natural, healthy part of life. Learn how to consciously experience things — the pleasant and the unpleasant things. Get out of the merry-go-round and into a mindful, more satisfying life.

An excellent and simple method to train these qualities is Naikan — come to rest, find inner clarity and turn your attention onto yourself. Naikan trains the perception of wealth — in the internal and in the external world.

Anyone who asks themselves the three Naikan questions in everyday life, gains more rest, greater clarity and new perspectives in just a few minutes. Anyone who visits a Naikan retreat week gains deep insight into one's own being in just one week.

If this book helps to inspire you to take a step back and pause, then it has served its purpose.

Form and Structure

Each point in each chapter is short and can be read as a self-contained unit. My objective was to present the content in a clear and manageable manner.

As an inspiration, the individual points are accompanied by one image and a thematically appropriate saying. With this I want to encourage you to pause and take a break.

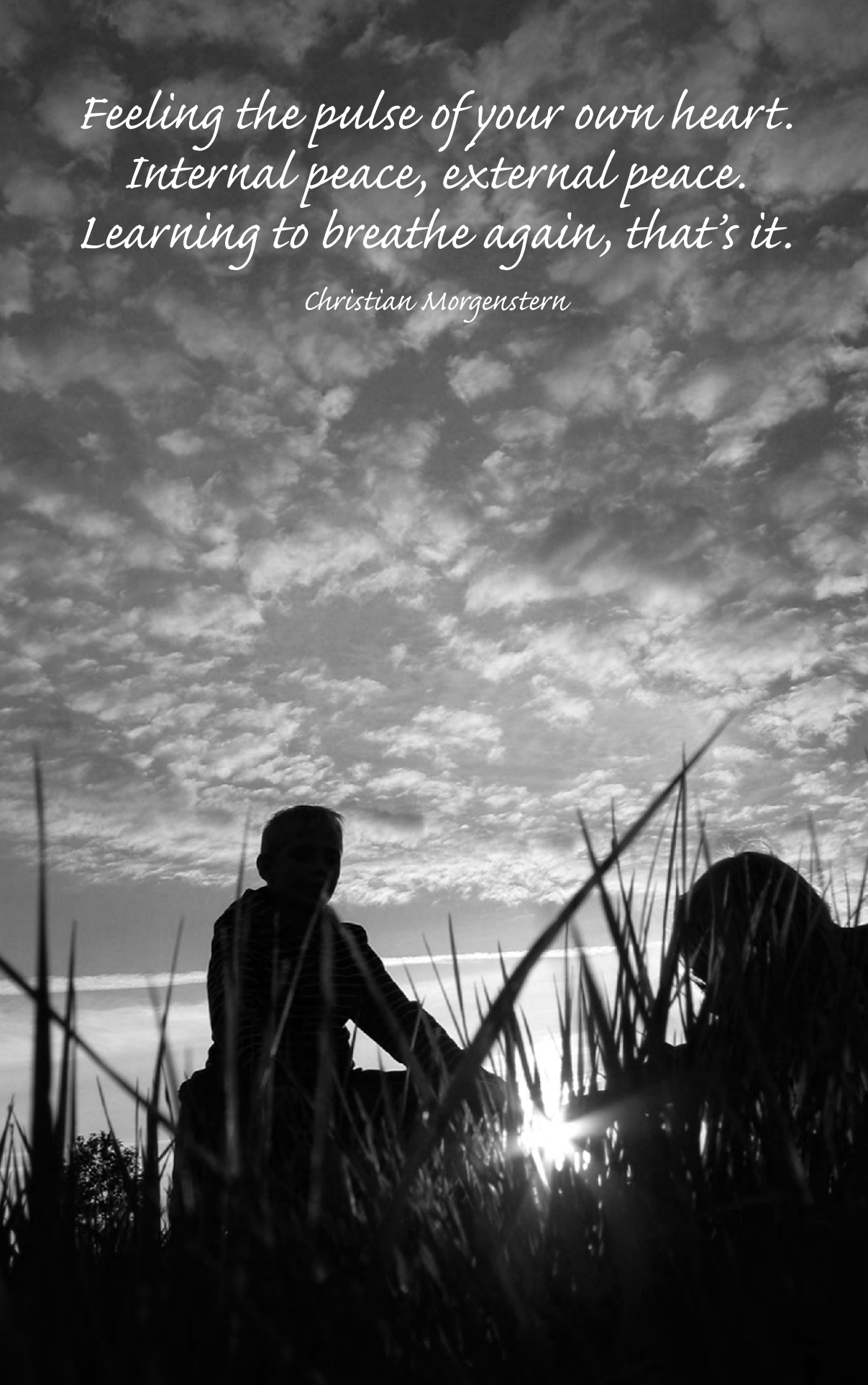
I ask my readers to be understanding with regard to the fact that I have used the masculine and feminine forms wherever applicable, although both genders are meant.

Observations, my own experiences, and Naikan experiences with more than 300 people, who I had the privilege of accompanying, are included in this book. After 20 years of working with this method, I am under the impression that a lot of knowledge, with regard to the theory and practise of Naikan, still has to be tapped into. This life is a fascinating journey of discovery.

From the style of the book you can see that I am an analytical mind, one which likes clarity and wants to know everything exactly. But any theory must be associated with feeling and experience — Naikan has taught me that and has changed my life. Perhaps this is the Naikan message that has impressed me the most: I can stay as I am, and I can acquire additional skills. Or more correctly: I can be myself more and more.

Johanna Schuh

wishes you peace, strength and joy in life.



*Feeling the pulse of your own heart.
Internal peace, external peace.
Learning to breathe again, that's it.*

Christian Morgenstern

1. FINDING INNER PEACE AND DISCOVERING YOURSELF

Peace has become very scarce in our culture. Our ears are constantly being flooded with noises: conversations, radio, television, music from headphones, ringing of mobile phones, traffic noises... Also our eyes are constantly being overloaded with images: television, advertising, computers, smartphones, as well as movement in the streets and in shopping malls...

If the outside is so loud and demanding, then it is no surprise that it has become difficult to feel inner peace. People increasingly have the feeling that they have lost touch with themselves. They feel externally driven and can no longer perceive that renowned inner voice.

Naikan's primary message is: It is possible to live in peace and quiet. If you practise turning your attention inwards again and again, then you can find peace — no matter how turbulent the outside is. The Naikan method can be a helpful tool for this.

How do I find inner peace?

This question is becoming increasingly important in our performance-oriented and fast-paced lives. It seems that our culture has forgotten to pause, to take a break. We stumble blindly from one action to the next. We often see the solving of problems as doing more and being even faster.

While the key to problem-solving often lies in retiring and observing the situation calmly. The Naikan method invites you to do exactly that: Retire from your everyday life for a while. Grant yourself a break! Spending a week in silence is ideal for this.

Discovering yourself

It is a modern trend to optimize oneself. The reason for working on oneself is often that the present situation doesn't fit to what is desired. One doesn't want something, one wants to do something about it.

Naikan goes in the other direction. It is about finding a way to deal with everything that is present, and to identify as many aspects and perspectives of life as possible. It is a journey of discovery of one's own being.

Pause for a moment with Naikan

Take a deep breath. Actually, right now.

Direct your focus inwards and be aware of what I would like to show you. Feel it. Simply be aware of what you are feeling, calmness or movement, which impulses emerge, which questions come to mind, which desires arise.

Learn that you do not immediately have to respond to the impressions, impulses and desires. Immediate action is not wanted in these quiet minutes of reflection. Simply try to perceive. Perceive what is, at this moment. That's all.

I have just presented you with a simple exercise for mindfulness.

Naikan adds a simple question technique to this pause:

1st Naikan question:

Who has done something for me? What do I receive?

2nd Naikan question:

What am I doing for the other person? What am I giving?

3rd Naikan question:

What am I doing that creates difficulties?

Perceiving what is, at this moment — and finding clarity with three simple questions. What is currently going on? What comes from the outside? What exactly is my own part? Naikan means pausing and paying attention to oneself.

Is that difficult?

No. The technique is simple. The difficulty here is that we need time and practise to change habits.

Is that possible at the flick of a switch?

At this point you should be warned of a popular misconception: With this is not meant that you will be internally peaceful and calm at the flick of a switch. Unfortunately it doesn't work that easily. Sometimes having a quiet moment makes it clear just how turbulent one's internal being is at that moment.

It's not about changing the current state instantly, but about first perceiving the current state at all. If it is internally turbulent, then it's just turbulent. If you never allow yourself time and rest to pay attention to yourself, then you will not even notice what is going on in your inner life. The corollary of this is that many things occur unconsciously. One feels at the mercy of certain things. Incidentally, this is one of the reasons why some people are a little afraid to take time to rest and retreat: They are not accustomed to paying attention to themselves. If you haven't paid attention to yourself and what is going on inside of you for a long time, then you may think a little fearfully: Who knows what will come up from deep inside?

The answer is simple: It shows what part of you wants attention. And when it finally gets attention, then you can work through it and find a good way to deal with it.

Perceiving. Accepting. Only dealing with it then.

Accept the status quo. Accept it the way it is. It is neither good nor bad, it's just part of you.

We unfortunately skip the first two steps very often in everyday life. We immediately act, we want to change things instantly. And then we wonder why we don't succeed. We have already done soooo much!

We behave like a cook who is seasoning a meal while not perceiving whether it is a vegetable stir-fry or a fruit salad. If we do not perceive what

the actual issue is, how can change even occur at all? Chance mainly governs here.

Or we behave like a cook who is seasoning a meal and sees that it is a fruit salad, but doesn't want to accept that, because after all, the vegetable stir-fry was in the fruit salad's place a minute ago. If we do not recognize what the issue is, how can our actions then be appropriate for the situation? How often do we act according to the motto: Now more than ever! Simply because we do not want to accept what our perception has clearly shown.

Inner peace grows when we perceive and accept what is.

Accepting doesn't mean finding everything wonderful and great and forgetting any criticism. Nor does it mean to resign and accept everything passively. Accepting means to look at the facts. That which is, is fine. And at the same time there are things that you can change, and goals that you want to achieve.

Rediscover ancient knowledge

Knowledge about the healing power of peace of body, mind and spirit, has existed for millennia. Every culture, every religion, every path of spiritual training knows methods of retreat and contemplation. Thereby there are always two spheres of activity:

- Methods of regular or daily exercise
- Methods of retreat from everyday life for an extended period

Naikan is a method that can be used both as a tool in everyday life as well as in the form of a time-out.

Naikan is not a religion, although it originated in Japan from the Buddhist worldview. Ishin Yoshimoto, the founder of Naikan, wanted to create a practise of introspection that is accessible and actionable for every person — regardless of his beliefs, regardless of his place in society, regardless of his physical fitness, regardless of his personal opinions.

Naikan neither offers wisdom teachers, nor ideology.

The method is designed for you to find insight from your own experiences. Self-competence and responsibility for oneself are at the forefront.

Drawing from your own knowledge

How often do you ask yourself when you want answers? Can you hear the answers that are coming from within? How do you deal with what you know and feel inside?

We prefer asking other people when we are seeking answers. But can someone else really tell you what the right path is for you personally? If we always look for answers on the outside, then that is a constant source of unrest. Ultimately only the answers that come from ourselves help. Naikan trains the ability to have an internal dialogue with oneself.

If you listen to yourself in order to get answers to your questions, you often receive quite contradictory signals from inside. Perhaps you react in a disappointed manner or have an internal quarrel with yourself. This is also a source of unrest. The healthy way to deal with inconsistencies is by perceiving them, and including these in your decision.¹ Naikan trains the ability to deal with the sometimes conflicting diversity of experiences, and to find clarity.


The tower of strength

Rest and movement are a constant interplay. This is true for the inner workings, as well as for the world that surrounds us. To deal with this moving interplay, we yearn for peace and quiet, for a tower of strength.

We like to look for support and orientation from the outside. But we won't find anything there. Finally, we see that it is about internal support and orientation.

Again and again people come to Naikan to find their own centre, their calming anchor. One participant also came with this request, and recognized the following on the sixth day of her Naikan-week: "I can be my own tower of strength."

Welcome to the world of introspection.



*Intensive Naikan
is the beginning.
Daily Naikan
is the goal.*

Ishin Yoshimoto

Classic Naikan: The Naikan week

When the Naikan method came to Europe in the 1980s, it was clear for a long time that "Naikan" meant a retreat week. Over time, the diversity of Naikan forms grew, which is very pleasing.

Today, however, it is no longer clear when one speaks of Naikan and says: "I have done Naikan," whether it was for a week, a weekend or a quick getting-to-know the method at a seminar. Was it Classic Naikan, Kodo Naikan, Naikan coaching? Was it solely Naikan, or Naikan in combination with another method?

In order to create a disambiguation, the 'Association of Classic Naikan' was founded in 2010 in Austria. The objective of the association is to represent, maintain, and clearly display the Classic Naikan week to the outside world.

What is Classic Naikan?

The definition of "Classic Naikan", in terms of the Association of Classic Naikan, quoted on <http://www.naikan-verband.net>:

Naikan introspection allows the growths of one's self-awareness and personal development in a holistic manner. Introspection and self-knowledge are the basis for the recognition, understanding, comprehension, experience, development, and the acceptance of one's own nature in all areas of human existence — on a spiritual, mental, emotional and physical level.

Classic Naikan is a one week retreat in silence and introspection. Methodological tools are the 3 Naikan questions:

1st Naikan question: What has [Person X] done for me?

2nd Naikan question: What have I done for [Person X]?

3rd Naikan question: What difficulties have I caused [Person X]?

The Naikan participants are accompanied by a trained Naikan guide or a team of Naikan guides during the Naikan week. The Naikan accompaniment is carried out in individual sessions (no group work).

Conditions:

- Duration of a Naikan week: A minimum of 6 whole exercise days (continuously from dawn to dusk), including 7 nights (e.g. Sunday evening to Sunday morning).

- Structure of the day: A minimum of 14 hours of Naikan exercise per day from the start of the day (waking up) until the end of the day (going to sleep).

- Structure of the week: At the beginning of the week the Naikan guide gives the Naikan participants an introduction (organizational as well as content-related information). After the introduction: The beginning of the Naikan exercise, retreat to the place of practise and thereafter silence until the end of the Naikan exercise. Self-reflection is supported through individual private Naikan conversations with the Naikan guide. On the last day the Naikan guide ensures a good completion of the Naikan week in the sense that the participant is well prepared for everyday life.

- Each Naikan participant receives a private training area for the individual self-reflection during the Naikan week. This is to retreat and focus on yourself.

- From the beginning of the Naikan exercise on the first day up until the last day, continuous silence between Naikan participants and no contact to the outside world is agreed on (no conversing and making contact, no phones, no computers), also no distractions are allowed (no television, no radio, no reading). Contact during the Naikan week is solely with Naikan guides.

- The Naikan guides come to the Naikan participants several times a day to lead individual Naikan conversations. During the course of the day, there are at least 7 individual meetings at intervals of 60 to 120 minutes.

- Naikan is understood as a continuous practise, without interruption (e.g. silence also during meals), and in autonomous self-reflection (i.e. most of the work is done by the Naikan participants themselves, at their

own pace at their place of practise, without interference from external sources).

- The Naikan exercise works with the 3 Naikan questions:

1st Naikan question: What has [.....] done for me?

2nd Naikan question: What have I done for [.....]?

3rd Naikan question: What difficulties have I caused [.....]?

- First of all, the Naikan questions are asked with regard to people (e.g. mother, father, grandparents, siblings, partners...). The memories in relation to a person are chronologically examined using the 3 Naikan questions, from the first contact until today, or until the last contact. This is divided into stages of life (about 4 to 6 years). For every stage of life, there is 60 to 120 minutes of reflection time for the Naikan participants, who find a certain closure through a short individual Naikan conversation with a Naikan guide. (Example: Person — mother, when I was 0-6 years old, then 6-10, 10-14, 14-18, etc. until today)

- Individual Naikan meetings are usually short (about 10 minutes). Here, the Naikan participant reports about some of the examples that he or she has found regarding the 3 Naikan questions. The Naikan guide listens attentively and thanks the participant. Support through genuine listening, restraint and being non-judgmental are the main tasks of Naikan guides. If the Naikan participant has questions or concerns, he or she can discuss these with the Naikan guide. If necessary, the Naikan guide is there to give additional guidance.

- The core of the Naikan method is to work with the 3 Naikan questions. Normally, it does not need additional methodological supplements. If necessary, the Naikan guide can support the participant with other tools.

- As a rule, the Naikan exercise begins with the observation of one's own life story in relation to the mother (or the person who has taken on the mother role), then in relation to the father. Subsequently, it is individually agreed upon which persons or topics will be dealt with using the Naikan questions.