The Practice of Asceticism (Level C1)

1 Warm-up

Discuss these questions with your partner / teacher:

1. What are the first five words that come to mind when you hear the word "asceticism"?
2. What does the ascetic lifestyle include?

2 Skim the text below. Mention at least 3 ideas expressed in the text.

In a world where consumerism and materialism reign supreme, the concept of asceticism may seem outdated and irrelevant. However, there are still individuals who choose to renounce material possessions in order to achieve spiritual enlightenment.

Ascetics are individuals who lead a life of self-denial and self-discipline, often embracing celibacy and living as hermits. They seek to transcend the physical realm and connect with the divine through their practice of austerity.

While some may view asceticism as extreme or unnecessary, for those who practice it, it is a way to achieve self-transcendence and find meaning beyond the superficialities of modern life. It is a way to strip away the distractions and focus on what truly matters.

There are different forms of asceticism, ranging from the extreme practices of fasting and self-flagellation to more moderate forms such as meditation and voluntary simplicity. Each individual must find the form that works best for them in their pursuit of spiritual growth.

In today's society, where success is often equated with wealth and possessions, it can be difficult to understand why someone would choose to live a life of asceticism. However, for those who have experienced the profound sense of peace and connection that comes with this lifestyle, it is a choice that brings immense fulfillment and purpose.

Asceticism is not just a religious practice, but also a philosophical one. It is a rejection of the notion that happiness and fulfillment can be found solely in material possessions and external achievements. Instead, it is a recognition that true happiness comes from within, and that by letting go of attachment to material things, one can find a deeper sense of contentment and inner peace.

In a world where the pursuit of material wealth often leads to stress, anxiety, and dissatisfaction, asceticism offers an alternative path to fulfillment and happiness. While it may not be for everyone, it is a reminder that there are other ways to live and find meaning in life beyond the superficialities of modern society.

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3 Match the words and phrases from the text with the definitions below.

1	superficialities	a	a person who lives alone and apart from society, often for religious or spiritual reasons.
2	physical realm	b	the world of tangible objects and experiences that can be perceived through the senses.
3	be equated with	c	to give up or reject a belief, claim, or action.
4	self-transcendence	d	the act of punishing oneself, often by whipping or beating, as a form of religious discipline or penance.
5	to renounce	e	a state of happiness and satisfaction with one's life and circumstances.
6	celibacy	f	relating to God or a higher power; sacred or holy.
7	self-flagellation	g	to be considered equal to or the same as something else in terms of meaning or importance.
8	the divine	h	the practice of abstaining from sexual relations, usually for religious reasons.
9	enlightenment	i	things that are shallow or lacking depth, such as appearances or surface-level characteristics.
10	contentment	j	a state of understanding and knowledge that comes from deep contemplation and spiritual awareness.
11	hermit	k	the act of going beyond one's own limitations or ego to achieve a greater sense of purpose or connection with the universe.

4 Let's Discuss These Interesting Questions!

1. Would you be ready to renounce some of your material possessions?
2. Can one achieve spiritual enlightenment without embracing celibacy? Why or why not?
3. What are some potential benefits and drawbacks of pursuing a life of asceticism in today's society?
4. Are there any contemporary examples of individuals or communities who practice asceticism?

5 Fill in the gaps in this ad with the words from the lesson:

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contentment, divine, realm, self-transcendence, enlightenment, asceticism (2), superficialities, transcending

Welcome to our rehab center, where you can practice _____(1) in a supportive environment. Our program is designed to help you achieve spiritual _____(2) by _____(3) the physical _____(4) and connecting with the _____(5). Through various practices like meditation, fasting, and self-reflection, you will learn to achieve _____(6) and experience a sense of _____(7) beyond the _____(8) of everyday life. Here's an example timetable: morning meditation, followed by a healthy breakfast, yoga, and a workshop on mindfulness. Afternoon activities include nature walks, journaling, and group discussions. Join us and discover the transformative power of _____(9).

6 Let's discuss...

1. Would you participate in this program? Why? Why not?

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Correct Answers

3 **Correct Answers:**

1 i 2 b 3 g 4 k 5 c 6 h 7 d 8 f
9 j 10 e 11 a

5 **Correct Answers:**

1 asceticism 2 enlightenment 3 transcending 4 realm
5 divine 6 self-transcendence 7 contentment 8 superficialities
9 asceticism

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