ABSTRACT. The purpose of this article is to show how meditation can be used to help a student to become an ethical person. Discursive and non-discursive meditation give the student an awareness of ethical issues and lead to the discovery and application of models of ethical conduct. In part one, the student is led through non-discursive meditation to discover him/her self as an ethical person. The student is also given the tools to explore ethical issues. Part two discusses a transition stage from non-discursive to discursive meditation. The student is led to use non-discursive meditation to construct an ethical value system and apply it to his/her own life. An art medium is especially helpful at this stage. Discursive meditation gives the chance for the student to compare who he/she is with what he/she should be. Part three discusses four elements in the construction of an ethical vision with discursive meditation: First, a picture of reality; second, models of ethical rules; third, models of ethical conduct; fourth, current personal and social values. The conclusion contains a description of the ethical person.

Business Ethics taught only from books and textual materials may occupy an important place in education, but my purpose is different. My goal is to help the students become ethical persons. This requires an ability to perform three seemingly simple tasks: First, to recognize ethical issues; second, to analyze them; and third, to act upon them. The ethical principles derived from textual materials covered in a Business Ethics course have their place, but only as a tool or a standard used by an ethical person. The purpose of this article is to show how meditation can be used to help the student to become an ethical person.

My purpose in using meditation to teach Business Ethics is to produce people with an “Ethical Vision”. Meditation gives students an awareness of ethical issues in their lives and leads to the discovery and application of models of ethical conduct to serve as guides to behavior in general and to ethical decision making in particular. In effect, I use meditation to stop the world. There are many ways to stop the world and many kinds of meditation. I will restrict myself to two forms, namely, discursive and non-discursive meditation. The classroom communication process between the instructor and the students is slowed down by both non-discursive and discursive meditation so that students can learn to use meditation to accomplish the three tasks mentioned above. Non-discursive meditation greatly contributes to the process of constructing a vision because it gives people a sense of themselves and their place in the world. Discursive meditation, in its many forms, gives substance to an ethical vision because it leads to an awakening to the existence and importance of ethical issues in life.

In part one, I will describe how the students are led through non-discursive meditation to discover themselves as ethical persons. They are also given the tools to explore ethical issues through non-discursive meditation.
In part two, I will discuss a transition state between non-discursive and discursive meditation. After discovering themselves as ethical persons, the students are led to use non-discursive meditation as a technique to construct their own ethical value system and apply it to their own lives. At this transition stage, an art medium is extremely useful for discovering and analyzing meanings, especially ethical meanings.

Through non-discursive meditation, the individual is taught to become aware of him/herself and his/her place in the world. However, non-discursive meditation is not an end in itself. Discursive meditation, as is explained in more detail in part three, gives the participant a chance to compare who he/she is with what he/she should be. Here the student is encouraged to compare the values he/she has discovered about him/herself during non-discursive meditation with an ideal, and construct a system of ethical principles for him/herself using discursive meditation. Textual materials are recommended here and the student is encouraged to search for the ideal. The result is the development of a person with an ethical vision through meditation in both non-discursive and discursive forms.

I. Discovering ethical issues through non-discursive meditation

An ethical person must become aware of his/her self, his/her ethical values, and his/her place in the world. Non-discursive meditation can be a powerful device to teach students how they can stop their world and take stock of their lives because the body itself participates in the meditation as the locus of experience and insight, inseparably one with the mind (Takeuchi, 1993, p. xx).

At this point, the process is entirely self-centered and observational, without the constraint of reference to any system of ethics or values. Thus viewed, it is only a first step, but a very necessary first step to becoming an ethical person. Because this step is only a means to an end, virtually any school of non-discursive meditation will suffice. There are many kinds of non-discursive meditation techniques, such as Taikyokken, Zen, and Yoga; these teach people to look at and reflect on their place in the world. The goal is to teach students a way of stopping and reflecting, to provide a context for developing and applying their own values. Therefore, non-discursive meditation is not used as an end in itself. Taikyokken, Yoga, or Zen all have their proponents, but in an ethics class, they serve only as a tool, not as a philosophy. Non-discursive meditation serves to stop the world. Students, like business people, lead busy, active, stressful lives. Non-discursive meditation serves to put a brake on the activities of a busy day. The ethical person must be able to stop this world and reflect upon life. This is an ability to step aside from normal activities in order to recognize ethical issues that arise in business or personal life.

I.A. Non-discursive meditation exercises

I began the class with a ten-minute period of Yoga exercises. The students were told to sit quietly and comfortably in their places. They were instructed to focus on their external environment with no attempt to rationalize or explain it. They were told to listen to the sounds that occurred, to look out the window and examine the green of the trees, to listen and feel the gentle afternoon breeze, to pay attention to the voices of people in the vicinity, and so on.

They were also shown how to attend to their inner sensations. For example, they were asked to stand up, stretch, and feel the movement of their muscles. Attention was called to the inner condition of their arms, neck, and head, for example. Then the instructor told them to become aware of the condition of their legs, knees, their chest and other parts of their body. They were given an opportunity to close their eyes and listen to their breathing, and even to attend to the sounds of their environment as perceived with their eyes closed.

I.A.1. Reflection. After the ten-minute session was over, the students were given a chance to reflect on the meditation in silence, and then they were asked to write down their reactions.