



Kalyāṇa-Mitta Meditation Center

Ajahn Kumāro Bhikkhu, Resident Monastic
122 Arlington Street, Unit B, Asheville, NC 28801
Elisha Buhler's telephone #: (910) 922-1549
website: mittameditation.com
email: mittameditation@gmail.com

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Tranquility Meditation (samatha) and The Five Hindrances (pañca nīvaraṇā)

This September Newsletter will discuss Tranquility Meditation (samatha) and The Five Hindrances (pañca nīvaraṇā). The October Newsletter will discuss Insight Meditation (vipassanā). There will be some overlap when discussing these two forms of meditation: tranquility and insight.

The pāli word "bhāvanā" is translated as 'meditation' and is the practice of mental cultivation that includes mindfulness (sati), concentration (samādhi), development of wholesome (kusala) qualities of mind, and wisdom (paññā). Bhāvanā is the process of training the mind to develop calm abiding (samatha) and insight (vipassanā) into the nature of reality. Meditation (bhāvanā) consist of the following two categories:

1. serenity or tranquility meditation (samatha bhāvanā) that cultivates concentration (samādhi), and
2. insight meditation (vipassanā bhāvanā) that cultivates wisdom (paññā).

The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Complete Translation of the Anguttara Nikaya translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi

2.31 (11) "Bhikkhus, these two things pertain to true knowledge. What two? Serenity and insight. When serenity is developed, what benefit does one experience? The mind is developed. When the mind is developed, what benefit does one experience? Lust is abandoned. When insight is developed, what benefit does one experience? Wisdom is developed. When wisdom is developed, what benefit does one experience? Ignorance is abandoned.

"A mind defiled by lust is not liberated, and wisdom defiled by ignorance is not developed. Thus, bhikkhus, through the fading away of lust there is liberation of mind, and through the fading away of ignorance there is liberation by wisdom."

Of these two categories, the cultivation of insight (vipassanā) has the greater importance because wisdom (paññā) is necessary to uproot from the mind the Three Unwholesome Roots (akusala mūla). The Three Unwholesome Roots (akusala mūla) are the following:

1. delusion (moha) = ignorance (avijjā),
2. greed (lobha), and
3. hatred (dosa).

The three unwholesome roots cause the cycle of repeated birth, ageing, sickness, death, and rebirth (saṃsāra) and also the suffering (dukkha) experienced within saṃsāra. Tranquility meditation (samatha) and the development of concentration (samādhi) contribute to the practice of insight meditation (vipassanā), and also serve as a comfortable and restful dwelling for the mind, pleasant abiding (sukha vihāraya) in this life.

The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Complete Translation of the Anguttara Nikaya translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi

4.41 (1) Concentration

"Bhikkhus, there are these four developments of concentration. What four? (1) There is a development of concentration that leads to dwelling happily in this very life. (2) There is a development of concentration that leads to obtaining knowledge and vision [ñānadassana]. (3) There is a development of concentration that leads to mindfulness and clear comprehension. (4) There is a development of concentration that leads to the destruction of the taints [āsavakkhaya].

(1) “And what, bhikkhus, is the development of concentration that leads to dwelling happily in this very life? Here, secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, a bhikkhu enters and dwells in the first jhāna, which consists of rapture and pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by thought and examination. With the subsiding of thought and examination, he enters and dwells in the second jhāna, which has internal placidity and unification of mind and consists of rapture and pleasure born of concentration, without thought and examination. With the fading away as well of rapture, he dwells equanimous and, mindful and clearly comprehending, he experiences pleasure with the body; he enters and dwells in the third jhāna of which the noble ones declare: ‘He is equanimous, mindful, one who dwells happily.’ With the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the previous passing away of joy and dejection, he enters and dwells in the fourth jhāna, neither painful nor pleasant, which has purification of mindfulness by equanimity. This is called the development of concentration that leads to dwelling happily in this very life.⁷¹⁷

(2) “And what is the development of concentration that leads to obtaining knowledge and vision? Here, a bhikkhu attends to the perception of light; he focuses on the perception of day thus: ‘As by day, so at night; as at night, so by day.’ Thus, with a mind that is open and uncovered, he develops a mind imbued with luminosity. This is the development of concentration that leads to obtaining knowledge and vision.

(3) “And what is the development of concentration that leads to mindfulness and clear comprehension? Here, a bhikkhu knows feelings as they arise, as they remain present, as they disappear; he knows perceptions as they arise, as they remain present, as they disappear; he knows thoughts as they arise, as they remain present, as they disappear. This is the development of concentration that leads to mindfulness and clear comprehension.

(4) “And what is the development of concentration that leads to the destruction of the taints? Here, a bhikkhu dwells contemplating arising and vanishing in the five aggregates subject to clinging: ‘Such is form, such its origin, such its passing away; such is feeling ... such is perception ... such are volitional activities ... such is consciousness, such its origin, such its passing away.’ This is the development of concentration that leads to the destruction of the taints.

“These are the four developments of concentration. And it was with reference to this that I said in the Pārāyana, in ‘The Questions of Puṇṇaka’:

“Having comprehended the world’s highs and lows,
he is not perturbed by anything in the world.
Peaceful, fumeless, untroubled, wishless,
he has, I say, crossed over birth and old age.”

Note 717: Evidently, this refers to the attainment of the jhānas either by one who does not use them to develop insight, or by an arahant, who enters the jhānas simply to dwell at ease. Elsewhere the jhānas are shown to lead to the destruction of the taints.

The practice of meditation produces merit (puñña). Merit is wholesome action (kusala kamma) that reaps benefit in this present life and in future lives, and merit is also a necessary condition to escape from the repeated cycle of rebirth (saṃsāra). The suttas in the Pāli Canon mentions mental development-meditation as one of the Three Kinds of Meritorious Actions (puñña kiriya vatthu). The Three Kinds of Meritorious Actions are the following:

1. generosity (dāna),
2. virtue (sīla), and
3. meditation (bhāvanā).

The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Complete Translation of the Anguttara Nikaya translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi

8.36 (6) Activity

“Bhikkhus, there are these three bases of meritorious activity. What three? The basis of meritorious activity consisting in giving; the basis of meritorious activity consisting in virtuous behavior; and the basis of meritorious activity consisting in meditative development.

The suttas also mention delight in mental development-meditation (bhāvanārāmatā) as one of the Four Noble Usages (ariyavaṃsa) for a monastic. A monastic, defined in the Buddhist Commentary Dhammapada-atthakathā by Buddhaghosa, as “the person who sees danger (in saṃsāra)”. The Four Noble Usages are the following:

1. content with any robe (cīvara),
2. content with any almsfood (piṇḍapāta),
3. content with any lodging (senāsana), and
4. delight in mental development-meditation (bhāvanā) and abandoning the defilements (kilesa).

4.28 (8) Noble Lineages

- (1) “Here, a bhikkhu is content with any kind of robe ...
- (2) “Again, a bhikkhu is content with any kind of almsfood ...
- (3) “Again, a bhikkhu is content with any kind of lodging ...
- (4) “Again, a bhikkhu finds delight in development, is delighted with development, finds delight in abandoning, is delighted with abandoning.⁶⁸⁰ ...

Note 680 Mp [Buddhist Commentary Manorathapūranī (Aṅguttara Nikāya-atthakathā)]: “Finds delight in development (bhāvanārāmo): He delights in developing the four establishments of mindfulness, the four right strivings, the four bases for psychic potency, the five faculties, the five powers, the seven enlightenment factors, the seven contemplations, the eighteen great insights, the thirty-seven aids to enlightenment, and the thirty-eight meditation objects. Finds delight in abandoning (pahānārāmo): He delights in abandoning the defilements of sensual desire and so forth.”

Tranquility Meditation (samatha) aims to calm and stabilize the mind by focusing on a meditation anchor (kasiṇa). A meditation anchor is a visual, auditory or tactile object that practitioners use to focus their attention during meditation to develop mindfulness (sati) and concentration (samādhi). The anchor is used to settle the mind from mental distractions and proliferation with thinking, feelings and emotions. The anchor is discussed in greater detail below.

The practice of meditation cultivates mental tranquility which leads to absorption concentration (jhāna). Absorption concentration (jhāna) or “one-pointedness of mind” (ekaggata) is achieved through sustained concentration on a meditation anchor.

The experience of uncomfortable physical sensations of the body (dukkha) during meditation is normal. Movement of the body alleviates dukkha to some degree and will tend to also move the mind from stillness. To cultivate a still, silent and peaceful mind it is best not to move the body during meditation, at the very least minimize movement of the body. There is benefit in meditation that investigates the arising, change, location and intensity of dukkha by paying attention to dukkha without identification or getting entangled with the unpleasant feelings. Identify instead with the observer that transcends dukkha, thereby liberation from dukkha is cultivated. However, if the mental faculties of energy (virīya), mindfulness (sati) and concentration (samādhi) are not sufficient to remain aloof from dukkha, then the experience of dukkha will disturb the peace of mind without advancing towards liberation from dukkha; in such a situation, move the body mindfully to a more comfortable position. A suggested way of practice with weak mental faculties is to stay with dukkha for a few minutes longer in each meditation session before moving the body in order to exercise and strengthen the ‘muscles’ of energy, mindfulness and concentration.

During meditation, thoughts will naturally arise. When thoughts arise, acknowledge them without becoming attached, interested or reactive. Allow thoughts and any content of mind to pass through the awareness like clouds (~content) drifting across the sky (~awareness), observe them without attachment or interest and let them pass, and gently turn attention back to the meditation anchor or to the physical sensations of the posture. Let go of thoughts about the past or the future, and bring attention fully to the present moment. The contents of mind are one or more of the following Five Aggregates (khandā):

1. material form (rūpa khandha),
2. mental formations (saṅkhāra khandha),
3. perceptions (saññā khandha),
4. feelings (vedanā khandha), and
5. sense consciousness (viññāṇa khandha).

During meditation attention is directed to the meditation anchor and may be practiced in the following Four Bodily Postures (īryāpatha):

1. sitting posture (nisinna),
2. standing posture (ṭhita),
3. walking posture (gacchanta), and
4. lying down posture (sayāna).

1. Sitting posture (nisinna) for meditation is performed with a still body that supports a still mind. Sit so that the body is comfortable and in a position that can be maintained without moving for the entire meditation period.

The sitting posture may take various forms based on stability, individual comfort and physical limitations. The posture position should allow sitting for an extended period without discomfort or distraction. The following are some popular positions used for sitting meditation.

- Full lotus position is achieved by placing the right foot on the left thigh and the left foot on the right thigh.
 - Half lotus position is achieved by placing one foot on the opposite thigh while the other foot rests on the floor.
 - Burmese position is a simpler form of the half lotus position, both feet are placed on the floor with legs crossed and ankles slightly overlapping.
 - Seiza position is achieved by kneeling with the buttocks resting on the heels and the hands placed on the thighs or on the lap. The use of a cushion or bench may also be used to support the buttocks and reduce strain on the knees.
 - Chair position is suitable for when the floor-based postures are uncomfortable. Sit on a chair with the back straight and feet flat on the ground, without leaning against the chair's backrest.
- Sit on a cushion (zafu) and meditation mat to elevate the hips slightly. This may help to maintain a more stable and comfortable posture. A meditation bench may be used when sitting cross-legged is uncomfortable.
 - Straighten the back and relax the shoulders to ensure that the spine is erect and straight. Imagine a string pulling the crown of the head toward the ceiling. The straight back helps to maintain alertness and prevents drowsiness. Relax the shoulders, let the arms and hands rest naturally, and avoid tensing any muscles.
 - The knees, when possible, should touch the floor to support a stable posture.
 - Place the hands on the lap, either resting one hand on top of the other with the palms facing upward or forming a meditation hand gesture (mudra). The Dhyana Mudra is formed where the hands rest on the lap, right hand on top of the left, with the tips of the thumbs gently touching.
 - The head is slightly tilted down and tuck the chin slightly to align the neck with the spine. This prevents strain on the neck.
 - Close the eyes in order to avoid stimulation from visual objects. However, when experiencing drowsiness try opening the eyes either half way or completely open so that light can stimulate the mind and produce alertness.
2. Standing posture (thita) for meditation is the practice of mindfulness while standing. This can be particularly useful during daily activities, such as when waiting in line.
 - Choose a suitable location that is quiet and without distractions. Stand upright with the feet shoulder width apart, the back is straight but not tense, allow the arms to hang naturally by the sides, and relax the shoulders and neck.
 - Begin by taking a few deep breaths to relax the body and mind. Then, bring attention to the sensation of standing. Feel the weight of the body on the feet, the pressure of the feet on the ground, and the overall sensation of balance and stability. Slowly scan the body from head to toe, and from toe to head, and notice any areas of tension or discomfort. Release tension by relaxing the muscles in the stressed areas.
 3. Walking posture (gacchanta) for meditation utilizes the energy of physical motion to keep the body awake, and the mind alert, mindful and concentrated. Walking mindfully may also be practiced in everyday activities by being fully present, promoting a sense of calm and clarity. Walking meditation is also used to refreshen the mind and body after periods of sitting meditation.
 - One way to practice walking meditation is to walk at a slightly slower pace than normal for about thirty paces, make a complete stop at the end of the path, turn mindfully around and completely stop, before you begin to walk in the opposite direction along the path. Be attentive

to the turning motion, and maintain awareness and mindfulness of each step. The mind is mindful and concentrated on the meditation anchor and/or to the sensations and movements of the feet and legs during each step.

- Walk upright with a relaxed posture. The hands may be in a hand gesture (mudra), such as one hand gently holding the other at belly level or the arms swinging relaxed at the sides. Start by taking a few deep breaths to relax the body and mind, and begin walking at a slower pace than the usual gait.
 - Maintain awareness of the body throughout the practice, feeling the movements of the legs, hips, and arms during the walk. Feel the sensations in the feet as they make contact with the ground.
4. Lying down posture (sayāna) for meditation is awareness of the body and mind while lying down. While lying down meditation is calming and suitable for when the body is sick, it's important not to fall asleep during the practice but to remain fully awake, aware and attentive.
- Lie down on the back in a comfortable and relaxed position. A cushion or a yoga mat may be used for support. Keep the body straight but not rigid, and let the arms rest by the sides with palms facing up. Small pillows may be placed under the head and knees if needed for added comfort.
 - Perform a body scan by systematically directing the attention to different parts of the body, starting from the toes and moving upward to the head, and then from the head downward to the toes, paying attention to the sensations in the body. Release any tension or discomfort that is present in the parts of the body during the scan.

The development of tranquility (samatha) and meditative absorption (jhāna) allows for the temporary suppression of Five Hindrances which are obstacles or barriers to the development of deep states of tranquility, concentration (samādhi), and insight (vipassanā). Permanent suppression of the Five Hindrances are achieved through wisdom (paññā) and wisdom is developed with insight meditation (vipassanā). **The Five Hindrances (pañca nīvaraṇā)** are the following:

- I. sensual desire (kāmacchanda),
- II. ill will (vyāpāda),
- III. sloth and torpor (thīnamiddha),
- IV. restlessness and remorse (uddhaccakukkucca), and
- V. doubt (vicikicchā).

The hindrances, hinders one's progress on the spiritual path because it keeps the mind bound to the cycle of suffering (saṃsāra).

The following are general practices recommended to overcome the hindrances.

1. Recognize the hindrances when they initially arise, investigate them in terms of the Three Characteristics of Existence, and thereby let go of the hindrances. The Three Characteristics of Existence (ti-lakkhaṇa) are the following:
 - i. impermanence (anicca),
 - ii. suffering (dukkha), and
 - iii. not-self (anatta).

The hindrances are nothing other than thoughts, emotions, habits, and conditions of mind. Practice mindfulness (sati) of the impermanent nature of the hindrances by observing their arising and passing away without getting caught up in or entangled with them. Suffering is experienced when you crave or attach to that which is impermanent. That which is impermanent and suffering is not-self. The mind is able to let go of the hindrances upon realization of their three characteristics and will then be able to rest in equanimity (upekkhā). The practice of equanimity is discussed with the practice of the Divine Abodes (brahmavihāra) below.

2. Understand the causes and conditions that give rise to the hindrances by cultivating mindfulness (sati), concentration (samādhi) and insight (vipassanā) which recognizes the hindrances when they initially arise. The following are general causes for the arising of the hindrances.

- i. Unrestrained sensory indulgence, engaging excessively in sensory pleasures without moderation can fuel the hindrance of sensual desire (kāmacchanda). Therefore, do not expose the mind to a degree of sensory stimulation that causes the mind to be overwhelmed and forgetful of the necessity to stay mindful, alert and aware.
 - ii. Habitual patterns and frequent experiences of aversion, anger, and hostility can strengthen the hindrance of ill-will (vyāpāda). Therefore, train the mind to remain in a state of loving-kindness (metta) as the usual mode.
 - iii. Lack of energy (virīya) and effort in cultivating mindfulness (sati), concentration (samādhi), and wisdom (paññā) can lead to the hindrance of sloth and torpor (thīnamiddha). Therefore, put forth effort even when there is a perception of tiredness due to the fact that perceptions are not trustworthy and also, available energy does increase when effort is exerted that goes beyond perceived limitations.
 - iv. An overly busy or agitated lifestyle can contribute to the hindrance of restlessness and remorse (uddhaccakukkucca). Therefore, simplify one's life by minimizing possessions, clutter, and plans to achieve Worldly Concerns. The Eight Worldly Concerns (lokadhamma) are the following:
 1. Hope for gain (lābha) is attachment to gaining material possessions, wealth, and favorable circumstances.
 2. Fear of loss (alābha) is aversion to loss, poverty, and unfavorable conditions.
 3. Hope for fame (yasa) is attachment to gaining recognition, praise, and popularity.
 4. Fear of disrepute (ayasa) is aversion to insignificance and a negative reputation.
 5. Hope for praise (pasamsā) is attachment to receiving praise, compliments, and positive feedback.
 6. Fear of criticism (nindā) is aversion to criticism, negative feedback, and blame.
 7. Hope for pleasure (sukha) is attachment to experiencing pleasure, comfort, and happiness.
 8. Fear of pain (dukkha) is aversion to misery, discomfort, and suffering.
 - v. Insufficient study and practice of the teachings (Dhamma) and not associating with spiritual friends (kalyāṇa-mitta) can lead to the hindrance of doubt (vicikicchā). Therefore, associate with others who are training the mind in accordance with the Dhamma, and maintain daily discipline of study and practice of the teachings.
 - vi. External influences, environmental factors, and social conditioning can contribute to the arising of the hindrances. Avoid situations, environments, and individuals that are not supportive for spiritual practice but instead nurture the hindrances. Therefore, live in a wholesome and supportive environment for spiritual development, and engage in Right Livelihood (sammā ājiva). Right Livelihood does not employ the following five occupations:
 1. trading in weapons (satthavaṇijjā),
 2. trading in living beings (sattavaṇijjā),
 3. trading in meat (maṃsavaṇijjā),
 4. trading in intoxicants (majjavaṇijjā), and
 5. trading in poisons (visavaṇijjā).
3. Mindfulness (sati) of the contents of mind, one or more of the Five Aggregates (khandā) mentioned above, will enable the mind to grow in consciousness, thereby have greater awareness of the arising of the hindrances as a content of mind. Mindfulness meditation involves observing the mind, acknowledging the arising of the hindrances and letting them go with equanimity (upekkhā). Mindfulness allows the mind to observe the hindrances without getting entangled in them, thereby gradually weakening their power. When you notice the hindrances arising, redirect your attention to something more beneficial, such as the meditation object, the breath (anapanasati), loving-kindness (metta), or contemplation on impermanence (anicca). Mindfulness practice also helps in maintaining presence and awareness of mind and body during daily activities outside of formal meditation.

4. Meditation (bhāvanā) cultivates tranquility and insight. Tranquility meditation (samatha) aims to cultivate a calm, focused, and a stable mind by calming the mental hindrances. Insight meditation (vipassana) is used to specifically target and investigate each of the hindrances in terms of the Three Characteristics of Existence (ti-lakkhaṇa).
5. Paying attention to the breath (anapanasati) as a meditation anchor is used to develop mindfulness and to subdue the hindrances. The practice is be mindful of the rhythm of breathing, inhalation and exhalation. Pay attention to only one breath at a time, the breath that is here and now. Do not think of past or future breaths. Pay attention to whether the breath is long or short, warm or cool, and feel the breath entering and leaving the lungs.

A long breath has benefits over a short breath. The long breath calms the body and mind, and exercises the faculties of energy (virīya), mindfulness (sati) and concentration (samādhi) in maintaining the long breath. Reciting the mantra “one long breath” while paying attention to the rhythm of breathing may also be helpful in reminding yourself to just pay attention to that one long breath.

Another method of practicing mindfulness of breathing is to count the breaths. The pair of inhalation and exhalation is counted as one number. Breath in “one”, breath out “one”, breath in “two”, breath out “two”, and so on up to “eight”; then start to count backwards from “eight” down to “one”. “Eight” as the limit of counting is selected for its reference to the Noble Eightfold Path (ariya aṭṭhaṅgika magga). Counting the breaths is useful when the mind is restless with thinking.

Increase focus and awareness of the breath immediately upon the initial rising of the hindrances (nīvaraṇā).

6. Meditating on the sound of silence, a refined meditation anchor or sign (nimitta), is useful in bringing the mind to subtle and deep states of concentration where the hindrances are temporarily not present. The sound of silence is heard as a background sound when the mind is quiet and still.

The hindrances does not arise when there is no sense of self. Ajahn Sumedho explains the relationship between the sound of silence and the absence of a sense of self.

The Four Noble Truths by Ajahn Sumedho

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See if you can hear a kind of ringing sound in the mind, the sound of silence, the primordial sound. When you concentrate your attention on that, you can reflect: ‘Is there any sense of self?’ You see that when you’re really empty - when there’s just clarity, alertness and attention - there’s no self. There’s no sense of me and mine.”

7. Associate with spiritual friends (kalyāṇa-mitta), like-minded practitioners and spiritual mentors, will provide support and encouragement to overcome the hindrances. Participation in group meditation and Dhamma discussions will serve to inspire and motivate, so that the hindrances can be overcome with consistent practice. Wholesome (kusala) behavior, environments and spiritual friends will provide support to cultivate wholesome mental states.
8. Practice patience (khanti) and endurance (adhivāsanā) during the process of training in the various spiritual practices used to cultivate wholesome (kusala) and skillful (upāyakosalla) qualities.

Do not expect instant gratification. Obstacles and problems in one’s personal life or with spiritual practices will probably not be resolved quickly. There is wisdom in adopting a long term view that benefits from the practice will be perceived over an extended period. Patience and endurance are some of the most valuable qualities of mind to be cultivated.

Patience refers to the ability to remain calm, composed, and tolerant when confronted with difficulties, provocations, or suffering (dukkha); and is the capacity to endure hardships and challenges without becoming reactive or agitated. Patience goes beyond mere tolerance, it involves developing a deep understanding of the impermanence and interconnectedness of all of life. Practicing patience allows individuals to avoid unnecessary conflicts and maintain inner peace (santi) and equanimity (upekkhā); it involves letting go of anger, hatred, and the desire for

revenge. Patience encourages compassion and empathy towards oneself and others. By cultivating patience, practitioners can break free from the cycle of suffering (saṃsāra), develop peace and contentment (santuṭṭhi), and remain in harmony with others, the environment and with oneself.

Endurance refers to the energy, diligence, and effort required to overcome obstacles and to persist in one's spiritual practice; it involves the determination to continue walking the path towards enlightenment despite challenges, obstacles, setbacks, or distractions that may arise. Endurance is closely related to the concept of Right Effort (sammā vāyāma), which is one of the factors of the Noble Eightfold Path (ariya aṭṭhaṅgika magga). Right Effort consists of generating the following four states of mind:

1. effort to avoid unwholesome states of mind from arising (saṃvara-padhāna),
2. effort to overcome unwholesome states of mind that have arisen (pahāna-padhāna),
3. effort to cultivate wholesome states of mind (bhāvanā-padhāna), and
4. effort to maintain wholesome states of mind that have arisen (anurakkhaṇa-padhāna).

Endurance is consistent effort aimed at purifying the mind of defilements (kilesa) and to benefit others without becoming complacent or discouraged in the face of difficulties. The focus is on the goal of liberation (nibbāna) from suffering (dukkha) inherent in the cycle of birth and death (saṃsāra) by maintaining consistency in the Three Fold Training of ethical conduct (sīla), meditation (bhāvanā samādhi), and wisdom (paññā).

- I. Training in ethical conduct (sīla) is achieved through practicing the following Five Precepts:
 1. abstain from destroying living beings (pāṇātipātā veramaṇī),
 2. abstain from stealing or taking that which is not freely given (adinnādānā veramaṇī),
 3. abstain from sexual misconduct (kamesu micchacara veramaṇī),
 4. abstain from false speech (musāvāda veramaṇī), and
 5. abstain from intoxicants that cause carelessness and cloud the mind (surā meraya majja pamādatthāna veramaṇī).
- II. Training in meditation (bhāvanā samādhi) is achieved through practicing tranquility meditation (samatha), and concentration (samādhi) that culminates in absorption concentration (jhāna).
- III. Training to develop wisdom (paññā) is achieved through investigation (dhammavicaya) and insight (vipassanā) meditation.

Another characteristic of endurance is to maintain a balanced approach in practice by not going to extremes. One is to strive towards liberation neither too vigorously nor too relaxed. Effort in practice is increased gradually. A balanced approach aides in maintaining a steady and consistent practice, and by so doing, results are realized and motivation for practice is continuous.

The qualities of patience and endurance are not only relevant for spiritual practice but are also relevant for daily life, fostering harmony in personal relationships and for a more compassionate and tolerant society. Overcoming the hindrances is a process that requires time and effort, discipline of consistent practice and trust that the hindrances will eventually be uprooted from the mind.

- I. Sensual desire (kāmacchanda) is literally the 'delight in sense pleasures'; the craving for sensory pleasures and attachments to sensory experiences, the desire to obtain and covet (abhijjhā) sensual pleasures obtained from the five objects of sensual enjoyment (kāmaguṇa): sights, sounds, odors, tastes, and tangible objects. There is also sensual desire for mental experiences. Sensual desire is greediness for sensual pleasures.

Attachment to sensory pleasures is a cause for the mind to be driven by craving (taṇhā) and to seek instant gratification, which leads to unwholesome actions and perpetuates the cycle of suffering (saṃsāra). When the mind is attached to and identify with sense objects, the mind is then distracted and preoccupied with sense experiences and sensual fantasies, and the mind will not become concentrated in stillness, silence nor peace.

The following specific practices are recommended to overcome sensual desire.

1. Contemplate the impurities (asubha bhāvanā), the unattractive and impermanent aspects of the physical body. The contemplation of the decaying nature of the body and objects of the senses will allow the mind to reduce attachment and desire for sensual objects, and have understanding of the transient nature of sensual pleasures.
 2. Renunciation (nekkhamma) reduces the mind's attachment to sensory pleasures and desires by reducing sensory stimuli and by practicing contentment with less sensory stimulation. This is the practice of minimizing exposure to those sense objects that cause the mind to become infatuated with sensory pleasures.
- II. Ill will (vyāpāda) is one of the Three Unwholesome Roots (akusala mūla) and defilements (kilesa) of mind. The Three Unwholesome Roots is mentioned above. Ill will is also known as anger or hatred (dosā).

Ill will, anger and hatred are mental hindrances that are also characterized by resentment, indignation, spite, malevolence, irritation, aversion, and displeasure. Ill will is an unwholesome mental state that produces animosity, hostility, or aversion towards oneself or others and involves the desire to harm, hurt, or cause suffering to oneself or others. The experience of ill will causes the mind to become clouded with aggression, and the resulting actions and speech are harmful or unkind. The mind under this hindrance is in conflict, disturbed, unbalanced, has diminished brightness, and has trouble establishing concentration (samādhi), attaining peace (santi) of mind and cultivating wisdom (paññā) and compassion (karunā).

The following specific practices are recommended to overcome ill will.

1. Train the mind in the following Divine Abodes (brahmavihāra), also known as the Four Immeasurables and Sublime Attitudes, as the standard or ordinary state of mind.
 - i. Loving-kindness (mettā) meditation is a practice of cultivating boundless love and goodwill towards all beings, including oneself. Loving-kindness is a genuine and unconditional love, without expecting anything in return, and extending that love to others without exception and discrimination. This practice aims to dissolve feelings of animosity, hatred, and ill-will, promoting a sense of interconnectedness and unity among all sentient beings.
 - ii. Compassion (karuṇā) is the quality of having empathy and concern for the suffering of others. Compassion goes beyond mere sympathy but involves a deep understanding of the nature of suffering (dukkha) and a sincere wish to alleviate it. Practicing compassion involves cultivating a sense of connection with all sentient beings and extending a helping hand to those who are experiencing pain, difficulty, or hardship. This practice helps to reduce ego self-centeredness and to increase a sense of interconnectedness with all of life.
 - iii. Altruistic or sympathetic joy (muditā) is to feel joy and rejoice in the success, well-being, and happiness of others. Sympathetic joy goes beyond mere happiness at one's own achievements but rejoices in the accomplishments and beneficial experiences of others. This practice helps to overcome jealousy, envy, and competitiveness.

Cultivating sympathetic joy is the recognition of the interconnectedness of all life and the realization that the happiness of others is not separate from our own. The experience of joy when others are happy can work to overcome the divisive tendencies of ego self-centeredness, leading to a more open and compassionate heart.

- iv. Equanimity (upekkhā) is impartial mental balance and evenness of mind that allows one to face life's ups and downs without being swayed by extreme and negative emotions. Developing equanimity can help one respond to challenging situations with greater clarity and composure.

The practice of equanimity is to treat all experiences, sentient beings, and situations with an open heart and a non-reactive mind. This doesn't mean being indifferent or apathetic, but rather having a deep sense of calm and tranquility that allows one to respond to life's challenges and joys with wisdom (paññā) and without being overwhelmed by emotions. Equanimity is cultivated through the practices of mindfulness (sati) and insight (vipassanā).

The mind is trained to not be moved or react to the ups and downs of life, the changing nature of phenomena, or the preferences of the ego. This quality helps individuals navigate the world with a sense of inner peace and acceptance, regardless of whether situations are pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral.

2. Cultivate forgiveness (khanti) towards oneself and others is crucial for letting go of grudges and resentment. Forgiveness is the ability to be patient and endure without anger or resentment. The recognition that the unenlightened acts out of ignorance (avijjā) and thereby are subject to suffering (dukkha) is helpful to develop compassion (karuṇā) and understanding (paññā) towards oneself and others, and to let go of negative emotions like ill will.
 3. Train in ethical conduct (sīla) is helpful to abstain from harmful actions, speech, and thoughts, thereby reducing the causes and conditions for ill will to arise. See above for the training in the Five Precepts.
 4. Practice acts of generosity (dāna) and kindness (mettā) will help to develop a sense of connection with others and counteracts the ego self-centeredness that fuels ill will.
- III. Sloth and torpor (thīnamiddha) is a state of dullness, heaviness, and lack of energy. The mind overwhelmed with sloth and torpor is bored and apathetic, in a low mood caused by loss of hope or courage and drowsiness.

Sloth is a symptom of the mind that is sluggish, lazy, discouraged, sad, depressed, lacking energy, effort, and enthusiasm. This hindrance may manifest as a general sense of inertia, where one feels lethargic and unwilling to engage in meditation or other virtuous activities.

Torpor is a symptom of the body that is drowsy, sleepy, sluggish, dull, a tendency to do nothing, mental foggiess; lack of clarity, alertness, and attentiveness. With torpor, the mind is clouded, making it difficult to maintain mindfulness and concentration during meditation or during other activities.

The mind and body subjected to this hindrance is weak and not pliable for meditation, and the mind will not become concentrated. The following specific practices are recommended to overcome sloth and torpor.

1. Develop energy and enthusiasm for meditation practice by reflecting on its benefits and setting clear intentions.
 2. Change postures to counteract physical lethargy and increase awareness and alertness of the meditation anchor, body and mind. Try alternating between the sitting (nisinna) and walking (gacchanta) meditation postures that are mentioned above under the Four Bodily Postures (īryāpatha).
 3. Open your eyes partially to allow some light to permeate the mind and use the light as a meditation anchor. Imagine and visualize bright light to invigorate the mind.
 4. Investigate the contents of mind using the Three Characteristics of Existence (ti-lakkhaṇa) described above and mentally recite inspiring Dhamma suttas and verses. An active mind will help in warding off sloth and torpor.
 5. Get sufficient sleep to prevent fatigue during meditation while avoiding overindulgence with eating and sleeping. Overindulgence in food or indulging in sleep can contribute to lethargy and drowsiness. Avoid extremes by eating and sleeping enough for health and meditation, not too much nor too little.
 6. Engage in physical activities like walking meditation, yoga, and other physical exercises to increase available energy for the body and mind. Physical movement will help prevent feelings of lethargy and increase alertness.
- IV. Restlessness and remorse (uddhaccakukkucca) is a mind tainted with agitation, worry, regret, distraction, unsteadiness, vacillation, confusion, and turbulence; and is often accompanied by feelings of anxiety and unease.

The restless mind is scattered and not collected, unable to settle down and tends to jump from one thought to another. This hindrance hinders concentration and prevents the mind from becoming calm.

Remorse is regret over past actions or decisions; the mind experiences anxiety, distress, disturbance, turmoil, and worry. The mind dwells on mistakes, past wrongdoings, or missed opportunities, leading to a sense of guilt and unease; wanders aimlessly, entangled in negative thoughts and emotions.

Restlessness and remorse prevents the mind from becoming peaceful and cannot develop concentration. The following specific practices are recommended to overcome restlessness and remorse.

1. Avoid excessive striving or pushing too hard, as it can lead to restlessness. Maintain a balanced effort that is steady and consistent with disciplined practice.
2. Walking (gacchanta) meditation, one of the Four Bodily Postures (īryāpatha) discussed above, may be used to release pent-up energy and restlessness, grounding the mind in the present moment.
3. Body scan meditation can help calm restlessness and create a sense of ease in the mind. Systematically direct attention to different parts of the body, starting from the toes and moving upward to the head, and then from the head downward to the toes. Release any tension or discomfort that is present in the parts of the body during the scan, and pay attention to the sensations in the body.
4. Cultivate contentment (santuṭṭhi) and acceptance of the here and now, the present moment, that is without anticipation and desires for the future and regrets over the past. This practice will result in a peaceful mind that is free of restlessness and remorse.
5. The training in ethical behavior will prevent remorse from arising due to harmful actions or unwholesome behaviors. See above for the training in Five Precepts.
6. Use the meditation mantra "there is nowhere to go and nothing to do" to stay present in the moment, the here and now. The mantra is a reminder to let go of striving for something else or to be engaged in some other activity, but remain committed to the practice of meditation. The mantra is a reminder to let go of the habitual desire for external achievement and stimulation. The watching consciousness observes mental chatter and contents of mind that naturally falls away into silence. Focus on the here and now, the meditation anchor, and bodily sensations.
- V. Doubt (vicikicchā) is uncertainty, lack of confidence and skepticism about the validity of the Buddha's enlightenment, teachings of the Buddha (Dhamma), uncertainty about the nature of reality, the path of practice to liberation from suffering (dukkha), or the effectiveness of one's own practice. There is a wavering in faith and confidence in the teachings and the path. The mind hesitates and is indecisive, obstructed, disturbed, confused and is unable to become concentrated. There is an inability to recognize what is truly valuable and what is not valuable.

There is a constructive form of skepticism or questioning that encourages investigation and the analysis of teachings (Dhamma) and experiences. "Healthy doubt" is a state of mind that promotes understanding (paññā) and insight (vipassanā) rather than blind acceptance or rejection. The Buddha emphasized personal experience and direct realization over blind faith or dogma. Healthy doubt prevents rigid belief systems and encourages penetration of the teachings on deeper levels. Healthy doubt promotes the following methods.

- Critical examination of teachings, practices, and beliefs in order to discern what resonates with one's own experiences and understanding.
- Questioning and exploring the principals and practices can lead to personal insights and realization, that are meaningful and transformative.
- Developing analytical thinking, discernment, and the ability to differentiate between useful teachings and those that might not resonate with an individual's path at a particular time in one's life.
- Wise attention (yoniso manasikāra) is careful consideration and investigation, directing one's attention in a way that leads to insight and understanding.

Blind attachment to particular ideas, practices, or teachers is not healthy. The healthy approach to the study and practice of Dhamma is with an open mind, curiosity, and a

willingness to explore, this leads to deeper understandings and personal growth. Healthy doubt is not a sign of failure or inadequacy but allows for acceptance of teachings and practices that are within one's ability to understand.

Unhealthy doubt is blindly or with inadequate investigation rejects the enlightenment of the Buddha, Dhamma and practices, and is an obstacle for cultivating wholesome mental qualities and meditation. The following specific practices are recommended for overcoming unhealthy doubt.

1. Investigate the teachings (Dhamma) and reflect on their meaning and relevance in your life. Understanding the principles of Dhamma can help clarify and remove doubts, and build confidence in the spiritual path.
2. Cultivate faith (saddha) in the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha, and let it support the practice.
3. Develop wisdom (paññā) by deepening one's understanding of the Dhamma and through investigation, doubts can gradually be dispelled, leading to greater clarity, confidence, and progress on the path towards liberation.
4. Seek guidance from experienced spiritual mentors and friends (kalyāṇa-mitta), and associate with a supportive spiritual community who can guide, answer questions and uncertainties. Being in the company of like-minded individuals is encouraging and uplifting.
5. Consistent meditation practice of serenity (samatha) and insight (vipassanā) will cultivate mindfulness (sati) and awareness (viññāṇa), leading to ever greater insights and a reduction in doubt. Insight meditation is used to step back from the contents of mind and mindfully observe doubts without attachment or aversion. Observe the transient, conditioned, and unsubstantial nature of thoughts and emotions, including doubt.
6. Investigate doubts directly. Often doubts arise from preconceived ideas or unexamined beliefs. By investigating doubts with an open mind (intellectually) and heart (emotionally), there is the possibility of discovering their root causes and the ability to find a resolution to the uncertainties.
7. Recall moments when experiencing clarity, peace, or positive results from practice. Those experiences will strengthen confidence and trust in the path.

Bhadantācariya Buddhaghosa wrote a Buddhist Commentary called Visuddhimagga: The Path of Purification that has been translated by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli. Buddhaghosa wrote that there are texts in the Pāli Canon which mention the following four levels of concentration (samādhi).

1. Momentary concentration (khaṇikasamādhi) exists when the mind has developed stable focus or one-pointedness on a meditation anchor for a short period of time before withdrawing from the peaceful state. Thoughts tend to proliferate with less frequency and is also the starting point for the development of insight (vipassanā).
2. Preliminary concentration (parikkamasamādhi) exists at the beginning of the meditation exercise that focuses on a meditation anchor. There is some degree of one-pointedness and calmness. This concentration is sometimes called 'insight concentration' (vipassanā samādhi): a concentration accompanied by wisdom (paññā) or a concentration applied for developing penetrative insight.
3. Access or Neighborhood concentration (upacārasamādhi) approaches but have not attained the first absorption concentration (jhāna); this is however, the initial stage of absorption. The Five Hindrances (nīvaraṇā) are suppressed and there may be a counterpart sign (patibhaganimitta). The counterpart sign is a mental image of the object of meditation, more subtle and refined than an ordinary mental image.
4. Absorption Concentration (appanasamādhi) is the complete and stable immersion or absorption of the mind on the meditation anchor. There are eight absorption concentrations called rūpa jhānas and arūpa jhānas. These are the highest stages and fulfillment of concentration.

A. Four Absorptions of the Form Sphere (rūpa jhāna)

There are four stages of rupa jhāna. Rupa refers to the material realm, as different from the desire (kama) realm and the nonmaterial (arupa) realm. Each jhāna is characterized by a set of factors which are present in that jhāna.

1st jhāna has five factors: applied thought (vitakka), sustained thought (vicāra), joy (pīti), pleasure (sukha), and one-pointedness of mind (ekaggata). There is seclusion from sensuality and the Five Hindrances (nīvaraṇā).

2nd jhāna is without applied and sustained thoughts. Thought conception and discursive thinking have ceased. There are three factors: joy, pleasure, and one-pointedness of mind. This jhāna is characterized by noble silence.

3rd jhāna is without applied and sustained thoughts, and joy. There are two factors: pleasure and one-pointedness of mind.

4th jhāna is without applied and sustained thoughts, joy and pleasure. There are two factors: equanimity (upekkhā) and one-pointedness of mind. Gross breathing may have ceased with the lungs, and subtle breathing may be through the pores of the skin.

B. Four Absorptions of the Formless Sphere (arūpa jhāna):

1. sphere of infinity of space (ākāśāñcāyatana),
2. sphere of infinity of consciousness (viññāṇañcāyatana),
3. sphere of infinity of nothingness (ākāśañcāyatana), and
4. sphere of infinity of neither perception nor non-perception (nevasañnānasaññāyatana).

An item of interest is an observation by Bhikkhu Bodhi who have written in the Introduction to The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Majjhima Nikaya: “in the Theravāda tradition the jhānas are not regarded as indispensable to the attainment of enlightenment”.

The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Majjhima Nikaya translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi
141 Saccavibhanga Sutta: The Exposition of the Truths

31. “And what, friends, is right concentration?

1. Here, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, a bhikkhu enters upon and abides in the first jhāna, which is accompanied by applied and sustained thought [vitakka and vicāra: initial and sustained attention], with rapture [pīti] and pleasure [sukha] born of seclusion.
2. With the stilling of applied and sustained thought, he enters upon and abides in the second jhāna, which has self-confidence [clarity of mind] and singleness of mind [ekaggatā: one-pointedness] without applied and sustained thought, with rapture and pleasure born of concentration.
3. With the fading away as well of rapture, he abides in equanimity, and mindful and fully aware, still feeling pleasure with the body [body refers to the ‘mind body’ (nāma-kāya)], he enters upon and abides in the third jhāna, on account of which noble ones announce: ‘He has a pleasant abiding who has equanimity and is mindful.’
4. With the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the previous disappearance of joy and grief, he enters upon and abides in the fourth jhāna, which has neither-pain-nor-pleasure and purity of mindfulness due to equanimity [upekkhā].

This is called right concentration.

Concentration (samadhi) is the eighth factor in the Noble Eightfold Path (ariya aṭṭhaṅgika magga), which is the path to liberation from suffering (dukkha) and nibbāna, the state of perfect peace. Right concentration (sammā samādhi) in the Noble Eightfold Path is defined as the four rūpa jhānas and marks the point where all eight factors of the Path converge and engage in unison. Right concentration supports the cultivation of wisdom (paññā), and wisdom is indispensable for the eradication of the defilements (kilesa), the Five Hindrances (pañca nīvaraṇā), and for the realization of nibbāna. An aspect of wisdom is the ability to understand the Three Characteristics of Existence (ti-lakkhaṇa).

Right concentration of the Noble Eightfold Path is the fulfillment of concentration. However, the faculty of concentration is sometimes defined as ‘one-pointedness of mind’ (cittassekaggatā) as the following sutta passage illustrates.

“And what, bhikkhus, is the faculty of concentration? Here, bhikkhus, the noble disciple gains concentration, gains one-pointedness of mind, having made release the object. This is called the faculty of concentration.

A **meditation anchor (kasiṇa)** is a visual, auditory or tactile object that practitioners use to focus their attention during meditation to develop mindfulness (sati) and concentration (samādhi). The anchor is used to settle the mind from mental distractions and proliferation with thinking, feelings and emotions. The meditation anchor is a gross anchor that helps to settle the mind from gross contents of mind while the counterpart sign (patibhaganimitta), see above under Access or Neighborhood concentration (upacārasamādhi), is a subtle anchor that allows the mind to enter into deeper states of concentration. The following is a guide for using a meditation anchor.

- Beginners to meditation may experiment with different meditation anchors in order to determine which anchor the mind is inclined to stay with. Once an anchor is discovered to be enjoyed by the mind then only that anchor should be used consistently during all meditation sessions; i.e., do not change anchors from one session to another.
- Choose a meditation anchor among the ten types listed below. The most common anchor is that of the recollection of mindfulness of breathing (ānāpānasati). Mindfulness of breathing meditation was originally practiced by Lord Buddha and was used by him as the basis for his own practice, after which, he proceeded to insight meditation (vipassanā) through which he realized nibbāna.
- Cultivate sustained attention, unbroken attention on the meditation anchor. When the mind wanders, gently and non-judgmentally bring focus back to the anchor. It's normal for the mind to wander, so be patient and persevere in the practice.
- Alternating attention between the meditation anchor and the counterpart sign (patibhaganimitta) is common as the mind grows in deeper levels of concentration and the counterpart sign grows in stability.
- Integrate the calm and focused state of mind cultivated during meditation into daily life. This heightened awareness and concentration can help navigate challenges and develop insight.

Visuddhimagga chapters III to XI, lists forty meditation subjects (kammaṭṭhāna) which are mentioned throughout the Pāli Canon and provides directions on the practice used to develop concentration. The forty meditation subjects may be used as a meditation anchor (kasiṇa) and they are listed as follows.

- I. Ten kasiṇa exercises mentioned in the pāli suttas. The meditation involves focusing on a visual object, such as a colored disk or a flame. The meditator develops concentration by directing sustained attention to the object, and can produce all four rūpa jhānas.
 1. earth (paṭhavī kasiṇa),
 2. water (āpo kasiṇa),
 3. fire (tejo kasiṇa),
 4. air/wind (vāyo kasiṇa),
 5. blue (nīla kasiṇa),
 6. yellow (pīṭa kasiṇa),
 7. red (lohita kasiṇa),
 8. white (odāta kasiṇa),
 9. space (ākāsa kasiṇa), and
 10. consciousness (viññāṇa kasiṇa) is mentioned in the pāli suttas. In the Visuddhimagga, this exercise is described as ‘light of the luminous mind’ (āloka kasiṇa).
- II. Ten impure and loathsome (asubha) objects of repulsion (paṭikkūla), specifically cemetery contemplations (paṭikkūla manasikāra) on ten stages of human decomposition which aim to cultivate mindfulness of body (kāyagatāsati). These exercises produce the first rūpa jhāna.
 11. swollen corpse,
 12. discolored bluish corpse,
 13. festering corpse,

14. fissured corpse,
 15. gnawed corpse,
 16. dismembered corpse,
 17. hacked scattered corpse,
 18. bleeding corpse,
 19. worm eaten corpse, and
 20. skeleton.
- III. Ten recollections (anussati)
21. Recollection of the attributes of the Buddha (buddhānussati) can produce neighbourhood-concentration (upacāra samādhī). This practice involves reflecting upon the qualities, virtues, and teachings of the Buddha. By contemplating on the Buddha's life and teachings, practitioners cultivate faith, devotion, and tranquility.
 22. Recollection of the attributes of the Dhamma (dhammānussati) can produce neighbourhood-concentration (upacāra samādhī).
 23. Recollection of the attributes of the Saṅghā of Noble Ones (saṅghānussati) can produce neighbourhood-concentration (upacāra samādhī).
 24. Recollection of the benefits of practicing morality (sīlānussati) can produce neighbourhood-concentration (upacāra samādhī).
 25. Recollection of the benefits of practicing generosity (cāgānussati) can produce neighbourhood-concentration (upacāra samādhī).
 26. Recollection of the attributes of heavenly beings (devānussati) can produce neighbourhood-concentration (upacāra samādhī).
 27. Recollection of the certainty of death (maraṇānussati) can produce neighbourhood-concentration (upacāra samādhī).
 28. Recollection of the characteristics of the body (kāyagatāsati) can produce the first rūpa jhāna.
 29. Recollection of mindfulness of breathing (ānāpānasati) can produce all four rūpa jhānas.
 30. Recollection of peace (upasamānussati) can produce neighbourhood-concentration (upacāra samādhī).
- IV. Four Divine Abidings (brahma-vihāra) meditations focuses on cultivating qualities whose blessings are directed towards oneself and others.
31. Loving kindness (mettā) can produce the first three rūpa jhānas.
 32. Compassion (karuṇā) can produce the first three rūpa jhānas.
 33. Sympathetic joy (muditā) can produce the first three rūpa jhānas.
 34. Equanimity (upekkhā) can only produce the fourth rūpa jhāna.
- V. Four immaterial states (arūpāyatana) are based upon the fourth rūpa jhāna.
35. Infinite space (ākāśānañcāyatana),
 36. Infinite consciousness (viññāṇaṇcāyatana),
 37. Infinite nothingness (ākāśaṇcāyatana), and
 38. Neither-perception-nor-non-perception (nevasaññānāsaññāyatana).
- VI. Other Meditations
39. Perception of the loathsomeness of food (āhārepaṭikkūlasaññā) can produce neighbourhood concentration (upacāra samādhī), and
 40. Analysis of the Four Great Elements (catudhātuvavatthāna) can produce neighbourhood concentration (upacāra samādhī). The Four Great Elements are the following:
 - a. earth (pathavi),
 - b. water (apo),
 - c. fire (tejo), and
 - d. air (vayo).

The following are Tips on Nurturing Meditation.

1. Cultivate structure and discipline in daily life to maintain momentum of practice and development of wholesome qualities. The path of training requires consistent effort, commitment, and dedication. The following suggestions are for consideration.
 - Establish a daily routine of meditation, preferably twice a day - once in the morning and again later in the day. A regular schedule helps to reinforce the practice and build momentum.
 - The daily routine may also include reciting mantras, reading Buddhist teachings, and engaging in acts of kindness and compassion.
 - Set clear intentions by defining your goals in practice. Whether it's cultivating mindfulness (sati), compassion (karuṇā), wisdom (paññā), or other wholesome qualities; having a clear purpose will keep you focused and motivated.
 - Join a supportive community (saṅgha) and benefit from a sense of belonging, opportunities for learning, and the chance to share experiences with like-minded individuals.
 - Study Buddhist Teachings (Dhamma) helps to deepen your understanding and inspiration for the practice.
 - Consciously cultivate mindfulness in daily life while engaging with daily activities, brings awareness to actions, speech, and thoughts throughout the day. Bring the practice into all aspects of life, not just during formal meditation sessions.
 - Practice generosity (dāna) by engaging in acts of giving and selflessness. Generosity is fundamental to practice and helps cultivate a compassionate selfless attitude.
 - Develop loving-kindness (metta) towards yourself by accepting imperfections that are caused by habits and conditions. Understand that progress in the training of mind is a gradual process that improves the imperfections by changing habits, and spiritual practices will eventually erode the defilements (kilesa) and hindrances (nīvaraṇā). Progress in training the mind tends to be cyclical, accept that there will be ups and downs, and avoid being overly self-critical.
 - Seek guidance from experienced practitioners and spiritual friends (kalyāṇa-mitta). They can offer valuable insights, answer questions, and provide encouragement during challenging times.
 - Observe the Five Ethical Precepts (sīla) described above. Training in ethical principles provides a foundation for practice and prevents harmful unwholesome actions (akusala kamma).
 - Cultivate an attitude of gratitude (kataññu). Recognize the positive changes and growth that practice brings to your life and acknowledge the support that has been received along the way.
2. Investigate the concept that suffering (dukkha) is a friend. Dukkha is an inherent part of life, and it is essential to investigate and understand its nature in order to find true peace and happiness. While the idea that dukkha is a friend might initially seem counterintuitive, it is a profound and transformative insight. The following are some key aspects of this perspective.
 - Recognize the universality of dukkha. The First Noble Truth states that dukkha is a universal experience of existence, affecting all living beings in various forms, from physical pain and mental anguish to the dissatisfaction with the impermanent nature of life and the world.
 - Acknowledge the impermanent and unsatisfactoriness of worldly experiences, and that clinging to impermanent things and experiences, no matter how pleasant they are, in an attempt to find lasting happiness will always lead to dukkha. The realization that worldly pursuits are incapable of providing lasting contentment, the mind will then let go of attachments and desires for the impermanent Eight Worldly Concerns (lokadhamma), mentioned above, and sensual pleasures that cause distress.
 - Use dukkha as a catalyst for spiritual growth by acknowledging and accepting dukkha, there then is an opportunity to learn and grow from the experience. Dukkha serves as a teacher, showing us the nature of our mind and how we respond to various unpleasant circumstances. By investigating dukkha, insight (vipassanā) arises into its causes and the way to counter the causes.
 - Be the consciousness that observes dukkha without getting entangled in it. Pure consciousness transcends the experience of dukkha and is not affected by it. The identification with pure

consciousness and not with any content of mind is liberation from dukkha. The contents of mind are one or more of the Five Aggregates (khandā) mentioned above.

- Develop compassion (karunā) and understanding (paññā) of ones' own dukkha which will then lead to a deeper sense of compassion for others who are also experiencing dukkha. The shared experience of dukkha connects us all as suffering sentient beings.
 - Instead of reacting with aversion or denial of dukkha, cultivate equanimity (upekkhā) and acceptance of how things are, which helps one to navigate through life's challenges with greater ease.
3. Each meditation is an an experiential process and a valuable learning opportunity. The insights (vipassanā) gained during meditation are not just intellectual but are based on direct experience and investigations. Each meditation session is an opportunity for the realization of Dhamma. Meditation is a transformative process that leads to greater wisdom (paññā), peace (santi), and liberation from dukkha (nibbāna).
- Each meditation exercises the mindfulness (sati) muscle while training the mind to be fully present and aware of each moment without judgment. The mindful mind observes thoughts, emotions, and sensations without getting attached to them.
 - Each meditation exercises and strengthens the concentration (samādhi) muscle while training the mind to pay attention and focus. Learning how to pay ever greater attention reaps benefits not only during meditation but in daily life.
 - Putting forth effort (virīya) in each meditation increases the perception of available energy for meditation and with the activities during daily life. There is the discovery that the mind has more energy for meditation and for other activities than what it thought it had available. Each meditation where effort is exerted develops the understanding that the mind can't be trusted (in general) when it complains that it lacks energy, when effort is exerted regardless of complaining thoughts, there is the discovery that there is in fact available energy. Perception of available energy increases each time the mind is taxed or goes beyond the energy it thinks it has.
 - Each meditation is an opportunity to develop insight (vipassanā) into the impermanent (anicca) nature of reality. The mind observes the arising and passing of the contents of experience. This understanding allows the mind to let go of attachments to the contents and develop acceptance of the changing nature of life.
 - Each meditation learns something new about suffering (dukkha). Through investigation, the mind learns the causes of dukkha (ignorance, craving, attachment, and aversion) and gain insights into how to alleviate dukkha.
 - Each meditation session builds upon previous experiences and provides an opportunity for growth and refinement of one's practice over time. Through steady and continuous practice of meditation - not interrupted by periods of no practice - maximum benefit of the practice is attained.
 - Each meditation develops the faculties of patience and endurance by facing obstacles, difficulties, distractions, and restlessness. These faculties are also used for peaceful and harmonious relationships with others and with activities throughout life.
4. Alternate between calm abiding (samatha) meditation and insight (vipassanā) meditation. Samatha rests and energizes the mind which is suitable for the work required in vipassanā meditation.
5. The more the body sits in meditation the more will the body feel comfortable due to the process of adapting or adjusting. Here are some ways meditation can lead to physical comfort and accommodation:
- Sitting in the same position for an extended period can initially be uncomfortable for those who aren't used to it. However, as you practice meditation regularly, you may notice increased flexibility in the muscles and tendons, making it easier to sit comfortably for longer durations.
 - An upright posture used during meditation is encouraged in order to maintain alertness and reduce the risk of discomfort and drowsiness. As the habit to focus on posture during

meditation is formed, these habits to maintain good posture will extend beyond the meditation sessions, leading to overall improved posture and reduced physical strain in daily life.

- Scanning the body during meditation and relaxing the tension in muscles may achieve overall physical relaxation. The focus on relaxation can contribute to physical comfort during meditation sessions.
- For individuals dealing with chronic pain or physical discomfort, meditation can serve as a tool for managing pain. The practice of meditation can develop the ability to alleviate or minimize physical discomfort through focused attention and relaxation techniques.

Announcements

- Kalyāṇa-Mitta Meditation Center has a presence on Meet-Up social media and we ask that you please sign-up for every event that you are planning to attend at www.MeetUp.com. Some people are intimidated by a small number of attendees and a larger number will be encouraging.
- Please help advertise Kalyāṇa-Mitta Meditation Center by providing a review at www.google.com/maps.

Activities of the Meditation Center

- Sitting meditation is held everyday at 6:30AM and 5:30PM. After meditation, Ajahn Kumāro is available to answer questions and discuss the Dhamma. Please sign up on Meet-Up or send an email mittameditation@gmail.com on the days and time you would like to participate.
- The days of the full moon, new moon and the two half moons are called in Pāli: The Uposatha, and is a Buddhist day of observance. A lunar calendar is available at <https://cal.forestsangha.org>. Ajahn Kumāro will perform the ceremony of giving the five precepts on the full and new moon days after the 5:30PM meditation. You may elect to keep the precepts as long as you see fit (one night, a week, a lifetime, etc).
- Meditation Workshop is held on the first Sunday of each month between 11:00AM and 1:00PM. The workshop will provide instruction and practice for sitting and walking meditation. There will also be an opportunity to ask questions and discuss the Dhamma. Please sign up on Meet-Up or send an email mittameditation@gmail.com if you are planning to participate.
- A recording of a Dhamma Talk from an experienced Thai Forest Teacher will be played on the third Sunday of each month. Sitting meditation starts at 4:30PM and the Dhamma Talk will be played afterwards. Please sign up on Meet-Up or send an email mittameditation@gmail.com if you are planning to participate.
- Every Saturday at 4:15PM the Meditation Center will be cleaned. Please join us in maintaining a clean space for practicing and discussing the Dhamma.
- There is a Library at the Meditation Center. You may browse for books to borrow at 5:00PM and check out the books for three weeks.
- Everyday at 8:40AM Ajahn Kumāro leaves for alms-round in order to give residents of Asheville the opportunity to earn merit by practicing generosity of giving food and placing it into the alms bowl. Ajahn does not accept or handle money. Ajahn usually arrives at the Whole Foods Market, 70 Merrimon Ave. just before 9:00AM and stands in front of the store for alms.
- Ajahn is available at other times during the day to meet with individuals or groups when requested.
- For more additional information please send an email to mittameditation@gmail.com. We also have a presence on Facebook and Meet-Up social media.

Request for Support

The Meditation Center is in need of support in order to accomplish its' mission and vision. The support may take various forms. You will support the Meditation Center by:

- Being present at the Meditation Center for group meditation.
- Giving alms during alms-round.
- Bringing to the Meditation Center items that are listed on the support page of the website www.mittameditation.com.
- Volunteering your skills, energy and time at the Meditation Center.
- Informing your family and friends about the Meditation Center and encouraging them to participate in the activities.
- Donating financial contributions for the Meditation Center's expenses. Kalyana-Mitta Meditation Center is recognized as a tax-exempt organization by the IRS under section 501(c)(3). Donations are deductible in accordance with IRS regulations. Financial contributions may be made on the support page of the website www.mittameditation.com and additional means for making financial donations may be discussed with Elisha Buhler at (910) 922-1549.