



Kalyāṇa-Mitta Meditation Center

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Feelings

The untrained mind is addicted to comfortable feelings and fear uncomfortable feelings, thereby the mind is controlled and enslaved by feelings. The mind seeks comfort, pleasure, or safety, and avoid pain, discomfort, or fear. Uncomfortable and comfortable feelings drive human behavior because they are signals that guide decision-making in the untrained mind. This leads to behavior patterns where decisions are driven more by habitual reactions than by logic, wisdom or long-term goals. For example:

- Avoiding confrontation because it feels uncomfortable, even if speaking up would be healthier in the long run.
- Staying in a familiar but unsatisfying situation because the fear of the unknown outweighs the desire for change.
- Chasing instant gratification, for example with social media, food, or entertainment, rather than facing boredom or emotional discomfort with mindfulness and concentration.

Feelings can control the mind, unless there is training that recognizes and perceive feelings as mere impermanent contents of experience rather than being unconsciously driven by them. Concentration (samādhi), mindfulness (sati), and wisdom (paññā) are qualities of mind that allow the shift from reactive to conscious behavior.

The mind naturally gravitate toward feelings that bring comfort, relief, pleasure, or safety. This includes:

- Dopamine-driven behaviors; e.g., eating, social media, shopping.
- Seeking validation or approval in order to feel accepted.
- Staying in routines or habits that are predictable and secure.

Comfortable feelings provide a reward; the mind remembers actions that led to pleasant feelings and seeks to repeat them, even if they do not result in physical or mental health or spiritual growth.

The mind is conditioned to avoid discomfort, pain, fear, shame, boredom, uncertainty, etc. This includes:

- Procrastination in order to avoid anxiety or being overwhelmed by stress.
- People-pleasing in order to avoid rejection.
- Staying in toxic relationships in order to avoid loneliness or fear of change.
- Overworking or distraction in order to avoid any form of physical or mental pain.

Uncomfortable feelings are interpreted by the untrained mind as threats to the survival of the organism and strives to escape those experiences, and not be present with them.

The mind is conditioned by experiences stored in memory. For example:

- A child shamed for expressing anger may grow into an adult who represses anger and doesn't learn how to manage and relate to anger.
- Someone praised for academic success may chase achievement to reinforce and enlarge their sense of self.

Habitual conditional responses reinforce themselves and become automatic scripts, driving decisions before conscious and wise evaluation has a chance to influence the mind.

The untrained mind that is unaware of the habits that reacts to feelings is controlled by the power of feelings. The trained mind that operates with concentration and wisdom has the freedom to tolerate the discomfort of anxiety, fear, and failure; can delay and resist the gratification of indulging in

sensual pleasures; has the ability to stay present with pleasant and painful feelings without blindly reacting to them.

The practice of staying fully conscious with comfortable/pleasant feelings (sukha vedanā), uncomfortable/unpleasant feelings (dukkha vedanā) and neither pleasant-nor-painful/neutral feelings (adukkhamasukha vedanā) are part of the path to nibbāna, liberation from suffering.

1. Feelings are impermanent (anicca), they arise for a moment before changing in intensity and then fall away. Perceive feelings as not inherently valuable because they are impermanent, thereby the mind will not become entangled in them, does not become attached to pleasant feelings or overwhelmed by unpleasant feelings.
2. Feelings are not-self (anattā) because whatever is a “self” must be permanent and be able to exercise control and power over itself. Feelings are impermanent and arise due to various causes and conditions and do not have control or power over those causes and conditions therefore, feelings are not a self or part of a self. Perceive feelings as not-self and do not identify with feelings, thereby the mind will escape suffering. Feelings are merely a content of experience.
3. Feelings are experienced as suffering (dukkha) when pleasant feelings change and are reduced in intensity. Also, craving (taṇhā) and clinging (upādāna) to pleasant feelings and aversion (dosā) to unpleasant feelings are the proximate causes for suffering; by understanding and letting go of these attachments and aversions, the mind will lessen and eventually eliminate suffering, and achieve perfect peace.
4. The chain of Dependent Origination (paticcasamuppāda) is the process in which feelings lead to suffering; feeling (vedanā) is the link that conditions craving (taṇhā) which leads to suffering: contact → feeling → craving → clinging → becoming → birth → suffering.
 - When a pleasant feeling arises, craving tends to arise ("I want more").
 - When an unpleasant feeling arises, aversion tends to arise ("I want it to go away").
 - Neutral feelings lead to ignorance when there is a lack of understanding of their nature.

When the mind relates to feelings with concentrated mindfulness, rather than reacting with craving or aversion, the chain of processes that lead to suffering is interrupted. The July 2023 Newsletter provides a discussion on Dependent Origination.

5. Mindful awareness of feelings (vedanānupassanā) involves heightened mindfulness (sati). Be mindful of feelings as feelings, whether pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral, with the understanding that: they arise and pass away; and they are not me, not mine, not myself. The practice is to be aware of feelings without becoming attached or averse to them. By observing feelings mindfully, the mind will develop an understanding of their impermanent nature and rest in equanimity (upekkhā):
 - Perceive and observe a pleasant feeling without grasping.
 - Perceive and observe an unpleasant feeling without aversion.
 - Perceive and observe a neutral feeling with understanding.

This leads to disenchantment (nibbidā) and ultimately to liberation (nibbāna).

6. Equanimity (upekkhā) is the appropriate response to all types of feelings. Cultivating equanimity involves maintaining a balanced and non-reactive state of mind regardless of whether the feelings are pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. This does not mean indifference but rather a calm, wise and concentrated awareness that does not blindly react.

The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Samyutta Nikaya by Bhikkhu Bodhi

36.6 (6) The Dart

“Bhikkhus, the uninstructed worldling feels a pleasant feeling, a painful feeling, and a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling. The instructed noble disciple too feels a pleasant feeling, a painful feeling, and a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling. Therein, bhikkhus, what is the distinction, the disparity, the difference between the instructed noble disciple and the uninstructed worldling?”

“Venerable sir, our teachings are rooted in the Blessed One, guided by the Blessed One, take recourse in the Blessed One. It would be good if the Blessed One would clear up the meaning of this statement. Having heard it from him, the bhikkhus will remember it.”

“Then listen and attend closely, bhikkhus, I will speak.”

“Yes, venerable sir,” the bhikkhus replied. The Blessed One said this:

“Bhikkhus, when the uninstructed worldling is being contacted by a painful feeling, he sorrows, grieves, and laments; he weeps beating his breast and becomes distraught. He feels two feelings—a bodily one and a mental one. Suppose they were to strike a man with a dart, and then they would strike him immediately afterwards with a second dart, so that the man would feel a feeling caused by two darts. So too, when the uninstructed worldling is being contacted by a painful feeling ... he feels two feelings—a bodily one and a mental one.

“Being contacted by that same painful feeling, he harbours aversion towards it. When he harbours aversion towards painful feeling, the underlying tendency to aversion towards painful feeling lies behind this. Being contacted by painful feeling, he seeks delight in sensual pleasure. For what reason? Because the uninstructed worldling does not know of any escape from painful feeling other than sensual pleasure. When he seeks delight in sensual pleasure, the underlying tendency to lust for pleasant feeling lies behind this. **He does not understand as it really is the origin and the passing away, the gratification, the danger, and the escape in the case of these feelings. When he does not understand these things, the underlying tendency to ignorance in regard to neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling lies behind this.**

“If he feels a pleasant feeling, he feels it attached. If he feels a painful feeling, he feels it attached. If he feels a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, he feels it attached. This, bhikkhus, is called an uninstructed worldling who is attached to birth, aging, and death; who is attached to sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair; who is attached to suffering, I say.

“Bhikkhus, when the instructed noble disciple is contacted by a painful feeling, he does not sorrow, grieve, or lament; he does not weep beating his breast and become distraught. He feels one feeling—a bodily one, not a mental one. Suppose they were to strike a man with a dart, but they would not strike him immediately afterwards with a second dart, so that the man would feel a feeling caused by one dart only. So too, when the instructed noble disciple is contacted by a painful feeling ... he feels one feeling—a bodily one, not a mental one.

“Being contacted by that same painful feeling, he harbours no aversion towards it. Since he harbours no aversion towards painful feeling, the underlying tendency to aversion towards painful feeling does not lie behind this. Being contacted by painful feeling, he does not seek delight in sensual pleasure. For what reason? Because the instructed noble disciple knows of an escape from painful feeling other than sensual pleasure. Since he does not seek delight in sensual pleasure, the underlying tendency to lust for pleasant feeling does not lie behind this. He understands as it really is the origin and the passing away, the gratification, the danger, and the escape in the case of these feelings. Since he understands these things, the underlying tendency to ignorance in regard to neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling does not lie behind this.

“If he feels a pleasant feeling, he feels it detached. If he feels a painful feeling, he feels it detached. If he feels a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, he feels it detached. This, bhikkhus, is called a noble disciple who is detached from birth, aging, and death; who is detached from sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair; who is detached from suffering, I say.

“This, bhikkhus, is the distinction, the disparity, the difference between the instructed noble disciple and the uninstructed worldling.”

The wise one, learned, does not feel
The pleasant and painful [mental] feeling.
This is the great difference between
The wise one and the worldling.

For the learned one who has comprehended Dhamma,
Who clearly sees this world and the next,
Desirable things do not provoke his mind,
Towards the undesired he has no aversion.

For him attraction and repulsion no more exist;
Both have been extinguished, brought to an end.
Having known the dust-free, sorrowless state,
The transcender of existence rightly understands.

The underlying instruction in the above sutta excerpt is to not be shaken by feelings, and to observe them with insight (paññā) and equanimity (upekkhā). Through training in concentration, the mind develops non-reactivity: being with the feeling as it is, without clinging or resisting. In addition, concentration provides a happiness that is stable and fulfilling, thus concentration is the escape from all types of feelings.

The Buddha taught an analysis of feelings in terms of gratification (assāda), danger (ādīnava), and escape (nissaraṇa) from the suffering caused by unwise reaction to feelings. The analysis cultivates vipassanā (insight) into the Three Characteristics of Existence (tilakkhaṇa): impermanence (anicca), unsatisfactoriness (dukkha), and not-self (anattā), leading to dispassion (virāga) and liberation (nibbāna).

Pleasant feelings (sukhā vedanā)

- Gratification (assāda) is the temporary enjoyment, delight, and pleasure that arises when experiencing pleasant sensations (physical or mental). This is what keeps the mind attached to sense pleasures.
- Danger (ādīnava) is in the impermanence of pleasant feelings, that they are subject to change, and thus become a cause for suffering when they pass or when craving for pleasant feelings intensifies.
- Escape (nissaraṇa) from the suffering caused by pleasant feelings is in cultivating concentration (samādhi), path (magga), and fruit (phala), thereby the mind lets go of craving (taṇhā) and clinging (upādāna) to pleasant feelings; ultimately, this leads to dispassion (virāga) and liberation (vimutti). “Path” is the supramundane path consciousness (lokuttara magga citta), the moment of enlightenment consciousness and “fruit” is the supramundane fruition consciousness (lokuttara phala citta) that immediately follows the path. The June 2025 Newsletter - Saṅgha provides the list of Eight Noble Persons (aṭṭha ariya-puggala) who have realized one of the eight stages of holiness, i.e., the four supermundane paths (magga) and the four supermundane fruitions (phala).

Painful feelings (dukkhā vedanā)

- Gratification (assāda) is not experienced with painful feelings.
- Danger (ādīnava) lies in the experience of mental suffering and the mind reacts with aversion (dosā) and resistance (pāṭigha). The agitation of mind gives rise to craving for relief.
- Escape (nissaraṇa) from the suffering is in abandoning the aversion and resistance to painful feelings with concentration and wisdom, leading to equanimity (upekkhā) and dispassion (virāga). Wisdom is the understanding that painful feelings are impermanent and not a self.

Neutral Feelings (adukkhamasukha vedanā)

- Gratification (assāda) is a subtle pleasure in neutral feeling, like the relief from pain or absence of disturbance, that can still become a basis for clinging.
 - Danger (ādīnava) is in not understanding the impermanence of neutral feelings.
 - Escape (nissaraṇa) is in understanding the impermanence of neutral feelings and the relinquishing of attachment even to neutral feelings.
7. Pleasant feelings aren't to be rejected, but seen clearly with wisdom. The practice is not to suppress pleasure or avoid comfort. Rather to recognize pleasant feelings as a content of experience and not a self or part of a self; to enjoy them mindfully if skillful and wholesome without clinging to them or fearing their loss. The practice is to cultivate a mindful relationship with feelings, recognizing their impermanent and conditioned nature, and respond with wisdom.

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

- Group sitting meditation practice for **one hour** is held Monday through Friday at 6:30AM and **everyday** at 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.
- Group sitting meditation practice for **two hours** is held every Saturday and Sunday at 6:30AM.

- 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. Kalyāṇa-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.