



Kalyāṇa-Mitta Meditation Center

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August 2025 Newsletter



Addiction

Addiction is the compulsive use of a substance or engagement in a behavior, despite harmful consequences; leads to cravings, loss of control, and continued use even when it causes problems in health, relationships, or daily life. There are two main types of addiction:

1. Substance addiction involves drugs or alcohol (e.g., nicotine, cocaine, opioids, alcohol).
2. Behavioral addiction involves compulsive behaviors (e.g., gambling, gaming, eating, internet use).

Key features of addiction are the following.

- The mind has craving, a strong urge, to use the substance or perform the behavior.
- The mind needs more of the substance or behavior to get the same effect.
- The body and mind experiences withdrawal symptoms, physical and mental pain, when the use of the substance or behavior is stopped.
- The mind is not in control over its thinking and behavior in its inability to stop the addiction, even when there is a desire to end the addiction.
- The addiction causes neglect in other areas of life: work, relationships, and physical and mental health deteriorates.

The causes for addiction are the following.

- Behaviors that bring immediate feelings of pleasure are reinforced by repeated use and form habits. For example: drinking alcohol, smoking, gambling, watching porn, etc. The mind learns to associate the addictive substance and behavior with relief of stress and increase pleasure, creating a habit that is challenging to break.
 - The mind seeks to escape and avoid responsibility, feelings of discomfort, or reality (yathābhūta: “as it really is”) with addictions.
- Research has revealed that biological history, genetics of the family, account for 40–60% of a person's vulnerability to addiction. The remaining risk comes from environmental factors like stress, trauma, social influence, and access to drugs.
- Addictive substances and behaviors alter brain chemistry, especially dopamine, a neurotransmitter associated with feelings of pleasure, motivation, and reward. The mind adapts to high dopamine levels that results in requiring more dopamine for the same pleasurable feeling; and is dependent on the high levels of dopamine in order to cope with the stress encountered in life.
- Addictions may also be used to offer temporary relief from symptoms of other mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety, PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder), ADHD (Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), and bipolar disorder. The dependence on addictions is a mental health disorder in and by itself.
- The mind that suffers from low self-esteem, struggles with confidence, has difficulty in managing strong emotions and stress, are prone to addictions. Addictive substances or behaviors are used to numb emotional pain or escape painful memories; and may also initially provide a sense of control or relief from mental distress.
- Environmental factors may also cause the addictions; for example, childhood trauma, neglect, abuse, loss, and peer pressure.
 - The family environment where substance abuse is common, increases the risk of falling prey to addictions. Dysfunctional family dynamics, lack of supervision, or parental neglect serve as contributing factors for taking on addictions.

- Peer pressure is a powerful force in initiating substance use or risky behaviors; wanting to belong or fit in can override the mind's wisdom faculty.
- Poverty, unemployment, lack of access to education or healthcare, and living in high-stress environments increase addiction risk. Chronic stress or feelings of hopelessness may drive the mind to seek relief in substances.
- Cultural and social conditioning and pressures about drinking alcohol, drug use, or material success may normalize and encourage addictive behaviors. For example, some cultures glorify alcohol use; social media can promote the desire for instant gratification of pleasurable feelings, impulsive and compulsive behaviors; overwork and consumerism may lead to addiction to work, shopping, or striving relentlessly for material success.

The Second Noble Truth states that the cause of suffering is craving (*taṇhā*) and addiction is a form of craving, an attachment or desire for pleasurable feelings and an escape from uncomfortable feelings. Addiction is a behavioral disfunction that causes suffering (*dukkha*).

The Four Noble Truths are the following.

- First Noble Truth is to understand the existence and characteristics of suffering (*dukkha*), which includes addiction and its consequences. See the February 2023 Newsletter for a discussion on The Noble Truth of Suffering.
- Second Noble Truth is the knowledge that the origin of suffering is craving (*taṇhā*). See the March 2023 Newsletter for a discussion on The Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering.
- Third Noble Truth is the realization that the end of suffering is to eliminate craving and addiction. See the April 2023 Newsletter for a discussion on The Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering.
- Fourth Noble Truth is the development of the training in the Noble Eightfold Path, which provides a framework for ethical living, mental discipline and the cultivation of wisdom in order to eliminate craving in all of its forms. See the May 2023 Newsletter for a discussion on The Noble Truth of the Path Leading to the Cessation of Suffering.

The Noble Eightfold Path is a holistic way to eradicate addiction.

1. Right View is the realization of The Four Noble Truths; understanding the nature of suffering, cravings and addictions, and the impermanence and not-self of all types of feelings (comfortable, uncomfortable, and neutral). For a discussion on Feelings see the July 2025 Newsletter.
2. Right Intention are thoughts of renunciation and detachments to sense pleasures by practicing generosity, thoughts of non-ill will with loving-kindness, and thoughts of non-cruelty by radiating compassion.
3. Right Speech is to abstain from false speech, malicious speech, harsh speech and idle speech. Wrong speech is addictive and requires conscious effort in order to form the habit of Right Speech.
4. Right Action is to abstain from killing, stealing, and wrong conduct in regard to sensual objects and not to engage in sexual misconduct. An example of Right Action is to abstain from intoxicants that cause a deterioration of mindfulness and concentration.
5. Right Livelihood is not to trade in the following occupations: weapons, living beings, meat, intoxicants, and poisons. Livelihood should not cause harm to oneself or others.
6. Right Effort is to prevent and overcome unwholesome states of mind, and to cause the emergence and maintenance of wholesome states. The effort is directed at cultivating skillful states of mind and abandoning unskillful habits.
7. Right Mindfulness is the awareness and contemplation of the body, feelings, mind states, and mind-objects. Mindfulness prevents the arising of craving and other unwholesome states, and the encouragement of wholesome states; and remembers to concentrate the mind on the meditation anchor during the practice of meditation.
8. Right Concentration is to focus and unify the mind on a wholesome state of mind. There are various levels of concentration that increase the quality of mental stillness, clarity and luminosity.

Mindfulness (*sati*) is the awareness of thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations coupled with the discernment (*pañña*) that encourages wholesome contents of experience and discourages

unwholesome content. Mindfulness and discernment recognizes cravings as they arise and choose not to act on them. Practice mindfulness to stay present with urges without reacting to the unwholesome voice in the mind. Being present allows one to:

- Recognize triggers of addictive behavior.
- Experience cravings as a mere content of mind.
- Create space between urge and action.
- Meditation cultivates mindfulness and develops mental clarity; allows the mind to observe cravings without being controlled or powered by them.

Guard the six sense faculties (indriya): eye (cakkhu), ear (sotā), nose (ghāna), tongue (jivhā), body (kāya), and mind (mana). Unguarded senses lead to attachment and suffering. The practice of sense restraint and the avoidance of unwholesome environments will prevent external stimuli from triggering addictive responses. Sense restraint (saṁvara) is fivefold.

1. Virtuous behavior trains the mind to maintain the precepts which prevents harmful speech and actions; thereby help remove the conditions that feed the addictions.
2. Mindfulness is practiced continuously to restrain the sense faculties and prevent the nurturing of addictions.
3. Knowledge of the impermanence and danger of feelings that results from contact with sense objects cultivates Right View in managing addictions.
4. Energy is utilized to remove unwholesome thoughts, speech and actions, and the addictions.
5. Patience is necessary in order to endure uncomfortable feelings and stress, and not to give in to the addictions.

Understand all feelings and cravings are impermanent (anicca) and there is no “self” (anattā) that benefits from the addiction. Contemplate the doctrine of not-self: understand that the aggregates (material form, feeling, mental formations, and sense consciousness) are not a stable, unchanging self or soul. The aggregates are impersonal, conditioned (saṅkhārā) phenomena. Realize that there is no permanent, unchanging self within these aggregates. See the October 2023 Newsletter - Insight Meditation (vipassanā) for a discussion on the not-self doctrine.

Realize that addiction are conditioned patterns of mind and body that can be disrupted, and the addiction is not a legitimate identity, will free the mind from the addiction.

Cultivate spiritual friendship (kalyāṇamitta), association with wise and supportive friends is an important condition to free the mind from the addiction. The Buddha taught that noble friendship is the entire of the holy life.

The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Samyutta Nikaya translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi 45.2(2) Half the Holy Life

Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling among the Sakyans where there was a town of the Sakyans named Nāgaraka. Then the Venerable Ānanda approached the Blessed One. Having approached, he paid homage to the Blessed One, sat down to one side, and said to him:

“Venerable sir, this is half of the holy life, that is, good friendship, good companionship, good comradeship.”⁵

“Not so, Ānanda! Not so, Ānanda! This is the entire holy life, Ānanda, that is, good friendship, good companionship, good comradeship. When a bhikkhu has a good friend, a good companion, a good comrade, it is to be expected that he will develop and cultivate the Noble Eightfold Path.”⁶

“And how, Ānanda, does a bhikkhu who has a good friend, a good companion, a good comrade, develop and cultivate the Noble Eightfold Path? Here, Ānanda, a bhikkhu develops right view, which is based upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, maturing in release. He develops right intention ... right speech ... right action ... right livelihood ... right effort ... right mindfulness ... right concentration, which is based upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, maturing in release. It is in this way, Ānanda, that a bhikkhu who has a good friend, a good companion, a good comrade, develops and cultivates the Noble Eightfold Path.

“By the following method too, Ānanda, it may be understood how the entire holy life is good friendship, good companionship, good comradeship: by relying upon me as a good friend, Ānanda, beings subject to birth are freed from birth; beings subject to aging are freed from aging; beings subject to death are freed from death; beings subject to sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair are freed from sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair. By this method, Ānanda, it may be understood how the entire holy life is good friendship, good companionship, good comradeship.”

Notes

5 Kalyāṇamittatā kalyāṇasahāyatā kalyāṇasampavaṅkatā. The three are synonymous. Spk: When he was in seclusion Ānanda thought, "This practice of an ascetic succeeds for one who relies on good friends and on his own manly effort, so half of it depends on good friends and half on one's own manly effort."

6 ... kalyāṇamitta means a good friend, i.e., a spiritual friend who gives advice, guidance, and encouragement. ...

Loving-kindness (mettā) and compassion (karuṇā) are mental qualities to be cultivated in order to manage addictions that are rooted in self-hatred or trauma. Cultivate loving-kindness and compassion for oneself and others will heal the wounds that drive addictive behavior. In short, develop compassion, patience, and understanding.

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.