



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

July 2026 Newsletter



Pain Tolerance is Patience-Endurance (khanti)

Pain tolerance isn't about forcing yourself to endure suffering for its own sake; it's about developing wise endurance, often called patience-endurance (khanti), and insight into the nature of experience. Pain, physical or mental, is used as a tool for understanding reality, not as something to glorify or suppress.

The benefits of cultivating pain tolerance are the following.

1. There is a reduction of overall suffering, which does not mean there is an increase in tolerance for harm. Through mindfulness (sati), you begin to see that pain has two layers:

- the raw physical sensation, and
- the mental reaction: resistance, fear, and aversion.

The practice of patience-endurance weakens the second layer (mental reaction), which is where most suffering comes from.

The reduction of mental reaction through patience-endurance is precise and systematic. It's not just "gritting your teeth," it's a training that changes how the mind processes experience at a deep level.

The teaching of Dependent Origination (paṭicca samuppāda) describes the conditioned reaction in the following chain: contact → feeling → reaction → suffering

- contact (phassa): e.g., pressure in the knee
- feeling (vedanā): unpleasant sensation
- reaction: "I don't like this," tension, fear, irritation
- suffering (dukkha): mental distress layered on top

Reaction is described with the following terms.

- Craving (taṇhā) is reactive wanting.
 - When pleasant feelings arise, there is the craving for wanting more of the sensation.
 - When unpleasant feelings arise, there is the craving for wanting the sensation to go away.
- The reaction to pain could be irritability, annoyance, and resistance (pāṭigha), "I don't like this;" a mental pushing away from the unpleasant experience. For physical pain, resistance is often the most direct "reaction."
- Aversion (dosa) is one of the three root defilements; the other two root defilements are greed (lobha) and delusion (moha). Aversion is a form of craving, wanting the unpleasant sensation to go away.
- Mental formations (saṅkhāra) are conditioned responses that include habitual reactions, emotional responses, and mental conditioning.

In summary, reaction has the following aspects.

- Immediate emotional pushback to pain is resistance or aversion.
- The urge "make this stop" or "I want this" is craving.
- The whole conditioned response pattern is mental formations.

The reaction is not automatic; it's conditioned and can be changed. See the July 2023 Newsletter for a discussion on Dependent Origination.

2. Patience-endurance interrupts the chain of Dependent Origination at the critical point between feeling and reaction. Instead of: unpleasant feeling → immediate aversion; it becomes: unpleasant feeling → aware pause → non-reaction.
3. The mechanisms that reduce mental reaction are the following.
 - The reaction impulse is slowed down. When pain arises, the mind normally reacts in milliseconds: tighten, resist, think “this is bad.” With practice, mindfulness inserts a gap: you see the urge to react but you don’t follow it; over time, the brain stops firing that reaction as strongly.
 - Instead of deconstructing “pain” into sensations of one solid block (“this hurts”), the mind begins to notice the raw data: pulsing, heat, pressure, vibration. Mindfulness of the raw data weakens the emotional charge because the mind reacts to concepts (“pain is bad”), and does not react to raw data.
 - Seeing impermanence (anicca) directly through observation, the mind notices: the sensation changes in intensity, in location by moving around, and vibrates; sensations arise and pass away. This insight into impermanence reduces panic reaction because the mind stops treating pain as a solid, permanent threat; and is central to understanding conditional reality marked by the Three Characteristics of Existence (tilakkhaṇa): impermanence, unsatisfactoriness (dukkha), and not-self (anattā). See the October 2023 Newsletter - Insight Meditation (vipassanā) for a discussion of the Three Characteristics of Existence.
 - Not-self is cultivated by dislodging identification (“this is happening to me”). Without training: “I am in pain,” with practice: “Pain is being known;” that shift in perspective reduces emotional ownership, which is a major driver of distress.

The mind is trained to not identify with the body; i.e., the body is not-self. Instead of identifying with pain as “my pain,” there is understanding that the sensations of pain are being experienced; this experience reinforces the teaching of not-self.
- The main problem isn’t pain, it is aversion, the root reaction. Patience-endurance trains the mind to: allow unpleasant feelings without pushing it away, and remain calm and steady without resistance; each time you do this, the mind weakens the habit of aversion.
- Non-reaction rewires conditioning (habit learning). Every moment of non-reaction is like updating the system from the old pattern: pain → react, to the new pattern: pain → observe. The mind eventually learns: “I don’t have to react to this.”
4. Patience-endurance matures into equanimity (upekkhā) by not suppressing reaction, not forcing calm but staying calm and not disturbed. At this stage, pain may still arise, but the mind remains balanced. Emotional resilience is developed by not reacting impulsively; you develop steadiness in difficult situations: physical discomfort, illness, or emotional stress. See the October 2024 Newsletter for a discussion on the Perfection of Equanimity (upekkhā pāramī).
5. Concentration (samādhi) is developed by remaining still with discomfort, for example, in meditation, which strengthens focus and mental stability.
6. The practices that develop pain tolerance are the following:
 - A. Mindfulness and investigation of sensations (vipassanā). In vipassanā, you observe pain directly:
 - notice how the location and intensity of sensations change;
 - avoid labeling the uncomfortable sensations as “bad” but understand them as conditional phenomena; and
 - watch how the sensations shift moment to moment due to the flux of conditions.
 - B. Equanimity (upekkhā) is the ability for the mind to remain balanced, neither resisting pain nor clinging to comfortable sensations.
 - C. Sitting through discomfort with wisdom in meditation, practitioners do not move immediately when discomfort arises, in order to study and understand the nature of uncomfortable feelings. This practice is done carefully and not to the point of injury.
 - D. Contemplation of feeling (vedanā) is an important practice mentioned in the Satipatthana Sutta; practitioners observe feelings as:

- pleasant,
- unpleasant, and
- neutral.

Pain is simply “unpleasant feeling,” not something personal.

E. Reflection on cause and effect is the understanding that pain arises due to conditions; such as posture, illness, and aging; which reduces emotional resistance.

7. The stages of practice are as follows:

- Early stage has a strong urge to move or escape and there is mental resistance.
- Middle stage has an ability to stay with pain longer; reaction is weaker but still present.
- Advanced stage has the mind observing pain with clarity, but the mind is quiet with little to no emotional disturbance.

8. The mind experiences a shift in perception. Instead of: “This pain is a problem.” It becomes: “This is an unpleasant sensation being observed.” That shift removes a huge amount of mental suffering.

The Dhamma does not promote self-harm or unnecessary endurance. The Buddha rejected extreme asceticism after trying it and taught the Middle Way:

- not to indulge in sensual comfort, and
- not to punish the body.

If pain signals injury or harm, the appropriate response is to adjust, not endure blindly. See the February 2025 Newsletter - The Middle Way (majjhimāpaṭipadā).

Pain tolerance means:

- understanding the nature of pain,
- not adding mental suffering on top of physical discomfort, and
- learning how to perceive and cope with pain.

With practice, the relationship to pain matures to enable freedom from mental distress.

See the June 2024 Newsletter - Perfection of Patience (khanti pāramī) for additional information.

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 6:30 a.m. and every day at 5:30 p.m. After meditation, Ajahn Kumāro is available to answer questions and discuss the Dhamma. Please sign up on Meet-Up or send an email to 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 6:30 a.m.
- The days of the full moon, new moon, and the two half moons are called in Pali: 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 5:30 p.m. 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 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. 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 to 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 4:30 p.m. and the Dhamma Talk will be played afterwards. Please sign up on Meet-Up or send an email to mittameditation@gmail.com if you are planning to participate.
 - Every Saturday at 4:15 p.m. 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 5:00 p.m. 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 9:00 a.m. 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.