Buddhist Learning 4 All

The Direct Path

The Four Foundations of Mindfulness (Satipaṭṭhāna)



DEFINITION

The Setting Up of Mindfulness

- **Sati (Mindfulness):** Remembering to stay in the present moment.
- **Paṭṭhāna (Foundation):** The establishing or setting up of observation.
- **The Method:** The Buddha's supreme manual for meditation practice.



The Instruction Manual

Mindfulness is not a vague feeling. It is a systematic process of investigating reality across four specific domains of human experience.

THE ARCHITECTURE

The Four Domains

1. Body

The physical form.

2. Feelings

The raw sensory tones.

3. Mind

States of consciousness.

4. Phenomena

Mental objects and principles.

THE PROMISE

Ekāyano Maggo



"This is the direct path for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation... namely, the four foundations of mindfulness."

— The Buddha (Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta)

FOUNDATION 01

Kāyānupassanā: The Body

The Gross Anchor

The physical body is the most solid, tangible object of meditation. It firmly anchors the wandering mind in the present.

- **Constant Presence:** The body is always right here, right now.
- **Grounding:** Breaks the momentum of abstract, discursive thought.

Mindfulness of Breathing



"Breathing in long, he discerns, 'I am breathing in long'; or breathing out long, he discerns, 'I am breathing out long.'"

The breath bridges the conscious and unconscious. It is the primary vehicle for stabilizing awareness.

Postures and Activities



Walking

Aware of every step.



Standing

Aware of shifting weight.



Sitting

Aware of the spine.



Lying Down

Aware of resting tension.

MODERN CONTEXT

The Disembodied Age



Reclaiming Reality

Modern screen culture forces consciousness entirely into the abstract head. Mindfulness of the body is an act of radical grounding.

- **The Antidote:** Healing anxiety starts with physical sensation.
- **Embodiment:** Returning to the actual biological organism.

FOUNDATION 02

Vedanānupassanā: Feelings

The Sensory Tone

"Feeling" (Vedanā) does not mean complex emotion. It is the immediate, raw, gut-level tone of any physical or mental contact.

- **The First Filter:** How experience hits us before we think about it.
- **The Catalyst:** Feelings drive our automatic reactions.

THE RAW DATA

The Three Tones of Experience

Pleasant

Produces the immediate impulse to grasp and cling.

Unpleasant

Produces the immediate impulse to reject and fight.

Neutral

Produces the impulse to ignore, driving delusion.

MODERN CONTEXT

Breaking the Dopamine Trap



The Crucial Gap

Observing Vedanā inserts a wedge between sensory input and our habitual reactions. This is how we overcome behavioral addiction.

- **The Habit:** Pleasant feeling immediately becomes craving.
- **The Freedom:** Feeling is just feeling. Craving is optional.

FOUNDATION 03

Cittānupassanā: The Mind

States of Consciousness

Stepping back to observe the overall condition or "flavor" of the mind, rather than getting caught in the content of its stories.

- **The Lens:** We are watching the watcher.
- **The Focus:** Not "what" the mind is thinking, but "how" the mind is being.

The Weather of the Mind



Knowing the mind with lust as with lust. Knowing the mind with hat as with hate.

Is the mind contracted or scattered? Elevated or restricted? We observe mental states as passing weather, not permanent traits.

MODERN CONTEXT

Dis-identification

Mindless Identification

"I am so anxious. I am an angry person." The ego completely merges with the temporary mental state.

Mindful Separation

"Anxiety is present in the mind." Space is created. The observer separates from the observed phenomena.

FOUNDATION 04

Dhammānupassanā: Phenomena

The Dharma Categories

Observing all phenomena strictly through the lens of the Buddha’s specific liberating frameworks.

- **Applied Wisdom:** Not just passive watching, but active investigation.
- **The Ultimate Goal:** Deconstructing reality into empty, impermanent processes.

PHENOMENA FOCUS 1

The Five Hindrances

Sensual Desire

Craving pleasure.

Ill-Will

Anger and aversion.

Sloth

Heavy lethargy.

Restlessness

Mental agitation.

Doubt

Paralyzing uncertainty.

PHENOMENA FOCUS 2

Deconstructing the Self

The Five Aggregates (Khandhas)

Observing form, feeling, perception, fabrication, and consciousness arising and passing away.

The Six Sense Bases

Watching the eye meet form, the ear meet sound, and the mind meet thoughts—without clinging.

PHENOMENA FOCUS 3

The 7 Factors of Awakening

Cultivating Liberation

Observing if mindfulness, investigation, energy, joy, tranquility, concentration, and equanimity are present or absent.

- **The Antidote:** These qualities directly counteract the five hindrances.
- **The Path Forward:** Recognizing and strengthening the wholesome.

THE ULTIMATE FRAMEWORK

The Four Noble Truths



The culmination of Satipaṭṭhāna is observing the reality of suffering, its origin, its cessation, and the path leading to its cessation.

Cross-Tradition Views

Theravāda (Vipassanā)

Systematic, step-by-step scanning and noting of sensations to dissolve the illusion of self through sheer impermanence.

Mahāyāna (Zen / Dzogchen)

Emphasis on objectless awareness. Resting in the natural, spacious, luminous nature of the mind beyond specific categories.

OFF THE CUSHION

Integrating the Foundations

Start with Body

In moments of stress, immediately locate the physical sensation.

Note the Feeling

Before reacting, label the raw tone: pleasant, unpleasant, neutral.

Check the Weather

Periodically ask: "What is the state of my mind right now?"

Buddhist Learning 4 All

The Realization of Nibbāna

By establishing mindfulness securely across body, feelings, mind, and phenomena, the direct path to liberation opens.

