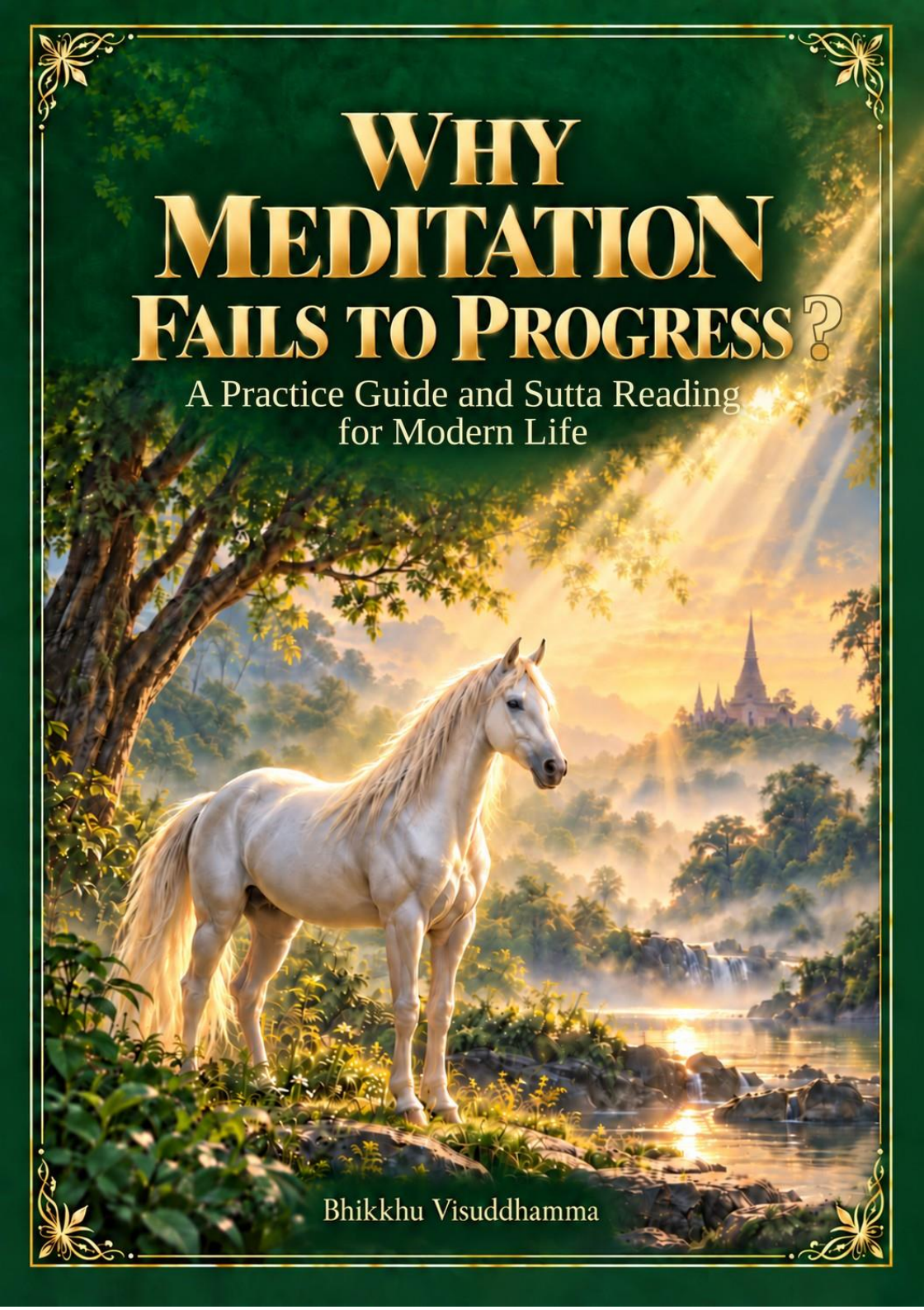


A white horse stands in a lush, misty landscape. In the background, a pagoda is visible on a hill, and a waterfall flows into a river. Sunlight rays stream through the trees, creating a serene atmosphere. The entire scene is framed by a decorative border with floral motifs in the corners.

WHY MEDITATION FAILS TO PROGRESS?

A Practice Guide and Sutta Reading
for Modern Life

Bhikkhu Visuddhamma

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A three-part edition in 32 chapters · 2026

From a sitting that suits your capacity to reading the suttas
with care and living responsibly.

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The illustrations and diagrams in this book were made or compiled by the author for study purposes

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Introduction

This book helps readers begin meditation, deepen a practice already under way, and read the suttas with care. Its two central texts are the Suddha Sutta (SN 47.24) and the Saddha Sutta (AN 11.9), which some sources call the Sandha Sutta or number AN 11.10. The question that runs through the whole book is this: is the mind knowing what is happening, or is it continuing to feed desire, irritation and clinging?

The three parts correspond to three kinds of reading need, not to three levels of attainment. Part One guides beginners; Part Two helps experienced practitioners review their method; Part Three presents the sutta texts, compares translations and discusses application in a technological life. Long-time practitioners may still return to a basic exercise when they notice strain or a loss of clarity.

Each chapter has an illustration, a summary, a memory verse, ten questions with answers and five reflection questions. Some chapters include an additional review section for readers who wish to study further. Illustrations and verses are study aids, not sutta text and not evidence of attainment. Reflection questions have no single correct answer; work with a real situation from your own life.

Images labelled “Reference figure” should be read together with the caption beside them. The caption states the limits of the simplification in the image. Where a label or instruction inside an image differs from the explanation given in the text, follow the explained and checked instruction; do not turn that label into a technique on your own.

Three reading paths

Beginners: read Chapters 1–2 and 4–5, then use Chapter 9 to get started. Read the summaries in Chapters 3 and 6–8 before reading them in depth. Five manageable minutes and one deliberate act of conduct each day are one way to begin.

Experienced practitioners: read Chapters 10–19, referring back to the foundations as needed. Use the questions and answers to check your understanding; note a situation where you are stuck so you can ask your teacher. The chapters do not require you to pass through the same process as everyone else.

Research readers: begin with Chapter 20, then 21–30. Chapter 31 discusses application and critique in modern life; Chapter 32 provides questions for self-study and discussion. The appendices help you look up sutta numbers, terms and sources.

Three kinds of content in this book

Readers will meet three kinds of content, which the text keeps clearly distinct.

Canonical text is what the suttas say. Where possible the text is given in Pāli together with translations whose translator is named.

Traditional interpretation comes from the commentaries and from later teachers. Examples include the analysis of clear comprehension into four aspects and the noting method

of Mahāsi Sayadaw. These are useful maps, and the book marks them clearly as interpretative maps.

Contemporary application consists of illustrative situations for readers today: email, traffic, phone scrolling and pressure at work. These examples clarify the practice but are not stories found in the canon.

A short sutta can support a broad method of practice, but no meaning should be imputed to the words of the sutta beyond what the text actually says. This caution is maintained throughout the book.

How to read sutta text and explanation

Keep three layers separate: the words of the sutta and sourced translations; traditional or authorial explanation; and modern exercises and situations. Empirical claims need suitable evidence from outside the suttas. Something that has not been proven need not be turned into a firm conclusion in order to practise a small, useful act.

Spelling and terminology

Pāli terms keep their diacritics to make comparison easier. In AN 11.9 the monk's name has the variant readings Saddha and Sandha; the Mahāsaṅgīti edition reads saddha, while some editions read sandha. This book keeps the name used in the text being translated and gives both forms where needed. Words such as jhāna, saññā, vibhūtā and sampajañña must be understood in context rather than given a single meaning wherever they occur.

Citations and links

Every canonical reference gives a sutta number so that it can be looked up in the printed edition as well. Appendix C lists the main sources and secondary literature. Translations made directly from Pāli, translations based on an English version, and paraphrases have different standing; the source label at the head of each passage indicates how it may be used. Contested readings are not to be used as binding instructions for beginning meditators.



Starting to practise

Before sitting, choose a place with few interruptions and a length of time that suits your capacity, for example five to ten minutes. A chair or a cushion will both serve; keep the body steady, the back naturally straight and the muscles unclenched. Leave the eyes lightly open or closed as conditions allow. This is guidance for getting started, not one obligatory posture.

Know the breath coming in or going out at a place where it is easy to notice, or know the touch of the body if the breath is not clear. Do not force a sensation to appear. When you notice that you are thinking, know the distraction and return gently. One noticing and one return is already one piece of practice; there is no need to wait for a mind entirely without thought.

If pain increases or the posture does not suit you, know the intention and change posture slowly. If the mind becomes dull, you may open the eyes or walk for a few minutes. If there is strain, reduce excessive effort. End by knowing the posture, standing up unhurriedly and noting one thing you have learnt. Do not use light, an unusual sensation or length of sitting to confirm an attainment for yourself. Chapters 4 and 5 give more detailed guidance.

Virtue, concentration and wisdom as the foundation

MN 44 places the aspects of the Noble Eightfold Path within the three groups of virtue, concentration and wisdom. Virtue

makes speech, action and livelihood less harmful; concentration includes the training of the mind with effort and mindfulness; wisdom directs understanding and choice. In daily life, keeping speech truthful, doing no harm and fulfilling responsibilities are part of the foundation, not a side matter outside the sitting (MN 44; SN 45.8).

Why meditation has not yet progressed

Before concluding that meditation has failed, distinguish not yet having a stable skill from not yet having reached liberation. Repeating a habit takes time; the path of liberation has a scope deeper than a week of practice. Review your aim, your regularity, the level of effort, sleep, ethical conduct, environment and the clarity of the instructions you are following. Do not take the absence of rapture or of an unusual experience as a conclusion of failure.

If you understand only the theory, choose one short exercise and do it regularly. If you habitually strain to make the mind quiet, reduce the intensity and learn again more lightly. If a hindrance keeps recurring, read Chapter 7 and ask how to adjust. If you only sit while your speech still causes harm, bring the practice into the moment of preparing to speak and to act. These questions help you recognise the condition that needs changing; they do not explain every obstacle for every person by a single cause.

Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
AN	Aṅguttara Nikāya (Numerical Discourses), cited by numbered group and sutta, e.g. AN 11.9
DN	Dīgha Nikāya — Long Discourses
MN	Majjhima Nikāya — Middle Length Discourses
SN	Saṃyutta Nikāya — Connected Discourses
Dhp	Dhammapada, cited by verse number
ATI	Access to Insight (accesstoinight.org)
SC	SuttaCentral (suttacentral.net)
DPD	Digital Pāli Dictionary (dpdict.net)
Spk, Mp	Commentaries: Sāratthappakāsinī (commentary on SN) and Manorathapūraṇī (commentary on AN)
bj, mr, ms, pts1ed, sya	Edition sigla used in SuttaCentral's notes on Pāli variant readings; retained as published

Prologue

The Message Still Waiting

At 10:14 on Tuesday morning, Mira opened an email from her supervisor. It began: “We need to talk about the report.” Her shoulders tightened before she reached the second sentence. A reply formed at once: “I sent it yesterday. You should check your inbox.” At the same moment her phone lit up with a news alert, and traffic noise drifted in through the open window.

Mira had been practising mindfulness for a few weeks. She placed both feet on the floor and noticed the pressure under her heels. The email had not changed, but now she could tell the event apart from her reaction: the words on the screen; an unpleasant feeling; heat in her face; the thought that she was being blamed; and the urge to defend herself. She did not suppress her anger, nor did she pretend it was wisdom. She waited until she could ask what her supervisor meant. The answer was ordinary: the attachment had not gone through.

That evening Mira sat for fifteen minutes. Her mind kept returning to the email. Each time, she had a chance to notice that she was remembering, to feel her body and to bring her attention back. The question for the reader is simple: when the mind returns to the email, is it observing an experience, or is it tied to the feeding trough, brooding on “fodder”? The two suttas in this book approach that question from different angles.

This story is an illustrative scenario, not an episode recounted in the suttas. It introduces the method that runs through the book: notice what has just arisen, understand its conditions and consequences, and make the effort not to keep feeding an unwholesome reaction. The canonical basis of this method is developed in later chapters (SN 47.24; AN 11.9; MN 10).

PART ONE

A GUIDE FOR BEGINNERS

This part helps you lay an ethical foundation, understand the instructions in plain language and build a rhythm of practice that suits your capacity. If the terms are unfamiliar, read the summary and the questions and answers first, and return to the main text when needed.

Chapter 1

Why Meditation Has Not Yet Brought Change

Why sitting long can still leave us quick to anger

Some people sit every day yet still flare up when given feedback. Others have barely begun and already think they have failed because the mind wanders so much. Both cases remind us to reconsider how we measure progress. Time spent sitting is one condition for learning; it does not tell the whole story about the quality of attention, understanding and conduct.

What we are learning

The moment you notice you are thinking about something else, you have remembered what you are practising. Return to a breath or a clear bodily contact. That return needs no reproach attached to it. After the sitting, see whether you listen to others more fully, can stop before hurtful words, and can correct what you have done wrong.

Three common sticking points

The first is expectation: wanting the mind to be calm at once. The second is method: gripping the attention so tightly that you lose ease. The third is living conditions: lack of sleep, overwork or constantly checking the phone. Each can be adjusted, rather than concluding that you are incapable of practice.

Beginning again

You intend to sit for five minutes but remember an unpaid bill. Know that you are remembering, write down what needs doing after the session if you fear forgetting, then return. If the bill must be dealt with now to avoid harm, deal with it and choose another time to practise. Mindfulness goes together with understanding what needs to be done; it does not ask you to abandon your responsibilities.

A first exercise

For three days, keep one short sitting that suits your capacity and one deliberate act of conduct, such as hearing a whole sentence before you reply. Each evening, note one thing that helped you see more clearly and one thing to adjust. Read Chapter 9 for an introductory programme; do not use seven days as a deadline for attainment.

Chapter 1 Review



Review figure 1. Notice, understand the conditions and choose an action that causes less harm.

Key points

- Noticing distraction is an opportunity to return.
- Progress is seen in how we live, not only in minutes of sitting.
- Adjust expectations, method and living conditions little by little.

Memory verse

*The mind strays off; I know, and turn back home,
No heavy words of blame upon my own.
The sitting done, I hear the other through,
Less heat in speech, more kindness in its tone.*



Dhammapada verse — Dhp 2

*Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā, manoseṭṭhā manomayā;
Manasā ce pasannena, bhāsatī vā karoti vā;
Tato naṃ sukhamanveti, chāyāva anapāyinī.*

Mind goes before all things; mind is their master, mind their maker. Speak or act with a clear mind, and happiness follows, like a shadow that does not depart.

Ten golden questions and answers

1. Does a wandering mind mean failure?

Answer: No. What we learn is to notice and return, not to keep feeding the story.

2. How long must I sit for it to help?

Answer: No number of minutes guarantees a result. A beginner can start with five manageable minutes and then review.

3. Is calm during the sitting enough?

Answer: Not yet. We also need to look at understanding and conduct after the sitting.

4. Why does trying harder make me tenser?

Answer: You may be forcing the mind to reach a particular state. Try softening the body and reducing the effort.

5. How should I record progress?

Answer: Note one concrete change in awareness, speech or action; avoid awarding yourself a level of attainment.

6. Should I neglect work to keep my meditation time?

Answer: Distinguish what can wait from urgent responsibilities, and schedule practice accordingly.

7. Is a little regular practice worthwhile?

Answer: It can be a good start if regularity goes together with attention and a review of how you practise.

8. What does the phone have to do with it?

Answer: It can be a condition that pulls you away from what you are doing. Notice it and adjust how you use it.

9. Must anger be gone before I can practise?

Answer: No. You can learn to recognise anger and choose a less harmful response even while it is still present.

10. What should I read next?

Answer: Chapters 2–5 lay the foundations; Chapter 9 offers an introductory programme.

Five mindful questions for better daily life

1. When this week did you listen to someone more carefully?
2. What yardstick are you using that turns meditation into a competition?
3. Which living condition could you change right away?
4. When you forget to practise, what words do you say to yourself?
5. How would you like your practice to benefit the people you live with?

Chapter 2

Buddhist Foundations for Meditation

Meditation belongs to a path

In the Buddha's teaching, meditation is bound up with virtue, concentration and wisdom. Virtue helps us live with less harm. Concentration gives the mind the stability to see clearly. Wisdom understands the conditions of suffering and how not to keep feeding it. The three support one another; they are not three wholly separate subjects.

Four truths to be understood

The Four Noble Truths concern suffering, the origin of suffering, the cessation of suffering and the path of practice. When you are new, do not hurry to explain every misfortune with a short formula. Illness, bereavement or unjust treatment still call for care, help and appropriate action. Noticing the mind's reaction helps us respond more clearly; it does not erase those needs.

The eight aspects of the path

The Noble Eightfold Path consists of right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration (SN 45.8; MN 141). So a way of practising that merely sharpens attention while feeding dishonesty, harm or conceit needs to be reconsidered.

The five precepts in daily life

A lay practitioner can take the five precepts as a foundation: abstaining from killing, from taking what is not given, from sexual misconduct, from false speech and from intoxicants that cause heedlessness. Learn the precepts clearly from a teacher. In daily life, begin with truthfulness, respect for other people's bodies and property, and taking responsibility when you have done wrong.

Understanding impermanence and non-self in due measure

Impermanence reminds us that what arises from conditions changes. Non-self helps us re-examine our grip on experience as a fixed self. Neither teaching means that life is worthless, that the person who suffers does not exist, or that we are exempt from responsibility. When you do not yet understand, read slowly and ask; do not use lofty words to deny something real.

Chapter 2 Review



Review figure 2. Keep the foundations, practise within your capacity and ask when the way is unclear.

Key points

- Virtue, concentration and wisdom support practice together.
- Mindfulness needs to go together with the other aspects of the Noble Eightfold Path.
- The teaching does not erase the responsibility to care for others and to correct mistakes.

Memory verse

*Keep honest speech today,
A calm mind sees what is good and what must be done.
Understanding, harm the ones you love less,
The path is present in each day lived straight.*

Ten golden questions and answers

1. What is virtue?

Answer: The ethical foundation that prevents harmful conduct and supports practice.

2. What does concentration help with?

Answer: It gives the mind stability; concentration needs to go together with understanding and ethics.

3. Is wisdom a matter of memorisation?

Answer: Memorising can help, but wisdom also requires understanding and seeing clearly what is being learned.

4. What are the Four Noble Truths?

Answer: Suffering, the origin of suffering, the cessation of suffering and the path leading to that cessation.

5. Does mindfulness stand alone?

Answer: Within the Noble Eightfold Path it is connected with the other seven factors.

6. Are the five precepts only for people who meditate?

Answer: No. They are a foundation for the life and practice of lay people, including outside the sitting.

7. Does impermanence mean we need not care for anyone?

Answer: No. Change is all the more reason to care for others at the right time.

8. Does non-self exempt us from responsibility?

Answer: No. Actions still have consequences and should be corrected when they cause harm.

9. Is illness just a matter of changing one's thinking?

Answer: No. Awareness of the mind does not replace appropriate health care.

10. What should I do after doing wrong?

Answer: Admit the mistake, limit the damage, repair what can be repaired and find ways not to repeat it.

Five mindful questions for better daily life

1. Did something you said recently fit with what you want to learn?
2. How could you correct a small mistake with someone close to you?
3. At work, what most often tests your honesty?
4. Have you ever used the word “impermanence” to avoid a responsibility?
5. Where in your life do virtue, concentration or wisdom need more care?

Chapter 3

Ardour, Mindfulness and Clear Comprehension

The phrase *ātāpī sampajāno satimā* describes how to practise. The formula does not ask the practitioner to be tense, to analyse every moment or to force the mind into a blank state. The three qualities support one another. The order of the Pāli words is not a rigid sequence of steps.

The three terms form a practical system. *Ātāpī* supplies wholesome energy; *sampajāno* provides clear discernment; *satimā* keeps the object and the Dhamma instruction from being forgotten.

Together, these three qualities keep meditation from sliding into sluggish effort, attention without understanding, or purely theoretical reflection. The refrain appears throughout the teachings on the establishments of mindfulness in MN 10, DN 22 and the *Satipaṭṭhāna Saṃyutta* (SN 47).

The three terms at a glance

Ātāpī. Practical meaning: sincere, persistent effort within one's capacity. Remember what you are practising, adjust when the mind is dull or overstrained, and do not feed unwholesome reactions. When this quality is weak, we tend to procrastinate, give up or practise half-heartedly.

Satimā. Core meaning: mindful; possessing sati: remembering, not forgetting. Practical function: keeping in mind the object, the instructions and the appropriate frame of

practice. When weak: the object is forgotten and we are swept into a story in the mind.

Sampajāno. Core meaning: clearly comprehending. Practical function: knowing the action, its purpose, its suitability and the experience without delusion. When weak: mechanical practice or impulsive, ill-considered action.

Figure 1 Qualities that support one another

Ardour ātāpī

Keep balanced effort to abandon the unwholesome and develop the wholesome.

Clear comprehension sampajāno

Know clearly what you are doing and adjust as appropriate.

Mindfulness satimā

Do not forget the task and the frame of practice.

SN 47.24 and MN 10. The three qualities are not three successive stages of attainment.

Figure 1. Ardour, clear comprehension and mindfulness support practice together. The diagram does not prescribe three successive stages, nor does it equate clear comprehension with the whole of liberating wisdom (SN 47.24; MN 10).

Ātāpī: ardent, balanced energy

Ātāpī derives from ātāpa, “heat”. In the context of insight meditation it does not mean emotional intensity, strain, self-punishment or forcing the mind to be quiet. It refers to the heat of sincere, sustained effort that weakens greed, aversion, delusion, heedlessness and the habit of forgetting. The practical question is:

“Right now, am I making the right amount of effort to notice and let go of what is unwholesome?”

This corresponds to right effort, whose four tasks are set out in SN 45.8 and MN 141:

- preventing unwholesome states that have not yet arisen;
- abandoning unwholesome states that have arisen;
- arousing wholesome states that have not yet arisen;
- maintaining wholesome states that have arisen.

The four tasks of right effort

Preventing

Unarisen unwholesome states:
learn to guard against triggering
conditions.

Abandoning

Arisen unwholesome states:
recognise them and choose a
suitable method.

Arousing

Unarisen wholesome states:
nurture goodwill and
understanding.

Maintaining

Arisen wholesome states: keep
developing and protecting them.

Paraphrased from SN 45.8 and MN 141. Effort needs balance, not strain.

The four right efforts in one afternoon

Preventing: knowing that late-afternoon tiredness makes you irritable, you eat a light snack and take a short walk before the meeting. Abandoning: in the meeting irritation flares up; you notice it and apply the method of MN 20, replacing the thought with a wholesome one or simply not continuing to feed it. Arousing: you deliberately recall something good about your colleague and arouse

goodwill. Maintaining: you keep that calm for the rest of the conversation and do not let it dissipate.

During sitting meditation:

- Choose one clear main object, such as the breath at the nostrils, the rising and falling of the abdomen, or sensations in the body.
- When the mind wanders, do not blame yourself.
- Simply recognise the distraction: “thinking”, “planning”, “hearing”, “irritation”, “sleepy”.
- Gently but firmly bring the mind back to direct experience.
- Repeat patiently as needed, without discouragement.

In daily life:

- When irritation arises, do not immediately speak, write or act on it.
- Apply ātāpī: pause, recognise “aversion is present”, feel its signs in the body and do not keep feeding it with repetitive angry thoughts.
- Return to wholesome conduct: silence, patience, gentle speech or appropriate action.

Sloth and drowsiness. Unhelpful response: “I’ll meditate later; let me just rest in this sluggishness.” Letting the dullness continue unnoticed. More skilful adjustment: sit upright within your capacity, open the eyes or do walking

meditation; if you are short of sleep or exhausted, rest appropriately. Do not condemn yourself for needing rest.

Restlessness. Unhelpful response: gripping the attention and chasing the breath, then becoming irritated. More skilful adjustment: soften the body, widen the attention, know restlessness as restlessness without feeding it; maintain calm and continuity instead of forcing.

Doubt. Unhelpful response: constantly switching methods or giving up too soon. More skilful adjustment: return to a simple object and continue long enough to observe cause and effect.

Self-criticism. Unhelpful response: “I’m bad at meditation because my mind keeps wandering.” Treating mind-wandering as proof of failure. More skilful adjustment: regard noticing the wandering as a success: mindfulness has returned.

Spiritual ambition. Unhelpful response: trying to produce jhāna, insight, purity or special experiences. More skilful adjustment: make the effort to know the present state and its understandable causes, not to reach an imagined future state.

How do we know ātāpī is being applied correctly? Right effort is continuous rather than flaring up intensely for a few minutes; gentle yet steady, neither slack nor forced; tied to knowing reality rather than suppressing it; and it gradually reduces unwholesome states. Such effort makes the mind more flexible, clear, patient and stable. One may think of holding a bird: hold it too loosely and it flies away, too tightly

and it is hurt. This is a familiar image from meditation talks, not from the suttas; the canon uses the image of a lute string neither too tight nor too slack (Soṇa Sutta, AN 6.55).

Sampajāno: clear comprehension

Sampajāno means knowing clearly or understanding thoroughly. The term is not only about noticing “I am walking” or “I am eating”. It includes knowing what one is doing, why one is doing it, whether it is beneficial and suitable, whether the mind remains within a wholesome range of attention, and whether experience is being seen as it really is rather than through the lens of delusion.

You can begin with four short questions: what is this for, is it suitable now, what needs attention, and am I misreading the situation? Chapter 23 explains the commentarial source and the terms; Chapter 29 gives the Dhammapada verses in Pāli and English for deeper reading.

Pause and ask four things. Before an important action, ask: Purpose: what am I about to do, and why? Benefit: does this support harmlessness, virtue, calm, wisdom or a necessary responsibility? Range: can I do this without losing mindfulness and self-restraint? Reality: what state of mind is driving me—greed, aversion, delusion, fear, kindness, a sense of responsibility or wisdom?

For example, before replying to a harsh message, remind yourself: “I want to reply because aversion is present.” “If I reply right now, will it help or harm?” “While replying, can I stay aware of bodily tension, feeling and mental state?”

“This anger is conditioned and impermanent; it need not govern my speech.” Then wait, write a measured reply, or choose not to respond.

Overthinking. Sign: turning every movement into a complex analysis. Adjustment: use a short, direct note: “walking”, “reaching”, “speaking”, “wanting”.

Moral rigidity. Sign: believing every pleasant activity is wrong. Adjustment: ask whether the activity is beneficial, timely, harmless and free of clinging, not merely whether it is pleasant.

Rationalisation. Sign: using the intellect to justify craving or aversion. Adjustment: notice bodily tension, urgency, concealment and the wish to justify oneself.

Losing the main object. Sign: being swept up in external tasks. Adjustment: re-establish awareness of the body, the feeling tone and the actual state of mind.

Insight without direct seeing. Sign: saying “impermanent” while reacting as though experience were permanent and personal. Adjustment: observe arising, changing, fading and ceasing in present experience.

Clear comprehension is working well when actions become more purposeful and less impulsive; when you notice intention before speaking or acting, not just regret afterwards; when you can distinguish experience from the story you build about it; and when you see body, feeling, perception, thought and emotion arising from conditions and

passing away. This is not a cold observer standing outside life. It is wisdom at work while walking, eating, washing, speaking, working, resting and relating to others.

Satimā: mindful presence and remembering

Satimā means “one who has sati”. It does not mean constantly thinking about the past, monitoring the present in a tense, narrow way, forcibly emptying the mind or having no thoughts at all. It means that when a phenomenon occurs, the mind knows it without forgetting the meditative frame or being carried away by it. The breath occurs: “knowing the breath”. Pain appears: “knowing painful feeling”. Aversion appears: “knowing aversion”. The mind is distracted: “knowing distraction”. The moment distraction is recognised, mindfulness is present again; no self-blame needs to be added.

The Notice–Return–Abide method

- Notice: what is most prominent right now? The breath, pressure, sound, pleasantness, pain, a thought, an emotion or a state of mind?
- Return: if you are swept into a story in the mind, gently come back to the chosen object or to the phenomenon that is clearest now.
- Abide: stay long enough to observe change: beginning, continuing, changing and ending.

Noticing and returning when distracted

Notice

Know that the mind has been carried into a thought or reaction.

Return

Gently come back to the breath or a contact that is clear.

Continue

Keep awareness within your capacity; repeat when needed.

A teaching device that supports mindfulness. One return does not guarantee that every hindrance is gone.

A simple breathing exercise: know a whole in-breath fully as an in-breath and a whole out-breath fully as an out-breath. If the mind drifts into memory, note “remembering”. If it moves into planning, note “calculating”. Return to the breath without irritation and continue.

Anchors in daily life. Before standing up, notice the intention to stand. At a doorway, know the step and the touch of the door. Before eating, know the hunger, the wish to eat, gratitude and the first bite. Before speaking, notice the intention and the feeling tone. Before sleep, know the body lying down and the state of mind. These are contemporary exercises in keeping with the wider practice, not a list given verbatim in SN 47.24.

Forgetfulness. Sign: ten minutes pass in thought without any awareness. Adjustment: do not blame yourself; begin again with the next breath or bodily sensation.

Obsession with labelling. Sign: repeating labels mechanically without actually feeling the experience. Adjustment: use labels only as a light support; give priority to direct knowing.

Suppression. Sign: trying to get rid of thoughts, emotions or pain. Adjustment: know that a thought or feeling is present; do not forcibly remove it. Change posture if pain increases and choose an appropriate way to care for the pain.

Misperception and illusion. Sign: feeling numb, distant or unreal while believing you are “being mindful”. Adjustment: return to firm bodily contact: feet, hands, breath, posture; seek qualified guidance if this persists.

Selective mindfulness. Sign: being mindful in formal sitting but careless in speech and conduct. Adjustment: extend awareness to intention, speech, consumption and relationships.

Sati is developing when you notice distraction sooner, recover more gently, notice feelings and intentions before they turn into speech or action, and are less pulled about by praise and blame. A particularly important sign is reduced identification: instead of “I am angry”, seeing “aversion has arisen”; instead of “my pain is unbearable”, seeing “painful feeling is present and changing”. This is not denying reality but seeing it more accurately.

The three qualities working together

a) Core nature and what happens when it is missing

- **Satimā (mindfulness):**
 - *Nature:* not forgetting present reality and the practice.
 - *When missing:* reacting mechanically.
- **Sampajāno (clear comprehension):**
 - *Nature:* understanding that reality correctly and choosing wisely.
 - *When missing:* one may recognise aversion yet still justify unwholesome speech.
- **Ātāpī (ardour):**
 - *Nature:* persistent effort to abandon what is unwholesome and develop what is wholesome.
 - *When missing:* one may understand what is wholesome but lack the resolve to practise it.

b) Situation 1: hearing a harsh voice

- **Satimā (noting):** sound, tightness in the chest, unpleasant feeling and the thought: “*They shouldn’t speak to me like that.*”
- **Sampajāno (reading the situation and choosing):** recognising that aversion is forming and understanding that immediate retaliation will not help.

- **Ātāpī (effort in practice):**

- Making the effort not to feed the anger with bitter words, revenge fantasies or replaying the story in the mind.
- Choosing a timely, truthful, harmless response, or remaining silent.

c) Situation 2: being suddenly cut off in traffic

- **Satimā (remembering):** *“I am driving; my task is to get home safely.”*

- **Sampajāno (reading the situation):**

- *Purpose:* arriving safely matters more than retaliating.
- Suitability: do not chase the other driver to retaliate. Keep your distance, watch the road and use warning signals when needed for safety.
- Range of attention: keep watching the road, people and vehicles; do not switch to a breath-watching exercise while driving.
- Non-delusion: know that unpleasant feeling and an angry mind are what is happening; do not rush to label the other driver an enemy or conclude that the whole day is ruined.

- **Ātāpī (effort in practice):** let go of hostile thoughts, re-establish calm and patiently repeat this if the thoughts return.

Dhp 5 reminds us that hatred is not appeased by hatred. The full verse is given in Chapter 29; in this situation, put safety first and feed retaliation less.

A daily practice plan

Morning, begin with 5–10 minutes. Practice: sit with the breath or bodily sensations. Establish satimā by bringing the mind back to the object again and again. Apply ātāpī: do not give in to wandering, dullness or discouragement. Apply sampajāno: notice whether the mind is straining, sleepy, agitated, calm, greedy, resistant or clear.

During the day. Practice: choose three pauses: before a meal, before using the phone and before an important conversation. Ask what is happening in body and mind, what the intention is, whether the action is beneficial and timely, and whether it can be done without greed, aversion or delusion.

Evening, five minutes. Practice: look back without guilt or self-condemnation: when did mindfulness arise today? When did I forget and react? What conditions supported clarity? What most often led to unwholesome states? What one thing will I adjust tomorrow?

The review is not about grading yourself. Its purpose is to understand conditions and learn from experience.

The final measure: is the practice sound?

Signs such as time spent sitting, unusual sensations or a nimitta are not enough to confirm attainment for oneself. A

nimitta is a sign or mental image whose meaning depends on the method and tradition; it is not identical with light, nor is it automatically a hallucination. To assess the direction of practice in daily life, see whether it gradually supports the following qualities:

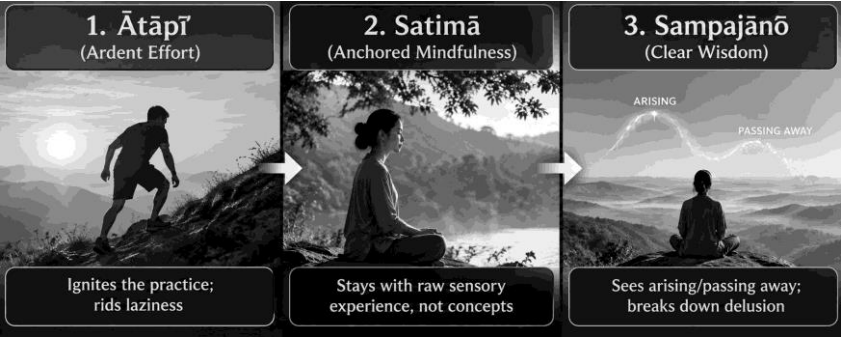
- Better virtue and self-restraint in speech and conduct;
- Less greed, irritation, conceit and harmful reactivity;
- Growing patience, kindness, humility and responsibility;
- An improved ability to know pleasant and painful feelings without immediately clinging or resisting;
- Deepening direct insight into impermanence, suffering and non-self; and
- A mind that is calm without dullness, energetic without strain, and observant without being preoccupied with itself.

If practice makes someone more conceited, rigid, isolated or angry, careless about virtue or obsessed with attaining experiences, then ardour, sampajañña and sati are probably being misunderstood. Sound practice should gradually support the ending of desire, discontent and clinging, not increase them.

Table: The three qualities — meaning, function and weakness

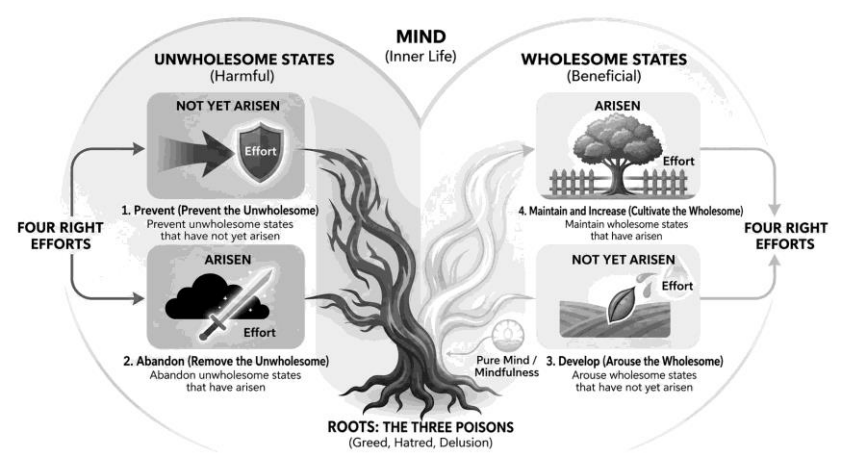
Pāli term	Core meaning	Practical function	When weak
Ātāpī	Persistent, balanced ardour	Applying steady, regulated effort to know what is happening and abandon unwholesome reactions	Passivity, procrastination, giving up or drifting
Satimā	Mindful; possessing sati: remembering, not forgetting	Keeping in mind the object, the instructions and the appropriate frame of practice	Forgetting the object and being swept into a story in the mind
Sampajāno	Clear comprehension	Knowing the action, purpose, suitability and experience without delusion	Mechanical practice or impulsive, ill-considered action

Reference figure and how to read it



Reference figure 1. The three qualities support practice together. The three-step arrows in the image are only the image’s way of presenting them, not three successive stages prescribed by the sutta.

Reference figure and how to read it



Reference figure 2. The diagram suggests nourishing what is wholesome and feeding the unwholesome less. The tree is a memory aid, not a physical description of the mind.

Chapter 3 Review



Review figure 3. Remembering the practice, understanding how to do it and making balanced effort support one another.

Key points

- Ardour is persistent effort; mindfulness helps us remember; clear comprehension helps us know clearly what we are doing.
- The three qualities support one another; they are not three successive attainments.
- When reviewing practice, look at how you speak, how you act and how you treat others.

Memory verse

*Remember the task, see it clear,
Try within your strength, do not strain.
Forgot? Then gently come back here,
One kind word, less harm again.*



Dhammapada verse — Dhṛ 276

*Tumhehi kiccamātappaṃ, akkhātāro tathāgatā;
Paṭipannā pamokkhanti, jhāyino mārabandhanā.*

The effort is yours to make; the Tathāgatas only point the way. Those who practise, and who meditate, are freed from the bondage of Māra.

Ten golden questions and answers

1. Is ardour better the more tense it is?

Answer: No. Ardour is persistent, balanced effort to reduce what is unwholesome and nourish what is wholesome.

2. What does mindfulness support?

Answer: It helps us remember what we are doing, the object and the instructions, and recognise when the mind is carried away.

3. What does clear comprehension support?

Answer: It helps us know clearly what we are doing, why, and whether it is suitable or harmful.

4. Are the three qualities three steps of attainment?

Answer: No. They can support one another within a single action, for example before replying to a message.

5. What are the tasks of the four right efforts?

Answer: Preventing unarisen unwholesome states, abandoning arisen ones, arousing wholesome states and maintaining wholesome states that have arisen.

6. What is missing if I recognise anger yet still speak harshly?

Answer: Awareness has not yet been joined by appropriate choice and effort. Stop feeding the anger and choose a less harmful way of speaking.

7. Must I name every sensation continuously?

Answer: No. A short note can help, but mechanical repetition obscures direct awareness.

8. Where do the four aspects of clear comprehension come from?

Answer: They are a systematisation from the commentarial tradition, not a list given verbatim in SN 47.24.

9. How does clear comprehension show itself on the road?

Answer: Remembering the task of safety, watching the road and other people, and not letting irritation lead to dangerous action.

10. Do seeing light or sitting for long prove progress?

Answer: Not yet. Virtue, understanding and conduct must also be considered; private experiences are not enough to confirm attainment.

Five mindful questions for better daily life

1. In your most recent argument, did you notice anger before speaking? If so, what still made you speak?
2. Where are you overexerting yourself? What balance could keep your persistence?
3. What helps you remember your commitment to practise on a busy day?
4. How could you apply the four right efforts to using your phone or talking with your family?
5. What change might the people close to you notice if your practice were heading in the right direction?

Chapter 4

Preparing and Beginning to Practise

Choose a place that is good enough

You do not need a perfect room. Choose a place with few interruptions, enough light and a posture you can sustain. Let your household know if you need some quiet time. Turn off unnecessary notifications, but keep a way to be reached for urgent responsibilities.

Sit within your capacity

You may sit on a chair with your feet firmly on the floor, or on a cushion if that suits you. Let the back be naturally upright, the face and shoulders unstrained. If pain clearly increases, change posture. Do not treat enduring pain as proof of effort.

A five-minute session

First minute: feel the feet, the hands and the posture. Following minutes: know the natural breath where it is clearest, or a bodily contact. When you notice distraction, gently return. Last minute: widen the attention, know where you are sitting and choose one small wholesome act to carry into the day.

The breath is for knowing

There is no need to make the breath long, short or strong to fit a pattern. If following the breath makes you tense or uncomfortable, use the contact of the feet, the hands or the

posture, and ask a teacher if you remain stuck. Chapter 12 presents MN 118 for deeper study; a first session does not have to complete sixteen steps.

Ending is also practice

Stand up slowly enough to know the body and move on to the next task. A short note is enough: what you noticed, what helped or hindered. If practice increases distress and affects daily functioning, reduce or pause it and seek suitable guidance. Points of caution are discussed in Chapter 17.

Reference figure and how to read it



Reference figure 3. The breath and bodily contact can serve as anchors. There is no need to copy the posture or try to control the breath as shown in the image.

Chapter 4 Review



Review figure 4. Seven days are a first step; they can be repeated and adjusted to your capacity.

Key points

- Choose a place and posture that suit your body and your responsibilities.
- Know the natural breath; when distracted, return.
- End the sitting with something useful for the day.

Memory verse

*An ordinary chair, both feet at rest,
Soft shoulders, knowing breath that comes and goes.
Forgot? Come back, it does no harm,
Stand up and greet the day more gently.*

Ten golden questions and answers

1. Must I sit cross-legged?

Answer: No. A chair or a cushion can both be suitable if the posture is stable and within your capacity.

2. Must I close my eyes?

Answer: The eyes may be gently closed or open, depending on conditions and instruction.

3. What if pain increases?

Answer: Change posture or stop; do not force yourself to endure it to prove you are good.

4. Must the place be completely silent?

Answer: No. Choose a place that is good enough and learn to notice sounds without chasing them.

5. How long should I begin with?

Answer: Perhaps five minutes, then adjust according to experience and capacity.

6. Should I lengthen the breath?

Answer: No. In this exercise, know the natural breath.

7. What if the breath is unclear?

Answer: Try the clearer contact of the feet, the hands or the posture.

8. What should I do when I remember a task?

Answer: Notice it, jot it down briefly if needed and return; deal with it at once if it is truly urgent.

9. Do I need to record the whole session?

Answer: No. One thing learned and one thing to adjust is enough.

10. What should I do after sitting?

Answer: Return to daily activity with one deliberate action, such as speaking or listening more carefully.

Five mindful questions for better daily life

1. Where and when can you set aside five minutes?
2. Which posture helps you strain less?
3. Who in your household needs to be told in advance so you can arrange things together?
4. Where do you tend to force the breath or force the mind?
5. What small act will connect your sitting with the rest of your day?

Chapter 5

Noticing, Returning and Abiding

Remembering what you are doing

In this exercise, mindfulness means not forgetting what you are practising. When a story pulls the mind away, notice it and return to what is being felt. There is no need to know exactly how long you forgot. Remembering now already gives you the chance to continue.

Returning without pushing away

If a thought is still present, you do not have to chase it away before you can know your hand or the breath. You can notice the thought and feel the body again. When something that needs dealing with keeps recurring, set aside time to handle it or write a plan after the sitting; returning is not avoiding your duties.

Abiding is not immobility

Abiding means keeping the practice sufficiently continuous and appropriate. You may change posture when needed, do walking meditation or adjust the object with guidance. Do not change just because of one uncomfortable minute, nor hold on at all costs when the method is making you more tense.

A light note

You may use a short word such as “thinking”, “hearing” or “wanting” to remember. After the word, feel what is

happening. If you are only reciting names without knowing the object, name less. Noting technique is discussed in detail in Chapter 30.

Before replying to a message

Seeing a disagreeable remark, notice the hand wanting to type quickly. Know the unpleasant feeling and the irritated mind. Wait long enough to reread, ask for clarification, then reply. This act includes remembering, understanding and effort; they are not three stages of attainment.

Table: Difficulties with noting and how to adjust

Difficulty	Sign	Adjustment
Forgetfulness	Ten minutes pass in thought without any awareness	Do not blame yourself; begin again with the next breath or bodily sensation
Obsession with labelling	Repeating labels mechanically without actually feeling the experience	Use labels only as a light support; give priority to direct knowing
Suppression	Trying to get rid of thoughts, emotions or pain	Know the object as it is; mindfulness observes rather than resists

Misperception and illusion	Feeling numb, distant or unreal while believing you are “being mindful”	Return to firm bodily contact: feet, hands, breath, posture; seek qualified guidance if it persists
Selective mindfulness	Being mindful in formal sitting but careless in speech and conduct	Extend awareness to intention, speech, consumption and relationships

Table: Practice rhythm through the day

Time	Practice
Morning, 5–10 minutes	Know one clear object. When distracted, return. Keep effort within capacity and review the state of body and mind.
During the day	Choose three pauses: before a meal, before using the phone and before an important conversation. Ask what is happening in body and mind, what the intention is, whether the action is beneficial and timely, and whether it can be done without greed, aversion or delusion.
Evening, five minutes	Look back without guilt or self-condemnation: when did mindfulness arise today? When did I forget and react? What conditions supported clarity? What most often led to unwholesome states? What one thing will I adjust tomorrow?

Chapter 5 Review



Review figure 5. Notice what is changing; do not try to hold a sensation still.

Key points

- Remembering and returning are skills to be trained.
- Returning does not require pushing away every thought or avoiding responsibilities.
- Use a light label if it helps, then know the actual experience.

Memory verse

*A light word reminds me: “hearing”,
Then I hear the real sound and return to the body here.
My hand stops typing bitter words in haste,
I read once more and choose a kinder reply.*



Dhammapada verse — Dhp 35

*Dunniggahassa lahuṇo, yatthakāmanipātino;
Cittassa damatho sādhu, cittaṃ dantaṃ sukhāvahaṃ.*

The mind is hard to hold down, light, alighting wherever
it pleases. Good it is to tame the mind; a tamed mind
brings ease.

Ten golden questions and answers

1. Is sati just knowing the present?

Answer: In this context it also means remembering the task and the instructions, not forgetting the frame of practice.

2. Should I blame myself for forgetting for a long time?

Answer: There is no need. Notice, then continue from what is clear right now.

3. Must thinking stop before I can return?

Answer: No. You can know that thinking is present and then feel the object again.

4. Does abiding mean sitting without moving?

Answer: No. Posture can change when needed while the practice remains informed by understanding.

5. How does a short label help?

Answer: It can help you remember and recognise; its value lies in the awareness that follows the label.

6. Should I name every sensation?

Answer: It is not required. Use labels as much as the method you are learning calls for.

7. When should I label less?

Answer: When labelling becomes mechanical, hides the object or creates tension.

8. Is constantly changing methods helpful?

Answer: It can make reviewing difficult. Have a clear reason and ask when unsure.

9. Does returning mean abandoning the problem?

Answer: No. Practical problems still need time and action to be resolved.

10. How can I practise before replying to a message?

Answer: Notice the reaction, read the facts carefully, then choose a considered reply.

Five mindful questions for better daily life

1. While doing housework, where does your mind usually wander?
2. What signal could you use to remember what you are doing?
3. Which problem needs to be dealt with rather than merely returning to the breath?
4. By what sign do you recognise mechanical labelling?
5. Which recent message would have turned out differently if you had waited a little longer?

Chapter 6

The Four Establishments of Mindfulness in Experience

These four domains are not four separate personalities or four unrelated techniques. They are complementary ways of knowing lived experience. Contemplation of the body attends to bodily processes; contemplation of feeling knows the pleasant, unpleasant or neutral tone of experience; contemplation of mind recognises the qualities of the mind; and contemplation of dhammas examines relevant patterns and categories, including the hindrances and the factors of awakening (SN 47.24; MN 10; DN 22).

Body (kāyānupassanā)

Kāye kāyānupassī means contemplating the body in the body. The phrase directs attention to processes felt in the body rather than to an abstract idea of “my body”. Breathing, posture, movement, touch and the elements may be observed according to the instructions of the method being practised. A main anchor can help steady attention, but it remains a practical support, not something to possess. The breath at the nostrils or the rising and falling of the abdomen are possible choices; the practitioner should attend to what is actually experienced rather than imagining a desired sensation (MN 10; MN 118).

Figure 2 Choose a clear anchor

Breath

Know the in-breath or out-breath where it is easy to notice. Do not force it long, short or deep.

Bodily contact

Know the feet touching the floor, the sitting posture or a movement that is clear.

Choose according to the exercise you follow. No need to find every sensation or keep changing the object.

Figure 2. The natural breath or a clear bodily contact can serve as an anchor, depending on the exercise being practised. There is no need to search for every possible sensation.

Feeling (vedanānupassanā)

Vedanā is pleasant, unpleasant or neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling. It is not the same as a complex emotion such as anger. When reading a critical message, one can distinguish: heat or tension in the body; the unpleasantness of the experience; the recognition of the message as blame; aversion in the mind; and the intention to reply. These elements can interweave very quickly; this is a way of distinguishing them for practice, not a fixed psychological sequence (MN 10; SN 36.6).

Mind (cittānupassanā)

Cittānupassanā means knowing the state or quality of the mind. For example, the practitioner knows the mind as affected by lust, aversion or delusion, as contracted, distracted, concentrated or liberated. This is not a claim that an unchanging self stands outside the mind. It is a practical knowing of changing mental conditions. Someone scrolling through videos late at night may notice scattered attention

and the wish to continue, then choose to put the device down and rest (MN 10).

Dhammas (dhammānupassanā)

Dhammānupassanā is contemplation of dhammas: relevant principles, categories or phenomena. In MN 10 and DN 22, examples include the five hindrances, the aggregates, the sense bases, the factors of awakening and the Four Noble Truths. The specific domain depends on the teaching being contemplated. This contemplation should not be reduced to abstract thinking about “everything”.

The pull of the world

Abhiijhā-domanassa is a compound that includes longing and discontent or distress in relation to the world. The refrain does not require emotional numbness or indifference to others. It guides us to observe without being governed by craving and aversion. A practitioner can still recognise danger, fulfil responsibilities, set boundaries and act with compassion. The difference lies in whether action is guided by clear understanding or by the unexamined demand that an experience must either satisfy us or disappear (SN 47.24; MN 10).

Aware while still fulfilling responsibilities

Know the reaction

The body is tense; the feeling is unpleasant; aversion is present.

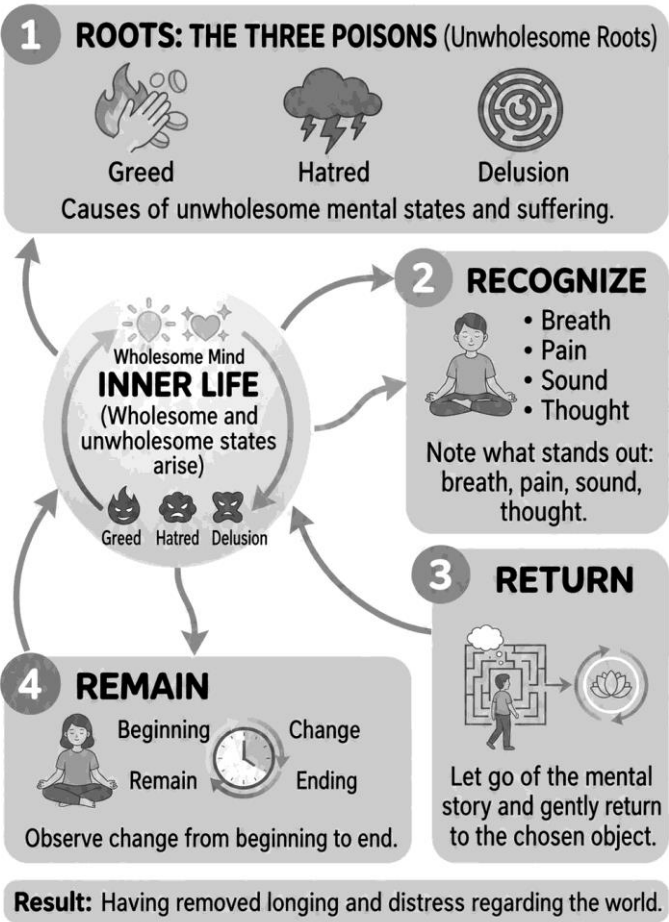
Choose an action

Consider purpose and consequences. Ask for clarity, set a boundary or protect others.

Applied from MN 10 and SN 47.24. Reducing unwholesome reactions goes together with responsibility.

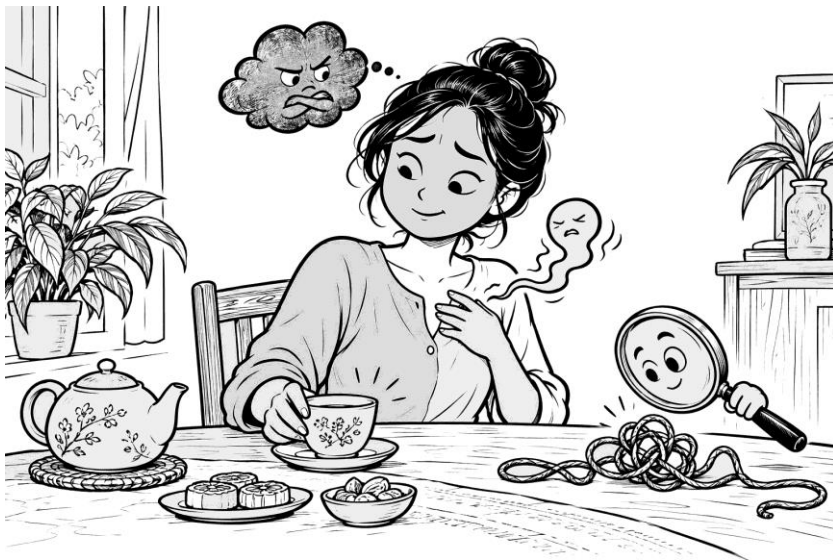
Reference figure and how to read it

FOUR ELEMENTS OF MINDFUL INNER PRACTICE



Reference figure 4. The diagram suggests aspects to consider when acting. The numbering in the image does not prescribe a sequence of attainment.

Chapter 6 Review



Review figure 6. In one and the same situation, we can know body, feeling, mind and dhammas.

Key points

- The body is the domain of breathing, posture and bodily sensation.
- Feeling is the pleasant, unpleasant or neutral tone; anger is a state of mind.
- Contemplation of dhammas helps us know groups such as the hindrances and their related conditions.

Memory verse

*The hand is touching, know the hand,
Unpleasantness comes, clear just now.
Anger rises, add no story,
See what feeds it, change course now.*

Ten golden questions and answers

1. In the example, to which domain does heat in the face belong?

Answer: It is a bodily sensation. The accompanying unpleasantness is feeling; anger is a state of mind.

2. Why distinguish body, feeling and mind?

Answer: So as not to lump everything into “I have been insulted”, and to see more clearly what can be adjusted.

3. What does neutral feeling mean?

Answer: Neither painful nor pleasant; it does not mean no experience or no mindfulness.

4. Is anger the same as unpleasant feeling?

Answer: No. They are related but belong to two different distinctions: feeling and state of mind.

5. Does contemplation of mind require someone standing outside the mind?

Answer: No. We learn to know the state of mind that is occurring without assuming an unchanging self that observes it.

6. How can contemplation of dhammas be learned from the hindrances?

Answer: Know whether a hindrance is present, the conditions for its arising and the conditions that help abandon it, as in MN 10.

7. Are the four establishments of mindfulness completely separate?

Answer: No. One event can be viewed through several domains; the distinctions aid learning and do not divide experience into four separate things.

8. Does not being governed by longing and discontent mean not caring for anyone?

Answer: No. We still care, help and set boundaries; we learn to act less from the push of desire or irritation.

9. What can I do if the breath is unclear?

Answer: Depending on the exercise, you can know the posture or a clear bodily contact, without forcing yourself to find a sensation.

10. How can an unpleasant message be observed?

Answer: Know the tension in the body, the unpleasant feeling, the angry mind and the intention to reply; then consider the content and choose how to respond.

Five mindful questions for better daily life

1. The last time you waited too long, could you distinguish the bodily sensation from the irritation?
2. When praised, what do you notice as pleasant, and what as the wish for more praise?
3. Do you often overlook neutral feeling in familiar tasks? Describe one.
4. When someone close to you is angry, how might understanding the difference between feeling and emotion help you listen?
5. Which situation allows you both to react less and to keep a necessary responsibility?

Chapter 7

The Five Hindrances and How to Adjust

The five hindrances are usually called sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and remorse, and doubt. SN 47.24 does not list them; MN 10 shows how to know their presence, their arising, their abandoning and the prevention of their recurrence. Knowing is the starting point; the practitioner also needs to develop suitable conditions and methods for abandoning them. Hindrances may appear in practice, but not everyone experiences every one of them in every session (MN 10; SN 46.2).

Kāmacchanda, sensual desire. In daily life: the mind drifts to food, sex, comfort, shopping or entertainment. Suitable adjustment: note “wanting, wanting” and return to a neutral bodily anchor. Review: recognise the wanting mind; feel its physical and mental signs; return to the appropriate object or activity.

Byāpāda, ill will. In daily life: irritation at outside noise, self-judgement, anger at people from the past. Suitable adjustment: shift attention to the sensation of anger in the body; meet it with patience (khanti). Review: recognise the resisting mind and its feeling tone; pause before speaking; cultivate patience and goodwill when appropriate.

Thīna-middha, sloth and torpor. In daily life: a dull, sleepy, lazy, heavy and sluggish mind. Suitable adjustment: sit upright within your capacity, open the eyes, change posture or do walking meditation; rest when genuinely short

of sleep. Review: refresh energy through posture, light, walking meditation or an object that demands more attention.

Uddhacca-kukkucca, restlessness and remorse (agitation and worry). In daily life: anxiety jumping from a to-do list to regrets about the past, fidgeting. Suitable adjustment: do not fight the thoughts; anchor the mind in the heavy, stable sensations of the lower body and the feet on the floor. Review: anchor attention in bodily contact and the breath; avoid resisting thoughts.

Vicikicchā, doubt. In daily life: inner monologue: “Does this work? Am I doing it right?” Suitable adjustment: recognise doubt as a passing cloud in the mind; note “doubting, doubting” and return to the next breath. Review: acknowledge uncertainty, return to clear instructions and seek a qualified teacher when needed.

Practical obstacles include over-interpretation, self-judgement, rationalising craving, mechanical noting and remembering mindfulness only when sitting. These are teaching observations, not a clinical diagnostic list. If practice causes prolonged distress or impairs daily functioning, reduce its intensity and seek appropriate guidance. Do not confirm liberation for yourself on the basis of numbness or feelings of unreality.

Table: The five hindrances and their remedies

Hindrance	In daily life	Remedy	Revised approach
Kāmacchanda, sensual desire	The mind drifts to food, sex, comfort, shopping or entertainment	Note “wanting, wanting” and return to a neutral bodily anchor	Recognise the wanting mind; feel its physical and mental signs; return to the appropriate object or activity
Byāpāda, ill will	Irritation at outside noise, self-judgement, anger at people from the past	Shift attention to the sensation of anger in the body; meet it with patience (khanti)	Recognise the resisting mind and its feeling tone; pause before speaking; cultivate patience and goodwill when appropriate
Thīna-middha, sloth and torpor	A dull, sleepy, lazy, heavy and sluggish mind	Sit upright, open the eyes, increase the light or do walking meditation when appropriate; rest if short of sleep. Do not double the effort or force strong breathing.	Refresh energy through posture, light, walking meditation or an object that demands more attention

Hindrance	In daily life	Remedy	Revised approach
Uddhacca-kukkucca Restlessness and remorse	Agitation and worry during practice; do not equate every anxiety or mental-health condition with this hindrance.	Do not fight the thoughts; anchor the mind in the heavy, stable sensations of the lower body and the feet on the floor	Anchor attention in bodily contact and the breath; avoid resisting thoughts
Vicikicchā, doubt	Inner monologue: “Does this work? Am I doing it right?”	Recognise doubt as a passing cloud in the mind; note “doubting, doubting” and return to the next breath	Acknowledge uncertainty, return to clear instructions and seek a qualified teacher when needed

Chapter 7 Review



Review figure 7. Know which obstacle is in the way so you can choose how to adjust.

Key points

- The five hindrances are states that obstruct a clear and stable mind.
- Recognising an obstacle is the first step; the conditions that feed it need to change.
- Sleepiness, restlessness and doubt need to be handled according to the situation, not by a single method.

Memory verse

*Much wanting, sulking, nodding off,
Confusion, doubt: know them honestly.
Do not feed what blocks the way,
Adjust the practice, step on through.*

Ten golden questions and answers

1. What are the five hindrances usually called?

Answer: Sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and remorse, and doubt.

2. Are the hindrances my fixed character?

Answer: They should not be seen that way. Know the present state and its conditions rather than labelling yourself as a person.

3. Does recognising desire mean it is gone?

Answer: Not yet. Learn not to feed it further, return to what is appropriate and change conditions when needed.

4. Where can I start when ill will is strong?

Answer: Stop harmful speech, know the tension in the body and the resisting mind, then choose an appropriate way to handle the situation.

5. How can sloth and torpor show themselves?

Answer: As a dull, listless or sleepy mind. Look at posture, the exercise and any lack of sleep.

6. If I lack sleep, should I sit longer to overcome the hindrance?

Answer: Not by default. Appropriate rest may be needed; do not turn effort into forcing yourself to exhaustion.

7. In plain language, what is restlessness and remorse?

Answer: An agitated, worried mind that has difficulty settling into the task at hand; do not equate this term with every kind of anxiety.

8. Does doubt mean every question is wrong?

Answer: No. Asking in order to understand is helpful. The obstacle is doubt that leaves the mind stuck, unable to learn clearly or to practise.

9. Is simply naming a hindrance enough?

Answer: Not always. MN 10 asks us to learn its arising, its abandoning and the conditions for its non-recurrence as well.

10. What if practice makes daily life difficult for a long time?

Answer: Reduce the intensity and seek a suitable teacher and the support you need; do not treat the difficulty as a sign of attainment.

Five mindful questions for better daily life

1. Which hindrance tends to appear when you are tired, hungry or criticised? What is the earliest sign you notice?
2. How might a change in your sleeping hours or surroundings reduce your obstacles?
3. How have you prolonged anger by retelling the story?
4. Which of your questions help you understand more, and what kind of doubt only makes you procrastinate?
5. How could you develop a way of asking for support without shame or self-blame?

Chapter 8

Mindfulness in Daily Life

Many practitioners mistake the establishments of mindfulness for a technique confined to sitting cross-legged. The suttas present them as a framework for all waking activities. The following examples are contemporary illustrative scenarios, not stories from the canon.

Contemplating the body in action: rush-hour traffic

Situation. You are driving in a traffic jam. Give priority to the road, people and vehicles. You can briefly notice your hands gripping or aversion being present, then release unnecessary tension while continuing to drive safely. Watching deep breaths or closing the eyes is not appropriate while driving. Mindfulness supports safe conduct; it does not replace the task of controlling the vehicle (application of MN 10).

Contemplating feeling in action: a harsh email

Situation. You receive a critical email and want to reply at once. Notice heat or tension in the body; know the unpleasantness of the experience as feeling; recognise anger as a state of mind; distinguish the thought of being insulted from the actual content of the email. Then consider whether replying now would help. You may wait, ask for clarification, reply truthfully or set a boundary. Noticing does not guarantee that the anger will vanish at once, but it

creates the conditions for a less impulsive response (MN 10; SN 36.6).

Contemplating mind in action: late-night phone scrolling

Situation. You keep watching videos even though it is late. Notice the wish to keep watching, the scattered state and the tiredness. Not every curiosity needs to be called sensual desire; consider how the mind is being carried away and the consequences of continuing. Putting the phone in another room, turning off notifications or closing the app can support the choice to rest. Recognising scatteredness does not mean it has disappeared; behaviour needs adjusting. This is a contemporary application, not a sutta passage about algorithms.

A moment in the middle of a setback

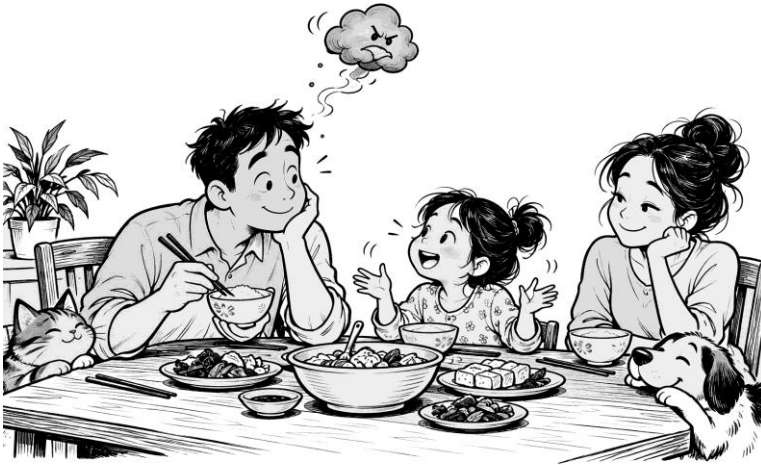
When a plan is suddenly cancelled, we may notice disappointment, heat in the body and the thought “this always happens to me”. Observing does not require immediately finding someone to blame. Notice how the feeling is changing, then decide on a practical step: make a new plan, talk it over or accept what cannot be changed. The lesson is not to deny the loss but to avoid multiplying it by constant blaming.

A brief daily rhythm

Time	Practice
Morning	Sit for five to ten minutes when you are starting out; increase gradually if appropriate. Know the object and notice distraction.
During the day	Choose three pauses, for example before a meal, before using the phone and before an important conversation. Ask what is happening and whether the next action is beneficial.
Evening	Look back for five minutes without self-condemnation. Recall when mindfulness arose, when it was lost, which conditions helped, and one adjustment for tomorrow.

Signs of heading in a wholesome direction include growing self-restraint, patience and responsibility, and the ability to know pleasant or painful feeling without immediately clinging or resisting. Long sitting, unusual sensations or reports of emptiness do not in themselves prove progress (MN 10; SN 47.24).

Chapter 8 Review



Review figure 8. Learning is present in meals, speech and how we use the phone.

Key points

- The establishments of mindfulness can be practised while eating, walking, speaking and working.
- In risky activities such as driving, safety and the task at hand always come first.
- Reviewing speech, patience and responsibility connects meditation with daily life.

Memory verse

*Holding the rice bowl, know the hand,
Listening, do not cut in.
In heavy traffic, keep the heart less harsh,
Learn from small things every day.*



Dhammapada verse — Dhp 5

*Na hi verena verāni, sammantīdha kudācanaṃ;
Averena ca sammanti, esa dhammo sanantano.*

Hatred is never settled by hatred in this world; by freedom from hatred it is settled. This is an enduring law.

Ten golden questions and answers

1. Can I only practise when sitting cross-legged?

Answer: No. MN 10 includes instructions on knowing postures and clear comprehension in daily activities; apply them to suit the task at hand.

2. What does mindfulness prioritise while driving?

Answer: The road, people and vehicles; do not turn to an inward exercise that takes attention away from safety.

3. Should I close my eyes or watch the breath deeply while driving?

Answer: No. Those exercises are not suitable while controlling a vehicle; keep your attention on the task of safety.

4. What should be distinguished when receiving a critical email?

Answer: The content of the email, bodily sensation, unpleasant feeling, the angry mind and the intention to reply, rather than lumping them into one certain insult.

5. What can be noticed while scrolling late at night?

Answer: The wish to keep watching, tiredness and a scattered mind; then adjust behaviour and surroundings if needed.

6. Is noticing tiredness enough to make me stop using the phone?

Answer: Not always. You may need to put the device away, turn off notifications or set a clear stopping time.

7. Does a cancelled plan oblige me to find someone to blame?

Answer: No. Know the disappointment, look at the facts and choose a practical step, avoiding feeding a story of blame.

8. Does practice deny loss?

Answer: No. You can acknowledge what is difficult and still deal with the consequences, talk things through or adjust plans.

9. What does a simple daily rhythm include?

Answer: A short sitting, a few moments of remembering during the day and an evening review, depending on circumstances and health.

10. Which everyday signs are worth reviewing?

Answer: Self-restraint, patience, responsibility and how you respond to pleasant and unpleasant experience; not only time spent sitting.

Five mindful questions for better daily life

1. At family meals, what usually makes you lose patience?
How could you notice it earlier?
2. How might a message you misunderstood be read differently?
3. When a plan is cancelled, what is within your power to do and what needs to be accepted as unchangeable?
4. How could you build phone habits that respect sleep and the person you are talking to?
5. What does someone in your family need you to listen to, and when will you practise that listening?

Chapter 9

Building a Practice Routine

This programme is for newcomers building a habit, learning to notice and adjusting how they practise. The seven days are a way of organising learning, not a deadline for completing sixteen steps, seven factors of awakening or realisation. A day may be repeated many times. Experienced practitioners may increase the time under suitable guidance; those who are tired or in pain may shorten sessions, change posture or rest.

Rhythm of practice in daily life

Time	Introductory exercise
Morning	Sit for 5–10 minutes with the natural breath or a clear bodily contact.
During the day	Choose 2–3 pauses before speaking, eating or using the phone; consider the next action.
Afternoon or evening	5–10 minutes of walking meditation if there is a safe path, or a short sitting.
Before resting	Look back for 2–3 minutes: what did I learn, which conditions helped, what needs adjusting? Keep adequate rest.

Learning task for each day

Day	Learning task	Review
1	Choose a posture and a clear anchor.	Did I know one breath or one contact?
2	Notice distraction and return.	Did I return with less self-blame?
3	Distinguish bodily sensation from feeling.	Did I know pleasant, unpleasant or neutral tone?
4	Recognise the state of mind.	Did I know whether the mind was angry, scattered or calm?
5	Recognise one hindrance and the conditions that feed it.	Was I able to choose a suitable adjustment?
6	Balance effort when dull or agitated.	Did the adjustment bring clarity with less strain?
7	Review the practice rhythm and conduct.	Keep one helpful thing, adjust one thing and write down a question for your teacher.

How to review a day of practice

Ask: did I remember to practise today; did I notice one moment of distraction; did I return with less self-blame; did I reduce one harmful word or action? The answers help choose tomorrow's task. Do not grade yourself for noble attainments and do not force emotions to dissolve.

An introductory session of walking meditation

Choose a short, level and safe path. Stand still and know the posture; walk at a natural pace just slow enough to know the foot touching the ground and the shift of weight. At the end of the path, stop, then turn around with awareness. If carried away by thoughts, notice and return to the steps. You can practise for five to ten minutes; there is no need to analyse every small movement. This is contemporary guidance, related to the instruction on knowing walking in MN 10.

Options for a guided retreat

Those familiar with practice may follow a schedule set by a teacher, alternating sitting for about twenty to thirty minutes, walking meditation, rest and Dhamma study. These durations are only examples to be adjusted. Keep sleep, meals and rest appropriate to health and community rules; adding sessions must not turn into sleep deprivation. Do not allocate attainments, rapture or individual groups of four steps to particular days.

When to adjust or ask a teacher

Increasing pain, exhaustion, prolonged distress or impaired functioning are reasons to adjust and seek support. Ask clearly which object you are using, when to return, when to widen awareness and how to handle hindrances. A retreat does not replace necessary health care; the descriptions in this book are not for clinical diagnosis.

Table: Learning by groups of days

Days	Learning	Limits to remember
1–2	Posture, anchor, noticing distraction and returning	Do not require the breath to change to fit a pattern
3–4	Distinguishing bodily sensation, feeling and state of mind	Do not force rapture or happiness
5–6	Recognising an obstacle and adjusting effort	Do not assign each factor of awakening to a fixed day
7	Reviewing the practice rhythm, conduct and questions to ask	Do not set a date for attainment or for completing MN 118

Chapter 9 Review



Review figure 9. Seven days are a first step; they can be repeated and adjusted to your capacity.

Key points

- The seven days are an introductory programme, not a timetable for absorption or realisation.
- Days of learning can be repeated and sessions shortened when needed.
- Keep resting, ask for clear instructions and review one thing learned each day.

Memory verse

*Day one: learn to know the out-breath,
Forgot? Then gently step back home.
Seven days of learning, no race for fruits,
Steady bit by bit, less craving.*

Ten golden questions and answers

1. What is the purpose of the seven-day programme?

Answer: To build a habit, learn to notice and adjust how one practises; it does not promise completion of the sixteen steps or noble attainment within a week.

2. How long can a beginner practise in the morning?

Answer: For example, five to ten minutes, according to capacity and instruction; it is not a mandatory duration for everyone.

3. If I have not understood a day's lesson, can I repeat it?

Answer: Yes. Repeating to understand clearly is more helpful than rushing to a new lesson to complete the schedule.

4. What does the first day emphasise?

Answer: Choosing a posture and a clear anchor, and knowing one breath or one contact, according to the exercise.

5. What does the second day teach?

Answer: Noticing distraction and returning gently, with less self-blame.

6. Why does the third day distinguish body and feeling?

Answer: To know that bodily sensation differs from the pleasant, unpleasant or neutral tone of experience.

7. What is the learning task of the fifth day?

Answer: Recognising one hindrance and the conditions that feed it, then trying a suitable adjustment.

8. What is reviewed on the last day?

Answer: Keeping one helpful thing, adjusting one thing and writing down a question for the teacher.

9. How should introductory walking meditation be done?

Answer: Choose a level, safe path and know the steps and the shift of weight at a comfortable pace; there is no need to analyse every small movement.

10. What should a guided retreat preserve?

Answer: Appropriate durations, rest, sleep, meals and clear instructions; do not add sessions by cutting sleep or schedule attainment by the day.

Five mindful questions for better daily life

1. What amount of time can you genuinely manage for practice without neglecting family responsibilities?
2. Of the seven tasks, which do you need to repeat many times? Why?
3. What sign helps you know when to shorten sessions or ask for more guidance?
4. How will you review a day when you forgot to practise so that returning is easier the next day?
5. After a week, which habit do you want to keep, and which living condition do you want to adjust?

PART TWO

DEEPENING THE PRACTICE

This part is for those who already have a stable rhythm of practice. The chapters help you review your object, balance effort, understand the hindrances and connect sitting with conduct. It is not a level of attainment; the foundations of Part One still need to be maintained.

Chapter 10

From Anchor to Direct Observation

Direct observation means maintaining close contact with the qualities that are actually present (pressure, warmth, movement, tension, sound, pleasantness, unpleasantness or thought) rather than replacing experience with continuous commentary. This structured method has three movements.

Step one: choose a main anchor

Choose a clear bodily process as the main meditation object, usually the natural breath at the nostrils or the rising and falling of the abdomen. Keep attention on the experience as it actually unfolds, without trying to control or adjust it. This establishes a firm foundation in contemplation of the body (kāyānupassanā), from which mindfulness and clear comprehension can be used to observe other experiences.

Step two: sustain direct observation

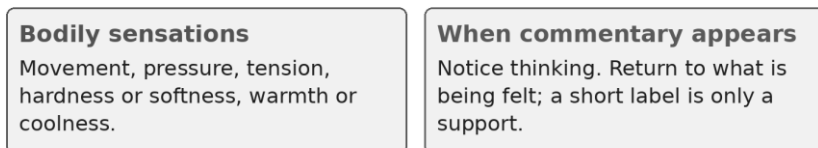
Abide with the qualities being experienced: movement, pressure, tension, hardness or softness, warmth or coolness. Know them as clearly as possible rather than continually interpreting. In this exercise there is no need to create images or try to make sensations last. Brief notes may be used when they help awareness; right thinking and visualisation still have a role in other practices. This instruction is limited to the contemplation of the body presented here.

General principle: Notice – Understand – Release the unwholesome reaction. In contemplation of the body,

understanding begins with knowing accurately what is being felt, without adding unnecessary interpretation.

For example, when observing the abdomen, instead of thinking “My abdomen is rising because I am breathing in”, directly experience the movement, expansion, pressure or tension that is occurring. When the abdomen falls, experience the relaxation, movement or change in pressure. In this way mindfulness stays in close contact with direct experience rather than being swept into concepts (paññatti). This develops sati together with sampajañña in the contemplation of the body (kāyānupassanā).

Figure 3 Know the qualities that are present



An exercise in contemplating the body. Do not seek desired sensations or forbid all thinking in every practice.

Figure 3. Directly observing the changing qualities of the body, without continuous verbal interpretation.

Figure 3 shows qualities that can be known in the body and how to return when the mind is swept into commentary. The meditator need only know the quality that is clear; there is no need to find every sensation in the diagram.

Short labels such as hearing, thinking or angry can help identify experience. When noting becomes mechanical, return to what is actually being felt. The noting method of the Mahāsi tradition is a later teaching system, not a list given verbatim in SN 47.24. Readers wishing to study this method can consult the works of Mahāsi Sayadaw listed in Appendix C.

Step three: follow arising and passing away

Observe each experience—a bodily sensation, a sound, a feeling or a thought—as a process of change rather than a fixed object. Notice how a phenomenon arises (*samudaya*), changes while it lasts and then passes away (*vaya*). Do not try to prolong pleasant experience, suppress unpleasant experience or analyse its impermanence intellectually. When there is pressure in the knee while sitting, observe: pressure arises → intensity changes → location or quality shifts → it disappears or is replaced by another sensation. A sound appears, is known and ends. A thought arises, lasts briefly in a chain of changes and gives way to another thought.

Figure 4 Knowing change

Pressure in the knee

Present → intensity changes → fades or is replaced.

Sound

Appears → changes → ends.

Thoughts and feelings

Know what is present and how it changes when clear. Do not force yourself to see every stage.

Paraphrased from MN 10 and DN 22. Seeing change once does not in itself guarantee liberation.

Figure 4. Observing arising, changing and passing away

Figure 4 illustrates change through pressure in the knee, sound, thought and feeling. A phenomenon may fade gradually, change its quality or be replaced; there is no need to see an entirely clear beginning and end in every observation. The diagram is a practical paraphrase of MN 10 and DN 22.

The figure paraphrases the instruction in MN 10: the practitioner contemplates the nature of arising, the nature of passing away, or both, in relation to body, feeling, mind and dhammas. DN 22 conveys the same instruction. The corresponding Pāli terms are *samudaya-dhamma*, *vaya-dhamma* and *samudaya-vaya-dhamma*.

The formula “arising → changing → passing” is a practical summary, not a verbatim quotation from the suttas. The essential point is not merely to think “everything is impermanent”. We need to keep directly perceiving the change that is happening in present experience. Through sustained practice, this experiential understanding of impermanence (*anicca*) can weaken clinging (*upādāna*) and support insight and dispassion. A single observation does not guarantee liberation; the path needs to be developed within

the context of virtue, concentration and wisdom (MN 10; DN 22; SN 22.59). The practitioner does not create impermanence but learns to recognise the arising and passing away that is already taking place.

Practice principle: Notice arising → Observe changing → Know passing away → Do not cling.

Reference figure and how to read it

2. Maintain Direct Observation

Stay with the qualities directly experienced here and now in the meditation object, rather than creating a mental image of it or continually describing it in words.

When observing the body, experience what is actually present—for example hardness or softness, pressure, tension, movement, warmth or coolness, vibration, and changing bodily feelings.

Do not try to create these experiences, analyze them, or hold on to them. **Simply** recognize each phenomenon as it arises, changes, and passes away.

Experience actual qualities in the present

- Movement**
rising, falling, expanding, relaxing
- Pressure**
pushing, pressing, releasing
- Tension**
tightening, relaxing
- Hardness or softness**
firm, soft
- Warmth or coolness**
warm, cool
- Vibration**
subtle pulsation, trembling
- Changing feelings**
arising, changing, passing away

Simply recognize it and let it pass naturally...

Arising → Changing → Passing away

Do not try to hold on to it. Simply recognize each phenomenon as it arises, changes, and passes away.

Directly experience what is present...

As it rises, experience movement, expansion, pressure, or tension.

As it falls, experience relaxation, movement, or changing pressure as it occurs.

Instead of conceptual thinking...

“My abdomen is rising because I am breathing in.”

This creates a mental image or verbal description (*paññatti*).

Practice principle: Experience → Clear recognition → No added elaboration → Let it pass

This develops *sati* (mindfulness) with *sampajañña* (clear comprehension) in *kāyānupassanā*—contemplation of the body.

Reference figure 5. Direct observation and the use of language. The advice in the image to avoid visualising applies only to the exercise under discussion; it does not reject every method that uses perception or verbal noting.

Chapter 10 Review



Review figure 10. Notice what is changing; do not try to hold a sensation still.

Key points

- Choose a clear anchor and know what is actually being felt.
- Recognise change as far as you can, without producing sensations at will.
- Seeing change once does not guarantee liberation; virtue, concentration and wisdom must all be developed.

Memory verse

*The in-breath comes, the out-breath goes,
A sound arrives, then passes on.
Know it is changing, do not hold,
What must be done, do honestly.*

Ten golden questions and answers

1. How does direct observation differ from continuous commentary?

Answer: Observation knows the tension, warmth or movement that is present; commentary can make us merely think about them and forget to feel.

2. What use is a main anchor?

Answer: It gives attention a place to return to when caught up in thought, according to the exercise being practised.

3. Must I perceive every sensation shown in the figure?

Answer: No. Just know what is clear; do not hunt for sensations to complete a list.

4. Are all thinking and imagining forbidden?

Answer: No. The instruction here is for direct observation; right thinking and visualisation have a role in other practices.

5. How should brief notes be used?

Answer: Lightly, when they help awareness, such as “thinking”; then return to what is felt, without reciting labels mechanically.

6. Does observing change mean waiting for a sensation to disappear?

Answer: No. A sensation may change in intensity or location; know it as clearly as you can without forcing it to end.

7. What should I do when pain increases?

Answer: Know the intention and then adjust your posture appropriately; observation does not oblige you to endure increasing pain to prove determination.

8. How can sound serve as an example of impermanence?

Answer: We hear a sound appear and then end. The example helps us become familiar with change; it does not in itself prove liberation.

9. Is reading the sentence “everything is impermanent” enough?

Answer: No. Study needs to go together with observation and conduct that grasps less; understanding a sentence differs from understanding deeply through practice.

10. Does knowing change end clinging immediately?

Answer: No. Wisdom needs long cultivation together with virtue and concentration; a single observation cannot guarantee that result.

Five mindful questions for better daily life

1. How did a recent unpleasant sensation change when you did not keep retelling its cause?
2. Which pleasant experience do you tend to try to hold on to? How does that affect the people close to you?
3. When washing dishes or walking, when do you know directly, and when are you only thinking about what you are doing?
4. Have you ever used the word “impermanence” to avoid dealing with a responsibility? How will you correct that?
5. If an emotion has not yet subsided, what less harmful action can you choose without waiting for it to disappear?

Chapter 11

Observing Arising and Passing Away

Seeing something change right within experience

A noise grows louder, then softer. A contact changes when the hand moves. A thought comes and gives way to another. Contemplating arising and passing away begins with knowing changes that can be noticed, without imagining the speed of subtle change.

Knowing change and knowing conditions

Sometimes an unpleasant sensation lessens when you change posture, yet the wish to win remains. Distinguish the ending of a sensation from having understood and abandoned the cause of clinging. Seeing change once does not in itself guarantee liberation.

Not hunting for disappearance

If you want anger to vanish in order to prove you have seen impermanence, the mind may add resistance. Know that anger is still present, recognise what feeds it and choose a less harmful action. There is no need to sit and wait in a situation that calls for setting a boundary or leaving.

An example with praise

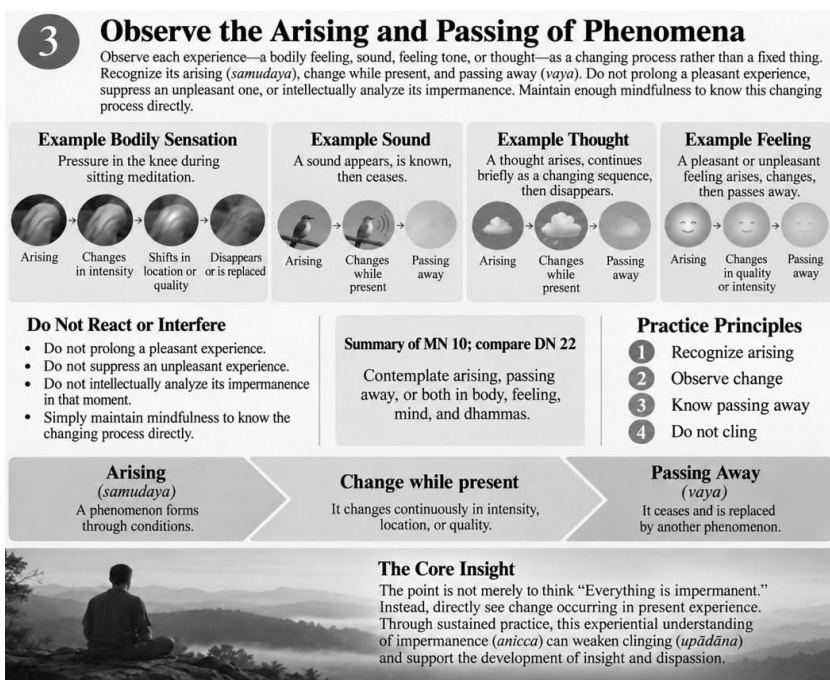
After being praised, you feel pleased and want to tell others. A little later the pleasantness fades, but the wish for recognition continues. You can know both without blaming

yourself. The practical question is whether you are using that feeling to reinforce the story “I am better than others”.

A measured exercise

In a familiar sitting, choose a clear object. From time to time, know that it is appearing, changing or no longer clear. When the mind is dull, return to a stable object; when straining, ease off. Do not try to see a phenomenon you have not yet seen. Read Chapters 10 and 12 to place this exercise on its foundation.

Reference figure and how to read it



Reference figure 6. Arising and passing away. Seeing a phenomenon change does not in itself guarantee that all clinging has been abandoned; the image’s emphasis on results should be read within that limit

Chapter 11 Review



Review figure 11. Notice what is changing; do not try to hold a sensation still.

Key points

- Know change without imagining what you have not seen.
- The end of a sensation does not mean the end of clinging.
- Contemplating impermanence must go together with understanding conditions and conduct.

Memory verse

*Sounds far away, then sounds draw near,
The hand has moved, I know the body changed.
Anger remains; I know it, not yet gone,
Fewer heated words, I choose a gentler phrase.*



Dhammapada verse — Dhp 277

*“Sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā”ti, yadā paññāya passati;
Atha nibbindati dukkhe, esa maggo visuddhiyā.*

“All conditioned things are impermanent” — when one sees this with wisdom, one turns away from suffering. This is the path to purity.

Ten golden questions and answers

1. What is arising?

Answer: The appearance of a phenomenon within the range being observed.

2. Does passing away mean everything vanishes at once?

Answer: No. We know what is no longer there or has changed in experience, without imposing a required speed.

3. Must I imagine each mind-moment?

Answer: No. The exercise gives priority to what is actually noticed.

4. Does a decrease in pain prove liberation?

Answer: No. It may decrease because of many conditions, such as a change of posture.

5. Does contemplating impermanence require anger to be gone?

Answer: No. You can recognise change and the conditions that feed anger while anger is still present.

6. Why does hunting for disappearance easily create tension?

Answer: Because we add expectation and resistance instead of knowing what is there.

7. Can praise become an object of study?

Answer: Yes. Recognise the pleasant feeling and the wish for recognition.

8. What if observing makes the mind dull?

Answer: Return to a clear object, adjust your effort and ask for guidance when needed.

9. Should the exercise be used to avoid conflict?

Answer: No. Real conflicts still need dialogue or appropriate boundaries.

10. What does seeing change once guarantee?

Answer: Only that you noticed something on that occasion; it does not confirm a level of attainment.

Five mindful questions for better daily life

1. What sensation has changed while the story in your mind still goes on?
2. How do you react when praise is not repeated?
3. Are you demanding that an emotion disappear immediately?
4. What conditions usually help your irritation subside?
5. How might knowing change help you speak or act differently?

Chapter 12

Mindfulness of Breathing in Sixteen Steps

MN 118 presents mindfulness of breathing in sixteen steps and explains how it relates to the four establishments of mindfulness, the seven factors of awakening, true knowledge and liberation. The steps indicate aspects to be learned and developed. They are not a timetable of sensations that unfolds identically for every practitioner, nor merely a relaxation technique.

The sutta sets out a chain of conditions: mindfulness of breathing, developed and cultivated, fulfils the four establishments of mindfulness; the four establishments of mindfulness, developed and cultivated, fulfil the seven factors of awakening. The sixteen steps are not in SN 47.24. They are an elaboration found in MN 118; the two suttas should be read side by side without confusing their contents.

The sixteen steps are divided into four tetrads (groups of four steps), each corresponding to one establishment of mindfulness.

Tetrad and establishment of mindfulness	Steps	Practice focus
Body	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Knowing long breathing in and out. 2. Knowing short breathing in and out. 3. Training to experience the whole body. 4. Training to calm the bodily formation. 	<p>Knowing length without controlling it; establishing continuity and calm in bodily experience.</p>
Feeling	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Training to experience rapture. 6. Training to experience happiness. 7. Training to experience the mental formation. 8. Training to calm the mental formation. 	<p>Knowing rapture and happiness; the mental formation is defined in MN 44 as perception and feeling. Do not force sensations.</p>

Tetrad and establishment of mindfulness	Steps	Practice focus
Mind	<p>9. Training to experience the mind.</p> <p>10. Training to gladden the mind.</p> <p>11. Training to concentrate the mind.</p> <p>12. Training to release the mind.</p>	Knowing the state of mind and cultivating gladness, stability and release when appropriate.
Dhammas	<p>13. Contemplating impermanence.</p> <p>14. Contemplating fading or dispassion.</p> <p>15. Contemplating cessation.</p> <p>16. Contemplating relinquishment.</p>	Contemplating impermanence, dispassion, cessation and relinquishment; distinguishing the end of a sensation from liberation.

These are practices to be trained in (sikkhati), not a promise that every practitioner will pass through four predictable stages on a fixed schedule. Step 3 is interpreted in several ways: “the whole body” may mean the whole breath-body or the whole bodily process, depending on the translation and interpretive tradition. Renderings of “mental formation” also

vary and should not be forced into a single physiological explanation.

The first tetrad: contemplation of the body

The first tetrad lays the foundation of attention in the physical reality of the body, with the breath as the main anchor.

- **Step 1.** Breathing in long, one knows: “I breathe in long” (dīghaṃ vā assasanto “dīghaṃ assasāmi”ti pajānāti). Simply observe the natural length of the breath without forcing or changing it.
- **Step 2.** Breathing in or out short, one knows clearly that it is a short breath. Here “short” refers to length; it does not automatically mean shallow, hurried or constricted. The first two steps are about knowing the breath as it is, not making it long or short (MN 118).
- **Step 3.** Sabbakāyapaṭisaṃvedī assasissāmīti sikkhati: one trains to breathe in experiencing the whole body; the formula also applies to breathing out. Understandings of “the whole body” differ: the whole breath-body or the whole physical body. Readers should follow the consistent instructions of the tradition they practise in. Knowing the full course of the breath and being aware of posture are introductory exercises; they do not settle the translation debate (MN 118).
- **Step 4.** One trains to breathe in and out calming the bodily formation. In MN 44, in-and-out breathing is called the bodily formation. Releasing bodily tension can

support this step, but it does not exhaust the meaning of the term. Let the breath calm down with the practice; do not deliberately hold the breath or force it to stop (MN 118; MN 44).

Introductory application. When tense, notice your posture and a few natural breaths; recognise their length, movement and any tension in the jaw or shoulders. Gently release what is gripping. This is a short exercise that supports awareness of the body, not a claim to have completed the first four steps or attained meditative absorption.

The second tetrad: contemplation of feeling

When the body relaxes and the mind settles, pleasant inner sensations may arise. This tetrad turns attention to the feeling tone of the present moment.

- **Step 5.** One trains to breathe in and out experiencing rapture (pīti). Rapture is the uplift that arises in the course of practice; it is not identical with every tingling or excitement. There is no need to try to produce rapture or to regard its absence as failure (MN 118).
- **Step 6.** One trains to breathe in and out experiencing happiness (sukha). In the context of practice, happiness denotes a pleasant or peaceful quality, to be distinguished from rapture. The two terms are related, but they are not two sensations everyone must undergo on a fixed schedule (MN 118).

- **Step 7.** One trains to breathe in and out experiencing the mental formation (*cittasaṅkhāra*). MN 44 defines the mental formation as perception and feeling. The practitioner learns to know these aspects while breathing. Thoughts and emotional reactions are related to perception and feeling, but they must not be used as a substitute definition of the mental formation (MN 118; MN 44).
- **Step 8.** One trains to breathe in and out calming the mental formation. Following the definition in MN 44, attend to perception and feeling. Calming impulsive reactions is an initial application; this step should not be equated with erasing all emotion or with the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling (MN 118; MN 44).

Introductory application. When there is a pleasant sensation, know its pleasantness and the recognition of it; notice the mind wanting to prolong the experience. When there is unpleasantness, also know its unpleasantness and the reaction of resistance. These observations help distinguish feeling, perception and reaction. They do not mean that every everyday pleasure is equivalent to the rapture and happiness in the meditative process of MN 118.

The third tetrad: contemplation of mind

The third tetrad aims at knowing and training the mind while breathing. One can learn to distinguish states from the beginning, but deeper practice needs to be supported by

suitable conditions; there is no rule that feeling must be completely stable before the mind can be known.

- **Step 9.** Training to experience the mind (citta): directly knowing the present state of the mind (concentrated, scattered, sluggish, angry or open).
- **Step 10.** Training to gladden the mind: if the mind is listless, bored or discouraged, encourage it, perhaps by attending to a pleasing aspect of the breath or arousing gratitude.
- **Step 11.** Training to calm or steady the mind: gathering the scattered mind into the breath so as to enter a deeper stillness (samādhī).
- **Step 12.** One trains to breathe in and out releasing the mind. In early practice one may recognise a temporary release from a hindrance; complete liberation from the taints has a deeper meaning. Do not call a moment of relaxation final realisation, and do not use an everyday example to validate the whole step (MN 118).

Practical application. If you sit down to work or practise and find the mind in turmoil, do not fight the thoughts. Step back and observe the state of the mind (Step 9). If the mind is sluggish, encourage it with an energetic posture (Step 10); if the mind is racing, anchor it in the touch of the air at the tip of the nose (Step 11).

The fourth tetrad: contemplation of dhammas

In the final tetrad, the breath is seen through the lens of universal characteristics in order to undo delusion (avijjā).

- **Step 13.** One trains to breathe in and out contemplating impermanence (aniccānupassī). Know the change and instability of conditioned experience. The difference between two breaths is a starting point; insight needs to be developed more deeply rather than merely thinking that everything changes (MN 118).
- **Step 14.** One trains to breathe in and out contemplating dispassion (virāgānupassī). Dispassion points to the fading of craving and no longer being infatuated with conditioned things. A sensation decreasing in intensity can prompt contemplation, but it does not in itself prove that craving has been abandoned (MN 118).
- **Step 15.** One trains to breathe in and out contemplating cessation (nirodhānupassī). The ending of conditioned experience can open the direction of contemplation; on the path to liberation one must distinguish the ordinary end of a breath from the cessation of craving and suffering. Do not hold the breath to produce an experience called cessation (MN 118).
- **Step 16.** One trains to breathe in and out contemplating relinquishment (paṭinissaggānupassī). Learn to let go of grasping and of feeding craving. In daily life, stopping an unwholesome reaction is an initial application; relinquishment in the direction of liberation has a deeper

scope. Letting go of clinging still goes together with responsibility, virtue and appropriate action (MN 118).

Introductory application. When a difficult emotion arises, know it and the conditions that are feeding it. If its intensity changes, know the change; if it remains strong, return to a suitable anchor and choose a harmless way to respond. An emotion calming down does not in itself mean dispassion or the realisation of the end of suffering. Do not set a deadline for an emotion to disappear.

Particular obstacles in mindfulness of breathing

- Forcing instead of observing. Beginners often force the breath into a rhythm, which makes the body tense and tired. The instruction is to know (*pajānāti*) the breath as it is.
- Getting caught in concepts. Thinking about the breath or visualising the lungs or a column of air replaces direct experience. Stay with direct tactile qualities: coolness, warmth, pressure, vibration, movement.
- Transition points. When it is clear, you may know the turn from in-breath to out-breath and back. Do not try to find a pause, hold the breath or infer the realisation of *nirodha* from the gap between two breaths. If following the breath too minutely creates tension, return to simply knowing the natural breath.

A condensed breathing practice

Choose a comfortable bodily anchor, such as the natural breath or a contact point on the body. Do not force the breath to be long, short, deep or smooth. Know the beginning, middle and end of each breath as far as you can. If the mind wanders, recognise that you are remembering, planning or hearing, and return. When the mind is steady, widen attention to sensations throughout the body and notice whether tension is increasing or subsiding. Know pleasant, unpleasant or neutral feeling together with the state of mind. Let the instructions of the practice guide your attention; do not chase rapture and happiness or blame yourself for their absence. Contemplate change and letting go steadily and clearly: the breath is a conditioned process, not a possession.

Chapter 12 Review



Review figure 12. The sixteen steps are a map for learning, not a race.

Key points

- MN 118 presents sixteen steps, divided into four groups related to the four establishments of mindfulness.
- MN 44 calls the breath the bodily formation; the mental formation is perception and feeling.
- Do not force the breath, schedule attainments or mistake a brief relaxation for complete liberation.

Memory verse

*Know the long breath, the short one too,
Breathe naturally, clear right now.
Learn step by step, do not count fruits,
Steady on the path, no forced days.*

Ten golden questions and answers

1. In which sutta are the sixteen steps found?

Answer: In MN 118, the Discourse on Mindfulness of Breathing; they are not a list from SN 47.24.

2. How are the four groups related to the establishments of mindfulness?

Answer: Steps 1–4 relate to body, 5–8 to feeling, 9–12 to mind and 13–16 to dhammas, according to MN 118’s explanation.

3. Does knowing a long breath mean trying to breathe in long?

Answer: No. The first two steps are knowing clearly the long or short breath that is present, both in and out.

4. Is short breathing necessarily shallow breathing?

Answer: No. Short and shallow are different descriptions; do not substitute one term for the other.

5. Does “experiencing the whole body” have only one interpretation?

Answer: Interpretive traditions differ between the whole breath-body and the physical body; follow consistent instructions rather than mixing methods on your own.

6. What is the bodily formation in MN 44?

Answer: The in-breath and the out-breath. Relaxing the body can help, but it does not replace that definition.

7. What is the mental formation in MN 44?

Answer: Perception and feeling. Do not turn this definition into all thoughts, emotions or a neural mechanism.

8. Must there be rapture on day two?

Answer: No. There is no mandatory schedule of sensations or attainments; rapture and happiness are to be learned, not forced.

9. Does the pause between two breaths prove contemplation of cessation?

Answer: No. Do not hold the breath or try to create a gap to confirm realisation for yourself.

10. How should a beginner use this chapter?

Answer: As a map for learning; start with a clear, manageable exercise and ask a teacher when you need to understand the deeper steps.

Five mindful questions for better daily life

1. Are you controlling the breath because you want to do it “right”? What happens when you force less?
2. How have you compared your progress with others? How did that comparison affect your practice?
3. When a pleasant sensation appears, do you want to repeat it at all costs?
4. From your own experience, how do you understand the difference between a temporarily calm mind and a way of living with less greed and aversion?
5. What specific question about the breathing exercise would you like to bring to your teacher?

Chapter 13

Balancing the Seven Factors of Awakening

The Seven Factors Of Awakening And How To Balance Them

Framework of the teaching

MN 118 links mindfulness of breathing with the seven factors of awakening: mindfulness, investigation of dhammas, energy, rapture, tranquillity, concentration and equanimity. The sutta describes the development of the factors through the practice of the establishments of mindfulness, leading to true knowledge and liberation. SN 46.53 gives guidance on balancing the factors according to the state of mind. There is no need to assign each factor to a particular day or tetrad.

Figure 5 Balancing the factors of awakening

When the mind is sluggish

Emphasise investigation, energy and rapture.

When the mind is agitated

Emphasise tranquillity, concentration and equanimity.

Mindfulness

Useful in both cases. Know the state in order to adjust.

SN 46.53. Balancing follows the state of mind; it is not two fixed groups of active and passive factors.

Figure 5. When the mind is sluggish, emphasise investigation, energy and rapture; when the mind is agitated, emphasise tranquillity, concentration and equanimity. Mindfulness is useful in both cases. This grouping is based on SN 46.53; it does not divide the factors into fixed active and passive qualities.

The explanations below show how to recognise the seven factors in practice. Examples linked to the breath are teaching devices; they do not establish a mandatory correspondence between numbered steps and numbered factors (MN 118; SN 46.53).

Mindfulness and well-directed investigation

Attention, investigation and energy can support one another in any domain of the establishments of mindfulness. Energy needs to be balanced according to the actual state of the mind.

1. Mindfulness (sati). Remembering the task of practice and noticing when the mind forgets the object or the frame of practice. In mindfulness of breathing, the breath is a helpful anchor; in the establishments of

mindfulness generally, there are also feeling, mind and dhammas. Lacking a clear sensation at the nostrils does not mean that all mindfulness has lost its footing (MN 10; MN 118).

2. Investigation of dhammas (dhammavicaya). Examining and distinguishing qualities relevant to practice: whether the mind is bright or dull, whether a hindrance is present, what supports wholesome states. Direct knowing does not permit conclusions about one's own neural mechanisms. The breath is one example for learning to investigate; investigation of dhammas has a wider scope (MN 118; SN 46.53).
3. Energy (virīya). Investigation requires sustained effort. This is how ātāpī is applied in practice. Each time the mind drifts and is brought back takes energy; that energy also dispels sluggishness (thīna-middha).

Rapture and tranquillity

4. Rapture (pīti). Wholesome uplift can support energy and abiding. When you feel joy in practice, know it without grasping. Do not attribute every rapture to a mechanism of leaking or accumulating energy, and do not force rapture to appear (MN 118).
5. Tranquillity (passaddhi). Body and mind are calm, with less coarseness or agitation. The practitioner recognises and nurtures the conditions suitable for calm. This is a description of meditative experience,

not a measurement of the state of the nervous system (MN 118; SN 46.53).

Concentration and equanimity

6. Concentration (samādhi). The mind is gathered, stable and less scattered. In mindfulness of breathing, the practitioner can sustain the object more clearly; concentration also needs the conditions of the whole path. A brief period of stillness is not enough to confirm a level of jhāna for oneself (MN 118; MN 44).
7. Equanimity (upekkhā). Balance in knowing experience, not carried away by liking or disliking. Equanimity can go together with care and action that protects others. In the development of the factors, equanimity is nourished on the basis of qualities already cultivated; it should not be equated with emotional numbness (MN 118; SN 46.53).

The factors of awakening and the direction of liberation

MN 118 teaches developing the factors dependent on seclusion, dispassion and cessation, maturing in relinquishment; when cultivated, they fulfil true knowledge and liberation. Readers should distinguish the teaching on the fully developed path from an introductory exercise. Knowing that a breath has ended, feeling equanimous or reading all sixteen steps does not in itself prove that one has experienced Nibbāna. Practice needs the support of virtue, concentration, wisdom and suitable guidance.

Balancing by the fire simile

The main canonical text guiding the adjustment of the factors according to the state of the mind is the Aggi Sutta, SN 46.53. The Buddha uses the image of a fire. If a fire is about to go out, one does not throw wet grass and water on it; one adds dry fuel and blows on it. If a fire is blazing, one does not add dry logs; one puts water and earth on it. In both situations mindfulness is needed.

State	Do not emphasise	Emphasise	Adjusting practice
Agitated, anxious or restless (a blazing fire)	Investigation, energy, rapture	Tranquillity, concentration, equanimity	Relax the face and shoulders; widen or steady attention; know thoughts without following them
Sluggish or sleepy (a dying fire)	Tranquillity, concentration, equanimity	Investigation, energy, rapture	Renew attention to the object; sit upright; open the eyes or do walking meditation; recall a source of inspiration
Balanced and clear		Mindfulness integrates the factors	Continue with a suitable object and avoid unnecessary adjustments

Strategy A: when the mind is anxious, restless or agitated (uddhacca)

When the mind is restless or racing with plans, SN 46.53 advises emphasising tranquillity, concentration and equanimity. Learn to recognise the present state in order to choose an adjustment, rather than increasing effort according to a single formula for everyone.

- **Tranquillity.** Know your posture and release whatever is gripping, such as the jaw or shoulders. Keep the breath natural. This is a suggested application; SN 46.53 does not prescribe a ratio between in-breath and out-breath.
- **Concentration.** Choose a range of attention you can sustain clearly: one contact point of the breath or a bodily contact. Narrowing to a very small point is not required; if it increases tension, adjust with suitable guidance.
- **Equanimity.** Know anxious thoughts without continuing to feed the story. Balance still allows you to deal with what needs doing. Brief noting can help; a thought will not necessarily stop the moment it is named.

Strategy B: when the mind is sluggish, listless or sleepy (thīna-middha)

If the mind sinks into dullness or boredom, the fire is dying down. Relaxing further will make us nod off.

- **Investigation.** Arouse curiosity. Ask: is the breath warm or cool, rough or smooth? Where exactly does the in-breath end and the out-breath begin?

- **Energy.** Sit upright within your capacity, open the eyes or switch to walking meditation. When genuinely short of sleep or exhausted, rest may be necessary. The Pacalā Sutta (AN 7.61; numbered AN 7.58 by Thanissaro) presents many ways of dealing with drowsiness, including walking meditation and lying down mindfully; deep or forceful breathing is not required.
- **Rapture.** Gladden the mind (Step 10). Arouse gratitude for the opportunity to practise, or attend to the most pleasant, refreshing sensation in the body, even just a feeling of ease in the hands.

Refreshing attention when dull or sleepy

Investigate

Notice the dull mind and check how clear the object is.

Adjust

Sit upright within your capacity, open the eyes or do walking meditation.

Rest when needed

Lack of sleep or exhaustion calls for suitable rest; do not force strong breathing.

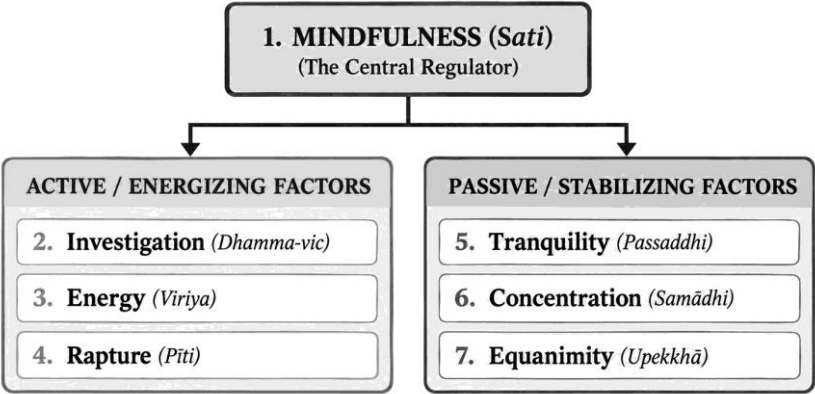
Applied with reference to SN 46.53 and AN 7.61 (Thanissaro: AN 7.58).

Note

The choices of posture, point of attention and gratitude are teaching applications. SN 46.53 teaches balancing the factors according to the state of mind; it does not mandate a single bodily technique, nor does it require eliminating

one group of factors entirely. Do not force the breath to combat drowsiness or to reach a calm state.

Reference figure and how to read it



Reference figure 7. The seven factors of awakening. The division into “active” and “passive” in the image is a simplification; balancing according to SN 46.53 depends on the state of mind and does not divide the qualities into two fixed types.

Chapter 13 Review



Review figure 13. The qualities that support awakening need to be developed and balanced.

Key points

- The seven factors of awakening are qualities to be developed in the direction of awakening.
- Each quality needs to be understood and balanced according to the present state of mind.
- Joy, calm or a feeling of equanimity on its own is not enough to confirm the fulfilment of the whole path.

Memory verse

*Remember, then investigate, persist,
Wholesome joy comes, the body light within.
The mind grows steady, equanimous, not cold,
Keep kind words amid the busy world.*

Ten golden questions and answers

1. What are the seven factors of awakening?

Answer: Mindfulness, investigation of dhammas, energy, rapture, tranquillity, concentration and equanimity.

2. How does mindfulness help in developing the factors?

Answer: It helps us remember the practice and know what is happening; it is the base that supports investigation and adjustment.

3. In plain language, what is investigation of dhammas?

Answer: Looking clearly at what is happening and at what helps practice, not just thinking at random.

4. Does energy mean trying hard regardless of one's state?

Answer: No. Effort needs to be persistent and balanced, not making the mind more agitated or the body more exhausted.

5. How does rapture differ from hunting for unusual sensations?

Answer: Rapture is wholesome uplift in practice; hunting for unusual sensations can feed more desire and disappointment.

6. What is tranquillity?

Answer: The lightness and calm of body and mind; it is not drowsiness or a loss of awareness.

7. How is concentration explained?

Answer: The mind is stable and less scattered. A brief period of calm is not enough to claim a level of jhāna.

8. Is equanimity coldness?

Answer: No. Equanimity is balance, less pulled by liking and disliking; one can still care for and help others.

9. Should each factor be matched to a particular day?

Answer: No. Development depends on conditions; SN 46.53 gives guidance on balancing according to the state of mind.

10. What do the factors of awakening lead to in MN 118?

Answer: Developed dependent on seclusion, dispassion, cessation and relinquishment, they support true knowledge and liberation.

Five mindful questions for better daily life

1. On a busy day, which quality do you most need to nourish: remembering, seeing clearly, effort or calming? Why?
2. How have you mistaken drowsiness for calm?
3. When pleased with a good session, do you cling to that joy or look down on others?
4. How could you show balance and care at the same time in a family matter?
5. What conditions help your mind become more stable without forcing yourself?

Chapter 13 Further Review



Further review figure 13. A weak fire needs more fuel and a blazing fire needs less: the mind also needs balancing.

Key points

- A sluggish mind and an agitated mind need different kinds of nourishment.
- SN 46.53 uses the image of a fire to explain the balancing of the factors of awakening.
- Mindfulness is useful in both cases; do not force the breath to change your state.

Memory verse

*A weak fire needs just enough wood,
A blazing fire, less force, then ease.
Know what your mind needs now,
Strive rightly, not endlessly.*

Ten more golden questions and answers

1. What is the number of the sutta on the fire?

Answer: SN 46.53, the Aggi Sutta, which gives guidance on balancing the factors of awakening according to the state of mind.

2. When the mind is sluggish, which group should be emphasised?

Answer: Investigation, energy and rapture, which help arouse clarity and suitable energy.

3. When the mind is agitated, which group should be emphasised?

Answer: Tranquillity, concentration and equanimity, which help calm and stabilise.

4. On which side is mindfulness useful?

Answer: In both cases, because the present state must be known in order to adjust.

5. Should the three unsuitable factors be abandoned entirely?

Answer: No. The sutta discusses the right time to develop them; it does not turn the two groups into fixed opposing camps.

6. What can I try when sleepy while sitting?

Answer: Open the eyes, change posture or do walking meditation as conditions allow; if genuinely short of sleep, rest appropriately.

7. Should a restless mind tighten its attention?

Answer: Not by default. You can grip less, choose a clear anchor and keep awareness within your capacity, according to guidance.

8. Does the sutta prescribe a ratio of in-breath to out-breath?

Answer: Not in this instruction. Do not attribute a breath-control technique to SN 46.53.

9. What is the status of arousing gratitude in the chapter?

Answer: It is an applied suggestion for encouraging the mind, not a verbatim quotation from the sutta on the fire.

10. How do I know whether an adjustment helps?

Answer: See whether the mind is clearer, less strained and stable enough to continue; adjust further when needed.

Five more mindful questions for better daily life

1. What do you usually do when the mind is listless? Does it really bring clarity or only prolong the dullness?
2. When worried about many things, do you increase your effort until you become even more tense? What could you reduce?
3. Which bodily sign tells you that you are straining too much?
4. What evidence will you use to distinguish needing rest from avoiding a difficult task, instead of scolding yourself?
5. Describe a situation in which you needed to change how you made effort, even though the goal stayed the same.

Chapter 14

Understanding the Escape from Sensual Desire and the Hindrances

A summary of how the sutta presents understanding, transformation and recognition of a mind dominated by sensual desire. The summary has three movements.

First movement: understanding sensual desire (kāmarāga)

In this sutta, sensual desire is presented not merely as a passing thought but as a state that imprisons the mind. The text uses specific language to describe that condition.

- A mind obsessed (kāmarāgapariyuṭṭhita cetasā). The untrained mind is “obsessed and overcome” by desire. The mind is taken over and has no room for clarity.
- The trough simile. The Buddha compares a person caught in this state to an untrained colt tied at the feeding trough, thinking only “Fodder! Fodder!” Under the influence of kāmarāga, a person’s awareness narrows to instinctive, immediate gratification.
- Repetitive thoughts that are hard to stop. Because the untrained person lacks clear comprehension, they are caught in a loop of thinking. The sutta describes the mind repeatedly absorbed in, brooding on, pondering and obsessively ruminating on (jhāyati pajjhāyati nijjhāyati avajjhāyati) the object of desire.

Second movement: the path of transformation, knowing the escape (nissaraṇa)

The basic difference between the untrained colt and the thoroughbred lies in how each responds to mental phenomena.

- Understanding reality (yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti). The untrained person “does not understand as it really is the escape from arisen sensual desire”. The practitioner who is like a thoroughbred does understand it.
- Samvega, often translated as spiritual urgency, is an interpretive term linked here with a serious attitude towards the consequences of heedlessness. The word does not occur in the quoted Pāli passage of AN 11.9. The image of the goad is not to be used to justify panic, violence or self-punishment.
- Not harbouring the hindrance. Instead of “keeping desire within”, the noble practitioner recognises desire as an arisen hindrance (nīvaraṇa) and inclines towards its ending, preventing the mind from fixating obsessively on it.

Third movement: realisation, wisdom and perception

The final part of the sutta opens a difficult question about meditating without depending on the listed bases and about saññā vibhūtā. The whole passage should not be explained merely by a sensation becoming impermanent or a thought becoming less rigid.

- Nissāya is used for depending on or being based on. The sutta lists the elements, the formless spheres, this world and the other world, and the range of experience. Using an object to train the mind does not in itself amount to clinging, nor is it condemned as wrong practice.
- Saññā vibhūtā is a point where translation and context must be compared. In Thanissaro’s translation the listed perceptions “have ceased to exist”; the revised translation in this book renders it as “no longer remain”. Interpreting them as no longer serving as a basis for clinging has practical value, but it must not be presented as the only lexical meaning or as proof that perception becomes transparent. See Chapter 27.

Chapter 27 distinguishes sutta text, translation choices and practical interpretation.

Chapter 14 Review



Review figure 14. Untie the knot by understanding the rope; learn the way out instead of pulling harder.

Key points

- A mind caught up in sensual desire needs to be recognised together with the conditions feeding it.
- Knowing the escape differs from suppression or merely naming the obstacle.
- The final part of AN 11.9 raises deep interpretive issues and must not be reduced to a changing sensation.

Memory verse

*Know the tangled cord, find its end,
Untie with skill, do not yank hard.
A wanting mind: add no more bait,
Learn the way out each day.*

Ten golden questions and answers

1. Under which themes does the chapter summarise the sutta?

Answer: The mind dominated by sensual desire, knowing the escape, and the passage on meditating without support together with the description of perception.

2. Is sensual desire in the sutta just a passing thought?

Answer: The passage discussed emphasises a mind overwhelmed by sensual desire and caught up in brooding on it.

3. What does nissaraṇa mean?

Answer: Escape or getting out; in this context, knowing the way out of a state that has arisen.

4. Is saying “I know I am greedy” enough?

Answer: Not yet. Learn what feeds greed and how to stop feeding it, with suitable guidance.

5. How does suppression differ from learning the escape?

Answer: Suppression tries to cover up or force a state away; learning the escape recognises it and develops the conditions that help abandon what is unwholesome.

6. Should saṁvega be used to push for achievement?

Answer: No. Seriousness must go with understanding and kindness, not turn into fear or self-punishment.

7. How does nissāya differ from nissaraṇa?

Answer: Nissāya means depending on or being based on; nissaraṇa means escape. The two words are not interchangeable.

8. Does using an object automatically mean clinging?

Answer: No. Distinguish a means of practice from grasping it as “me” or “mine”.

9. Does the disappearance of a sensation fully explain saññā vibhūtā?

Answer: No. The passage needs to be compared across translations, the whole sentence and the interpretive tradition.

10. What plain practical lesson can be drawn?

Answer: Recognise the state that carries the mind away, look at the conditions feeding it and choose a less harmful action, without confirming attainment for yourself.

Five mindful questions for better daily life

1. When you know you are angry but keep thinking to prove you are right, what are you feeding?
2. What cue at home or at work makes your desire recur?
3. How could you change that condition instead of merely relying on more willpower?
4. In what you are studying, where is seriousness helpful and where is it pressure to achieve?
5. When an exercise brings calm, how will you use that calm to act better?

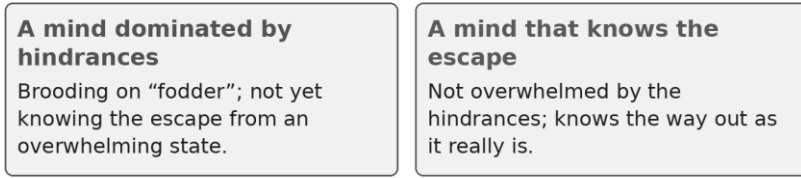
Chapter 15

The Untrained Colt and the Thoroughbred

An untrained colt, tied near the feeding trough, thinks only about fodder. It does not consider the trainer's task or how it should respond. The Buddha compares this state to a practitioner whose mind is overwhelmed by sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and remorse, or doubt. Such a person keeps brooding within the hindrance without understanding the escape from it as it really is (AN 11.9).

The thoroughbred does not just fixate on fodder. It anticipates the trainer's task and regards the goad (patoda) as a consequence to be taken seriously. The human counterpart of that horse is the practitioner who recognises an arisen hindrance and understands the escape from it. *The sutta goes on to say that such a practitioner does not meditate in dependence on the four elements, the four formless attainments, this world or the next, or what is seen, heard, sensed, cognised, attained, sought or pondered; and yet does meditate. When Sandha asks how this can be, the Buddha describes the related perceptions as vibhūtā. The passage praises a meditation not bound by any of these bases.*

Figure 6 The untrained colt and the thoroughbred



Paraphrased from AN 11.9 / AN 11.10. For not depending, read Chapter 27; abandoning the object is not required.

Figure 6. The horse simile in AN 11.9: the untrained colt and the thoroughbred.

Figure 6 contrasts a mind dominated by the hindrances with a mind that knows the escape from them. The labels in the image are teaching summaries, not a translation of the whole sutta. The description of meditating without depending on the listed bases is studied in Chapter 27; the diagram does not instruct beginners to abandon their meditation object.

The contrast is not simply between having an object and having none. The sutta states that the practitioner meditates without depending on the listed bases and yet meditates. That is not enough to confirm a modern doctrine of completely objectless awareness. The practical starting point is to know the hindrances and learn the conditions for escaping them; beginners can still use the breath or a bodily anchor.

The terms for the animals

The untrained horse can be called *khalaṇka* and the thoroughbred *ājānīya*. English renderings vary, including “colt”, “inferior horse”, “untamed horse”, “untrained horse”, “wild young horse”, “thoroughbred” or “excellent

thoroughbred”. These words serve the illustrative example and should not be turned into fixed psychological types. The trainer is the assadammasārathi (horse trainer or charioteer), and the goad is the patoda.

Khaḷuṅka. Meaning in the simile: an untrained horse tied at the feeding trough (doṇiyā baddho). Human counterpart: a practitioner sitting in a quiet place yet bound by instinctive desire and shallow thinking.

Ājānīya. Meaning in the simile: a noble thoroughbred of good breeding, ready to take on the trainer’s task. Human counterpart: a disciplined practitioner who comes to meditation with urgency (saṃvega) and sincerity.

Yavasam yavaśan. Meaning in the simile: “Fodder! Fodder!” (Thanissaro: “Barley! Barley!”). Human counterpart: obsessive thoughts repeating within a hindrance.

Assadammasārathi. Meaning in the simile: the horse trainer. Human counterpart: the task the path of practice sets.

Patoda. Meaning in the simile: the goad or spur, regarded as a debt, bondage, loss or misfortune. Human counterpart: consequences taken seriously.

Table: Terms in the horse simile

Pāli	Meaning in the simile	Human counterpart
Khaḷuṅka	An inferior or untrained horse in the simile; not necessarily referring to age	A mind dominated by the hindrances without knowing the escape
Ājānīya	A noble thoroughbred of good breeding, ready to take on the trainer's task	One who knows the escape from the hindrances; saṁvega is an associated term, not found in this passage
Yavasam yavaśan	“Fodder! Fodder!” (Thanissaro: “Barley! Barley!”)	Obsessive thoughts repeating within a hindrance
Assadammasārathi	Horse trainer	The task the path of practice sets
Patoda	The goad or spur, regarded as a debt, bondage, loss or misfortune	Consequences taken seriously

Chapter 15 Review



Review figure 15. Train little by little and remember what needs doing, rather than just chasing what you want.

Key points

- The untrained colt and the thoroughbred are images for comparison, not labels for judging people.
- The point for practice is to know when you are being carried away and to learn the escape.
- Beginners can still practise with the breath or a clear anchor.

Memory verse

*The colt dotes on the trough, the steed recalls the road,
The learner knows, and clings a little less.
Train bit by bit, no forcing with the whip,
Keep a gentle heart, take ordinary steps.*

Ten golden questions and answers

1. Does khaḷuṅka necessarily mean a young horse?

Answer: No. In this book the appropriate rendering is an untrained horse; it does not depend on age alone.

2. What is ājānīya called?

Answer: A thoroughbred, the good horse in the comparison; not a kind of person worth more than others.

3. Should distracted students be called inferior horses?

Answer: No. Use the image to understand states of mind and ways of practice, not to belittle learners.

4. What does the feeding trough illustrate?

Answer: Preoccupation with gratification that carries the mind away; it does not condemn the necessary need to eat.

5. What does the trainer in the simile highlight?

Answer: The thoroughbred remembers its task and how to respond, rather than thinking only about fodder.

6. What is patoda?

Answer: The whip or pointed goad in the horse image; it is not an instruction to use violence on learners.

7. Does saṃvega appear in the quoted sutta passage?

Answer: No. The book associates this term as an interpretation of seriousness about the consequences of heedlessness.

8. Are beginners who use the breath condemned as practising wrongly?

Answer: No. Having an anchor for learning differs from grasping an object or an achievement; do not read the simile as an order to abandon the breath.

9. Is wanting to eat when hungry always a hindrance?

Answer: One should not conclude this from the object alone. Look at how the mind is carried away, the need and the way of acting.

10. How can this image be applied to phone use?

Answer: Notice that you just want to keep watching, remember what needs doing, then stop or change conditions; that is a present-day application.

Five mindful questions for better daily life

1. What is like a feeding trough that makes you forget your commitments to family or work?
2. Do you usually train yourself with encouragement or with self-scolding? What are the consequences of each?
3. How could you prepare for a session with an attitude that is both serious and kind?
4. When teaching children or guiding others, do you use comparisons that shame them? How will you change your way of speaking?
5. When did you manage to return to what needed doing even though you still wanted to watch or eat more?

Chapter 16

Sensual Desire and Lay Life

In this part, *kāmarāga* is rendered as sensual desire according to the context of the sutta. *Kāmacchanda* is the usual name of the hindrance of sensual desire. The terms overlap in scope but are not interchangeable in every context: *kāmarāga* is also used in other classification systems. Keep the Pāli name that matches the passage under discussion.

Scope and definition

Sensual desire in this part is infatuation with sensual pleasure; memories and fantasies of the object can also feed it. Not every wish is unwholesome: the wish to learn, to help or to practise needs to be assessed by its quality and purpose. The image of the horse thinking about fodder illustrates a mind carried away by gratification; it does not condemn the need to eat to maintain health.

Sexual desire is one case of sensual desire. Do not equate all care, intimacy or affection with sexual desire. Consider the circumstances, ethical conduct, consent and the degree to which the mind is carried away, rather than assuming a single biological drive for everyone.

Broad and narrow scope

Sexual desire can fall within the scope of sensual desire; sensual desire also includes other sensory desires. The sutta emphasises a mind overwhelmed by sensual desire and knowing the escape. Not only the name of the object but also

the degree of obsession, the behaviour and the consequences need to be recognised.

Practical consequences

- Subtlety. If you look for kāmārāga only in sexual desire, you will miss its everyday forms: the urge to check the phone for entertainment (sight, hearing) or constantly shifting posture in search of maximum comfort (touch).
- The trough trap. Whenever the mind narrows to immediate sensory gratification—whether an animal craving food or a person craving stimulation—it becomes an untrained colt.

The author adds a limitation. This distinction is useful when it helps avoid an overly narrow understanding of sexual desire. Modern claims that digital sexual stimulation defeats meditation practice go beyond the content of the canon. Practitioners can examine different triggers and consequences without lumping them together or declaring that one method will suit everyone (AN 11.9; MN 13; MN 54). Chapter 20 discusses how to test conclusions.

Chapter 16 Review



Review figure 16. Recognise desire and choose moderate use while still meeting genuine needs.

Key points

- Sensual desire has a wider scope than sexual desire.
- Not every wish is unwholesome; consider the purpose, how far the mind is carried away and the behaviour.
- Ethical conduct and changing conditions help in dealing with desire, rather than mere shame or self-blame.

Memory verse

*Wanting to eat, to see, to hear,
Know the mind is swept, don't rush to blame.
What is needed, use in measure,
Where there is greed, learn to cling less.*

Ten golden questions and answers

1. What does sensual desire mean in this chapter?

Answer: Infatuation with sensual pleasure; memories and fantasies of the object can also feed it.

2. Is sexual desire the whole of sensual desire?

Answer: No. Sensual desire also concerns other sensory pleasures, such as tasty food or entertainment.

3. Are kāmarāga and kāmacchanda interchangeable everywhere?

Answer: No. They overlap in scope, but the correct name and classification for the passage under discussion should be kept.

4. Is the wish to learn or to help others always unwholesome?

Answer: No. Consider its quality and purpose; do not condemn every wish.

5. Is eating when hungry something to give up entirely?

Answer: No. Eating to maintain health is a need to be considered in due measure; the trough simile refers to a mind carried away by gratification.

6. Is affection the same as sexual desire?

Answer: No. Do not lump all care or intimacy into a single drive.

7. Is looking at the object enough to know the mind is unwholesome?

Answer: Not yet. Consider the intention, the degree of obsession, the action and its consequences.

8. Is changing posture always chasing pleasure?

Answer: No. It may be a necessary adjustment when there is pain or the posture is unsuitable; know the actual reason.

9. In the example, how can the phone feed desire?

Answer: Signals and new content can prompt the wish to keep watching. This is an observation of present-day behaviour, not a sutta passage about algorithms.

10. What can support self-restraint?

Answer: Setting limits on use, changing the environment, keeping precepts and seeking guidance when needed, rather than just scolding yourself.

Five mindful questions for better daily life

1. Which desire makes you neglect sleep, work or commitments to loved ones?
2. By what signs do you distinguish a real need from wanting further gratification?
3. When talking about desire with someone close to you, what way of speaking can be honest without shaming them?
4. Have you ever condemned something pleasant simply because you believed practice must involve suffering? How do you see that now?
5. What manageable limit could you try this week, and how will you review the result?

Chapter 17

Effort without Self-Coercion

The principles below help keep practice clear and well grounded. They do not establish a process that must move from having an object to having none; AN 11.9 does not give such an instruction for beginners.

Essential safeguards

Build on ethical conduct and stability. Remember to keep speech, action and livelihood harmless; choose a suitable exercise and keep a rhythm of practice within your capacity. Do not set the goal of dissolving perception or erasing the object. Exercises with a clear anchor remain valuable; maturing in knowing and handling the hindrances matters more than imitating a description of attainment (MN 44; SN 45.8; AN 11.9).

Use a bodily anchor when appropriate. Posture, the feet touching the floor or the natural breath can help you know what is present. If attending to the breath increases discomfort, you can open your eyes and choose an easily noticed point of contact, then seek suitable instruction. These choices are practical applications, not claims about a neural mechanism or a confirmed goal of liberation.

Important warnings and common pitfalls

- Avoiding problems through theory. Repeating “impermanent” or “not-self” while still feeding anger does not replace recognising and dealing with the

hindrances. Knowing the escape requires developing suitable conditions for abandoning them; it is not just sitting and waiting for every state to dissolve by itself. MN 20 and SN 46.2 offer related directions for study.

- Distinguishing clarity from vagueness. Feelings of emptiness, drowsiness, numbness or unreality do not in themselves confirm liberation. Sloth and torpor and health problems may need different approaches; this book does not use a meditation chart to diagnose dissociation. When daily functioning is affected, reduce intensity, return to a simple exercise and seek a competent teacher.
- Pressure to achieve. Do not turn meditation into a competition with yourself. Forcing the mind to be calm, to have rapture or to sit for long can exhaust you. Keep commitments that suit your capacity, adjust when needed and ask your teacher. Seriousness needs to go together with kindness and patience.

Safeguards in practice

1. Make ethical conduct and everyday responsibilities the foundation of meditation.
2. When attention is chaotic or unstable, use the body and a firm anchor.
3. Do not take conceptual understanding of emptiness, impermanence or non-self for direct realisation.

4. Do not confuse states of blankness, numbness or disorientation with liberation.
5. Keep your effort humane. The simile in the sutta does not license harshness towards yourself or others.
6. Assess practice by its effects on conduct, compassion, self-restraint and understanding, not merely by unusual experiences.
7. Seek competent guidance if practice repeatedly causes distress, dissociation or impaired everyday functioning.

Summary framework for practitioners

Attention. Untrained-colt state (stop and return to the foundation): obsessive rumination on sensory input, digital notifications or passing desires. Thoroughbred state (nourish and sustain): knowing the escape from an overwhelming state; this comparison is not a complete description of attainment.

Dealing with the hindrances. Untrained-colt state (stop and return to the foundation): harbouring the hindrance within; endlessly repeating irritation, anxiety or doubt. Thoroughbred state (nourish and sustain): recognising and developing the conditions for abandoning it; not just waiting for the state to dissolve.

Relationship with objects. Untrained-colt state (stop and return to the foundation): using bodily sensations, thoughts or spiritual concepts as rigid psychological props. Thoroughbred state (nourish and sustain): experiencing the

world clearly without turning perceptions into solid, permanent entities to grasp.

How to review the method

Attention. Grounded practice: use a clear object, then observe experience as it unfolds. Risk to consider: confusing not attending to concepts with blankness or drowsiness. Sign of skilful development: awareness remains clear and connected with conduct.

Hindrances. Grounded practice: recognising their presence, causes and the conditions for abandoning them. Risk to consider: pretending a hindrance has gone simply because it has been named mentally. Sign of skilful development: fewer repetitive, hard-to-stop thoughts; greater ability to respond with consideration.

Effort. Grounded practice: persistent and proportionate to the state of mind. Risk to consider: fear, self-punishment or rigid rules of achievement. Sign of skilful development: less heedlessness without more tension or conceit.

Technology. Grounded practice: recognising triggers and changing conditions when needed. Risk to consider: making neuroscientific claims without evidence or treating willpower as the only solution. Sign of skilful development: more intentional use and a greater ability to stop.

Non-dependence. Grounded practice: not clinging to sense objects, concepts or attainments. Risk to consider: confusing non-clinging with withdrawing from everyday

responsibilities. Sign of skilful development: clearer ethical action, less possessiveness or defensiveness.

Assessing practice. Grounded practice: looking at conduct, compassion, self-restraint and insight. Risk to consider: using unusual experiences as the only measure of attainment. Sign of skilful development: growing patience, humility, responsibility and clarity.

Distinguishing source and application

The table below distinguishes sutta text, teaching applications and inferences to avoid. It is a tool for reading and self-examination, not a scale for confirming attainment.

Domain	Keep	Avoid
Sutta text	Not depending on the listed bases; and yet meditating.	Adding one's own conclusion of a completely objectless state.
Translation	"No longer remain" is the choice in this book's translation; keep vibhūtā for comparison.	Treating "transparent" as the only established meaning.
Application	Use an anchor and learn not to grasp achievement.	Abandoning the object or losing recognition in order to imitate attainment.

Table: Difficulties with effort and how to adjust

Difficulty	Unhelpful response	More skilful adjustment
Sloth and drowsiness	“I’ll meditate later; let me just rest in this sluggishness.” Letting the dullness continue unnoticed	Sit upright, open the eyes or do walking meditation when appropriate. If short of sleep or tired, rest and adjust your schedule; do not force alertness with strong breathing.
Restlessness	Gripping the attention and chasing the breath, then becoming irritated	Soften the body, widen the attention, know restlessness as restlessness without feeding it; maintain calm and continuity instead of forcing
Doubt	Constantly switching methods or giving up too soon	Return to a simple object and continue long enough to observe cause and effect
Self-criticism	“I’m bad at meditation because my mind keeps wandering.” Treating mind-wandering as proof of failure	Regard noticing the wandering as a success: mindfulness has returned

Difficulty	Unhelpful response	More skilful adjustment
Spiritual ambition	Trying to produce jhāna, insight, purity or special experiences	Make the effort to know the present state and its understandable causes, not to reach an imagined future state

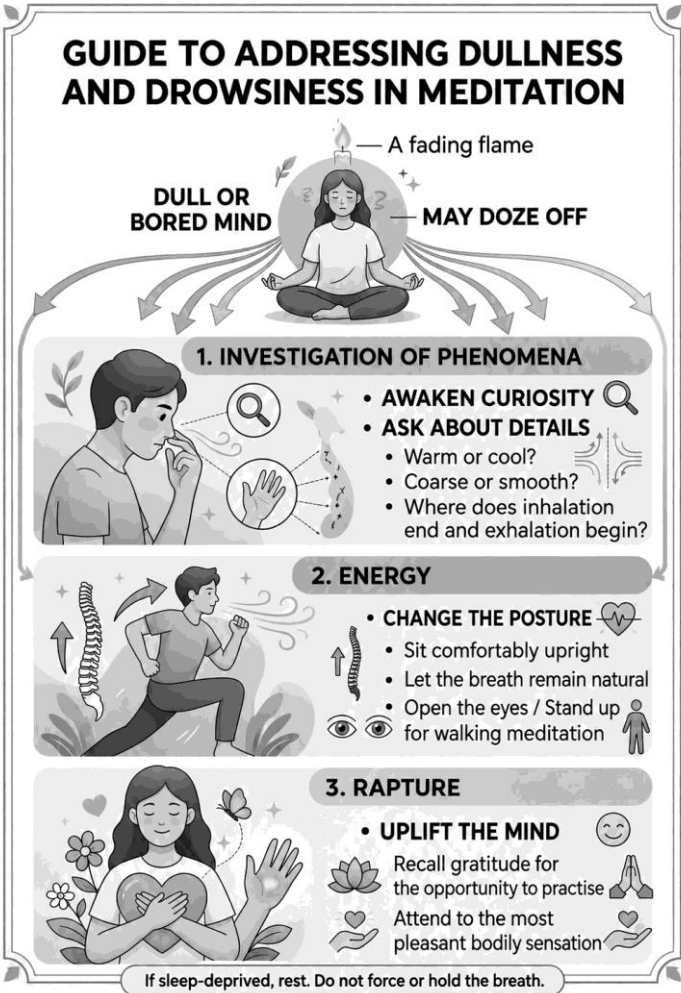
Reference timetable for a guided day

This sample timetable is for a guided practice day, not a mandatory schedule for beginners. Sitting time can be reduced, rest increased or a session skipped according to capacity. The period 21:00–6:00 is for sleep and rest; meal rules should suit the participants and the venue.

Time	Suggested activities for a guided practice day
6:00–6:30	Wake up, wash, light exercise
6:30–7:00	Sit within your capacity, changing posture as needed
7:00–8:00	Breakfast and rest
8:00–8:30	Walking meditation
8:30–9:00	Sitting meditation

Time	Suggested activities for a guided practice day
9:00–10:00	Rest and light communal work
10:00–11:00	Instructions and questions
11:00–13:30	Lunch, washing and rest
13:30–14:00	Walking meditation
14:00–14:30	Sitting meditation
14:30–16:00	Rest, exercise and meeting the teacher
16:00–16:30	Practice within your capacity
16:30–18:00	Meal according to suitable rules, and rest
18:00–19:00	Study and review of practice
19:00–21:00	Short practice according to capacity, rest, then prepare for sleep

Reference figure and how to read it



Reference figure 8. The image is a reminder to adjust when drowsy. Do not follow the words “breathe in deeply and forcefully 3–5 times” in the image as a mandatory instruction. Give priority to posture, light, walking meditation and rest if short of sleep; do not force or hold the breath.

Chapter 17 Review



Review figure 17. Keep the foundations, practise within your capacity and ask when the way is unclear.

Key points

- Keeping precepts, practising within your capacity and seeking clear instruction give learning a foundation.
- Blankness, numbness or strange sensations are not enough to confirm liberation.
- When reviewing practice, look at conduct, kindness and the ability to live responsibly.

Memory verse

*Sit within your strength, rise gently,
Know when tired, don't strain.
Ask when stuck, practise clearly,
One kind word kept each day.*

Ten golden questions and answers

1. What is the protective foundation in this chapter?

Answer: Ethical conduct, stability, a suitable exercise and a rhythm of practice within your capacity.

2. Must I empty the mind to prove I have gone beyond concepts?

Answer: No. Keep clear awareness; do not try to erase the object or lose recognition.

3. What can I do when the breath makes me uncomfortable?

Answer: Open your eyes, choose a clear contact such as the feet according to instruction and ask someone competent; do not force.

4. Does saying “non-self” replace dealing with anger?

Answer: No. Know the anger, the conditions feeding it and how not to act harmfully.

5. Is vagueness or drowsiness equanimity?

Answer: They should not be equated. Equanimity goes with balance and awareness; vagueness needs reviewing.

6. How does pressure to achieve show itself?

Answer: Demanding an experience on a particular day, scolding yourself when it does not come, or increasing practice time regardless of health.

7. What is the use of a bodily anchor?

Answer: It helps you know something clear and present when attention is unstable, according to a suitable exercise.

8. On what is everyday assessment based?

Answer: Whether speech, kindness, self-restraint, responsibility and understanding are improving; not for proclaiming noble attainments for yourself.

9. When should I seek further guidance?

Answer: When the method is unclear, obstacles keep recurring or practice repeatedly causes distress and impairs daily functioning.

10. Is asking for support a lack of effort?

Answer: No. Asking in order to understand and adjust is part of responsible learning, not a sign of failure.

Five mindful questions for better daily life

1. Have you used a Buddhist theory to avoid apologising or putting something right?
2. What signs show that you are turning practice into pressure to achieve?
3. What would you want a trustworthy teacher to help you understand clearly about the exercise?
4. On a tiring day, what short, manageable way could you keep up your practice?
5. What quality would you like your loved ones to notice in you after a period of practice?

Chapter 18

Letting Go while Keeping Responsibility

What to let go of

In daily life, letting go can begin with not continuing to feed a retort, an unnecessary purchase or a story of self-importance. It does not mean abandoning care for loved ones, the right to safety or responsibilities at work.

Still doing what needs to be done

Someone caring for parents can stop demanding that everything go their way while still arranging medication schedules and finding support. Someone treated wrongly can reduce a heated reaction and then state boundaries clearly. Kindness goes together with the ability to protect; it does not demand enduring everything.

Three signs to review

First, calling numbness peace. Second, calling unwillingness to listen to others equanimity. Third, using the teaching to exempt yourself from correcting mistakes. These signs are questions for reviewing practice, not a diagnosis of anyone's condition.

Assessing by conduct

Ask whether you are more truthful, more able to apologise and better at fulfilling what needs to be done. Beautiful experiences in sitting deserve to be understood, but they do not replace long-term assessment. Do not use your

composure to prove that someone who is sad practises poorly.

Self-study exercise

Choose something you are holding on to tightly. Write two lines: which reaction you can stop feeding, and what still needs to be done. Do what needs doing at a manageable pace. The table below helps distinguish easily confused points, while Chapter 27 discusses “not depending” in the sutta text.

Table: Points to review when letting go

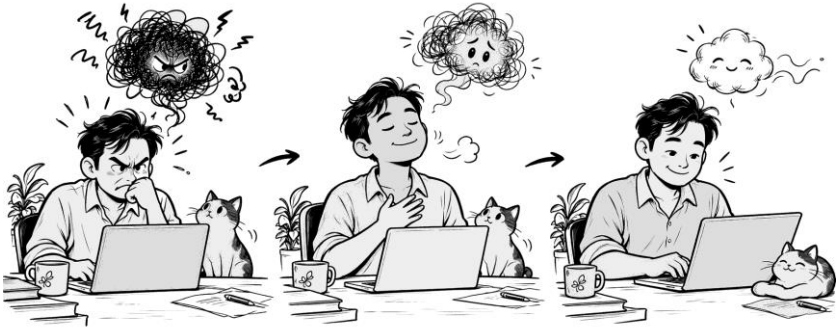
Point to review	Tendency to correct	Grounded direction of practice
Attention	Being pulled into notifications or repetitive stories	Notice, then return to the suitable object or task
Hindrances	Continuing to feed desire, irritation or doubt without seeking clarity	Recognise the conditions and choose ways to feed the obstacle less
Relationship with objects	Grasping experiences or achievements as mine	Use means of learning without awarding yourself attainments

Table: Framework for assessing practice

Aspect	Grounded practice	Risk to consider	Sign of skilful development
Attention	Use a clear object, then observe experience as it unfolds	Confusing not attending to concepts with blankness or drowsiness	Awareness remains clear and connected with conduct
Hindrances	Recognise presence, causes and conditions for abandoning	Merely naming it mentally and assuming the hindrance is gone	Fewer repetitive, hard-to-stop thoughts; more considered responses
Effort	Persistent and proportionate to the state of mind	Fear, self-punishment or rigid rules of achievement	Less heedlessness without more tension or conceit
Technology	Recognise triggers and change conditions when needed	Making neuroscientific claims without evidence or treating willpower as the only solution	More intentional use and a greater ability to stop

Aspect	Grounded practice	Risk to consider	Sign of skilful development
Non-dependence	Not clinging to sense objects, concepts or attainments	Confusing non-clinging with withdrawing from everyday responsibilities	Clearer ethical action, less possessiveness or defensiveness
Assessing practice	Looking at conduct, compassion, self-restraint and insight	Using unusual experiences as the only measure of attainment	Growing patience, humility, responsibility and clarity

Chapter 18 Review



Review figure 18. Notice, understand the conditions and choose an action that causes less harm.

Key points

- Let go of unwholesome reactions while still doing what needs to be done.
- Peace needs to be distinguished from numbness and avoidance.
- See practice through speech, conduct and responsibility.

Memory verse

*Let go the retort upon the lips,
What must be done, I still do each day.
A softened heart, yet boundaries remain,
Kindness includes a hand that holds others up.*

Ten golden questions and answers

1. Is letting go the same as not caring?

Answer: No. In this everyday exercise, grasping less helps us act with consideration.

2. Must responsibilities be abandoned?

Answer: No. Responsibilities need to be identified and carried out appropriately.

3. Does kindness allow setting boundaries?

Answer: Yes. Boundaries can protect oneself and others without retaliation.

4. Is numbness surely equanimity?

Answer: No. Look at clarity and the ability to function, without crediting yourself with an achievement.

5. Is a beautiful sitting enough to measure progress?

Answer: Not yet. Look at conduct, understanding and consequences over a long period.

6. Does apologising have anything to do with practice?

Answer: Yes. Admitting and correcting mistakes expresses responsibility.

7. Should sad people be criticised as poor practitioners?

Answer: No. Sadness has many conditions; listen and offer support.

8. How can I examine something I am holding on to tightly?

Answer: Separate the reaction you are feeding from the practical task that still needs doing.

9. Is the table here for diagnosing others?

Answer: No. It is a prompt for reviewing your own method and asking further questions.

10. Where is not depending discussed?

Answer: Chapter 27 reads the sutta text and sets limits on inferences drawn from that term.

Five mindful questions for better daily life

1. Which responsibility have you wanted to drop in the name of “letting go”?
2. Which boundary do you need to state clearly with an acquaintance?
3. When you are calm, do you listen fully to other people’s sadness?
4. How could you put right something that caused harm?
5. In a situation where you are stuck, which reaction should be fed less, and what still has to be done?

Chapter 19

Combining Study and Practice

The two suttas can be brought into a common sequence of practice without confusing the specific teaching of each. SN 47.24 sets out four domains of contemplation and the qualities needed in practice. AN 11.9 sharpens the question of whether the mind is stuck in a hindrance or has understood the escape from it. MN 118 provides a detailed breathing practice for developing the four domains, while SN 46.53 gives guidance on balancing the factors of awakening.

The practice formula is Notice – Understand – Release the unwholesome reaction. Mindfulness keeps us from forgetting what we are doing; clear comprehension and investigation support understanding; ardour sustains the abandoning of what is unwholesome and the development of what is wholesome. This is a teaching summary, not a sutta sentence or three levels of attainment.

Stage	Question	Example
Notice	What is present in body, feeling, mind or dhammas?	“Unpleasant feeling, chest tightening, anger, wanting to reply.”
Understand	What is this state, what sustains it and what is beneficial right now?	“I interpreted the message as blame; replying at once could make the exchange worse.”
Release the unwholesome reaction	Which reaction can I stop feeding, and what action is timely and harmless?	Wait, ask for clarification, then respond truthfully or set a boundary.

In formal sitting, choose a main anchor. Feel the anchor directly, notice when attention has wandered and come back. When appropriate, widen awareness to the whole body, the feeling tone and the state of mind. In daily life, use natural transitions (before standing up, crossing a threshold, eating, speaking, using the phone or lying down) as reminders to re-establish mindfulness. These are contemporary exercises in keeping with the wider practice, not a list given verbatim in SN 47.24.

One formula and its supporting moves

- The overall formula: Notice – Understand – Release the unwholesome reaction. Releasing here means ceasing to

feed a harmful reaction; what needs to be done is still done in a truthful and appropriate way.

- When distracted: recognise that the mind has wandered, gently return to the anchor and continue. This is a move that supports mindfulness within the overall formula.
- When experience changes: know arising, changing or ending as far as you can. There is no need to force yourself to see every stage, and do not grasp a sensation as an achievement.
- When action is needed: know the state of mind, consider the purpose and consequences, then choose harmless speech or action. Pausing does not remove responsibility.

Chapter 19 Review



Review figure 19. Notice, understand the conditions and choose an action that causes less harm.

Key points

- Notice, understand and release the unwholesome reaction is the book's reminder for practice.
- Releasing means ceasing to feed what is harmful while still dealing with what needs to be done.
- Sitting meditation and daily life support each other through repeated remembering and returning.

Memory verse

*Know the heat, understand why,
Feed anger less: which words to say?
The task remains, do it rightly,
A less harsh heart, at ease together.*

Ten golden questions and answers

1. What does the book's formula consist of?

Answer: Notice, understand and release the unwholesome reaction; it is a teaching summary, not a verbatim sutta sentence.

2. With what question does noticing begin?

Answer: What is present in body, feeling, mind or dhammas right now?

3. What else does understanding need to ask?

Answer: What is happening, what feeds it and what is beneficial in the present circumstances?

4. What does releasing the unwholesome reaction mean?

Answer: Ceasing to feed harmful actions or thoughts, then choosing what is truthful and appropriate.

5. Does releasing mean dropping the task or staying silent forever?

Answer: No. You can still discuss, correct mistakes, set boundaries and fulfil responsibilities.

6. What should I do when distracted during sitting?

Answer: Know that the mind has been carried away, gently return to the anchor and continue the exercise.

7. Must the formula be carried out very slowly, step by step?

Answer: Not always. It is a reminder for learning; the qualities can support one another within an action.

8. How can it be used at moments of transition?

Answer: Before standing up, eating or speaking, notice briefly, then continue the task at hand with clarity.

9. How can it be applied to a critical message?

Answer: Know the tense body and the angry mind, reread the content, then choose to wait, ask for clarification or reply truthfully.

10. How are sitting and daily life related?

Answer: Sitting trains remembering and returning; daily life provides opportunities to apply this to speech, action and responsibility.

Five mindful questions for better daily life

1. Which daily activity would make a suitable reminder to practise?
2. When criticised, what facts do you need to understand before replying?
3. What reaction do you want to release, and what responsible task still needs doing?
4. How could you state a boundary in a way that is both truthful and minimally harmful?
5. How will you review a day so as to learn something specific without condemning yourself?

PART THREE

READING THE SUTTAS AND DISCUSSING APPLICATION

This part presents the texts, the translations and the issues that need comparison. In critique, distinguish the words of the sutta, commentarial explanation, the author's reasoning and modern application. Questions about technology are kept within the limits of the evidence; the suttas are not turned into a neuroscientific theory.

Chapter 20

Reading the Suttas with Scrutiny

A helpful interpretation is not necessarily the only meaning. When studying the suttas, distinguish the original text, the translation, the commentary, the author's argument and modern application. The evidence for a claim must match the kind of claim it is.

Personal experience can help raise questions but does not by itself decide linguistic meaning. Note clearly what the sutta says, what is inferred and what has not been verified. This principle guides the whole study that follows.

Five layers of reading

Distinguish the original text, translation, commentary, exposition and application. An email can illustrate practice but does not thereby become sutta text. A helpful understanding is not necessarily the only meaning.

Once familiar with a method, it is easy to find it in every sutta. Read the structure, the vocabulary and the problem the text is addressing before confirming a view you already hold.

One word does not decide the whole text

Consulting a dictionary opens possible meanings; grammar and context are also needed. When a difference in translation affects the argument, state the difference. Refuting one interpretation does not in itself prove another.

Experience helps raise questions; it does not by itself decide linguistic meaning. Understanding through reasoning also does not prove direct realisation. Record separately what has been seen, what has been understood and what is being inferred.

Responsible exposition

Begin with the passage, the translation choice and the problem, then set out your reasons. Commentaries need a reference location; empirical claims need suitable sources outside the suttas. What has not been verified is still marked as unverified.

Self-study exercise: write separately what the text says, what the translator chose, how the commentary is cited, what you infer and what you apply. If a source cannot be identified, mark it for checking.

Critical reading helps distinguish what the text says from the assumptions readers bring to it. The three issues below keep the connection with modern life without relying on biological claims that lack direct evidence.

The scope of the teaching on not depending

The statement in AN 11.9 about not depending on the listed bases cannot automatically be turned into having no object at all. An interpretation must account for the list of bases, *saññā vibhūtā* and *jhāyati ca pana*. A hypothesis does not become a conclusion simply because it is expressed in psychological language.

- Do not use popular theories about the brain to refute or confirm an attainment. Statements such as “objectless awareness is biologically impossible” require definitions and suitable research; the sutta does not provide such empirical evidence. The practical part of this book does not need to rely on them.
- An application within scope is to distinguish a means of attention from grasping at achievement. Someone can continue to use the breath while learning to be less conceited and less dependent on the session being pleasant. That does not confirm the entire state described in AN 11.9.

Desire and the digital environment

Notifications and new content can become cues that keep users watching. In a specific situation, look at the cue, the feeling, the wish and the action rather than claiming that every platform has the same mechanism or that everyone is controlled in the same way.

- For example, you intend to check one message but stay for twenty minutes. Noticing the wish to keep watching is the first step. Turning off notifications, keeping the device away from where you sleep or setting clear times for use helps change the conditions. This is a contemporary behavioural suggestion, not a sutta passage about dopamine or brain structure.
- Sexual desire needs to be distinguished from other sensory desires according to circumstances, degree and

consequences. The difference does not in itself prove that one group of desires lies beyond all possibility of practice. Environmental limits, support and suitable practice can be combined; do not claim that mere observation is always enough.

Discipline with dignity and responsibility

The image of the trainer and the goad can evoke seriousness about the consequences of heedlessness. It does not prove a diagnosis of trauma, nor does it permit teachers to use fear or violence. Each contemporary psychological connection must be identified as a connection rather than as the verbatim content of the sutta.

- In practice, suitable discipline means keeping manageable commitments, adjusting when needed and learning from forgetting. *Samvega* is associated as an urgent motivation towards the path; it is not a term occurring in this Pāli passage. Such motivation needs to go together with understanding, patience and kindness.
- An organisation might use attention training to require employees to put up with harmful conditions. In that case, both external conditions and the conduct of those responsible need to be examined. Mindfulness in the spirit of virtue, concentration and wisdom still allows one to raise concerns, protect others and set boundaries; it is not merely for increasing productivity.

Distinguishing questions from evidence

Issue	Well-founded reading
Not depending	Compare the listed bases; do not equate this with having no object at all.
Digital environment	Look at specific cues, wishes and behaviour; change conditions when needed.
Discipline	Keep practice within capacity; do not use the goad metaphor to justify harm.

Three principles of critical reading

First, identify the source of each statement: sutta text, translation, commentary or modern application. Next, ask whether that source really supports the strength of the conclusion. Finally, check whether the instruction suits the practitioner's level and circumstances.

Regarding vibhūtā, a dictionary meaning such as “manifest” is not enough to replace a contextual translation with the word “transparent”. Conversely, the rendering “no longer remain” is not evidence that all consciousness is destroyed. Keep the interpretive question open within the bounds of the evidence (Chapter 27).

Regarding patoda, the comparison with the horse does not prescribe how students should be treated. Using violence or pushing beyond capacity is conduct to be

judged by the principle of non-harm, and cannot be legitimised by a metaphor.

Regarding technology, observing that a cue attracts us does not amount to measuring a neural pathway. Using clear behavioural language helps readers test the example without having to accept an unproven biological theory.

Assessing application

A good application must both stay faithful to the scope of the source and help the reader know what to do. Practice is helpful when it supports awareness, choice and less harmful action; there is no need to claim a neural or liberating result to explain an example.

- Signs of vagueness or numbness should not be used as evidence of having gone beyond concepts. When unsure how to practise, return to a simple exercise and ask your teacher.
- Urgency must not be turned into a demand to reach rapture, concentration or insight on a particular day. Cultivating wholesome states needs different conditions and amounts of time for each person.
- External responsibilities still matter. One can recognise aversion while also reporting a dangerous incident, protecting vulnerable people or refusing a harmful request.

The suggestions about changing the environment and phone use are presented as practical applications. Do not regard them as conclusions of AN 11.9 about digital platforms or as evidence that technology can make liberation impossible.

When assessing progress, look at conduct, self-restraint and understanding. Better concentration is not enough if speech still harms or responsibilities are neglected. Everyday criteria help assess the direction of practice; they are not a way of confirming noble attainment for oneself.

Chapter 20 Review



Review figure 20. Check the source before sharing; know how to stop at the cue to keep watching.

Key points

- Applications to daily life need to be distinguished from the verbatim content of the suttas.
- Observations about habits do not in themselves prove a brain mechanism.
- Helpful discipline needs to preserve dignity, responsibility and moderation.

Memory verse

*A message comes: know the wish to look,
Put the phone down, pull it in less.
Where the source is clear, say so clearly,
Keep the heart upright day and night.*

Ten golden questions and answers

1. What does reading with scrutiny mean?

Answer: Asking what the source says, whether the conclusion goes beyond the source and whether the instruction suits the practitioner.

2. Is the phone example a verbatim part of AN 11.9?

Answer: No. It is a present-day application for understanding specific cues, wishes and actions.

3. Does knowing that notifications pull me away measure dopamine?

Answer: No. Behavioural observation is not a measurement of neural mechanisms; do not infer what there is no data for.

4. How can turning off notifications help?

Answer: It can remove one condition that prompts you to look at the device; try it and review, and do not see it as the only solution for everyone.

5. Can an attainment be refuted with a popular theory of the brain?

Answer: That is not sufficient. Definitions, data and suitable methods are needed; do not attribute such a conclusion to the sutta.

6. In the example, what is discipline within capacity?

Answer: Keeping practice commitments you can manage, adjusting when needed and learning from lapses without punishing yourself.

7. Does the goad metaphor permit teachers to instil fear?

Answer: No. A metaphor does not replace the principle of non-harm in how students are treated.

8. Does mindfulness oblige employees to put up with harmful conditions?

Answer: No. One can know the mind while also raising concerns, setting boundaries or protecting others.

9. Is better concentration enough to assess the whole path?

Answer: Not yet. Speech, conduct, self-restraint and understanding must also be considered, not just productivity or attention.

10. What should be stated clearly when presenting a new application?

Answer: That it is an application, the related source, the limits of the conclusion and the specific thing readers can try.

Five mindful questions for better daily life

1. What source lies behind a recent remark you heard about phones or meditation? How will you check it?
2. What condition in your environment makes you do something for longer than intended?
3. How might a small change at your desk or in your bedroom help you keep your commitments?
4. Have you ever used mindfulness to stay silent about something that needed to be raised? What should be done differently?
5. How could you set a truthful and minimally harmful boundary at work?

Chapter 21

The Suddha Sutta and Its Translations

SN 47.24 is a short sutta taught at Sāvaththī. The Buddha sets out four domains of mindfulness practice: body, feeling, mind and dhammas. The recurring instruction is to contemplate each domain ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful, having removed longing and discontent for the world. The sutta itself is very concise; detailed exercises for each domain are set out more fully elsewhere, especially in MN 10 and DN 22.

Pāli text

The Pāli passage below follows the Mahāsaṅgīti edition published by SuttaCentral. The abbreviation *pe* (*peyyāla*) marks the standard repetition of the formula for each of the remaining domains.

Sāvaththinidānaṃ.

“Cattārome, bhikkhave, satipaṭṭhānā. Katame cattāro? Idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhu kāye kāyānupassī viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā, vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassaṃ; vedanāsu ...pe... citte ...pe... dhammesu dhammānupassī viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā, vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassaṃ.

Ime kho, bhikkhave, cattāro satipaṭṭhānā”ti.

Bhikkhu Sujato's English translation

Readers of this English edition are referred to Bhikkhu Sujato's own English translation of SN 47.24 on SuttaCentral (suttacentral.net/sn47.24); the Vietnamese edition of this book contains a Vietnamese rendering based on it, which is not reproduced here.

The translation used in this book

The translation used in this book has been revised against the Pāli, with reference to the English translations of Sujato and Bodhi. The traditional term “four establishments of mindfulness” is kept so that readers can compare it with the original.

At Sāvathī. “Bhikkhus, there are these four establishments of mindfulness. What four? A bhikkhu dwells contemplating the body in the body, ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful, having removed longing and discontent for the world. [The same formula applies to] feelings... mind... and dhammas. These are the four establishments of mindfulness.”

Other renderings

Sujato renders satipaṭṭhāna in English with an expression that emphasises the practice of mindfulness; Bodhi uses an expression that emphasises the establishing of mindfulness. The translation used in this book keeps the term “four establishments of mindfulness”. Translation choices help identify nuances, but they do not in

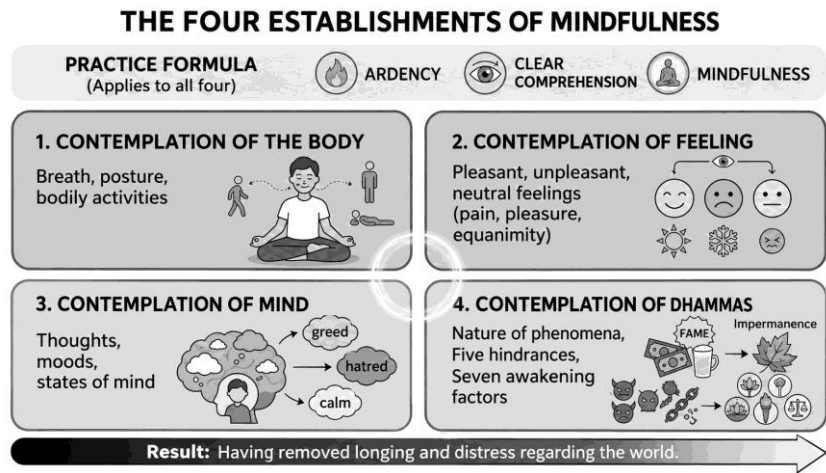
themselves prove a difference in practice. The whole sentence, Pāli grammar and context need to be compared.

The four domains of mindfulness

Body Breathing, posture and bodily activity.	Feeling Pleasant, unpleasant or neither-painful-nor-pleasant tone.
Mind Knowing the quality of mind: angry, scattered, calm...	Dhammas Knowing by categories: hindrances, factors of awakening...

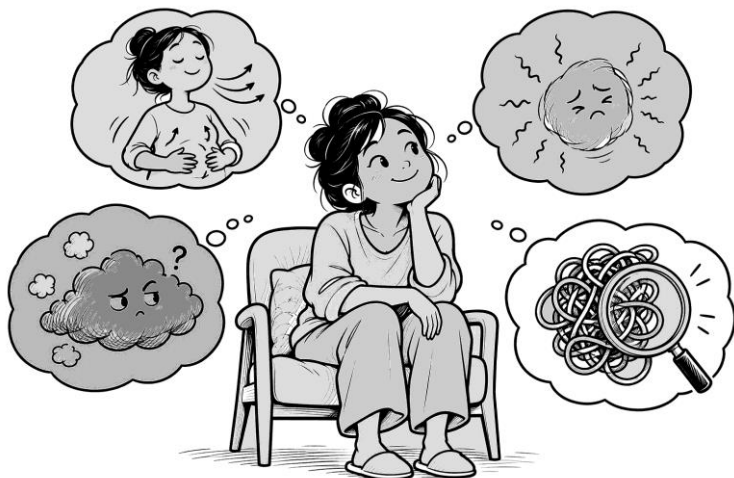
Paraphrased from MN 10 and SN 47.24. Feeling is not the same as complex emotion.

Reference figure and how to read it



Reference figure 9. The four establishments of mindfulness. Vedanā is the pleasant, unpleasant or neutral tone, not a general name for all emotions.

Chapter 21 Review



Review figure 21. Four perspectives shed light on one event as it happens: body, feeling, mind and dhammas.

Key points

- The four establishments of mindfulness are body, feeling, mind and dhammas.
- Practice requires effort within capacity, mindfulness and clear comprehension.
- SN 47.24 gives a brief framework; MN 10 and DN 22 explain it more fully.

Memory verse

*The body breathes: know it is breathing,
Feeling is pleasant, or unpleasant, nothing more.
The mind just angered: add no fuel,
Choose gentle words with everyone.*

Ten golden questions and answers

1. What is SN 47.24 about?

Answer: The sutta sets out the four establishments of mindfulness and how to practise them with ardour, clear comprehension and mindfulness.

2. What are the four establishments of mindfulness?

Answer: Four domains of observation: body, feeling, mind and dhammas; not four persons or four selves.

3. How can contemplation of the body begin?

Answer: Beginners can know their posture or the natural breath, following suitable instructions.

4. Is feeling the whole of emotion?

Answer: No. Feeling refers only to the pleasant, unpleasant or neither-painful-nor-pleasant quality of experience.

5. What does contemplation of mind know?

Answer: The state of mind, for example angry, scattered or calm, rather than merely retelling the story that caused the anger.

6. Is contemplation of dhammas thinking about everything?

Answer: MN 10 presents specific groups, such as the hindrances and the factors of awakening; learn according to the group being practised.

7. Does this sutta list the sixteen breathing steps?

Answer: No. The sixteen steps belong to MN 118 and are presented in Chapter 12.

8. Is noticing the mind wandering a failure?

Answer: It is an opportunity for mindfulness to return. Know that you have just forgotten and continue, without scolding yourself.

9. Does practice require me to be indifferent to others?

Answer: No. Recognising reactions helps us choose less harmful speech and action while keeping our responsibilities.

10. What can I start with today?

Answer: Choose something simple, such as sitting for five minutes or knowing your hands while washing dishes; practise within your capacity and regularly.

Five mindful questions for better daily life

1. During a recent meal, what did you notice belonging to body, feeling and mind? How did you react?
2. When hearing criticism, what is the fact and what is the story you add?
3. Where do you usually remember to practise and where do you forget? Why the difference?
4. What small change in how you speak to loved ones could express your practice?
5. If you do not use sitting time as the only measure, by what will you review your progress?

Case Studies: Five Applied Situations

The five situations below help review noticing, understanding and releasing unwholesome reactions. The answers apply only to the circumstances described; they are not a tool for diagnosis or for confirming attainment. The examples are contemporary exercises.

1 Conflict at work

You are arguing with a colleague who has missed a deadline. Which approach both helps reduce impulsive reactions and keeps the responsibility to deal with the work?

- A. Demand an explanation immediately in order to build a story of blame.
- B. Focus on your colleague's shortcomings in order to argue against them.
- C. Recall the similarities between yourself and your colleague and notice your own bodily sensations, so that the anger can settle.
- D. Give up and conclude that you cannot control external events.

Suggested answer: C. Recognising similarities can support empathy, and noticing bodily tension helps interrupt automatic retaliation. This does not remove the need to deal with the missed deadline.

2 An unexpected setback

Disappointing news disrupts your weekend plans. Which approach supports awareness without rushing to act on irritation?

- A. Observe the feeling as it arises and changes, without immediately blaming or acting on it.
- B. Analyse the situation until you have identified who is at fault.
- C. Build a story of blame to justify the irritation.
- D. Think only about the faults of the person who disrupted the plans.

Suggested answer: A. Knowing the feeling that is present helps create a pause. When needed, you can still talk things through, change plans or set boundaries; awareness does not mean accepting every harmful behaviour.

3 A traffic incident

While you are driving, another driver cuts you off. Which approach supports mindfulness and safety?

- A. Analyse the other driver's technique to identify their faults.
- B. Imitate their aggression to teach them a lesson.
- C. Recognise the impulsive emotional reaction without retaliating, while continuing to drive safely.
- D. Ignore the incident because controlling emotions requires sitting in meditation for a long time.

Suggested answer: C. Reflection can reduce hostility, but road safety and appropriate self-protective action remain the priority.

4 Frustration with theory

You understand mindfulness in theory but still get angry when a customer is rude. What is the most likely limitation?

- A. You have treated the teaching as theory without practising regularly enough to train the ability to pause and respond.
- B. You have not yet identified every cause of the unpleasant feeling.
- C. You pay too much attention to inner sensations and not enough to the customer's behaviour.
- D. You should try to find the customer's behaviour amusing.

Suggested answer: A. Conceptual understanding alone does not guarantee a trained response. The key is practice, not self-blame.

5 Midday exhaustion

At 2 p.m. on a stressful workday you notice your patience declining. Which of the options below could help you recover before continuing?

- A. Meditate at your desk for exactly 30 minutes before resuming work.
- B. Take five quiet minutes to pause and recover.
- C. Confront a colleague to shift attention away from your own state.
- D. List the similarities between yourself and the stressful environment.

Suggested answer: B. A short pause can support recovery; the appropriate length depends on circumstances and needs. When exhaustion persists, a pause does not replace adjusting rest or seeking support.

Chapter 22

Analysing the Formula of the Establishments of Mindfulness

The Pāli formula in this sutta contains foundational terms for insight meditation (vipassanā) in the Theravāda tradition.

Opening and number

Pāli	Analysis	Meaning
Sāvattthinidānaṃ	Sāvattthī (the city) + nidāna (source, origin)	“Set at Sāvattthī”
Cattārome	cattāro (four) + ime (these)	“These four” (four categories)
Bhikkhave	Vocative plural of bhikkhu	“Bhikkhus”
Satipaṭṭhānā	A term related to sati and the establishing of mindfulness; its word analysis is debated in scholarship	“Foundations of mindfulness” or “establishments of mindfulness”
Katame	Interrogative pronoun	“Which?” or “What are...?”
Idha	Adverb	“Here” or “in this teaching”

Core formula (taking the body as the example)

Pāli	Analysis	Meaning
Bhikkhu	Singular noun for one bhikkhu	A bhikkhu
Kāye	Locative of kāya (body)	“in the body”, the object of observation
Kāyānupassī	kāya + anupassī; anu (along, repeatedly) + passati (sees)	“one who contemplates, follows or observes closely”
Kāye kāyānupassī		Contemplating the body as body; avoiding identification of the body with a self. Not limited to interoceptive sensing.
Viharati		Dwells or lives in a way of practice

Three qualities of mind

Pāli	Meaning
Ātāpī	Ardent: sincere, persistent effort within one's capacity. The word is related to ātāpa (heat); in practical instruction, the focus is on the right amount of effort.
Sampajāno	Clearly comprehending: knowing clearly what one is doing. The traditional explanation further discusses purpose, suitability, range of practice and non-delusion.
Satimā	Mindful: maintaining active remembrance of the present task, not drifting into daydreams or forgetfulness.

Psychological goal

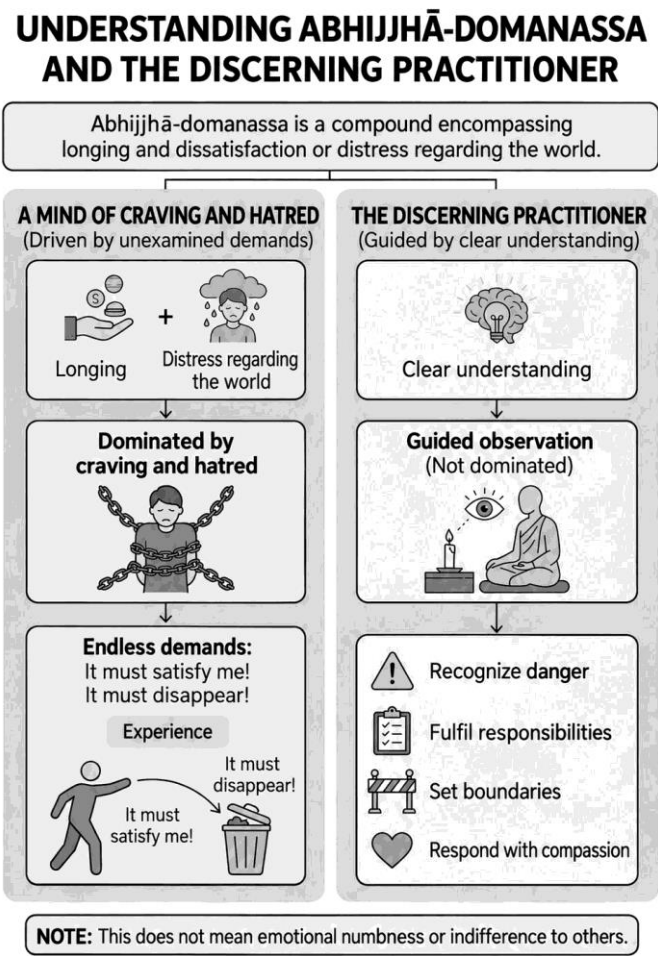
Pāli	Analysis	Meaning
Vineyya	Indeclinable gerund of vineti	having removed, dispelled or subdued
Loke	Locative of loka	In regard to the world; the meaning should be read in context
Abhijjhā-domanassaṃ	abhijjhā: longing; domanassa: distress or mental pain, not a synonym for every form of aversion	“Having dispelled both longing and discontent in regard to the world”

The remaining domains

Pāli	Meaning
Vedanāsu	In feelings: pleasant, unpleasant or neutral feeling
Citte	In the mind and mental states: contracted, distracted, angry, lustful or purified
Dhammesu dhammānupassī	dhammesu (in principles, phenomena, mental objects) + dhammānupassī (contemplating dhammas)

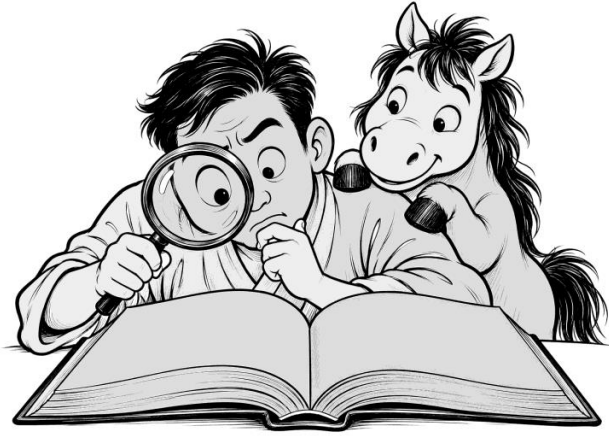
One further point about satimā needs explanation here. Sati carries the sense of remembering, keeping in mind or recollection. The Digital Pāli Dictionary (DPD, entry sati) gives the meanings: memory, remembering, recollection, mindfulness, presence and awareness. So satimā does not merely mean “living in the present”. In meditation it implies not forgetting what one is doing: remembering to know the breath, the body, feelings, states of mind or dhammas just as they are unfolding.

Reference figure and how to read it



Reference figure 10. Longing and discontent in experience. Domanassa is not a synonym for every form of aversion; keep the distinction between feeling and state of mind.

Chapter 22 Review



Review figure 22. When you meet an unfamiliar word, open the explanation and read the whole sentence before drawing conclusions.

Key points

- Terms help us read the sutta correctly, but the whole sentence must be understood.
- Mindfulness includes remembering what is being practised, not just fleeting attention.
- Beginners can learn the English meanings first, then look up the Pāli when needed.

Memory verse

*Meet a strange word, don't rush past,
Read the sentence first, then understand.
Learn it clearly, practise truly,
Don't use words to win or lose.*

Ten golden questions and answers

1. Why does the book keep Pāli words?

Answer: So that readers can compare terms with the sutta text and the translations.

2. Must I know all the Pāli before I can practise?

Answer: No. Understand the English instructions and practise one clear thing; Pāli serves deeper study.

3. What is the main meaning of bhikkhu?

Answer: A monk. When explaining applications for lay people, the book adds the word practitioner, without changing the word's main meaning.

4. What does kāye relate to?

Answer: To the body, in the phrase contemplating the body in the body. It is a point in the sentence that must be read together with the other words.

5. How is viharati rendered in the chapter?

Answer: As dwelling or living in that way of practice; not a brief, passing movement.

6. What kind of person does satimā describe?

Answer: One who is mindful, remembering the task and the instructions being practised.

7. Does sati only mean remembering the past?

Answer: No. The word means remembering; in meditation, that element helps us not forget what needs to be known and how to practise.

8. What does vineyya mean here?

Answer: Having removed or subdued longing and discontent in regard to the world, according to the sentence under discussion.

9. Can I pick one dictionary meaning and apply it everywhere?

Answer: That is unwise. The meaning must fit the sentence, the context and the usage in the sutta.

10. What should I do when two translations differ?

Answer: Read the whole passage, note the translator's name and notes, and write down what is unclear to ask about, rather than hastily concluding which version is wrong.

Five mindful questions for better daily life

1. How have you misunderstood a word in a teaching or in a family conversation?
2. When you hear a difficult term, do you usually ask again or pretend to understand? What makes you choose that?
3. What example would you use to explain mindfulness to someone unfamiliar with Buddhism?
4. How might a phrase you often use, such as "letting go", be misunderstood by people close to you?
5. How could you change your reading habits to know clearly what is sutta text and what is explanation?

Chapter 23

Clear Comprehension in the Commentarial Tradition

The commentarial framework and the sutta text

Chapter 3 used four aspects of clear comprehension: purpose, suitability, range and non-delusion. This is an explanatory framework from the commentarial tradition, not a four-item list stated verbatim in SN 47.24. In study, distinguish the source of the framework from the modern examples used to explain it.

Understanding intention before acting

You know you are writing an email but may not yet know that you want the recipient to feel ashamed. The question of purpose helps reveal this. The question of suitability reminds us to consider timing, recipient, circumstances and consequences. A good intention does not guarantee a suitable way of acting.

Range of attention according to the task

When driving, keep attention on the road and other road users. When listening to a loved one, attend to their words and your intention in replying. Do not apply the narrowed attention of sitting practice to every activity. The appropriate range is also linked to the responsibilities of the action.

Non-delusion is not a slogan

Saying “it’s just sound” does not erase the content of a threat. Saying “there is no self” does not erase the person who needs help. One can distinguish sound, feeling and state of mind while still recognising the situation correctly. Using the term non-self does not in itself prove insight into non-self.

Reading and checking

Use the table as four questions after a specific event, not as an analysis of every movement. If you want to attribute a sentence to the commentaries, you need the name of the text and a reference location. Until then, keep its status as a “traditional interpretive framework” and avoid putting it in quotation marks as if it were sutta text.

The four aspects with full examples

The place of the fourfold analysis

The four aspects below (purpose, suitability, range and non-delusion) are a traditional explanatory framework of the commentarial system. They are not recited in SN 47.24 or in the root text of MN 10. The canon provides the practical content: the formula ātāpī sampajāno satimā; the applications of clear comprehension in MN 10 (walking, looking ahead, eating, bending and stretching, speaking and keeping silent); and images such as the quail and the hawk (SN 47.6). The commentaries, especially the *Papañcasūdanī* (commentary on MN 10) and the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* (commentary on DN 22), systematise

these contents into four aspects; specific page references should be given according to the edition used. The framework can be treated as a useful map while regularly checking it against the sutta text.

Purpose. Pāli: Sāttthaka-sampajañña. Key question: “Is this action meaningful for the path of practice? Is it worth doing?” Practical example: late at night you reach for your phone to scroll. The honest answer to “What is the purpose?” is “to avoid boredom”. You put the phone down and go to sleep.

Suitability. Pāli: Sappāya-sampajañña. Key question: “Is this suitable now, for this person, place, body and mind?” Practical example: you want to tell a colleague that her work is careless. The purpose is good, but you are still angry and she is in front of the whole team. You wait until the next day and speak to her privately. Compare MN 58 on timely speech.

Range. Pāli: Gocara-sampajañña. Key question: “Is the mind staying within the appropriate range?” Practical example: while washing dishes, your mind goes back to yesterday’s argument. You notice “I have wandered away from what I am doing” and return to the warm water and the plate. See SN 47.6 and Dhṛp 33–34.

Non-delusion. Pāli: Asammoha-sampajañña. Key question: “What is actually happening? Is this seen as impermanent, conditioned and non-self?” Practical example: know the movement of the steps; recognise that thoughts and feelings are present. When harsh words are spoken, distinguish the

sound, the unpleasantness and the aversion; this distinction does not deny the speaker’s responsibility.

Table: Four aspects of clear comprehension

Aspect	Pāli	Key question	Practical example
Purpose	Sātthaka-sampajañña	“Is this action meaningful for the path of practice? Is it worth doing?”	Late at night you reach for your phone to scroll. The honest answer to “What is the purpose?” is “to avoid boredom”. You put the phone down and go to sleep.
Suitability	Sappāya-sampajañña	“Is this suitable now, for this person, place, body and mind?”	You want to tell a colleague that her work is careless. The purpose is good, but you are still angry and she is in front of the whole team. You wait until the next day and speak to her privately. Compare MN 58 on timely speech.

Aspect	Pāli	Key question	Practical example
Range	Gocara-sampajañña	“Is the mind staying within the appropriate range?”	While washing dishes, your mind goes back to yesterday’s argument. You notice “I have wandered away from what I am doing” and return to the warm water and the plate. See SN 47.6 and Dhp 33–34.
Non-delusion	Asammoha-sampajañña	“What is actually happening? Is this seen as impermanent, conditioned and non-self?”	When hearing harsh words, distinguish hearing, unpleasant feeling and the angry mind; still understand the content and set boundaries when needed. Do not use the distinction to deny the person who is suffering.

Table: Difficulties in practising clear comprehension

Difficulty	Sign	Adjustment
Overthinking	Turning every movement into a complex analysis	Use a short, direct note: “walking”, “reaching”, “speaking”, “wanting”
Moral rigidity	Believing every pleasant activity is wrong	Ask whether the activity is beneficial, timely, harmless and free of clinging, not merely whether it is pleasant
Rationalisation	Using the intellect to justify craving or aversion	Notice bodily tension, urgency, concealment and the wish to justify oneself
Losing the main object	Being swept up in external tasks	Re-establish awareness of the body, the feeling tone and the actual state of mind
Insight without direct seeing	Saying “impermanent” while reacting as though experience were permanent and personal	Observe arising, changing, fading and ceasing in present experience

Chapter 23 Review



Review figure 23. Remembering the practice, understanding how to do it and making balanced effort support one another.

Key points

- The four aspects are a commentarial framework, not a list given verbatim in SN 47.24.
- A good intention still needs a suitable way of acting and the right timing.
- Distinguishing experience does not erase facts and responsibility.

Memory verse

*Before speaking, ask what you intend,
Right person, right time, then the right road.
Hearing pain, still know the one who cares,
The sutta's words remind us to help those around.*

Ten golden questions and answers

1. What are the four aspects?

Answer: Purpose, suitability, range and non-delusion.

2. Does SN 47.24 list these four items?

Answer: No. The book presents them as a commentarial interpretive framework.

3. Is the phone example in the sutta?

Answer: No. It is a modern example used to explain the framework.

4. Is knowing that I am writing enough for clear comprehension?

Answer: One also needs to consider the intention, circumstances and consequences of the writing.

5. Does good intention always make speech appropriate?

Answer: No. Timing and manner may need to change.

6. What is the range when driving?

Answer: The road, vehicles, other people and controlling the vehicle safely.

7. Is saying “it’s just sound” enough?

Answer: No. One needs to understand the content and act appropriately for the situation.

8. Does saying “non-self” prove insight into non-self?

Answer: No. Terminology and direct understanding need to be distinguished.

9. Must every movement be analysed?

Answer: No. Use the framework just enough, and avoid turning everyday activities into a strain.

10. What is needed to cite the commentaries?

Answer: The name of the text, a reference location and enough of the cited passage to check it.

Five mindful questions for better daily life

1. In a recent email, what was your real intention?
2. Could you choose a different time to give a piece of feedback?
3. Which activity needs you to widen your attention?
4. How have you used Buddhist language in a way that left the listener feeling misunderstood?
5. Which specific matter could these four questions help you put right?

Chapter 24

MN 118 and the Discourses on Mindfulness

What each sutta contributes

SN 47.24 sets out the formula of the four establishments of mindfulness. MN 118 develops mindfulness of breathing and shows its relation to the establishments of mindfulness, the factors of awakening, true knowledge and liberation. SN 46.53 discusses balancing the factors of awakening according to whether the mind is sluggish or agitated. Comparative reading deepens understanding; do not attribute the whole content of the long sutta to the short one.

Sixteen steps are not a sixteen-day schedule

The four tetrads are the teaching structure of MN 118. The seven-day programme in Chapter 9 is this book's introductory proposal. The two structures serve different purposes. Beginners are not required to have rapture, happiness or a level of liberation on an appointed day.

The factors of awakening do not divide people into two types

SN 46.53 advises developing qualities suited to the state of mind. Investigation, energy and rapture help lift a sluggish mind; tranquillity, concentration and equanimity help calm an agitated mind. Mindfulness is useful in both cases. These groups do not mean that one half is “active” and the other always “passive”, or that each group is only for one type of person.

Keeping terms in context

Understandings of “the whole body” in MN 118 differ among translation and teaching traditions. MN 44 defines the mental formation as perception and feeling. One should not quietly replace the mental formation with all thoughts, or use a physiological description to settle every semantic issue. Chapter 12 keeps the map and the limits of interpretation.

A comparative reading

Choose an instruction you are following. Note the sutta with relevant wording, the explanation by your teacher or an author, and how you apply it. If no verbatim instruction can be found, that does not mean the method is useless; recognise it as a later development and assess it by its purpose, conditions and consequences.

Chapter 24 Review



Review figure 24. The sixteen steps are a map for learning, not a race.

Key points

- Comparison needs to respect the distinct role of each sutta.
- The introductory programme is not a deadline for completing MN 118.
- Balancing the factors of awakening depends on states of mind; it does not divide people into two types.

Memory verse

*Let each sutta say what it says,
Don't pile other meanings into one text.
When the mind is dull, brighten it,
When tense, soothe it, keep it kind.*

Ten golden questions and answers

1. What does SN 47.24 focus on?

Answer: The formula of the four establishments of mindfulness.

2. To which sutta do the sixteen steps belong?

Answer: MN 118, the Discourse on Mindfulness of Breathing.

3. Where is balancing the factors by state of mind found?

Answer: SN 46.53, the sutta on the fire.

4. Must the sixteen steps be completed in seven days?

Answer: No. The seven days are an introductory programme proposed by this book.

5. What should a sluggish mind emphasise?

Answer: According to SN 46.53, investigation, energy and rapture are suitable for lifting the mind.

6. What should an agitated mind emphasise?

Answer: Tranquillity, concentration and equanimity are suitable for calming the mind.

7. When is mindfulness used?

Answer: In both cases; not only when the mind is already balanced.

8. Is the mental formation every thought?

Answer: MN 44 defines the mental formation as perception and feeling; it must be read in context.

9. Are the interpretations of “the whole body” all the same?

Answer: No. There are differences that should be recognised in deeper study.

10. Is a method without verbatim support certainly useless?

Answer: No. Distinguish its origin from its practical value and the limits of its application.

Five mindful questions for better daily life

1. What is the source of the instruction you are following?
2. How have you pushed yourself to progress on a schedule that was too fast?
3. When the mind is dull, what adjustment helps it brighten?
4. When the mind is tense, what adjustment usually helps?
5. What difference in translation would you like to ask your teacher about?

Chapter 25

The Saddha Sutta: Text and Variant Readings

AN 11.9 on SuttaCentral, usually called the Saddha or Sandha Sutta, is numbered AN 11.10 in Thanissaro Bhikkhu’s translation. This chapter presents the Pāli and the book’s revised translation made directly from the Pāli, and refers readers to Thanissaro’s English translation. Source labels clearly distinguish the translations; Chapter 27 discusses points that have no single agreed interpretation.

Pāli text

The Pāli text is copied from the Mahāsaṅgīti edition on SuttaCentral.

Ekam samayam bhagavā nātike viharati giṇṇakāvasathe.

*Atha kho āyasmā saddho yena bhagavā tenupasaṅkami;
upasaṅkamitvā bhagavantam abhivādetvā ekamantaṃ
nisīdi. Ekamantaṃ nisinnaṃ kho āyasmantaṃ saddham
bhagavā etadavoca:*

*“Ājānīyajhāyitaṃ kho, saddha, jhāya; mā
khaḷuṅkajhāyitaṃ.*

*Kathaṇca, khaḷuṅkajhāyitaṃ hoti? Assakhaḷuṅko hi,
saddha, doṇiyā baddho ‘yavasam yavasan’ ti jhāyati. Tam
kissa hetu? Na hi, saddha, assakhaḷuṅkassa doṇiyā
baddhassa evaṃ hoti: ‘kiṃ nu kho maṃ ajja
assadhammasārathi kāraṇaṃ kāressati, kimassāhaṃ*

*paṭikaromī'ti. So doṇiyā baddho 'yavasam yavasan'ti
jhāyati.*

*Evamevaṃ kho, saddha, idhekacco purisakhaḷuṅko
araññagatopi rukkhamūlagatopi suññāgāragatopi
kāmarāgapariyuṭṭhitena cetasā viharati kāmarāgaparetena
uppannassa ca kāmarāgassa nissaraṇaṃ yathābhūtaṃ
nappajānāti. So kāmarāgaṃyeva antaraṃ katvā jhāyati
pajjhāyati nijjhāyati avajjhāyati, byāpādapariyuṭṭhitena
cetasā viharati ... thinamiddhapariyuṭṭhitena cetasā
viharati ... uddhaccakukkucapariyuṭṭhitena cetasā viharati
... vicikicchāpariyuṭṭhitena cetasā viharati
vicikicchāparetena, uppannāya ca vicikicchāya nissaraṇaṃ
yathābhūtaṃ nappajānāti. So vicikicchaṃyeva antaraṃ
katvā jhāyati pajjhāyati nijjhāyati avajjhāyati. So
pathavimpi nissāya jhāyati, āpampi nissāya jhāyati, tejampi
nissāya jhāyati, vāyampi nissāya jhāyati,
ākāsānañcāyatanampi nissāya jhāyati,
viññāṇañcāyatanampi nissāya jhāyati, ākiñcaññāyatanampi
nissāya jhāyati, nevasaññānāsaññāyatanampi nissāya
jhāyati, idhalokampi nissāya jhāyati, paralokampi nissāya
jhāyati, yampidaṃ dīṭṭhaṃ suttaṃ mutaṃ viññātaṃ pattaṃ
pariyesitaṃ anuvicaritaṃ manasā, tampi nissāya jhāyati.
Evaṃ kho, saddha, purisakhaḷuṅkajhāyitaṃ hoti.*

*Kathaṇca, saddha, ājānīyajhāyitaṃ hoti? Bhadro hi,
saddha, assājānīyo doṇiyā baddho na 'yavasam yavasan'ti
jhāyati. Taṃ kissa hetu? Bhadrassa hi, saddha,
assājānīyassa doṇiyā baddhassa evaṃ hoti: 'kiṃ nu kho
maṃ ajja assadammasārathi kāraṇaṃ kāressati,*

kimassāhaṃ paṭikaromī'ti. So doṇiyā baddho na 'yavasam yavasan'ti jhāyati. Bhadro hi, saddha, assājānīyo yathā iṇaṃ yathā bandhaṃ yathā jāniṃ yathā kaliṃ evaṃ patodassa ajjhoharaṇaṃ samanupassati.

Evamevaṃ kho, saddha, bhadro purisājānīyo araṇṇagatopi rukkhamūlagatopi suñṇāgāragatopi na kāmarāgapariyuṭṭhitena cetasā viharati na kāmarāgaparetena, uppannassa ca kāmarāgassa nissaraṇaṃ yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti, na byāpādapariyuṭṭhitena cetasā viharati ... na thinamiddhapariyuṭṭhitena cetasā viharati ... na uddhaccakukkucapariyuṭṭhitena cetasā viharati ... na vicikicchāpariyuṭṭhitena cetasā viharati na vicikicchāparetena, uppannāya ca vicikicchāya nissaraṇaṃ yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti. So neva pathaviṃ nissāya jhāyati, na āpaṃ nissāya jhāyati, na tejaṃ nissāya jhāyati, na vāyaṃ nissāya jhāyati, na ākāsaṇāṇcāyatanaṃ nissāya jhāyati, na viñṇāṇaṇcāyatanaṃ nissāya jhāyati, na ākiṇcaṇṇāyatanaṃ nissāya jhāyati, na nevasaṇṇānāsaṇṇāyatanaṃ nissāya jhāyati, na idhalokaṃ nissāya jhāyati, na paralokaṃ nissāya jhāyati, yampidaṃ diṭṭhaṃ suttaṃ mutaṃ viñṇātaṃ pattaṃ pariyesitaṃ anuvicaritaṃ manasā, tampi nissāya na jhāyati; jhāyati ca pana.

Evaṃ jhāyiṇca pana, saddha, bhadrā purisājānīyaṃ saindā devā sabrahmakā sapajāpatikā ārakāva namassanti:

'Namo te purisājaṇṇa,

namo te purisuttama;

Yassa te nābhijānāma,

yampi nissāya jhāyasī’”ti.

Evam vutte, āyasmā saddho bhagavantam etadavoca:

“katham jhāyī pana, bhante, bhadro purisājānīyo neva pathaviṃ nissāya jhāyati, na āpaṃ nissāya jhāyati, na tejaṃ nissāya jhāyati, na vāyaṃ nissāya jhāyati, na ākāśānañcāyatanaṃ nissāya jhāyati, na viññāṇaṃcāyatanaṃ nissāya jhāyati, na ākiñcaṇṇāyatanaṃ nissāya jhāyati, na nevasaññānāsaññāyatanaṃ nissāya jhāyati, na idhalokaṃ nissāya jhāyati, na paralokaṃ nissāya jhāyati, yampidaṃ diṭṭhaṃ sutam mutaṃ viññātam pattam pariyesitam anuvicaritam manasā, tampi nissāya na jhāyati; jhāyati ca pana? Katham jhāyīṇa pana, bhante, bhadraṃ purisājānīyaṃ saindā devā sabrahmakā sapajāpatikā ārakāva namassanti:

‘Namo te purisājañña,

namo te purisuttama;

Yassa te nābhijānāma,

yampi nissāya jhāyasī’”ti.

“Idha, saddha, bhadraṃ purisājānīyassa pathaviyaṃ pathavisañña vibhūtā hoti, āpasmiṃ āposañña vibhūtā hoti, tejasmiṃ tejosañña vibhūtā hoti, vāyasmim vāyosañña vibhūtā hoti, ākāśānañcāyatane ākāśānañcāyatanañña vibhūtā hoti, viññāṇaṃcāyatane viññāṇaṃcāyatanañña vibhūtā hoti, ākiñcaṇṇāyatane ākiñcaṇṇāyatanañña vibhūtā hoti, nevasaññānāsaññāyatane

*nevasaññānāsaññāyatanasaññā vibhūtā hoti, idhaloke
idhalokasaññā vibhūtā hoti, paraloke paralokasaññā
vibhūtā hoti, yampidaṃ diṭṭhaṃ sutāṃ mutāṃ viññātāṃ
pattāṃ pariyesitaṃ anuvicaritaṃ manasā, tatrāpi saññā
vibhūtā hoti. Evaṃ jhāyī kho, saddha, bhadro purisājānīyo
neva pathaviṃ nissāya jhāyati ...pe... yampidaṃ diṭṭhaṃ
sutāṃ mutāṃ viññātāṃ pattāṃ pariyesitaṃ anuvicaritaṃ
manasā, tampi nissāya na jhāyati; jhāyati ca pana.*

*Evaṃ jhāyīṃca pana, saddha, bhadraṃ purisājānīyaṃ
saindā devā sabrahmakā sapajāpatikā ārakāva namassanti:*

‘Namo te purisājañña,

namo te purisuttama;

Yassa te nābhijānāma,

yampi nissāya jhāyasī’”ti.

Variant readings noted

In the opening instruction, the phrase khaḷuṅkajhāyitaṃ is read as mā khaḷuṅkajhāyitaṃ in the Buddha Jayanti edition and the first PTS edition (bj, pts1ed); the monk’s name is given as sandha in all the Syāmaratṭha editions (sya-all). For baddho, the Syāmaratṭha and Mranma readings have bandho (sya-all, mr). One edition reads kammassāhaṃ instead of kimassāhaṃ (mr). In Sandha’s question, purisājānīyo is read thus in bj, sya-all, pts1ed and mr. The sigla are kept as published by SuttaCentral. These variants do not change the meaning of the passage.

Thanissaro Bhikkhu's English translation

Thanissaro Bhikkhu's English translation of this sutta, "To Sandha" (AN 11.10), is available at dhammatalks.org/suttas/AN/AN11_10.html and on Access to Insight. The passage given below is an English version of the Vietnamese rendering that was made from it for the Vietnamese edition of this book; that Vietnamese rendering was not composed by Thanissaro Bhikkhu, and this passage should not be quoted as his own wording. His English translation uses *absorbed* for *jhāyati* and *ceased to exist* for *vibhūtā*. The rendering of *vibhūtā* here follows that source and is not turned into the conclusion that all consciousness is annihilated. Read it alongside the Pāli above and the book's own translation below.

On one occasion the Blessed One was staying at Nāḍika, in the brick house. Then the Venerable Sandha approached the Blessed One, paid homage and sat down to one side. As he sat there, the Blessed One said: "Sandha, meditate like a thoroughbred horse, not like an untrained horse. How does an untrained horse meditate?

"An untrained horse tied beside a feeding trough thinks only: 'Barley! Barley!' Why is that? Because, when tied beside the trough, it does not think: 'What task will the trainer give me today? How should I respond?' Tied beside the feeding trough, it thinks only: 'Barley! Barley!'

"In the same way, some people resemble an untrained horse: they go into the forest, to the foot of a tree or to an empty

dwelling, yet their minds are overwhelmed and obsessed by sensual passion. Such a person does not recognise, as it actually is, the escape from sensual passion that has arisen. Taking sensual passion as the focus, that person becomes absorbed in it, thinks about it, reflects on it and keeps brooding over it.

“That person’s mind is overwhelmed by ill will... by dullness and drowsiness... by restlessness, remorse and anxiety... by doubt, and is obsessed by doubt. That person does not recognise, as it actually is, the escape from doubt that has arisen. Taking doubt as the focus, that person becomes absorbed in it, thinks about it, reflects on it and keeps brooding over it.

“That person meditates in dependence on earth... water... fire... wind... infinite space... infinite consciousness... the sphere of nothingness... the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception... this world... the next world... and whatever is seen, heard, sensed, cognised, attained, sought or examined by the intellect. This is how a person resembling an untrained horse meditates.

“How does a thoroughbred horse meditate? A thoroughbred horse tied beside a feeding trough does not think only: ‘Barley! Barley!’ Why? Because, when tied beside the trough, it thinks: ‘What task will the trainer give me today? How should I respond?’ It does not think only: ‘Barley! Barley!’ The thoroughbred regards the touch of the goad (the

English translation uses spur) as a debt, confinement, loss or misfortune.

“In the same way, a person resembling a thoroughbred, on going into the forest, to the foot of a tree or to an empty dwelling, has a mind that is neither overwhelmed nor obsessed by sensual passion. That person recognises, as it actually is, the escape from sensual passion that has arisen.

“That person’s mind is not overwhelmed by ill will... dullness and drowsiness... restlessness, remorse and anxiety... or doubt, nor is it obsessed by doubt. That person recognises, as it actually is, the escape from doubt that has arisen.

“That person meditates without depending on earth, water, fire, wind, infinite space, infinite consciousness, the sphere of nothingness, the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception, this world, the next world, or whatever is seen, heard, sensed, cognised, attained, sought or examined by the intellect — yet still meditates. The devas, together with Indra, the Brahmās and Pajāpati, pay homage from afar to a person resembling a thoroughbred who meditates in this way:

‘Homage to you, thoroughbred among human beings.

Homage to you, supreme among humanity —

we cannot know

what you depend upon

when you meditate.’

On hearing this, the Venerable Sandha said to the Blessed One: “Venerable sir, how does a person resembling a thoroughbred meditate without depending on earth, water, fire, wind, infinite space, infinite consciousness, the sphere of nothingness, the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception, this world, the next world, or whatever is seen, heard, sensed, cognised, attained, sought or examined by the intellect, yet still meditate? And why do the devas, together with Indra, the Brahmās and Pajāpati, pay homage from afar to that person as follows:

‘Homage to you, thoroughbred among human beings.

Homage to you, supreme among humanity —

we cannot know

what you depend upon

when you meditate.’

“Sandha, for a person resembling a thoroughbred, the perception of earth regarding earth has ceased to exist; the perception of water regarding water... the perception of fire regarding fire... the perception of wind regarding wind... the perception of infinite space regarding infinite space... the perception of infinite consciousness regarding infinite consciousness... the perception of the sphere of nothingness regarding the sphere of nothingness... the perception of the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception regarding that sphere... the perception of this world regarding this world... the perception of the next world regarding the next

world... and the perception regarding whatever is seen, heard, sensed, cognised, attained, sought or examined by the intellect has ceased to exist.

“Meditating in this way, Sandha, a person resembling a thoroughbred meditates without depending on earth, water, fire, wind, infinite space, infinite consciousness, the sphere of nothingness, the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception, this world, the next world, or whatever is seen, heard, sensed, cognised, attained, sought or examined by the intellect — and yet meditates. And to a person resembling a thoroughbred who meditates in this way, the devas, together with Indra, the Brahmās and Pajāpati, pay homage from afar:

‘Homage to you, thoroughbred among human beings.

Homage to you, supreme among humanity —

we cannot know

what you depend upon

when you meditate.’

That is what the Blessed One said.

The book’s revised translation from the Pāli

The translation made directly from the Pāli renders *jhāyati* as “meditates” and *khaḷuṅka* as “untrained horse”. *Vibhūtā* is rendered “no longer remains” in the passage, while the Pāli term is kept at its first occurrence so that readers can compare. This translation choice does not by itself settle the

exact status of the state described; see Chapter 27. The name Saddha is kept according to the Mahāsaṅgīti Pāli.

Prologue

On one occasion the Blessed One was staying at Nātika, in the brick hall. Then Venerable Saddha approached the Blessed One, paid homage to him and sat down to one side. When Venerable Saddha was seated, the Blessed One said:

“Saddha, meditate like a thoroughbred; do not meditate like an untrained, unschooled horse.

The meditation of the untrained horse (a hindered mind)

And how, Saddha, does an untrained horse meditate? When an untrained horse is tied at the feeding trough, it thinks only: ‘Fodder! Fodder!’ Why is that? When tied at the trough, it does not think: ‘What task will the horse trainer require of me today, and how shall I respond?’ Instead, tied at the trough, it just broods: ‘Fodder! Fodder!’

In the same way, Saddha, an untrained person goes to the forest, to the root of a tree or to an empty hut, and dwells with a mind obsessed and overcome by sensual desire (kāmarāga). He does not understand as it really is the escape from sensual desire that has arisen. Harbours sensual desire within, he broods, ponders, concentrates and obsessively ruminates.

He dwells with a mind obsessed and overcome by ill will (byāpāda)... sloth and torpor (thīna-middha)... restlessness and remorse (uddhacca-kukkucca)... doubt (vicikicchā). He does not understand as it really is the escape from doubt that

has arisen. Harbouring doubt within, he broods, ponders, concentrates and obsessively ruminates.

He meditates in dependence on the earth element; he meditates in dependence on the water element; he meditates in dependence on the fire element; he meditates in dependence on the air element. He meditates in dependence on the sphere of infinite space, the sphere of infinite consciousness, the sphere of nothingness and the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception. He meditates in dependence on this world, in dependence on the world beyond. He meditates in dependence on whatever is seen, heard, sensed, cognised, attained, sought and explored by the mind. That is how an untrained person meditates, Saddha.

The meditation of the thoroughbred (a liberated mind)

And how, Saddha, does an excellent thoroughbred meditate? When an excellent thoroughbred is tied at the feeding trough, it does not brood: ‘Fodder! Fodder!’ Why is that? When tied at the trough, it thinks: ‘What task will the horse trainer require of me today, and how shall I respond?’ It does not brood: ‘Fodder! Fodder!’ Indeed, Saddha, an excellent thoroughbred regards the touch of the goad (patoda) as a debt, a bond, a loss, a misfortune.

In the same way, Saddha, a person like an excellent thoroughbred, having gone to the forest, to the root of a tree or to an empty hut, does not dwell with a mind obsessed or overcome by sensual desire; he understands as it really is the escape from sensual desire that has arisen. He does not dwell

with a mind obsessed by ill will... sloth and torpor... restlessness and remorse... doubt; he understands as it really is the escape from doubt that has arisen.

Thus he does not meditate in dependence on earth, water, fire or air. He does not meditate in dependence on the sphere of infinite space, the sphere of infinite consciousness, the sphere of nothingness or the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception. He does not meditate in dependence on this world or the world beyond. Whatever is seen, heard, sensed, cognised, attained, sought and explored by the mind, he does not meditate in dependence on that either. And yet he meditates.

When a person like an excellent thoroughbred meditates in this way, the devas together with Indra, Brahmā and Pajāpati pay homage to him from afar, saying:

‘Homage to you, thoroughbred among men!

Homage to you, highest among humankind!

We do not understand

in dependence on what you meditate.’”

Saddha’s question

When this was said, Venerable Saddha asked the Blessed One: “Venerable sir, in what way does a person like an excellent thoroughbred meditate so that he does not depend on earth, water, fire, air, the formless spheres, this world, the world beyond or whatever is seen, heard, sensed, cognised, attained, sought or explored by the mind, and yet meditates?

Why do the devas together with Indra, Brahmā and Pajāpati pay homage to him from afar, saying:

‘Homage to you, thoroughbred among men!

Homage to you, highest among humankind!

We do not understand

in dependence on what you meditate.’”

The explanation of the listed perceptions

“Here, Saddha, for a person like an excellent thoroughbred, the perception of earth in regard to earth no longer remains (vibhūtā); the perception of water in regard to water no longer remains; the perception of fire in regard to fire no longer remains; the perception of air in regard to air no longer remains.

The perception of the sphere of infinite space in regard to the sphere of infinite space no longer remains; the perception of the sphere of infinite consciousness no longer remains; the perception of the sphere of nothingness no longer remains; the perception of the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception no longer remains.

The perception of this world in regard to this world no longer remains; the perception of the world beyond in regard to the world beyond no longer remains. And whatever is seen, heard, sensed, cognised, attained, sought or explored by the mind—the perception of that too no longer remains.

That is how, Saddha, a person like an excellent thoroughbred meditates without depending on earth, water, fire, air, the formless spheres, this world or the next, and yet meditates.

When he meditates in this way, Saddha, the devas together with Indra, Brahmā and Pajāpati pay homage to him from afar, saying:

‘Homage to you, thoroughbred among men!

Homage to you, highest among humankind!

We do not understand

in dependence on what you meditate.’”

That is what the Blessed One said.

Chapter 25 Review



Review figure 25. A horse thinking of the feeding trough prompts the question: what is carrying the mind away?

Key points

- AN 11.9 uses the images of the untrained horse and the thoroughbred to contrast ways of meditating.
- Distinguish the Pāli text, the translation and the explanation.
- The passage on meditating without support and yet meditating needs to be read carefully together with the description of perception.

Memory verse

*The horse looks at the trough, the person at the mind,
Know what carries you off, don't feed it in secret.
Read the sutta through to its full meaning,
Ask until it's clear, practise without error.*

Ten golden questions and answers

1. Why are there AN 11.9 and AN 11.10?

Answer: Editions number the suttas differently; SuttaCentral uses AN 11.9, while Thanissaro's translation uses AN 11.10 for this sutta.

2. Are Saddha and Sandha certainly two different suttas?

Answer: No. These are spellings of the name in different readings; compare the title and content.

3. Is Nātika the name of the brick hall?

Answer: No. Nātika is a place name; giñjakāvasatha is rendered as “brick hall” in the opening.

4. What does the untrained horse brood on?

Answer: It broods on fodder rather than the task the trainer will give; this is a comparative image in the sutta.

5. What dominates the person corresponding to that horse?

Answer: A mind overwhelmed by sensual desire and the other listed hindrances, not knowing the escape as it really is.

6. How does the thoroughbred differ in practice?

Answer: The person like a thoroughbred knows the escape from states that have arisen and is not overwhelmed by the hindrances.

7. Does the sutta say that abandoning all objects is an exercise for beginners?

Answer: No. Do not turn a difficult description in the sutta into an instruction to erase awareness or abandon every anchor.

8. How is vibhūtā rendered in the book’s translation?

Answer: As “no longer remains” in this passage; read the notes and the limits of interpretation in Chapter 27.

9. Did Thanissaro write a Vietnamese version?

Answer: No. The Vietnamese edition of this book contains a Vietnamese rendering of his English translation; in this English edition readers are referred to his original.

10. In what order should beginners read the chapter?

Answer: Read the introduction and the English translation first; the Pāli and variant readings can be consulted later for deeper study.

Five mindful questions for better daily life

1. When reading a difficult sentence, do you usually look for context or choose the interpretation you prefer? Give an example.
2. What might the feeding trough be in your daily life, something the mind keeps returning to?
3. How do you distinguish knowing a desire from continuing to think about how to satisfy it?
4. What question about the translation would you like to note down before drawing a conclusion?
5. How could you use the image of the thoroughbred to encourage yourself without forcing yourself or looking down on others?

Chapter 26

A Close Reading of the Horse and Trainer Simile

Reading a metaphor within its limits

AN 11.9 contrasts an untrained horse that thinks only of fodder with a thoroughbred that attends to what the trainer needs. In the application, the focus is on a mind dominated by the hindrances and on not knowing or knowing the escape. Not every feature of the horse has a psychological meaning confirmed by the sutta.

A name does not determine a person's nature

Khaḷuṅka is rendered in ways that emphasise an inferior or untrained horse. The word does not necessarily indicate age. Ājānīya suggests a thoroughbred. In practice, use the contrast to recognise tendencies of the mind, not to label yourself or others as permanently lower or higher grades.

The goad and an ethical question

The image of the goad may lead present-day readers to question training through fear. That question deserves discussion. But the presence of a goad in a metaphor does not by itself show that the sutta requires teachers to beat, humiliate or coerce students. Nor should reverence for the suttas be used to exempt a harmful way of teaching from scrutiny.

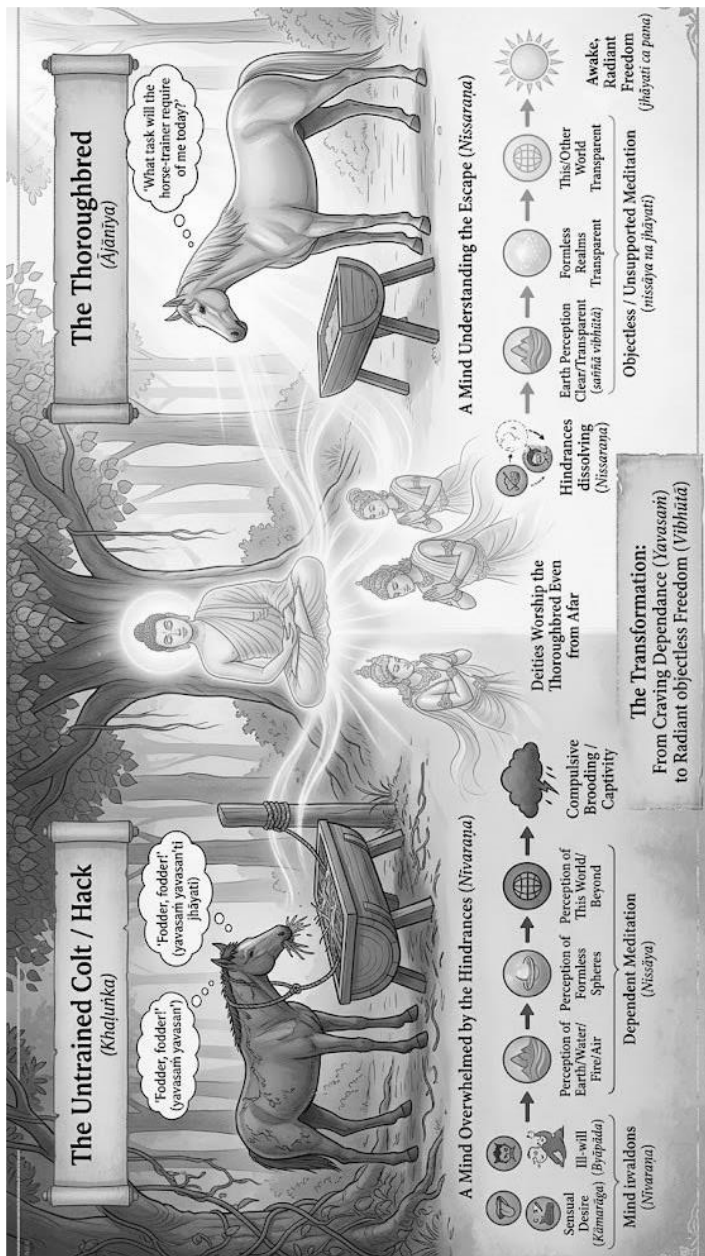
Urgency and pressure to achieve

Samvega is a Buddhist term that can be used when discussing urgency, but it does not occur in the AN 11.9 passage under comparison. When used as an explanation, its status should be stated correctly. In daily life, seriousness helps us correct our conduct; fear often makes us hide mistakes and chase titles. That is a practical connection, not a canonical measure.

Questioning a way of teaching

Are students allowed to ask questions? Can they adjust to their body and circumstances? Does the teacher take responsibility for the instructions? See whether the teaching clarifies understanding and conduct or merely increases submission. Critique needs to identify which words, which circumstances and which consequences, rather than rejecting or defending an entire tradition in a single sentence.

Reference figure and how to read it



Reference figure 11. The horse simile in AN 11.9. Not depending must not be equated with having no object; the image does not confirm attainment or permit the coercion of students.

Chapter 26 Review



Review figure 26. Train little by little and remember what needs doing, rather than just chasing what you want.

Key points

- A metaphor has a scope; it does not explain every association.
- The names of the horses are not labels for a student's nature.
- Urgency in practice needs to go together with the right to ask and the avoidance of harm.

Memory verse

*The horse reminds the mind to find its way home,
Don't turn the old goad into a trade of coercion.
Study seriously, still ask before and after,
Correct what harms, keep each other kind.*

Ten golden questions and answers

1. What is the focus of the horse simile?

Answer: Being dominated by the hindrances, and knowing or not knowing the escape.

2. Does khaḷuṅka always mean a young horse?

Answer: No. The translation should attend to quality or training, not assume age.

3. Should ājāṇīya be used as a self-awarded title?

Answer: It should not. The metaphor helps us review how the mind works.

4. Does every detail of the horse have a psychological meaning?

Answer: No. Distinguish what the sutta develops from additional associations.

5. Does saṁvega appear in this AN 11.9 passage?

Answer: No. When linking it, the book identifies it as an additional interpretive term.

6. Does the goad in the simile permit harming students?

Answer: A metaphor cannot be used to justify harming or humiliating anyone.

7. May I question my teacher?

Answer: Yes. Clear questions help in understanding instructions and the limits of their application.

8. Does seriousness mean no rest?

Answer: No. The amount of practice needs to suit body, mind and circumstances.

9. Can reverence for the suttas replace checking sources?

Answer: No. Checking is still needed when discussing meaning and sources.

10. What does good critique need?

Answer: A specific passage, an interpretation, reasons and evidence suited to the kind of claim.

Five mindful questions for better daily life

1. Are you using a practice label to belittle or exalt yourself?
2. What way of teaching makes you hesitant to ask?
3. In your experience, how do seriousness and fear of failure differ?
4. Can you formulate one clear question about the instructions you are following?
5. How would you like your teacher to respond to your mistakes?

Chapter 27

Meditating without Support

Framework of the teaching

Two states of mind

The sutta contrasts what two practitioners attend to, revealing a layer of Buddhist psychology deeper than ordinary distraction.

The five hindrances (nīvaraṇa). The untrained person is dominated by them. The sutta uses the strong phrase *kāmarāgapariyuṭṭhita* cetasā, describing a mind obsessed, rooted in or overwhelmed by sensual desire. The five hindrances are *kāmarāga* (sensual desire), *byāpāda* (ill will), *thīna-middha* (sloth and torpor), *uddhacca-kukkucca* (restlessness and remorse) and *vicikicchā* (doubt). Because such a person does not know the escape (*nissaraṇa*) from these states, he falls into repetitive, compulsive brooding.

Objects of dependence (*nissāya*). The untrained person meditates in dependence on:

- The four elements (*pathavī, āpa, teja, vāya*: earth, water, fire, air);
- The four formless spheres (*ākāsānañcāyatana* and those following: infinite space, infinite consciousness, nothingness, neither perception nor non-perception);
- This world and the next (*idhaloka, paraloka*);

- The entire range of experience: “whatever is seen, heard, sensed, cognised, attained, sought and explored by the mind” (*diṭṭhaṃ suttaṃ mutaṃ viññātaṃ pattaṃ pariyesitaṃ anuvicariṭaṃ manasā*).

Calm or a subtle attainment can become an object of clinging if it is appropriated as “me” or “mine”. However, this is no reason to call every meditation object a psychological crutch or to conclude that concentration with an object is wrong. Distinguishing a means of practice from grasping that means helps us read AN 11.9 together with MN 1 and SN 22.59 without denying the role of concentration.

The word *nissāya* can be rendered “depending on” or “based on”. The question in the sutta is what the absorbed practitioner relies on. The sutta does not offer a modern theory of attention or use contemporary psychological categories.

Understanding the escape

Nissaraṇa means escape, getting out or release. The practitioner like a thoroughbred recognises the escape from a hindrance as it actually is. This does not mean suppressing the hindrance or repeating a doctrinal formula to cover it up. We recognise that it is present, understand the conditions that sustain it and let the conditions leading to its abandoning develop. Other suttas give specific methods: MN 20 teaches how to deal with unwholesome thoughts, and SN 46.2 contrasts the hindrances with the factors of awakening.

The meaning of saññā vibhūtā

Sandha asks how the practitioner can meditate without depending on the listed bases and yet meditate. The Buddha answers by describing the related perceptions as vibhūtā. This is a philological and interpretive question; it cannot be settled merely by an everyday experience of reduced tension.

- Saññā is usually translated as perception, relating to the recognition of the marks of experience. Explanations such as recognising or naming are only introductory; perception should not be equated with all cognition or the whole process of reasoning.
- Vibhūtā is translated according to the context of the sentence. Thanissaro’s English translation has “ceased to exist”; Sujato’s rendering uses an expression meaning “has disappeared”. The book’s revised translation uses “no longer remains” and keeps the Pāli term where needed. Dictionary meanings such as “clear” or “manifest”, if examined, do not by themselves prove that the interpretation “transparent” is correct in this passage.

One practical connection is that perceptions are no longer grasped as “me”, “mine” or a lasting support. That connection should be marked as interpretation; it does not replace the translation “no longer remains”. Contemplation of impermanence and non-clinging in other suttas helps illuminate the direction of practice, but does not permit automatically identifying the state described in AN 11.9 with any experience of emptiness or Nibbāna a reader may report.

The limits of translation and interpretation

Jhāyati ca pana, “and yet he meditates”, must be read together with the description of the perceptions. The phrase does not prove that vibhūtā means only “clear”, nor does it permit the conclusion that all perception and all consciousness are destroyed. The meditative state described differs from brooding dominated by the hindrances; its exact status needs comparison of texts and interpretive traditions.

In this book, translation and commentary have separate tasks: the translation presents the choice “no longer remains”; the commentary states the limits of that choice and the application of non-clinging. The word “transparent” is not used as an established equivalent of the Pāli term. Beginners are not instructed to deliberately lose recognition or eliminate every object.

The limits of citing the commentary

This edition does not use an explanation lacking a verifiable passage and reference to claim that the Manorathapūraṇī explains the state above as taking Nibbāna as its object. Research readers can consult the commentary in a reliable edition; any conclusion about the commentarial passage needs the original text, a translation and the specific location. The practical part of this book rests on canonical instructions that can be checked, not on this unverified attribution.

A practical model answer

The model answer below illustrates how to answer a question about *jhāyati ca pana* by distinguishing textual data, interpretive hypotheses and practical application.

The data to keep

AN 11.9 says that the practitioner does not depend on the listed bases and yet meditates. The following passage describes the related perceptions as *vibhūtā*. From these two data one cannot infer that the mind has no object at all, nor invoke an unverified commentarial explanation to decide the exact object. A scholarly answer must preserve this difficulty and compare the readings (Chapter 27).

An application that can be drawn

- In early practice, one can distinguish using the breath to steady the mind from grasping calm as a possession or achievement. When the wish to possess is noticed, the practitioner knows it and learns not to keep feeding it. This is a practical connection concerning non-clinging; it is not a description of the whole state in AN 11.9.
- For example, a meditator finds the mind calmer today and then thinks he is better than others. The breath is still a useful object, but the self-importance is something to recognise and stop feeding. Continuing to know the breath does not in itself create clinging; the issue lies in how the mind treats experience.

Inferences to avoid

Do not turn the sutta into a mandatory scheme: an object, then losing the object, then liberation. Drowsiness or lack of awareness is not an intermediate stage to be reached. Do not try to create a blank to prove that you have gone beyond concepts.

A more suitable approach is to maintain clear awareness, examine the conditions feeding the hindrances and choose the necessary adjustments. When the mind is dull, you can change posture or do walking meditation; when overstrained, you can reduce intensity. These adjustments are not enough to confirm a liberated state for oneself.

A good answer cites the relevant sutta passage, states clearly the translation and the status of each inference, and gives an example within scope. There is no need to assume a cortical mechanism or invoke an unclarified objectless experience. Unresolved questions can be kept as research problems.

Chapter 27 Review



Review figure 27. Read a word within the whole sentence and context; don't let a magnifying glass make you forget the whole picture.

Key points

- Close reading needs to distinguish sutta text, translation and interpretation.
- Not depending does not automatically mean having no object at all.
- Keep what is unclear as a research question; do not turn a dictionary meaning into a firm conclusion.

Memory verse

*Read one word, remember the sentence,
Read that sentence, weigh before and after.
What is unclear, ask again,
Don't guess and call it deep.*

Ten golden questions and answers

1. Why read the whole passage rather than a single word?

Answer: Context helps determine usage and the limits of meaning; a single word can lead to excessive conclusions.

2. How is saññā rendered as a term?

Answer: Perception, relating to recognising the marks of experience; not equated with all thinking.

3. Can vibhūtā be settled by a dictionary alone?

Answer: No. The dictionary meaning is a reference point; the specific sentence and context must be considered.

4. Which rendering does the book use for this passage?

Answer: “No longer remains”, while keeping the Pāli term for reference and stating the limits of interpretation.

5. How is jhāyati ca pana rendered?

Answer: “And yet he meditates”; it must be read together with the list of bases and the description of the perceptions.

6. Can one infer from this passage that all consciousness is destroyed?

Answer: No. That conclusion goes beyond what the translation and commentary in this book establish.

7. Is non-clinging a direct translation of vibhūtā?

Answer: In this book it is a limited practical connection, not a replacement for the translation “no longer remains”.

8. Can an attribution to the commentary without a reference be used?

Answer: Not to settle a difficult question. The original text, a translation and the specific location of the commentarial passage are needed.

9. Should beginners try to lose recognition?

Answer: No. Keep clear awareness and a suitable exercise; do not imitate a state by dulling the mind.

10. How should an answer be written when disagreement remains?

Answer: State what the sutta says, what the translation chose and what remains undetermined; that is more honest than overclaiming.

Five mindful questions for better daily life

1. How have you misunderstood something a loved one said because it was taken out of context?
2. When others offer an interpretation different from yours, how can you check it together without turning it into a contest?
3. Are you holding on to a meditation experience as proof that you fully understand the sutta?
4. Which statement you have long believed needs its source and context checked?
5. How might accepting “I don’t yet understand clearly” change the way you study and speak?

Chapter 27 Further Review



Further review figure 27. An anchor is a means of learning; do not turn calm into a medal for yourself.

Key points

- A good answer distinguishes what the sutta says from hypotheses and applications.
- The breath can be used for learning without grasping calm as an achievement.
- Do not turn the passage on not depending into a schedule of losing the object and then attaining realisation.

Memory verse

*The breath helps, just use it,
Calm arrives, don't boast of "me".
Learn it clearly, drop complacency,
Keep a kind heart with everyone.*

Ten more golden questions and answers

1. What question does jhāyati ca pana raise?

Answer: How the practitioner can meditate without depending on the listed bases and yet meditate; it must be read together with the description of the perceptions.

2. What are the two textual data the chapter keeps?

Answer: The statement about not depending and yet meditating, and the description of the related perceptions as vibhūtā.

3. Can I add my own conclusion of a completely objectless state?

Answer: Those two data alone do not provide enough grounds. Note what remains hypothesis and compare the context.

4. How does using the breath differ from clinging to achievement?

Answer: The breath is a means of learning; clinging to achievement grasps calm or the ability to practise as proof that “I am better than others”.

5. When the mind is calm and I then think I am good, does that need to be noticed?

Answer: Yes. Self-importance is something to know and stop feeding, even when the session is calm.

6. Should I try to create a blank in the mind?

Answer: Not in order to imitate a description of attainment. Maintain awareness and suitable instructions.

7. According to the chapter's suggestions, what should I do when the mind is dull?

Answer: You can change posture or do walking meditation, look at the actual conditions and ask for guidance if needed.

8. When overstrained, should I practise harder?

Answer: Not by default. You can reduce intensity, grip less and return to a clear, manageable exercise.

9. What parts should a model answer contain?

Answer: The relevant sutta passage, the translation, what is inferred, the limits and an application example within scope.

10. Is an answer useless if it cannot resolve everything?

Answer: No. Stating clearly what remains undetermined supports honest study and opens research questions.

Five more mindful questions for better daily life

1. Have you ever felt superior because you could sit longer or more calmly? How did that thought affect your behaviour?
2. Which useful skill are you turning into an achievement to protect your self-image?
3. How would you describe a meditation experience so as to distinguish what you felt from what you inferred?
4. When you do not get the result you hoped for, what specific learning can you return to?
5. How could you bring the calm of a session into a difficult conversation without using it to judge others?

Chapter 28

Reading the Phrase *saññā vibhūtā*

Why a phrase needs to be read slowly

Saññā is usually translated as perception: the capacity to recognise and identify experience. The phrase *saññā vibhūtā* in AN 11.9 has been translated in different ways. Chapter 27 keeps the choice made in the book's translation and its interpretive limits. This chapter shows how to read the differences; it does not claim that one translation resolves every issue.

Do not replace a difficult word with the experience you want

If we like the idea of “transparency”, we may read every sentence that way. If we like a blank, we may read the passage as an instruction to lose recognition. Both moves need to be justified by context and sources; a familiar feeling cannot decide the meaning of a word.

Three layers of argument

The first layer is the text: which words the sentence uses and which list it relates to. The second is translation: which expression the translator chose and whether there is a note. The third is interpretation: what the author infers about practice. Disagreement at one layer does not by itself decide the others.

The limits of attribution

A statement attributed to the Manorathapūraṇī, the commentary on the Aṅguttara Nikāya, needs the original text and a reference location. Until these are available, the attribution should not be used to determine that the state in the sutta takes Nibbāna as its object or is a kind of completely objectless awareness. Such caution keeps the research verifiable.

Keeping the foundation while reading deeply

A difficult sentence is not an instruction for beginners to empty the mind or lose recognition. Continue with a clear object, ethical conduct and a suitable amount of practice. You may not yet be able to resolve every word, yet still learn to cling less to achievement and feed the hindrances less.

Table: Checking how to read the difficult phrases in AN 11.9

Question	Wording to keep	What to check	Inference to avoid
Depending	The list of bases in AN 11.9	The meaning of nissāya in context	Automatically equating it with having an object
Perception	The phrase saññā vibhūtā	Translations and philological arguments	Taking “transparent” as the only meaning
Still meditates	Jhāyati ca pana	Relation to the contrast with the hindrances	Using a difficult sentence to force the mind blank

Chapter 28 Review



Review figure 28. Read a word within the whole sentence and context;
don't let a magnifying glass make you forget the whole picture.

Key points

- Keep the distinction between text, translation and interpretation.
- Do not use a desired experience to decide the meaning of a word.
- An attribution to the commentary needs a verifiable location.

Memory verse

*The word is hard: read the whole sentence,
No clear source yet? Don't rush to conclude.
Keep the base of practice amid daily life,
Study deeply, still care for those around.*

Ten golden questions and answers

1. How is saññā understood at first?

Answer: As perception, the capacity to recognise and identify experience.

2. Does vibhūtā have an agreed translation?

Answer: No. The book keeps the differences and the limits of the choices being compared.

3. Is liking a meaning enough to choose it?

Answer: No. Context and verifiable sources are needed.

4. What are the three layers of reading?

Answer: Text, translation and interpretation.

5. Does a translation disagreement decide every practical issue?

Answer: Not automatically. Look at the steps of inference from translation to instruction.

6. What is the Manorathapūraṇī?

Answer: The commentary on the Aṅguttara Nikāya in the Theravāda tradition.

7. What is needed to attribute something to the commentary?

Answer: The actual passage and a sufficiently clear reference location.

8. What if there is no location yet?

Answer: Treat the statement as unproven and do not use it as a deciding ground.

9. Do beginners need to lose recognition?

Answer: No. Keep a clear object and a suitable foundation.

10. Can I continue practising without understanding everything?

Answer: Yes, with clear and manageable instructions; research questions can remain open.

Five mindful questions for better daily life

1. Do you usually choose the meaning of a sentence by its source or by what you like?
2. Where could a claim you currently believe be checked?
3. How do you feel when you have to hold an unresolved question?
4. How have you turned an experience into an overly broad conclusion?
5. What helps you both study deeply and keep your daily life stable?

Chapter 29

Parallel Discourses and the Dhammapada

Dhammapada verses on effort and alertness

The Dhammapada verses on heedfulness (appamāda) express this same quality. Each verse is quoted in Pāli, followed by the author's rendering; translations vary between translators.

Dhp 21 (Chapter on Heedfulness)

*Appamādo amatapadaṃ, pamādo maccuno padaṃ;
appamattā na mīyanti, ye pamattā yathā matā.*

Heedfulness is the path to the deathless; heedlessness is the path to death. The heedful do not die; the heedless are as if already dead.

Note: “do not die” in the verse on heedfulness refers to the path towards the deathless, that is, Nibbāna; it does not promise that the body will live forever (Dhp 21–23).

Dhp 24 (Chapter on Heedfulness)

*Uṭṭhānavato satīmato, sucikamassa nisammakārino;
saññatassa dhammajīvino, appamattassa
yasobhivaḍḍhati.*

For one who is energetic and mindful, pure in deed, who acts with consideration, is self-restrained, lives by the Dhamma and is heedful, good repute steadily grows.

Dhp 25 (Chapter on Heedfulness)

*Uṭṭhānenappamādena, saṃyamena damena ca;
dīpaṃ kayirātha medhāvī, yaṃ ogho nābhikīratī.*

Through effort, heedfulness, restraint and self-control, let the wise make an island that no flood can overwhelm.

Dhp 276 (Chapter on the Path)

*Tumhehi kiccamātappaṃ, akkhātāro tathāgatā;
paṭipannā pamokkhanti, jhāyino mārabandhanā.*

You yourselves must make the effort; the Tathāgatas only point the way. Those who practise and meditate are freed from the bonds of Māra.

Dhp 280 (Chapter on the Path)

*Uṭṭhānakālamhi anuṭṭhahāno, yuvā balī ālasiyaṃ
upeto;
saṃsannasaṅkappamano kusīto, paññāya maggaṃ
alaso na vindatī.*

Who does not strive when it is time to strive, who, though young and strong, is lazy, with will and mind enfeebled: that idler does not find the way of wisdom. This is a full rendering of the verse; the encouragement to strive does not mean ignoring illness or the need for rest.

This explanation refers to Dhp 1–2 and Dhp 33–34 on the mind. The Pāli text of these verses is quoted below.

Dhp 1 (Chapter of Pairs)

*Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā, manoseṭṭhā manomayā;
manasā ce paduṭṭhena, bhāsatī vā karoti vā;
tato naṃ dukkhamanveti, cakkamva vahato padaṃ.*

Mind precedes all things; mind is their chief; they are made by mind. If one speaks or acts with a corrupted mind, suffering follows as the wheel follows the foot of the ox that draws the cart.

Dhp 2 (Chapter of Pairs)

*Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā, manoseṭṭhā manomayā;
manasā ce pasannena, bhāsatī vā karoti vā;
tato naṃ sukhamanveti, chāyāva anapāyinī.*

Mind precedes all things; mind is their chief; they are made by mind. If one speaks or acts with a pure mind, happiness follows like a shadow that never leaves.

Dhp 33 (Chapter on the Mind)

*Phandanam capalam cittam, dūrakkham
dunnivārayam;
ujum karoti medhāvī, usukārova tejanam.*

The mind, trembling and unsteady, hard to guard and hard to restrain: the wise make it straight as a fletcher straightens an arrow.

Dhp 34 (Chapter on the Mind)

*Vārijova thale khitto, okamokataubbhato;
pariphandatidaṃ cittaṃ, mārādheyyaṃ pahātave.*

Like a fish lifted from its watery home and thrown onto dry land,
this mind thrashes about as it tries to escape the realm of Māra.

Dhp 5 (Chapter of Pairs)

*Na hi verena verāni, sammantīdha kudācanaṃ;
averena ca sammanti, esa dhammo sanantano.*

Hatred is never appeased by hatred in this world; by non-hatred alone is it appeased. This is an eternal law.

The Satipaṭṭhāna Saṃyutta (SN 47) expands the concise framework of the Suddha Sutta through many short suttas. The three suttas below offer helpful images for understanding protection, compounding reactions and responsibility towards others.

In SN 47.6, a quail leaves its familiar ground and is seized by a hawk. It says that if it had been in its own territory, the hawk could not have defeated it. Released, the quail returns to a freshly ploughed field full of clods. When the hawk swoops, it hides behind a clod and escapes. The sutta compares the safe territory to the four establishments of mindfulness and the unsuitable territory to the five strands of sensual pleasure. This is a reminder to keep within the range of practice, not advice to withdraw from all responsibilities.

SN 47.7 Makkaṭṭa Sutta, The Monkey. Theme and central image: monkeys in the Himalayas are caught in a hunter's sticky-resin trap. The foolish monkey touches the resin with one hand, then uses the other hand, both feet and its mouth to free itself, and ends up binding itself completely. Key insight: compounding reactions. Getting stuck in sense objects (loka) imprisons the mind; satipaṭṭhāna is a protective shield.

SN 47.19 Sedaka Sutta, The Acrobat. Theme and central image: two acrobats balance on a bamboo pole. The master proposes: “You protect me and I will protect you.” The apprentice replies that each should protect himself. Key insight: the social ecology of practice. Protecting oneself through mindfulness also protects others; protecting others through patience and harmlessness also protects oneself.

References to the Dhammapada

The Dhammapada verses below support reflection on the mind, effort and impermanence. They are cited by theme, not as a direct commentary on SN 47.24. Each verse is given in Pāli with an English rendering. Dhp 1–2 are printed in full in this chapter.

- Dhp 1–2 emphasise the quality of mind in speech and action and the painful or happy consequences. The two verses should not be used to claim that every physical thing is created by the individual mind, or that all suffering is simply the fault of the one who suffers.
- Dhp 42–43 contrast a wrongly directed mind with a rightly directed mind: the mind can harm, or bring deep

benefit to, the person concerned. The verse on the wrongly directed mind is Dhp 42; the parallel verse on the rightly directed mind is Dhp 43.

- Dhp 277. One who sees with wisdom that all conditioned things are impermanent turns away from suffering. This is the path of purification and points to the contemplation of dhammas (dhammānupassanā).

Dhp 42 (Chapter on the Mind)

*Diso disaṃ yaṃ taṃ kayirā, verī vā pana verinaṃ;
micchāpaṇihitaṃ cittaṃ, pāpiyo naṃ tato kare.*

Whatever an enemy may do to an enemy, or a hater to the one he hates, a wrongly directed mind can do one even greater harm.

Dhp 43 (Chapter on the Mind)

*Na taṃ mātā pitā kayirā, aññe vāpi ca ñātakā;
sammāpaṇihitaṃ cittaṃ, seyyaso naṃ tato kare.*

What neither mother nor father nor any other relative can do for us, a rightly directed mind can do, and do even better.

Dhp 277 (Chapter on the Path)

*“Sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā”ti, yadā paññāya passati;
atha nibbindati dukkhe, esa maggo visuddhiyā.*

“All conditioned things are impermanent”: when one sees this with wisdom, one turns away from suffering. This is the path of purification.

Specialised interpretations

- MN 118 (Discourse on Mindfulness of Breathing). Mindfulness of breathing, developed and cultivated, fulfils the four establishments of mindfulness. This is the theme of Part Two.
- Mahāsi Sayadaw. The noting method is discussed in Chapter 10.

A summary of daily practice

The formula running through the book is Notice – Understand – Release the unwholesome reaction. Ardour sustains effort; mindfulness does not forget the task; clear comprehension supports clear knowing and appropriate action. The qualities work together; they are not three levels of attainment. Choose an anchor, notice distraction and return; when the mind is steady enough, know change without forcing. Insight needs to develop together with virtue and concentration; seeing a sensation change once does not in itself guarantee the end of clinging (MN 10; MN 44; SN 47.24).

Table: Three parallel suttas in the Satipaṭṭhāna Saṃyutta

Kinh	Theme and central image	Key insight
SN 47.6 Sakuṇagghi Sutta, The Hawk	A quail leaves its familiar ground and is seized by a hawk. Returning to a freshly ploughed field full of clods, it hides behind a clod and escapes.	The danger of worldly distraction. Leaving one's territory for the five strands of sensual pleasure makes one easy prey for Māra.
SN 47.7 Makkata Sutta, The Monkey	Monkeys in the Himalayas are caught in a hunter's sticky-resin trap. The foolish monkey touches the resin with one hand, then uses the other hand, both feet and its mouth to free itself, and ends up binding itself completely.	Compounding reactions. Getting stuck in sense objects (loka) imprisons the mind; satipaṭṭhāna is a protective shield.
SN 47.19 Sedaka Sutta, The Acrobat	Two acrobats balance on a bamboo pole. The master proposes: "You protect me and I will protect you." The apprentice replies that each should protect himself.	The social ecology of practice. Protecting oneself through mindfulness also protects others; protecting others through patience and harmlessness also protects oneself.

Chapter 29 Review



Review figure 29. The quail returns to the field of clods: an image reminding us to keep to the territory of practice.

Key points

- The quail sutta reminds us to keep to the territory of practice; the monkey sutta shows how we get stuck without protection.
- The Sedaka Sutta links protecting oneself with protecting others.
- The Dhammapada verses add meaning about the mind, effort and impermanence; they do not replace the sutta being read.

Memory verse

*The bird returns to its familiar field,
The monkey, eager to touch, gets stuck the more.
Guard yourself well, and others benefit,
Help others be at peace, and you are at peace too.*

Ten golden questions and answers

1. What is the quail's safe territory in SN 47.6?

Answer: A freshly ploughed field with clods; the quail shelters behind a clod when the hawk swoops.

2. What does that territory symbolise?

Answer: The four establishments of mindfulness are the monk's territory of practice in the sutta; the image is a reminder of protection.

3. How does the monkey in SN 47.7 get further stuck?

Answer: It uses its other hand, its feet and its mouth to free itself from the resin and ends up stuck at all five points.

4. How might the monkey story relate to arguments?

Answer: One retort can drag in many more. This is a present-day example; the sutta's main point is still protection against the five strands of sensual pleasure.

5. What image does SN 47.19 use?

Answer: The acrobat on the pole and his apprentice, which explain protecting oneself and protecting others.

6. How does protecting others protect oneself?

Answer: The sutta names patience, harmlessness, loving-kindness and sympathy. These qualities also protect the practitioner.

7. Does protecting oneself mean neglecting others?

Answer: No. Developing the establishments of mindfulness and harmless conduct supports both sides.

8. What does Dhp 42 say about the direction of the mind?

Answer: A wrongly directed mind can do a person deeper harm than anything an enemy or hater can do.

9. Do Dhp 1–2 say that everything is created by the individual mind?

Answer: That conclusion should not be drawn from the two verses. The chapter discusses the quality of mind in speech, action and their consequences.

10. What does Dhp 277 remind us of?

Answer: All formations, that is, all conditioned things, are impermanent; seeing this with wisdom leads to turning away from suffering.

Five mindful questions for better daily life

1. In a recent argument, which reaction made you “stick” further to the old matter?
2. What “familiar territory” helps you keep mindful when your phone or the news pulls your mind away?
3. In a specific disagreement, how could you protect yourself while still protecting a loved one?
4. When you want to win an argument, is that direction of mind harming you? Why?
5. What act of patience or harmlessness could you carry out this week?

Chapter 30

The Noting Tradition and Technique

Origin and usefulness are two separate questions

Chapter 10 discusses noting as associated with the Mahāsi tradition. In research reading, distinguish a later system of instruction from the verbatim words of the suttas. A technique that is not verbatim can still be useful; its usefulness does not make it something the Buddha said in exactly those words.

Labels remind; they do not replace experience

A single word, “thinking”, can help you notice that the mind has just gone into a story. After the word, know the body or the object that is clear. If you merely repeat “angry, angry” while continuing to list someone’s faults, the naming has not yet done the work of knowing and understanding what feeds the anger.

Try it in due measure within the method you are learning

In a familiar sitting, see whether labels help you remember, whether you can still feel the object after the label, and whether they create extra tension. Do not change the whole method after one difficult session. Note what you observe and ask your teacher.

Do not turn a choice into a competition

Someone who uses labels is not thereby inferior to someone who does not. Someone who drops labels has not thereby

attained deep insight. Assess by function, circumstances and consequences. Dialogue between traditions should begin by describing each other's methods accurately.

Bringing the technique into a real situation

When you want to open another app, try knowing “wanting”, then feel your hand and ask about the purpose. Sometimes you need to open it to work; sometimes you should put it down. The technique supports choice; it does not provide a mechanical answer for every use of the phone.

Chapter 30 Review



Review figure 30. When you meet an unfamiliar word, open the explanation and read the whole sentence before drawing conclusions.

Key points

- The origin and the usefulness of a technique need to be considered separately.
- Labels support awareness; they do not replace knowing the object.
- Do not use the choice to use or drop labels as a contest.

Memory verse

*Name it lightly, know your hand,
Name it endlessly, see no clearer, grow more tense.
Ask your teacher, review each stage,
Walk the familiar path steadily, level, without contest.*

Ten golden questions and answers

1. Is the noting system verbatim in every sutta?

Answer: No. Distinguish the words of the suttas from a later system of instruction.

2. Does not being verbatim mean useless?

Answer: No. Usefulness should be assessed by purpose and conditions.

3. What is a short label for?

Answer: To help you remember and recognise what is happening.

4. What is needed after the label?

Answer: Continue knowing the actual experience rather than just reciting names.

5. Does naming anger many times end it?

Answer: There is no guarantee. Understand what is feeding the reaction and choose a suitable response.

6. Should I change methods immediately?

Answer: Do not change everything because of one difficulty; review and ask.

7. Does dropping labels prove deep insight?

Answer: No. A choice of technique does not in itself prove any attainment.

8. Where does dialogue between traditions begin?

Answer: With describing each other's instructions and purposes accurately.

9. How can labels be used when opening the phone?

Answer: Notice the wish, then consider the purpose and the action needed.

10. Do labels decide for me?

Answer: No. You still need to understand the situation and take responsibility for your choice.

Five mindful questions for better daily life

1. Which label helps you remember most clearly?
2. When does naming become mechanical?
3. How have you competed with others over a practice technique?
4. What would you like to ask your teacher about using labels?
5. What lesson could one use of your phone today become?

Chapter 31

Reading the Suttas in a Technological Life

From the canon to technological life

The book's two main suttas say nothing about phones, social media or artificial intelligence. When we draw connections, we are applying a framework about the mind and practice to new circumstances. Such application may be worth learning, but we must state clearly what is sutta text, what is present-day observation and what is a practical suggestion. A sutta number must not be used in place of evidence about neuroscience or technology design.

First critique: object or no object

One question raised is: can the mind be aware with no object at all? First we must define what “object” refers to. AN 11.9 says the practitioner meditates without depending on the listed bases and yet meditates; that statement does not by itself become a scientific model of brain activity. So both the claim that “the sutta has proven objectless awareness” and the claim that “biology has refuted the sutta” go beyond the evidence if they lack suitable argument and research. Practitioners keep a clear anchor and do not cling to it as an achievement; researchers keep the question open and identify what can be tested.

Second critique: is observation alone enough?

While scrolling continuously, recognising desire is a helpful step, but it does not necessarily change the conditions that

keep you going. You can turn off unnecessary notifications, keep the device out of the bedroom, set a time for replying or use tools strictly for work. These are suggestions for organising daily life, not a formula the sutta gives about algorithms. Individuals should not be blamed for lacking mindfulness when their work requires them to be constantly available; the division of labour and rest periods also need discussing.

A situation at work

Mira has to monitor a group chat while on duty. Switching her phone off completely would mean failing in her responsibility. She and her colleagues sort messages by urgency, agree on handover times and arrange cover when someone is off. When a difficult message comes in, she recognises her reaction and then reads what needs to be handled. Practice here includes both adjusting the mind and adjusting the organisation; it is not just enduring the alerts through willpower.

Third critique: thoroughbred or submission?

The horse metaphor can be used to demand that learners be obedient and not ask questions. Distinguish what the sutta contrasts from how someone today uses the image. Serious training of the mind does not exempt teachers from the responsibility to explain, welcome questions and avoid harm. Nor is there sufficient ground to conclude that all discipline is oppression. Look at the purpose of a specific rule, whether

learners understand it and can adjust it, and its consequences for behaviour, health and relationships.

Speech in the middle of an online argument

A post makes you angry. Pausing to know the unpleasant feeling does not decide whether the post is right or wrong. You then need to check the source, distinguish news from opinion and consider whether to reply or to report it to someone responsible. Not feeding aversion does not mean staying silent in the face of harmful information. A reply can be clear and firm and set boundaries without insulting anyone.

Reading the suttas with artificial intelligence tools

You may use tools to draw up lists of questions or compare passages you have supplied. Before treating a statement as sutta text, find the original, the sutta number, the translator and the actual passage. A sentence that sounds fluent or carries Pāli diacritics is not yet a source. Do not let a tool replace the person responsible for a translation, a teaching or the assessment of a learner's experience. This principle of checking sources applies to every medium, including oral tradition and printed books.

Sensual desire in family life

The teaching on dispassion needs to be read according to monastic and lay circumstances. In married life, the question is not only whether a feeling is present, but also respect, consent, fidelity and harmlessness. Do not use a

generalisation about instinct to conclude that practice is useless; nor use a lofty ideal to force others to live by your choices. Chapter 16 distinguishes the terms and the levels of practice.

Mindfulness and changing shared conditions

If someone is treated unjustly, advising them only to watch their emotions may miss what needs to be resolved. Self-mastery helps them choose clearer steps: recording what happened, finding support, stating boundaries or taking part in correcting procedures. SN 47.19 links protecting oneself with protecting others through patience, harmlessness, goodwill and care. The book's modern connection is this: keep the mind informed by understanding and work together to correct conditions that cause suffering where possible; it is not a verbatim instruction about any present-day institution.

A week-long experiment in daily living

Choose a situation: the phone before sleep, work email or arguments in a group. Note the initial cue, the bodily and mental reaction, what needs to be done and one condition that could change. Make a small change, then review your ability to stop, your way of speaking and the quality of your daily life. Do not call a week of improvement attainment; if the change does not help, look for the reason and adjust. The table below keeps the three critiques in the form of bounded questions rather than unproven biological conclusions.

How to discuss in order to learn more

In critique, state clearly whether you are questioning the sutta text, the translation, a traditional interpretation or present-day application. State the strongest argument for the interpretation under discussion, then point out its limits. Respect goes together with checking; a difficult question can be kept open. Reading the suttas is valuable when it helps us understand more thoroughly and live more responsibly.

Table: Critical questions and directions for examination

Critical question	Limits and direction for examination
Is awareness without any object possible?	Define what “object” means; AN 11.9 does not by itself decide a biological model.
Is observation alone enough in the face of distracting technology?	Awareness is one step; usage, environment and the organisation of work may also need changing.
Does the thoroughbred metaphor lead to submission?	Distinguish the sutta text from its application; look at the right to ask, the degree of pressure and the concrete consequences.

Chapter 31 Review



Review figure 31. Check the source before sharing; know how to stop at the cue to keep watching.

Key points

- Modern applications need to distinguish the sutta text from inferences and suggestions.
- Awareness of mind needs to go together with changing living conditions when necessary.
- Critique must identify the passage, the term and the kind of evidence.

Memory verse

*The phone rings: know the wish to look,
Handle what's needed; at quiet night, stop.
Source unclear? Don't rejoice too soon,
Kind words, right deeds, step by step we practise.*



Dhammapada verse — Dhp 21

*Appamādo amatapadaṃ, pamādo maccuno padaṃ;
Appamattā na mīyanti, ye pamattā yathā matā.*

Heedfulness is the path to the deathless; heedlessness is the path to death. The heedful do not die; the heedless are as though already dead.

Ten golden questions and answers

1. Does AN 11.9 speak directly about algorithms?

Answer: No. The connection with technology is the book's modern application.

2. Does not depending certainly mean having no object?

Answer: The two cannot automatically be equated. The list, the context and the limits of interpretation must be read.

3. Can the suttas replace neuroscientific research?

Answer: No. Empirical claims need suitable empirical sources and methods.

4. Is awareness alone enough to change a habit?

Answer: Not necessarily. Conditions of use and the organisation of work may also need changing.

5. Should I turn off all devices while on duty?

Answer: Urgent responsibilities must be kept; arrange duty, rest and handover appropriately together.

6. Does not feeding aversion mean not objecting?

Answer: No. You can object clearly, check sources and avoid insults.

7. Can a sentence generated by a tool be treated as sutta?

Answer: Only after checking it against the original text and source; fluency does not guarantee accuracy.

8. Does the thoroughbred metaphor permit coercing learners?

Answer: A metaphor cannot be used to escape responsibility or justify harm.

9. How should lay life read the teaching on dispassion?

Answer: Distinguish circumstances and levels of practice, keep ethics, show respect and do not force others.

10. Is a week of better phone use an attainment?

Answer: No. It is a change in daily living to be reviewed, not a confirmation of spiritual achievement.

Five mindful questions for better daily life

1. Which notifications are needed for your responsibilities, and which can you turn off?
2. Which shared condition at your workplace needs to be corrected together?
3. How could you object to something false while humiliating the speaker less?
4. Has the source of a scholarly-sounding statement you once shared been checked?
5. What limit would you like to set so that technology serves living and practice?

Chapter 32

Model Answers and Questions for Further Study

Questions for close reading

The five questions below are for research readers. When answering, distinguish sutta quotation, translation, interpretation and personal experience; no claim to any attainment is required. Specific passages and situations may be used to test the argument.

Five research questions

Each answer should state its sources, the limits of its conclusion and an application suited to the reader's level.

Question 1. Compare the bases listed in AN 11.9 with the sentence *jhāyati ca pana*. What does the sutta text permit us to conclude, and what remains hypothesis? Why must not depending not be automatically replaced by having no object at all?

Question 2. Compare Thanissaro's rendering of *saññā vibhūtā* with the revised translation in Chapter 25. How do dictionary meaning and context play different roles? State clearly the limits of the non-clinging interpretation and what to avoid when guiding beginners.

Question 3. What does the image of the patoda convey in the sutta? Why is *saṁvega* associated as an interpretive term rather than said to be a word occurring in the

passage? Describe how to sustain effort while respecting health and kindness.

Question 4. How does recognising a hindrance differ from abandoning it? Drawing on MN 10, MN 20 or SN 46.2, choose a direction of practice and give an example of changing the conditions of phone use. Distinguish the modern application from the sutta text.

Question 5. A person becomes more concentrated yet still speaks harmfully: why is that not enough to assess the whole path? Drawing on virtue, concentration and wisdom in MN 44, propose criteria for examining conduct without using them to confirm noble attainment for oneself.

Review through situations

Use these questions for self-study or group discussion. AN 11.9 says that the thoroughbred meditates without depending on the listed objects and “yet meditates”. What does this paradox challenge, and what inferences should beginners avoid?

- What ranges of meaning have been proposed for *saññā vibhūtā*? Why is it methodologically unsafe to automatically equate this phrase with unconsciousness or annihilation?
- How does knowing the *nissaraṇa* of a hindrance differ from suppressing it, indulging it or explaining it away?
- What can the metaphor of the horse trainer and the goad convey about consequences and urgency? What harm

might result if a practitioner turned that metaphor into fear, punishment or pressure to achieve?

- How can digital services repeatedly stimulate desire or distraction? Which part of this analysis is contemporary observation rather than a claim of AN 11.9?
- How does practising attention to an object bring stability, and how can clinging to the object become a limitation?
- Why does mindfulness while driving require keeping attention on road safety and other people?
- When aversion arises after a critical message, how do contemplation of feeling and contemplation of mind differ?
- What are the four domains in SN 47.24, and which details of the sixteen-step practice come from MN 118?
- What conditions indicate that practice is supporting ethical conduct and clear understanding rather than conceit, avoidance or submission?

Applied situation questions

- At work, a colleague misses a deadline. What changes if, before asking for an explanation, you notice the tension in your body and your anger?
- A planned family visit is cancelled. How can you observe disappointment without denying the practical consequences?

- A driver cuts you off. Which response protects safety while limiting retaliation?
- After reading meditation theory, you feel your practice “isn’t working”. What daily exercise could help you recognise the difference between conceptual knowledge and a trained skill?
- At midday you feel exhausted. What adjustment might be suitable, and why might a five-minute pause help more than an impulsive confrontation?

Five situational multiple-choice exercises, with suggested answers, are in the Case Studies before Chapter 22.

Chapter 32 Review



Review figure 32. Clear questions and clear sources keep research on the right track.

Key points

- Research questions need sources, context and limits on conclusions.
- Understanding terms correctly helps avoid turning speculation into sutta text.
- A helpful argument needs to connect with everyday action without exaggerating results.

Memory verse

*Ask clearly, read deeply,
Not fully understood? Don't speak in haste.
Sources and meanings need checking again,
Live more gently, study long.*

Ten golden questions and answers

1. What is the aim of the advanced questions?

Answer: To train the analysis of sources and arguments, without asking readers to claim any attainment.

2. Where should an answer about AN 11.9 begin?

Answer: With the sutta passage, the list of bases and the sentence “yet meditates”, before offering one’s own ideas.

3. Why compare translations?

Answer: To see translation choices and notes, rather than treating a familiar expression as the only meaning.

4. What role does context play for vibhūtā?

Answer: It helps consider the meaning that fits the sentence and the whole passage; do not replace it with a favoured dictionary meaning.

5. What is needed when citing the commentary?

Answer: The original text, a translation and a specific reference location, so that others can check it.

6. What must be distinguished when discussing patoda?

Answer: The image in the sutta from its application to learners; no right to punish can be inferred from the horse image.

7. How does recognising a hindrance differ from abandoning it?

Answer: Recognising is knowing it is present; abandoning needs conditions and practices that stop the unwholesome from continuing to be fed.

8. How should the phone example be labelled?

Answer: As a present-day application related to the teaching; not as a claim that the sutta described that technology.

9. What does concentration combined with harmful speech show?

Answer: The whole path cannot be assessed by attentional ability; virtue and understanding must also be considered.

10. How should a responsible answer end?

Answer: With a conclusion proportionate to the support of the sources, what remains unclear and one concrete application, without boasting of achieving what has not been shown.

Five mindful questions for better daily life

1. Which passage would you like to study deeply because it affects a real decision in your life?
2. If someone pointed out that your source does not support your conclusion, how would you revise your answer?
3. Which personal experience do you need to describe more carefully when guiding others?
4. How could you turn an argument about winning and losing into a joint checking of sources?
5. After your study, what specific change in speech or action would show that you have learned something useful?

Chapter 32 Further Review



Further review figure 32. Ask, reread and bring what you learn into something real in daily life.

Key points

- Learning through questions helps check what you understand and what you do not.
- Discussion needs listening, clear sources and everyday examples.
- The answers are suggestions for study; the reflection questions help readers find ways of living suited to their own circumstances.

Memory verse

*Ask one question, hear one word,
Read the source clearly, argue less.
Bring what you learn to daily bread,
Live more gently with everyone.*

Ten more golden questions and answers

1. Why does the final chapter use questions?

Answer: So that readers can review, check their understanding and connect the book's content with real situations.

2. Is answering word for word enough to understand?

Answer: Not yet. Explain in your own words and give suitable examples, while knowing the limits of what you have understood.

3. What are the sources of the four establishments of mindfulness and the sixteen steps?

Answer: The four establishments of mindfulness are set out in SN 47.24; the sixteen steps of mindfulness of breathing belong to MN 118.

4. How does knowing the escape from a hindrance differ from indulging it?

Answer: Indulging continues to feed the state; learning the escape knows the conditions and develops ways of abandoning what is unwholesome.

5. When criticised, how does contemplation of feeling differ from contemplation of mind?

Answer: Contemplation of feeling knows the unpleasantness; contemplation of mind knows anger or resistance. Both can relate to the same event.

6. Can not depending be turned at once into having no object?

Answer: No. Consider the whole AN 11.9 passage and the limits of the translation, without adding excessive conclusions.

7. Should the goad metaphor become a way of teaching students?

Answer: No. Teaching needs to be harmless and to respect learners and their conditions of practice.

8. What should be done when a study group disagrees?

Answer: Listen fully, find the source passage, distinguish data from inference; note what is unclear instead of attacking each other.

9. Where else can situational exercises and answers be found?

Answer: The Case Studies before Chapter 22 have five multiple-choice situations with suggested answers; use them together with each chapter's review.

10. After studying, what should I choose to begin with?

Answer: Choose one small action you can take in daily life, try it within your capacity and then review its actual consequences.

Five more mindful questions for better daily life

1. When a colleague misses a deadline, how can you both know your anger and discuss responsibilities?
2. What could a cancelled family visit teach you about disappointment and how to talk things through?
3. When cut off in traffic, which of your reactions protect safety and which only seek retaliation?
4. Using something you once learned, how would you describe the difference between understanding theory and training a skill?
5. If you feel exhausted and impatient in the middle of the day, how could you take a break or adjust your work while keeping your responsibilities?

Afterword

Finishing the book does not mean having finished learning to practise. The two suttas invite us to look again at what is very close: how the body is, what quality feeling has, what is carrying the mind away, and what helps us stop feeding unwholesome reactions. We learn this in sitting, but also when hearing disagreeable words, caring for loved ones and fulfilling our responsibilities.

Tomorrow, choose one small thing: sit for five minutes, hear someone out completely, or pause before sending an angry message. If you forget, notice and begin again. If you are too tense or unsure how to practise, reduce your effort and ask your teacher. The seven-day programme only helps you get started; it sets no date for attainment.

The book's reminder is: notice, understand what is feeding the reaction, then choose a way that causes less harm. Do not only ask how long you have sat; ask whether today you caused others less suffering. Keep patience with learning, kindness towards those around you and caution before what you do not yet understand. From one small thing done with understanding, we continue on the path of practice.

The three reading paths meet in something very small: knowing the reaction, understanding what feeds it, then choosing a less harmful way. Beginners can continue with a short sitting; experienced practitioners can review what they are holding on to; researchers can keep a question and look for clearer sources. There is no need to turn learning into a

race. Let understanding be seen in speech, care and everyday responsibility.

Appendix A Canonical Passages and Translation Notes

The Pāli passages below identify the main formulas discussed in the book. For the full text and variant readings, consult a critical Pāli edition or a reliable digital edition such as SuttaCentral. English translations differ; they should be regarded as translations, not as the Pāli original.

SN 47.24 Kinh Suddha

The full Pāli text and the translations are in Chapter 21. The key sentence is *kāye kāyānupassī viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā, vineyya loke abhiññādomanassaṃ*, repeated for feelings (*vedanāsu*), mind (*citte*) and dhammas (*dhammesu*).

AN 11.9 Kinh Saddha, “Kinh Sandha”

*Ājānīyajhāyitaṃ kho, saddha, jhāya; mā
khaḷuṅkajhāyitaṃ.*

Reference translation: “Sandha, meditate as a thoroughbred meditates; do not meditate as an untrained horse.” The central phrases are *uppannassa ... nissaraṇaṃ yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti* (understands as it really is the escape from what has arisen) and *jhāyati ca pana* (and yet meditates). The key phrase concerning perception is *saññā vibhūtā hoti*. Translators render the animal terms and *vibhūtā* differently (Chapters 15 and 27).

Dhammapada references

The table below gives the Dhammapada verse numbers, chapters and where they are discussed. The Pāli passages are kept with the English renderings in the corresponding chapter. The renderings aim to clarify content; they do not replace consulting specialist translations.

Verse	Chapter	Theme in this book	Pāli text printed in
Dhp 1, Dhp 2	Chapter of Pairs, Dhp 1–20	Mind precedes; non-delusion (Chapters 3 and 29)	Chapter 29
Dhp 5	Chapter of Pairs, Dhp 1–20	Hatred is not appeased by hatred (Chapter 3, traffic example)	Chapter 29
Dhp 21, Dhp 24, Dhp 25	Chapter on Heedfulness, Dhp 21–32	Heedfulness and effort (Chapter 3)	Chapter 29
Dhp 33, Dhp 34	Chapter on the Mind, Dhp 33–43	The restless mind; range of attention (Chapter 3)	Chapter 29
Dhp 42, Dhp 43	Chapter on the Mind, Dhp 33–43	Wrongly and rightly directed mind (Chapter 29)	Chapter 29

Verse	Chapter	Theme in this book	Pāli text printed in
Dhp 276, Dhp 277, Dhp 280	Chapter on the Path, Dhp 273–289	Effort; impermanence; laziness (Chapters 3 and 29)	Chapter 29

Appendix B Sutta Numbers and Choice of Terms

The table below helps look up sutta numbers, the scope of sources and distinctions to keep while reading. A difference in numbering systems does not in itself create a different sutta.

Reference	Distinction to keep
AN 11.9 / AN 11.10	SuttaCentral and Thanissaro use different numbering; compare the titles Saddha / Sandha.
SN 47.19	The Sedaka Sutta with the image of the acrobat; not SN 47.20.
AN 4.41	The sutta on developing concentration, usually called Samādhi or Samādhībhāvanā.
Dhp 42 / Dhp 43	42: wrongly directed mind; 43: rightly directed mind.

Reference	Distinction to keep
MN 118 / SN 46.53	Sixteen steps: MN 118. Balancing the factors of awakening according to the mind: SN 46.53.
Four aspects of clear comprehension	A commentarial interpretive framework; not a list given verbatim in SN 47.24.
Manorathapūraṇī	Do not use an attribution lacking the original text and a verifiable location to decide the state in AN 11.9.

Standardised terms in this edition

Pāli	English usage
Saddhasutta / Sandha	Saddha or Sandha Sutta; the name follows the text being compared.
Bhikkhu	Bhikkhu (monk); not replaced in every case by “lay practitioner”.
Khaḷuṅka	Untrained horse in the simile; not necessarily indicating the horse’s age.
Ājāṇīya	Thoroughbred; the person compared to a thoroughbred in the application.

Pāli	English usage
Kāmarāga / kāmacchanda	Sensual desire / sensual lust; read in context, not interchangeable in every classification.
Nissaraṇa	Escape; knowing and developing the conditions for escaping the hindrances.
Nissāya	Depending on or based on; not automatically meaning having an object.
Saññā vibhūtā	The related perceptions “no longer remain” in the translation; see the limits of interpretation in Chapter 27.
Jhāyati	Meditates, in the passage about the practitioner; the sense of brooding in the simile must be read in context.
Samvega	Spiritual urgency; an associated interpretive term, not found in the AN 11.9 passage.
Patoda	Goad; the metaphor is not to be used to justify harm.
Giṇḍakāvasatha / Nātika	Brick hall / the place name Nātika; the two names are not to be identified.

Distinguishing the sources of translations

- Translations made directly from the Pāli and translations based on an English version are labelled separately. The name of an English translator indicates an intermediary source; it does not mean that person composed the version being read.
- Standardised terms include “meditates” for jhāyati in the passage about the practitioner, “untrained horse” for khaḷuṅka in the context of the simile, and “sloth and torpor” for thīna-middha. Animal language is not used to belittle the worth of anyone learning meditation.
- “Brick hall” is the rendering of giṇṇjakāvasatha used in the opening. Nātika is the place name where the Buddha stayed in the sutta; it is not the name of the brick hall. The spelling Nādika appears in some translations.
- Sensual desire, sensual lust and sexual desire are distinguished according to context. Saññā is kept as “perception” when discussing terms; explanations such as “recognition” are aids to understanding, not an identification with all thinking.
- Questions about saññā vibhūtā are dealt with in Chapter 27. The glossary is not used to settle a debate that still requires the original text, context and commentarial evidence.

Appendix C Sources and Reference Works

This appendix lists addresses for checking the sutta texts, translations and secondary literature. Read each translator's notes together with the text, especially for AN 11.9 and MN 118. Additional references are not to be treated as evidence for a conclusion for which the book has not cited a specific passage.

Main canonical texts

SN 47.24 Suddhasutta. Pāli (Mahāsaṅgīti):

suttacentral.net/sn47.24/pli/ms. Translations: Sujato; Bodhi.

AN 11.9 Saddhasutta (Sandha Sutta). SuttaCentral; Sujato's translation: suttacentral.net/an11.9/en/sujato. Thanissaro Bhikkhu, "To Sandha", AN 11.10:

dhammatalks.org/suttas/AN/AN11_10.html; Access to Insight:

accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an11/an11.010.than.html.

MN 10 Kinh Satipaṭṭhāna, suttacentral.net/mn10; DN 22

Kinh Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna, suttacentral.net/dn22.

MN 118 Kinh Ānāpānassati,

suttacentral.net/mn118/en/sujato; Thanissaro Bhikkhu:

<https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/MN/MN118.html>.

MN 44, Cūḷavedalla Sutta: defines the bodily formation as in-and-out breathing and the mental formation as perception and feeling; groups the Noble Eightfold Path under virtue, concentration and wisdom. Thanissaro's English translation:

<https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/MN/MN44.html>.

SuttaCentral: <https://suttacentral.net/mn44>.

SN 46.53 Kinh Aggi, suttacentral.net/sn46.53; SN 46.2

Kinh Kāya, suttacentral.net/sn46.2.

SN 47.6 Sakuṇagghi Sutta, suttacentral.net/sn47.6; SN 47.7

Makkata Sutta, suttacentral.net/sn47.7; SN 47.19 Sedaka

Sutta, suttacentral.net/sn47.19, and Thanissaro's translation on Access to Insight.

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MN 1 Kinh Mūlapariyāya, suttacentral.net/mn1; MN 13

Kinh Mahādukkhakkhandha, suttacentral.net/mn13; MN

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Abhayarājakumāra, suttacentral.net/mn58; MN 141

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SN 36.6 Kinh Salla, suttacentral.net/sn36.6; SN 45.8

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273–289 Chapter on the Path, and other chapters):

SuttaCentral; translations by Buddharakkhita and

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Appendix D Glossary of Pāli Terms

Pāli	Meaning in this book
Abhijjhā-domanassa	Longing and discontent; craving and distress in regard to the world
Ājānīya	Thoroughbred; the image of a noble horse and the corresponding human image
Anicca	Impermanence

Pāli	Meaning in this book
Asaṅkhata-dhātu	The unconditioned element; a term related to Nibbāna, not used to confirm the object in AN 11.9 without evidence.
Ātāpī	Ardent, zealous; effort like heat
Bojjhaṅga	Factor of awakening (seven in all)
Jhāyati	Meditates, is absorbed; in the case of the untrained horse, also means to brood
Kāmarāga	Sensual desire in AN 11.9; distinguished from kāmacchanda and other classificatory contexts.
Khaḷuṅka	Untrained horse in the comparison; not necessarily indicating the horse's age
Nissāya	Depending on, based on
Nissaraṇa	Escape, getting out, release
Nīvaraṇa	Hindrance (five in all)
Patoda	Goad or spur
Samvega	Spiritual urgency

Pāli	Meaning in this book
Sampajāno, sampajañña	Clearly comprehending; clear comprehension
Saññā	Perception; recognising the marks of experience. Not equated with all thinking.
Sati, satimā	Mindfulness, remembering; one who is mindful
Satipaṭṭhāna	Establishment of mindfulness (or form of mindfulness); four in number
Vedanā	Feeling tone: pleasant, unpleasant or neutral
Vibhūtā	“No longer remains” is the translation choice in this book; “transparent” is not treated as the only meaning. See Chapter 27.
Vineyya	Having removed, subdued
Yathābhūtaṃ	As it really is

Appendix E Topic Index and Citation Checklist

This table helps you choose where to read according to the issue you face; it does not replace reading the explanation in the chapter.

Topic	Where to read
Starting within your capacity	Chapters 1–5 and 9
Body, feeling, mind and dhammas	Chapters 6–8 and 21–22
Effort and obstacles	Chapters 3, 7, 13–14 and 17
The breath and direct awareness	Chapters 10–12 and 24
Sensual desire and lay conduct	Chapters 16 and 31
Letting go and responsibility	Chapters 18–19
The horse and the escape	Chapters 15, 25–27
Translation and commentary	Chapters 20–25 and 28–30
Technology and critique	Chapters 31–32

Type of citation	What to check	Example
Sutta text	Number, text and translator	AN 11.9 or AN 11.10 depending on the source
Commentary	The actual passage and reference location	Do not decide the meaning of vibhūtā by an unclear attribution
Translation	Choice of words and context	Nissāya does not automatically mean having an object
Empirical claims	Research and suitable methods of testing	Do not take the suttas as evidence about brain activity
Modern application	Purpose, circumstances and consequences	Scheduling message checks and rest periods
Images or verses	The accompanying explanation	Do not treat diagrams or verses as sutta text

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