

Bhikkhu Visuddhamma

A woman with dark hair, wearing a white shawl, is shown in profile from the chest up. She has her eyes closed and a serene expression, suggesting a meditative state. Her hair is adorned with green leaves and small white flowers. The background is a soft-focus landscape of a sunset or sunrise over a body of water, with mountains in the distance. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow that reflects on the water. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

A Guide to Practising
**the Four Foundations
of Mindfulness**
in Everyday Life



Peace can begin from the smallest things.

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About this English edition

A companion volume to Abhidhamma in Everyday Life.

This English edition by Bhikkhu Visuddhamma. It retains the six chapters, Pāli passages, explanatory material, fictional teaching stories, songs, practice exercises, journal examples, appendix, and aspiration.

Scriptural translations are rendered for study from the material supplied. Its canonical references and distinctions between the discourses, commentarial interpretation, and contemporary teaching applications are retained.

Brief editorial notes distinguish figurative language from doctrinal terminology.

Abbreviations

DN: Dīgha Nikāya.

MN: Majjhima Nikāya.

SN: Saṃyutta Nikāya.

AN: Aṅguttara Nikāya.

Ud: Udāna.

Introduction

The four foundations of mindfulness (satipaṭṭhāna) constitute a central practice in the Theravāda Buddhist tradition. They are presented in two foundational discourses: the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (MN 10) and the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta (DN 22). This teaching establishes mindfulness in four domains of contemplation: body (kāya), feeling (vedanā), mind (citta), and dhammas (dhamma mental construction). Its purpose is to develop an accurate understanding of experience, gradually erode clinging, and advance along the path to the cessation of suffering.

This manual was prepared primarily for the students of Tuệ Tâm. It translates scriptural principles into concrete practices that can be applied in daily life. Its examples, diagram captions, three-step and five-step procedures, and practice journal are teaching aids developed for students; they are not verbatim instructions from the discourses.

“One dwells contemplating the body as body, ardent, clearly comprehending, and mindful, having set aside covetousness and distress concerning the world.” - DN 22, body-contemplation formula; translated from the Pāli.

Throughout the manual, Pāli passages are presented separately and accompanied by references to their discourses. The translations are intended to support study and practice. Readers may compare them with published Pāli editions. Technical terms are explained with reference to the commentarial tradition and the Abhidhamma system

represented by the Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha, while lexical meaning is distinguished from practical interpretation.

This manual does not replace medical or psychological treatment. Those experiencing serious psychological difficulties should consult qualified professionals and an experienced teacher to identify an appropriate form of practice. Conscious composure in everyday activities is a practical benefit, but the aim of satipaṭṭhāna is more profound: to understand experience accurately and erode attachment to it, the very attachment through which the world of saṃsāra is sustained.

May this manual help practitioners recognise body and mind with honesty and clarity, progressively relinquish attachment, weaken greed, hatred, and delusion, care for themselves without harming others, and advance towards the cessation of suffering in this very life.

Bhikkhu Visuddhamma

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Opening Reflection

Bringing practice to the point where suffering arises

One evening, a husband walks through the door and hears his wife say, “You always leave everything to me!”

He immediately wants to reply, “And you are always criticising me!” Before speaking, however, he notices that his jaw is clenched, his chest is hot, and his breathing has become rapid. He silently acknowledges, “The body is tense. Unpleasant feeling is present. The mind wants to fight back.”

He pauses briefly and says, “I am tired and a little irritated. Give me a few minutes, and then we can work out what needs doing first.”

The housework has not disappeared. Their disagreement has not been fully resolved. Nevertheless, something has changed: he has recognised a reaction as it forms and has not allowed it to become hurtful speech immediately.

This is one way of entering satipaṭṭhāna practice in everyday life. We learn to recognise the body, feelings, states of mind, and the conditions that increase or diminish suffering. Through that recognition, we learn to live with greater discernment and responsibility.

The preceding story is a fictional teaching illustration.

BRINGING THE PRACTICE TO WHERE SUFFERING ARISES



CHAPTER I: PURPOSES AND PRINCIPLES OF PRACTICE

1. What are the four foundations of mindfulness

Satipaṭṭhāna is the establishment of mindfulness in four domains: body, feeling, mind, and dhammas.

The two foundational discourses for study and practice are the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (MN 10) and the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta (DN 22). Their instructions concerning walking, standing, eating, drinking, speaking, and remaining silent show that this practice belongs within ordinary daily activities.

Domain	Pāli term	Practical question
Body	Kāya	What posture, movement, or bodily manifestation is present?
Feeling	Vedanā	Is this experience pleasant, unpleasant, or neither painful nor pleasant?
Mind	Citta	Is the mind affected by greed, anger, confusion, distraction, or collectedness?
Dhammas Mental fabrication	Dhamma	What factors bind the mind? What factors should be cultivated to move towards liberation?

All four domains may be recognised within a single situation. When criticised, for example, we may recognise a tense jaw as a bodily manifestation, unpleasantness as feeling, the impulse to retaliate as a mental state, and the presence of anger together with its sustaining conditions as material for contemplation of dhammas.

These distinctions help us observe more clearly. They do not imply that lived experience consists of four entirely separate drawers: the drawers belong to the same cabinet.

2. The purposes of practice

The practice aims to weaken by knowing greed, hatred, delusion, and habits that produce suffering, including unwholesome kamma. It helps us recognise reactions as they form so that we can respond consciously and with proper reflection.

It also develops an understanding of the arising, alteration, and cessation of conditioned phenomena. We learn that body and mind cannot be possessed as something permanent and entirely subject to our wishes. In this way, practice develops the path towards dispassion, relinquishment, and liberation.

Conscious composure in daily life is a useful benefit. The deeper purpose of satipaṭṭhāna, however, is to understand experience accurately and diminish the clinging directed towards it. Experience appropriated in this way constitutes the world of saṃsāra.

3. The scriptural foundation: Ardency clear comprehension and mindfulness

Pāli, from the body-contemplation formula in DN 22:

Kāye kāyānupassī viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā, vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassaṃ.

Translation:

One dwells contemplating the body as body, ardent, clearly comprehending, and mindful, having set aside covetousness and distress concerning the world.

Corresponding formulas apply to feeling, mind, and dhammas (DN 22).

Term	General meaning	Expression in practice
Ātāpī	Ardent; making a serious effort in training	Knowing one is prone to anger and deliberately practising a pause before speaking
Sampajāno	Clearly comprehending what is occurring and what one is doing	Recognising that one is about to say something hurtful
Satimā	Mindful; not forgetting the object and direction of practice	Remembering to return to body, feeling, and mind when carried away by events

Accordingly, “non-judgemental” should mean refraining from self-condemnation and from hastily constructing additional narratives, while still distinguishing the wholesome from the unwholesome and the beneficial from the harmful.

Recognising that “anger is present in the mind” does not necessarily require concluding that “I am a bad person.” Once anger is recognised, however, we need to prevent it from producing speech or actions that cause suffering.

The formula describes both body contemplation and the qualities necessary for its practice. To understand it merely as “paying attention to the body” would omit effort, comprehension, and the setting aside of covetousness and distress.

A translation that follows its grammatical structure closely is: “*One dwells contemplating the body in the body, ardent, clearly comprehending, and mindful, having removed covetousness and distress concerning the world.*” A familiar practice-oriented rendering is: “Dwell contemplating the body as body, ardent, clearly comprehending, and mindful, restraining covetousness and distress concerning the world.”

The formula occurs in both MN 10 and DN 22. The following discussion distinguishes lexical and grammatical meaning from teaching examples devised to support practice.

3.1 The structure of the sentence

The subject is bhikkhu, “a monk,” supplied in the preceding full sentence. Kāyānupassī, ātāpī, sampajāno, and satimā all describe that practitioner. Four questions clarify the construction:

- What does the practitioner do? Dwells or abides: viharati.
- What is contemplated? The body as body: kāye kāyānupassī.
- With what qualities? Ardency, clear comprehension, and mindfulness.
- What is set aside? Covetousness and distress concerning the world.

3.2 Kāye

Kāya means “body”; here it refers to the physical body. Kāye is its locative form. The locative expresses location or the domain under consideration, so the term may be understood as “within the domain of the body,” “with regard to the body,” or “in the body.”

It does not instruct us to search for a mysterious entity deep inside the body. It specifies the field of observation.

When sitting, a practitioner may recognise that the body is seated, the feet touch the floor, the back is upright or curved, breathing is occurring, and the shoulders are tense or relaxed. These are practical ways of returning to the body as experienced.

For example, while waiting for a family member to telephone, we may repeatedly think, “Why have they not called?” Suddenly, we notice a bouncing foot and a tightly

gripped telephone. Returning to kāye means recognising, “The hand is gripping; the foot is moving; the body is sitting.” We re-establish the object under observation.

Practice reminder: “How is the body manifesting at this moment?”

3.3 Kāyānupassī

The compound can be analysed as kāya + anupassī. Kāya means “body”; anupassī means “one who observes, follows, or contemplates.” The related verb anupassati means “to contemplate” or “to examine.” The prefix anu- contributes a sense of following or repeated observation. This prefix alone does not justify demanding completely uninterrupted awareness from beginners.

Why does the expression repeat the word “body” in kāye kāyānupassī? The repetition is not merely stylistic. It directs the practitioner to recognise the body as body rather than immediately turning it into a narrative about personal worth.

In the commentarial interpretation, the repetition keeps observation within its proper domain and guards against attributing to the body qualities inconsistent with its nature. This is a traditional interpretation, which should be distinguished from grammar alone.

Observation of the body	An added narrative
Some hairs have turned grey.	I have lost my worth.
The skin is changing.	Nobody will love me any more.
This body is ageing.	This must not happen to me.

Body contemplation helps distinguish bodily change from the conclusions we impose upon it. It does not prohibit concepts, reflection, or bodily care. The discourses also include reflection on bodily parts, material elements, and bodily dissolution. Body contemplation therefore cannot be reduced to sensation accompanied by an absolute prohibition on thought (DN 22, contemplation of the body).

When walking, we recognise the movement of the feet as they lift, move, and settle. If the thought arises, “My walking meditation looks better than that person’s,” we recognise the intrusion of comparison and return to walking.

Practice reminder: “Know the body as it is, and recognise the story when you add one.”

3.4 Viharati

Viharati means “dwells,” “resides,” “abides,” or “maintains a way of living.” Here it indicates dwelling in contemplation of the body. It suggests sustained practice, not a single brief recognition treated as a completed task.

Abiding does not mean remaining in one posture or forcing the mind into immobility. The object may change with activity: when sitting, know sitting; when rising, know rising; when walking, know walking; when eating, know the activity of eating. Recognising forgetfulness and returning are themselves part of training.

We might spend ten minutes observing the breath in the morning, then notice the hand lifting the kettle and the water

being poured while making tea. In this way, observation becomes part of everyday living.

Practice reminder: “Keep returning within the activity you are doing.”

3.5 Ātāpī

Ātāpī means “ardent,” “energetic,” or “diligent in training.” It is related to ātāpa, “heat,” and expresses application and diligence in the context of practice. It does not require producing a physical sensation of heat. It describes the effort not to drift along under the influence of defilements.

An ardent practitioner returns after noticing distraction, stops feeding conditions that sustain anger, continues practising even when the day is unpleasant, and adjusts effort to avoid strain. Ardency needs clear comprehension. Effort without understanding can become forced tension or a pursuit of achievement.

During sitting meditation, the mind may wander into work concerns. We can abandon the practice with “I might as well keep thinking,” attack ourselves with “Why am I so poor at this?”, or recognise “thinking” and return to the breath. The third response combines direction with freedom from additional self-reproach.

Practice reminder: “Recognise that you have wandered, and return gently but earnestly.”

3.6 Sampajāno

Sampajāno is related to sampajānāti, “to know clearly” or “to comprehend.” In practice, clear comprehension is an accurate understanding of what is occurring. Applied to everyday activity, it helps us consider purpose, suitability, and the manner in which we act.

The commentaries distinguish four aspects: purpose, suitability, the domain of practice, and non-delusion. These are commentarial elaborations, not four separate meanings explicitly contained in the word itself.

Clear comprehension should be distinguished from attention alone. A person may scrutinise every word of a message while planning retaliation. Attention is present, but that alone does not constitute the clear comprehension intended by this training formula. We need to recognise, “I am reading this message, feeling irritated, and looking for words that will hurt the other person.” Such recognition enables us to adjust the action we are preparing to take.

Suppose we are about to say, “You are always selfish!” Clear comprehension reveals that the sentence judges the person's whole character, that our immediate purpose may be to cause pain, and that this manner of speaking is unlikely to resolve the disagreement. We can instead say, “I am overwhelmed by the housework. I would like us to redistribute it.”

Practice reminder: “What am I doing, for what purpose, and is this approach suitable?” This is an application question, not a word-for-word translation of sampajāno.

3.7 Satimā

Satimā is the masculine nominative singular of satimant, “one who possesses sati.” Sati is associated with remembering, recollecting, and not forgetting. In this practice, it means not forgetting the object and direction of training, thereby sustaining recognition.

In body contemplation, we remember to keep the body within the field of observation. When the mind is carried away, we remember to return.

Mindfulness does not necessarily require continuous silent labelling. Words such as “walking,” “sitting,” or “breathing in” may help beginners, but repeating words without recognising what is happening is insufficient. We may silently repeat “chewing” while mentally arguing with someone who is not present. What is needed then is to recognise that the mind has wandered and return to eating.

Quality	Principal function	Example while washing dishes
Satimā	Not forgetting the practice	Remembering to return to awareness of the body
Sampajāno	Clearly comprehending what is happening	Recognising tense hands and excessive haste
Ātāpī	Sustaining and adjusting effort	Reducing pressure in the hands and continuing when the mind wanders again

These distinctions assist learning; in practice, the qualities support one another.

Practice reminder: “Do not forget what is being observed.”

3.8 Vineyya

Vineyya is an indeclinable verbal form, commonly called an absolutive. Here it means “having removed” or “having subdued.” It is related to *vineti*, which can mean “to lead away,” “remove,” or “discipline,” depending on context. Translating it simply as “recognising” would fail to convey its full meaning.

A rendering such as “in order to restrain” emphasises the purpose of practice. A closer grammatical analysis, however, must acknowledge the sense of having set something aside.

This does not mean that all defilements must be eradicated before practice can begin. The formula describes a practice in which covetousness and distress are set aside rather than continually nourished. Vineyya alone does not establish that the practitioner has eradicated greed and hatred through the noble path.

In daily training, we may temporarily stop nourishing a stream of covetousness or distress and return to the object. It may later reappear and require further attention.

While observing the breath, for example, we remember words that angered us and begin constructing replies. Practising vineyya means recognising that we are feeding

this train of thought, ceasing to elaborate it, and returning to the body. If the issue still needs attention, we address it at a suitable time.

Merely saying “I know that I am angry” while continuing to imagine revenge does not fully express the setting aside of covetousness and distress.

Practice reminder: “See what binds the mind and stop supplying it with fuel.”

3.9 Loke

Loke is the locative singular of loka, “world.” In this expression, “concerning the world” indicates that covetousness and distress are directed towards the contents of lived experience.

The commentarial tradition associates the “world” here with the body and, more broadly, the five aggregates subject to clinging. Loke therefore should not be understood merely as external society or other people. In the practical interpretation offered here, the experiential world includes both external and internal dimensions. Internally, we can distinguish information registered through experience from imagined constructions elaborated from that information.

Objects of covetousness and distress may include possessions, praise, status, relationships, health, appearance, pleasant feelings, and even a peaceful state recently experienced in meditation.

Yesterday's sitting may have been pleasant, whereas today's mind is distracted. We think, “I must recover

yesterday's state!" Even a meditative state can become an object of insistence.

Practice reminder: "Towards what is the mind directing covetousness or distress?"

3.10 Abhijjhādomanassam

This compound combines abhijjhā and domanassa.

Abhijjhā means covetousness or craving. Here it refers to desire characterised by appropriation or absorption in an object. It should not be equated with every wish. The wish to learn the Dhamma correctly, care for one's family, or fulfil responsibilities must be assessed in relation to motivation and conduct.

In meditation, the thought "I must keep this pleasant feeling; it must not disappear" reveals a demand attached to feeling. That demand is what needs observation.

Domanassa means mental displeasure, distress, sorrow, or dissatisfaction. It is not synonymous with bodily pain, nor is it identical to every form of anger. In explaining the function of the practice, the commentaries connect covetousness and distress with prominent hindrances such as sensual desire and ill will. In word-by-word translation, however, mental distress must still be distinguished from an intention to harm.

For example: "I cannot settle today. I am useless!" In addition to distraction, there is distress generated by judgement and self-attack. A more appropriate response is:

“The mind is difficult to settle today. I will review the conditions and continue with suitable effort.”

Development	What may be recognised
A pleasant state occurs.	Pleasantness is known.
We want it to remain according to our wishes.	Covetousness may be receiving nourishment.
The state changes.	Change is known.
We become upset because we cannot retain it.	Distress may arise.

The practical task is to recognise and set aside the covetousness and distress that govern the mind while continuing to care for the body and attend to necessary work.

3.11 Applying the whole sentence

Imagine a family member saying, “You never listen to me!”

Kāye

Application: Return to the body: a tense jaw, heat in the chest, rapid breathing.

Kāyānupassī

Application: Observe these manifestations and distinguish them from “I am being disrespected.”

Viharati

Application: Sustain recognition while standing, sitting, and conversing.

Ātāpī

Application: Make an effort not to speak hurtfully at once.

Sampajāno

Application: Recognise the urge to retaliate and understand the consequences of the words about to be spoken.

Satimā

Application: Remember the practice when drawn into the argument.

Vineyya

Application: Set aside the continued rehearsing of retorts and the struggle to win.

Loke

Application: Recognise what is being grasped: approval or the image “I am always right.”

Abhijjhādomanassam

Application: Recognise the demand that the other person agree and the distress when this does not happen.

We might say, “I am tense and want to argue. Give me a moment to settle. Then I would like to hear what has left you feeling unheard.”

This illustrates the overall spirit of the formula. The additional recognition of feelings and mental states also shows how the four domains support one another.

A practice paraphrase for students is: “I return to observing the body as it manifests, with persistence, clear comprehension, and mindfulness, while setting aside the covetousness and distress that pull the mind away.” This is an applied paraphrase, not a literal translation.

4. Three core steps in practice

The following procedure is a teaching framework, not a three-step formula quoted verbatim from a discourse.

Step	Purpose	Application
1. Recognise	Know what is occurring.	“The jaw is tense”; “unpleasantness is present”; “the mind wants to resist.”
2. See clearly	Recognise conditions, change, and consequences.	“The more I replay those words, the stronger anger becomes.”
3. Release clinging and adjust	Stop nourishing unwholesome reactions and act appropriately.	Pause the argument, listen, clarify information, or correct a mistake.

Recognition is the beginning. When unwholesome states continue to be nourished, we need to adjust attention, thinking, and action.

5. Understanding impermanence suffering and not-self

Impermanence (anicca): whatever arises through conditions changes. Anger may intensify, diminish,

temporarily subside, and return when we revisit an old incident.

Suffering or unsatisfactoriness (dukkha): beyond immediate pain, this term includes the dissatisfaction involved in demanding lasting happiness from what changes.

Not-self (anattā): phenomena do not constitute a permanent self that exercises complete control according to its wishes. Training nevertheless has effects because body and mind respond to conditions.

Understanding not-self reduces identification with defilements while encouraging us to attend to conditions that can be changed.

Scope: this is a resource for education and spiritual practice within the Buddhist tradition. It does not replace medical or psychological treatment. Those experiencing serious psychological difficulties should consult a qualified professional and an experienced teacher to select an appropriate practice.

CHAPTER II: THE FOUR DOMAINS OF PRACTICE

1. Contemplation of the body (Kāyānupassanā)

Illustrative story The family meal

A fictional situation prepared for this lesson.

Lan has cooked dinner throughout the week. Today, both children demand phở instead of rice, and her husband sends a message saying that he will be late. She stands in the kitchen, still chopping vegetables, while thoughts circle in her head: “Why does nobody think about me? I have been cooking all week, and nobody seems to notice.”

Suddenly, she notices how tightly she is gripping the knife. The blade comes down hurriedly and heavily. Her shoulders have risen almost to her ears, her jaw is clenched, and her breathing is short and rapid, felt high in her throat. She pauses for a second simply to recognise, “The body is tense. The hand is gripping. The shoulders are raised. The jaw is clenched. Breathing is rapid.”

This is contemplation of the body. At this point, she is not trying to discover an explanation; she is recognising how the body manifests while the mind is carried away.

She relaxes her shoulders, loosens her grip, and takes a slightly longer breath. Tears gather but do not fall. She recognises unpleasantness: this is contemplation of feeling. Rather than immediately judging, “I am sad” or “I am weak,” she simply knows, “Unpleasant feeling is present.”

She then notices the urge to complain, send an angry message, put down the saucepan, and say, “Get your own dinner!” This is contemplation of mind: anger and resistance are present. She recognises anger without concluding that she is a bad person.

She recalls, “He has sometimes been late on other evenings when I cooked. Each time, I insist that today he must arrive on time and praise the meal. Yet being late does not necessarily mean that he does not care. Sometimes a client calls at the last moment.” This is an initial application of contemplation of dhammas: recognising a condition that sustains suffering, namely the demand, “Because I have cooked, you must be here.”

She does not force anger to disappear; she simply stops feeding it as much. She writes, “Dinner is ready. Please reheat it when you get home. I am a little tired today.” The message neither attacks nor conceals her situation. It states it honestly.

Dinner is not perfect. The children still argue that they want phở. Her husband arrives fifteen minutes late. Yet Lan has not spoken hurtfully. That evening, she writes in her journal: “Today I recognised the tension in my shoulders earlier, while chopping vegetables, rather than only after anger had erupted.”

The focus is to recognise the body precisely as it manifests.



The body is often a convenient starting point because posture, movement, and physical contact are relatively easy to recognise. When thought carries the mind away, feeling the feet touch the ground or recognising breathing can bring us back to present experience.

Scriptural basis

From the section on postures in DN 22:

Gacchanto vā ‘gacchāmī’ti pajānāti.

“When walking, one clearly knows, ‘I am walking.’”

From the section on clear comprehension in daily activities:

Asite pīte khāyite sāyite sampajānakārī hoti.

“When eating, drinking, chewing, and tasting, one acts with clear comprehension” (DN 22, contemplation of the body).

Knowing that we are walking is more than repeating the word “walking.” What matters is recognising the actual activity.

Daily practice exercises

Breathing. When convenient, spend about a minute feeling the breath where it is clearest, for example at the nose or in abdominal movement. Use the reminder, “Know the in-breath; know the out-breath.” Progress may appear as earlier recognition of wandering and an easier return. If you are merely imagining the breath, return to actual sensation. Do not force breathing to slow down.

Changing posture. Recognise standing up, sitting down, turning, or lying down. “Standing up” can serve as a brief reminder. Progress consists in remembering practice at the transition itself. Use the movement of rising or sitting as the cue.

Walking, standing, sitting, and lying down. When walking, know the steps; when standing, know the body's support; when seated or lying down, know contact points. Reminders include “feet touching the ground” and “the body is supported.” Mindfulness can occur in multiple postures. Do not confine meditation to sitting; adapt practice to the activity.

Ordinary activities. Choose two or three activities, such as eating, washing dishes, brushing teeth, or bathing. Reminders include “chewing” or “water touching the hands.” Progress means doing these activities less absent-mindedly. If you forget, begin again with the next movement; there is no need to repeat the whole activity.

Tension and relaxation. Notice the shoulders, jaw, chest, and abdomen, and release unnecessary tension. Use “tension is present” or “softening.” Earlier recognition of tension is a sign of progress. Do not force immediate relaxation; change posture or rest when needed.

Methodological distinctions

Hourly reminders, observing the abdomen rise and fall, and scanning the body from head to foot are ways of organising practice. They should not be presented as verbatim instructions from MN 10 or DN 22.

Neither slower breathing nor slower activity is a compulsory measure of progress. A practitioner may work quickly when circumstances require while clearly comprehending what is being done.

Body contemplation in the discourses also includes bodily parts, material elements, and bodily dissolution. The exercises above select introductory practices suitable for daily life.

For example, while washing dishes, we recall the morning's argument and begin gripping a plate tightly. As soon as we notice the tension, we feel water touching the

skin, reduce our grip, and continue washing. The earlier issue may still require resolution. Returning to the body helps us stop mentally continuing the argument while washing up.

Practice reminder: “Feel the body living and acting; do not merely think about it.”

The fourteen body-contemplation subjects in MN 10 and DN 22

In MN 10 and DN 22, body contemplation comprises six principal groups. Counting the nine cemetery contemplations separately gives fourteen subjects. The following list covers the body-contemplation sections of these two discourses; the broader scriptural scope is discussed below.

No.	Subject	Group
1	In-breathing and out-breathing	Mindfulness of breathing
2	Walking, standing, sitting, lying down, and bodily postures	Postures
3	Clear comprehension in everyday activities	Clear comprehension
4	Bodily parts and substances	Unattractiveness of the body
5	Earth, water, fire, and air	Four elements
6	A swollen, discoloured, decaying corpse	First cemetery contemplation

No.	Subject	Group
7	A corpse being eaten by animals	Second cemetery contemplation
8	A skeleton with flesh and blood, held together by sinews	Third cemetery contemplation
9	A fleshless skeleton smeared with blood, held together by sinews	Fourth cemetery contemplation
10	A skeleton without flesh or blood, held together by sinews	Fifth cemetery contemplation
11	Disconnected bones scattered in various places	Sixth cemetery contemplation
12	Bones white as shells	Seventh cemetery contemplation
13	Bones heaped together, more than a year old	Eighth cemetery contemplation
14	Bones decayed and crumbled to dust	Ninth cemetery contemplation

The first group Mindfulness of breathing

Ānāpānāpabbhaṃ is the section on in-breathing and out-breathing. In MN 10 and DN 22, it presents four exercises, each applying to both inhalation and exhalation.

Knowing a long breath

Representative Pāli: Dīghaṃ assasāmī; dīghaṃ passasāmī

Practice: Know a long in-breath and a long out-breath as long.

Knowing a short breath

Representative Pāli: Rassaṃ assasāmī; rassaṃ passasāmī

Practice: Know a short in-breath and a short out-breath as short.

Experiencing the whole body

Representative Pāli: Sabbakāyapaṭisaṃvedī

Practice: Train to breathe in and out experiencing the whole body.

Calming bodily formation

Representative Pāli: Passambhayaṃ kāyasaṅkhāraṃ

Practice: Train to breathe in and out calming bodily formation.

Sabbakāya receives different interpretations: the entire process or “body” of breathing, or the whole physical body. Detailed instruction should state which interpretation it adopts.

These two mindfulness discourses present the four steps above. The complete sixteen-step breathing sequence should not be inserted here and described as the verbatim list from

their body-contemplation sections (DN 22, breathing section).

The second group Contemplation of postures

Iriyāpathapabbam is the section on bodily postures. Its four main postures are:

Posture	Pāli	Recognition
Walking	<i>Gacchant o</i>	When walking, know that one is walking.
Standing	<i>Ṭhito</i>	When standing, know that one is standing.
Sitting	<i>Nisinno</i>	When sitting, know that one is sitting.
Lying down	<i>Sayāno</i>	When lying down, know that one is lying down.

The discourse also states:

Yathā yathā vā panassa kāyo paṇihito hoti, tathā tathā naṃ pajānāti.

“In whatever way the body is positioned, one clearly knows it accordingly.”

The practical scope therefore includes particular positions and transitions such as bending, leaning, turning, standing up, and sitting down. These movements are applications of the principle stated in the discourse.

The third group Clear comprehension in daily activity

Sampajānapabbam is the section on clear comprehension. The discourse lists the following activities:

Going forward and returning

Pāli: Abhikkante paṭikkante

Application: Clearly comprehend advancing and returning.

Looking ahead and around

Pāli: Ālokite vilokite

Application: Clearly comprehend looking.

Bending and extending

Pāli: Samiñjite pasārite

Application: Clearly comprehend flexing and extending the limbs.

Carrying robes and bowl

Pāli: Saṅghāṭipattacīvaradhāraṇe

Application: Clearly comprehend carrying and using robes and an alms bowl.

Eating, drinking, chewing, tasting

Pāli: Asite pīte khāyite sāyite

Application: Clearly comprehend eating and drinking.

Defecating and urinating

Pāli: Uccārapassāvakamme

Application: Clearly comprehend bodily elimination.

Walking, standing, sitting

Pāli: Gate ṭhite nisinne

Application: Maintain clear comprehension in these postures.

Sleeping and waking

Pāli: Sutte jāgarite

Application: Apply clear comprehension in relation to sleeping and waking.

Speaking and silence

Pāli: Bhāsite tuṇhībhāve

Application: Clearly comprehend speaking and remaining silent.

The repeated phrase is sampajānakārī hoti: “one acts with clear comprehension.”

For lay practitioners, dressing, washing dishes, brushing teeth, opening a door, and using a telephone can be practised according to this principle. These are contemporary applications, not activities listed verbatim in the discourse (DN 22, clear-comprehension section).

The fourth group Contemplation of bodily constituents

Paṭikūlamanasikārapabbam concerns attention to the body's unattractive nature, traditionally called contemplation of bodily impurity. In the Pāli versions of MN 10 and DN 22 used in the source, the list comprises thirty-one constituents.

No.	Pāli	English
1	<i>Kesā</i>	Head hair
2	<i>Lomā</i>	Body hair
3	<i>Nakhā</i>	Nails
4	<i>Dantā</i>	Teeth
5	<i>Taco</i>	Skin
6	<i>Maṃsaṃ</i>	Flesh
7	<i>Nhāru</i>	Sinews
8	<i>Aṭṭhi</i>	Bones
9	<i>Aṭṭhimīṇjaṃ</i>	Bone marrow
10	<i>Vakkaṃ</i>	Kidneys
11	<i>Hadayaṃ</i>	Heart
12	<i>Yakanaṃ</i>	Liver
13	<i>Kilomakaṃ</i>	Membranous tissue enclosing internal organs
14	<i>Pihakaṃ</i>	Spleen
15	<i>Papphāsaṃ</i>	Lungs
16	<i>Antaṃ</i>	Intestines
17	<i>Antaguṇaṃ</i>	Mesentery or connecting intestinal tissue
18	<i>Udariyaṃ</i>	Stomach contents
19	<i>Karīsaṃ</i>	Faeces
20	<i>Pittaṃ</i>	Bile
21	<i>Semhaṃ</i>	Phlegm or mucus

No.	Pāli	English
22	<i>Pubbo</i>	Pus
23	<i>Lohitaṃ</i>	Blood
24	<i>Sedo</i>	Sweat
25	<i>Medo</i>	Fat
26	<i>Assu</i>	Tears
27	<i>Vasā</i>	Liquid fat or grease
28	<i>Kheḷo</i>	Saliva
29	<i>Singhāṇikā</i>	Nasal mucus
30	<i>Lasikā</i>	Joint fluid
31	<i>Muttaṃ</i>	Urine

Two textual points require attention. The familiar list of thirty-two bodily parts adds matthaluṅgaṃ, the brain. That list should be distinguished from the thirty-one-part list in the versions of MN 10 and DN 22 discussed here. In addition, ancient anatomical terms such as kilomakaṃ and antagaṇaṃ have been translated differently; traditional renderings should not automatically be treated as exact equivalents of modern anatomical terminology.

The discourse compares this observation to opening a bag containing different kinds of grain and recognising each kind. Its purpose is to see the body as constituted by many components and thereby reduce fascination with its overall appearance (DN 22, bodily-parts section).

The fifth group Contemplation of the four elements

Dhātumanasikārapabbaṃ is the section on attending to the elements. The discourse states:

*Atthi imasmiṃ kāye pathavīdhātu āpodhātu tejodhātu
vāyodhātu.*

“In this body there are the earth element, the water element, the fire element, and the air element.”

Element	Pāli	General practical explanation
Earth	<i>Pathavīdhātu</i>	Hardness, softness, and solidity
Water	<i>Āpodhātu</i>	Cohesion, binding, and fluid constituents
Fire	<i>Tejodhātu</i>	Temperature, heat, and cold
Air	<i>Vāyodhātu</i>	Movement, tension, and support

The final column provides teaching explanations; these are not complete definitions explicitly supplied in that brief passage of DN 22. The aim is to regard the body in terms of its constituent elements and reduce attachment to it as a solid, enduring “I” (DN 22, elements section).

The sixth group Nine cemetery contemplations

Navasivathikapabbaṃ is the section on the nine cemetery contemplations.

1. A corpse one, two, or three days after death: swollen, discoloured, and decaying.

2. A corpse being eaten by birds, animals, and other creatures.

3. A skeleton with flesh and blood, held together by sinews.

4. A fleshless skeleton smeared with blood, held together by sinews.

5. A skeleton without flesh or blood, still held together by sinews.

6. Disconnected bones scattered about: hand, foot, knee, thigh, hip, spinal, skull, and other bones.

7. Bones white as shells.

8. Bones heaped together, more than a year old.

9. Bones decayed and crumbled to dust.

After each observation, practitioners apply it to their own body:

Ayaṃ pi kho kāyo evaṃdhammo evaṃbhāvī evaṃanaṭṭho.

“This body too has such a nature, will become like that, and has not gone beyond that condition.”

The essential point is to recognise that one's own body is subject to dissolution. This is more than viewing a corpse as an unrelated object (DN 22, cemetery contemplations).

Modes of contemplation common to all subjects

After each section, the discourse repeats the following approaches. They describe how to contemplate; they do not add new objects to the fourteen-subject list.

Internally

Pāli: Ajjhataṃ

Meaning: Contemplate the body internally, commonly interpreted as one's own body.

Externally

Pāli: Bahiddhā

Meaning: Contemplate the body externally, commonly interpreted as others' bodies.

Internally and externally

Pāli: Ajjhatabhiddhā

Meaning: Contemplate both.

Arising

Pāli: Samudayadhammānupassī

Meaning: Observe the arising aspect of the body.

Passing away

Pāli: Vayadhammānupassī

Meaning: Observe alteration and cessation.

Arising and passing away

Pāli: Samudayavayadhammānupassī

Meaning: Observe both.

Establishing mindfulness that there is a body

Pāli: Atthi kāyo

Meaning: Maintain recognition sufficient for knowledge and mindfulness.

Non-clinging

Pāli: Na ca kiñci loke upādiyati

Meaning: Do not cling to anything in the world.

The subjects answer “What is observed?” These approaches answer “How is it observed?” (DN 22, body-contemplation refrain).

Across the wider canon, mindfulness of the body is not confined to this list. The Kāyagatāsati Sutta (MN 119) also presents the four jhānas, with descriptions of their pervasion of the entire body. The precise designation is therefore “the fourteen subjects of body contemplation in MN 10 and DN 22,” not “every method of bodily mindfulness in the entire canon.”

When the scope is expanded to MN 119, the four jhānas and their respective images of bodily pervasion must also be included.

Jhāna	Qualities described	Simile in MN 119
<i>First, paṭhama jhāna</i>	Rapture and pleasure born of seclusion from sensuality and unwholesome states, with applied and sustained thought	Bath powder kneaded with water, thoroughly moistened inside and out

Jhāna	Qualities described	Simile in MN 119
<i>Second, dutiya jhāna</i>	Rapture and pleasure born of concentration; applied and sustained thought have subsided	A lake permeated by cool water from an internal spring
<i>Third, tatiya jhāna</i>	Rapture has faded; pleasure remains with equanimity, mindfulness, and clear comprehension	Lotuses immersed in water, permeated by coolness from root to tip
<i>Fourth, catuttha jhāna</i>	Neither painful nor pleasant feeling; mindfulness purified by equanimity; a pure, bright mind pervading the body	A person covered from head to foot with a white cloth

The fourth jhāna is specifically described in terms of a pure, bright mind pervading the whole body, not rapture and pleasure doing so (MN 119, the four jhānas).

Seeing the body as it is

Meditation lyrics, to be sung slowly, gently, and without haste.

Verse 1 Walking standing lying down and sitting

*Taking a step, know stepping;
Coming to rest, know stillness.
Sitting quietly, or lying down,
Know the body's presence clearly.*

*Breathing in, know breathing;
Breathing out, know ease.
Seek no ruler in the body,
Amid life's meetings and departures.*

Refrain

*See the body as it is;
Add no "I" to what appears.
Conditions gather; then disperse,
Like clouds borne on the wind.*

*Simply recognise what happens;
Do not claim it as "my own."
Unclench the tightly grasping hand;
Let the heart grow light beneath the open sky.*

Verse 2 The body's unattractive nature

*Hair and body hair, nails and teeth;
Skin conceals the sinews and the flesh.
Blood and sweat and tears are here:
There is more than beauty in this form.*

*Look closely at the body;
Be less enchanted by its shape.
Neither hate nor decorate it in the mind;
Care for it from day to day.*

Verse 3 The body's impermanence

*Breath comes in and breath goes out;
Not one breath remains for ever.
The body changes every moment;
It does not wait until tomorrow.*

*Rosy cheeks will lose their colour;
Dark hair, too, will turn to grey.
See the changes taking place;
Gradually loosen what binds.*

Refrain

*See the body as it is;
Add no “I” to what appears.
Conditions gather, then disperse,
Like clouds borne on the wind.*

*Simply recognise what happens;
Do not claim it as “my own.”
Unclench the tightly grasping hand;
Let the heart grow light beneath the open sky.*

Bridge No independent master

*The body moves: know it clearly.
Heat or cold appears: know that too.
Among the things now manifest,
No permanent “I” can be found.*

*Even the knowing that is present
Has arisen through conditions.
Do not install an owner at the centre,
Taking every experience as self.*

Ending Gradually slower

*Walking, standing, lying down, or sitting,
See the body's arising and passing.
Do not take the body as “I”;
Do not take the knowing as “I.”*

*Still care for the body, morning and evening;
Still care for the people around you.
Release only the grasping
At what will finally fall apart.*

*No name to hold, no foothold left;
Only breathing through the body.
A lifetime spent clutching tightly,
Exchanged for one release,
As the insistence on “myself” grows quiet.*

2. Contemplation of feeling (Vedanānupassanā)

Illustrative story Praise and criticism

A fictional situation prepared for this lesson.

Minh has worked as an accountant for three years. During the month-end meeting, his supervisor praises a new colleague: “Lan's report is very clear. We should learn from her.” Minh sits quietly, nods, and smiles in agreement. Inside, however, a slight heaviness gathers in his chest. A thought passes through his mind: “I have been here three years. Why have I never received praise like that?”

He recognises the presence of feeling: unpleasantness, not intense but unmistakable. It is not an ache, but a heavy, disappointed quality. This is unpleasant feeling.

Another thought follows: “Perhaps I should prepare reports differently. Or perhaps I am not as capable as Lan.” He recognises a comparing, self-deprecating mind. This is contemplation of mind: recognising the habit of devaluing oneself when another person receives recognition.

He does not immediately try to drive the thought away, recognising that forceful dismissal may simply allow it to return in another form. Instead, he observes its conditions. It followed hearing praise; the supervisor offered that praise because Lan's report was clear. The unpleasantness, then, is not contained in the praise itself; it is associated with the way he links the praise to his own worth.

This is a practical application of contemplation of dhammas: recognising conditions of arising. In the story's

teaching sequence, contact involves hearing praise; feeling is unpleasant; perception recognises that someone else is being praised; formations include the impulse to compare and devalue oneself; and conceptual proliferation (papañca) expands into “I am inferior” and “I am not appreciated.” This is an account of the experience, not a claim that these factors always arise as separate, successive Abhidhamma stages.

He asks himself, “How would I feel if I lost this, if praise did not come to me?” The answer is sadness. Yet he also sees that this sadness does not establish a lack of ability. He is demanding recognition at the time he wants it. Covetousness (abhijjhā) is attaching itself to his sense of worth.

After the meeting, he approaches Lan's desk. “Congratulations. Your report really is clear.” His words are not forced: he has recognised jealousy without hiding or feeding it. Lan smiles. “I have learned a great deal from you too.” Minh returns to his desk feeling lighter.

That evening, he writes: “I recognised unpleasant feeling when someone else received praise. I noticed comparison. I did not follow the impulse to diminish her. I felt lighter, but I still need to observe whether comparison returns.”

The focus is to recognise the pleasant, unpleasant, or neither-painful-nor-pleasant quality of experience.



Distinguishing feeling from emotion

Here, vedanā does not mean the whole of an emotion or every bodily sensation. When hearing criticism, a tightening chest is a bodily manifestation; the unpleasant quality of the experience is feeling; anger, wounded pride, or fear are complex mental states; and “They look down on me” is an interpretation.

Distinguishing these aspects helps us recognise what is present without merging everything into the single judgement “I am suffering.”

Scriptural basis

From MN 10, contemplation of feeling:

***Sukhaṃ vā vedanaṃ vedayamāno ‘sukhaṃ vedanaṃ
vedayāmī’ti pajānāti.***

“When experiencing a pleasant feeling, one clearly knows, ‘I am experiencing a pleasant feeling.’”

*Adukkhamasukhaṃ vā vedanaṃ vedayamāno
‘adukkkhamasukhaṃ vedanaṃ vedayāmī’ti pajānāti.*

“When experiencing a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, one clearly knows, ‘I am experiencing a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling.’”

“Neither painful nor pleasant” closely renders adukkhamasukha. Such feeling is not identical to wise equanimity. Someone may experience neither marked pleasure nor displeasure while still lacking clear comprehension.

Daily practice exercises

Pleasant feeling. Recognise pleasantness when enjoying food, receiving praise, or seeing something beautiful. Use “pleasantness is present.” Progress involves recognising both the pleasant feeling and any wish to prolong it. Do not classify all enjoyment as greed; observe whether insistence or appropriation arises.

Unpleasant feeling. Recognise unpleasantness when in pain, tired, or hearing unwelcome words. Use “unpleasantness is present.” Progress may consist in less immediately turning unpleasantness into resistance. There is no need to endure pain to prove the quality of one's practice; harmful conditions should still be addressed.

Neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling. Observe experiences in which neither pleasure nor pain is prominent.

Use “neither painful nor pleasant.” Progress may be the recognition of experiences previously overlooked. Do not equate neutral feeling with liberation or profound peace.

From feeling to reactive tendencies. Observe impulses to retain, oppose, or seek stimulation. Use “feeling is present; an intention is present.” Progress involves earlier recognition before acting. If recognition comes only after a reaction, use it to learn rather than to blame yourself.

Why contemplation of feeling matters

In the Sallattha Sutta, the Discourse on the Arrow (SN 36.6), the Buddha distinguishes experienced pain from the additional mental suffering produced through resistance and lack of understanding. The image of two arrows shows how the mind's relationship to feeling affects the suffering added to it.

In daily life, we can recognise: “Unpleasantness is already present. If I keep feeding the impulse to retaliate, I am adding suffering.”

This does not imply that every reaction arises only from pleasant or unpleasant feeling. Neutral feeling, lack of understanding, memory, habit, and modes of attention also matter. Feeling is an important observation point within a network of conditions.

For example, after a delicious bite of cake, we recognise pleasantness. Then comes the thought, “I must have more immediately.” We can pause to distinguish, “The pleasant taste is being experienced; the wish for more is also present.”

We then consider whether we are still hungry or merely seeking to repeat the pleasure.

Wanting more food is not invariably greed. The decision should be assessed in its actual circumstances.

The reactive tendencies described here are possibilities, not inevitable outcomes.

Practice reminder: “Recognise feeling so that liking and disliking do not compel action.”

The innkeeper and the passing guests

A humorous teaching song.

Verse 1 What exactly is feeling

*Sitting in meditation, a mosquito bites your seat;
Itching and discomfort: is feeling there, my friend?
A compliment arrives and delight begins to stir;
Pleasant feeling makes its entrance, plain to see.*

*At times there is irritation, weariness, or sorrow;
Unpleasant feeling accompanies the scene.
When neither pleasure nor pain stands out,
Neutral feeling is there: do not fall asleep!*

Chorus Where and how to contemplate

*Where should feeling be observed?
Do not fly into the sky to search!
Look where feeling rises, settles,
And appears in bodily and mental life.*

*Right there, within the feeling,
Add no seasoning; bring no “I.”
Know pain simply as pain;
No need to cry, “Why must this happen to me?”*

*Sit and sip a cup of morning dew;
Watch feeling perform its passing play.*

Verse 2 The observing attitude

*When pleasure comes, do not swallow the hook;
When pain arrives, do not rush to protest.
When feeling is neutral, do not nod off;
Stay mindful and clearly aware each day.*

*Regard these feelings as passing clouds:
The wind brings them, then carries them away.
Observe without hatred or being swept along;
This is the work of discerning practice.*

Verse 3 What the practice reveals

*Here is what the practice shows:
Feeling dances in just this way.
It arises and passes, again and again;
Impermanent, not-self: why cling so tightly?*

*This feeling is not who I am;
It is not mine to clutch and keep.
The heart can settle when grasping loosens;
No entanglement: smile and clap!*

Outro

Ha ha!

*Feelings are guests just passing through;
The innkeeper makes tea and watches.
Good tea, guests arriving and leaving;
Some cheerful, some scolding:
We sit, enjoy the tea, and let them pass.*

Editorial note: The song uses “innkeeper” figuratively; it does not establish a permanent observing self. Neutral feeling is still feeling, and the emotions named in the verse should be distinguished from their pleasant or unpleasant tone.

3. Contemplation of mind (Cittānupassanā)

Illustrative story A sleepless night

A fictional situation prepared for this lesson.

Hoa lies down at eleven, but her mind will not settle into sleep. It jumps from work to children, from money to her elderly mother, from something a neighbour said yesterday to the worry that tomorrow's rain will prevent the laundry from drying.

She lies still and tries to count breaths. One, two, three; then the count disappears and the mind runs off again. Irritation follows. She turns over, adjusts the blanket, and raises the pillow. The harder she tries to sleep, the more awake she feels.

She recognises that the body is lying down while the mind is racing. This is contemplation of mind: knowing

distraction, unease, and the wish to control events that have not occurred. She does not immediately conclude, “I am ill”; she simply recognises the present state of mind.

She stops trying to force sleep, sits up, and leans against the headboard. With a hand on her abdomen, she feels its movement with breathing. The body is seated, the back rests against a pillow, and the room is quiet. This is contemplation of the body: returning to bodily experience without trying to compel mental stillness.

She recognises unpleasantness associated with being unable to sleep. This is contemplation of feeling: not intense, but clear. Instead of judging, “Here we go again; the night is ruined,” she knows, “There is unpleasantness associated with not sleeping.”

She then investigates the conditions of this mental state: repeated recollection of the past and concern about the future. Would the mind soften if she stopped feeding those thoughts? When it moves to tomorrow, she recognises “thinking” and returns to the abdomen. It wanders again; she recognises and returns again. She sees thoughts arise and pass away. No individual thought remains permanently. This applies contemplation of dhammas to the impermanence and conditional arising and cessation of mental phenomena.

She does not insist that she must sleep. She sits, breathes, and knows. After about half an hour, her eyelids grow heavy. She lies down and falls asleep.

The following morning, she does not feel that she has “attained” anything. She notices only that, despite the

restless mind, she did not condemn herself or struggle against it. In this fictional account, she did not take a sedative that night. She simply sat, breathed, and recognised experience. It was an ordinary night, but something had changed.

Editorial note: This story illustrates a response to restlessness; its reference to medication is not advice to stop or avoid prescribed treatment.

The focus is to know the present state of mind and how it changes.



Contemplation of mind distinguishes “anger is present” from “I am nothing but an angry person.” The first recognition leaves room for learning and change.

Scriptural basis

From MN 10, contemplation of mind:

*Sarāgaṃ vā cittaṃ ‘sarāgaṃ cittaṃ’ti pajānāti, vītarāgaṃ
vā cittaṃ ‘vītarāgaṃ cittaṃ’ti pajānāti.*

“One clearly knows a mind affected by lust as affected by lust, and a mind free from lust as free from lust.”

Sadosaṃ vā cittaṃ ‘sadosaṃ cittaṃ’ti pajānāti.

“One clearly knows a mind affected by hatred as affected by hatred.”

Recognition includes both the presence and the absence of defilements. Searching only for faults while overlooking clarity is an unbalanced form of observation.

Daily practice exercises

Greed, lobha or rāga. Recognise the wish to possess, enjoy, or force events to conform to personal preference. “The mind is grasping” can serve as a reminder. Progress means seeing desire without automatically acting on it. Avoid self-condemnation and distinguish greed from reasonable needs and wholesome aspirations.

Anger, dosa. Recognise irritation and the urge to retaliate or hurt another person. Use “anger is present.” Progress appears when anger becomes hurtful speech or action less often. Do not wait for anger to disappear while continuing to rehearse revenge; stop nourishing it.

Delusion, moha. Recognise failure to see what is influencing the mind, misunderstanding, or disregard for

consequences. Use “this is not yet clear.” Progress includes suspending judgement and investigating further. Delusion is not simply sleepiness: a person may be alert and still misunderstand.

Anxiety and fear. Recognise the mind's repeated construction of threatening scenarios or its attempt to control events that have not occurred. Use “worry is present” or “fear is present.” Progress involves distinguishing facts from imagination. Recognise the state, verify information, and address what can be addressed.

Jealousy and comparison. Recognise discomfort at another person's success or advantage. Use “jealousy is present.” Progress may involve less disparagement and greater capacity to rejoice in others' good fortune. Practise appreciative joy and learn what is useful without demanding immediate happiness from yourself.

Disappointment and discouragement. Recognise unmet expectations and the wish to give up. Use “disappointment is present.” Progress involves seeing the mood change while continuing appropriate action. Disappointment is real, but the conclusion “I am useless” needs examination.

Fatigue. Recognise bodily tiredness and accompanying mental states. Use “the body is tired” or “the mind feels discouraged.” Learn to distinguish the need for rest from avoidance. Do not classify every instance of fatigue as a defilement.

Collectedness and openness. Recognise reduced distraction, the ability to listen, and less immediate defensiveness. Use “the mind is settled.” Progress includes knowing the conditions that support wholesome states. Cultivate these conditions without demanding that the state last for ever.

Anxiety, jealousy, and disappointment are everyday categories used here to support practice; they are not the verbatim list of paired mental states in MN 10. Nor should an ordinary sense of openness be equated with technical terms for profound meditative states.

Recognising a lack of clear awareness

“Knowing that one does not know” is useful when it refers to an actual recognition: “The mind had wandered, and I now notice that.” This provides an opportunity to return. It does not mean that every vague or confused state already constitutes mindfulness.

A colleague is praised. We notice heaviness in the chest and think, “I work hard too.” Instead of blaming ourselves for jealousy, we acknowledge it, examine the need for recognition, and offer sincere congratulations. If necessary, we later discuss our own contribution privately. Appreciative joy and expressing legitimate needs can coexist.

Practice reminder: “Know clearly what is present in the mind, then attend to conditions that diminish the unwholesome and strengthen the wholesome.”

Consciousness according to Theravāda Abhidhamma

According to Theravāda Abhidhamma, a consciousness arises when its conditions are present, knows an object, and ceases, conditioning the arising of a subsequent consciousness. No permanent mind stands behind the sequence to control it.

To understand this account, we need to distinguish an individual consciousness-moment, a cognitive process, and kamma and result within that process. The following discussion uses the system of the Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha. Its numerical details concerning consciousness-moments belong to the Theravāda exegetical system.

What is an individual consciousness

Citta is characterised by cognising an object. Eye-consciousness knows visible form; ear-consciousness knows sound; mind-consciousness knows such objects as memories, ideas, and mental states.

An “episode of anger” in ordinary language is not a single consciousness-moment. It includes many successive events: hearing, understanding meaning, remembering the past, resentment, and the wish to reply.

Consciousness always arises with mental factors (cetasikas), which participate in that experience. The seven universal mental factors are contact, feeling, perception, volition, one-pointedness, the mental life faculty, and attention. They co-arise; they are not seven consecutive stages.

When a bell is heard, for example, there is cognition of sound together with feeling, recognition of the object's features, and other mental factors. There is no entirely isolated “bare knowing” devoid of all mental factors.

The conditions for consciousness

In MN 148, the Buddha explains that eye-consciousness arises dependent on the eye and visible forms. The meeting of these three is contact. The same principle applies to the ear and sounds and to the remaining sense domains. We should therefore not imagine a complete contact occurring first, followed only afterwards by consciousness (MN 148, Chachakka Sutta, the Discourse on the Six Sets of Six).

The following questions help students investigate conditionality:

Question	Example when hearing criticism
What object is known?	Initially sound; subsequently the meaning understood.
Which faculty supports it?	Hearing depends on the auditory faculty.
What consciousness preceded it?	Successive consciousnesses condition the continuation of the process.
Which mental factors accompany it?	At different moments there may be anger, or mindfulness and understanding.
What has been cultivated?	A habit of wounded pride, or a habit of calm examination.

These are practical investigative questions, not an exhaustive list of all conditions in the Paṭṭhāna.

“Conditioned” does not mean that everything is a result of past kamma. Abhidhamma distinguishes wholesome, unwholesome, resultant, and functional consciousnesses, each with different roles.

The sequence of a cognitive process

The following is a model of a complete five-sense-door process with a very great object, using seeing as the example.

Moment	Consciousness or function
1	Past life-continuum, Atīta-Bhavaṅga
2	Vibration of the life-continuum, Bhavaṅga-calana
3	Arrest of the life-continuum, Bhavaṅgupaccheda
4	Five-door adverting, pañcadvārāvajjana
5	Eye-consciousness cognising visible form, Cakkhuviññāṇa
6	Receiving, Sampaṭicchana
7	Investigating, Santīraṇa

Moment	Consciousness or function
8	Determining, Votthapana
9–15	Seven impulsion moments, Javana
16–17	Two registration moments, Tadārammaṇa

The life-continuum subsequently resumes.

These are multiple successive consciousnesses, not one consciousness passing through seventeen stages. Not every process contains all seventeen moments. A mind-door process has a different structure and does not contain eye-consciousness, receiving, and investigating in the manner shown above.

Terms such as “investigating” and “determining” should not evoke an inner person thinking verbally. They name extremely brief cognitive functions.

Where kamma and its results occur

Receiving an object and responding to it have different ethical characteristics. In Abhidhamma, eye-consciousness and ear-consciousness are resultant. Impulsion is the phase that may be wholesome or unwholesome; the functional impulsions of an arahant do not produce rebirth-generating kamma.

In AN 6.63, the Buddha identifies volition (cetanā), intentionality, as kamma: having intended, one acts through body, speech, or mind. Ethical causality must therefore be considered in relation to intention, not merely the fact that a sound has been heard (AN 6.63, Nibbedhika Sutta).

For example, someone says, “Venerable, what you did was not correct.” Hearing the sound is not itself anger. Understanding the statement requires successive cognitive processes. Thinking “They look down on me” may open the way to resistance. Intentionally saying something hurtful expresses an unwholesome intention through speech. Considering the criticism with goodwill creates conditions for a different response.

This is an everyday illustration, not an assignment of each thought to a particular moment in the seventeen-moment outline.

Why the same words sometimes provoke anger and sometimes do not

The external object is not the only condition. Attention, understanding, and cultivated tendencies also influence our response. MN 19 teaches that the mind inclines towards whatever a person repeatedly thinks about and examines. Repeatedly cultivating angry thoughts and repeatedly cultivating thoughts free from ill will orient the mind differently (MN 19, Dvedhāvitakka Sutta, the Discourse on Two Kinds of Thought).

Someone accustomed to thinking “Everyone who criticises me wants to belittle me” is likely to repeat that

interpretation. Someone who regularly asks “What truth is there here that could help me improve?” cultivates another tendency.

Practice can therefore begin with three questions:

- What am I directly hearing or seeing?
- What interpretation am I adding?
- Will the intended words or actions cause harm?

The purpose is not to count seventeen moments, but to recognise conditions that support greed, anger, or understanding and cultivate conditions for wholesome consciousness.

At the precise moment of seeing, the consciousness is eye-consciousness; at the precise moment of hearing, it is ear-consciousness. Practising the Buddha's instruction to Bāhiya, however, involves wisdom and non-clinging, not merely the occurrence of these sensory consciousnesses. Sensory cognition and liberating wisdom must not be equated.

What consciousness arises at the moment of seeing or hearing

Seeing visible form

Consciousness: Cakkhuviññāṇa, eye-consciousness

Characteristics in Abhidhamma: Rootless resultant consciousness accompanied by neutral feeling

Hearing sound

Consciousness: Sotaviññāṇa, ear-consciousness

Characteristics in Abhidhamma: Rootless resultant consciousness accompanied by neutral feeling

“Rootless” means without the root mental factors; it does not mean uncaused. Neither of these consciousnesses is accompanied by the mental factors mindfulness (sati) or wisdom (paññā).

Eye-consciousness therefore knows visible form but does not, by itself, possess insight into not-self. People who have not undertaken this training also have eye-consciousness and ear-consciousness.

The purpose of the instruction to Bāhiya

In Udāna 1.10, the Buddha instructs Bāhiya to train so that in the seen there is only the seen, and likewise for the heard, sensed, and cognised. The instruction then points to no longer locating a self in those experiences and to the ending of suffering. The discourse records that Bāhiya's mind was liberated from the taints without clinging.

As a practical interpretation, seeing and hearing remain clear, but experience is not appropriated as “I,” “mine,” or a self that owns knowing. This is not an instruction to make the mind blank or to stop understanding meaning.

Consciousness accompanied by wisdom

When relating this instruction to Abhidhamma terminology, the following levels should be distinguished:

Level	Classification
A trainee practising valid insight without attaining a path at that moment	Great wholesome consciousness associated with knowledge, mahākusala ñāṇasampayutta
The attainment of a path and its fruition	Supramundane path and fruition consciousnesses
An arahant cognising with wisdom in ordinary activity	Great functional consciousness associated with knowledge, mahākiriya ñāṇasampayutta

This is an Abhidhamma correlation, not a list of consciousness-types stated directly in the Bāhiya discourse. Path and fruition consciousnesses take Nibbāna as their object. Eye-consciousness or ear-consciousness does not transform into a liberating consciousness.

An example Hearing criticism

Someone says, “Venerable, what you did was not correct.” Ear-consciousness knows only sound. Subsequent consciousnesses recognise the sentence and its meaning. Wounded pride may arise, or mindfulness and wisdom may examine it. These are successive consciousnesses, not simultaneous functions of a single consciousness.

Applying the instruction to Bāhiya does not necessarily mean failing to understand the sentence. One can understand the feedback, examine it, and correct a mistake without constructing the additional narrative “They have insulted my self.”

Transformation lies in wisdom and non-clinging within the cognitive process, not in prolonging an instant of ear-consciousness so that only sound is heard.

The instruction concerns seeing, hearing, and cognising without appropriating experience as “I” or “mine.” It must be read in full: both “in the seen, only the seen” and the ensuing passage, “you will not be in that ... this is the ending of suffering.”

The Pāli passage from Udāna 1.10

Tasmātiha te, Bāhiya, evaṃ sikkhitabbaṃ:

“Diṭṭhe diṭṭhamattaṃ bhavissati, sute sutamattaṃ bhavissati, mute mutamattaṃ bhavissati, viññāte viññātamattaṃ bhavissati”ti.

Evaṃ hi te, Bāhiya, sikkhitabbaṃ.

Yato kho te, Bāhiya, diṭṭhe diṭṭhamattaṃ bhavissati, sute sutamattaṃ bhavissati, mute mutamattaṃ bhavissati, viññāte viññātamattaṃ bhavissati, tato tvaṃ, Bāhiya, na tena;

yato tvaṃ, Bāhiya, na tena, tato tvaṃ, Bāhiya, na tattha;

yato tvaṃ, Bāhiya, na tattha, tato tvaṃ, Bāhiya, nevidha, na huraṃ, na ubhayamantarena.

Esevanto dukkhassāti.

A close translation retaining the terseness of the original is:

Therefore, Bāhiya, you should train thus: “In the seen there will be only the seen; in the heard, only the heard; in the sensed, only the sensed; in the cognised, only the cognised.” Thus, Bāhiya, should you train.

When, for you, there is ... only the cognised, then, Bāhiya, you will not be “with that.” When you are not “with that,” you will not be “in that.” When you are not “in that,” you will be neither here nor beyond nor between the two. Just this is the ending of suffering.

“Not with that” and “not in that” are highly compressed expressions. Their literal wording should be distinguished from their interpretation for practice.

The opening sentence An instruction to train

Pāli	Meaning and grammar	Practical significance
Tasmātiha	A connective commonly analysed from tasmā + iha: therefore, or therefore here	Introduces specific instruction.
Te	Second-person pronoun: for you or by you, according to construction	Training must occur in one's own experience.
Bāhiya	Vocative: O Bāhiya	The Buddha directly addresses his listener.

Pāli	Meaning and grammar	Practical significance
Evam	Thus; in this way	Refers to the training that follows.
Sikkhitabbam	A gerundive from sikkhati, to learn or train: should be trained	Calls for practice, not merely intellectual understanding.

Because the sentence contains sikkhitabbam, it is not merely describing an automatic sensory mechanism. It prescribes training in how experience is met.

In the seen only the seen

Diṭṭhe diṭṭhamattam bhavissati can be analysed as follows:

Element	Literal meaning
Diṭṭhe	Locative singular of diṭṭha: in or with regard to the seen
Diṭṭha	What has been seen; the seen
Mattam	Only this much; merely; no more than this
Diṭṭhamattam	Merely the seen
Bhavissati	Will be; future of bhavati, here within an instruction to train accordingly

A practical interpretation is to know what appears clearly without continuing to appropriate it through craving and self-identification.

Seeing an attractive car illustrates the distinction. Recognising colour and shape is one matter; recognising that it is a car is another; thinking “I must own this car to deserve respect” adds appropriation. The relevant point is where the mind begins investing personal worth in the object. There is no need to forbid recognition that the object is a car.

The other three expressions

Together, the remaining expressions cover experience through the six sense faculties.

Pāli expression	Analysis	Domain
Sute sutamattam bhavissati	Sute: in the heard; suta + mattam: merely the heard	Sound
Mute mutamattam bhavissati	Mute: in the sensed; muta + mattam: merely the sensed	In the traditional classification used here, smell, taste, and touch
Viññāte viññātamattam bhavissati	Viññāte: in the cognised; viññāta + mattam: merely the cognised	What is known through mind

The last expression is especially useful in meditation because a thought is also an object that can be known.

For example, while hearing traffic, the mind says, “It is too noisy; I cannot meditate!” Alongside the sound, there is a thought and unpleasantness. All three can be recognised, rather than merely trying to erase the thought and return to sound. Nor is it necessary to add self-reproach: “Thinking like this proves that I am a poor practitioner.” That judgement, too, can become an object of recognition.

Na tena and na tattha

These expressions move the discussion from knowing an object to non-attachment.

Pāli	Literal meaning	Interpretation in practice
Yato	When; when indeed; sometimes because	Introduces a condition.
Kho	Emphatic particle	Not a separate meditation factor.
Tato	Then; therefore	Introduces the consequence.
Tvaṃ	You	Subject.
Na	Not	Negation.

Pāli	Literal meaning	Interpretation in practice
Tena	Instrumental of the pronoun ta: by that or with that	Not bound by, or establishing oneself through, the experience.
Tattha	There; in that	Not locating an “I” or “mine” within experience.

“Attachment” is not the sole dictionary meaning of *tena*. It is an interpretation informed by the passage's liberative context. Translations handle this elliptical expression differently; an interpretive rendering should not be presented as the only grammatical possibility. The source directs readers to compare John D. Ireland's translation.

Consider “An unpleasant feeling is being known,” as distinct from “This feeling proves that I have been humiliated; I must make the other person suffer.” In the second case, experience becomes a basis for self-defence and retaliation. Training means recognising and releasing that appropriation while continuing to understand the situation accurately.

Even the thought “I am a pure observer standing outside every emotion” needs examination. If it is grasped as an enduring self, identification remains.

Esevento dukkhassa

What does “the ending of suffering” mean?

Expression	Meaning
Nevidha	Na + eva + idha: neither here
Na huram̐	Nor beyond; huram̐ may refer to a future life in an appropriate context
Na ubhayamantarena	Nor between the two
Esevanto	Eso + eva + anto: just this is the end
Dukkhasa	Of suffering
Iti or ti	Marks the end of quoted speech

“Neither here nor beyond” does not mean that the physical body vanishes or that the mind falls into nothingness. The passage concerns liberation. The narrative immediately records:

Anupādāya āsavehi cittaṃ vimucci.

Anupādāya means “without grasping” or “without clinging”; āsavehi, “from the taints”; cittaṃ, “mind”; and vimucci, “was liberated.” Thus: “The mind was liberated from the taints without clinging.” This reports Bāhiya's result; it is not a phrase for practitioners to repeat as a claim about themselves (Ud 1.10).

A parallel discourse SN 35.95

In the Māluṅkyaputta Sutta (SN 35.95), the Buddha teaches the same formula. Māluṅkyaputta explains that without mindfulness the mind becomes infatuated and

remains caught in the object. With mindfulness and without infatuation, knowing and feeling continue, but the mind does not remain caught. The Buddha endorses this understanding.

This shows that the practice includes mindfulness and freedom from infatuation, not merely reducing experience to sensory sensation.

The following procedure applies the teaching to criticism at the level of lived experience; it is not an Abhidhamma table of consciousness-moments.

Step	Practice
Recognise hearing	Know that sound is appearing, without trying to retain or prolong it.
Recognise the response	Notice unpleasantness, chest tension, facial heat, or the urge to reply.
Distinguish fact from interpretation	“They said this was incorrect” differs from “They intend to destroy my reputation.”
See conditionality	The response depends on words, memories, expectations, and interpretation; it changes when conditions change.
Release appropriation	Stop feeding the need to win, retaliate, or prove personal worth through argument.
Respond with understanding	Seek clarification, acknowledge a genuine error, or express disagreement calmly.

If anger has already arisen, practice can begin there: “Anger is present and is being known.” There is no need to wait for an anger-free mind. Nevertheless, verbal recognition is only a means. We must observe whether anger is actually being nourished less, rather than merely repeating a phrase internally.

From immediate relief to liberation

Hearing criticism without reacting on one occasion reveals a direct benefit of relinquishing appropriation. A period of calm, however, is not equivalent to Bāhiya's eradication of the taints.

Over time, observe three aspects. The object changes: a sound appears and disappears. The response changes: unpleasantness, desire, and thought also alter. Appropriation creates pressure: the more we insist that experience conform to our wishes, the more tightly we are bound to it.

When a peaceful state occurs, apply *viññāte viññātamattaṃ* to that state as well. Know it without claiming it as “my achievement” or demanding its permanence. The instruction to Bāhiya is practised more deeply when relinquishment includes unpleasant objects, pleasant objects, and one's own meditative experience.

4. Contemplation of dhammas (Dhammānupassanā)

Illustrative story Moving house

A fictional situation prepared for this lesson.

Dũng is moving after fifteen years in the same apartment. Over the weekend, he and his wife load their belongings into the car. He takes a family photograph down from the wall, and small flecks of dust fall. He looks at the mark where it hung for fifteen years and feels a hollow sense of loss.

He recognises the unpleasant quality accompanying sadness. This is contemplation of feeling: not a sharp pain, but the unpleasantness of loss.

He looks at the empty room: white walls, bare floor, no curtains, and no familiar smell of cooking. He recognises the standing body, slightly drooping shoulders, and eyes that sting without tears. This is contemplation of the body, without judgement.

Then comes the thought, “I have lived here fifteen years. How can I leave?” The mind is clinging and uncomfortable with release. This is contemplation of mind: desire is present, not simply for a material possession, but as attachment to “This place is mine; it is part of me.”

He pauses and looks more closely. Fifteen years ago, before he arrived, the room was empty too. During those years he lived, cooked, argued, welcomed his first child, cried, laughed, and finally prepared to leave. Now it appears empty again, while its occupants come and go. He applies contemplation of dhammas: recognising impermanence, conditionality, and not-self. What arises through conditions changes and ceases as conditions change. The apartment is not an enduring possession of a self; it has been a place of temporary residence.

He also recognises that clinging to “This is my home” intensifies suffering. Without that insistence, moving is a change of location. Yet he does not force sadness to disappear. Its unpleasant tone is conditioned and will change as conditions change. He allows it to appear and pass.

His wife calls, “Are you bringing that saucepan?” He smiles gently and carries it to the car. Looking into the rear-view mirror, he watches the old apartment diminish and disappear around the corner.

This is not perfect relinquishment. It is simply a person recognising impermanence on moving day and not allowing attachment to become prolonged suffering.

The focus is to observe experience through categories of the Dhamma in order to understand what binds the mind and what leads towards liberation.



Contemplation of dhammas is more than thinking about psychological laws. In MN 10 and DN 22, it is developed through the five hindrances, five aggregates subject to clinging, six internal and external sense bases, seven awakening factors, and four noble truths. Impermanence, conditionality, and clinging illuminate these categories; they do not replace the full content of the discourse.

A. Impermanence conditions and clinging

Impermanence, anicca. Select a feeling, a mood, and a situation, and observe how each changes. Ask, “Has it remained exactly as it was initially?” Avoid merely repeating “impermanent” without observing.

Conditions of arising. Examine what preceded a mood and what continues to nourish it. Ask, “How does the mind change when I continue thinking in this way?” Avoid treating an inferred cause as certain when it is still a hypothesis.

Clinging, upādāna. Observe attachment to opinions, roles, possessions, relationships, or self-image. Ask, “What am I insisting must conform to my wishes?” Do not equate all concern or responsibility with clinging.

Several conditions may sustain a mood. Someone who spoke harshly may already have left, yet anger continues because we replay the words internally.

The question “How would I feel if I lost this?” may open an inquiry. Nevertheless, sadness at losing a loved one or

possessions does not by itself provide an exact measure of someone's clinging.

B. The five hindrances (Pañca nīvaraṇāni)

Hindrances obscure clarity and obstruct mental stability. From MN 10, concerning sensual desire:

Yathā ca uppannassa kāmacchandassa pahānaṃ hoti tañca pajānāti.

“One clearly knows how arisen sensual desire is abandoned.”

The formula shows that practice includes recognising presence, arising, abandonment, and the conditions for preventing recurrence.

Hindrance	Pāli	Recognition and adjustment
Sensual desire	<i>Kāmacchanda</i>	Repeatedly seeking sensory gratification. Reduce stimulation that nourishes desire and return to the task at hand.
Ill will	<i>Byāpāda</i>	Feeding opposition or the wish to harm. Stop rehearsing retaliation; cultivate goodwill and non-harming conduct.

Hindrance	Pāli	Recognition and adjustment
Sloth and torpor	<i>Thīnamiddha</i>	Mental sinking, inertia, and difficulty staying alert. Adjust posture or walk; consider whether sleep deprivation calls for rest.
Restlessness and remorse	<i>Uddhacca-kukkucca</i>	Agitation, distraction, and repetitive self-reproach. Return to the body; correct mistakes and learn instead of merely tormenting yourself.
Doubt	<i>Vicikicchā</i>	Indecision that paralyses practice. Identify what is unclear, study, and consult an experienced teacher.

Questions motivated by a wish to understand are not necessarily the hindrance of doubt. Likewise, acknowledging an error in order to correct it differs from prolonged remorse without behavioural change.

C. The five aggregates subject to clinging (Pañcupādānakkhandhā)

The five aggregates analyse experience into material form, feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness.

Aggregate	Pāli	Illustration when criticised
Material form	<i>Rūpa</i>	The body, sounds, and related physical manifestations
Feeling	<i>Vedanā</i>	The unpleasant quality of experience
Perception	<i>Saññā</i>	Recognition of words, the speaker, and familiar features
Formations	<i>Saṅkhārā</i>	Mental activities such as the wish to resist, attention, and related tendencies
Consciousness	<i>Viññāṇa</i>	Auditory and mental cognition of their respective objects

This table illustrates aspects of experience, not five rigidly successive stages.

From MN 10:

Iti rūpaṃ, iti rūpassa samudayo, iti rūpassa atthaṅgamo.

“Such is material form; such is its arising; such is its disappearance.”

In practice, we learn to recognise arising and passing factors rather than merge them into a fixed self: “I am the person being insulted, and I must win.”

D. The six internal and external sense bases

Internal base	Corresponding external base
Eye	Visible forms
Ear	Sounds
Nose	Odours
Tongue	Tastes
Body	Tangible objects
Mind	Mental objects

The everyday exercise is to observe the bondage that arises in the course of contact.

When looking at an advertised product, recognise the image being seen, any pleasant feeling, and the extent to which the wish to possess it is being nourished. If the advertisement is remembered after the telephone is switched off, the present object is being encountered through mind.

E. The seven awakening factors (Satta bojjhaṅgā)

These are qualities cultivated towards awakening.

Factor	Pāli	Meaning and cultivation
Mindfulness	<i>Sati</i>	Remember the object and direction of training.
Investigation of dhammas	<i>Dhammavicaya</i>	Examine wholesome and unwholesome states and their conditions.
Energy	<i>Viriya</i>	Apply balanced, persistent effort.
Rapture	<i>Pīti</i>	Develop wholesome gladness in practice.
Tranquillity	<i>Passaddhi</i>	Allow bodily and mental agitation to settle.
Concentration	<i>Samādhi</i>	Develop mental stability and reduced distraction.
Equanimity	<i>Upekkhā</i>	Cultivate balance without being pulled towards liking and disliking.

From MN 10, concerning the mindfulness awakening factor:

Yathā ca uppannassa satisambojjhaṅgassa bhāvanāya pāripūrī hoti tañca pajānāti.

“One clearly knows how the arisen mindfulness awakening factor is brought to fulfilment through cultivation.”

The appropriate attitude is therefore active cultivation of conditions without forcing a particular state to occur.

The Aggi Sutta, the Discourse on Fire (SN 46.53), teaches adjustment according to the mind's condition. When the mind is sluggish, investigation, energy, and rapture are appropriate. When it is agitated, tranquillity, concentration, and equanimity are appropriate. Mindfulness is useful in both cases.

F. The four noble truths (Cattāri ariyasaccāni)

The four noble truths situate suffering in relation to its origin, its cessation, and the path of practice.

From MN 10:

‘Idaṃ dukkhaṇ’ti yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti.

“One clearly knows as it actually is, ‘This is suffering.’”

Suffering

Content: Recognise suffering and unsatisfactoriness.

Introductory application: “What is troubling me?”

Origin

Content: Understand suffering's origin; craving is central to the canonical exposition.

Introductory application: “What am I craving or clinging to?”

Cessation

Content: The cessation of craving and ending of suffering.

Introductory application: Recognise the significance of ceasing to nourish craving and clinging.

Path

Content: The noble eightfold path.

Introductory application: Cultivate right view, intention, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, and concentration.

The temporary subsiding of anger is beneficial, but it should not be equated with realisation of the truth of cessation. Nor should the truth of the path be reduced to the instruction “let go.” The path involves training across the dimensions of life (DN 22, the four noble truths).

Practice reminder: “*See clearly what is happening, what sustains it, and what needs to be done.*”

CHAPTER III: RECOGNISING AND REDUCING REACTIONS THAT CAUSE SUFFERING

Illustrative story An email that provokes misunderstanding

A fictional workplace situation prepared for this lesson.

On Monday morning, Tuấn opens an email from his manager to the whole team: “Who sent the client a report with incorrect figures? This needs checking immediately.” Tuấn sent the report. His face grows hot, his heart races, and his hands tremble slightly.

He recognises bodily manifestations: facial heat, rapid heartbeat, trembling hands, and a tight chest. This is contemplation of the body, simply recognising without judgement.

He then recognises the strong unpleasant tone of the experience. It is accompanied by anxiety, fear, and impulses to conceal the error or blame someone else. Distinguishing these from the feeling tone, he recognises states of mind: fear, avoidance, defensiveness, and the search for someone to blame. The mind is unsettled and mildly angry, with the anger directed at himself.

He does not reply immediately. He pauses and knows three breaths. Then he investigates: why was the email sent? Because he supplied incorrect figures. Why were they incorrect? He copied them from an old file. He sees that the present fear is not explained by the email alone. The mind is

holding to the image “I am a careful person; I do not make mistakes.” When that image is threatened, suffering arises. This is clinging, upādāna, to a conception of oneself.

He also sees that blaming someone else would increase distress because he knows the error was his. Concealing it would increase fear of discovery. The least burdensome course is to acknowledge, correct, and learn.

He replies, “I sent the incorrect figures. I will check them and send a corrected report within an hour.” After sending it, his heart is still racing, but he feels lighter. Fear has not vanished; the insistence “I must never be wrong” has loosened.

An hour later, he sends the corrected report. His manager replies, “Thank you. Please take more care next time.” Tuấn sits quietly and writes: “I recognised fear after making an error. I saw the wish to blame someone and hide it, but did not follow those impulses. I acknowledged and corrected the mistake. Fear remained, but it did not control the response.”



Illustrative story The children are arguing

A fictional family situation prepared for this lesson.

Two children are arguing in the living room. There is shouting, crying, and the sound of toys being thrown. Vân is reading. On hearing them, her chest immediately grows hot, her shoulders tighten, and the first thought is, “They are fighting again! I never get a moment's peace!”

She pauses for just a second to recognise the body: heat in the chest, tight shoulders, a clenched jaw, and hands gripping the book. She then recognises unpleasant feeling and the accompanying impulse to stand up and shout. Turning to the mind, she sees anger and the wish to make both children stop immediately, driven at that moment by her desire for quiet rather than care for them.

She investigates the conditions. Shouting and crying prompted the reaction, yet children sometimes argue. She recognises an additional demand: “They must be quiet; they

must behave; I must have peace.” Covetousness, abhijjhā, is attaching itself to images of “well-behaved children” and “a mother entitled to quiet.”

She stands, but does not shout. She enters the living room and sits on the floor between them. One child is crying, the other angry. She places a hand on the younger child's head and feels its warmth against the hair. The body is seated, the hand is touching, and breathing is slowing: contemplation of the body.

She says gently, “I heard you arguing. I know you are angry. I am a little irritated too. Let me sit here for a moment.” She does not immediately accuse, adjudicate, or demand silence. She sits, breathes, and recognises what is occurring.

After five minutes, the children begin to settle. She asks, “What happened?” One explains; the other interrupts. She listens to understand the conditions of the quarrel rather than immediately assign a fixed identity of “the bad one.” This applies contemplation of dhammas: recognising that reactions have conditions and need not define an enduring character.

That evening, she writes: “Anger arose immediately when I heard the children arguing. I recognised it before shouting. I sat, breathed, and listened. It was not perfect; irritation remained, but I did not speak hurtfully.”



A. Understanding the movement from contact to reaction

The same situation does not affect everyone identically. Responses also depend on feeling, perception, memory, habit, attention, and interpretation.

In the Madhupiṇḍika Sutta, the Discourse on the Honeyball (MN 18), we find:

Phassapaccayā vedanā, yaṃ vedeti taṃ sañjānāti, yaṃ sañjānāti taṃ vitakketi, yaṃ vitakketi taṃ papañceti.

“With contact as condition, there is feeling. What one feels, one perceives; what one perceives, one thinks about; what one thinks about, one proliferates.”

Papañca, commonly translated as “conceptual proliferation,” describes elaboration through which the mind becomes entangled in networks of ideas. In daily life, a

single piece of feedback can lead to “They always look down on me,” followed by a series of remembered incidents recruited to support that conclusion.

The source describes its proposed diagram as a teaching model for self-observation, not a substitute for the complete teaching of dependent origination or an exact description of individual consciousness-moments in Abhidhamma.

Practice can begin with whichever factor is clearest: bodily tension, unpleasant feeling, an accusatory thought, or the urge to retaliate. We need not observe an entire sequence before stopping an unwholesome action.

B. Workplace situations

These responses are applications of the teaching. Their ethical basis is to examine whether an action harms oneself, another, or both, in accordance with the spirit of MN 61, the discourse advising Rāhula.

Receiving criticism or feedback. Unpleasant feeling may accompany interpretations such as “They disrespect me” or “I am incompetent.” Habitual responses include excuses, forceful rebuttal, and resentful silence. Instead, recognise body and feeling, know anger if present, distinguish the substance of the feedback from the tone of voice, and ask specifically what needs correction.

Heavy workloads and urgent deadlines. Unpleasantness may accompany “I cannot manage this.” Habitual responses include rushing, making errors, and procrastinating. Recognise tension in the shoulders, jaw, and

abdomen; know a few breaths; identify priorities; and renegotiate the workload if necessary.

Comparing performance. Unpleasantness and inferiority may accompany “I always fall behind them.” Habitual responses include jealousy, discouragement, and overwork. Recognise comparison, identify what can be learned, cultivate appreciative joy, and set goals appropriate to your circumstances.

Not receiving recognition. Disappointment may accompany “Nobody sees my effort.” Habitual responses include resentment and reduced commitment. Recognise the need for acknowledgement, continue valuable work, describe your contribution, and request specific feedback.

A clarification about causality: doing good work is worthwhile, but does not guarantee praise or reward from a supervisor at the desired time. Outcomes depend on many conditions. Reduced dependence on praise can coexist with requesting fair treatment.

A possible response to feedback is: “I would like to understand so I can improve. Could you show me which part falls short and what standard it needs to meet?”

C. Situations in relationships

Being misunderstood. Unpleasantness may accompany “They refuse to understand me.” Habitual responses include excessive explanation, anger, and withdrawal. Recognise the unpleasantness, ask how the other person understands the

situation, clarify one point at a time, and arrange another conversation if listening is not yet possible.

Hearing hurtful words. Strong unpleasantness may accompany “I must answer back.” Habitual responses include harsh speech or suppressed anger followed by sulking. Recognise bodily tension and anger, pause speech that may cause harm, and state boundaries when needed.

Wanting a response from another person. Attention may feel pleasant and its absence unpleasant. Habitual responses include demands, control, and self-devaluation. Distinguish the need for connection from insisting that another person comply; communicate wishes clearly and respect each other's choices.

Clinging to opinions. Contradiction may feel unpleasant and evoke “I must win.” Habitual responses include argument, stubbornness, and resentful silence. Recognise the wish to win, examine evidence, listen for valid points, and revise your view when warranted.

Wanting care is not automatically greed. Observe how the wish operates: does it become possessive, coercive, or harmful?

Letting go does not require remaining in a conversation that includes insults. We may say, “I am willing to discuss this. If the insults continue, I will pause the conversation and return to it later.”

Nor can every misunderstanding be resolved through a single explanation. What needs relinquishing is the demand

that the other person understand immediately, while necessary communication continues.

D. Two prominent tendencies and their basis in confusion

Tendency	Manifestation	Observation and adjustment
Grasping and clinging	“I must have it”; “I must keep it”; “They must agree.”	Recognise the demand and its cost. Pursue reasonable action with less coercion.
Resistance and anger	“I must get rid of this”; “They must hurt as I do.”	Recognise unpleasantness and harmful intention. Stop feeding retaliation and address the issue appropriately.
Accompanying or underlying confusion	Failing to see conditions and consequences; immediately believing one's interpretation	Delay judgement, check facts, learn, and observe further.

Lobha, greed; taṇhā, craving; and upādāna, clinging, are related but not identical. “Clinging” or “holding on” may function broadly in practical discussion, but detailed study requires these terms to be distinguished.

Practice reminder: “The pause” is a teaching image for an opportunity to recognise and respond. There is no need to

locate a fixed psychological gap between feeling and reaction.

The innkeeper and the passing guests

A reprise of the teaching song.

Verse 1 What exactly is feeling

*Sitting in meditation, a mosquito bites your seat;
Itching and discomfort: is feeling there, my friend?
A compliment arrives and delight begins to stir;
Pleasant feeling makes its entrance, plain to see.*

*At times there is irritation, weariness, or sorrow;
Unpleasant feeling accompanies the scene.
When neither pleasure nor pain stands out,
Neutral feeling is there: do not fall asleep!*

Chorus Where and how to contemplate

*Where should feeling be observed?
Do not fly into the sky to search!
Look where feeling rises, settles,
And appears in bodily and mental life.*

*Right there, within the feeling,
Add no seasoning; bring no "I."
Know pain simply as pain;
No need to cry, "Why must this happen to me?"*

*Sit and sip a cup of morning dew;
Watch feeling perform its passing play.*

Verse 2 The observing attitude

*When pleasure comes, do not swallow the hook;
When pain arrives, do not rush to protest.
When feeling is neutral, do not nod off;
Stay mindful and clearly aware each day.*

*Regard these feelings as passing clouds:
The wind brings them, then carries them away.
Observe without hatred or being swept along;
This is the work of discerning practice.*

Verse 3 What the practice reveals

*Here is what the practice shows:
Feeling dances in just this way.
It arises and passes, again and again;
Impermanent, not-self: why cling so tightly?*

*This feeling is not who I am;
It is not mine to clutch and keep.
The heart can settle when grasping loosens;
No entanglement: smile and clap!*

Outro

*Ha ha!
Feelings are guests just passing through;
The innkeeper makes tea and watches.
Good tea, guests arriving and leaving;
Some cheerful, some scolding:
We sit, enjoy the tea, and let them pass.*

CHAPTER IV: A FIVE STEP PROCEDURE FOR DISTURBING SITUATIONS

This procedure converts the preceding principles into memorable actions. It is a teaching aid prepared for students, not five steps quoted verbatim from a discourse.

The ethical basis for pausing and reflecting can be compared with the instruction to Rāhula in MN 61:

Paccavekkhitvā paccavekkhitvā vācāya kammaṃ kattabbam.

“Verbal action should be undertaken after repeated reflection.”

1. Interrupt haste

Pause speech or action that may cause harm. If convenient, recognise one to three breaths. When receiving harsh criticism, refrain from replying immediately.

2. Recognise the body

Know the clearest tension or point of contact: “The jaw is tense; the feet touch the ground.”

3. Distinguish feeling from mental state

Recognise unpleasantness, then any anger or fear: “Unpleasantness is present; there is an urge to resist.”

4. Examine conditions and consequences

Recognise what is sustaining the response and consider whether the intended action will help: “I am believing that they disrespect me; a harsh reply would make this harder.”

5. Choose an appropriate action

Ask for clarification, acknowledge an error, express a view, establish a boundary, or arrange to speak later: “I would like to consider this feedback carefully. Could we discuss it point by point?”

“Pause” does not mean stopping every necessary action. In an emergency, we still act; the aim is to reduce impulsiveness. Nor must all unpleasantness disappear before speaking or acting. Once there is sufficient clarity to avoid harm, appropriate action can proceed while unpleasant feeling remains.

A concise reminder: “Pause; know the body; distinguish feeling and mind; examine conditions; choose a wholesome action.”

Seeing clearly and releasing gently

*While walking, standing, lying down, or sitting,
Amid voices, laughter, and daily life,
Observe what arises and passes
Here in body, mind, and world.*

*Recognise the five veils that obscure the mind;
What conditions make them stronger?
Learn how to release what darkens clarity;
Sustain wakefulness by day and night.*

Refrain

*When it is present, know its presence;
When absent, do not trouble the heart.
See things come and see them go;
Loosen the grip and lighten the load.*

*Form, feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness
Appear and depart through conditions.*

*See each arising and passing;
Do not gather them into a single "I."*

*Eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind
Meet their objects: where do the fetters form?
See the conditions that create bondage;
Learn how the knots of suffering loosen.*

Repeat the refrain

*Mindfulness, investigation, and energy;
Rapture, tranquillity, concentration, and equanimity:
When absent, skilfully bring them forth;
When present, nourish their fulfilment.*

*Suffering is to be fully understood;
Craving is to be abandoned.
Cessation is to be realised;
The path is to be cultivated throughout life.*

*See arising and passing as they are;
Claim neither "I" nor "mine."
Gradually relinquish greed, hatred, and clinging;
Walk each step with greater ease.*

Final refrain

*When it is present, know its presence;
When absent, do not trouble the heart.
See things come and see them go;
Loosen the grip and lighten the load.*

CHAPTER V: THE PRACTICE JOURNAL

1. The purpose of keeping a record

A journal helps reveal recurring conditions: when the mind reacts readily, what sustains the reaction, and which responses help.

This approach accords with MN 61, where the Buddha teaches reflection on actions before, during, and after their performance. Harmful action calls for acknowledgement and future restraint; harmless action should be followed by continued training.

The journal is a contemporary application. A brief, honest record is more useful than extensive technical language that does not reflect actual experience.

2. Completed examples

The following entries are hypothetical illustrations. The times given for settling are not guaranteed outcomes.

14 September at 9 am Feedback on a report

Body: Jaw and shoulders tense.

Feeling: Unpleasant.

Mind: Anger and the wish to defend myself.

What I recognised: When I think “They look down on me,” anger increases. Asking about specific errors makes the matter clearer.

Habitual response: Arguing or remaining resentfully silent.

Practice and illustrative outcome: I paused, relaxed the jaw, recognised anger, and asked what needed correction. Tension lessened after about five minutes; after ten minutes, I felt lighter.

14 September at noon Enjoying food

Body: Awareness of chewing and fullness.

Feeling: Pleasant.

Mind: Wanting more food in order to continue enjoying the taste.

What I recognised: Pleasant taste, hunger, and the wish for another serving are not the same thing.

Habitual response: Eating more despite having had enough.

Practice and illustrative outcome: I recognised pleasantness and desire, checked hunger, and ate according to need.

14 September at 3 pm A colleague receives praise

Body: Heaviness in the chest.

Feeling: Unpleasant.

Mind: Jealousy and disappointment.

What I recognised: Comparison is nourishing suffering. There is insufficient evidence to conclude that my contribution is being dismissed.

Habitual response: Remaining dissatisfied for the rest of the afternoon.

Practice and illustrative outcome: I recognised the state, congratulated the colleague, and returned to work. After about fifteen minutes, I felt lighter, while remaining attentive to any return of comparison.

14 September at 7 pm A family member speaks harshly

Body: Tension around the chin and cold hands.

Feeling: Strongly unpleasant.

Mind: Anger and the wish to retaliate.

What I recognised: Repeating the words internally keeps anger going.

Habitual response: Speaking harshly, then sulking.

Practice and illustrative outcome: I paused, recognised body and mind, and suggested resuming when both of us could listen. About twenty minutes later, we spoke more calmly.

There is no need to reproduce the outcomes in these examples. An entry such as “I was still angry, but did not use insulting language” records meaningful progress.

3. A blank journal template

Date and time

Notes:

What actually happened?

Notes:

What was occurring in the body?

Notes:

Was feeling pleasant, unpleasant, or neither painful nor pleasant?

Notes:

What mental state or intention was most prominent?

Notes:

How was I interpreting the situation?

Notes:

What conditions may have sustained the state?

Notes:

What was the habitual or actual response?

Notes:

What practice did I use?

Notes:

What actually resulted?

Notes:

What needs correcting, following up, or discussing with a teacher?

Notes:

4. Reviewing the journal

Each week, choose a few situations and ask:

- In which circumstances do I most often lose mindfulness?
- Do I confuse assumptions with facts?
- Am I recognising reactions earlier?
- Which harmful words or actions have I reduced?
- Which conditions in daily activity or communication need to change?

Practice reminder: “Use the journal to learn from experience, not to condemn yourself.”

CHAPTER VI: SUSTAINING PRACTICE AND RELEASING ATTACHMENT TO WHAT WE KNOW

1. Begin with a clear and suitable object

Body contemplation is often convenient for beginners, but it is not an inflexible prerequisite that must be mastered before feelings or mental states can be recognised.

If anger is clear, know anger. If unpleasant feeling is prominent, know unpleasantness. If the mind is highly confused, returning to a bodily contact point may simplify observation.

2. Choose two or three daily reminders

Possible reminders include the beginning of a meal, each time you rise from a chair, or washing dishes or brushing teeth.

Each reminder need only prompt a genuine interval of recognition. As familiarity develops, practice can extend into other situations.

3. Recognise without condemnation and adjust accordingly

“The mind contains greed” differs from “I am a bad person.” “Anger is present” differs from “I cannot change.”

Freedom from self-condemnation does not remove responsibility. Hurtful speech calls for an apology and a

change in conduct. If a situation repeatedly nourishes greed or anger, examine how you engage with it.

4. Recognise earlier little by little

Progress may take the following form. At first, we recognise anger only several hours afterwards. Later, we notice it while speaking harshly. Gradually, we recognise the intention to speak harshly before the words are uttered.

This is a practical direction of development, not a compulsory timetable. Even late recognition allows us to stop further harm and repair what has occurred.

5. Be patient with longstanding habits

Habits repeated for many years take time to change. On some days the mind is clear; on others it is confused. What matters is how we learn and return to practice.

One loss of composure does not erase earlier skilful responses. One pleasant sitting does not establish that defilements have been eradicated.

6. Integrate formal meditation with daily life

Depending on circumstances, students may set aside about fifteen to twenty minutes each day for sitting practice. This is a scheduling suggestion, not a canonical quota or a guarantee of results.

Phase	Suggested practice
Beginning	Choose a suitable posture and recognise the seated body.
Main practice	Attend to breathing or another clear object; recognise wandering and return.
A prominent feeling or mood	Recognise it without pursuing its narrative.
Ending	Select one situation during the day in which to continue practising.

Formal meditation should support everyday living: less harm, better listening, and clearer self-understanding.

7. Practise with companions and a teacher

A companion can remind us to practise, listen to our experience, and help identify what we tend to overlook.

When discussing practice, describe concrete experience: “I noticed a tense jaw and then the urge to argue,” rather than hastily declaring attainment of an insight stage or a realisation.

An experienced teacher helps distinguish recognition from suppression, acceptance from resignation, and temporary calm from deeper understanding.

8. Release attachment to knowledge while continuing to learn

The idea of “letting go of what one knows” requires careful expression. If it is taken to mean discarding all

knowledge, students may lose understandings necessary for practice.

A more appropriate approach is to use learning to illuminate experience, remain willing to revise interpretations, and avoid turning knowledge into a defence of self.

In the Alagaddūpama Sutta, the Discourse on the Simile of the Snake (MN 22), the Buddha compares the Dhamma to a raft:

Evameva kho, bhikkhave, kullūpamo mayā dhammo desito nittharaṇatthāya, no gahaṇatthāya.

“In the same way, monks, I have taught the Dhamma as comparable to a raft: for crossing over, not for grasping.”

Within this lesson, the raft reminds us to learn in order to practise and move beyond suffering. Appropriate means remain necessary. What needs examination is grasping those means as a possession to defend in competition with others.

For example, we may once have believed that a good practitioner never experiences unpleasantness. Study and observation clarify the distinction between feeling unpleasantness and feeding anger. Relinquishing the earlier view increases understanding.

Signs to observe over time

Progress may be reflected in concrete changes:

- Earlier recognition of bodily tension, greed, or anger.
- Less obedience to impulses that would hurt others.
- Greater ability to receive feedback without immediate defensiveness.
- More honesty about personal motives.
- Readiness to acknowledge and correct mistakes while maintaining appropriate boundaries.
- Less dependence on praise, agreement, and pleasant states.
- Persistent learning with reduced attachment to existing knowledge.

These signs support self-examination. They are not criteria for certifying spiritual attainments.

Appendix

Notes for Students

This manual was prepared primarily for the students of Tuệ Tâm, with examples and levels of practice appropriate to that group's educational purpose. Teachers using it with other audiences should adapt instruction to their experience, circumstances, and capacity to engage.

Pāli passages are presented separately with discourse references. The translations serve study and practice. Stories, diagram captions, the three-step and five-step procedures, and the journal are teaching aids designed to apply the Dhamma.

Aspiration

May all students persevere in study and practice, recognising body and mind with honesty and clarity. May they gradually relinquish attachment, weaken greed, hatred, and delusion, care for themselves without harming others, and advance towards the cessation of suffering in this very life.

Questions and Answers on Everyday Mindfulness

Twenty practical questions about the four foundations of mindfulness

These answers bring together the book's guidance on benefits, objects of contemplation, methods, and correcting mistakes. Begin with what is clear in your experience. Recognise it honestly, understand what sustains it, and respond in ways that reduce harm and clinging.

Contemplation of the body

1. What are the benefits of contemplating the body?

Contemplating the body gives us a concrete place to recognise what is happening before a reaction becomes harmful speech or action. We notice a gripping hand, raised shoulders, or hurried breathing and gain an opportunity to respond with greater care. Repeated observation also supports understanding of the body as changing and dependent on conditions, rather than a permanent possession entirely under our control. Relaxation can be helpful, but the deeper direction is clearer understanding and less clinging.

In the family-meal story, Lan notices her tight grip on the knife before sending an angry message. The benefit begins with recognition and a more responsible response.

2. What should I contemplate in the body?

Begin with a clear bodily object: breathing, walking, standing, sitting, lying down, a movement, or a point of contact. During ordinary tasks, know what the body is doing. The book also explains the broader subjects in MN 10 and

DN 22: bodily constituents, the four elements, and the nine cemetery contemplations. These extend practice towards understanding the body's composition and dissolution. A beginner need not work through every subject in one session; choose a suitable object and seek guidance when needed.

While washing dishes, recognise the hand holding a plate and water touching the skin. These are bodily observations; "Nobody appreciates me" is an added thought.

3. How do I contemplate the body during daily activities?

Know the actual posture, movement, or breath, using balanced effort, clear comprehension, and mindfulness. A short label such as "walking" may help, but the word must point to an activity you actually recognise. Notice change when it becomes evident, and return when attention wanders. You can release unnecessary tension while continuing the task. The book's practical sequence is to recognise, see clearly, and release clinging while adjusting your response.

When rising from a chair, know that you are rising. When walking, feel the steps. You do not have to move unusually slowly; attend at a pace appropriate to the activity.

4. What should I do if I force the breath, imagine sensations, or become tense?

Recognise the mistake without self-attack. If you are deliberately making every breath slow or deep, release that demand and notice breathing as it occurs. If you are imagining the breath, return to a sensation you can actually recognise. If attention itself has become strained, soften the effort and use a simple contact point, such as the feet on the

floor. Adjust posture or rest when needed. An unpleasant bodily condition does not have to be endured to prove that you are practising well.

Ask, “What can I actually know now?” Accurate, modest recognition is more useful than trying to manufacture a special experience.

5. Does contemplating the body as not-self mean neglecting or disliking it?

No. In the book, not-self means that the body is not a permanent self or an enduring possession that obeys every wish. It does not cancel the need for food, rest, cleanliness, and responsible care. Contemplation of bodily constituents is intended to reduce fascination and clinging, not encourage hatred of the body. Likewise, awareness of bodily dissolution supports understanding of its nature. If contemplation becomes self-disgust or neglect, recognise that reaction and review your approach with an experienced teacher.

Care for the body while observing its changes. You can acknowledge ageing without adding the judgement that your life has lost its worth.

Further reading in this book

Chapter I, Sections 3–5; Chapter II, Contemplation of the body; Chapter VI, Sections 1–6.

Contemplation of feeling

6. What are the benefits of contemplating feeling?

Contemplation of feeling helps distinguish the pleasant or unpleasant tone of experience from the reaction that follows. This makes it easier to recognise the urge to hold on, push away, or seek stimulation without automatically obeying it. The book uses the two-arrow teaching to explain how resistance can add mental suffering to pain. The practical benefit is a less reactive relationship to feeling; the deeper direction is understanding its changing nature and reducing attachment.

When criticism is unpleasant, you can know the unpleasantness before sending a hurtful reply. The feeling may remain while your conduct becomes more skilful.

7. What exactly should I contemplate as feeling?

Here, feeling (*vedanā*) means the pleasant, unpleasant, or neither-painful-nor-pleasant quality of experience. It does not mean the whole of an emotion, every bodily sensation, or the story explaining what happened. The book distinguishes chest tension as a bodily manifestation, unpleasantness as feeling, anger or fear as mental states, and “They look down on me” as an interpretation. These distinctions help clarify experience without requiring perfect classification at every moment.

After hearing another person praised, ask, “Is this experience pleasant, unpleasant, or neither?” Then separately recognise any jealousy or comparison that accompanies it.

8. How do I contemplate pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral feelings?

Recognise the tone that is present, then notice its changes and your relationship to it. With pleasantness, observe whether a demand to prolong it appears. With unpleasantness, observe whether resistance or retaliation is being nourished. With neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, remain attentive rather than overlooking the experience. Do not force a feeling to change merely to obtain a preferred result. When its tone is unclear, acknowledge that uncertainty and continue observing.

While eating something delicious, distinguish pleasantness from the wish for another serving. Check your actual needs before acting. Enjoyment and craving are not automatically the same thing.

9. What should I do if I confuse feeling with emotion or try to suppress it?

Return to one simple distinction. “Unpleasantness is present” identifies feeling; “anger is present” identifies a mental state. If the distinction is still unclear, observe the clearest aspect instead of arguing internally about terminology. If you are pushing unpleasantness away, recognise that resistance too. Stop demanding immediate comfort and choose an appropriate response to the situation. Acceptance of a feeling does not require accepting harmful circumstances or leaving a practical problem unresolved.

If you recognise the feeling only after speaking harshly, stop further harm, acknowledge what happened, and correct your conduct. Late recognition still provides an opportunity to learn.

10. Does neutral feeling mean equanimity, and does pleasant feeling mean progress?

Neither conclusion follows automatically. The book distinguishes neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling from wise equanimity: neutral feeling can occur without clear comprehension. Pleasantness may accompany useful practice, but it can also become an object of craving. Unpleasantness does not by itself show that practice has failed. Examine the quality of knowing and the response: are you clearer about what is happening, less compelled to react, and less insistent that the experience remain as you wish?

A sitting with discomfort and patient recognition may teach more than a pleasant sitting spent worrying about how to preserve the pleasure.

Further reading in this book

Chapter II, Contemplation of feeling; Chapter III, Understanding the movement from contact to reaction.

Contemplation of mind

11. What are the benefits of contemplating the mind?

Contemplating the mind helps us know a mental state without turning it into a fixed identity. Recognising “anger is present” leaves room for learning; concluding “I am an angry person who cannot change” can strengthen discouragement. Observation also reveals which conditions weaken unwholesome states and support wholesome ones. Benefits appear in greater honesty about motives, less obedience to harmful impulses, and more willingness to listen and correct mistakes.

You may still feel irritated but refrain from insulting someone. The book treats that change in conduct as meaningful, even before the irritation has subsided.

12. What should I observe in the mind?

Observe the state or intention that is evident: grasping, anger, confusion, distraction, or collectedness, for example. Recognise both the presence and absence of unwholesome states; do not search only for faults. The book also uses ordinary experiences such as anxiety, jealousy, disappointment, and openness as practical examples, while distinguishing them from the precise canonical list. Ask what is happening now rather than diagnosing your entire personality.

After a colleague is praised, notice whether the mind wants to diminish that person. Later, recognise a sincere willingness to congratulate them if it arises. Both observations matter.

13. How do I contemplate thoughts without being carried away by them?

Recognise that thinking is occurring and notice its present character: planning, comparing, worrying, or rehearsing retaliation. Distinguish the thought from a fact about the situation. If it keeps drawing you into a story, return to a clear bodily object and stop deliberately elaborating it. Useful reflection can resume when it serves understanding or practical action. The book's discussion of Bāhiya does not require abolishing thought or preventing ordinary recognition; it emphasises knowing without appropriation and clinging.

“My manager asked for a correction” is a report of an event. “My manager wants to destroy my reputation” is an interpretation that needs examination.

14. What should I do if the mind keeps wandering or anger keeps returning?

Notice the present state and begin again, gently but earnestly. Repeated returning is part of training. With anger, check whether you are still rehearsing accusations or imagining revenge; merely repeating “anger” while feeding it is insufficient. Reduce the conditions that sustain it and pause harmful speech. If anger returns, recognise its return without treating earlier practice as worthless. If harm has already occurred, apologise and make the necessary correction.

You can say, “I am too agitated to discuss this carefully. Let us return to it shortly.” Use the pause to stop feeding retaliation, then address the issue responsibly.

15. Must I stop all thoughts or observe every consciousness-moment?

No. The book's Abhidhamma explanation is a framework for understanding conditioned mental processes, not a demand that beginners identify seventeen moments while living through an event. Its full five-sense-door model is not the structure of every cognitive process. In practice, start with what can actually be recognised: hearing, thinking, unpleasantness, or the wish to retaliate. Nor should you imagine a permanent observer standing outside these events; the book explains that knowing itself is conditioned.

A useful report is "I noticed the urge to argue and paused." Claiming to have directly observed a technical sequence requires more than recalling its names.

Further reading in this book

Chapter II, Contemplation of mind, Consciousness according to Theravāda Abhidhamma, and the discussion of Bāhiya; Chapter VI, Sections 3–7.

Contemplation of dhammas

16. What are the benefits of contemplating dhammas?

Contemplating dhammas connects recognition with understanding what binds the mind and what supports release. It helps us investigate how hindrances are nourished, how they can be abandoned, and how wholesome qualities can develop. This gives practical direction to observation: recognise suffering, examine craving and clinging, and cultivate the path through conduct as well as meditation. The aim extends beyond feeling calmer to weakening greed, hatred, and delusion.

When replaying an insult intensifies anger, recognising that relationship gives you something to change. You can stop rehearsing retaliation while still addressing the disagreement.

17. What should I contemplate as dhammas?

The book presents the five groups found in MN 10 and DN 22: the five hindrances; the five aggregates subject to clinging; the six internal and external sense bases; the seven awakening factors; and the four noble truths. Use these categories to understand actual experience. Impermanence, conditionality, and clinging illuminate the practice, but do not replace its full range. You do not need to examine every category in each sitting.

For a simple beginning, recognise an evident hindrance such as ill will, observe what sustains it, and consider what helps abandon it. Also recognise helpful qualities when they are present.

18. How do I contemplate dhammas in an ordinary conflict?

Use the book's five-step procedure: interrupt haste; recognise the body; distinguish feeling from mind; examine conditions and consequences; and choose an appropriate action. For example, after criticism, notice bodily tension, unpleasantness, and defensiveness. Ask whether the demand "I must never be wrong" is sustaining distress. Check the facts, acknowledge any genuine error, and respond without retaliation. If the criticism is mistaken, explain or set a boundary with care.

This procedure is a teaching aid, not a verbatim scriptural formula. You need not complete every step before preventing harm, nor wait until all unpleasantness disappears before acting.

19. What should I do if contemplation becomes overthinking, self-blame, or a claim of attainment?

Return to observable experience and separate evidence from interpretation. Treat a proposed cause as tentative when it is uncertain. If reflection becomes repetitive self-accusation, identify the correction needed and make it, rather than continuing to punish yourself mentally. If a peaceful state prompts "I have attained liberation," recognise the claim as a thought and avoid premature conclusions. The book distinguishes temporary relief from the realisation of cessation and eradication of the taints.

When unsure, describe concrete events to an experienced teacher: what was noticed, what changed, and what remained. Use learning to clarify experience, and remain willing to revise your understanding.

20. How can I know whether my practice is improving, and what should I do after mistakes?

Look for changes across daily life: earlier recognition of tension and reactions, fewer harmful words, better listening, more honest acknowledgement of motives, and less dependence on praise or pleasant states. Keep a brief journal of the situation, body, feeling, mind, interpretation, response, and actual result. After a mistake, stop further harm, acknowledge and repair what you can, examine the conditions, and choose one adjustment for next time. Review recurring patterns patiently.

Progress is not a fixed timetable or a certificate of attainment. “I was still angry, but I corrected the report without blaming someone else” records useful learning. Continue practising with suitable reminders, formal meditation, and guidance.

Further reading in this book

Chapter II, Contemplation of dhammas; Chapters IV–VI, the five-step procedure, practice journal, and sustaining practice.



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*May all who hear, understand, and correctly practice
the Buddha's teachings be liberated from suffering.*

*May the merits from this work be dedicated
to the liberation of all beings.*



Nguyện cầu những ai có cơ duyên lắng nghe, thấu hiểu
và thực hành đúng lời dạy của Đức Phật sẽ thoát khỏi khổ đau
trong kiếp sống phù du này. Mọi công đức được vun bồi từ
công việc này xin hồi hướng cho sự giải thoát
khỏi vòng luân hồi sinh tử.