

In Walking the Path to Awakening . . .

Mindfulness of Breathing

1. **Breathing:** Focus on the breath. It's the ideal place to watch both what is going on in the *body* and in the *mind*. In a sense, it is home because you can always come back to the breath – right here where the body and the mind meet.
- ↓
2. **Mindfulness:** Stay with the breath. Come back to it when the mind wanders, without any self-recrimination.
- ↓
3. Develop **alertness, awareness, and awakeness.**
- ↓
4. Experience **peace, calm, and serenity.**
- ↓
5. Develop **concentration.**
- ↓
6. Receive **insight** for living.
- ↓
7. Maintain **equanimity.**

In this way, one begins to **observe things as they actually are** – as they are happening and being fabricated. One sees where habits of fabrication are causing needless suffering and stress – and that stress is unnecessary. In fabricating one's experience out of the raw materials that come from past actions, choices are being made. Through the path, one learns how to make these choices more and more skillfully.

Karma (Volitional Action)

Typically, volitional action is based on craving or aversion, and ignorance. It involves the *will*, and is enacted mentally or physically. Three stages of karma are:

1. **Intention:** Involves the will, and is the wanting to do something. It can be *skillful* or *unskillful*.
2. **Action:** Is the action itself, which can be physical, verbal, or mental. It can be *skillful* or *unskillful*.
3. **Result:** Is a sense of relief or satisfaction. It can be *skillful* or *unskillful*.

Three factors influence the experience of the *present moment*: (1) results from past actions, (2) present actions, and the (3) results of present actions. Present actions shape not only the present, but also the future.

Skillful intention is shaped by *appropriate attention* (which focuses on questions that help foster skillfulness in one's actions) and *right view* (which provides a proper understanding of actions and their potential).

Factors for Awakening

1. **Mindfulness:** Keep the breath in mind.
- ↓
2. **Analysis of qualities:** See how the sense of the *body* and *mind* are being fabricated through the breath and the perceptions about the breath.
- ↓
3. **Persistence/energy/effort:** Do the best to fabricate in skillful ways and abandon unskillful fabrications.
- ↓
4. **Rapture:** Realize that refreshment will come through skillful action.
- ↓
5. **Serenity:** Realize that ease will come through skillful action.
- ↓
6. **Concentration:** Develop concentration.
- ↓
7. **Equanimity:** Watch with equanimity all these aspects as they are happening.

These seven factors lead to **knowledge** and **release** – the knowledge of awakening (understanding what the mind has been doing that is causing stress), and release (how the mind can let go of the cause). When one has completed *all* the duties with regard to the Four Noble Truths (to understand suffering; to abandon its origin; to cultivate the path; and to realize cessation) the mind no longer creates any unnecessary burdens for itself. It tastes the deathless!

Brahma-viharas (Divine Abodes)

Begin by cultivating these four sublime states toward *oneself*, and then one can begin to radiate them outward toward *all others*.

1. **Goodwill** (*metta*) – have the desire for true happiness for oneself and for others.
2. **Compassion** (*karuna*) – see suffering and desire for it to stop.
3. **Empathetic joy** (*mudita*) – see happiness and desire for it to continue and expand.
4. **Equanimity** (*upekkha*) – see the universality of the principle of actions and their results.

These Four Limitless Ones are sublime expressions of love. They: (1) transform greed, aversion, and delusion; (2) purify the heart and generate positive energy; (3) provide the answers to all situations in life; and (4) represent the enlightened heart.