

# 8 Fold Path of Wisdom, Compassion, & Cultivation

The 8 fold path comprises 8 lines we develop over time towards awakening. This is an expression of our understanding of dependently originating phenomena, of the nature of fabrication, and skilful action towards wholesomeness. All limbs are to be brought towards wakeful wisdom, compassionate action, or unifying wellbeing.

The elements of the path are referred to as right, but might be felt better as middle weighed; for it aims a middle way between gluttony and depriving to alleviate dukkha.

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## Right View and Understanding

To see the world according to the 4 noble truths and dependent origination.

1. In life there is dukkha; sometimes this is outright pain and misery, but often times it is a background radiation of not-quite-right; unsatisfactoriness. It is a relational attitude that feels contracted.
2. Thus the cause is not something in the world but in the relationship; specifically demanding for things to be otherwise. Life has the nature of anicca, dukkha, anatta. But we don't see it this way. Ignorance of the way things appear, leads to demanding them to be otherwise. This causes us to be radically out of tune, taking a position that is untenable, indefensible, and stressful.
3. Because there is a cause on which the dukkha condition depends, we can stop manifesting this relationship from our side, and relate in a better way. Which brings immediate relief, and culminates in nirvana, cessation, and unconditioned peace and wellbeing.
4. Because the way to an unconditioned state is dependent on relationships to conditioned forms and feelings, a formula is possible, and the 8 fold path of practice is just such a way to fabricate less dukkha.

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## Righty Intention, Resolve, Thought

All our experiences are fabricated by volitional activities; sankharas which can be shaped.

**Body:** particularly how we place or shape the body; breathing in a more relaxing or spacious way; opening contraction in the body; or attending to the whole body or space around the body.

**Verbal:** gathering thoughts and evaluations towards the practice and how we live; not overly focussed on who we are; not seeing as fixed and separate, but investigating how we're relating.

**Mental:** gathering the attention; guiding perception; noticing vedana and urge to escalation.

We can cultivate skilful intentions in place of the default setting of greed, hatred and delusion, by intending in tune with letting go and renunciation, not ill will, and harmlessness. This leads to more wisdom and skilfulness in how we speak and act.

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## Right Speech

Wise and virtuous speech is both goal and path; use our gift skilfully and wholesomely, not frivolously. Abstaining from divisive and abusive speech means we develop peace in harmonious ways.

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## Right Action

The precepts of ethical behaviour bring harmony, peace, fearlessness, and harmlessness. Abstaining from killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct, or put more positively, promoting peace, generosity, and respecting sexuality, develops loving connections.

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## Right Livelihood

Guiding how you stay alive in this world in a way that leaves the world in a better state. Living with simplicity is the path of happiness. We may be shocked that for every \$1 spent on health care and education 10 times more is spent on war and death. But how's the inner world? How's the balance between thoughts of generosity vs. selfishness, of harmony vs. aversion?

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## Right Effort

Means relaxed diligence. This is invaluable on the cushion but also elsewhere in our lives. How can we have a goal and go for it, without shrinking or grasping too firmly onto it?

**4 Great Efforts**; all based on the sense of the wholesome and unwholesome.

**Prevent** not yet arisen unwholesome states, (develop the right conditions, don't make things extra difficult; like food shopping while hungry)

**Abandon** arisen unwholesome states, (see the unattractive qualities in something craved)

**Generate** not yet arisen wholesome states, (draw attention to the already okay, practice generosity, kindness, ethical conduct; blamelessness)

**Maintain** arisen wholesome states, (invite the mind to remain with the state; be nourished; all senses alert and receptive; a collective harmonious resting on and in a unification of heart-mind).

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## Right Mindfulness

Is penetrative seeing which knows things to be the appearance of dependently originated manifestations and fabrications.

Examining body, vedana, mind states, and phenomena and all the dharma teachings.

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## Right Unification, Spread Well-Being, Stability, or Undistractedness

The clarity, presence, & flexibility of a cultivated heart-mind. Samadhi is to come together; a unification of body-heart-mind. Such as absorbing perception attainments—when the mental hindrances of greed & aversion are stilled, energy is tranquil & alert, and doubt is resolved.

An interplay of ethics, wisdom, and cultivation

What is the goal of our path? Is it to have more wisdom and understanding about life? Or maybe it is to be more concentrated, have more penetrative seeing, and meditative experience? Or are we looking for skilful ways of living that harm less and bring more peace and harmony to the world around us? All the limbs are interdependently linked. There is no singular culmination of the path, and therefore no aspect or part to leave out. Ethics are borne from wise understandings. Wisdom is reliant on clear seeing and steadiness. While one of our greatest distractions is regret & blame from a life lived without ethical concern at its heart.