

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.

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.

Righty Intention and Resolve

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

Body: particularly breathing in a more relaxing way rather than an intense way, opening the contraction in the body.

Verbal: gathering thoughts and evaluations towards the practice, and how we live; not focusing on who we are, nor being fixed and separate, but investigating how we operate.

Mental: gathering the attention and perception, noticing the 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.

Right Speech

Wise and virtuous speech is the goal and the path; use our gift truthfully and not frivolously.

Abstaining from lying, from divisive speech, from abusive speech, and from idle chatter, means we get to peace in harmonious ways.

Right Action

The precepts of ethical behaviour bring harmony, peace, fearlessness, and harmlessness. Abstain from killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct. Or put more positively, promoting peace, generous giving, and respecting sexuality through individual space and loving connections.

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 what about in our own minds and lives? How's the balance between thoughts of generosity vs. desire, of peace and harmony vs. anger and aversion?

Right Effort

Means relaxed diligence. This is invaluable on the cushion but also elsewhere in our lives. How can we have a goal and stick to it without grasping 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).

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.

Right Concentration, Stability, and Undistractedness

The clarity and heightened presence of a cultivated mind. Samadhi is to come together; a unification of heart-mind, particularly in the absorbing perception attainments, where the mental hindrances of greed, aversion are stilled, energy is both tranquil and 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.