

Chapter 3

Mindfulness and the Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path

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3.1 Introduction

In the late 1970s, Kabat-Zinn, an immunologist, was on a Buddhist meditation retreat practicing mindfulness meditation. Inspired by the personal benefits, he developed a strong intention to share these skills with those who would not normally attend retreats or wish to practice meditation. Kabat-Zinn developed and began conducting mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) in 1979. He defined mindfulness as, “the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment to moment” (Kabat-Zinn 2003, p. 145). Since the establishment of MBSR, thousands of individuals have reduced psychological and physical suffering by attending these programs (see www.unmassmed.edu/cfm/mbsr/). Furthermore, the research into and popularity of mindfulness and mindfulness-based programs in medical and psychological settings has grown exponentially (Kabat-Zinn 2009).

Kabat-Zinn (1990) deliberately detached the language and practice of mindfulness from its Buddhist origins so that it would be more readily acceptable in Western health settings (Kabat-Zinn 1990). Despite a lack of consensus about the finer details (Singh et al. 2008), Kabat-Zinn's operational definition of mindfulness remains possibly the most referred to in the field. Dozens of empirically validated mindfulness-based programs have emerged in the past three decades. However, the most acknowledged approaches include: MBSR (Kabat-Zinn 1990), dialectical behavior therapy (DBT; Linehan 1993), acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT; Hayes et al. 1999), and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT; Segal et al. 2002).

In its appropriation into the scientific community, mindfulness has had to, understandably, be free from many of the religious and cultural additions that these

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teachings had acquired over the centuries. Unfortunately, the timely and appropriate distillation of mindfulness from a Buddhist framework in the early 1980s continued over the following decades, and for many it became the accepted protocol. When Baer (2003) wrote a well-read and cited empirical review of mindfulness training as a clinical intervention, the Buddhist framework hardly received a mention. Currently, the importance of Buddhist psychology in the therapeutic endeavor is beginning to be recognized and acknowledged (e.g., Didonna 2009; Williams and Kabat-Zinn 2013). Up until very recently, however, mindfulness in contemporary psychology has usually been taught in a manner that is absent of any particular philosophical, cultural tradition, or vocabulary (Allen et al. 2006). According to some Buddhist psychotherapists, the practices

have become dislodged from their ethical and philosophical frames and redefined in ways intelligible to secular, scientific minds. (Dawson and Turnbull 2006, p. 60)

In the twenty-first century, the interest in and benefits of mindfulness have moved beyond the domains of health and psychotherapy to include neuroscience, education, the military, the justice system, and the corporate sector (e.g., Carroll 2011; Davidson et al. 2003; Stone 2014; Wilson 2014). No longer on the fringe of society as an alternative activity, mindfulness has become a mainstream interest. Lifestyle magazines regularly feature articles about mindfulness, and according to one major advertising company it is one of ten trends that will shape our world in 2014 and beyond (http://www.jwt.com/blog/consumer_insights/10-trends-that-will-shape-our-world-in-2014-and-beyond/). Mindfulness is now a commodity with a growing market value (Wilson 2014). We can find on the shelves of our Internet supermarket products such as “mindful mayonnaise” (e.g., <http://earthbalancenatural.com/product/original-mayo/>), indicating that mere associations with the word are a selling point. As the contemporary world embraces mindfulness, the meaning and details of the practice that originally inspired Kabat-Zinn, in 1979, seem to have drifted away. Currently, mindfulness can mean many different things.

Long-term Buddhist meditation practitioners have mixed feelings about the popularization and commodification of mindfulness. On the one hand, we celebrate such a powerful healing tool being readily available, albeit at a price, to the world. On the other hand, some of us feel discomfort about how the public perception of mindfulness sometimes seems superficial, confused, and naïve (Huxter 2013). The meaning of what is to the long-term meditation practitioner a profoundly liberating practice seems to have become diluted, obscured, and presented in a manner that is tangential to the Buddha’s original descriptions.

In 2014, 35 years after Kabat-Zinn launched MBSR into a world cautious about the influence of Eastern religions, it is perhaps timely to fully remove the camouflage hiding the Buddhist origins of this practice. Perhaps it is timely to unreservedly clarify the details of this practice in accordance with its foundations. In this chapter, I highlight the Theravada Buddhist understanding of mindfulness. Then, in order to connect mindfulness to a context of wisdom, ethics, and meditation, I discuss mindfulness in the relation to the Buddha’s eightfold path.

3.2 Mindfulness: The Buddha's Perspective

Despite the lack of consensus, most contemporary psychologists describe mindfulness in a way that is roughly similar to Kabat-Zinn's operational definition cited earlier. This definition, however, describes only part of what is known in the Buddhist traditions as mindfulness. The contemporary definitions of mindfulness are more consistent with what modern Buddhist meditation teachers call "bare attention."

According to Wallace (2008, p. 60), "bare attention corresponds most closely to the Pali term *manasikara*, which is commonly translated as "attention" or "mental engagement." This word refers to the initial split seconds of the bare cognizing of an object before one begins to recognize, identify, and conceptualize." Bare attention may be an aspect of Buddhist mindfulness. However, according to the traditional perspectives, mindfulness is much more than just nonjudgmentally being aware. Mindfulness was the word that an English-born Pali scholar used in 1881 to translate the term *sati*. *Sati* literally means "memory". *Sati* involves remembering to be attentive. The opposite of *sati* is forgetfulness. With forgetfulness, we forget to be present, forget our purpose, and forget the lessons from the past. *Sati* is the type of memory that can be trained and cultivated. According to the ancient texts on Buddhist psychology, *sati*, is a form of recollecting or calling back to mind or bearing in mind (Narada 1956).

Wallace (2008, p. 60) wrote that mindfulness (*sati*): "includes retrospective memory of things in the past, prospectively remembering to do something in the future, and present-centered recollection in the sense of maintaining unwavering attention to a present reality." In resonance with Wallace, mindfulness has also been described as remembering where we are, what we are doing, and who we are with (Hanh 1975, 1998) as well as the presence of mind (Bodhi 2000b).

In possibly the most authoritative text on Buddhist meditation, the *Visuddhimagga* written by Buddhaghosa in 412 AC, other features of mindfulness are highlighted as follows:

Its characteristic is not floating; its property is not losing; its manifestation is guarding or the state of being face to face with an object; its basis is strong noting or the close applications of mindfulness of the body and so on. It should be seen as like a post due to its state of being set in the object, and as like a gatekeeper [preventing the unwholesome from entering the mind and allowing the wholesome to enter] because it guards the gate of the eye and so on. (Nanamoli 1956, p. 524)

The practice of mindfulness may include bare attention or *manasikara*, but it is not limited to it. With bare attention, judgments and interpretations are suspended in favor of noting experience as it is, here now, not lost in proliferative elaboration and embellishment. When the remembering aspect of mindfulness is combined with bare attention, it connects the many moments of experience in a way that brings understanding. The connection of distinct and separate moments of attention is analogous to a child's dot-to-dot drawing. When the child makes the effort to connect the dots together, a coherent picture emerges and one sees the big picture. Understanding takes into account the big and broad picture of the stream of consciousness as it

meanders and flows through the moment-to-moment, week-to-week, year-to-year experience called life. The application of mindfulness provides a way to connect the moments, weeks, months, and years so that there is insight and a coherent picture of our lives.

Sati is often coupled with another mental factor called *sampajanya* as *sati-sampajanya*. This coupling points to the strength of the connections between these two mental factors. *Sampajanya* translates as clear comprehension or introspection. *Sampajanya* involves understanding the purpose, timeliness, and suitability of what one is doing. In relation to meditation, it is a form of meta-awareness and quality control. When meditation involves focusing on an object, mindfulness remembers to prevent attention straying from the object, while *sampajanya* recognizes that attention has strayed (Wallace 2008).

Sati in combination with other helpful factors such as *sampajanya* leads to the development of wisdom. In Buddhism, wisdom (*punya*) can refer to reason, logic, and intuitive knowing. It can involve the coherent picture, mentioned above, of our own and other lives so that we can make decisions about what is helpful and what is not helpful on our journey towards what is meaningful for us. Wisdom involves understanding the picture of our lives in combination with intentions to act skillfully. When we can remember the purpose of our actions, what we are doing and where we are going, we are more able to live in alignment with wisely chosen life directions. From a Buddhist perspective, skillful mindfulness cannot be separated from the context of wise discernment and acting in accordance with principles of harmlessness, which are integral aspects of the Buddha's the eightfold path leading to awakening.

3.3 Awakening to the Four Noble Truths

Synonymous with the term “enlightenment,” awakening can refer to radical transformations of consciousness where individuals wake up to the truths of existence. Systems of practice that lead to awakening have been called the consciousness disciplines (Walsh 1980). The contemplative traditions of Theravada Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism, and Hindu Yoga are examples of consciousness disciplines that may lead to awakening (Brown 1986). According to Brown (1986), scholars have different ideas about how the different traditions perceive the path of practice and ultimate reality. Despite differences, all traditions agree that awakening “produces two major changes: the view of external reality is permanently altered and the internal experience of suffering is alleviated” (Brown 1986, p. 268). Thus, the results of awakening are that suffering is released and there are radical transformations of perceptions and consciousness. The honorific term “Buddha” comes from the Pali verb root “*budh*,” which means “to understand” or “to awaken.” Historically, Siddhartha Gotama became a Buddha about 2560 years ago, and he taught ways to understand or awaken to the four noble truths. In essence, the four noble truths are two cause–effect relationships: suffering and its causes, freedom from suffering, and the causes for this. The first noble truth in Pali is termed *dukkha*. Though *dukkha* is often

translated as suffering, the words “discontent” or “unsatisfactoriness” may more accurately capture the meaning of this term. The extent of *dukkha* can range from the gross and obvious such as severe illness and death to the subtle and obscure, such as not getting what we want exactly how we want it. The main aim of the Buddha's teachings is freedom from *dukkha* via the realization of the four noble truths.

The term “noble” is used to describe profoundly awakened realizations and impeccable behaviors that result from these realizations. The relationships evident in the four noble truths can also be applied to the patterns evident in more basic human issues including psychological disorders and ways to work with these disorders. At this basic level, the four truths could be described as “ennobling” (Bodhi 2000a) because, though not yet signifying profound realizations, they are nonetheless reducing the severity of suffering. According to Huxter (2009), the four ennobling truths could be described from a cognitive behavioral therapy perspective as follows:

1. There are presenting problems or disorders (*dukkha*).
2. There are causative factors leading to the development of disorders and psychological patterns maintaining them (*the causes of dukkha*).
3. It is possible to reduce the level of suffering or completely resolve the problem (freedom from *dukkha*).
4. There are treatments using cognitive, behavioral, and affective strategies that address both the causative and maintaining factors (the causes for freedom from *dukkha*).

3.4 The Fourth Truth: The Buddha's Eightfold Path

The eightfold path is also called the middle way because it is balanced with moderation and does not incline to extremes of self-indulgence or self-denial. The Buddha's eight-factored path is a way to balance any imbalances of connotation, attention, cognition, and affect (Wallace and Shapiro 2006). It contains factors that are in opposition to the patterns driven by what Buddhists call the root causes of *dukkha*: craving/clinging, aversion/hatred, and confusion/ignorance. The eightfold path is a general framework which has within it numerous subsystems, all of which work together in a manner that inhibits or uproots the types of mental, emotional, and behavioral patterns that cause and perpetuate psychological suffering. This path and its subsystems also nurture what is best by cultivating optimal, compassionate, and wise ways of perceiving, being, and understanding.

According to some scholars, the path has two levels, ennobling and noble (Bodhi 2000a; Thanissaro 1996). The first, fundamental or ennobling level leads to the alleviation of severity of *dukkha*. Most contemporary psychotherapies utilize strategies consistent with the ennobling eightfold path. When the ennobling path has been travelled and there is an alleviation of *dukkha* with some stress reduction, the conditions for a vision of Nirvana are more likely. With even just a glimpse of Nirvana, major psychological transformations occur and a more refined and noble level of the path can be followed, leading to complete liberation.

The Buddha's eightfold path is divided into three basic trainings, which are: wisdom with two factors (right understanding, view, or conceptualization and right intention, resolve, thought, or vision), ethics or a wholesome lifestyle with three factors (right action, speech, and livelihood, or upkeep), and meditation with another three factors (right effort, mindfulness, and concentration). Each factor on the path starts with the word right. Right is the usual translation of the Pali term *samma*. Other ways *samma* could be understood include: complete, authentic, fully, skillful, appropriate, or correct. The eight factors support each other to collectively lead towards freedom from *dukkha*. These interdependent factors are "comparable to the intertwining strands of a single cable that requires the contributions of all the strands for maximum strength" (Bodhi 2000a, p. 13).

At a basic ennobling level, right view is the understanding that actions have consequences and that unhelpful actions often lead to things not working out for the best. Right view leads to making skillful decisions and commitments to act in ways that are harmless, kind, and liberating (right intention). When one acts in a manner that is wise (right speech, action, and livelihood), there is a level of mental composure that is conducive to motivation and focused attention. Looking at oneself honestly (mindfulness) often requires courageous effort. The combination of effort, remembering to be attentive, and seeing deeply with focused attention gives rise to understanding. When understanding arises, this leads to right intentions, then right actions and the path of liberation continues. In essence, this eight-factored pathway describes a process for changing or releasing unhelpful habits and behaviors and developing, instead, what is helpful to reach desired goals that are beneficial for self and others.

3.5 Wisdom Training

According to Thanissaro (2006), "the Buddha had a simple test for measuring wisdom. You're wise, he said, to the extent that you can get yourself to do things you don't like doing but know will result in happiness, and to refrain from things you like doing but know will result in pain and harm." A Buddhist perspective of wisdom is that it is manifold and includes the factors of view and intention, seeing, and volition. Wisdom guides strategies to abandon the thinking and emotional and behavioral patterns that lead to being bound up in *dukkha*. The seeing aspect of wisdom can refer to knowledge, understanding, or insight about how suffering arises and how it is abandoned. The intentional aspects of wisdom include the interpersonal and intrapersonal correlates of insight, which are loving-kindness, compassion, and letting go. Wisdom can arise from meditation (effort, mindfulness, and concentration). It can also arise from hearing or reading wise words and reflection or thinking clearly and realistically. Thus, wisdom may include the helpful thinking processes encouraged by therapies such as cognitive therapy (Beck 1976). However, wisdom is not limited to this type of verbal and logical thought as it can include a nonverbal knowing that is described by some as intuitive (Pandita 1992).

Intuitive knowing involves being able to remember, know, and plan for what could be the best course of action for any particular situation. What is remembered may not be readily available in conscious verbal memory, but is readily available in the form of intuitive nonverbal knowing. An intuitive medical practitioner in an emergency, for example, may have a sense that something is not quite right in their patient and know, intuitively, that a particular course of intervention is needed. At the time of the emergency, this particular medical practitioner may not be able to articulate or consciously access verbal and rational information about the problem. However, she knows from experience and this knowledge has been stored in the unconscious so that it is retrieved intuitively. In this case, the doctor has clinical wisdom and it is accessed nonverbally. Wisdom about life can result from remembering to be attentive to experience (mindfulness). Such wisdom may be able to be articulated verbally or it may be simply a silent knowing.

3.6 Right View

Right view is the first stage of the path and the first aspect of wisdom. Without a clear perspective on where to go it is easy to get lost. Right view is also the result of the path. That is, when we begin to make wise decisions to act in a way that avoids harm it helps us see clearly, which circles back to shape our attitudes, the ways we think and further decisions we make about life. With a clear view, our perception of things is no longer distorted by ideas that are unhelpful. One fundamental distortion, according to the Buddha's discourses, is the view that things are permanent, independent, and able to be controlled. The belief that actions do not have consequences and that we can behave unethically without consequences, is another mistaken view according to the teachings of the Buddha. Such a view means that individuals do not see that the way they behave in the world has an impact. At a more subtle level, this view means that people do not see how everything is, somehow or other, connected to everything else, and that what we do affects others and the environment around us. The ennobling level of right view has already been mentioned. At the noble level, right view refers to seeing the four noble truths, completely. It also entails the profound perspectives on consciousness and the world that these realization produce.

When we are able to see clearly with insight that specific actions may lead to specific consequences, we may be more willing to act in ways that produce less suffering. The Pali term for insight is *vipassana*. According to scholars, the *vi* of *vipassana* denotes separate, intense, or distinct and the *passana* refers to seeing. Therefore, *vipassana* literally translates as seeing separately and seeing distinctly (Kearney 1995). In resonance with this meaning, Goleman (1988, p. 123) wrote that insight can refer to "the clear perception of the object as it really is." Insight directly counters ignorance and it is a key factor in being able to bring an end to *dukkha*. Insight is the realization of the four truths and knowing, at an experiential level, three universal characteristics of existence.

3.7 Three Universal Characteristics of Existence

Also called the three marks of existence, the three universal characteristics of existence according to Buddhism are:

1. *Annica*: impermanence or change
2. *Dukkha*: discontent, unreliability, ambiguity, uncertainty, or not a source of genuine happiness
3. *Anatta*: interdependence, no-thing-ness, no self-ness, insubstantiality, contingency, or emptiness (Huxter 2007)

These three universal characteristics of existence, each linked, describe the nature of things from three angles. Everything changes (*annica*) and because it does, nothing is reliable or certain (*dukkha*). *Dukkha* when it is described as a characteristic of existence is slightly different to how it is described as the first noble truth. Things such as a chair or a bottle of water, for example, can display the characteristic of *dukkha*. We cannot rely on a chair or a bottle, or any other thing to last because their nature is impermanent. This sense of unreliability is *dukkha*. To put it another way, impermanent things are *dukkha* because they cannot be reliable sources of enduring happiness. The third characteristic of existence, *anatta*, is yet another perspective on the nature of things. In Pali, *atta* refers to self and *anatta* refers to not-self. Here, self refers to the incorrect view that things are independently self-arising. This view means that phenomena arise independent from causes and conditions, which is, of course, contrary to the way things actually are. As a characteristic of existence, *anatta* describes that changing phenomena are interdependent. That is, individual things depend on other things for their existence. The term emptiness is sometimes used to describe *anatta* in that things, including you and me and my chair and bottle, are empty of inherent self-existence.

Insight has many levels. At an ennobling level, insight about the three characteristics of existence has a generalizing effect with clinical implications. Seeing the impermanence (*annica*) and interdependence (*anatta*) of something external such as melting snow turning into a flowing stream can be generalized to something internal such as painful thoughts and emotions, and seeing that they too are changing, dependent on other things for their arising and passing and need not be taken personally. One of the aims of MBCT (Segal et al. 2002) is the development of meta-cognitive insight. Meta-cognitive insight refers to “experiencing thoughts as thoughts (that is as events in the mind rather than direct readouts on reality)” (Teasdale et al. 2002, p. 286). By developing meta-cognitive insight, MBCT participants resist feeding into ruminative thoughts, thereby short circuiting a process that previously bound them to relapse with depression. Meta-cognitive insight can develop by shifting the focus of attention from the contents of thoughts to the relationship with thoughts as well as seeing the general unreliability or *dukkha* of these events.

3.8 Right Intention

Right intentions are also sometimes called right thought. Here, thought has a resolute or purposeful nature. At a macro level, intentions can steer us through the bigger picture of our whole life. When we are clear about what causes suffering and what leads away from suffering, it is easier to make important decisions about the direction we wish our lives to take. At a micro level, intentions are involved in the moment-to-moment actions of our everyday life. At the micro level we may have thousands of intentions every day. If we want to short circuit reactive patterns of *dukkha*, it helps to be mindful of skillful and unskillful intentions. Skillful intentions are those intentions that lead to happiness for our self and other beings in the long run. Unskillful intentions are those intentions that lead us to act in a manner that may complicate our lives or harm our self or others. The Buddha explained that unwholesome intentions are those directed by craving, ill will, and ignorance and eventually lead to harm. In direct opposition to this, right intentions are those based on wisdom, letting go, and good will that do not result in harm.

The first type of right intention is renunciation. Renunciation involves letting go of craving, grasping at, and clinging to views, concepts, and experiences. Intentions of good will are the second type of right intentions. Unwholesome intentions driven by ill will are major obstacles to meditation and the cause of much suffering. The direct opposite and remedy for ill will is loving-kindness or *metta*. *Metta* is the cultivation of unconditional care, goodwill, and warm friendliness towards self, other beings, and experience in general. The third type of skillful intention is harmlessness. Compassion is a human response to suffering and is the wish for beings (including ourselves) to be free from suffering. The aspiration to avoid harm and foster compassion are examples of the third types of right intentions.

3.9 Ethical Training

Intentional actions that do not cause harm could be considered as ethical actions. Moreover, compassion and kindness could be considered as universal ethics. In Pali, the word for ethical training is *sila* which is often translated as morality or virtue. In traditional Buddhist meditation, ethical behaviors provide a level of life stability that is necessary for the cultivation of the mind. Ethical behavior provides us with enough mental composure and a lightness of conscience that enables us to concentrate and be mindful at levels that are conducive to meditation. In the traditions, ethical behaviors are considered a prerequisite for training in meditation because they are the foundation upon which the practice is built. In a Buddhist framework, the risks and dangers of meditation, such as when we arrive at stages of insight where *dukkha* becomes lucidly evident, are well known (Nanamoli 1956; Nyanaponika 1994). Having an ethical foundation and lifestyle is considered an important protective factor to help manage possible difficult negative side effects of meditation practice.

Acting with ethical integrity includes making the choice to be harmless in our actions. When we are not intentionally harming ourselves or others, it is likely that our minds will not be plagued with hatred, guilt, or fear. When we avoid harmful speech, actions, and occupations, our conscience is more likely to be clear and our minds more easily able to focus on the immediate experience of life.

3.10 Right Speech

Many of us communicate with others a lot of the time and most of us talk to our selves, most of the time. As expressions of greed, ignorance, and hatred, words have the power to inflict great harm. Through our communications we can, however, also express the qualities of generosity, wisdom, and kindness which promote healing, well-being, happiness, and awakening in self and others. Right speech involves communicating with intentions that further our journey along a path of healing and awakening. Right speech includes words that are encouraging, constructive, helpful, kind, and supportive. Right speech involves *sampajanya* or the clear comprehension of what should be spoken, when, and how, in accordance with purpose, timeliness, and appropriateness. Right speech usually involves being honest. If however, being frank is not helpful then right speech may involve telling a white lie. If it is not appropriate or timely to speak then being silent is also considered to be right speech.

3.11 Right Action

Right actions involve behaving in ways that are consistent with wholesome and wise directions. Wrong actions involve going against valued directions, resulting in unhappiness and a general increase of *dukkha*. Actions that are consistent with the eightfold path vary from one individual to the next, but the general principle is to avoid intentional harm and participate instead in actions based on generosity, kindness, compassion, and wisdom. The five Buddhist precepts reflect the themes of right action and, though they can be considered as proactively engaging in helpful behaviors (Hanh 1993), they are most often described as training to avoid behaviors that will in some form or other be harmful. The first three of the five precepts are avoid unnecessary killing, avoid taking what is not freely offered (i.e., theft) and avoid sensual misconduct, which usually means sexual contact where someone is hurt or harmed. The last two of the five precepts include avoiding false and harsh (wrong) speech and avoiding having the mind clouded by unwise use of intoxicants or drugs.

3.12 Right Livelihood

The next factor on the path is right livelihood, which refers to making a living that is consistent with liberating life directions. It refers to how we provide for the needs and desires of our self and our dependents. Most of us spend a large percentage of our time in the workplace. Our work can be a source of meaningfulness, excitement, joy, and fulfillment or a source of drudgery, frustration, misery, and feeling trapped. If what we do for a living is criminal, then it is for the most part harmful to someone in the long run and therefore wrong livelihood, because it produces *dukkha*. If our work involves doing something that for us is meaningless or is going in the opposite direction to what we value then, even if it is not criminal, it could be wrong livelihood for us because we increase our vulnerability to becoming unmotivated, frustrated, feeling trapped, and generally unhappy. Right livelihood is an essential component of the path and if it is ignored it negatively impacts the ability to train our mind with meditation.

3.13 Meditation Training: Serenity and Insight

In Buddhism, meditation is an integral part of the eightfold path. The Pali term for meditation is *bhavana*, which translates as bringing into being, causing to be, developing, or cultivating (Nanamoli and Bodhi 1995; Olendzki 2009). In Theravada Buddhism, meditation is sometimes called *citta bhavana*. *Citta* generally refers to mind. However, a more accurate English translation of *citta* is “heart–mind” because the functions of *citta* align closely with what in the West we would call the heart as well as the mind. *Citta bhavana* refers to training the heart–mind, with concentration, mindfulness, and energy in order to develop serenity and insight.

Serenity and insight are two aspects of Buddhist meditation conducive to wisdom and awakening. Meditation practitioners may focus specifically on developing the serenity aspect of meditation or they may focus on developing insight. The intentional cultivation of serenity emphasizes concentration while insight emphasizes mindfulness. Serenity meditation practices lead to unified, quiet, still, and calm states of the heart–mind. Hence, they are also commonly called tranquility, stillness, and calm meditation practices. At the other end of the meditation spectrum, insight meditation practices cultivate insight or knowing and understanding about oneself and the world. Regardless of how we meditate, or whether we incline towards serenity or insight, meditation always involves some form of effort, mindfulness, and concentration. The serenity and insight aspects of meditation could be considered as the two ends of a stick. When someone picks up one end of the stick, the other end follows. Serenity and insight are inseparable as opposite ends of the meditation spectrum.

Some meditation practices are at the extreme end of serenity-emphasizing concentration, some practices are at the extreme end of insight-emphasizing mindfulness, and some practices are in between. Within any one meditation session, an

individual's attention may also go back and forward along the spectrum varying the concentration–mindfulness ratio. The two aspects of meditation work together. The serenity aspect provides sufficient calm, stillness, precision, power, and mental clarity to enable us to see what is happening and how it happens, developing insight. The insight aspect of meditation provides the discernment to not be distracted by superficial attraction or aversion and to focus attention in the most helpful way. By balancing the serenity and insight sides of meditation, it is possible to generate the wisdom and compassionate intent needed for awakening. Right effort, is the first factor in the meditation component of the path.

3.14 Right Effort

Right effort involves the decision to train the heart–mind in ways that are in accordance with our understanding and best intentions. The effort required for meditation should not be confused with the strain or struggle that sometimes might be associated with achieving a goal. Just as tuning a guitar, the string cannot be too tight or too loose, the effort for meditation is a balanced degree of energy. The type of effort required in meditation can involve rousing enthusiasm, energy, and commitment to persist. Meditation teachers, for example, sometimes describe right effort as courageous and “enduring patience in the face of suffering and difficulty” (Pandita 1992, p. 264). The opposite is also true when right effort involves knowing that there may be too much energy and enthusiasm with our meditation practice and rather than trying harder, we respond by letting go, letting be, and going with the flow of life's changes.

Balanced effort involves the diligence and zeal to cultivate healthy states of heart–mind as well as having the grace to accept and submit to what cannot be changed and let go of what is unhealthy or unhelpful. Balanced effort is often the result of wise recollection, resolve, and commitment. On a daily basis, right effort may involve wisely remembering the relationships between physical activities, events, situations, thoughts and emotions, and doing what is helpful as well as avoiding what is unhelpful. In the context of a regular meditation practice, right effort can involve wisely remembering what has worked in the past to strengthen mindfulness and concentration, then skillfully inclining towards doing what is beneficial. Meditative, courageous effort, concentration, and mindfulness are inseparable as factors of heart–mind training or *citta bhavana*.

3.15 Right Concentration (*Samma Samadhi*)

Concentration is the collection of intensification, focus, and one-pointedness of attention. Concentration is how attention remains centered on its object. The concentration that is involved in unwholesome activities such as murder, theft, or other

harm is not the sort of concentration that is found on the eightfold path. This type of concentration is called wrong concentration. Right concentration, on the other hand, involves the gathering of attention in relationship to activities that are ethically wholesome. According to Bodhi (2000a), right concentration is defined as the wholesome unification of the mind.

When attention is collected and settles onto one activity or object, there is a reduction of unnecessary mental functions. Concentration decreases the tendency for attention to be dispersed, scattered, or to go from one thing to another. When our attention becomes more focused, we may also feel absorbed in what we are doing. The experience of flow, as described in contemporary psychology (e.g., Csikszentmihalyi 1988), is one example of a function of concentration. Flow is an optimal state of being that can occur when individuals are so engaged and absorbed in whatever they are doing that everything else fades away as insignificant.

Becoming concentrated can alter the way we experience our self and the world around us. Right concentration usually co-arises with relaxation and a sense of physical and emotional ease. As relaxation becomes deeper, physical health concerns may begin to heal, concerns fade away and problems that may have seemed entrenched, resolved. As long as we are concentrating on neutral and pleasing objects, in a way that is not harmful, concentrated attention generally leads to well-being.

Wallace (2006) noted that relaxation is the first step on the path to developing highly refined meditative concentration. The second step is stability of attention, so that attention stays where it is placed, and the third step is vividness of perception, so that whatever is perceived becomes sharp in focus and lucid. In the Theravada Buddhist traditions, meditative concentration is called *samadhi*, and *samatha bhavana* refers to serenity meditation. According to Pali scholars, the term *samadhi* is derived from *sam-a-dha* where the root *dha* means “to put or place,” *a* indicates “towards,” and *sam* refers to “together” (Kearney 2009). Therefore, *samadhi* literally means to collect attention together and place it on an object. The Buddhist Pali literature uses the term *samadhi* to refer to: one-pointedness as a particular mental factor; very high states of concentration called *jhānas* along with the stages leading up to them; and a method of practice which is used to attain serenity, tranquility, or calm (Kearney 2009).

Serenity meditation (*samatha bhavana*) practices provide a systematic way of cultivating *samadhi* and a vehicle to travel along the path of awakening. As long as it is ethically wholesome, almost any object can be used to cultivate serenity. However, Theravada texts such as the *Visuddhimagga* describe up to 40 classic serenity meditation practices (Nanamoli 1956). The classic objects include the breath, colors, the elements such as earth (solidity) and wind (movement) as well as qualities of mind such as loving-kindness and compassion. Wallace (2006) explained that the primary purpose of developing highly concentrated states is to stabilize and refine vividness of attention so that enquiry into the nature of reality is enhanced.

In the process of the eightfold path, insight is the liberator and *samadhi* is the tool that makes insight possible. Like looking at the moon with a telescope, *samadhi* is the instrument that makes the vision powerful and lucid. Ultimately, *samadhi* gives muscle to insight (Wallace 2008).

Right concentration can be purposefully cultivated as part of the path of serenity meditation or it can result as a by-product on the path of insight meditation (Bodhi 2000a). While serenity meditation is mostly associated with the development of right concentration, insight meditation is related to the development of right mindfulness.

3.16 Right Mindfulness (*Samma Sati*)

In Buddhism, the type of mindfulness that leads to wisdom and awakening is called right mindfulness. Wrong or unskillful mindfulness, on the other hand, may involve remembering to be attentive in a way that does not lead to wisdom and may be harmful (Thanissaro 2006). A burglar or a sniper, as two examples again, must remember to be attentive to achieve their goals. However, this type of mindfulness does not lead to understanding. In Buddhism, right mindfulness has an ethical quality that discerns what is useful to follow and what is not. Right mindfulness grounds the practitioner in the present moment and it facilitates both serenity and insight.

The function of mindfulness in serenity meditation is slightly different than the function of mindfulness in insight meditation (Bodhi 2000a). In the context of serenity meditation practices, “*mindfulness* refers to attending continuously to a familiar object, without forgetfulness or distraction” (Wallace 2006, p. 13). According to Bodhi (2000a), the function of mindfulness in serenity meditation is to monitor concentration. In this role, it ensures that focused attention does not slip off and become lost in thought or other distractions. In serenity meditation, mindfulness serves to remember to bring attention back to the object of attention, whatever it may be. Mindfulness or insight meditation, which will be described as *satipatthana vipassana* also requires right mindfulness to be effective. The primary task of right mindfulness in mindfulness meditation is to observe, note, and discern phenomena precisely so that cause–effect relationships are understood and the three characteristics of existence (impermanence, emptiness, and unreliability) are seen clearly.

3.17 Mindfulness Meditation

What is called mindfulness meditation or insight meditation in contemporary psychology is called *satipatthana vipassana* in the Theravada traditions. *Satipatthana* is a compound Pali word derived from *sati* and *patthana* or *sati* and *upatthana* (Thanissaro 1996). *Patthana* means keeping present and foundation or source (Thanissaro 1996). The *patthana* of *satipatthana* refers to remembering where attention is directed (Kearney 2000; Nyanaponika 1962). *Upattana* is a variation of the term and refers to establishing near or setting up near or station, with the idea that attention is stationed or established and an object is kept closely in mind (Thanissaro 1996). Thus, *satipatthana* means the foundations of mindfulness and refers to remembering to deliberately place close attention or turn the mind to what is happening. The term *vipassana* means insight, and *satipatthana vipassana* literally

refers to practicing the foundations of mindfulness for the development of insight. One of the Buddha's discourses (*suttas*) called the *Satipatthana Sutta* describes the practice in detail, and a basic overview of this *sutta* follows.

The four foundations of mindfulness are:

1. Body (*kaya*)
2. Feelings (*vedana*)
3. Consciousness or heart–mind (*citta*)
4. Phenomena (*dharmas*—Sanskrit)

Each of these foundations contains sub-domains, which are different aspects of the foundation they are within. Scholars have also referred to these foundations as applications (e.g., Wallace 2011), domains, and/or frames of reference (Thanissaro 1996). The names of the different foundations also include the Pali compound word *anupassana*, which is derived from *anu*, which translates as along, and *passana*, which is seeing. *Anupassana* is usually referred to as contemplation and Pali scholars also translate this term as “to repeatedly look at” or “to closely observe” (Analyo 2003, p. 32) or “to seeing along with” or “to track” (Kearney 2014). When we closely observe and track changing conditions of body and heart–mind we begin to understand ourselves.

Analogous to walking along a path in a mysterious forest, journeying through life with mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sampajanya*), we pay attention to the present moment realities yet also keep in mind our direction and remember significant markers on the way. In this way, our wisdom grows and we become familiar with the environment of our body–heart–mind so we do not get lost.

The four foundations of mindfulness are at the heart of Buddhist meditation (Nyanaponika 1962) and they encompass the full range of all possible human experiences. They also cover the range of processes needed for the development of insight and therefore liberation from cycles of *dukkha*. Though the *Satipatthana Sutta* was directed to monks in ancient India, the instructions given are as relevant today in contemporary culture, as they were when they were originally taught 2560 years ago.

As a meditation practice, meditators can choose to establish their attention on one foundation or a sub-domain of a foundation as is appropriate. Just like changing gears on a motor vehicle to adapt to the road and the terrain, meditators can make different foundations or sub-domains central in their awareness as required and needed. Practitioners usually begin with mindfulness of body practices and progress to more refined foundations of mindfulness as their skills develop. Mindfulness of body practices are, however, often foundation practices that meditators use as an anchor to come back to when needed.

The instructions in the *sutta* are given in such a way that they lead to the cultivation of the helpful/wholesome and the abandonment of the unhelpful/unwholesome. These instructions are geared towards reducing and uprooting the causes of *dukkha* (clinging/craving, hostility/aversion, and ignorance/delusion) and cultivating insight. Regardless of which foundation or sub-domain a meditator chooses to make central, they all ultimately lead to being free from habits and patterns that cause *dukkha*. Ultimately, however, it is the realization of the four noble truths, which is

key to being free from *dukkha*. As an indication of the progressive nature of the four foundations, contemplation of the four noble truths is listed as the last sub-domain in the fourth foundation.

The discourse outlines the basics of *satipatthana* by firstly establishing four mental qualities:

1. Being ardent or with diligence and energy
2. Being alert or clearly knowing and comprehending
3. Mindfulness
4. Being able to put aside greed and distress with reference to the world or detachment (Huxter 2007, p. 51)

According to Thanissaro (1996), the discourse also describes three stages in the development of *satipatthana*:

1. Noticing the object in and of itself, both internally (within oneself) and externally (outside of oneself), and both internally and externally (the interaction between internal and external) in the immediate time frame (the present moment).
2. Noticing how the object changes by being attentive to either its arising, its passing, or its arising and passing.
3. Having equanimity about the object, without doing anything with it, and being present with an object as it is.

3.18 Contemplation of Body: *Kayanupassana Satipatthana*

The first foundation involves contemplating the body in all possible ways and circumstances. This foundation has six sub-domains, which are as follows:

1. Mindfulness of breathing
2. Mindfulness of physical postures
3. Clear comprehension of actions (physical)
4. Mindfulness centered on the components of the body
5. Contemplation on the natural qualities or elements of body
6. Mindfulness on the nine cemetery meditations

Mindfulness of the breath is possibly one of the most common meditation practices and it can be a serenity or an insight meditation practice. For many meditation practitioners, beginner or advanced, mindfulness of breath is a popular anchor practice which is used as a regular meditation practice. While we are alive, we breathe; thus, the breath is always there as an object of attention and a way to track immediate experience.

Mindfulness of physical postures refers to being attentive to all postures whether reclining, sitting, walking, and so on. It is understandable that this sub-domain is second on the list because after breathing it is something that is always available. No matter where we are, we are in a posture.

Clear comprehension of actions (physical) refers to being aware of actions and doing them with clear understanding (*sampajanya*). Clear comprehension of actions is more refined than merely being aware of postures as it includes awareness of the greater context of our experience. For example, regardless of whether we are sitting, walking, eating, or talking, we can be aware with clarity of the purpose, suitability, and timeliness of our actions.

Mindfulness centered on the components of the body involves being aware of the separate component of the body such as hair, skin, bones, teeth, as if visualizing these parts of the body, laid out in front of oneself. The description of this sub-domain of mindfulness may not be consistent with most popular perspectives of mindfulness. Nonetheless, when we can reflect on and be mindful of the components of the body, our conceptualization about our bodies goes deeper than our superficial perceptions. In Theravada Buddhist traditions, contemplation of parts of the body is a part of the ordination process for monks and nuns. Contemplating hair as hair, bones as bones, teeth as teeth and skin as skin, as examples, helps to break down the tendency to identify with a body.

Contemplation on the elements of the body refers to being aware of the qualities of temperature (fire), the qualities of hardness and softness (earth), the qualities of movement (air), and the quality of fluidity (water). Formal meditation practices are often steered towards mindfulness of the elements. For example, being aware of the sensations associated with how the abdomen stretches with the breath can be mindfulness of air element (movement). Being aware of all the changing experiences at the base of the foot when walking may involve tracking the experience of hardness and softness (earth element). Sometimes the elements are not directly experienced and the practitioner visualizes the parts of the body that represent these qualities. For example, feeling and visualizing the teeth and bones can represent hardness (earth element) and saliva and blood represent fluidity (water element).

Mindfulness on the nine cemetery meditations involves either visualizing or observing actual corpses at various stages of decay and being aware that one day we shall also die. Like contemplating the parts of the body above, contemplating corpses at various stages of decay is not a mindfulness practice that is commonly taught in Western settings. In most cases, it would not be appropriate. Traditionally, skilled meditation teachers prescribed this practice to students with particular temperaments. Nonetheless, being able to observe a dead body, if it is not traumatizing, can have a powerfully sobering and insightful effect. Seeing a body without life can impact dramatically on our understanding of what it means to be alive and embodied. Being able to realize that one's own body will also age, decay, and die can also transform the tendency to identify with a body as an unchanging entity.

3.19 Contemplating Feelings: *Vedananupassana Satipatthana*

The Pali term *vedana* comes from the root term *vedeti*, which means to feel and to know (Anlayo 2003). *Vedana* is usually translated as feelings and it refers to the emotional flavor or the affective tones of pleasantness, unpleasantness, or neither.

Other dimensions of feelings include whether they give rise to unhelpful reactive patterns or not. Feelings are not emotions as they are considered in our everyday language, nor are they physical sensations. *Vedana* is often translated as sensations. This translation can, however, be confusing, because as described in the first domain of mindfulness sensations can refer to physical qualities such as pressure, heat, movement, and so on.

Feelings move us to act. Often our feelings about something can move us to act in ways that are wholesome and helpful in life. Feelings can also move us to act in ways that perpetuate being bound on cycles of *dukkha*. In these reactive cycles, craving to either push away or pull in, arise dependent on feelings. We cannot control our feelings about experiences because they arise as conditioned responses. We can choose, however, how we act based on our feelings. Contemplating feelings as feelings can short circuit unnecessary over reactions to experiences that come our way. As one example, contemplating feeling can help to regulate emotions and reduce cravings, thereby helping to work with addictions. Contemplating feelings also develops equanimity (resilience and peace) and can therefore be helpful for pain management.

3.20 Contemplation of *Citta* or Heart–Mind: *Cittanupassana Satipatthana*

The object of mindfulness within this domain is the heart–mind or *citta*. In Theravada Buddhism, the heart–mind thinks, feels, knows, and experiences via feelings (*vedana*), perceptions, mental fabrications/cognitions, and consciousness. It is not an enduring entity, but a sequence of momentary mental acts, each discrete, distinct and changing (Bodhi 2000a). The knowing aspect of heart–mind is awareness, and the heart–mind is both cognizant and illuminating.

It is easy to confuse the aware aspect of heart–mind with the thoughts, emotions, moods, impulses, feelings, and other events that arise within it. One of the functions of this foundation of mindfulness is to distinguish between the events that arise and pass within the heart–mind and awareness itself.

There are up to 15 sub-domains in this foundation, which include emotions, moods, thoughts, and states of mind ranging from the gross to the subtle, deluded, and awakened. The sub-domains of this foundation involve being attentive to the presence of these heart–mind events and the degree to which they represent one of the root causes of *dukkha* (greed, hatred, or ignorance) or their absence. Contemplating the heart–mind helps with emotional regulation as well as reducing the tendency to identify with transient emotional and mental events. For example, mindfully tracking the changing nature of painful emotions helps to short circuit reactive patterns often associated with these experiences. Attending to aggressive emotions and possibly labeling them, as another example, can help to provide choice with these drives rather than feeling controlled by them.

Contemplating heart–mind also includes being attentive to and tracking very subtle and refined states of heart–mind such as those associated with high levels of concentration and insight. Practicing awareness of awareness (Wallace 2005), which is a meditation practice taught in some traditions, is an example of practicing this contemplation at more refined levels.

As the objects of contemplation include reference to an unsurpassable heart–mind and a heart–mind free from unwholesome tendencies, this indicates that this foundation of mindfulness includes awareness of an awakened heart–mind.

3.21 Contemplating Phenomena: *Dhammanupassana Satipatthana*

This foundation involves contemplating *dhammas* or dharmas (Sanskrit). The word *dharma* most commonly refers to the truths that the Buddha and other awakened beings knew directly and taught. The term *dharma* or *dhamma* can also mean a range of other things. According to one Pali dictionary, its meaning includes:

Nature, condition, quality, property, characteristic; function; object, thing, idea, phenomena; doctrine; justice; the law. (Childers 2005, p. 118)

In order to more completely understand the fourth foundation, it is also worthwhile considering how the Buddha may have explained experience and *dhammas*. For the Buddha, the world is our experience of the world, which comprises both the subjective experiencing and the object being experienced. It is evident in the discourses that the Buddha also taught that the world was not an independently existing thing, but an interdependent co-arising experience, where the self and its world were a series of experiences. In Theravada Buddhism, the units of experience are called *dhammas* and are often translated as phenomena. A *dhamma* is not an objective thing, but a thing as experienced or the experience of a thing. A *dhamma* has two essential aspects: experiencing and what is experienced (Kearney 2007).

Thanissaro (1996) noted that *dhammanupassana* (contemplating *dhammas*) includes any experience that is not included in the other foundations. Analayo (2003) stated that this foundation is more concerned with a range of specific mental qualities and patterns pertaining to the teaching of the Buddha. This foundation can also include the way thought, emotions, moods, and behaviors interact. The fourth foundation is different from the other three in that there is more active engagement and intelligent discernment about experience and less nonevaluative observation. With the first three foundations, it is enough to simply focus on an object with diligence, notice how the object changes, and be present with equanimity. With the fourth foundation, however, more emphasis is placed on following the principles involved with reducing and abandoning *dukkha*, and cultivating the factors that produce wisdom and lead to awakening. The five sub-domains of the fourth foundation are:

1. Contemplation of the five hindrances or obstacles to meditation and living a valued life
2. Contemplation of the five aggregates of experience that together we call a self
3. Contemplation of the six sense bases
4. Contemplation of seven factors of awakening
5. Contemplation of the four noble truths

3.22 Contemplation of the Five Hindrances

This sub-domain refers to contemplating five hindrances that block the path of freedom and obscure awareness of an awakened heart–mind. They are:

1. Obsessive and unnecessary sensual desire or craving
2. Hostility, ill will, or unhelpful aversion
3. Lethargy, mental stiffness, and dullness
4. Agitation, worry, rumination, and restlessness
5. Paralyzing uncertainty and doubt

3.23 Contemplation of the Five *Kanda* or the Aggregates of Clinging

In Buddhism, the “self” consists of five groups or aggregates of experience. When there is clinging to the groups as an independent and permanent self, there is *dukkha*. The five groups of clinging include form, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness. The instructions in the *Satipatthana Sutta* are to merely note the arising and passing of these conditions. When impermanence is perceived and insight develops, the tendency to reify and cling to the aggregates as a solid lasting independent self, is released. In Buddhist insight meditation practices, there is a general enquiry about what it is to be human. Sometimes this is verbalized internally as “what or who am I?” Within this particular sub-domain, the focus of the contemplation is completely on the nature of self and insight arises about the self. The aim of this sub-domain of mindfulness is to wake up to ourselves and in doing so we release the grip on who and what we think we are. To release clinging to changing body–heart–mind experiences as a self is to also realize complete awakening.

3.24 Contemplation of the Six Sense Spheres

The six senses spheres are sight, sound, smell, touch, taste, and mental experience. In Buddhism, the heart–mind is considered a sense preceptor and it perceives mental objects. The instructions in the *sutta* are to notice the sense organ and the sense object. Further to this, the meditator is instructed to notice either the presence or absence of craving and clinging dependent on the sense perception. Attention is also brought to knowing how clinging has arisen, how it can be discarded once arisen and also how the tendency to cling can be kept at bay. Thus, hearing sounds, as one example, we can note impermanence of the sounds, and know how to let go of the tendency to cling to pleasant sounds or reject and condemn unpleasant sounds.

3.25 Contemplation of the Seven Factors of Awakening

The seven factors of awakening are seven positive cognitive, affective, and behavioral qualities that help lead to awakening. In Buddhist psychology, they are considered as sequential in that one positive factor leads on to the next. In order they are: mindfulness, investigation/interest, energy/enthusiasm, rapture/joy, tranquility/calm, concentration/unification, and peacefulness/being centered or equanimity. In the teachings of the Buddha, the factors have both refined noble and basic ennobling levels. The instructions in the *sutta* are to simply observe whether one or more of the factors are present or not, then to apply strategies to cultivate, nourish, nurture, and maintain them. Developing the seven awakening factors has an opposite outcome to the effects of being bound up in the five hindrances because they lead to awakening and not away from it. At an ennobling level, the cultivation of the factors is therapeutic. For example, developing skills and qualities such as awareness, enquiry, motivation, relaxation, joy, concentration, peacefulness, etc., are often basic components of many psychotherapeutic approaches.

3.26 Contemplation of the Four Noble Truths

The description of the contemplation of the four noble truths is inseparable from describing reflections and contemplations of the whole of the Buddha's teaching. This is because the four noble truths are the essence of what the Buddha taught and to realize the four noble truths is to realize the teaching of the Buddha. Mindfulness in this sub-domain refers to remembering to be attentive to these realizations and track them.

The final messages at the end of the *sutta* are predictions about the results of practicing the four foundations of mindfulness. According to the Buddha, the results of practicing mindfulness are not only the reduction of *dukkha* but also its complete release through awakening. These predictions point to how causes have effects.

That is, when mindfulness is practiced in a right, complete, or skillful way, it has the result of leading to insight, timely realizations, and ultimately full and complete awakening.

3.27 Conclusion

In the past 30 years, mindfulness has gained popularity in the contemporary world. The trend began with psychotherapeutic programs and interventions and now it is a mainstream and marketable interest. However, mindfulness is often taught in a way that is separate from the context of its Buddhist roots. The aim of this chapter was to illuminate the foundations of mindfulness in the context of the Buddha's noble eightfold path. Mindfulness was explained by referring to the original Pali term *sati*, which literally means memory. The traditional description of mindfulness and the contemporary description differ in that the Buddhist approach emphasizes wise discernment while contemporary mindfulness-based programs most often emphasize bare attention. Taking into account both the traditional and contemporary approaches to mindfulness Bhikkhu Bodhi, described mindfulness as: "to remember to pay attention to what is occurring in one's immediate experience with care and discernment" (Shapiro 2009, p. 556). From a Buddhist perspective, right mindfulness cannot be separated from the context of seven other factors, each supporting the other in the direction of awakening.

The eightfold path comprises three components: the wisdom component (right view and right intention), the ethics component (right speech, action, and livelihood), and the meditation component (right effort, mindfulness, and concentration). The Buddha's ennobling eightfold path empowers individuals to change what causes them suffering and experience the results of healing and increased well-being. The Buddha's noble eightfold path leads to radical transformations in consciousness, impeccable behaviors, and complete freedom from suffering and its causes. The meditation component of the path has two aspects: serenity where concentration is emphasized and insight where mindfulness is emphasized. These two sides of Buddhist meditation mutually support each other with serenity, providing the functions of focus, stillness, and calm to facilitate insight, while insight enables discernment to steer focused attention in the right direction. Insight meditation is represented by the four foundations of mindfulness, the practice of which has been explained in a comprehensive and detailed way in the *Satipatthana Sutta*. These foundations are contemplations of body, feelings, heart-mind, and phenomena.

The Buddha's approach to mindfulness is a timeless, sophisticated, and refined practice that can be adopted by any individual and any culture. Mindfulness is key in developing the understanding that motivates us to release what is not helpful and cultivate instead what is wholesome and liberating. When there is no cause for suffering, there is no suffering. Thus, it is one way to address and reduce psychological distress in whatever way it manifests. Moreover, the practice of mindfulness is a way to awakening and thus a powerful factor to realize complete psychological

freedom. It is worthwhile to pay homage to the historical Buddha, the one who taught the foundations of mindfulness and the profound way of the noble eightfold path to awakening.

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