

Basic Terminology - Quick Reference Guide Insight Meditation Community of Charlotte

This compilation is intended as a quick reference for those not familiar with terms often encountered when learning about the Buddha's teachings (the *Dharma*). While it is far from complete and presents only basic definitions, we hope you will find it useful. Words in italics are from the Pali language, used during the time of the Buddha.

Dukkha is an important concept, commonly translated as suffering, pain, unsatisfactoriness or stress. It refers to the fundamental unsatisfactoriness and painfulness inherent in each human life. Its pervasiveness is the first of the Four Noble Truths, and it is one of the three marks of existence.

The Four Noble Truths is a teaching of the Buddha that many would say is the most fundamental, describing the operation of *dukkha*.

1. There is suffering (*dukkha*).
2. There is a cause of suffering: clinging.
3. There can be a reduction in or end to suffering: don't cling.
4. There is a method to reduce or end suffering by addressing clinging, namely the Noble Eightfold Path.

The Noble Eightfold Path is the step-by-step prescription to help us move away from *dukkha* and toward a more easeful life.

Wisdom (Insight)

1. Wise/Right Understanding/View
2. Wise/Right Intention

Ethical Behavior

3. Wise/Right Speech
4. Wise/Right Action
5. Wise/Right Livelihood

Mind Training (Meditation)

6. Wise/Right Effort
7. Wise/Right Mindfulness
8. Wise/Right Concentration

The Four Foundations of Mindfulness are fundamental practices to help us cultivate mindfulness.

1. Mindfulness of body
2. Mindfulness of feeling tone
3. Mindfulness of mind states
4. Mindfulness of mind objects

The Four *Brahma-Viharas* (Divine Abodes) are wholesome mind states that we are encouraged to cultivate.

1. Loving-Kindness (*metta*)
2. Compassion (*karuna*)
3. Altruistic Joy (*mudita*)
4. Equanimity (*upekkha*)

The Three Jewels are reflections designed to inspire and support us as practitioners.

1. The Buddha (both the historical figure, and each person's ability to achieve awakening)
2. The *Dharma* (the teachings of the Buddha)
3. The *Sangha* (the community of *Dharma* practitioners)

The Three Characteristics of Existence are universal truths that gradually become intuitive knowings as we progress on the path.

1. Impermanence (*anicca*)
2. Suffering (*dukkha*)
3. Not-self/selflessness (*anatta*)

The Five Hindrances are unwholesome mental states that arise in our life and practice, hindering us from mindfulness and concentration.

1. Sensual desire
2. Ill-will or anger
3. Sloth and torpor
4. Restlessness and worry
5. Doubt

The Three Poisons (Defilements) are poisonous states of mind that motivate non-virtuous, unskillful thoughts, speech, and actions. They arise from ignorance and cause all manner of suffering and unhappiness for ourselves and others.

1. Greed/desire
2. Hatred/Ill will/aversion
3. Delusion/ignorance

The Five Precepts constitute a basic code of ethics for laypersons.

1. I take as a training the precept to refrain from taking life.
2. I take as a training the precept to refrain from taking that which is not freely given.
3. I take as a training the precept to refrain from sexual misconduct.
4. I take as a training the precept to refrain from unwise/unskillful speech.
5. I take as a training the precept to refrain from intoxication, which clouds the mind.

The Five Remembrances are useful reflections to support us on the path.

1. I am of the nature to get sick.
2. I am of the nature to get old.
3. I am of the nature to die.
4. I am of the nature to lose everything and everyone near and dear to me.
5. I am the owner of my *karma* (consequences of my actions).