

*Namo tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammâ Sambuddhassa!*

## Noble Eightfold Path

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The Lord Buddha showed us a way out of *dukkha* (stress, suffering, unsatisfactoriness) called the Noble Eightfold Path. This path is composed of eight "steps" or components to be practiced in unison, leading to *Nibbâna* (realization). As a young person, even if one is not intent on traversing this *higher* path, it is good to have knowledge of it. The following are the eight steps and how they can be practiced.

1. *Samma-ditthi* (**right view**): “*And what, monks, is right view? Knowledge with regard to stress, knowledge with regard to the origination of stress, knowledge with regard to the stopping of stress, knowledge with regard to the way of practice leading to the stopping of stress: This, monks, is called right view.*”<sup>1</sup> The first component of the path involves having a good understanding of the **Four Noble Truths** of 1. suffering, 2. the **cause** of suffering, 3. the end of suffering and 4. the way leading to the end of suffering. This step is primarily practiced mentally.

2. *Samma-sankappo* (**right intention / motive / resolve**): “*...Being resolved on renunciation, on freedom from ill will, on harmlessness...*” This includes developing positive intentions in our minds at all times, such as thoughts of detachment and **letting go** (*nekkhamma* or renunciation), loving-kindness (*mettâ*), compassion (*karunâ*), non-jealousy (*muditâ*) and equanimity (*upekkhâ*).<sup>2</sup> This step is primarily practiced mentally.

3. *Samma-vâca* (**right speech**): “*...Abstaining from lying, abstaining from divisive speech, abstaining from abusive speech, abstaining from idle chatter...*” This includes always speaking 1. words that are truthful, 2. words that create unity among people rather than disunity, 3. words that are gentle and kind as opposed to harsh words, 4. and avoiding empty words which are of no benefit to anyone. This step is primarily practiced verbally.

4. *Samma-kammantô* (**right action**): “*...Abstaining from taking life, abstaining from stealing, abstaining from unchastity...*” This includes 1. avoiding killing and being kind and compassionate to all beings, 2. not stealing, and 3. avoiding being unfaithful to one's and others' partners and primarily for youth avoiding pre-marital sexual relations. This is step primarily practiced physically.

5. *Samma-ajivô* (**right livelihood**): “*A lay follower should not engage in five types of business. Which five? Business in weapons, business in living beings, business in meat, business in intoxicants, and business in poison.*”<sup>3</sup> This primarily involves being employed in an honest and harmless occupation. This is step primarily practiced physically.

6. *Samma-vayâmô* (**right effort**): “*(i) There is the case where a monk generates desire, endeavors, activates persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the sake of the non-arising of evil, unskillful qualities that have not yet arisen. (ii) He generates desire, ... for the sake of the abandonment of evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen. (iii) He generates desire, ... for the sake of the arising of skillful qualities that have not yet arisen. (iv) He generates desire, endeavors, activates persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the maintenance, non-confusion, increase, plenitude, development, & culmination of skillful qualities that have arisen.*” That is 1. exerting effort to prevent bad qualities that have not yet arisen, 2. the exerting of effort to abandon bad qualities that have already arisen, 3. the effort to give rise to good qualities that have not yet arisen and 3. the effort to maintain the good qualities that have already arisen. This is step primarily practiced mentally.

7. *Samma-sati* (**right mindfulness**): “*(i) There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself -- ardent, aware, & mindful -- putting away greed & distress with reference to the world. (ii) He remains focused on feelings ... (iii) He remains focused on the mind ... (iv) He remains focused on mental qualities ...*” This is the continuous mental observation/watching and awareness (this is being mindfulness) at all times of all changes that occur in 1. our bodies, 2. our feelings, 3. our minds and 4. phenomena. This step is primarily practiced mentally.

8. *Samma-samâdhi* (**right concentration**): “(i) There is the case where a monk -- quite withdrawn from sensuality, withdrawn from unskillful (mental) qualities -- enters & remains in the first jhana: rapture & pleasure born from withdrawal, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. (ii) With the stilling of directed thought & evaluation, he enters & remains in the second jhana: rapture & pleasure born of concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation -- internal assurance. (iii) With the fading of rapture, he remains in equanimity, mindful & alert, and physically sensitive of pleasure. He enters & remains in the third jhana, of which the Noble Ones declare, 'Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasurable abiding.' (iv) With the abandoning of pleasure & pain -- as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress -- he enters & remains in the fourth jhana: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain.” This is withdrawing from [sensual pleasures](#) and practicing meditations such as loving-kindness (*metta*), awareness of breath (*anâ-pâna-sati*) or other meditations to attain the higher mental states (*jhâna*). This step is primarily practiced mentally.

Together the eight components of the path represent *sîla* (morality: composed of 3. right speech, 4. right action and 5. right livelihood), *samâdhi* (concentration: composed of 6. right effort, 7. right mindfulness and 8. right concentration) and *paññâ* (wisdom: composed of 1. right view and 2. right intention). These three, *sîla*, *samâdhi* and *paññâ* are the "next step up" from three foundation practices of *dâna* (giving), *sîla* (morality), *bhâvana* (meditation), for those who wish to take their practice to the "next level" and reach Nibbâna sooner. May you attain [Nibbâna](#).

## Notes

1. SN 45.8, Magga-vibhanga Sutta, [An Analysis of the Path](#), Translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu [ <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn45/sn45.008.than.html> ]
2. *Mettâ*, *karunâ*, *muditâ* and *upekkhâ* are also called the divine abidings (*brahma-vihara*).
3. AN 5.177, Vanijja Sutta, [Business \(Wrong Livelihood\)](#), Translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu [ <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an05/an05.177.than.html> ]

## Related Suttas

1. SN 45.8, Magga-vibhanga Sutta, [An Analysis of the Path](#), Translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu [ <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn45/sn45.008.than.html> ]
2. SN 56.11, Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, [Setting the Wheel of Dhamma in Motion](#), Translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu [ <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn56/sn56.011.than.html> ]
3. AN 5.177, Vanijja Sutta, [Business \(Wrong Livelihood\)](#), Translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu [ <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an05/an05.177.than.html> ]

## Other Resources

1. [The Four Noble Truths - A Study Guide](#) by Thanissaro Bhikkhu [ <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/study/truths.html> ]
2. [Nibbana](#) by Thanissaro Bhikkhu [ <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/thanissaro/nibbana.html> ]
3. [Accesstoinsight.org](#) section on [brahma-vihara](#) (i.e. *mettâ*, *karunâ*, *muditâ* and *upekkhâ*) [ <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/index-subject.html#brahmavihara> ]