**UNIVERSAL WHOLESOME MIND CONDITIONERS**

There are 25 wholesome mental factors that condition consciousness. The first 7 are universal, accompanying each wholesome self-state organizing process.

1. **CONFIDENCE:** The Pali word here is *saddha* (sah-dah), typically translated as *confidence* or *faith*, particularly faith in the validity of the Buddhist way of life, and represents certainty regarding the benefits of virtue, wisdom and meditative training. It is not faith based on hearsay, but rather grounded in actual results. Buddhist commentary suggest three levels of *saddha*: faith based on logical argument, faith based on the example set by a wise person, and faith based on direct experience. The first two are “shakeable”, because they are based on supposition, while the third confirms through the application of mindfulness, investigation and effort. It can only accumulate gradually, through skillful, persistent and consistent practice. The result of this accumulation is the ability to be unshakable regarding applying the acquired skills and the benefit of the outcome, despite circumstances and the opinions of others. Saddha provides the antidote for the hindrance of skeptical doubt. There is a well-known sutra describing the importance of faith, called the Kalama Sutta (translated by Thanissaro, downloaded from Access To Insight):

Don't go by reports, by legends, by traditions, by scripture, by logical conjecture, by inference, by analogies, by agreement through pondering views, by probability, or by the thought, "This contemplative is our teacher." When you know for yourselves that, "These qualities are skillful; these qualities are blameless; these qualities are praised by the wise; these qualities, when adopted & carried out, lead to welfare & to happiness" — then you should enter & remain in them.

1. **MINDFULNESS**: The Pali word here is *sati* (sah-tee), and is defined as "…*recollecting, calling back to mind: the mindfulness that is remembering, bearing in mind, the opposite of superficiality and of obliviousness*…". This is probably the most important of the conditioners of the mind. As the first of the seven factors for awakening, it monitors and supports regulation of all the other mental factors. Its primary function is to support Wholesome Effort, i.e., the arising of wholesome consciousness and the non-arising of unwholesome consciousness. The Satipatthana Sutta, translated as the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, is dedicated to the cultivation of mindfulness in all aspects of life, and is regarded as perhaps the most useful sutta in Buddhism. It represents the most applicable of all the wholesome cetasikas for overcoming the five hindrances.
2. **MORAL SHAME**: The Pali word here is *hiri* (hih-ree), and is the opposite of *ahiri*, shamelessness, an unwholesome cetasika that appears in every moment of distress and confusion about what happiness is and how to realize it. It represents modesty, humility, conscientiousness, and scrupulousness. It prevents regret and remorse. It is present at any moment when virtue is applied.

1. **FEAR OF CONSEQUENCES**: The Pali word here is *ottappa* (oh-tah-pah), and is the opposite of another universal unwholesome cetasika, *anottappa*, recklessness. We are all inherently social creatures, and unwholesomeness creates distrust and disharmony. This factor focuses on the intentional cultivation of virtue so that social support is readily available for awakening. Another application of ottappa is the recognition that an emerging unwholesome self-state organizing process will produce regrettable results, whereas anottappa disregards the suffering that is caused by unwholesome actions. Hiri and ottappa cooperate, with the result being alert for any violation of Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood.
2. **NON-ATTACHMENT**: The Pali word here is *alobha* (ah-low-bah), and this cetasika is considered a fundamental root factor for awakening, along with non-aversion and Wholesome Understanding. Classically, it is like "…being detached, like a drop of water on a lotus leaf…" It is the cause of generosity and through realizing the reality of non-self. It is the antidote for the unwholesome cetasikas of *lobha*, ignorance, and *micchaditthi* \_(mee-chah-dee-tee), wrong view.
3. **NON-AVERSION**: The Pali word here is *ados*a (ah-doh-sah), and is equivalent to the Buddhist term *metta*, lovingkindness, and is the antidote for *dosa*, aversion/ill-will. This is another of the "beautiful root factors", and has the characteristic of gentleness, inclusiveness, tolerance and patience. Non-aversion is not affection, which is sentimental attachment to an object of attention. It is closely aligned with and supportive of another wholesome cetasika, *karuna* (kah-roo-nah), compassion.
4. **EQUANIMITY**: The Pali word here is *Tatramajjhattata* (tah-trah-mah-jah-tah-tah), and represents balanced functioning of the wholesome cetasikas. According to Nina Van Gorkom in her book “Cetasikas”, it "…has the characteristic of conveying citta [consciousness] and cetasikas evenly. Its function is to prevent deficiency and excess, or its function is to inhibit partiality. It is manifested as neutrality." "Its proximate cause is seeing [that]…Beings are owners of their deeds [karma]." It functions synonymously with upekkha, another term for equanimity. Upekkha is described as the ability to be presently aware and benevolently functional whether the outcome is to one’s personal advantage or not. It supports the optimal balancing of the 7 factors of awakening, in the progress toward awakening. Here’s an illustrative set of graphics:

mindfulness, investigation, concentration,

right effort,

confidence

Too much energy produces desire, aversion and restlessness

Strong skepticism/doubt

Strong identification/attachment

This intersection is always moving; vipassana brings stability, and perfect balance is self-mastery.

Equanimity:

Optimal dynamic balancing of affect and indentification

Too little energy produces sloth and torpor

The Universal Wholesome Mind Conditioners interact with the Universal Mind Conditioners, *Feeling, Perception, Contact, Volition, Concentration, Vitality* and *Attention*. Additionally, the wholesome Occasional Mind Conditioners, *Bringing Attention to an Object, Sustaining that Attention, Determination, Energy, Enthusiasm*, and *Will to Do* participate in the process of self-organization. The following is an attempt to describe in and integrative way how these various conditioning functions simultaneously occur and create a brief aggregation—when several of these momentary aggregations are bound together, a process that occurs multiple times per second, the aggregates appear as an enduring, autonomous self. The goal of the Awakening process is to “deconstruct” these binding moments, revealing the arising and passing away of the aggregates, proving the Buddhist concept of non-self to be real.

1. A sensory process is stimulated through *contact*, which is not available for conscious investigation. For example, light stimulates the optical process, and this contact initiates the meaning-making process, organized around *feeling* and *perception*.
2. *Mindfulness*, another set of neural pathways, can manifest *concentrated* *attention* through *aiming attention* at what is forming and *sustaining this attention*, producing conscious awareness of the feeling as it develops, either as pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral regarding affect.
3. *Perception* involves another set of neural associations that sorts through the various stimuli that are also occurring and systematically disregards those perceptions that don’t fit into a coherent aggregation, until a small percentage of the cascade of stimuli is coordinated, perhaps a color, a shape and whether it is moving or not. This sorting process can be observed with mindfulness as well.
4. As the process of meaning-making continues, *volition* operates to orient the process towards an aggregation of various mind conditioning functions, either wholesome or unwholesome. When *mindfulness* is involved, the orientation is wholesome, because *non-attachment* and *non-aversion* are also involved in the aggregating process. Because of these functions, *moral shame* and *fear of consequences* are aligned with the development of the feeling and perception towards a moment of self-experience.
5. As the process of binding the moments of wholesome self-state organizations occurs, *enthusiasm* regarding the process produces *vitality* and the *will-to-do*, manifesting as mental well-being and ethical behavior, and shapes the experience of “selfing”. The actions initiated by the wholesome mind conditioners is balanced by *equanimity*—not too agitated or too dull, with *non-attachment* to what is experienced as an autonomous and enduring self or doubt as to the wholesomeness of what is emerging into consciousness. This balanced, unified, and focused attention cultivates c*onfidence* in the process of vipassana, insight into the nature of subjective experience.
6. The ultimate goal of this process, beyond well-being and ethical behavior, is a clear awareness of the moment-by-moment binding together of the aggregates, and there is an immediate subjective awareness of what is called “arising and passing away”, that is, each moment of aggregation, multiple times per second, which makes real the Buddhist concept of anicca (ah-nee-chah), the transient nature of the self-organizing process, and anatta (ah-nah-tah), the absence of an enduring/autonomous self. Full realization of this liberates the mind to Nirvana, the unconditioned.

The highly integrated and dynamic interactions between the Universal Mind Conditioners, Occasional Mind Conditioners and Universal Wholesome Mind Conditioners produces a heightened level of mental functioning, conceptualized as the next 12 mind conditioners called the “Beautiful Pairs”, that represent a highly effective coordination between consciousness and those factors that enhance the ability to cultivate clear awareness of the shaping of one’s personality in and ongoing way. These factors will be discussed further in the next talk.