

The Eightfold Path

- 1. Right Understanding [Wisdom]**
Realism, objectivity, seeing things as they really are. Understanding the Four Noble Truths. Knowledge which penetrates into the very heart of things (as opposed to mere information).
- 2. Right Intention [Wisdom]**
Thoughts of selfless renunciation or detachment, thoughts of love and thoughts of non-violence, extended to all living things. Thoughts of universal compassion.
- 3. Right Speech [Ethical Conduct]**
Negatively, refrain from lying, slandering, backbiting, rude and hostile speech, gossip, etc. Positively, speak the truth and use words that are friendly and benevolent. Speak only when you have something useful or meaningful to say.
- 4. Right Action [Ethical Conduct]**
Do not kill; do not steal; do not cheat; do not engage in illicit sex; do not use alcohol; avoid violence (cultivate non-violence -- ahimsa). Help others.
- 5. Right Livelihood [Ethical Conduct]**
Don't engage in any occupation that directly or indirectly harms others (or animals), such as arms trading, dealing in alcohol, butchering, soldiering, etc.
- 6. Right Effort [Mental Discipline]**
Try (strive, will) --
(1) to prevent evil and unwholesome states of mind from arising (volitional acts such as conceit, hatred, self, desire).
(2) to get rid of evil and unwholesome states that have already arisen.
(3) to produce or cause to arise good and wholesome states of mind not yet arisen.
(4) to develop and bring to perfection the good and wholesome states of mind already present.
- 7. Right Mindfulness (Attentiveness, Acts of Consciousness) [Mental Discipline]**
To be aware of and to monitor (1) activities of the body, (2) sensations or feelings (pleasure, displeasure, and neutral), (3) mental states or volitional acts, (4) ideas, thoughts, conceptions, and things. Paying attention to the appearance and disappearance of a wide variety of conditions, psychological scrutiny (not harsh, but alert and watchful).
- 8. Right Concentration [Mental Discipline]**
Like yoga in Hinduism. Discard unwholesome thoughts. Clear out distractions. Focus on one object. Then clear the mind entirely (emptiness), so that only pure equanimity remains (trance-like). [Note that this training or conditioning is not to be confused with nirvana].