



静心学堂 丛书

The Mindful Peace Academy Collection

中英双语 Chinese-English Edition

# 八步骤三种禅修

Eight Steps and Three Types of Meditation

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如何才能有效落实修学？重点就在于十八字方针<sup>[1]</sup>，在于八步骤三种禅修。所以，我们要把认识和运用十八字方针，作为辅导员培训的重点。从辅导员、实习辅导员到辅助员，都要掌握相关内容。如果辅导员都不能掌握十八字方针，不知如何运用八步骤三种禅修，怎么能带好一个班，并指导学员运用？

今天，我将从五个方面来和大家谈一谈。

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[1] 态度上：真诚、认真、老实；方法上：理解、接受、运用；效果上：观念改变、心态改变、生命品质改变。

# 一、真诚、认真、老实

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佛法不仅能帮助我们  
看到存在的问题  
还能为我们提供智慧的认识  
但它究竟能对我们产生多少疗效  
是取决于每个人自己  
我们唯有具备  
“真诚、认真、老实”的态度  
才能以开放的心态  
接受佛法，改善生命

十八字方针中，“真诚、认真、老实”属于态度模式，也是落实方法、达到修学效果的前提。那么，它对落实修学到底有多大作用？这是很多人修学之初容易产生的疑问。有些学员甚至会对此心生抵触：我们是仰慕佛法智慧来修学的，这个起点是不是太低了？我们是小学生吗？这也值得强调吗？

之所以有这样的定位，是特别针对今天的学人而设置的。当今这个时代，就是一个不真诚、不认真、不老实的时代，这种习惯和学佛完全是背道而驰的。事实上，这正是很多人修学不得受用的症结所在。不真诚，就会目标不清，不知学佛是为了调心治病；不认真，就会浅尝辄止，就像用药剂量不足，难以生

效；不老实，就会四处攀缘，今天接受这种治疗，明天尝试那个配方，尚未看到疗效就不了了之。总之，没有真诚、认真、老实的态度，是不可能药到病除的。

在《道次第》的闻法轨则部分，讲到闻法要离三种过、具六种想，这和我们所说的“真诚、认真、老实”到底是什么关系？

凡夫心的特点，就是无明和我执。因为无明，使我们的认识受到感觉、情绪和观念的影响，从而产生种种错误认识。因为我执，又会以自我为中心，把自己对世界的错误认识当作真实，并执著于此。我们相信自己的感觉，但这个感觉是错误的。所以，人要改变自己非常困难。除非我们认识到自己存在的问题，进而接受智慧文化的教育。

佛法不仅能帮助我们看到存在的问题，还能为我们提供智慧的认识。但它究竟能对我们产生多少疗效，是取决于每个人自己。我们唯有具备“真诚、认真、老实”的态度，才能以开放的心态接受佛法，改善生命。否则就会像覆器那样，虽然法雨普润，却依然活在自我的感觉中，滴水未沾；或是像垢器那样，把所

学的一切都用自我感觉改造过，成为“我的法”，而非佛的法。

具六种想，则是“真诚、认真、老实”的重要基础。在学佛成为时尚的今天，不少人只是将之作为一种爱好，就像品茗、闻香、听琴那样，不过是生活的点缀而已。之所以这样，关键在于没有“于已作病者想，于说法者作医师想，于教法作药物想，于修行作疗病想，于如来作正士想，于正法起久住想”。在这些认识中，最重要的是病者想。

我们必须认识到，自己是生死轮回的重病患者，是贪、嗔、痴的重病患者。如果不能生起这一认识，学佛必然流于表面，是不可能相应的。只有看到以迷惑烦恼为基础的生命存在重大过患，看到轮回的本质是痛苦的，才会寻医问药，积极治疗。进而认识到，佛法是药物，法师是医生，修行是治疗过程。具备这些认识，才能建立“真诚、认真、老实”的修学态度。

那么，这种修学态度和“理解、接受、运用”又是什么关系？

比如理解，有错误和正确之分，有肤浅和深入之



分；比如接受，有少量接受和全部接受之分，有勉强接受和欣然接受之分；再如运用，有偶尔运用和经常运用之分，还有生搬硬套和任运自如之分。为什么会有这些差别？正是取决于“真诚、认真、老实”的修学态度，取决于能否离三种过，具六种想。

如果是覆器，佛法根本就进入不了心田，哪里谈得上理解？如果是漏器，无论接受多少法都会流失殆尽，无法积聚为改造心行的力量；如果是垢器，接受的法都会被自己处理过，不能产生应有的正向作用，甚至成为烦恼的增上缘。

所以说，态度模式决定了我们对法的“理解、接受、运用”，也决定了我们对法的受益程度，即能否通过学佛完成观念、心态和生命品质的改变。

## 二、认识八步骤

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佛陀一生应机设教  
都是为解决众生问题服务的  
在佛陀的教法中  
有理论，有实践  
是一个从言教到生活  
从观念到心行的系统工程  
如果单纯当作理论  
或是修行技术，乃至生活方式  
都是不完整的

关于如何修学，我们首先提出了有关态度、方法、效果的十八字方针，进而提出八步骤三种禅修。后者是对十八字方针在修学运用上的概括，不仅是一种方法，同时也蕴含了结果。其中，前四步偏向理解和接受，后四步则是通过传承佛法来改造生命，在理解、接受的基础上加以运用。

对于每一课的内容，只有理解之后，知道其中讲的是什么，才谈得上接受。如果不曾理解，或理解出现偏差，哪怕听得再多，仍是活在自己的世界里，不能真正和法产生连接，更谈不上运用了。所以，“理解、接受、运用”就是通过心相续来传承佛法，完成生命的改造，进而帮助更多的人走向觉醒。

对八步骤的概念，我们的学员应该不会陌生。但具体怎么运用？并不是人人都很清楚的。其实，八步骤就是一种方法论。简单地说，就是把书本道理转化为生命品质的方法。

学佛大体有两种误区。一是偏于理论，知道很多道理，说起来头头是道，但只是纸上谈兵，和安身立命关系不大；二是盲修瞎炼，每天忙于功课，总在念着拜着，但内心烦恼依旧，把学佛和生活打成两截。

须知，佛陀一生应机设教，都是为解决众生问题服务的。在佛陀的教法中，有理论，有实践，是一个从言教到生活、从观念到心行的系统工程。如果单纯当作理论，或是修行技术，乃至生活方式，都是不完整的。

如何把理论和实践结合起来？佛法的常规修习理路，有八正道、闻思修、信解行证，及亲近善知识、听闻正法、如理作意、法随法行等。这些方法包含在众多典籍中，是佛陀为我们提供的共同路径。但对今天的学人来说，仅在文字上理解这些经典就存在障碍，要认识其中蕴含的深意，更是难上加难。

基于此，我根据现代人修学的需要，概括出八步骤三种禅修。其中，包含了从理解法义到思考人生、形成认识，进而落实于心行、改善生命品质的过程。这不仅是一套有效的修学方法，同时还蕴含着学佛所要达到的结果。

## 1. 前三步

八步骤的前三步非常关键。第一步是读懂每个句子，第二步是了解每个段落的内涵，第三步则是从发现问题到解决问题，从传承法义到建立认识。这是修学不可或缺的基础。

以往的学习方式，通常是总结段落大意，现在比较流行做思维导图。关于这个方法，我三十年前在广化寺读《四分律行事钞》时就已使用。《行事钞》由道宣律祖编著，共三十篇。每篇涉及一项内容，包括出家人如何受戒、安居、依止师长等等。我每读完一篇，就做出相关的思维导图，使整个纲领一目了然，知道其中到底要说什么事，这件事该从哪些方面去做，

等等。

静心学堂课程有不少教材来自我的历次演讲，其中，有些是音像资料，有些已整理成书。不论哪一种，都会有相应的结构。比如从若干方面来谈这个问题，每个方面大概讲些什么。整理成文后，一般会有若干层级的标题。现在编写的同修班辅助材料也做了思维导图。大家在学习过程中，可以借助这些方便。

但光看目录和思维导图是缺少具体内容的，还是不清楚它到底要说什么，这就需要回到相关的音像和书籍。我们为什么要求把每课内容学习三遍以上？其实，这是“理解”的最低要求。如果没有观听或阅读三遍，很难理解其中究竟要告诉我们什么。事实上，这也是很多学员认真学习后的共识。

读第一遍的时候，可能感觉知道得差不多了；读第二遍的时候，才发现许多之前忽略的内容；读第三遍的时候，又会发现之前的学习还有遗漏，还不够深入。如果继续下去，其实还会有新的领悟。哪怕之前的三遍已经学得比较扎实，在内容上完全没有遗漏，但因为你对佛法的认识在加深，对同样的内容就会有

不一样的发现。

或许有人会觉得，有必要这样吗？对不少人来说，从一段话甚至一个句子中，也能了解一些佛法道理，从中有所受用。但我们要知道，这种接受是不完整的。真正学佛，不仅是让自己的烦恼稍微少一点，让心稍微安静一点，还要从迷惑走向觉醒，从轮回走向解脱。这就必须对法义有完整、准确、透彻的认识，三项标准缺一不可。

首先是完整。比如《佛教的财富观》，是要告诉我们财富和人生的关系。内容包括“怎样看待财富、财富与道德、佛教徒能否追求财富、怎样追求财富、合理支配财富”等方面。由这些问题，构成对财富的完整认识，而不仅仅是了解一个方面。否则就会以偏概全，影响对这个问题的认识。

其次是准确。这就必须反复地观听和阅读，理解其中到底要告诉我们什么道理。所以，三遍是基本要求，要准确理解，其实需要读上更多遍。古人说，“书读百遍，其义自见”，确为经验之谈。更何况，佛法博大精深，很多道理都是层层展开的。随着修学的提

升，你再去读，每次都会有不一样的收获。所以只要时间允许，我们应该多听闻，多思考，确保理解没有偏差。

第三是透彻。只有完整、准确地理解法义，对它到底要讲什么了然于胸，佛法智慧才会进入我们的心相续中。否则就会浮在表面，好像知道了，但知道的只是皮毛，没有真实力用。书法有个标准叫“力透纸背”，学佛也是同样，要把法义深深镌刻在心中，念念不忘，才能在境界现前时有效运用。

我们对法义的理解包含两个层面，一是理论层面，二是现实层面。佛法能不能用得起来，首先取决于理论层面的理解是否完整、准确、透彻。具备这个基础，才能在现实层面去对照、检验并接受。比如无常，有关于无常的理论，也有关于无常的事实。我们学习的所有理论，都要到现实中去反复观察，一一验证。

佛法讲无常，现实到底是不是无常的？讲人生是苦，现实到底是不是苦的？讲金钱是毒蛇也是净财，现实中到底是不是有这样两种面向？所有问题，我们都要回归到现实中加以对照，只有这样，才能把闻思



正见落实于心行，真正成为自己的认识。

我们是充满迷惑烦恼的凡夫，所有的痛苦、轮回、颠倒，都是因为无明而产生。我们本来拥有无价珍宝，却一无所知，只能流转生死，乞讨度日。这是何其可怜的人生！佛陀说法的目的，不是为了给我们提供一套理论，让我们掌握一些知识，而是帮助我们认识人生和世界的真相，找到开启宝藏的钥匙。所以在学习书本理论之后，必须联系现实进行观察，由此建立正见，也就是观察修。

由无明建立的错误认识，给生命带来了无穷过患。现在，我们需要传承智慧的认识来替换它。这种智慧不是复制进去就行了，那是不能生根的，对境现前，很可能就随风飘零，根本无力抵御。只有通过观察，看清人生和世界的真相确如佛法所说，而非我们原来认识的那样，才能对佛法心悦诚服。那样的认识，才会深深镌刻在心田，任凭风吹雨打，考验重重，都不再构成干扰。

在近四十年的学佛过程中，我越来越感觉到，佛陀简直把人生道理说尽说透了。有句话叫作“世间好

话佛说尽”，这个好话，就是真实语，智慧语。所以，佛法是靠智慧而不是别的什么折服我们。只有明白这一点，我们在给别人介绍佛法时，才能充满自信，而不是鹦鹉学舌。或是像复读机那样，只会照搬佛陀怎么说，古德怎么说，导师怎么说。当然，我们可以引用，但关键是要真正理解并接受，形成自己的认识。这样的话，才是从内心流淌出来的，是具有感染力的。

## 2. 第四步

在前三步的基础上，第四步就是建立正确认识，即观念的禅修。所谓正确认识，包括理论认识 and 实际认识两部分。理论的认识，就是佛陀所说的因缘因果、无常无我等道理；实际的认识，就是我们的人生观、世界观和价值观。

通过八步骤的前三步，我们对佛法所说的每个内容，都能完整、准确、透彻地理解，从中获得正见。进一步，还要过渡到对现实的观察。缺少这个环节，书本理论和实际认识就不能发生连接，产生作用。如

果把理论比做一粒种子，闻思只是获得种子，而观察修才是耕耘、播种，让种子生根发芽的过程。

### 3. 第五步

建立正见之后，第五步是运用观念，建立正向心态。常常有人说：“佛法我怎么用不起来？”如果种子还没有埋入土壤，怎么生长？同样，如果法还没有变成你的认识，怎么运用？另一个常见问题是：“道理我都懂，就是做不到。”其实，凡是我们真正懂得的道理，一定可以做到。我们不会吃下毒药，因为知道这样会失去生命。可为什么明明知道是错误还会去犯？归根结底，就是对道理认识不足，对其中的危害认识不足。知道这件事不对，但只是停留在概念上，并没有发自内心地认同，成为实际认识，所以就用不起来。

可见，真正产生作用的是实际认识。一旦将佛法理论变成自己的认识，自然就用起来了，不用都不行。就像我们平时看到喜欢的东西，立刻会生起贪心，根本不需要什么过程。因为贪欲已经被训练得任运自如，

一旦境界现前，瞬间就会自动运转。所以说，运用是取决于观念的改变，取决于观念的深入程度。

#### 4. 第六步

从第五步的运用观念、建立正向心态，到第六步的完成心态改变，都属于心态的禅修。很多学员通过几个月的修学，烦恼变少了，人际关系和谐了。为什么有这样的效果？因为佛法已经在他的生命系统中运转起来，自然就会产生作用。这种作用，首先就表现在心态的改变。

生命有两条道路，一条是轮回道，一条是解脱道，非此即彼。轮回就是迷惑心理的发展过程。因为错误的认识和观念，引发狭隘、自私、贪婪、对立、冷漠等一系列负面心理，给人生带来种种烦恼。如果我们不想继续这样的痛苦，就要建立正确认识，重新观察世界。通过观察，让这种正确认识在内心扎根，逐渐替换原有的错误知见。错误知见减少一分，烦恼痛苦也会随之减少一分。佛陀之所以能断除烦恼，成就断

德，安住于无限的寂静，也是因为他的正见已经圆满。

所以说，心态的禅修，是来自于观念的禅修；心态的转变，是取决于观念的转变。

## 5. 第七步

心态改变之后，第七步就是重复正向心态，改变生命品质。无始以来，轮回的串习始终在主导生命，力量根深蒂固。相比之下，修学建立起来的正向心态还不稳定，需要不断养护。一方面，要认识到负面心理的过患，不再进入原有轨道，不去肯定它、认可它、支持它、参与它；另一方面，需要认识到正向心理的意义，时时对它加以关注、欣赏、支持和重复。这个过程，就是佛法所说的扫尘除垢，转染成净。

## 6. 第八步

随着正向心理的强化，最终进入第八步，完成生命品质的改变。从三种禅修来说，第七和第八步所进行的，就是生命品质的禅修。佛和众生的最大区别，

就在于生命品质。凡夫的生命品质是以贪嗔痴为基础，而佛菩萨的生命品质则体现为圆满的慈悲和智慧。这种生命品质不是与生俱来的，而是通过修行造就的。

八步骤的修行，就在引导我们成就这样一种生命品质。首先是舍凡夫心，消除负面心行，佛教称之为断德；其次是成就正面心行，圆满无限的智慧和慈悲，佛教称之为智德和悲德。这些品质需要通过戒定慧三无漏学来成就，静心学堂课程同样是围绕这个目标而设定。

除了八步骤，我们还有十六字窍诀，即“树立正见，认清真相，摆脱错误，重复正确”。八步骤的前四步，是帮助我们“树立正见，认清真相”；而后四步则是引导我们“摆脱错误，重复正确”。如果前四步，尤其是第三步没有完成，就无法树立正见，也就不能认清真相，摆脱错误，更谈不上重复正确了。

所以说，八步骤贯穿着学习教理到转变生命品质的整个过程。其中，第一、第二步是基础，第三、第四步是关键，第五、第六步是提升运用，第七、第八步是达到圆满。

### 三、观察修与安住修

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我们曾经因为错误的  
观察修和安住修  
带来烦恼，流转生死  
现在还是依照这个心行运作规律  
只是调整了方向  
通过对佛法的思维获得正见  
以此认识问题，改变心行  
这样就能解除烦恼，出离生死

很多学佛人对禅修有一份向往，认为我们的课程中没有禅修，总想去哪里体验一下。之所以这样，是因为我们对禅修有一定的误解，觉得只有闭上眼睛、盘腿坐在那里才是禅修。

对于这个观点，禅宗早在一千多年前就作了批判。《六祖坛经》说：“生来坐不卧，死去卧不坐，一具臭骨头，何为立功课？”身体不过是个皮囊而已，怎么可以根据它是坐着还是躺着来判断修行境界呢？关于此，禅宗还有一个著名的公案。当年，马祖道一精进禅坐，南岳怀让看出他是个堪当大任的法器，就想度一度他。于是，怀让禅师取了一块砖在他身边磨。马祖被吵得不行，就问：你磨砖干啥？怀让说：我想把



它磨成镜子。马祖奇道：磨砖岂能做镜？怀让反问：如果磨砖不能做镜，坐禅岂能成佛？怀让接着举例说：就像牛车不动的时候，应该打车还是打牛？

禅修是心地功夫，关键是改变我们的心，打坐只是辅助手段。真正的用心，贯穿在一切时，一切处，包括行住坐卧，乃至吃喝拉撒。只要保持正念，随时随地都是修行。很多人不懂得怎么在心地下功夫，既不学习教理，也不改变观念，调整心行，只是浑浑沌沌地坐在那里，以为这才是禅修的唯一方式。其实，这是对禅修的误解。

话说回来，既然躺着、走着都可以修行，盘腿坐着自然也可以是修行。事实上，这也是常规的禅修方式。但我们要知道，坐在那里干什么，才是最重要的。禅修并不是让身体保持某种姿势就行了，关键在于用心，而不是形式。正因为如此，禅宗修行历来都不拘一格，但用心却绵绵密密，绝不空过。

佛教中，关于禅修的方法很多。比如止观，是通过培养定力来成就观智；内观，是通过培养觉知来获得观照力；观想，则是通过想象来调整心行。静心学

堂课程比较重视观察修，这也是《道次第》倡导的修学方式。通过听闻法义，运用理性思维，建立对世界的正确认识。因为说法是佛陀一生教化的重要手段，所以，学习佛陀言教，也是他老人家为我们施设的常规修学途径。

## 1. 观察修的心理基础

学佛是要开智慧，见真理，而智慧和人的理性有关。为什么说人是万物之灵？为什么人类会有五千年文明？为什么诸佛世尊出自人间，而不以其他身份成佛？都是因为人有理性。人类要离苦得乐，就会不断探索生命。在探索过程中，去认识生命是怎么回事，世界是怎么回事。同时，通过思考对已有认识进行审视，看到自己存在的不足，从而加以改变，转染成净，转识成智。

这种理性的形成，包括生活方式的文明与否，又和我们接受的文化教育有关。我们接受什么样的文化教育，就会建立什么样的理性，成为什么样的人。古

往今来的罪犯乃至暴君，也是因为接受不良文化，形成错误观念，才会导致种种不良行为，从而危害自己，危害社会。

幸运的是，我们今天接受到觉醒的文化，智慧的文化。否则，将永远看不清世界真相，找不到生命出路。我是谁？生命的意义在哪里？靠我们自己去想，是想不出来的。虽然路就在那里，过去也有古佛走过，但除了慧根极利的独觉，凡夫是没有能力找到这条道路的。

古往今来，有些哲学家和艺术家在功成名就后走上了绝路。他们并不是为生计所迫，也不是受到什么打击，而是找不到人生的意义。世间很多人，为了事业、财富、家庭就可以忙碌一生，乐此不疲，但总有一些人不能满足于此。当他们真正开始探索人生时，才会发现，这是一条迷雾重重、崎岖坎坷的道路，需要勇猛精进，更需要智慧抉择。

佛陀不但找到了这条道路，还为我们施設种种教法，苦口婆心地引领我们。尽管有了这么多方便，也尽管我们有幸得人身，闻佛法，但佛典浩瀚，很多人

穷其一生都在上下求索，不得要领。有鉴于此，我们特别根据现代人的特点，安立修学模式，只要“真诚、认真、老实”地遵循这一次第，下多少工夫，就能有多少受益。

## 2. 观察修的教理依据

闻思修是佛法修学的基本次第。其中的思，就是如理思维。这个“如理”非常重要。凡夫也总在思维，可那是虚妄分别，是胡思乱想，不但没有解决问题，反而会想出种种烦恼。所谓“天下本无事，庸人自扰之”，说的就是这个。所以说，理性本身是双刃剑，必须合理运用，才能令我们破迷开悟。否则，只会迷上加迷。

在“亲近善知识，听闻正法，如理作意，法随法行”四法行中，如理作意也是关键所在。从亲近善知识到听闻正法，是在接受智慧的传承。在此基础上，通过如理作意，知道佛法究竟告诉我们些什么，才能法随法行，走向觉醒。

而在八正道中，首先是正见，其次是正思维。我们接受了佛法正见，就要落实到心行，以此观察世界，思考人生，而不是一味随着妄念跑。唯识也讲到，由四种寻思（名寻思、事寻思、自性假立寻思、差别假立寻思），才能引发四种如实智。

可见，如理思维对学佛非常重要。《道次第》倡导观察修，正是基于这些常规修行路线提出的，并非独辟蹊径。忽略这个关键，就会走上歧途而不自知。长期以来，为什么佛法修学存在这么多问题？有人谈玄说妙，徒逞口舌之利；有人盲修瞎炼，只做表面功夫。佛法本身是深奥的智慧，但现在的教界越来越没文化了。学禅的不要看经教，说是“不立文字，教外别传”；念佛的也不要看经教，说是“三藏十二部，留给他人悟”。而不学经教意味着什么？就意味着我们无法传承佛陀的言教，无法传承这种智慧的认识。

参禅也好，念佛也好，都是在众多经论基础上浓缩的修行手段，而不仅仅是我们看到的表现形式。在这些方法背后，还有完整的理论和修证体系。如果把理论去掉，把知见和用心方法去掉，最后剩下一个话

头，一句佛号，就像内容去掉后剩下的标签，被完全架空了，力量从何而来？

佛教和其他宗教最大的不同，就在于正见。很多宗教也有戒律，也有禅修，在这两方面，佛教和其他宗教是共通的。尤其是和印度本土宗教，连概念都有很多相似之处。如涅槃、解脱、业力和轮回等术语，在印度其他宗教早已有之。为什么只有佛法才能将人导向解脱？正是因为知见不同，对这些概念的剖析和解读不同，由此发展的修行原理也不同。这才是佛法真正的不共所在。

当然，理性是不能直接抵达真理的，但它可以帮助我们找到方向，接近真理。只有最后进入空性的禅修时，才要放下分别，开启无分别的智慧。在此之前，如理思维是不可或缺的。

### 3. 凡夫心是依观察修而建立的

其实对凡夫来说，观察修和安住修并不陌生。因为凡夫心也是通过观察修和安住修建立起来的，可以

说，我们无始以来一直在做观察修和安住修。比如我们喜欢一样东西，就会反复想着它的好处，想着一定要把它占为己有，这就是观察修。最后使这个念头变得极其强烈，在内心久久不去，甚至强烈到只剩下这个念头，这就是安住修。比如有些人自视甚高，感觉良好，也是来自观察修。因为他总想着自己的长处，越想越觉得自己了不起，觉得别人都不如他，最后生起极大慢心，并沉浸在这一感觉中，处处透着优越感。这种感觉从何而来？其实就是自己修出来的。

总之，观察修就是针对某个问题，通过各种角度的反复思考，形成相应心念，并使这种心念增长广大。无始以来，凡夫在无明和我法二执的认知基础上，思维种种问题，形成现有的凡夫人格。所以，这种修行方法很适合凡夫。我们曾经因为错误的观察修和安住修带来烦恼，流转生死。现在还是依照这个心行运作规律，只是调整了方向，通过对佛法的思维获得正见，以此认识问题，改变心行，这样就能解除烦恼，出离生死。

改变心行包括两方面，一方面是摆脱导向轮回的

负面心理，一方面是建立与解脱相应的正向心理。这不是玄谈，完全可以在修学过程中不断实证。只要“真诚、认真、老实”地按照八步骤，尤其是第三、第四步，从理解法义到建立观念，再以这些观念思考人生，心态必然会发生改变。

#### 4. 观察修在《道次第》中的运用

整个《道次第》所说的，就是这样一个修心次第。这个过程围绕“舍凡夫心，发菩提心”展开，包含道前基础的依止善知识、暇满义大，下士道的念死无常、念三恶趣苦、皈依三宝、深信业果，再到中士道的出离心，上士道的菩提心和菩萨行。每个环节都在帮助我们消除错误观念，建立正确认识，即观念的修行。再通过对这种认识的观修，摆脱凡夫心，建立走向觉醒的心，即心态的修行。

这个过程需要一步步地落实。比如听闻轨则，如果不能离三种过，具六种想，就不能成为法器，不能让纯净的佛法进入心相续中，完成生命品质的改变。



同样，没有“真诚、认真、老实”的修学态度，就谈不上“理解、接受、运用”，更谈不上“观念、心态、品质”的改善。

此外，下士道的重点是建立对三宝的信心，生起皈依之心，并深信业果；中士道的重点是深刻意识到轮回的痛苦本质，生起出离心；上士道的重点是通过修习七因果和自他相换，认识到菩提心的功德，发菩提心，行菩萨行，修空性见。其中的每个过程和环节，都贯穿着相应的观察修和安住修。

在《二十一禅修手册》中，把《道次第》的重要环节都形成禅修内容。观察修部分，是把《道次第》的相关内容，用简要的语言加以总结。就像我们修习皈依仪轨时，要思维暇满义大、念死无常、念三恶道苦等，由此生起真切的皈依之心。此处的关键，不是念诵相关文字，而是通过对这些现象的观察思维，发自内心地觉得：三宝对自己无比重要，是人生唯一的依怙和归宿。当我们生起强烈的皈依之心，再来念诵三皈依，才能具足力量。进而安住于三宝功德，与三宝心心相印。

除了皈依，我们对每一法都可以进行这样的观察修和安住修。依止善知识如此，发出离心、菩提心也是如此。如果没有观察修和安住修，我们对这些法的学习，往往会停留在理论层面，不能落实到心行，和人生发生连接。那样的话，我们所学到的法，就只是人生的包装，不会成为人生的内容。

## 四、八步骤三种禅修

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关键是要了解到  
禅修的意义和作用  
知道它的重点在打车还是打牛  
如果抓不住重点  
哪怕把车打得散架了  
牛还是原地不动  
一旦把佛法智慧  
真正变成自身的观念和心态  
随时随地都能洒脱自在，了无牵挂

禅修的重点，不在于是坐着，还是站着或走着，而在于心行的建立和改变。明确这个重心，才能完成观念、心态到生命品质的改变。

在我们的修学设置中，完成这个目标的方式，包括自己的阅读和观听，也包括小组交流和班级交流。可能有人会问：这样的话，和世间人读书有什么不同？两者的差别在哪里？差别就在于，有没有运用八步骤。如果没有运用八步骤，就是在学文化，学知识，学理论。即使所学的是佛法，但因为没有经过八步骤进行转化，也算不上修行。反之，如果运用八步骤在修学，不管是自己思维法义，还是参加交流，都属于禅修的范畴。

因为禅修要做的，就是如何把佛法智慧转化成你的认识和观念。这不是必须坐在那里、闭着眼睛才能完成，可以在看书时完成，也可以在小组和班级交流中完成。所以，关键是要了解到禅修的意义和作用，知道它的重点在打车还是打牛。如果抓不住重点，哪怕把车打得散架了，牛还是原地不动。一旦把佛法智慧真正变成自身的观念和心态，随时随地都能洒脱自在，了无牵挂。正如禅宗所说的那样：“行亦禅，坐亦禅，语默动静体安然。”

对于法的落实，我们在八步骤的基础上提出了三种禅修，即观念的禅修、心态的禅修和生命品质的禅修。

## 1. 观念的禅修

第一步到第四步，是观念的禅修。通过阅读、观听、使用辅助教材，准确理解法义。进一步，学会用这种法义认识世界，思考人生，并通过现实中的对照和检验，知道佛陀告诉我们的一切真实不虚。从而摆

脱错误，建立正见。具备正见之后，以此断除烦恼，导向解脱。

静心学堂的所有课程，都是在帮助我们建立相关正见。如同喜班部分，是从佛教的角度看待信仰、财富、环保、世界等种种问题。为什么有这样的设置？因为在我们的烦恼中，有的来自家庭，有的来自感情，有的来自事业，有的来自人际关系，总之，每种烦恼都有一个归属。那么，它的最终归属在哪里？为什么这些事让我们产生烦恼？就是因为无明，因为用错误观念看问题。换言之，这是由错误的观察修和安住修造成的。

正因为烦恼是由错误观念造成的，所以，解脱必须建立在正见基础上。首先就要了解，佛法是怎么看待这些问题的。我们通过对课程内容的阅读和观听会发现，原来我们习以为常的一些观念是经不起推敲的，原来事物还有我们从未涉猎的另一个角度，原来真相并不是人云亦云的那一个，而是要通过观察、思维和实证才能找到的。

我们对每一课、每本书的学习，都是在传承一种

智慧的认识，这就必须完整、准确、透彻地理解其中内容。建立正确认识后，还要持久、稳定地安住其中，以此替代原有的错误观念。一旦正确观念淡化了，就要重新认识，重新思考，让正见再次清晰起来，成为内心的主导力量。

## 2. 心态的禅修

第五步到第六步，是心态的禅修。建立正见后，我们要以此处理问题，指导人生。从运用正确观念到建立良性心态，这个过程离不开观察修。当我们真正能以智慧观察世间和人生时，烦恼就不起现行的了。然后就要安住在智慧观照中，保有内在的清静和慈悲，并使这一状态不断延长。

当这个状态模糊了，难以为继了，就要继续观察，去念死无常，念轮回苦，或忆念三宝功德。总之，针对当前存在的困扰，对相关法义进行思考，将心重新调整到位。

所以，观察修和安住修不是一次就能完成的，而

要经过十次、百次，甚至千万次的重复。这个过程需要轮番修。一方面是用正见对治妄念，一方面是用正向心态对治负面心态。当心能够安住在正见和正向心态中，就持续、稳定地保持这一状态，不再观察。否则，反而会使心趋于掉举。

### 3. 生命品质的禅修

第七和第八步，是生命品质的禅修。无明迷惑造就了凡夫的生命品质，我们希望成就佛菩萨那样的生命品质，就要不断发展与觉性相应的心理，强化与解脱相应的心理，并使这些心理稳定下来，占据主导，最终才能转变现有的生命品质。

在此过程中，需要让心长时间地安住于正向心态。一旦偏离，就要通过观修把它调动起来，进而安住其中。这个过程也需要轮番进行，通过重复正确，造就全新的生命品质。

八步骤三种禅修的要点：观念的禅修是修正观念，心态的禅修是调整心态，生命品质的禅修是改变生命



品质。也就是通过对法义的理解，建立正确观念；通过运用正确观念，建立正向心态；通过重复正向心态，造就高尚的生命品质。这是一个转迷为悟、转凡成圣的过程。

## 五、座上修和座下修

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真正运用八步骤去自修交流  
修学效果是显而易见的  
当观念有了改变，进一步  
就是把这些观念带到生活中  
使心态得到调整  
这种座下的修行  
既是对座上修的落实  
也是对它的检验和巩固  
假以时日  
必然会导向生命品质的改变

在我们的修学建构中，虽然把《道次第》作为重点，但这只是其中的一门课程，不是全部。包括对观察修、安住修和座上修、座下修的定义，也和《道次第》有不同侧重。

比如《道次第》说到观察修和安住修，我们又在此基础上提出了八步骤三种禅修。在《道次第》的略示修法部分，将每个法的修行分为加行、正行、结行和未修中间四部分。其中，加行、正行和结行属于座上修行，未修中间属于座下修行。在《二十一禅修手册——道次第实修手册》中，还将各项内容形成了相关仪轨。

在这些仪轨中，每项修行前都有皈依和发心，接

着是对于某一法进行观察修和安住修。比如怎样对依止善知识进行观察修和安住修，怎样对念死无常进行观察修和安住修，最后是回向。也就是说，主要是在座上进行观修。

静心学堂课程特别针对在家居士而施設，考虑到初学者往往还不习惯坐在那里观修，要不就昏沉瞌睡，要不就胡思乱想，效果并不理想。所以，我们将座上修行贯穿到自修和交流中。也就是说，只要运用八步骤来修学，不论自修还是交流，都属于座上修的范畴。

禅修的重点是改变观念、心态和生命品质，形式只是辅助。从具体实践来看，如果我们真正运用八步骤去自修交流，修学效果是显而易见的。当观念有了改变，进一步，就是把这些观念带到生活中，使心态得到调整。这种座下的修行，既是对座上修的落实，也是对它的检验和巩固。假以时日，必然会导向生命品质的改变。

所以，只要对八步骤三种禅修运用到位，严格按照这套模式来学，观念和心态肯定越来越健康，越来越有智慧。与人的相处，对事的处理，也会越来越圆

融。反之，如果没有正见指导，一味执著某种外在形式，往往会修得烦恼重重。为什么很多人学佛学得怪怪的，和大家格格不入？就是因为他的修学不是立足于智慧，而是执著于某种形式，这就很容易和生活脱节，和他人对立。

总之，八步骤三种禅修是一套行之有效的方法，也是落实佛法修学的关键。希望大家结合自身修学，对如何运用这套方法进行深入交流，把它真正落到实处。





# **EIGHT STEPS AND THREE TYPES OF MEDITATION**

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**Spoken at the Advisor Training in 2015**

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How can we effectively implement the Mindful Peace Academy Curriculum? The key lies in mastering the Nine-Word Guideline<sup>1</sup> and practicing the Eight Steps and Three Types of Meditation. Therefore, as the focus of advisor<sup>2</sup> training, we should understand

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1. The Nine-Word Guideline is an important guiding principle in the Mindful Peace Academy Curriculum. It includes the attitudes of “honesty, earnestness, and commitment,” the methods of “understanding, accepting, and applying,” as well as the transformation of “views, mindsets, and life quality.”

2. Advisors are students who have benefited from and progressed relatively quickly in the Mindful Peace Academy Curriculum. They also volunteer to assist class students in their study and growth. Their roles are defined as learners, supporters, sharers, and servers. Advisors are divided into levels, progressing from lower to higher: Class Assistant, Assistant Advisor, Junior Advisor, Intermediate Advisor, and Senior Advisor.

and apply the Nine-Word Guideline. Everyone, including Class Assistant, Assistant Advisor and all levels of advisors, must master the relevant content. If advisors themselves are unable to grasp the Nine-Word Guideline or apply the Eight Steps and Three Types of Meditation, how can they effectively lead a class and guide students to do such practice?

Today, I will share with you from five aspects.

# I

## HONESTY, EARNESTNESS, COMMITMENT

In the Nine-Word Guideline, the attitudes of “honesty<sup>1</sup>,

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1. Honesty: Use the Dharma as a mirror to honestly face the afflictions in your life. Realize that you are an ordinary being, filled with delusion and afflictions—a seriously ill patient trapped in samsara. Have the courage for self-reflection—don’t deceive yourself or shy away from your afflictions. Only by clearly seeing these issues can you approach study and practice with the mindset of treating an illness. Otherwise, learning the Dharma may become nothing more than an ornament in your life. We must be honest not only in facing ourselves but also in facing the Dharma and the teacher. Like a patient eager for recovery, regard the Dharma as a medicine to heal your illness and the teacher as a skilled doctor who can save your life.

earnestness<sup>2</sup>, and commitment<sup>3</sup>” are essential for effectively applying the methods and achieving the desired results in our study and practice. So, how crucial are these attitudes in implementing the Mindful Peace Academy Curriculum? This is a question often asked by many new beginners. Some students may even feel resistance, thinking: “We are here to learn the wisdom of the Buddha’s teachings. Isn’t this starting point too low for us? Are we elementary school students? Is this really something worth emphasizing?”

Actually, this emphasis is specially tailored for today’s

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2. Earnestness: Devote yourself wholeheartedly to study and practice, holding yourself to high standards. Follow the guidelines for listening to the Dharma as outlined in the *Stages of the Path*, and deeply engage with the teachings of each lesson. Repeatedly listen, reflect, and fully grasp the meaning of the Dharma, allowing it to integrate into your mind and transform your life from within.

3. Commitment: Once you recognize the value of the Mindful Peace Academy Curriculum, follow it sincerely with single-minded focus. Don’t let a chaotic worldly mindset lead you astray or cause you to cling to external distractions. If you fail to cherish this opportunity to engage with the curriculum and settle your mind on learning, it will be difficult to gain any true benefit.

learners. We live in an era marked by a lack of honesty, earnestness, and commitment, which is completely opposite to the attitudes required for the study and practice of Buddhism. In fact, this is precisely the crux of why many fail to benefit from their study and practice. Without honesty, we are unclear of our goal, not understanding that the purpose of studying Buddhism is to tame the mind and heal the sickness. Without earnestness, we will only skim the surface of the teachings, like taking too little medicine to gain any effect in curing a disease. Without commitment, we flit from one approach to another, trying different treatments and formulas without waiting to see effective results. In summary, without honesty, earnestness, and commitment, it is impossible to recover from the disease of cyclic existence through the medication of the Buddha Dharma.

In the *Stages of the Path*, the guidelines for listening to the Dharma teach us that we should “avoid the Three

Faults<sup>4</sup> and cultivate the Six Contemplations.” How does this advice relate to the attitudes of “honesty, earnestness, and commitment” in the Mindful Peace Academy Curriculum?

The unenlightened mind is characterized by ignorance and self-attachment. Due to ignorance, our understanding is influenced by feelings, emotions, and perceptions, leading to various wrong views. Because of self-attachment, we become self-centered, taking our wrong views of the world as real, and clinging to them. We trust our feelings, but they are often misleading. This makes it very difficult to change ourselves unless we are able to recognize our own problems and embrace the teachings of wisdom culture.

Buddhist teachings not only help us identify problems

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4. Three Faults refer to the upside-down vessel, the contaminated vessel, and the leaky vessel in the following texts. These three types of vessels serve as metaphors that represent the common faults encountered when studying Buddhism.



but also offer us insights of wisdom. However, the extent of its healing effect on us depends on each individual. Only by adopting the attitudes of “honesty, earnestness, and commitment” can we truly open our minds to embrace the Dharma and improve our lives. Otherwise, we are like an upside-down vessel: even though the rain of Dharma falls on everyone, we remain caught up in our self-centered feelings, untouched by even a single drop-let of wisdom. Or, like a contaminated vessel, we twist everything we learn through our self-centered feelings, turning it into “my Dharma” instead of the Buddha’s Dharma.

Cultivating the Six Contemplations is fundamental to the attitudes of “honesty, earnestness, and commitment.” In today’s world, studying Buddhism has become fashionable. However, many people treat it as nothing more than a hobby, akin to tasting tea, smelling incense, or appreciating music, merely embellishing their lives. The key reason for such attitude lies in the absence of the Six Contemplations: “seeing oneself as a patient, the Dharma

teacher as a doctor, the teachings as medicine, the practice as taking the medicine for healing, the Tathagata (Buddha) as a true sage, and aspiring for the Dharma to endure.” Among these, the most important is seeing oneself as a patient.

We must realize that we are seriously ill patients in the cycle of life and death, afflicted with the severe illnesses of greed, aversion, and ignorance. If we cannot realize this, our study of Buddhism will inevitably remain superficial, making it impossible for us to resonate with the true teachings. Therefore, only when we realize that a life rooted in delusion and afflictions has significant flaws, and that the true nature of samsara (cyclic existence) is suffering, will we be motivated to seek remedies and actively engage in treatment. Furthermore, we need to realize that the Buddha Dharma is medicine, Dharma teachers are doctors, and the practice is the healing process. With these understandings, we can then develop an honest, earnest, and committed attitude toward our study and practice.

Then, what is the relationship between the attitudes of “honesty, earnestness, and commitment” and the study methods of “understanding, accepting, and applying”?

For instance, “understanding” can range from correct to incorrect, and from shallow to deep. “Accepting” can vary from partial to complete and from reluctant to wholehearted. “Applying” can be occasional or consistent, and either rigid or seamlessly integrated. Why are they different? They lie in the attitudes of “honesty, earnestness, and commitment” in the study and practice, as well as the ability to avoid the Three Faults and cultivate the Six Contemplations.

If we are like an upside-down vessel, the Dharma won’t even enter our mind—how can we understand it? If we are like a leaky vessel, no matter how much Dharma we receive, it will all drain away, unable to accumulate the strength needed to transform the mind. And if we are like a contaminated vessel, the Dharma we take in will be processed by our own filters, unable to yield its intended

positive effect. And it may even become a condition that increases our afflictions.

Therefore, our attitudes determine how we “understand, accept, and apply” the Dharma, as well as the extent to which we benefit from it—whether we can transform our views, mindsets, and life quality through studying Buddhism.

## II

### UNDERSTANDING THE EIGHT STEPS

Regarding how to study and practice, we first introduce a Nine-Word Guideline, which covers attitudes, methods, and outcomes, and then further put forward the Eight Steps and Three Types of Meditation. The latter encapsulates the practical application of the Nine-Word Guideline, serving not only as a method but also encompassing the outcomes. Among these steps, the first four focus more on understanding and accepting, while the last four emphasize on transforming life by inheriting the Buddha's teachings, and applying what has been understood and accepted.

For each lesson in the Mindful Peace Academy Curriculum, only after correct understanding can we truly know what is being taught and then accept it. If our understanding is incorrect or distorted, no matter how much we hear, we will still be living in our own world, unable to truly connect with the Dharma, let alone apply it. Therefore, the Dharma is inherited through the continuum of mind by “understanding, accepting, and applying” it. Then we fulfill our mission of transforming our lives and further help more people on the path to awakening.

Students of the Mindful Peace Academy Curriculum should be familiar with the concept of the Eight Steps. But how to apply it effectively? Not everyone is very clear on that. Actually, the Eight Steps serve as a methodology. Simply speaking, it is a method to transform theoretical knowledge from books into practical life qualities.

There are generally two misconceptions in studying Buddhism. The first is an overemphasis on theory—we may

know many teachings and speak eloquently about them but fail to apply them practically in life, with little connection to finding peace and purpose in life. The second is aimless practice—we may be busy with daily rituals and recitations, constantly chanting and praying—but our inner afflictions remain unchanged. This disconnects Buddhist study from daily life.

It should be understood that all the teachings Buddha gave throughout his life, were tailored to different spiritual faculties, and aimed at addressing the problems of sentient beings. In the Buddha's teachings, there are both theory and practice. They form an integrated system that bridges teachings and daily life, and connects views with mindsets. If we view it merely as a theory, a technique for practice, or even just a way of life, it remains incomplete.

How do we integrate theory and practice in Buddhism? The conventional path of Buddhist practice includes the Noble Eightfold Path, the approach of listening,

contemplating, and practicing, as well as the principles of faith, understanding, practice, and realization. It also emphasizes following wise teachers, listening to the right Dharma, and contemplating and practicing in accordance with the Dharma. These methods are included in numerous Buddhist texts, representing the common path laid out by the Buddha. However, for today's learners, even gaining a basic understanding of the texts is challenging, let alone comprehending the profound meanings they contain.

In response, I have summarized Eight Steps and Three Types of Meditation tailored to the needs of practitioners today. This framework includes understanding the teachings, reflecting on life, forming correct understandings, and then applying them in our mind to improve the quality of life. This is not only an effective method for practice but also contains the goals that Buddhist study aims to achieve.



## 1. The First Three Steps

The first three steps of the Eight-Step process are very crucial. The first step is to understand each sentence, the second step is to delve into the meaning of each paragraph, and the third step is to transition from raising questions to solving them, from learning the teachings to forming correct views. These steps form the indispensable foundation of the study.

In the past, the learning approach was usually about summarizing the main idea of each paragraph; nowadays, creating mind maps is getting more popular. I began to use mind maps thirty years ago at Guanghai Monastery while studying the *Expository Notes on the Four-Part Vinaya*. Written by Vinaya Patriarch Daoxuan, this text consists of thirty sections. Each section addresses a specific topic, including how monastics should receive precepts, how to observe the three-month summer retreat, and how to rely on teachers and so on. Each time I finished reading a section, I created a corresponding mind

map to clearly outline the main points. This helped me understand exactly what it was all about, and how to approach the matter.

Many of the teaching materials of the Mindful Peace Academy Curriculum are collected from my past lectures. Some are audio-visual materials, while others have been compiled into books. Regardless of the format, there is always a structured outline. For example, a topic is discussed from several aspects, with each aspect covering specific points. Once compiled into texts, there are usually multiple levels of headings. The supplementary materials prepared for the intermediate stage of practice<sup>1</sup> also include mind maps. Everyone can take advantage of them to enhance learning efficacy.

However, the table of contents and mind maps lack details. Therefore, just by browsing them, we are still unclear about what they say. So, it is necessary to study the

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1. Mindful Peace Academy Curriculum includes the preliminary, intermediate and advanced stages of practice.

relevant audio-visual materials and books. Why does the Mindful Peace Academy Curriculum require studying each lesson at least three times? Actually, this is the minimum requirement for “understanding.” Without watching the teaching videos or reading the materials repeatedly for three times, it’s difficult to comprehend what it truly conveys. Indeed, this is a consensus reached by many students after serious study.

After reading the text for the first time, we may feel like we’ve grasped most of it; on the second reading, we may discover that many details were previously overlooked. By the third reading, we’ll realize that there were still neglected contents and that our understanding wasn’t deep enough. If we keep reading, new insights will likely emerge. Even if the first three readings seem thorough and nothing was left out, as our understanding of the Dharma deepens, we will uncover new insights from the same content.

Some may wonder, is this really necessary? Many people

can grasp some principles of the Dharma from just a paragraph or even a single sentence and find it beneficial. However, we need to recognize that receiving Dharma in this way is incomplete. A serious Dharma student will not be satisfied by just slightly reducing the afflictions and making the mind a bit more peaceful. Truly studying the Dharma is about freeing oneself from delusion to awakening, and from samsara to liberation. This requires a complete, accurate, and thorough understanding of the Dharma, and each of the three standards is indispensable.

The first standard is completeness. For example, the *Buddhist View on Wealth* aims to tell us about the relationship between wealth and life. The content covers various aspects such as “how to view wealth, the relationship between wealth and morality, whether Buddhists can pursue wealth, how to pursue wealth, and how to manage wealth reasonably.” These topics collectively provide a complete understanding of wealth, rather than just focusing on a single aspect. Without this completeness,

one may hold a biased and incomplete view on wealth.

The second standard is accuracy. Achieving accuracy requires watching teaching videos or reading texts repeatedly. In this way, we will truly understand the teachings being conveyed. Therefore, going over the contents three times is a basic requirement. In fact, to accurately grasp the meaning, it often requires many more times. Just as an ancient saying goes, “Read a book a hundred times, and its meaning will naturally reveal itself,” which speaks to their experiential wisdom. Moreover, the Dharma is vast and profound, with many teachings unfolding layer by layer. As our study and practice deepen, each time we revisit the text, we will gain new insights. Therefore, as long as time permits, we should listen, read, and reflect more times, ensuring our understanding remains accurate and free from misconceptions.

The third standard is thoroughness. Only by understanding the teachings completely and accurately will we be fully clear about the meaning, allowing the wisdom of

the Dharma to constantly enter our minds. Otherwise, our understanding will remain superficial. It may seem as if we understand, but what we grasp is only skin-deep: simple yet not useful. In calligraphy, there is a standard known as “strength penetrating the back of the paper.” Similarly, in studying Buddhism, we must deeply engrave the teachings in our minds, constantly recalling them, so that we can effectively apply them when we face real-life situations.

Our understanding of the teachings involves two levels: the theoretical and the practical. First of all, the ability to effectively apply the Buddhist teachings depends on whether our theoretical understanding is complete, accurate, and thorough. With this foundation, we can then put them into practice, reflect on them, test them, and ultimately internalize them. For example, impermanence is a theoretical concept but also a reality. All theories we learn must be repeatedly contemplated and verified in real life.

Buddhism teaches impermanence, but is it true in reality? It states that life is suffering, but is this the truth? It describes money as both a poisonous snake and pure wealth; does money indeed have the dual aspects in real life? We must examine all these questions against the backdrop of our actual experiences. Only by doing so can we internalize the right views gained from listening and contemplation, making them a true part of our understanding.

We are ordinary beings filled with delusions and afflictions. All our suffering, the cycle of rebirth, and our deluded thoughts arise from ignorance. We possess invaluable inner treasures yet know nothing about them. Instead, we merely drift through the cycle of birth and death and live like a beggar day after day. What a pitiful way to live! The Buddha's teachings are not meant to provide us with a set of theories or to impart knowledge, but to help us understand the true nature of life and the world, and to find the key to unlock the treasures within. Therefore, after we study the theories from books, it is

essential to connect them with real life through contemplation, thereby establishing the right views. This process is called Contemplative Meditation.

The wrong views arising out of ignorance bring endless suffering to our lives. To counter this, we need to replace these wrong views with the wisdom of right views. This wisdom cannot simply be copied and pasted into our minds; it must take root deeply. Without deep roots, it may easily be swept away when real-life challenges arise, leaving us utterly powerless to resist. Only by observing and clearly seeing that the truth of life and the world aligns with what the Dharma teaches—not with our previous perceptions—can we wholeheartedly embrace the Dharma. The right views will then be deeply engraved in our minds, unshaken by any trials or tribulations.

In my nearly forty years of studying Buddhism, I have increasingly realized that the Buddha articulated the truths of life with unparalleled clarity and depth. Just as a saying goes, “All the finest teachings in the world have been



spoken by the Buddha.” These finest teachings are the words of wisdom and the words of truth. Therefore, the Dharma convinces us through wisdom, not through any other means. Only after we understand this can we introduce the Dharma to others with genuine confidence. Then we will not merely parrot what we’ve heard, or just like a tape recorder, simply repeating what was said by the Buddha, the ancient masters, or our teachers. Of course, it is fine to quote them, the crucial point is to truly understand and internalize their teachings, and form our own insights. When our insights come from within, our words will flow from the mind and naturally resonate with others.

## **2. Step Four**

Built on the first three steps, the fourth step is to establish the right views, or meditation on views. The right views include both theoretical and practical insights. The theoretical insight refers to the Buddha’s teachings of dependent origination, cause and effect, impermanence,

and no-self. The practical insight encompasses our views on life and the world, as well as our values.

Through the first three steps of the Eight-Step process, we should achieve a complete, accurate, and thorough understanding of each aspect of Buddhist teachings, thereby attaining the right views. Moving forward, we must transit to contemplate these right views in real life. Without this critical step, there won't be a connection between theoretical knowledge and practical insight, thus no effect can be made. If we consider theory as a seed, then listening and contemplating are just acquiring the seed. Contemplative Meditation, on the other hand, is the key process of cultivating and planting the seed, allowing it to take root and sprout.

### **3. Step Five**

After establishing the right views, the fifth step is to apply them and develop positive mindsets. People often ask, "Why can't I apply the Buddhist teachings

effectively?” If a seed hasn’t been planted in the soil, how can it grow? Similarly, if the teachings haven’t become part of your understanding, how can you apply them? Another common issue is, “I understand the teachings, but I can’t put them into practice.” In fact, if we truly understand the teachings, we can certainly put them into practice. Just as we won’t taste poison because we know it is fatal. So why do we still make mistakes even when we know they are wrong? Fundamentally, it is due to an insufficient understanding of the teachings and their consequences. We may know something is wrong, but if this understanding remains at a conceptual level, it is not fully internalized. As a result, it doesn’t become true practical insight, leaving us unable to apply it.

As such, the real impact comes from practical insight. Once the Buddhist teachings are transformed into our own understanding, we will naturally apply them—it will become impossible not to do so. Just as greed arises when we see something we like, without any thinking process. Because our greed has been conditioned to

operate automatically, it activates as soon as the opportunity arises. Therefore, applying the teachings depends on the transformation of our views and how deeply these views are ingrained.

#### **4. Step Six**

The fifth step is about applying the right views and establishing positive mindsets, while the sixth step involves completing the transformation of the mindsets. Both fall under the meditation on the mindsets. Many students, after a few months of study and practice, have experienced less afflictions and more harmonious relationships. Why is it so effective? It's because the Dharma has started operating within their life systems, it will naturally take effect. This effect is first manifested as a transformation in mindsets.

There are two paths in life: the path of samsara and the path of liberation. It is one or the other. Samsara is the development of a deluded mind. Due to wrong

perceptions and views, we develop a series of negative mental states such as narrow-mindedness, selfishness, greed, opposition, and indifference, which bring various afflictions to our lives. If we do not wish to continue suffering in this way, we must establish the right views and re-contemplate the world. Through contemplation, we can let the right views take root in our minds, gradually replacing our original wrong views. As these wrong views diminish, our afflictions and suffering will also decrease. The Buddha was able to eradicate afflictions, achieve the virtue of cessation, and dwell in infinite tranquility because his right views were perfected.

Therefore, the meditation on mindsets stems from the meditation on views; the transformation of mindsets depends on the transformation of views.

## **5. Step Seven**

After transforming our mindsets, the seventh step is to continually reinforce positive mindsets and improve

our quality of life. Since beginningless time, the habits of samsara have been dominating our lives, with deeply ingrained power. In contrast, the positive mindsets developed through study and practice are still unstable and require constant nurturing. On one hand, we must recognize the harm caused by negative mindsets and avoid falling back into old patterns—no affirming, endorsing, supporting, or engaging in them. On the other hand, we need to understand the value of positive mindsets, and consistently focus on appreciating, supporting, and reinforcing them. This process is what Buddhism refers to as “sweeping away dust and impurities, transforming defilements into purity.”

## **6. Step Eight**

As the positive mental state strengthens, we reach the eighth step, ultimately transforming the quality of life. From the perspective of the Three Types of Meditation, the seventh and eighth steps focus on the meditation on life quality. The greatest difference between buddhas and

sentient beings lies in the quality of life. The life quality of ordinary beings is based on greed, aversion, and ignorance, while the life quality of buddhas and bodhisattvas is characterized by perfect compassion and wisdom. This life quality is not innate; it is cultivated through practice.

The Eight-Step practice is designed to guide us toward achieving such a quality of life. First, we must let go of the deluded mind and eliminate negative mindsets, which Buddhism refers to as the virtue of cessation. Next, we cultivate positive mindsets that embody infinite wisdom and compassion, referred to as the virtue of wisdom and the virtue of compassion. These qualities need to be achieved through the Three Non-Outflow Methods of precepts, samadhi, and wisdom. Similarly, the Mindful Peace Academy Curriculum is structured around achieving these goals.

In addition to the Eight Steps, we also have Four Key Principles: “Establish Right Views, Recognize the Truth, Eliminate Wrongness, and Reinforce Correctness.” The

first four steps help us “Establish Right Views and Recognize the Truth,” while the last four steps guide us to “Eliminate Wrongness and Reinforce Correctness.” If the first four steps, especially the third step, are not completed, we cannot establish the right views or recognize the truth, let alone eliminate wrongness or reinforce correctness.

Therefore, the Eight-Step practice encompasses the entire process, from learning the teachings to transforming life quality. Among these, the first and second steps form the foundation, the third and fourth steps are the key, the fifth and sixth steps enhance the application, and the seventh and eighth steps achieve perfection.



# III

## CONTEMPLATIVE MEDITATION AND ABIDING MEDITATION

Many Buddhist practitioners have a yearning for meditation, thinking that the Mindful Peace Academy Curriculum lacks meditation and always want to experience it somewhere else. This stems from our misunderstanding of meditation, as many people think that it only involves sitting cross-legged with eyes closed.

The Chan School had addressed this view over a thousand years ago. The *Platform Sutra* states, “While alive, we can sit without lying down; once dead, we lie down and cannot sit. Just a pile of stinking bones—what use

is it for attaining enlightenment?” The body is merely a shell; how can we judge the state of practice based on whether we are sitting or lying down? On this, Chan School also has a famous koan:

Mazu Daoyi was once diligently practicing sitting meditation. Master Nanyue Huairang recognized him as a Dharma vessel capable of shouldering great responsibility, and decided to guide him. Thus, Huairang began grinding a brick next to where Mazu meditated.

Disturbed by the noise, Mazu asked, “What are you grinding the brick for?”

Huairang replied, “I am trying to polish it into a mirror.”

Mazu wondered, “How can you make a mirror by grinding a brick?”

Huairang retorted, “If a brick cannot be polished into

a mirror, how can sitting meditation alone make you a buddha?”

He continued by asking, “When an ox cart is not moving, should you whip the cart or the ox?”

Meditation is about cultivating the mind; the key is to change our mind, and sitting meditation is merely a supportive method. The true practice of mind extends across all times and places, including all activities like walking, standing, sitting, lying down, and even eating and going to the bathroom. As long as we maintain mindfulness, we are in a state of practice anytime, anywhere. Many people don’t understand how to cultivate the mind. They neither study the teachings nor change their views or adjust their mindsets, but simply sit aimlessly, thinking this is the only way to practice meditation. Actually this is a misunderstanding of meditation.

Returning to the point, if lying down and walking can be forms of meditation, then naturally, sitting cross-legged

can be as well. In fact, this is a conventional method of meditation. However, what truly matters is that we know what we are sitting there for. Meditation is not about maintaining a specific posture; it's about engaging the mind, not the form. For this reason, the Chan approach has always been flexible and unstructured, but the mind engagement is thorough and consistent, ensuring no moment is missed or wasted.

In Buddhism, there are many methods of meditation. For example, Samatha and Vipassana are about cultivating concentration to attain wisdom of contemplation; Vipassana involves cultivating awareness to achieve insightful reflective power; and visualization is about using imagination to adjust our mindsets. The Mindful Peace Academy Curriculum places emphasis on Contemplative Meditation, which is also the method promoted in the *Stages of the Path*. By listening to the teachings, we use rational thinking to establish the right view of the world. As teaching the Dharma was an important method used by the Buddha throughout his life to enlighten others,

studying his teachings is also a conventional path of practice he established for us.

## **1. The Mental Foundation of Contemplative Meditation**

Studying Buddhism is to gain wisdom and see the truth, and wisdom is related to human rationality. Why are humans considered the most spiritually advanced of all beings? Why has humanity developed a civilization over five thousand years? Why do all buddhas and World-Honored Ones achieve enlightenment in the human form, not in other forms? It is because humans possess rationality. To escape suffering and attain happiness, we continually explore life. In this process, we seek to understand what life is and what the world is truly about. At the same time, by reflecting on and examining our current understanding, we see our shortcomings and strive to change them—transforming defilement into purity, and consciousness into wisdom.

This rationality is shaped by our lifestyles and the cultural education we receive. In turn, the cultural education we receive influences our rationality and determines the kind of person we become. Historically, there were some criminals and even tyrants. They were influenced by negative cultural inputs, so they formed wrong views that led to harmful behaviors, endangering themselves and society.

Fortunately, today, we are embracing a culture of awakening and wisdom. Otherwise, we would never see the true nature of the world or find a way out of life's eternal questions, such as "Who am I?" and "What is the meaning of life?" These are beyond our capacity to answer. Although the path is right there and ancient buddhas had walked through it before, ordinary beings are unable to find this path on their own, apart from Pratyekabuddhas (solitary buddhas) with exceptionally sharp faculty.

Throughout history, some philosophers and artists, after achieving fame and success, ended up in despair. They

were not driven by financial needs or struck by any particular misfortune, but rather, they could not find meaning in life. Many people in the world can spend their entire lives busily pursuing career success, wealth, and family, finding joy in these pursuits and never growing weary. However, there are always some who are not satisfied with just these. When they truly begin to explore life, they will discover that it is a foggy, rugged, and challenging path that requires both great diligence and wise decisions.

The Buddha not only found this path, but also presented various teachings, tirelessly guiding us with great patience and compassion. Despite these conveniences, and even though we are fortunate to have been born as humans and to hear the Dharma, the Buddhist sutras are vast. Many people spend their entire lives searching within them, but fail to grasp the essence. In light of this, we have specially designed a Mindful Peace Academy Curriculum tailored for people today. With the attitudes of “honesty, earnestness, and commitment,” the more

effort we put forth, the more benefits we can gain.

## **2. The Teaching Principles of Contemplative Meditation**

Listening, contemplating, and practicing form the basic sequence in the study of Buddhist teachings. Here, “contemplating” refers to correct reasoning. This “correct reasoning” is extremely important. Ordinary beings are constantly thinking, but they engage in deluded discriminations and idle distractions. This fails to solve problems, and creates various mental afflictions. Just as the saying goes, “The world has no inherent troubles; it’s the meddlesome who trouble themselves.” Thus, rationality is a double-edged sword; it must be used properly to help us break free from delusions and attain enlightenment. Otherwise, it only leads us to deeper delusions.

The Four Dharma Practices state that “following wise teachers, listening to the right Dharma, and contemplating and practicing in accordance with the Dharma.”



Among these, contemplating in accordance with the Dharma is crucial. From following wise teachers to listening to the right Dharma, we are receiving wisdom. Based on this, we contemplate in accordance with the Dharma, so we understand what the Dharma truly tells us, allowing us to practice accordingly and move towards enlightenment.

Within the Noble Eightfold Path, the Right View comes first, followed by the Right Thought. Once we have embraced the right view of the Dharma, we must integrate it in our mindsets and use it to observe the world and reflect on life, rather than blindly following delusive thoughts. The Yogacara School also explains that through four types of investigation—namely, the Investigation of the Name<sup>1</sup>, the Investigation of Substances(or Given Things)<sup>2</sup>, the Investigation of the Designated Intrinsic

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1. Investigation of the Name means that the bodhisattva sees with regard to a name that it is just a name.

2. Investigation of Substances (or Given Things). With regard to a given thing, seeing that it is just a given thing is the investigation of the given thing.

Natures<sup>3</sup>, and the Investigation of Designated Differences<sup>4</sup>—we can develop these four types of true wisdom.

It is evident that contemplating in accordance with the Dharma is extremely important in studying Buddhism. The *Stages of the Path* advocates Contemplative Meditation, which is based on this conventional path of practicing instead of blazing a new one. Ignoring this key aspect can lead one off the right path unknowingly. Why have there been so many issues with Buddhist practice over the years? Some people enjoy discussing abstract and esoteric teachings, merely showing off their rhetorical skills; others blindly practice without true understanding, focusing only on superficial efforts. The Dharma itself is a profound wisdom, but the current Buddhist community is increasingly neglecting the study of texts. For

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3. Investigation of Designated Intrinsic Natures. With respect to designations for essential nature, clearly seeing those as just designations for essential nature is the investigation of designations for essential nature.

4. Investigation of Designated Differences. With regard to designations for particularity, seeing those as just designations for particularity is the investigation of designations for particularity.

example, Chan practitioners do not read Buddhist texts, thinking that Chan is not realized by written texts, but by a special transmission outside the texts; those who recite Amitabha's name do not study the texts either, saying, "Let others study the Tripitaka and its Twelve Divisions for enlightenment." What does it mean not to study the texts? It means we are unable to transmit Buddha's teachings and wisdom effectively.

Whether practicing Chan or reciting Amitabha's name, both are simplified methods of cultivation based on numerous texts, and not merely the forms we see. Behind these methods lie a comprehensive theory and a system of cultivation and realization. If we remove the theory, the understanding, and methods of using the mind, what remains is just a point of inquiry (*hua tou*) or Amitabha's name, like a label stripped of its content, completely hollowed out. In this case, where do we gain strength?

The greatest difference between Buddhism and other religions lies in the right view. Many religions also have

precepts and meditation practices, which are shared by Buddhism. Especially with Indigenous Indian religions, Buddhism shares many similar concepts like nirvana, liberation, karma, and samsara, which have long existed in other Indian religions. However, why is it that only the Dharma can lead people to liberation? It is precisely because the views differ, and the analyses and interpretations of these concepts vary, that the resulting principles of practice also become different. This is where the true uniqueness of the Dharma lies.

Of course, rationality alone cannot directly reach the truth, but it can help us find the direction and approach the truth. Only when one finally enters the meditation on emptiness should they let go of discrimination and unlock non-discriminative wisdom. Prior to this, rational thinking is indispensable.

### **3. The Unenlightened Mind Is Established Through Contemplative Meditation**

In fact, for ordinary beings, Contemplative and Abiding

Meditations are not something new. Because the mind of an ordinary being is also built through Contemplative and Abiding Meditations, it can be said that we have been practicing both since the beginningless time. For example, when we like something, we repeatedly think about its benefits and desire to possess it; this is Contemplative Meditation. Eventually, this thought becomes extremely strong, lingering in our mind for a long time, or even to a point where only this thought remains; this is Abiding Meditation. For instance, some people have a very high opinion of themselves or feel good about themselves, which also comes from Contemplative Meditation. They constantly think about their strengths and the more they think, the prouder they feel. They believe that they are better than others, eventually giving rise to immense arrogance. Then, they are indulging in this feeling, allowing a sense of superiority to permeate everywhere. Where does this feeling come from? It is actually cultivated by oneself.

In summary, Contemplative Meditation involves repeatedly examining a specific issue from various perspectives.

This process helps develop corresponding thoughts and gradually expand them. Since beginningless time, ordinary beings, driven by ignorance, attachment to self, and attachment to phenomena, have shaped their current personalities by contemplating various issues. Therefore, this method of practice is well-suited for ordinary beings. We once experienced suffering and the cycle of rebirth due to incorrect Contemplative and Abiding Meditations. Now, we just follow the same mental operation pattern, but with a different path of direction. By contemplating Buddhist teachings, we can gain the right views, which enable us to address issues, transform our mindsets, eliminate afflictions, and ultimately transcend the cycle of rebirth.

Changing our mindsets involves two aspects: on one hand, eliminating negative mental states that lead to samsara, and on the other hand, establishing positive mental states that correspond to liberation. This is not just empty talk; it can be continuously realized through study and practice. As long as we follow the Eight Steps

with honesty, earnestness, and commitment—focusing especially on the third and fourth steps—we can understand the meaning of the teachings, establish the right views, reflect on life with these views, and inevitably transform our mindsets.

#### **4. The Application of Contemplative Meditation in the *Stages of the Path***

The entire *Stages of the Path* outlines a systematic approach to cultivating the mind, centered on “abandoning the unenlightened mind and generating bodhicitta.” It is divided into four parts. First, the foundational practices in Before the Path, such as relying on a wise teacher, appreciating the preciousness of human life endowed with leisure and opportunities (meaning the time and ability to learn, and practice the Dharma). Second, the Path of Lesser Being focuses on contemplating the

impermanence of death<sup>5</sup>, reflecting on the suffering of the three lower realms<sup>6</sup>, and taking refuge in the Three Jewels<sup>7</sup>, and a firm belief in karma and its results. Third, the Path of Middling Being focuses on developing the aspiration for liberation. Fourth, the Path of Great Being focuses on developing bodhicitta and engaging in the practices of a bodhisattva. Each segment helps us to eliminate wrong views and establish right views—this is the practice of meditation on views. Through contemplation of these insights, we free ourselves from the

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5. Contemplating the Impermanence of Death in the *Stages of the Path* includes three aspects: first, contemplating the certainty of death—realizing that death is inevitable and cannot be avoided; second, contemplating the uncertainty of the time of death—realizing that the moment of death is unpredictable and beyond our control; third, contemplating the futility of worldly matters at the time of death—realizing that, apart from the Dharma, nothing else—neither wealth nor loved ones—can provide true support when death arrives.

6. Three Lower Realms, often referred to as the realm of animals, the realm of hungry ghosts, and the realm of hell beings, represent states of existence characterized by intense suffering in Buddhism.

7. Three Jewels are the foundational elements of Buddhist practice: the Buddha (the Teacher), the Dharma (the Teachings), and the Sangha (the Community).



unenlightened mind and cultivate an awakening mind—this is the practice of meditation on mindsets.

This process needs to be implemented step by step. For example, the guidelines for listening to the Dharma teach us that, if we cannot abandon the Three Faults and cultivate the Six Contemplations, we cannot become a vessel for the Dharma, nor can the pure teachings enter into the continuum of our mind to effect a change in our life quality. Similarly, without an “honest, earnest, and committed” attitude towards study and practice, there can be no “understanding, accepting, and applying,” let alone improvement in “views, mindsets, and life quality.”

Moreover, the Path of the Lesser Being focuses on establishing faith in the Three Jewels, generating aspiration of taking refuge, and deeply believing in karmic results; the Path of the Middling Being focuses on deeply realizing that the nature of samsara is suffering, and developing the aspiration for liberation; the Path of the Greater

Being focuses on cultivating the Seven-Point Cause-and-Effect<sup>8</sup> and the practice of Exchanging Self and Others<sup>9</sup>, so we can understand the merits of bodhicitta, develop bodhicitta, engage in bodhisattva practices, and practice the view of emptiness. Each of these three paths involves corresponding Contemplative and Abiding Meditations.

In the *Twenty-One Meditation Manual*, the key segments of the *Stages of the Path* are developed into meditation practices. The Contemplative Meditation summarizes the relevant teachings of the *Stages of the Path* in a concise language. Just as we engage in the daily practice of refuge, we should contemplate the great significance of a precious human life, the impermanence of death, and the sufferings of the three lower realms, thus giving rise to a

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8. Seven-Point Cause-and-Effect is a systematic method in Mahayana Buddhism for cultivating bodhicitta by recognizing the interconnectedness of all beings. It emphasizes developing loving-kindness and compassion through a progressive seven steps.

9. Exchanging Self and Others is another method for cultivating bodhicitta. It emphasizes the equal importance of self and others while reversing the habitual self-centered mindset.

genuine mind of taking refuge in the Three Jewels. The key here is not reciting the related texts, but through the contemplation of these phenomena, we feel from the bottom of our hearts that: the Three Jewels are immensely important to us, as they serve as our sole reliance and refuge in life. When a strong mind of refuge arises, reciting the Three Refuges will be truly powerful. This allows us to abide in the merits of the Three Jewels and align our mind with the essence of the Three Jewels.

Besides taking refuge, we can apply such Contemplative and Abiding Meditations to every teaching, including relying on a wise teacher, developing renunciation, and generating bodhicitta. Without the Contemplative and Abiding Meditations, our study of the Dharma often remains theoretical and fails to integrate into our minds and lives. In such cases, the Dharma we learn merely becomes a superficial decoration in our lives, rather than a profound, transformative force.

# IV

## EIGHT STEPS AND THREE TYPES OF MEDITATION

The focus of meditation lies not in whether one is sitting, standing, or walking, but in cultivating and transforming the mind. By clearly understanding this central point, we can achieve a transformation in views, mindsets, and ultimately life quality.

In the Mindful Peace Academy Curriculum, achieving this goal involves reading the texts and watching the teaching videos, as well as small group and class discussions. Some may ask: How does this differ from the way people usually read books? The difference lies in the

application of the Eight Steps. Without applying the Eight Steps, we are merely studying culture, knowledge, or theory. Even if we study the Dharma, without transforming it through the Eight Steps, it cannot be considered true practice. Conversely, if we study with the Eight Steps, whether contemplating the Dharma individually or participating in discussions, we all regard it as a form of meditation.

Because meditation aims to transform the wisdom of Dharma into your own understanding and views, this transformation doesn't necessarily require sitting with your eyes closed; it can happen while reading a book or during group and class discussions. The key is to understand the meaning and function of meditation and to focus on the right aspect: if the cart is not moving, are you hitting the cart or whipping the ox? If you miss this focus, no matter how hard you try, you won't progress. This is like whipping the cart instead of the ox; the cart might fall apart, but the ox won't move. Once you truly internalize the wisdom of Dharma into your own views

and mindsets, you will become free anytime, anywhere, unbound by attachment. As Chan Buddhism says: “Walking is Chan; sitting is Chan; whether speaking or silent, moving or still, one is always at ease.”

To carry out the Dharma, we propose Three Types of Meditation based on Eight Steps: meditation on views, meditation on mindsets, and meditation on life quality.

## **1. Meditation on Views**

The first to fourth steps focus on the meditation on views. By reading the texts, watching the teaching videos, and discussing supplementary materials, we can accurately understand the meaning of the teachings. Furthermore, we learn to use these teachings to understand the world and reflect on life. By comparing and testing them against real life, we realize that everything the Buddha taught us is true and unfailing. Thus, we can discard wrong views and establish right views. With the right views in place, we can eliminate afflictions and

move toward liberation.

All courses in the Mindful Peace Academy Curriculum aim to help us establish the corresponding right views. For instance, the preliminary stage of practice addresses issues like faith, wealth, environmental protection, and various global issues from a Buddhist perspective. Why is it structured this way? Because our afflictions come from various aspects of life—some stem from family, some from relationships, some from careers, and some from social interactions—in short, every type of affliction has a source. Then, what is the source? Why do these issues bring us afflictions? This is because, based on ignorance, we use wrong views to address the issues. In other words, this is the result of wrong Contemplative and Abiding Meditations.

Because afflictions arise from wrong views, liberation relies on the foundation of right views. First, it is necessary to understand how Buddhism views these issues. Through reading the texts and watching the teaching

videos, we will find that some of our habitual views cannot hold up under scrutiny. We will discover that there are other perspectives we have never explored. Furthermore, the truth is not merely what everyone says; it can only be found through observation, contemplation, and true realization.

Every lesson and every book we study pass on particular wisdom that must be understood completely, accurately, and thoroughly. After establishing the right views, we must also persistently and firmly abide in them, replacing any prior wrong views. If these right views become unclear, we must re-contemplate them. This helps them regain clarity and once again serve as our guiding force.

## **2. Meditation on Mindsets**

The fifth and sixth steps focus on meditation on mindsets. After establishing the right views, we must use them to handle problems and guide our lives. The transition from applying the right views to developing positive mindsets



is inseparable from Contemplative Meditation. When we can truly observe the world and life with wisdom, afflictions cease to arise. We must then abide in this wise observation, maintain inner purity and compassion, and extend this state continuously.

When this state becomes unclear and difficult to maintain, we must continue to contemplate the impermanence of death, the suffering of samsara, or the virtues of the Three Jewels. In essence, we should reflect on the relevant teachings to address the current problems and readjust our mindsets accordingly.

Therefore, the Contemplative and Abiding Meditations cannot be completed in a single attempt but require repetitions of tens, hundreds, or even millions of times. This process involves repetitive practices. On the one hand, right views can counteract delusory thoughts, and on the other hand, positive mindsets can counteract negative ones. When the mind can remain settled in a right and positive mindset, it should continue to

maintain this state steadily and consistently without further contemplation. Otherwise, further contemplation might actually lead to restlessness.

### **3. Meditation on Life Quality**

The seventh and eighth steps focus on the meditation on life quality. Ignorance and delusion shape the life quality of ordinary beings. If we aspire to attain the life quality of buddhas and bodhisattvas, we must continually cultivate mental states in harmony with awakened nature, and strengthen these mental states aligned with liberation. These mental states will then be stabilized until they take the lead, ultimately transforming our current life quality.

In this process, it is necessary to keep the mind settled and maintain a positive mindset for extended periods. Once it deviates, we must use Contemplative Meditation to bring it back, and then abide in it. This process also entails repetitive practices—crafting a brand-new life quality through reinforcing correctness.

The essentials of Eight Steps and Three Types of Meditation are as follows: meditation on views aims to correct wrong views, meditation on mindsets adjusts our mindsets, and meditation on life quality transforms life quality. This process entails understanding the Dharma to establish the right views, using these right views to develop positive mindsets, and consistently maintaining these positive mindsets to cultivate a noble life quality. This journey transforms delusion into enlightenment, and turns an ordinary person into a sage.

# V

## SEATED MEDITATION AND OFF-CUSHION MEDITATION

In the Mindful Peace Academy Curriculum, although the *Stages of the Path* is emphasized, it is just one course among many, not the entire curriculum. We define Contemplative Meditation, Abiding Meditation, Seated Meditation<sup>1</sup>, and Off-Cushion Meditation<sup>2</sup> differently from how they are defined in the *Stages of the Path*.

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1. As long as you apply the Eight Steps in your study and practice, whether in self-study or group discussions, it falls under the category of Seated Meditation.

2. Integrating the right views and mindset cultivated during Seated Meditation into daily life is known as Off-Cushion Meditation.

For instance, the *Stages of the Path* teaches Contemplative and Abiding Meditations. Built on this, we have proposed Eight Steps and Three Types of Meditation here. In the brief demonstration of practice methods in the *Stages of the Path*, the practice of each teaching is divided into preparatory practice, actual practice, concluding practice, and non-practice intervals (daily life practice). Here, preparatory practice, actual practice, and concluding practice are considered Seated Meditation, while non-practice intervals are considered Off-Cushion Meditation. In the *Twenty-One Meditation Manual—The Stages of the Path Practical Manual*, the contents are also organized into related rituals.

In these rituals, each practice begins with taking refuge and generating aspirations, followed by Contemplative and Abiding Meditations on a specific teaching. For example, teachings such as relying on a virtuous teacher and contemplating the impermanence of death involve practicing both Contemplative and Abiding Meditation, concluding with the dedication of merits. That is, the

main practice is done while seated.

The Mindful Peace Academy Curriculum is specifically designed for lay practitioners at home. We believe that beginners often aren't used to sitting for meditation; either dozing off or getting distracted with random thoughts, which is not effective. Therefore, we extend Seated Meditation to self-study and group discussions. That is to say, as long as the Eight-Step method is applied to practice, whether in self-study or in discussions, it falls within the scope of Seated Meditation.

The focus of meditation is to change views, mindsets, and life quality; the form is just a support. From a practical standpoint, when we truly apply the Eight Steps in our self-study and discussions, the effects become clear and noticeable. Once our views have changed, the next step is to integrate these changes into our everyday lives, and adjust the mindsets accordingly. This Off-Cushion Meditation not only puts Seated Meditation into practice but also tests and reinforces it. Over time, it will

inevitably lead to improvement in life quality.

Therefore, as long as we use the Eight Steps and Three Types of Meditation correctly and strictly follow this approach, our views and mindsets will undoubtedly become healthier, and we will grow increasingly wise. Our interactions with others will become more harmonious and our ways of handling matters will also become smoother. Conversely, without the guidance of right views, clinging blindly to certain external forms often leads to increased afflictions. Why do many people practice Buddhism in strange ways, not fitting in with others? It is because their study and practice are not based on wisdom but fixated on a specific form, which can easily lead to disconnection from life and conflicts with others.

In summary, the Eight Steps and Three Types of Meditation are effective methods and hold the key to carrying out the Mindful Peace Academy Curriculum. I hope you can deeply discuss how to apply this approach through

your personal study and practice, and truly implement it in your practice.



## 国际静心协会、静心学堂简介

国际静心协会（简称 MPI）是 2021 年成立于瑞士苏黎世的非盈利组织，旨在向全球传播佛法智慧和禅意生活。

静心学堂为“国际静心协会”旗下的核心公益品牌，致力于传承生命觉醒教育，为现代人提供安顿身心、安身立命之道。我们推广的静心学堂课程体系，为汉传佛教济群长老以四十年修学所证，对当代佛教教育作出的探索，包括禅意生活、智慧人生和觉醒之道。同时，我们将在世界各地营造具有禅意的空间、彼此增上的氛围，为大众修学保驾护航。

“静心学堂丛书”呈现了禅意生活、智慧人生的部分课程。我们衷心希望，更多人由此了解生命觉醒的教育，共享东方智慧给人类带来的福祉。

## Mindful Peace International & Mindful Peace Academy

Mindful Peace International (MPI), established in 2021 in Zurich, Switzerland, is a non-profit organization dedicated to spreading Buddhist wisdom and promoting a Chan-inspired life globally.

The Mindful Peace Academy serves as the core public welfare brand under Mindful Peace International. We are dedicated to passing on education about life awakening and offering modern individuals ways towards physical and mental well-being, thereby helping them ground themselves and discover their life's mission. The curriculum we promote at the Mindful Peace Academy has been authenticated through forty years of study and practice by Master Jiqun, an eminent elder of Han Buddhism. It represents an exploration of contemporary Buddhist education, encompassing teachings on the Chan-inspired Life, the Wisdom for Living, and the Path to Awakening. Moreover, we are committed to creating Chan-inspired spaces and fostering mutually enriching environments worldwide to safeguard the public's learning journey.

The *Mindful Peace Academy Collection* showcases a selection of courses on the Chan-inspired Life and the Wisdom for Living. We sincerely hope that through these courses, more individuals will engage with life awakening education and share in the blessings that Eastern wisdom brings to humanity.

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