



The 5 Hindrances

Five Hindrances

What are they?

Mental obstacles that prevent our mind from attaining **tranquility** and from **seeing things clearly**, thus obscuring insights and wisdom.

1. Sensual Desires (*kamacchanda*)
2. Ill Will (*byapada*)
3. Sloth and Torpor (*thina-middha*)
4. Restlessness and Worries (*uddhacca-kukkucca*)
5. Skeptical Doubt (*vicikiccha*)

How to recognise them?

This is made more challenging by the fact that by obscuring wisdom, one cannot clearly see what is good for oneself, what is good for others, and what is good for both.

How to abandon them?

AN 5.51

There are five impediments and hindrances, overgrowths of the mind that stultify insight. What five?

1. **Sensual desire** is an impediment and hindrance, an overgrowth of the mind that stultifies insight.
2. **Ill-will...**
3. **Sloth and torpor...**
4. **Restlessness and remorse...**
5. **Skeptical doubt** are impediments and hindrances, overgrowths of the mind that stultify insight.

Without having overcome these five, it is impossible for a monk whose insight thus lacks strength and power, to know his own true good, the good of others, and the good of both; nor will he be capable of realizing that superhuman state of distinctive achievement, the knowledge and vision enabling the attainment of sanctity.

Analogy: Gold and its impurities [AN 5.23]

Analogies for the Five Hindrances

	WATER	BONDAGE
SENSUAL DESIRES	Coloured Water	Debt
ILL WILL	Boiling Water	Sick
SLOTH and TORPOR	Water with slimy moss	Prison
RESTLESSNESS and REMORSE	Water ruffled by wind	Slave
SKEPTICAL DOUBT	Water in a dark place	Lost in desert

The Three Poisons & the Hindrances

GREED Sensual Desires (Attachments)

HATRED Ill Will (Aversions)

DELUSION Sloth & Torpor
Restlessness & Remorse
Skeptical Doubt

Present in our everyday mind, not just during meditation, as **mental habits**

Habituation of the Hindrances

- Our mental hindrances are our unwholesome mental habits, perpetuated and strengthened in our daily activities, as a result of lack of mindfulness
- To change a habit, one must replace it with a new habit
- To acquire a new habit, one must do it repeatedly until it becomes a part of us
- Analogy: learning to ride a bicycle, learning to cook
- Required skill: Mindfulness
 - That is why Samma Sati comes before Samma Samadhi

MN 10 Satipatthana Sutta

How does a monk practice mind-object contemplation on the mental objects of the five hindrances?

Herein, monks, when sensual desire is present in him the monk knows, "There is sensual desire in me," or when sensual desire is absent he knows, "There is no sensual desire in me."

He knows how the arising of non-arisen sensual desire comes to be; he knows how the rejection of the arisen sensual desire comes to be; and he knows how the non-arising in the future of the rejected sensual desire comes to be.

MINDFULNESS is the antidote for the hindrances.

Tools for the Hindrances

1. MINDFULNESS

- a. Recognition
- b. Acceptance
- c. Investigation
- d. Non-attachment

2. ANAPANASATI

CONDITIONS	RESULTS
Suppression and/or abandonment of defilements & hindrances	TRANQUILITY OF MIND (SAMATHA)
Suppression and/or abandonment of defilements & hindrances	SEEING THINGS AS THEY REALLY ARE (INSIGHTS) leading to WISDOM (VIPASSANA)

Causes & Antidotes for Hindrances

HINDRANCES	CAUSES (NOURISHMENT)	ANTIDOTES (DENOURISHMENT)
Sensual Desires Attachment	Paying unwise attention to: Beauty Pleasant Sensations	* Meditate on foulness of body Decaying body 32 parts of body Guard the sense doors Moderation in eating
Ill Will Aversion	Paying unwise attention to: Unpleasant Sensations	* Metta bhavana Reflection on its negative effects Reflection on kamma
Sloth and Torpor Dullness of mind	Low energy Unmotivated Laziness	* Exertion (viriya), Will Power, Goal Interest - Beginner's Mind Avoid over eating Change body posture Staying in the open Recollection of death - urgency

How to overcome sleepiness [AN 7.58]

Once the Exalted One spoke to the Venerable Maha-Moggallana thus: "Are you drowsy, Moggallana? Are you drowsy, Moggallana?" — "Yes, venerable sir."

- (1) "Well then, Moggallana, at whatever thought torpor has befallen you, **to that thought you should not give attention**, you should not dwell on it frequently. Then it is possible that, by so doing, torpor will disappear.
- (2) "But if, by so doing, that torpor does not disappear, you **should think and reflect within your mind about the Dhamma** as you have heard and learned it, and you should mentally review it. Then it is possible that, by so doing, torpor will disappear.
- (3) "But if, by so doing, that torpor does not disappear, you **should learn by heart the Dhamma in its fullness**, as you have heard and learned it. Then it is possible...
- (4) "But if, by so doing, that torpor does not disappear, you **should shake your ears, and rub your limbs** with the palm of your hand. Then it is possible...
- (5) "But if, by so doing, that torpor does not disappear, you **should get up from your seat, and after washing your eyes with water, you should look around in all directions and look upwards to the stars in the sky**. Then it is possible...
- (6) "But if, by so doing, that torpor does not disappear, you **should firmly establish the (inner) perception of light**: as it is by day, so also by night; as it is by night, so also by day. Thus with a mind clear and unobstructed, you should develop a consciousness which is full of brightness. Then it is possible...
- (7) "But if, by so doing, that torpor does not disappear, you **should, conscious of that which is before and behind, walk up and down**, with your senses turned inwards, with your mind not going outwards. Then it is possible...
- (8) "But if, by so doing, that torpor does not disappear, you **may lie down on your right side, taking up the lion's posture, covering foot with foot — mindful, clearly conscious, keeping in mind the thought of rising**. Having awakened again, you should quickly rise, thinking: 'I won't indulge in the enjoyment of lying down and reclining, in the enjoyment of sleep!'

"Thus, Moggallana, you should train yourself!"

Causes & Antidotes for Hindrances

HINDRANCES	CAUSES (NOURISHMENT)	ANTIDOTES (DENOURISHMENT)
Restlessness and Worries Anxiety and Remorse	Paying unwise attention to: Unrest of mind <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinking about past and future • Proliferation of thoughts 	* Giving attention to quietude of mind Knowing & Reflection on dhamma & vinaya Anapanasati
Skeptical Doubt	Not enough faith and understanding of the Dhamma Paying unwise attention to doubt	* Firm conviction regarding Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha

* Suitable Conversation
 Noble Friendship

Ahara Sutta [SN 46.51]

Summary

- Five hindrances happen all the time, in both daily life & meditation
- They are unwholesome mental habits
- Changing mental habits needs perseverance and continuous practice
- Mindfulness is the key to change
- General rule:
 - Watch non-judgmentally, without attachment or aversion
 - Shift unwise attention towards something more positive
 - Body can be used to manage energy, both lack and excessive

Relationships: Hindrances – Jhanas - Fetters

- Five Hindrances & Jhanas
 - Suppression or abandonment of the hindrances is necessary for Jhanas
 - Jhana is necessary to be able to see things as they really are
- Five Hindrances & Fetters
 - Sensual Desires & Ill Will are 4th and 5th fetters
 - Restlessness is 9th fetter

Fundamentals of Buddhist Meditation

1. Ignorance to Wisdom, ie Thinking Mind to Knowing Mind
2. Progression from gross to subtle Mind
 - Sila: Body, Speech, Mind
 - Bhavana: Body, Feelings, Thoughts, Dhamma
3. Satipatthana: Persistent unremitting effort in mindfulness
4. Anapanasati: Samadhi