

Meditation Skills, Markers and Hindrances

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Summary

This is a map of the interaction between Meditation Skills, Experiential Markers, Meditative Hindrances and their antidotes during MIDL Mindfulness of Breathing.

Table Explanation

Meditation Skills

- There are 16 main Meditation Skills in mindfulness of breathing.
- Each Meditation Skill is a specific mental training that will expose any weaknesses within the balance of your attention and strengthen any deficiencies.

Experiential Markers

- There are 12 Experiential Markers in mindfulness of breathing.
- Experiential Markers are natural experiences that can be observed during mindfulness of breathing as a reflection of the development samadhi (unification of attention).
- Experiential Markers are also reference points that are used during mindfulness of breathing to give structure, direction, and track how unified your attention is.

Meditative Hindrances

- There are 16 Meditative Hindrances that can arise during mindfulness of breathing that block the development of samadhi.
- The presence of any of the Meditative Hindrances, is a natural reflection of an imbalance in either your effort or the structure of your attention.
- Meditative Hindrances are useful as they are both the content for developing insight and an accurate way of tracking both the strength of samadhi and depth of wisdom.

Antidotes

- Antidotes are how to work skilfully with Meditative Hindrances that arise due to imbalances in your effort or structure of attention during mindfulness of breathing.

Creating Your Foundation: Grounding & Softening

Meditation Skill 01: Grounding Your Attention.

- **Purpose:** Grounding is the meditative skill of immersing awareness in your body to create a foundation from which to observe habitual patterns within your mind.
- **Meditative Hindrance:** Restlessness + sleepiness due to (1) stress or anxiety. When you begin meditation, you bring any stress that has built up in day-to-day life with you. It may make you feel restless or sleepy leading to frustration.
- **Antidote:** Curiosity in regards to what it means to relax + retraining your breathing patterns using the Meditation Skill below will lower your stress levels.

Meditation Skill: Retrain Your Breathing Patterns

- **Purpose:** When we are stressed or anxious, the way that our body breathes changes. Over time stress breathing in the upper chest can become natural for us. Retraining diaphragmatic breathing increases health and lowers stress, anxiety and hypervigilance.

Meditation Skill 02: Softening Into Breathing.

- **Purpose:** Softening is the meditative skill of using slow, gentle breaths to deeply relax any effort/resistance held within your body.
- **Meditative Hindrance:** (2) Physical Restlessness.
- **Antidote:** Curiosity + apply techniques in learnt in Meditation Skill 02.

Meditation Skill 03: Skill of Softening Into.

- Purpose: Softening Into is the meditative skill of relaxing the effort that underlies the habitual tendency within the mind towards attraction, aversion, or indifference.
- Meditative Hindrance: (3) Mental Restlessness.
- Antidote: Curiosity + apply the softening into technique learnt in Meditation Skill 03.

TIER 1 Mindfulness of Breathing

Meditation Skill 04: Cultivate Skill in Mindfulness.

- Purpose: Develop continuity of mindfulness by keeping the experience of the touch of your thumbs within your mind to decondition habitual forgetting.
- Experiential Marker 1: Touch of Your Thumbs.
- Meditative Hindrance: (4) Habitual Forgetting, (5) Gross Wandering.
- Antidote: Curiosity + combine the softening of attraction, aversion and indifference learnt in Meditation Skill 03 with the grounding of your attention on the touch of your thumbs in Meditation Skill 04.

Meditation Skill 05: Cultivate Skill in Focusing.

- Purpose: Develop flexibility in your ability to focus awareness from narrow, to middle to wide focus. Precursor to the ability to observe attention and awareness separately.
- Experiential Marker 2: Tuning Into the Experience of the Room.
- Experiential Marker 3: Your Body as it Sits in Meditation.
- Meditative Hindrance: (3) Mental Restlessness, (4) Forgetting, (8) Doubt.
- Antidote: Curiosity + combine the softening of attraction, aversion and indifference learnt in Meditation Skill 03 with the grounding of your attention on the touch of your thumbs in Meditation Skill 04.

Meditation Skill 06: Cultivate Skill in Grounding.

- Purpose: Develop the meditative skill of flexible attention and the ability to self-observe by grounding awareness within your body and observing your attention wander.
- Experiential Marker 4: Awareness Grounded in Body.
- Meditative Hindrance: (4) Forgetting, (5) Gross Wandering, (6) Directed Thinking.
- Antidote: Curiosity + combine the softening of attraction, aversion and indifference learnt in Meditation Skill 03 with the flexible attention skill in Meditation Skill 06.

Meditation Skill 07: Cultivate Skill in Observing.

- Purpose: Develop the meditative skill of observing natural breathing, free from control.
- Experiential Marker 5: Natural Flow of Your Breathing.
- Meditative Hindrance: Habitual control, (6) Directed Thinking, (7) Wandering.
- Antidote: Curiosity + combine the softening of attraction, aversion and indifference learnt in Meditation Skill 03 with the flexible attention skill in Meditation Skill 06.

Meditation Skill 08: Cultivate Skill in Allowing.

- Purpose: Decondition any tendency within your mind towards habitual control by resetting autonomous breathing. This is done simply by letting a slow breath out through your nose, relaxing, and allowing the breath to draw back in by itself.

Meditation Skill 09: Cultivate Skill in Applying.

- Purpose: Cultivate some stability in attention by remembering in & out-breaths.
- Experiential Marker 6: Knowing In & Out-breaths.
- Meditative Hindrance: (4) Forgetting, (6) Thinking, (7) Wandering, (8) Doubt.
- Antidote: Curiosity + combine the softening of attraction, aversion and indifference learnt in Meditation Skill 03 with the flexible attention skill in Meditation Skill 06.

Meditation Skill 10: Cultivate Skill in Acknowledging.

- Purpose: Develop the meditative skill of labelling to train attention and develop insight by using intentional words to direct attention towards specific experience.
- Meditative Hindrance: Struggle and strain, over-effort.
- Antidote: Curiosity + softening of attraction, aversion and indifference learnt in Meditation Skill 03.

Meditation Skill 11: Cultivate Skill in Sustaining.

- Purpose: To increase the application of attention towards each breath, as a precursor to the process of calming the habitual, going out of attention, towards the senses.
- Experiential Marker 7: Knowing the Length of Each Breath.
- Meditative Hindrance: (8) Doubt, (9) Gross Dullness, (10) Gross Restlessness.
- Antidote: Curiosity + by combining the grounding of your attention on the touch of your thumbs in Meditation Skill 04, the softening of attraction, aversion, indifference learnt in Meditation Skill 03 + detail by using labels as learnt in Meditation Skill 10.

Meditation Skill 12: Cultivate Skill in Experiencing.

- Purpose: To increase accuracy and precision of attention on breath sensations as a precursor to developing sustained attention on one point of breath sensation.
- Experiential Marker 8: Knowing Sensations Within Each Breath.
- Meditative Hindrance: (9) Gross Dullness, (10) Gross Restlessness.
- Antidote before Gross Dullness arises: Curiosity + pay attention to fine detail of sensations within your body and breathing from the very beginning of your meditation. Balance this effort with gentle softening learnt in Meditation Skill 03.
- Antidote once Gross Dullness is present: Curiosity + stop observing breathing and bring your attention on the touch of your thumbs as in Meditation Skill 04 with the intention of increasing mindfulness. Softening any aversion or indifference in Meditation Skill 03.

Meditation Skill 13: Cultivate Skill in Stabilising.

- Purpose: To completely sustain attention on one point of breath sensation as a precursor to tranquillity and sustaining of peripheral awareness.
- Experiential Marker 9: Knowing One Point of Breath Sensation.
- Meditative Hindrance: Subtle: (11) Dullness, (12) Wandering, (13) Restlessness.
- Antidote: Curiosity + attention to detail + calming divided into three stages: soften/relax any held extra effort in your body, soften any effort in your breathing, allowing it to become calm and subtle, and soften all desire to-do the meditation, within your mind.

TIER 2 Mindfulness of Breathing

Meditation Skill 14: Cultivate Skill in Joy & Tranquillity.

- Purpose: To cultivate and establish the first five Enlightenment Factors and to develop skill in monitoring and balancing attention.
- Experiential Marker: Replace Experiential Markers 1-3 and 5-6 with softening.
- Meditative Hindrance: Weak perception of meditative joy.
- Antidote: Curiosity + tune into and train the perception of the subtle pleasure of abandoning effort, letting go, releasing all doing, until your mind inclines towards it.

TIER 3 Mindfulness of Breathing

Meditation Skill: Transitioning from Doing to Knowing.

- Purpose: This is a skill for learning to transition from powering attention, to powering awareness as a foundation for access concentration and jhana.
- Meditative Hindrance: Habitual weakness in the focus of awareness.
- Antidote: Curiosity + instructions found in Meditation Skill 05 to strengthen any weakness you may have in the ability to narrow or expand awareness.

Meditation Skill 15: Cultivate Skill in Intimate Attention.

- Purpose: To completely sustain awareness on the subtle sensations of your body as it responds to breathing so that both attention and awareness are sustained.
- Experiential Marker 10: Subtle Sensations of Whole-Body Breathing.
- Meditative Hindrance: (11) Subtle Dullness.
- Antidote: Curiosity + developing intimate, exclusive attention on the subtle sensation of the whole body as it breathes.

Meditation Skill 16: Cultivate Skill in Unification.

- Purpose: To establish access concentration in preparation for jhana and insight.
- Experiential Marker 11: Completely Sustained Attention & Awareness.
- Meditative Hindrance: (14) Subtle Instability (due to desire to control).
- Antidote: Curiosity + developing intimate, exclusive attention on the subtle sensation of the whole body as it breathes.
- Experiential Marker 12: Unified, Stable Attention, free from Hindrances.
- Meditative Hindrance: (15) Anticipation (pleasure), (16) Fear (giving up control).
- Antidote: Saddha (verified faith) + the above Meditation Skill: Transitioning from Doing to Knowing to learn how to transition from powering attention, to powering awareness.