

Vipassana for Hackers

Paper Three: Why Meditate?

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Target Audience

Vipassana for Hackers, Paper One: Curious Mechanics was written to avoid discussing the outcomes or consequences of meditation in detail. The focus of that paper was only the internal mechanics of Vipassana meditation, to pique the interest of potential meditators who had heard of Vipassana elsewhere. Outcomes are discussed only so far as they assist the reader in understanding what is written earlier in the paper regarding the senses. *Paper Two: The Brain* goes further into the mechanics as they pertain to the nervous system. Here, outcomes are discussed as they pertain to neuroplasticity. Neither paper directly discusses why an individual might choose to try this particular technique of meditation.

As before, the “Hacker” of *Vipassana for Hackers* is not meant to identify computer programmers. Instead, it is meant as a label for a culture of curious and creative people who enjoy exploring, learning, and creating.

Paper Three: Why Meditate? is written for anyone who has ever asked themselves that very question or asked that question of their friends who meditate. It is for both those who are curious about the practice of Vipassana specifically and those who are curious about meditation in general. It is for people who have meditated in other traditions and are curious about the benefits of Vipassana. It is also for people who have never meditated in their entire lives. It is intended for anyone who keeps hearing about Vipassana meditation — in the media, in books, and from friends — and wants to learn what all the fuss is about.

The reader need not have read *Paper One* or *Paper Two*. In fact, it is the intention of this paper to be the most accessible of the series and readers with only a faint interest in the topic of meditation should start here.

Vipassana Basics

Before we get to a discussion about why meditation is valuable, some basic understanding of what meditation is (and isn't) is required.

The technique of Vipassana is based on a single underlying principle:

Every experience which emerges in the mind, whether a thought, emotion, or contact of the five senses, always surfaces with a corresponding sensation on the body.

It is important to understand this point as it underpins all other aspects of the technique of Vipassana. Someone who is learning Vipassana need not accept this principle as fact. Rather, a 10-day Vipassana course is a sort of laboratory where the principle can be tested and experienced for oneself.



Figure 1: The sense doors and bodily sensation.

The totality of human experience can be categorized according to the “sense doors” listed in Figure 1 [1]: The five external sense doors of sight, sound, taste, smell, and touch are listed at the top. The internal sense door of “mind” is broken down into thought and emotion, second to the bottom. At the very bottom of the diagram is bodily sensation, the object of meditation in Vipassana.

Once these eight experiences are listed, there is no experience left undescribed. All human experience from the mundane (imagination, daydreaming, physical pleasures, physical discomforts, etc.) to the supramundane (out-of-body experiences, hallucinations, etc.) are subsets of these seven sense doors and their reflection in bodily sensation, the eighth.

Attention in one place only

TODO: sense circle diagram

- posture

- sleep
- health (activation / motivation)
- ethics (activation / motivation)
- your children: a. knowing how to meditate, b. cross-legged posture
- emotion (i.e. anger)
- mundane sphere / productivity (21 lessons, seinfeld)
- reset frame of reference outside oneself, outside one's own lifetime: "trees for god" and obvious karma (sidu/booga smoking)
- unlearning obsessive / repetitive thought, enhancing creativity
- controlling unbounded sexuality without repression
- clarity: in thought, work, planning
- clarification: "isn't that what makes us human?" (emotions) — rather, what makes us animal
- Die Standing Up

References

- [1] 5 Senses by Daniel Falk from the Noun Project <https://thenounproject.com/daniel2021/collection/human-body-senses/>
Thought by Nociconist from the Noun Project
<https://thenounproject.com/search/?q=thought&i=2025873> Heart by
Rafael Garcia Motta from the Noun Project
<https://thenounproject.com/search/?q=heart&i=807960> Body by
Makarenko Andrey from the Noun Project
<https://thenounproject.com/search/?q=body&i=789989> *The Noun Project*.