

Ven Anīgha Reddit Archive 2025

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2025

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“The More You Scratch an Itch..” Further explanation, Please?

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** StrikingRegular1150 2025-01-12 00:24:11

First, let me say I absolutely love the Hillside Hermitage Youtube Channel. I’m so grateful for it! Discourse that I’ve been exposed to through it has really helped connect a lot of dots for me. So thank you, thank you, thank you on account of that.

I have a question I’d very deeply appreciate any responses on from either Hillside Hermitage or anyone in the community, here.

For years I’ve been trying to gain better insight into the dynamic of how the more one pushes away something not wanted it paradoxically not only does it not lessen the effects of what’s desired to be pushed away, but only makes it worse. (When I say “push away something not wanted”, examples: anxious avoidance of a trigger, angry defensive pushing-away a trigger, or indulging in sensory escapism to forget a trigger.)

I’ve felt for years that better understanding this (paradoxical at face value) dynamic of what happens you react to internal pressure by giving in, or don’t, is one of the most important lessons in human life there is.

I say that, not only for better navigating in real time what caving into pressures means for one’s self, but also for eliciting feelings of compassion for others when seeing them cave into these pressures.

Hillside Hermitage video reference this dynamic within responding to pressures or not, and will sometimes make the analogy of:

“The more you scratch an itch the worse it gets.”

I was wondering if anyone could flesh this out much more deeply though?

Thank you very much in advance!

Love,
Mark

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2025-01-12 16:21:08

As with everything that has to do with the Dhamma, this isn't really something you can figure out in an abstract sense. The very act of trying to figure it out can often be underlain by the same dynamic of "scratching" an arisen "itch," and you would be overlooking the actual dynamic right in front of your nose and contemplating abstract ideas instead. It can only be understood on the basis of practical, lived virtue and restraint. That's how you begin to see—on a first-person level, which is the where the Dhamma is found—how your choices and the attitudes they stem from impact the directions that your mind inclines to.

It can't really be described in any more detail than saying that your mind's inclinations are something you only have indirect, "delayed" control over, exactly like a dog. No matter how tight you have it on the leash, you can't force a dog to *want to* behave as you'd like it to. But when you see it getting excited having smelled something attractive, you do have a choice to either let it run towards it, or not. If you let it go where it wants, it will only get more agitated and defiant to your commands (the "itch" intensifies). If you stop it from running towards its target when the excitement is still only nascent, despite probably having to put up with a bit of whimpering initially, you cut off the possibility for an entire array of problems at its very root, and the "itch" will diminish too.

The same principle applies to aversion, just that the "itch" is of course different in its content (pushing back at a perceived threat).

[Edit: It's also important to remember that letting "the dog" get worked up over one thing means letting it get worked up over *everything*. So if a person struggles with a specific defilement, they should always consider not just that one, but all the other defilements they might be giving in to, not seeing them as a problem].

What is the appropriate attitude/view to have towards one's parents?

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Ok-Addition-7759 2025-01-10 20:06:07

As I prepare to go forth it's becoming much more real the fact that I'm leaving my family behind. When I leave, I don't know when or if I might see them again. It feels easier to see the body as not mine than it is to see my mom or dad as not my mine. I don't want to say they're "not mine" in the wrong way. Nothing can belong to anyone, but it's too easy to take that in the wrong way, in a way that avoids responsibility or isn't taken personally enough or is dissonant with the actual underlying emotions and attachments(denial, repression, etc).

The Buddha makes it clear that we owe our parents a lot, that it's a debt that is hard to repay. They are our first teachers and we aren't entitled to any of the food, protection, care, etc that they provide.

I used to have a very entitled mindset. I thought I was a victim. I've come to see how much

of a lie that is, that I'm not owed these things, and that I am deeply, deeply cherished, loved and accepted by those around me. As I prepare to go forth it's becoming so much more real how much I owe my mom. How much she did for me. How much she sacrificed. I have a hard time not being ashamed for consuming resources like food and healthcare and accepting things without guilt. That part of being a monk will be difficult to get used to. I would like to be able to accept things without shame or guilt. I think the entitlement is a compensation strategy by the mind to cover that up.

I didn't have any relationship with my father before I found Buddhism, but my introduction to the dhamma was so profound and for whatever reason drove me to call my dad. We talked for the first time in 15 years. 2 years later, we have a wonderful relationship. He is a good man, a kind man, and I'm so blessed to have gotten to have this relationship with him. At first I was really apprehensive about the idea of reconnecting with him or building it into a relationship, but I kept coming back to the Buddha's teaching that there is mother and there is father.

I've practiced hard at home to earn merit for my mom, it's been a big motivator. She isn't really able to receive Buddhism much, I can't teach her or establish her in mindfulness, the things the Buddha says are best for parents and loved ones. When she asked what I wanted for Christmas I saw an opportunity for her to make merit and told her I wanted a donation to Hillside Hermitage. I'm really glad I was able to help her make merit with that. I don't see much more I can do except be a good son and practice well.

How does one view parents and relationships with them? How does one properly say they're not mine? I'm not trying to get out of the pain of separation. I'll have to work through that and I plan on crying in the forest a lot when I get to Sri Lanka, for grief and joy.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2025-01-11 13:27:08

How does one view parents and relationships with them? How does one properly say they're not mine?

You don't "say" they're not yours.

As usual, you first need to be established in the precepts and withdrawal from sensuality, especially because those defilements are much coarser than the attachment to loved ones. Then within that, don't try to deny all the good that your parents have done for you. Acknowledge how helpful they've been, but at the same time don't try to cover up the fact that you could lose them or be separated from them forever the very next moment. That's just to hammer in the same point that *any* attachment to anything in the world is unjustified and unbeneficial because it puts you in a vulnerable position due to impermanence.

Attachment doesn't help you the tiniest bit in being grateful for what somebody has done for you nor even in repaying them. Quite the opposite; all attachment is bound up with selfishness by necessity. It's based on your own attitude towards your own feelings, and has nothing to do with the other person. It will blind you and make you overlook ways in

which you may even be harming the other person given that your tacit priority is getting what you want out of them.

Signs of the Mind/Practice Check

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Many_Relation_2784 2025-01-10 17:02:28

Dear Ajahn Nyanamoli or Bhante Aniga,

I'm longtime follower of the Buddha Dhamma but a recent "convert" to your commentaries. I was hoping I could get your perspective on results in my own practice related to the citta Nimitta topic. Please let me know if this question is appropriate as I'm new to Reddit.

I have a busy household life but am calmly indifferent to craving. I live close to nature and abstain from distractions. What I experience as "my mind" is something like a willful energy field that envelopes whatever point of view is functioning at the times. Thinking is active so often there is thinking with that mental energy field behind and around the point of view through thought. What I've come to understand (and this is what I would like feedback on) is that everything that appears as phenomena in experience is already fabricated, almost entirely a projection, of the mind, and the projections are already conditioned by whatever perceptions and feelings the mind contains. So the resulting effect is that I see everything as an illusion. Not as unreal, just not as it appears to be. Like when I see my reflection in the mirror, I know it's real as a reflection, but I also know it's not real as another person in the room. Or, when I see a mirage, I know it's real as a play of heat reflecting light, but illusory as water. I won't quench any thirst with the water I see in a mirage. These are similes for the effects of seeing the mind and how it projects its assumptions onto the screen of experience. Is this what you mean when you discuss "seeing the sign of the mind?" I already understand experiencing the mind as a separate entity, behaving like a child or animal, driven by craving for various kinds of foods, spellbound by ignorance that hides the fact that these foods are actually empty of any satisfactory qualities. But I'm curious about this way of being I described here because I don't want to go down any tributaries away from the Noble Path.

If I'm being completely honest, I don't really see that a "mind" or a "body" truly "exist" (stand apart). What I see is that there is experience, and "mind" is a designation given to a certain group of activities of similar function and "body" is a designation given to another category or system of activities with similar functions and qualities. Experience is a field of phenomena, grouped together and conditioned by craving, only taken as solid, substantial, and existing due to avijja. Passion/craving is like an adhesive, and the Dhamma is an anti-adhesive (dispassion) for the purpose of unbinding the aggregates. This is not a denial in any way of the reality of the All that we experience, or of individuality. This is just to say that words like "mind" and "body," "mentality" and "materiality," "self," and "world", carry assumptions of a reality apart from experience as a whole. It was simultaneous with seeing in this way that I understood craving is the only cause of suffering, and felt an overwhelming remorse for every word and action I have committed under my

enslavement to craving. If I could summarize it all, I would say that both body and mind are constructed by craving in order for craving to fulfill its hunger. So when I discern the sign of the mind, I find craving wearing a mask called “mind” and a costume called “body.” It seems to me that craving is at the root of everything. But when craving is extinguished, the craving-born representation of reality ceases. reality as it is remains, empty of any fabrication that would be subject to clinging, birth and death, empty of any conditions for suffering.

I share this honest perspective with you because when I share these things with people smarter and more developed than me, I learn a lot, and root out hidden wrong views. I appreciate your feedback. Thank you.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2025-01-11 16:40:12

This sounds like an attempt to find an escape from suffering through psychologizations, and is certainly not what we mean with “seeing the sign of the mind.”

Seeing the sign of the mind would be taking a step back from this whole complex net of ideas and asking yourself why you feel compelled to engage with them in the first place. Most likely, through radical honesty, you would see that it helps you cope with challenging emotional states and situations better one way or another. But that’s not how you arrive at freedom from suffering. It’s the mind still trying to exert control over experience and have things go according to its preferences at the level of feeling at least, just in a way that’s less obvious.

You can only arrive at true freedom from suffering by abandoning craving in regard to whatever feeling is present, not by trying to manipulate it by rehearsing various ideas, whether accurate or not.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2025-01-11 17:49:59 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

Effort isn’t necessarily always conscious, especially when something has become habitual. *Saṅkhāras* exist due to ignorance as the Buddha said, not because one explicitly wants to have them.

it’s seen as a sentence without meaning. Then the sentence falls apart.

Even if it feels like it’s not “you” making that happen, the fact remains that the freedom came from a change that occurred, and not from you being completely unmoved by both very meaningful and very meaningless sentences equally, or by whatever else happens to manifest regardless of its pressuring or non-pressuring qualities.

Such freedom cannot be unconditioned because the occurrence of a change is its condition.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2025-01-12 04:31:24 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

Change occurs on its own.

It does, but you seemed to imply that the occurrence of the change is the reason for the freedom, i.e., that if the sentences continued having the same heaviness of meaning indefinitely, the suffering would also continue.

What I'm trying to share is the seeing that resulted from the cessation of craving.

And my point is that what you described seems like a change in feeling (regardless of whether you deliberately caused it or not), not the cessation of craving. Seeing the sign of the mind and Right View boil down to seeing that these two could not be further apart.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2025-01-12 05:09:04 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

Simply put: when I see a mirage, no thirst for water arises. Why? Because the knowledge that a mirage is empty of water is already present.

My point is that the actual cessation of craving is such that even when the water is perfectly real and not a "mirage," you *still* don't crave for it. Understanding the four noble truths leads to direct cessation of craving without any intermediary, rather than indirectly by altering the way you perceive things first, and *thus* not craving. The latter is adding a middleman, and it's what we tend to call "management." It's not what the Buddha taught.

The *direct* reason for your suffering is not that you see things as real and not a mirage, which is what your view seems to imply. It's that you cannot feel "real" pleasure without craving for it or feel "real" pain without craving against it. So that's where the wisdom needs to be developed. The "mirage"-type feelings and phenomena don't need to be understood because anybody will naturally be equanimous towards them.

That was all just to clarify what I said. Could you expand on this?:

"Seeing the sign of the mind and Right View boil down to seeing that these two could not be further apart."

Seeing the sign of the mind means becoming aware of its attitude of craving when things *aren't* easy to endure, i.e., when they're not a "mirage". That's how you develop Right View. And that could not be further apart from a practice based on things being a mirage always, which will only obscure the fact that if things were not so, your mind *would* crave. The latter practice involves a subtle assumption that feelings, not craving, are the root of suffering, and thus it's the polar opposite of Right View.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2025-01-12 05:36:34 (in reply to a comment not included)

and now I understand where you're coming from

It doesn't seem like it, I'm afraid. The way you speak about your understanding quite clearly implies to me that you think feelings are the cause of suffering, despite not wanting to phrase it that way presumably because it sounds wrong according to what you've learned intellectually. I would've said the same even if you had never used any metaphors. I've only been using your metaphor to try to convey the message.

Thus, everything remains real as it is, but no longer as it once appeared to be.

This is the mistake I'm referring to. Everything *should* be exactly as it once appeared to be. *Avijjā* has nothing to do with things *appearing* otherwise than they truly are. The Buddha was no mystic. It has to do with not understanding that 100% real water is not worth craving for, for reasons completely unrelated to the ultimate truth/validity of its appearance.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2025-01-12 06:32:45 (in reply to a comment not included)

Simply put, you are on the surface using the same words and expressions of "giving up craving" and "seeing impermanence" to describe a very different practice from what I'm describing. For you, those expressions mean the phenomenon's appearance changes. On the other hand, what I'm saying is that knowing the nature of a phenomenon and abandoning craving in regard to it does not change the way it appeared when there was ignorance, and that is perfectly fine because appearances are not the root of suffering. If one needs to change appearances to not suffer, one is not addressing the core issue but simply sidestepping it.

This is how the presence of craving, in any form, fabricates experience so that things appear to be good and bad, me and mine.

I can't see how things would appear in any way similar to how they did when craving deluded perception, making everything appear as permanent, satisfying, and ownable.

It's the other way around entirely. Things appear the way they've always done (feelings of "good" and "bad") > craving is present due to ignorance of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anattā* in regard to feelings and the aggregates in general > one suffers. This is quite clear from the Suttas.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2025-01-12 16:48:25 (in reply to a comment not included)

Yes, that analogy might work on a crude level. But in the end it's subtler than that, since only the most misled people would genuinely think that insight leads to a transformation

of sensory perceptions themselves. Ultimately, you need to stop expecting any change to occur even at the level of feeling, since that's also part of "appearance."

Over time, of course, the mind becomes more equanimous, and things that used to pressure it won't do so as much. But that is a secondary side effect of the right practice, and it is absolutely paramount not to be hoping for that effect and trying to bring it about when it's not there, for otherwise you won't actually be abandoning craving here and now, and any calm that comes out of craving will be feeble, limited, and require constant management.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2025-01-14 04:26:54 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

It is NOT sensory perceptions that change. It is ignorance (perceptual and conceptual fallacies) in regard to sensory perceptions that disappear completely.

I've no doubt that that's not what you're saying, and I never thought so. I wasn't referring to you when I wrote "the most misled people..."

As I made clear, the problem is not with the phrasing. The phrasing of what you wrote here to describe insight is not necessarily wrong because it's what the Suttas say. But what that content *means for you* seems to be something rather different. It involves still putting the blame for suffering on the way experience manifests.

This Sutta may help get my point across. The Arahant is completely free from suffering *in spite* of the potentially infinite magnitude of the tides (arising from the senses), whereas what you're describing sounds to me like "there is freedom *because* there is no tide" (the "tide" having been removed by the contemplation of impermanence, letting go, etc., which would not be the correct use for those contemplations).

Even if the content of the sense perceptions remains the same, their "weight" is gone. But that "weight" is in itself not craving and thus not suffering, yet your descriptions sound to me very much like you think it is.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2025-01-14 12:14:28 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

No need to stand apart from the tides of change, of conditions, of pain, because without craving it is impossible to suffer

Indeed, and it's essential to check whether one's practice revolves around removing that actual craving or whether it simply diminishes the tides.

having had experience altered in such a way that seeing phenomena as anicca, dukkha, anatta, has created a refuge within where nothing seems to reach.

And this sounds to me like diminishing the tides. It might still be "the same mass of water" as before and not have entirely turned into something else, but that freedom is

ISN'T EVERYONE IN THIS COMMUNITY JUST BLINDLY ASSUMING THAT FREE WILL EXISTS?9

still dependent on *an alteration of some kind*, in this case the magnitude of the tides.

Isn't everyone in this community just blindly assuming that free will exists?

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** senserestraint 2025-01-10 05:18:46

Ajahn Nyanamoli talks a lot about taking personal responsibility for giving into the pressure of desire. I don't understand - doesn't this imply that free will isn't an illusion?

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2025-01-10 13:40:56

I don't understand - doesn't this imply that free will isn't an illusion?

Why would it be? The Buddha certainly never said that. At least not if we define free will simply as the ability to exert intentions or refrain from doing so, and differentiate that from the ability to achieve desired results.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2025-01-10 17:12:14 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

A determinist would say that all your intentions and refraining are caused by prior conditions which you didn't have control over i.e., any of your actions can be traced back to the state of the world prior to your birth.

Indeed, but without a concrete basis or evidence for that belief (there isn't any), but only other beliefs/assumptions that they take on faith, often simply because not feeling the weight of responsibility is more pleasing to them. Quite the opposite, experiential evidence—which is apodictic and cannot be “proven” through secondary means—shows you that your choices make a difference. The person would choose to deny that evidence and settle for a belief instead.

Asserting that there are actions which are ultimately caused by you would imply that you are some kind of primordial unconditioned entity

That's quite a leap. You wouldn't feel like you're a “primordial unconditioned entity” if someone locked you into a cell even if they let you move freely within it, would you? That's what the power of choice is: the ability to put one of the options given to you above the others, never to actually create new things from nothing. Even on the mental plane, you can't think a thought that wasn't already available before you thought it. Otherwise you would never forget things.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2025-01-11 06:32:59 (in reply to a comment not included)

Your choices making a difference isn't evidence for them not being pre-determined.

Nor will you be able to provide conclusive evidence that they *are* pre-determined. So my point is that it's a belief that isn't even supported by any more evidence than the opposite. It's not somehow a more rigorous or rational take.

that doesn't mean they have some free will independent of the flow of conditions, it just means that the current flow of conditions INCLUDES their wisdom from choosing the donut in the past and INCLUDES their current degree of ability to restrain.

In the overall picture, it's still a path of less resistance that will be used to avoid responsibility for indulgence, because the person will inevitably at some point *choose* to regard their supposed lack of free will as their reason for eating the donut, rather than making the perfectly possible, even if "illusory," choice to blame it on nothing but their own weakness—assuming eating the donut actually *was* an indulgent intention, which isn't a given—thus opening up the possibility for growth, even if an "illusory" one.

The Buddha's teaching is ultimately about the way things manifest to you and your suffering on account of those manifestations, not about hidden metaphysical truths. Even if actually and in truth your choices and your development in restraint were "not real", that will make no difference to your ability to practice the Dhamma and free yourself within the supposed "illusion". Whether it's an illusion or not, you suffer, and experience shows you that there are "illusory" choices that either go with the grain of craving, or not. That's all that matters.

A point about meditation and question about sensuality

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Ok_Watercress_4596 2025-01-07 10:32:11

Hi, I wanted to share a little bit about my own "path" here to illustrate a point and to ask a question, maybe someone can help

1. I used to not be able to keep the 5 precepts and was really upset about it almost all the time, so having no other options I started meditating and eventually was able to start keeping the 5 precepts. Now I want to aim to increase the threshold further as I did in the past, starting with the most obvious things and to me it seems like sitting mindfully, aware of the body, with a quiet mind really helps me to overcome rising greed, aversion and grief, etc. To me it seems obvious that even though meditation may not be sufficient on its own as a technique to attain Nibbana, it is quite important and a crucial element of fulfilling the gradual training, in my experience. The thoughts are filled with sensuality as well, so sitting calmly helps me to undo the thinking habits that are unbeneficial and to me it seems like this cannot be avoided,

- a person must become aware of their thoughts and calm them down and try to give them up, otherwise these thoughts are the same as the sensuality I want to give up
2. I've been trying to contemplate drawbacks of sensuality, but it doesn't seem to work. I've given up various things, but at the same time value some other things and really struggle to give them up. I'm wondering if there is some trick or way or technique to clearly see the peril, danger, drawback, the problem with pleasure and make the thoughts of renunciation more appealing as a way out
 3. Can I still enjoy some hobbies I like? Like 3D modelling, videogames and bodybuilding, are those also dangerous?

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2025-01-07 15:19:51

The thoughts are filled with sensuality as well, so sitting calmly helps me to undo the thinking habits that are unbeneficial and to me it seems like this cannot be avoided, a person must become aware of their thoughts and calm them down and try to give them up, otherwise these thoughts are the same as the sensuality I want to give up

It *can* be avoided by training yourself in virtue, restraint, and renunciation in the overall context of your life, since those actions create the momentum that keeps pushing you in the same direction mentally even when you're not doing anything in particular. Once you abandon those things on the bodily and verbal level, you need to learn how to abandon *only* the unwholesome thoughts whenever they arise as the Buddha described in MN 19, not shut down your thinking altogether, which is a form of cheating.

If you try to jump right into calming yourself down before all of this is done, it will be an act of suppression rooted in ignoring the work you need to do. It might make you more peaceful quicker, but it will be the peace of taking a nap in a dirty room, shirking your duty to clean it.

I've been trying to contemplate drawbacks of sensuality, but it doesn't seem to work. I've given up various things, but at the same time value some other things and really struggle to give them up. I'm wondering if there is some trick or way or technique to clearly see the peril, danger, drawback, the problem with pleasure and make the thoughts of renunciation more appealing as a way out

It might be that you're expecting a special contemplation to do the work of abandoning for you, but that's not how it works. Right contemplation internally becomes possible on the basis of renunciation externally, since what you're contemplating is not the peril in the specific objects (which would be an endless task) but the peril in feeding further the craving that becomes revealed when you're restrained, by giving in to it once more. Undermining your own wish to attain lasting peace for the sake of instant gratification.

Can I still enjoy some hobbies I like? Like 3D modelling, videogames and bodybuilding, are those also dangerous?.

Playing video games will always be rooted in a craving for distraction, which will in turn feed sensual tendencies too and make it harder to restrain them. And that cannot be beneficial. The others depend on the intention behind doing them at the time. It could be craving for distraction too, or vanity in the case of something like bodybuilding, or some practical purpose. Nothing apart from the five precepts, celibacy, and giving up entertainment is set in stone.

That said, you probably want to stop the coarser, most craving-driven things like sexual activity and entertainment before you try to closely examine your intentions behind subtler things that aren't covered by the precepts. You won't have a clear perspective to do so otherwise.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2025-01-07 15:29:48 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

You will have imperturbable peace to whatever degree you do that work, whereas the work of "meditation" as conceived of nowadays is just putting a bandage over a festering wound and doing next to nothing about it in the end.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2025-01-07 19:02:15 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

Any action rooted in craving inevitably makes you liable to suffer more when you don't get what you want or get what you don't want. Even if the misfortune has nothing to do with the original action. That's because it's "one" craving that is fed by everything and spreads onto everything, so to speak.

Each time you give in to craving, you basically bind yourself down tighter with your head beneath a guillotine that could drop at any moment. Because nothing fundamentally guarantees that you won't lose everything you cling to the very next moment.

If by not fueling it further you give up craving and thus break loose before the guillotine drops, it won't be a problem no matter how hard it falls.

Practice for right view

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Wild-Brush1554 2025-01-04 06:06:09

I have been practicing sense restraint(for a few weeks) and non activity for a few days. I am restrained when it comes to my bodily and verbal actions because I'm only fulfilling my basic needs (eating, bathroom, sleeping, chores and other necessities) since any other activity would be done out of unwholesome intentions because its unnecessary.

While abiding in non activity, i just walk/sit(while sitting i try not to move and stare at one area)and let the feelings and cravings come up without changing them. Throughout the day mind is very active, it keeps bringing up thoughts rooted in craving, longing for

company, past experiences and anxiety about the future/doubt. I endure craving and try to discern my intentions. I can clearly see that most of my thoughts are rooted in craving which would make them unwholesome(I could be wrong since I dont have right view). I dont try to think of unwholesome thoughts, however they come anyways and my mind jumps to them, but not all the time. I try to let the mind do its own thing without trying to change much.

Am I supposed to just keep doing the same thing and wait for the mind to settle(I assume it will since im not agitating it).

My current understanding of the practice is that I should:

1. Avoid acting out of unwholesome intentions.
2. See the danger in the slightest fault
3. Contemplate the danger of sense pleasures.

By contemplating i mean whenever a thought of craving comes up I reflect on how its impermanent, can never satisfy me and will be future suffering.

The time in non activity is not easy, although im not restless(which is a good sign) I still feel uneasy and suffer my minds craving

Is my practice of non activity and endurance happening rightly? Will this be enough(if done consistently and over long enough) to make me naturally devalue sense pleasures and get the right view?

Any help would be appreciated!

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2025-01-05 06:17:55

More important than trying to “get it right” in this particular period would be to make sure that you establish yourself in sense restraint permanently (which you say you’ve done only for a few weeks). Otherwise, you will be trying extra hard now but sooner or later your motivation will run out, and since you tried to take on the whole thing all at once, you might just as quickly drop it all and default back to non-restraint.

And *that*, not the lack of intellectual clarity you’re trying to resolve, would compromise your training and undo any beneficial work you may have done.

So sure, do your best to contemplate and discern and so on, but don’t aim for perfection on that level. Aim for perfection only in regard to sense restraint for now (or even just the eight precepts, in case you aren’t 100% confident with them either).

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2025-01-06 07:04:00 (in reply to a comment not included)

How do we know if we are 100% confident in the precepts?

One way would be to review yourself at the end of each day to see not only whether you broke any of them, but whether you were at any point even *close* to doing so.

You should also, of course, ask yourself honestly whether your resolve is to keep them forever and you feel perfectly comfortable with that prospect, or whether the resolve is only temporary or only applies to when it's relatively easy to say "no."

Ultimately, if you doubt it, it's because you're not confident.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2025-01-06 11:43:55 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

In order to permanently establish myself in sense restraint, I would have to find a substitute for sense pleasures right?

This is a common wrong view. The right kind of joy, which is the joy of renunciation, will come only when you give up any hopes of getting what you currently regard as joy, which most likely is still within the sensual/unwholesome realm. And that relinquishment that is peaceful won't happen for as long as you are restraining your senses *for the sake of* some kind of joy. In fact, that's exactly what would make the sense restraint painful, since you would just be feeding your craving through it.

The joy of renunciation will arise when you fully see the danger in sensuality and the value of renunciation, and keep your sense restraint with that alone as motivation. Not when you do something entirely separate from that, for otherwise it wouldn't be called "joy of renunciation" anymore.

Even if I don't give in, I would still be touched by the pressure which would make it very hard and a constant "doing" to not give in.

That's not a problem per se. You need to keep "doing" it for a long time until the mind calms down for no other reason than having gotten used to it. If you've been feeding these habits for years or even longer, like basically everyone, it's silly to expect them to subside quickly. Hence what I wrote about not expecting to undo it all at once.

Will this habit subside on its own through longer duration of practice

It will. The mind's over-activity is a result of the lingering momentum created by one's previous lack of bodily and verbal restraint.

A desire/thought arises about something pleasant, while the desire is there if I remind myself how it is painful etc, wouldn't that be done out of aversion to?

Yes, but that's a more subtle problem than what would happen if you didn't contemplate the danger, so you don't have to worry about that until the danger has become fully clear, and definitely not until sense restraint has become your natural mode of being.

What is the “you” that chooses what to allow the wild animal to engage with?

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** MaggOtBrainz 2025-01-02 13:46:29

What is the “you” that chooses what sense objects to engage with or present to the wild animal?

Do you have control over that “you” and the choices it makes? Or is that also determined by further factors down the chain?

If you do have control, then what is the you that has control? Isn't that antithetical to the teaching of the Buddha? You would be some kind of separate acausal entity. You could've chosen not to be in ignorance in the first place. Whether or not you are pressured by the world would be completely up to you. But we know that we are ALREADY pressured - that's the starting point.

If you don't have control, what is the basis for that “you” that chooses what to engage with? And therefore, what is the basis of an ignorant mind, and what is the basis of an enlightened mind?

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2025-01-04 05:44:37

What is the “you” that chooses what sense objects to engage with or present to the wild animal?

In simple terms, you could say it's the faculty of attention.

Do you have control over that “you” and the choices it makes? Or is that also determined by further factors down the chain?

You can only attend to something because it is there as possible-to-be-attended-to already, cognized by your sense bases, without you having any ultimate say in what's available and what isn't.

You could've chosen not to be in ignorance in the first place. Whether or not you are pressured by the world would be completely up to you.

From the above, you can see that this doesn't really follow. In your own experience, is moving your attention to something else a fundamentally reliable method of avoiding suffering? If so, how come many people fall into depression anyways?

what is the basis of an ignorant mind, and what is the basis of an enlightened mind?

Not sure what you mean by this. Assuming you're asking what is the cause of each, a simple way to put it is that the ignorant mind continues to put an emphasis on the little control that it has and overlooks the more fundamental non-control. The enlightened mind does the opposite.

It bears mentioning that “not allowing the wild animal to engage with things” is not what leads to enlightenment alone. That’s what anyone who attains samadhi even with wrong view would have to do. A tamed animal (assuming the taming came from the gradual training and not a meditation technique) is but a *suitable basis* for enlightenment.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2025-01-05 12:47:34 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

What causes the mind to go down these paths? I think that’s what I’m trying to get at. What are the conditions for you to make choices that are in alignment with enlightenment or samsara?

Restraint in conduct and of the senses (or lack of it) is the condition. Things like sensuality and ill will are driven precisely by an emphasis on the very limited control one has and overlooking the bigger picture of non-control. If you saw that you have so little control over your own life that you could even die the very next moment, any value in sensuality or hatred would be gone at least for the duration of that recognition. But if you keep giving in to such acts, you can’t even stop to consider the aspect of non-control because you’re already fully bent on asserting your control.

What else is required?

The insight of non-control (which should not be confused with **denial** of control). The mind tamed by restraint has less of a pressure to assert its control, but that doesn’t mean there is the understanding of how little control can be exerted regardless of how hard you try.

And to be clear, understanding non-control would not turn one into some sort of automaton. It just means one doesn’t find any refuge in the power of choice that is factually there, so when things go bad, there will be no suffering if one fails miserably at improving them, as will inevitably happen sometimes.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2025-01-08 06:49:29 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

I think I’m mindful of the possibility of death at any moment, (I accept it, and I’m ok with it, it doesn’t worry me), and yet cravings for sense pleasures still arise.

That might be because you’re thinking of death in an abstract sense. It’s impossible for a non-Arahant to be at ease with death unless they misconceiving what death is. A courageous soldier on a battlefield is not afraid of death because his notion of death does not apply to whatever his sense of self and of safety has become established upon. Most people who feel that way would get closer to what death is by considering the possibility of losing everything they find the slightest bit of joy and reassurance in, forever.

This discussion might be helpful.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2025-01-11 13:15:14 (in reply to a comment not included)

I will cease to exist, all suffering will stop for me, from my perspective something completely new will be reborn.

I’m missing something, if I die then my sense of self will cease to exist.

These views are where the problem lies. That’s not how it works, and it’s not how the Buddha spoke about “rebirth.” Think of it as things happening to you tomorrow without having any memories of today. You would still most certainly be concerned about what position today’s actions will put you in even if you won’t remember them. *anattā* is the result of seeing dukkha in regard to the entirety of existence, not an intellectual standpoint you simply adopt.

Do I have to be seriously into 8 precept territory for years to be able to see what you are talking about here? Can a regular person with decent sense restraint understand this contemplation, or am I spinning my wheels at this point?

To be able to see it in a way that liberates unconditionally, yes. 8 precept territory is the least that qualifies as “decent sense restraint,” especially in modern times in a lay setting. Less than that would seem “decent” because of one’s habituated baseline and lack of a reference point for the sheer “size” of one’s craving in absolute terms. Even a lay sotāpanna would know that they’re mostly just “cruising” on 5 precepts, not *practicing*.

Sure, strictly speaking it may be possible to understand the Dhamma with slightly less, but why would you justify continuing to smoke any amount of cigarettes if you genuinely wanted to cure yourself of lung cancer, unless you had the very pernicious view that there is no connection between the two?

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2025-01-15 05:01:20 (in reply to a comment not included)

There are at least two things that may be missing which would constitute that “middle step.” The first would be that in order to start learning how to recollect death (or anything else) rightly, you need to have undertaken restraint and precepts first, rather than relying on the contemplation of death to do the restraint for you. It can only undo delight at the level of thought. If things have been proliferated past that point into bodily and verbal acts, there’s not much any contemplation can really do. We probably give that “disclaimer” quite often, though perhaps it wasn’t explicitly mentioned in this specific case.

The second thing, which comes within the first, is that you have to recognize the liability to death *rightly* (which means concretely, in a way that doesn’t leave out your point of view). Thinking about it as some sort of external fact will certainly not undo your passion for sensuality. Many people do already recognize that “we’re all going to die one day” and so on, but because they’re not relating to that possibility of death rightly, they can even use it as an excuse *for* sensuality, ironically.

It should also be qualified that undoing passion for sensuality does not necessarily mean exterminating the *pressure* of sensuality on the spot. If you've been cultivating delight mentally, you can't instantaneously stop that train. But what recollecting death rightly *would* do is put things back into perspective so that you are unable to keep fueling the pressure that has been accumulated, at least for as long as the recollection remains properly established.

Is jhana necessary for enlightenment?

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** None 2025-01-02 04:38:15

I don't even fully understand what jhana is, mostly because of the many contradictory teachings from many different people who all say they know what it is and how to get it. I've sort of decided for a while to just not bother with the whole matter and do my practice. But is jhana a necessary part of the Buddha's instructions for awakening? If I don't know what it is, will whatever it is be cultivated if I'm practicing everything else correctly?

My basic point is - do I need to have this term clearly defined in the correct way, and is jhana a state I need to work towards intentionally, or is it something that will arise naturally by doing other things that support it?

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2025-01-02 05:15:50

My basic point is - do I need to have this term clearly defined in the correct way, and is jhana a state I need to work towards intentionally, or is it something that will arise naturally by doing other things that support it?

Unless you've already been leading a lifestyle of virtue (avoiding any verbal or bodily action driven by defilements and not just keeping rules), celibacy, restraining your senses, not tolerating the slightest unskillful thought, and seclusion for a good while and somehow you still haven't attained jhāna, then the answer is the latter. The Buddha always began his instructions on how to enter jhana not with a special technique for focusing on sensations, but by listing all these things, starting all the way down from virtue.

The contradictory teachings you mention are due to an underemphasis or altogether dismissal of those prerequisites. For someone who does fulfill them, and doesn't get distracted by any of the various views about what jhāna is, withdrawal from unwholesome states will take place regardless of their wishes. And that withdrawal is pleasant and joyful on its own because the hindrances are a burden that is now gone, because they were not acted out of and fueled for long enough. Not because some contrived method of fabricating joy is involved. Each teacher coming up with their own such method and justifications for it and putting that first, giving the prerequisites an honorary mention, if any, is the reason for all the discrepancies.

And yes, jhāna (read: successful abandoning of sensuality and all forms of aversion) is indispensable for enlightenment.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2025-01-03 05:03:50 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

And am I correct that you are saying jhana is not a state to be arrived at by putting yourself in a trance through a series of steps in accordance with a technique? Rather jhana is the pleasure that arises when one is sufficiently withdrawn from sensuality because of the intentional act of abandoning it throughout their life, not just temporarily during meditation, while being asleep, or for a period of time on retreat?

Correct.

Does this mean there are non-Buddhist jhanas that Hindu yogis can attain through trance states, but this is something different from what the Buddha called jhana?

Yes. They're such a different thing that arises out of such a different mode of practice (which the Buddha happens to never have talked about) that it's a bit of a stretch to call them jhānas, really. The fact that the people who practice that way are often still engaged in sensuality outside of their meditation points to the fact that it's not the state the Buddha described, on account of which even a puthujjana would go beyond such pleasures.

Does this imply that jhana is a sensual experience too, but just a highly refined sensual experience because it is free from unwholesomeness?

"Sensual experience" and "free from unwholesomeness" going together is a contradiction in terms. One enters jhāna by being completely withdrawn from sensuality, as the Suttas always say.

How would one go about "letting go" of jhana?

By applying the same attitude to it as one did to sensuality and the world in order to enter jhāna.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2025-01-03 05:14:55 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

Then what you are saying is that jhana will not arise for anyone until anagami stage?

Certainly not. Often people struggle to see the middle line we are trying to convey between "jhāna can be attained by anyone and their mother by doing a meditation technique" on one extreme and "jhāna cannot be attained by anyone but an anāgāmi".

Jhāna is the culmination of building up a momentum of renunciation and disinterest in the world through one's lifestyle. But that doesn't mean that the opposite momentum towards sensuality can never return. It will sooner or later, even if only in a next life, unless one develops the insight that destroys the fetters regardless of jhāna.

People who have been well withdrawn from sensuality, company, distractions, and worldly activity for a good while would be able to see that their minds have greater perspective, and are in general less disturbed by things. A lot of people would report that after staying at a monastery for a while. That's at least a few steps in the direction of jhāna.

But this would soon fade once they return to the world and start breaking precepts again, etc. One would also ironically be prevented from getting to that modicum of proper samādhī even if the external conditions are right when engaging in a meditation technique, since that's often yet another activity of pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain that takes the place of the external activities that were abandoned. What comes out of that isn't a truly calm state, but another ecstatic pleasure that tires you out eventually.

Getting up early and napping during the day

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Ok-Addition-7759 2025-01-01 21:12:40

So, I get up pretty early and after I eat my meal for the day at 8:00 I'm often useless for the next several hours and struggle to meditate or be mindful. I eat in moderation so that's not the issue. I have to fiercely fight to stay awake after eating and often can't sit down for a couple hours after eating or I'll just go into oblivion. I'm tempted to take naps all the time but it's really hit or miss if they actually make me function better.

Is it better to just power through and not nap until my mind stops steering to that as an option and gets used to it? (like it does steering to eat more after my meal but before noon since it's "allowable")

This sleep stuff really sucks because it feel like my body wants to get up this early, and I'd probably feel gross going back to more sleep at this point. Sometimes it's like the only time my mind relaxes and the pain in my neck goes away is when it's time for bed. It's really frustrating that calm might only come at that time and I have to meditate and live with anxiety and neck pain otherwise. I feel like I'm over determining things but I don't know how to stop.

Edit: A few of you mentioned food intolerance and I think that must be it. I think it's my whey protein. I had an inkling that might be an issue for a while but didn't test it out properly. It's that subtle inner feminine voice that I seem to often miss or ignore, and then stumble around this way and that before I finally listen to them to see that once again, they were right. It's a very male thing to prioritize thinking, logic, and prior determinations over intuition.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2025-01-02 05:43:22

If you know you're not tired due to some specific physical reason like recent strenuous activity or some food intolerance, then the problem might be that you're expecting the

dull state after the meal not to be there, with the wrong view that “only then” can you practice. That aversion would in turn make the sleepiness worse.

The hindrance of sloth and torpor is not due to the drowsiness after the meal in and of itself, but due to your *ayoniso manasikāra* towards it:

“And what, bhikkhus, is the nutriment for the arising of unarisen sloth and torpor and for the increase and expansion of arisen sloth and torpor? There are, bhikkhus, discontent, lethargy, lazy stretching, drowsiness after meals, sluggishness of mind: frequent *ayoniso manasikāra* to them is the nutriment for the arising of unarisen sloth and torpor and for the increase and expansion of arisen sloth and torpor.

—SN 46.51

