

Shamatha: Hindrances, Faults, and Supports

Compiled by George Draffan from traditional and modern Buddhist sources including the *Bhavanakrama*.

Five Hindrances	Possible Responses
<p>Busyness</p> <p>Busyness includes mental and physical restless and agitation, endless thinking, anxiety, worry, and remorse.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recognize busyness, relax and return attention to the practice. ● Relax by sighing. Then place slightly more attention on exhaling than inhaling. ● Maintain light, open attention. ● Look downward, or close your eyes. Relax the face and eyes. ● Rest attention on the aspect of your breathing or the part of your body that feels most settled. ● Rest attention on the lower body, such as the abdomen rising and falling as you breathe. ● Set aside worries, fault-finding, and the tyranny of clinging to thoughts and emotions. ● Renew your interest in meditation practice by appreciating the happiness and comfort it brings. ● Reflect on impermanence and suffering and why you are practicing. ● Cut busyness forcibly with one breath. ● Count the breath until busyness subsides. ● Imagine an inverted black lotus flower in your torso, going down into the ground. ● Go to a dark warm place.
<p>Dullness</p> <p>Dullness includes sloth, torpor, laziness, lack of vitality, fogginess, going blank, and sleepiness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recognize dullness; energize and bring more attention to the practice. ● Renew your body's natural alignment and alertness. ● Diligently direct attention to the object of attention (eg the breath); place more attention on inhaling. ● Bring attention to the air passing in and out of your nostrils. ● Feel the detailed sensations of the body. ● Open your eyes, look up slightly. ● Imagine a bright white light in your head. ● Imagine a white lotus flower in your torso, growing up in the sky. ● Imagine your body sitting in a vast space (mix mind and breath with space). ● Tense your body for a few moments and then relax. ● Stand up, walk, or go to a light open place. ● Cultivate faith by reflecting on the value of awareness and the three jewels, aspire to awaken.

Five Hindrances	Possible Responses
<p>Desire Desire includes longing, wishing, or craving for (and attachment to) any sense-object or mind state.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recognize attraction, desire, attachment, and grasping. ● Place attention on the feeling of desire itself, rather than on the object of desire. ● Place one-pointed attention on the object of meditation. ● Feel sensations and whole body awareness. ● Reflect on impermanence and suffering and why you are practicing. ● Reflect on the superiority of comfort, pleasure, and happiness that are not dependent on sense-objects.
<p>Aversion Aversion includes dislike, hatred, ill-will, disgust, judgment, boredom, fear.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recognize aversion arising. ● Place attention on aversion itself, rather than on the object of aversion. ● Sustain attention on the object of meditation. ● Feel sensations and whole body awareness. ● Reflect on impermanence and suffering and why you are practicing. ● Cultivate lovingkindness toward yourself. ● Take delight in practice.
<p>Doubt Doubt includes skepticism, paralysis by analysis, indecision, inadequacy, and resistance to practice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recognize doubt. ● Recognize that feelings, thoughts, and stories are feelings and thoughts, not facts. ● Sustain attention on the object of meditation with continuity, firmness, and steadiness. ● Allow your positive experiences of meditation give you confidence to continue practicing. ● Develop faith by reflecting on the reliability of the teacher, the teachings, and the sangha. ● Allow your teacher and sangha help you overcome self-doubt.

Five Faults	Possible Responses
Unwillingness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Renew your interest in practice by cultivating enthusiasm, faith, aspiration, and pliancy. ● Renew motivation to practice by reflecting deeply on your sufferings and your aspirations. ● Cultivate confidence in your ability to awaken. ● Hone your competence in skills so that you are well-trained and ready. ● Stand at your cushion until you know why you aren't willing to practice.
Forgetting to practice, Forgetting how to practice, Forgetting the object of attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Remind yourself that mindfulness means remembering. ● Practice daily; schedule the time and don't negotiate. ● Sharp, clear, one-pointed mindfulness makes meditation pleasant.
Confusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recognize confusion and return to the method of practice. ● Recognize whether dullness and busyness are occurring.
Not making an effort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recognize dullness and busyness when they occur, and apply remedies diligently. ● Restore balance by energizing (when dull) and relaxing (when busy). ● Increase vigilance and mindfulness. ● Reflect on the shortcomings of the life of habitual patterns. ● Reflect on difficulty of obtaining good conditions for practice. ● Reflect on death and impermanence.
Trying too hard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Don't apply remedies when the other faults don't arise; simply rest in attention. ● Cultivate equanimity by relaxing and doing one simple task (eg attend to breathing).

Six Supports	Descriptions and Investigations
Conducive space	Prioritizing space as well as time. Quiet, clean, tidy, with natural or indirect lighting. Having a space with few interruptions or noise. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Where do I sit physically? ● Where do I sit emotionally?
Basic needs met	Not having to worry about economic survival; observing diet and sleep that support health and alertness. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What do I need physically? ● What do I need emotionally? ● What do I need to maintain my sense of identity?
Contentment	Cultivating both outer contentment (basic needs met) and inner contentment. Not being excessively attached to clothing, wealth, mundane activities, etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How much is enough physically? ● How much is enough emotionally?
Manageable life	Space to breathe. Balance. Not hurrying or compressing. Organize your life around spiritual practice, not vice versa. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What gets in the way of my practice?
Ethical behavior	Rely on experience rather than commandments; cultivate sensitivity to results of my acts. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What keeps me unbalanced? ● What drives unethical actions (actions that cause suffering for self or others)?
Letting go of drama	Earth: rigidity and stubbornness. Water: compulsive clinging and withdrawing. Fire: consuming, seducing, and anger. Air: rationalizing and busyness. Void: falling to pieces, or going blank. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What stories am I telling?