

THE NINE STAGES LEADING TO SHAMATHA

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Stage	What is achieved	Power by which that is achieved	What problems persist	Attentional imbalances	Type of mental engagement	Quality of experience	Involuntary thoughts
1. directed attention	One is able to direct the attention to the chosen object	Learning the instructions	There is no attentional continuity on the object	Coarse excitation	Focused	Movement	The flow of involuntary thoughts is like a cascading waterfall
2. continuous attention	Attentional continuity on the chosen object up to a minute	Thinking about the practice	Most of the time the attention is not on the object				
3. resurgent attention	Swift recovery of distracted attention, mostly on the object	Mindfulness	One still forgets the object entirely for brief periods				
4. close attention	One no longer completely forgets the chosen object		Some degree of complacency concerning samadhi	Coarse laxity and medium excitation			
5. tamed attention	One takes satisfaction in samadhi	Introspection	Some resistance to samadhi	Medium laxity and medium excitation	Interrupted	Achievement	Involuntary thoughts are like a river quickly flowing through a gorge
6. pacified attention	No resistance to training the attention		Desire, depression, lethargy and drowsiness	Medium laxity and subtle excitation			
7. fully pacified attention	Pacification of attachment, melancholy and lethargy	Enthusiasm	Subtle imbalances of the attention, swiftly rectified	Subtle laxity and subtle excitation			Familiarity
8. single-pointed attention	Samadhi is long and sustained without any excitation or laxity		It still takes effort to ward off excitation and laxity	Latent impulses for subtle laxity and subtle excitation	Uninterrupted	Stillness	The conceptually discursive mind is calm like an ocean unmoved by waves
9. attentional balance	Flawless samadhi is long and sustained effortlessly	Familiarity	Attentional imbalances may recur in the future	The causes for those imbalances are still latent	Effortless	Perfection	The conceptually discursive mind is still like Mount Meru, King of Mountains

Coarse excitation: The attention completely disengages from the meditative object

Medium excitation: Involuntary thoughts occupy the centre of attention, while the meditative object is displaced to the periphery

Subtle excitation: The meditative object remains at the centre of attention, but involuntary thoughts emerge at the periphery of attention

Coarse laxity: The attention mostly disengages from the object due to insufficient vividness

Medium laxity: The object appears, but with not much vividness

Subtle laxity: The object appears vividly, but the attention is slightly slack