

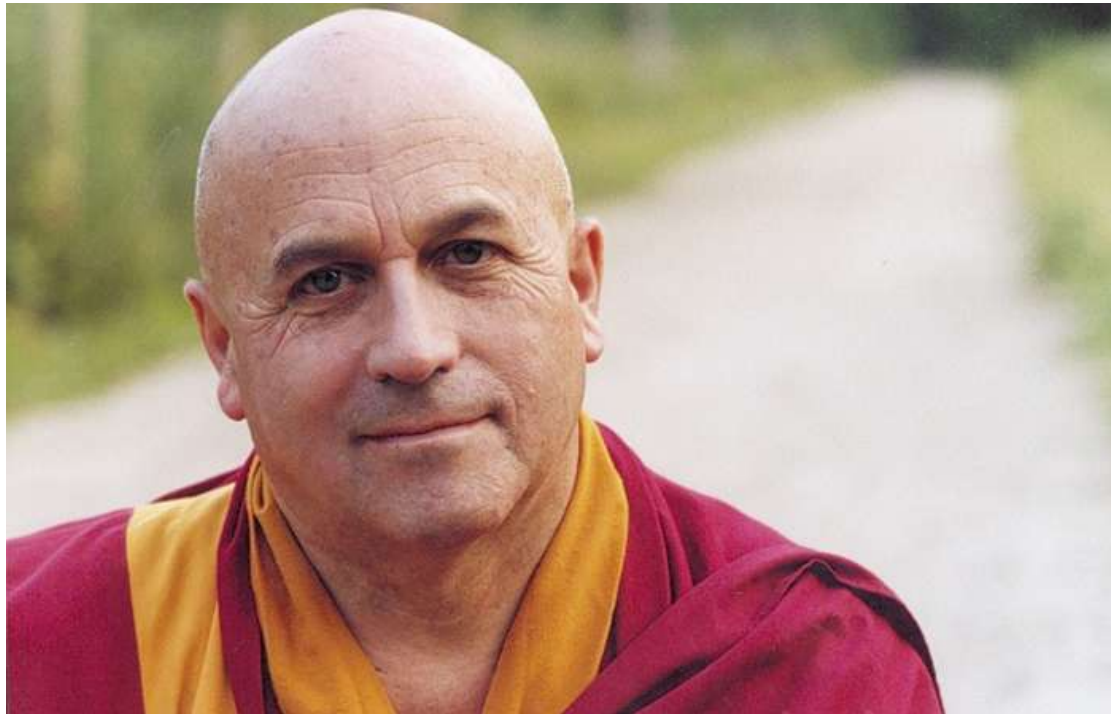
An Introduction to Buddhism

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INVESTICE DO ROZVOJE VZDĚLÁVÁNÍ

“We must distinguish between spirituality in general terms, which aims to make us better people, and religion. Adopting a religion remains optional, but becoming a better human being is essential.” *Mathieu Ricard*



‘Spirituality can be defined as “the eternal human yearning to be connected with something larger than our own egos””

Parker J. Palmer

Stopping and looking deeply

There is a story in Zen circles about a man and a horse. The horse is galloping quickly, and it appears that the man on the horse is going somewhere important. Another man, standing alongside the road, shouts, “Where are you going?” and the first man replies, “I don’t know! Ask the horse!” This is also our story. We are riding a horse, we don’t know where we are going, and we can’t stop.”

Peace is every step: it turns the endless path to joy

Many of us believe that happiness is only possible when we have achieved certain objectives: a partner, a job, status, a new car, a holiday. Buddhism teaches that this is not the way to happiness. Happiness can be achieved directly, in any circumstances, right now. It is not an objective that you reach after long endurance, but rather a process that you participate in here and now.

Right Mindfulness

Mindfulness is....

”....paying attention on purpose,
in the present moment,
non-judgementally....”

Jon Kabat Zinn

Awareness as a starting point

William James:

“The faculty of voluntarily bringing back a wandering attention over and over again, is the very root of judgment, character, and will. . . . An education which should improve this faculty would be the education par excellence. But it is easier to define this ideal than to give practical instructions for bringing it about.”

Mindful breathing

When you practice mindful breathing, “Breathing in, I’m aware of my in-breath,” you practice in such a way that you are no longer an observer. You practice in such a way that you become your in-breath. You become a participant, no longer an outside observer.

Focused Attention

- Single-pointed concentration.
 - Breath
 - Natural object [e.g. a flower]
 - Thought
 - Images
- Purpose is to break reactive, associative thinking, and to bring clarity, freedom, sustained focus to observation and thought.

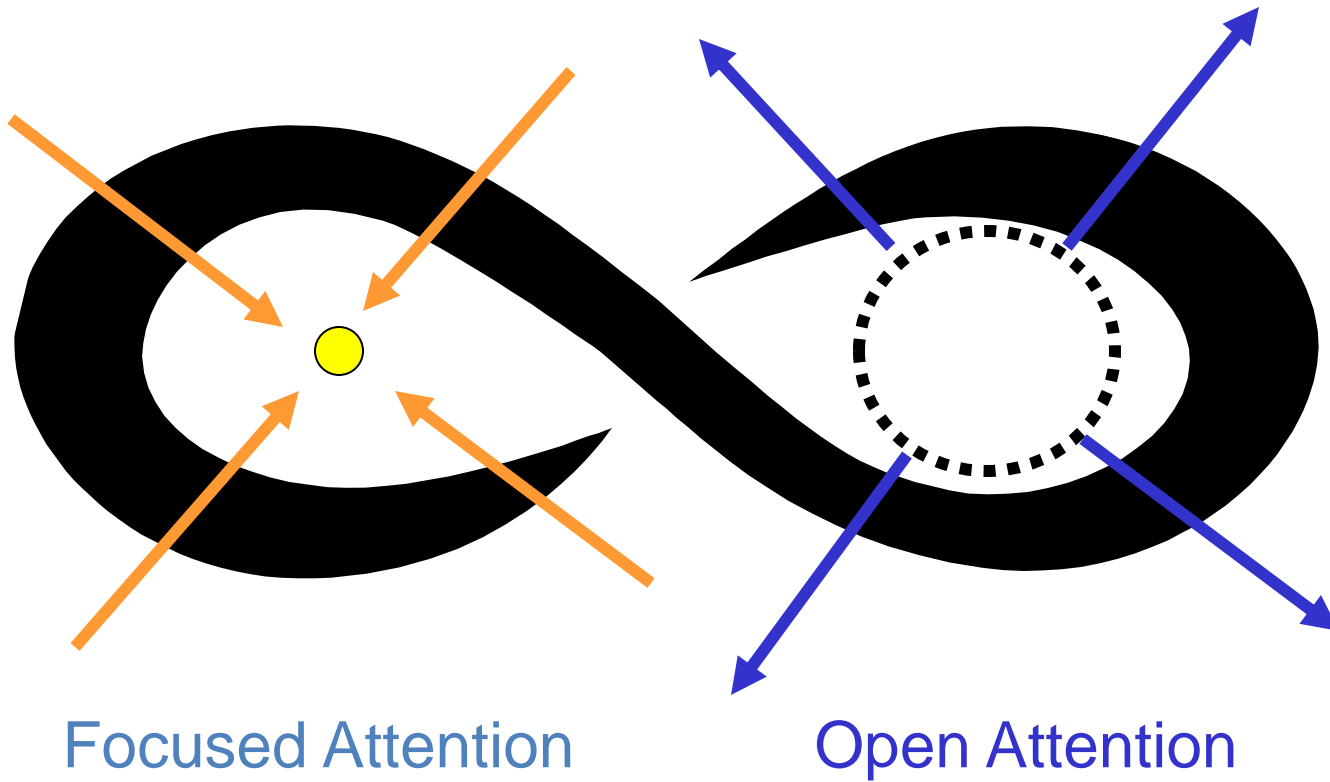
Focused attention meditation

Focused attention meditation entails voluntarily focusing attention on a chosen object in a sustained fashion.

Open monitoring meditation

Open monitoring meditation involves non-reactively monitoring the content of experience from moment to moment, primarily as a means to recognize the nature of emotional and cognitive patterns.

Open attention



From focused attention to open monitoring

Open monitoring meditation initially involves the use of focused attention training to calm the mind and reduce distractions, but as focused attention advances, the cultivation of the monitoring skill per se becomes the main focus of practice. The aim is to reach a state in which no explicit focus on a specific object is retained; instead, one remains only in the monitoring state, attentive moment by moment to anything that occurs in experience.

Open attention

I said to my soul, be still, and wait without hope
For hope would be hope for the wrong thing; wait
without love
For love would be love of the wrong thing; there is
yet faith
But the faith and the love and the hope are all in
the waiting.
Wait without thought, for you are not ready for
thought:
So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness
the dancing.

Open attention

Grace fills empty spaces, but it can only enter where there is a void to receive it, and it is grace itself which makes this void.

Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace*



Tughenhadt House

.....large spaces provide freedom. Space has in its rhythm a completely special calm which cannot be provided by a closed room.

Romano Guardini

Mindfulness of Breathing

- Bring your attention to your breathing
- Count each out breath from one to ten
- If your mind wanders off, bring your attention back to your breathing and start counting again

Living in the present moment

Do not pursue the past.

Do not lose yourself in the future.

The past no longer is.

The future has not yet come.

Looking deeply at life as it is
in the very here and now,
the practitioner dwells
in stability and freedom.

A circular calligraphic frame, likely created with a brush, containing the text "be still and know". The text is written in a cursive, handwritten style. The frame has a thick, dark border with some texture and a small, dark, irregular mark at the bottom center.

be still
and
know

The activity of the mind

Judgements = liking or disliking

Associations = memories, stories, comparisons

Emotional inter-relationship with thoughts

Thoughts don't occur singularly or without some emotional "flavour".

Commentary = our thoughts comment on all our experiences.

“The systematic training of the mind — the cultivation of happiness, the genuine inner transformation by deliberately selecting and focusing on positive mental states and challenging negative mental states — is possible because of the very structure and function of the brain...But the wiring in our brains is not static, not irrevocably fixed. Our brains are also adaptable” (His Holiness the Dalai Lama, *The Art of Happiness*, pp. 44-45).

Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR)

A mindfulness-based program designed initially to assist people with pain and a range of conditions and life issues that were difficult to treat in a hospital setting.

Developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center.

Uses a combination of mindfulness meditation, body awareness, and yoga to help people become more mindful.

In recent years, MBSR has been the subject of controlled clinical research. This suggests it may have beneficial effects, including stress reduction, relaxation, and improvements to quality of life.



Research: Basic Science

On a basic science level, we are:

- Working to elucidate neurobiological mechanisms of mindfulness through the study of brain activity and connectivity using fMRI
- Conducting neurophenomenological studies to link the subjective experience of mindfulness with specific brain activity using real-time fMRI and EEG neurofeedback.

Why does spirituality matter for neuroscience of consciousness?

1) spiritual practice is a disciplined **subjective** examination of human experience and its meanings.

Hypothesis 1: participants trained in the same contemplative tradition should be capable of generating original and reproducible first-person data correlating with similar third-person data.

2) spiritual practice is a **transformative process**

Hypothesis 2: spiritual practices can have a long-term impact of on brain function and structures; a process known as neuroplasticity

Catherine Kerr:

The neuroscience of somatic attention

“When you pay mindful attention to a sensory stimulus like the breath, you are *exercising* the lateral prefrontal attentional circuit in the brain.”

Anxious rumination

- Repetitive negative cognitions about the self, e.g. “I’m not good enough.” “I shouldn’t have done that.”
- Situated in the medial front cortex network.
- Known as the “default network” – it is where we go to when we are not doing anything else.

Focusing on present moment sensations

- Situated in the lateral pre-frontal cortex.

The 2 networks are anti-correlated

- When one goes up, the other goes down.
- *Medial* – self-related rumination about past and future
- *Lateral* – focus on sensations in the present moment
- Subtle awareness of body sensations takes you out of the “rumination” network

Meditators in MRI's

- The Dalai Lama has helped recruit Tibetan Buddhist monks for research on the brain and meditation in the Waisman Laboratory for Brain Imaging and Behaviour at the University of Wisconsin- Madison.
- The findings from these studies, as well as related research efforts, suggest that over the course of meditating for tens of thousands of hours, the long-term practitioners had actually altered the structure and function of their brains.

[in the **SPOTLIGHT**]

Richard J. Davidson
and Antoine Lutz

Buddha's Brain: Neuroplasticity and Meditation

Neuroplasticity

- The term neuroplasticity is used to describe the brain changes that occur in response to experience. There are many different mechanisms of neuroplasticity, ranging from the growth of new connections to the creation of new neurons.
- When the framework of neuroplasticity is applied to meditation, studies suggest that the mental training of meditation is fundamentally no different than other forms of skill acquisition that can induce plastic changes in the brain.

Findings of brain changes in meditation

Changes include alterations in patterns of brain function assessed with functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), changes in the cortical evoked response to visual stimuli that reflect the impact of meditation on attention, and alterations in amplitude and synchrony of high frequency oscillations that probably play an important role in connectivity among widespread circuitry in the brain.

These findings support the view that attention is a trainable skill that can be enhanced through the mental practice of focused attention meditation.

The First Noble Truth

- The first Noble Truth is suffering (dukkha).
- The root meaning of the Chinese character for suffering is bitter. Happiness is sweet; suffering is bitter.
- We all suffer to some extent – when the Buddha looked around him he saw poverty, disease, old age and death.
- “If we can be truly aware of the suffering and call it by its true name it can be very helpful.”

All is not suffering

- A common misconception is that Buddhism believes that the world consists only of suffering.
- “If we say that life is only suffering, it’s not correct. But if we say that life is only suffering, it’s also not correct. There are both, and they each play their role.....We can’t wait to be happy until we remove 100% of suffering. That moment will never exist.”



No mud, no lotus

“Imagine there was no suffering. This is like trying to imagine a lotus growing without the mud that nurtures it. You can’t plant lotus on marble. If there’s no mud there’s no lotus.....Lotus flowers are made of non-lotus elements, including mud. Happiness is made of non-happiness elements, including suffering.”

Suffering is not just outside us

“We need to abolish poverty and social injustice, and to deal with the problems of global warming and economic recession. But we need to begin with the painful feelings we carry inside us. We have to deal with these things first. If they’re not dealt with, we may inadvertently cause more suffering when we are trying to relieve it. “

Learning from suffering

“Many of us are afraid of ill-being, and our natural tendency is to run away from it. This has become a collective habit. There is an epidemic of medicating ourselves with alcohol, drugs, sedatives, and tranquilizers to escape our suffering. But the First Noble Truth suggests that we should stay and acknowledge our suffering. If we don't understand suffering, we can't understand happiness.”

The Second Noble Truth

The Second Noble Truth is the origin, roots, nature, creation, or arising of suffering.

“Once we have called our suffering by its true name, we need to look deeply to see where this suffering comes from.....

Why are we in the midst of economic crisis? Why is there so much pollution, terrorism, and climate change? When we ask these questions, we need to take the time and space to really look deeply to try to find the answer.”

The Third Noble Truth

The Third Noble Truth is the cessation of creating suffering by refraining from doing the things that make us suffer.

“When the roots of suffering are absent, we can be free and happy, and we can act ethically, motivated by our understanding and compassion.”

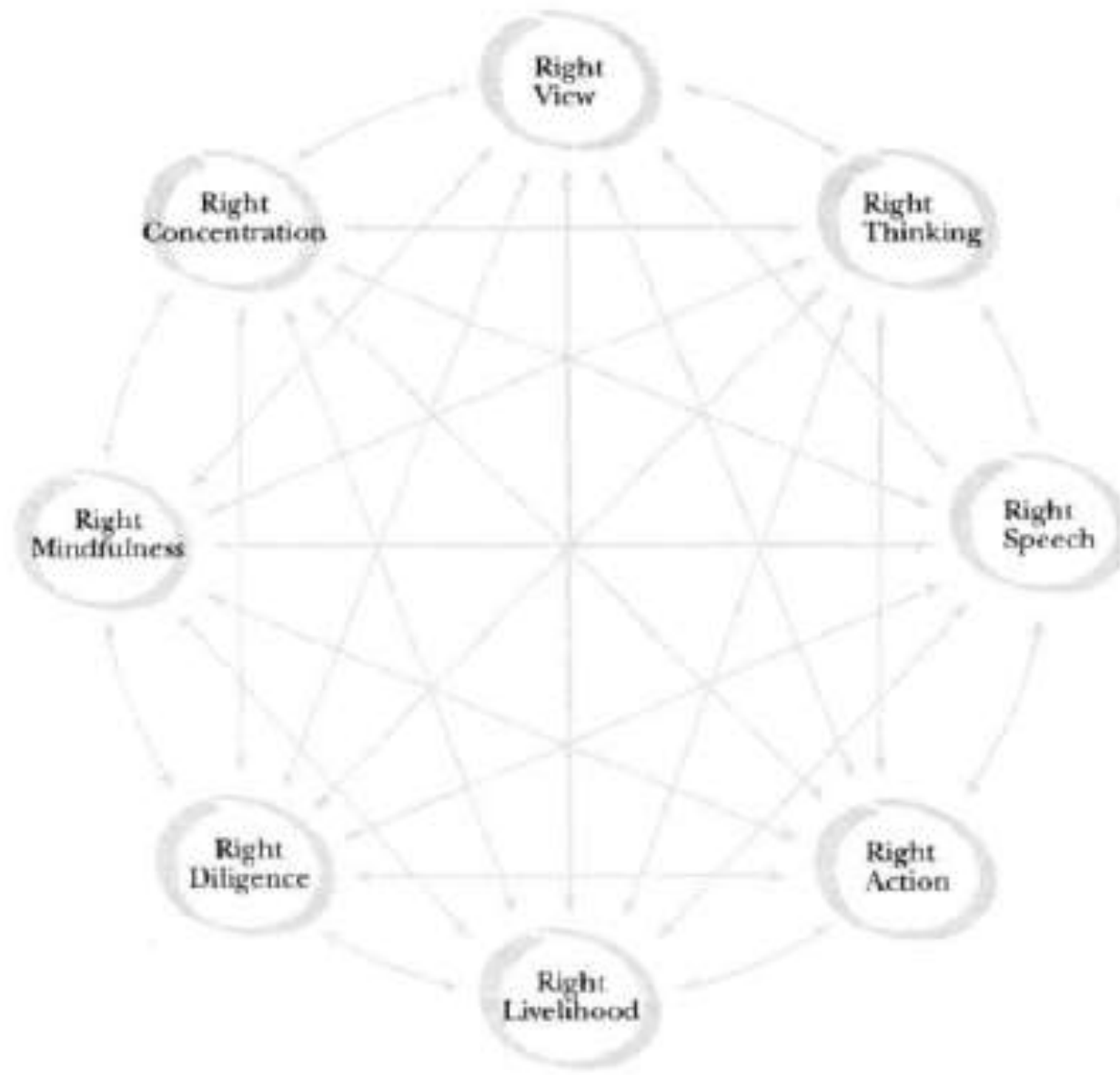
The Fourth Noble Truth

The Fourth Noble Truth is the path that leads to refraining from doing the things that cause us to suffer.

This path is called the Noble Eightfold Path:

- Right View; Right Thinking; Right Speech; Right Action; Right Livelihood; Right Diligence; Right Mindfulness; Right Concentration.

The Eightfold Noble Path

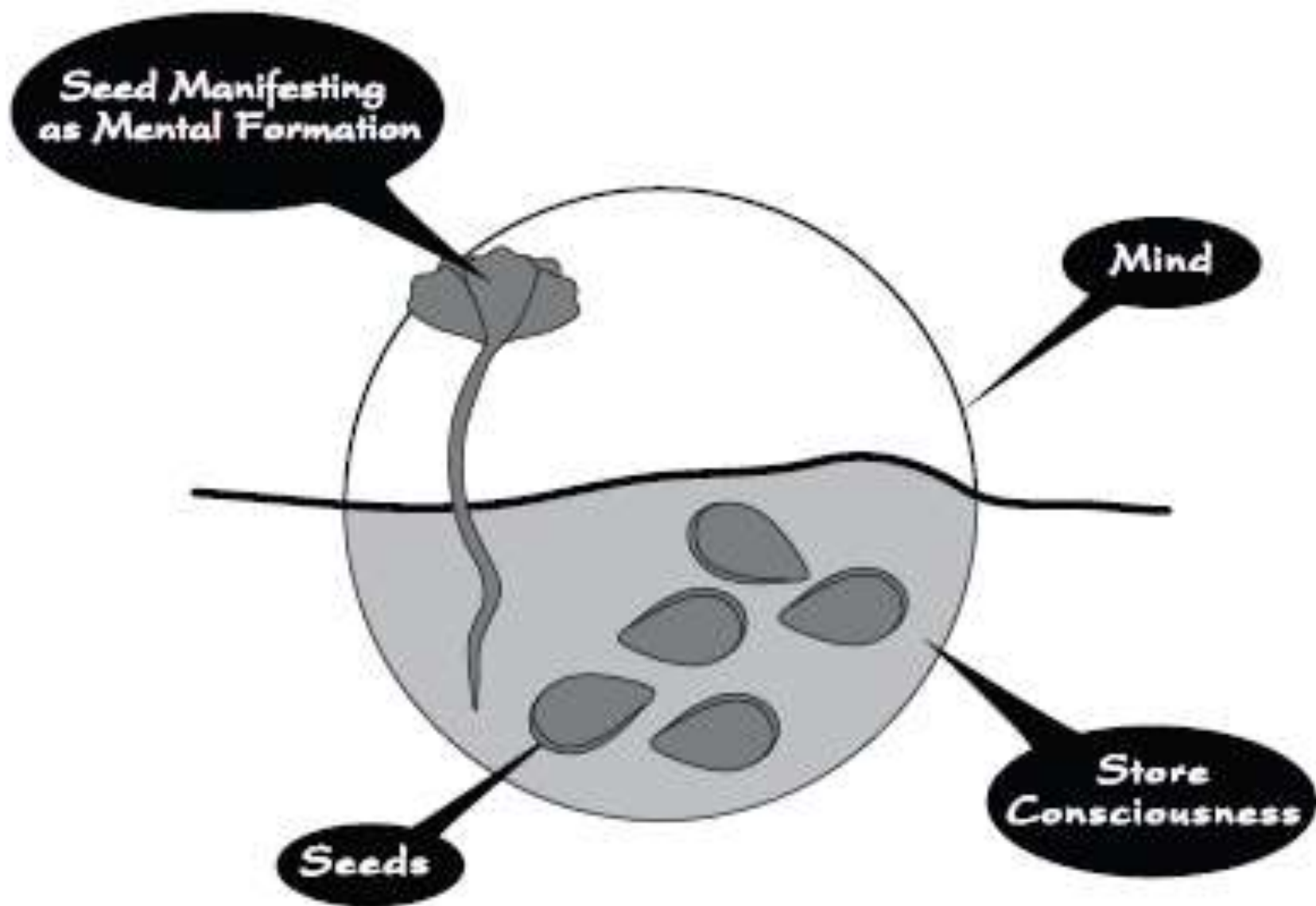


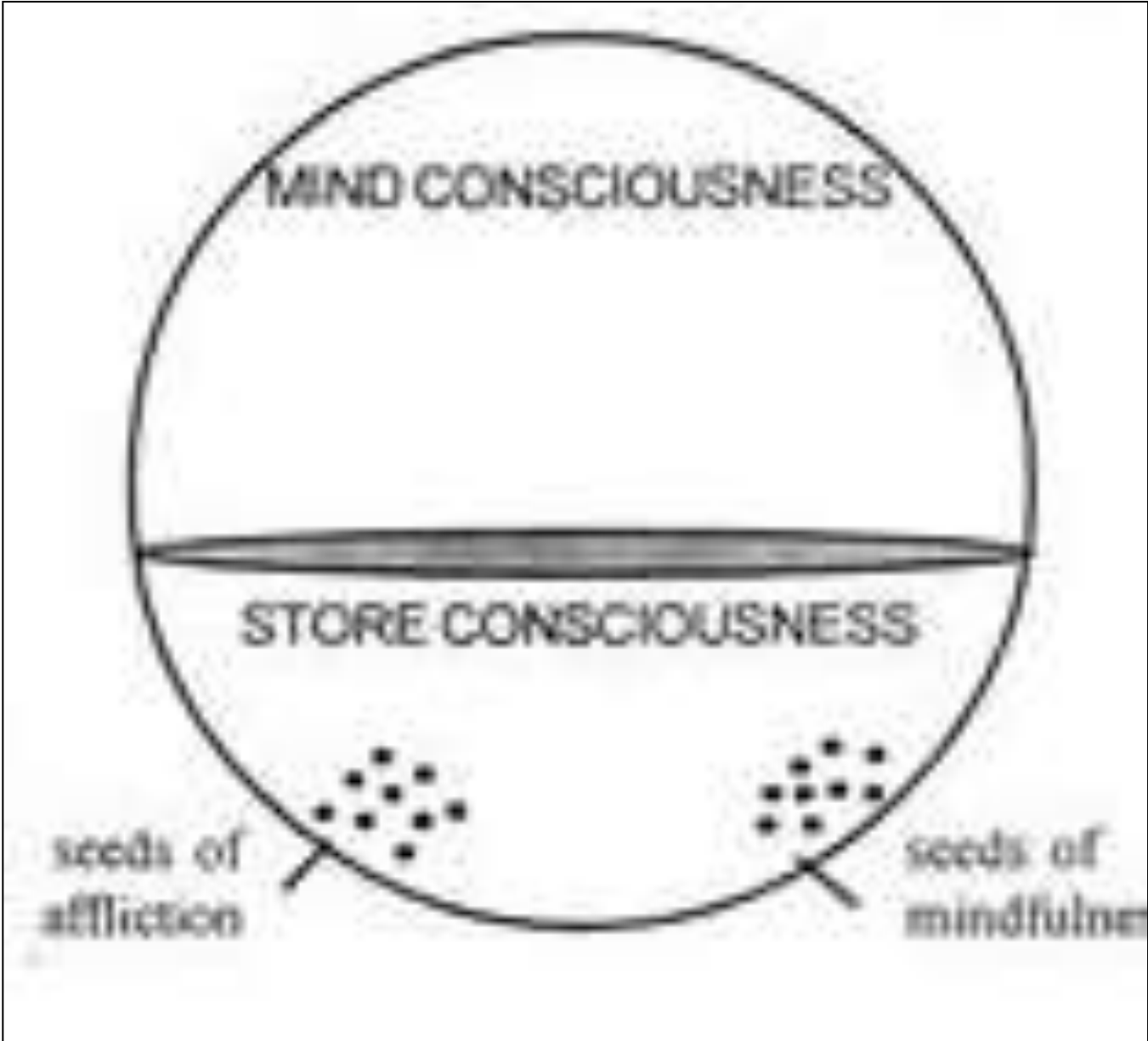
Right Diligence

- Water positive seeds

E.g.

- Feelings of well-being
- Kindness
- Compassion
- Generosity
- Altruism
- Co-operation





Right Diligence

- Water positive seeds
- E.g.
 - Cultivate attention
 - Exercise
 - 3 gratitudes
 - Generosity and random kindness
 - Journal happiness

Right Diligence

- Water positive seeds
- Keep positive seeds manifesting

Right Diligence

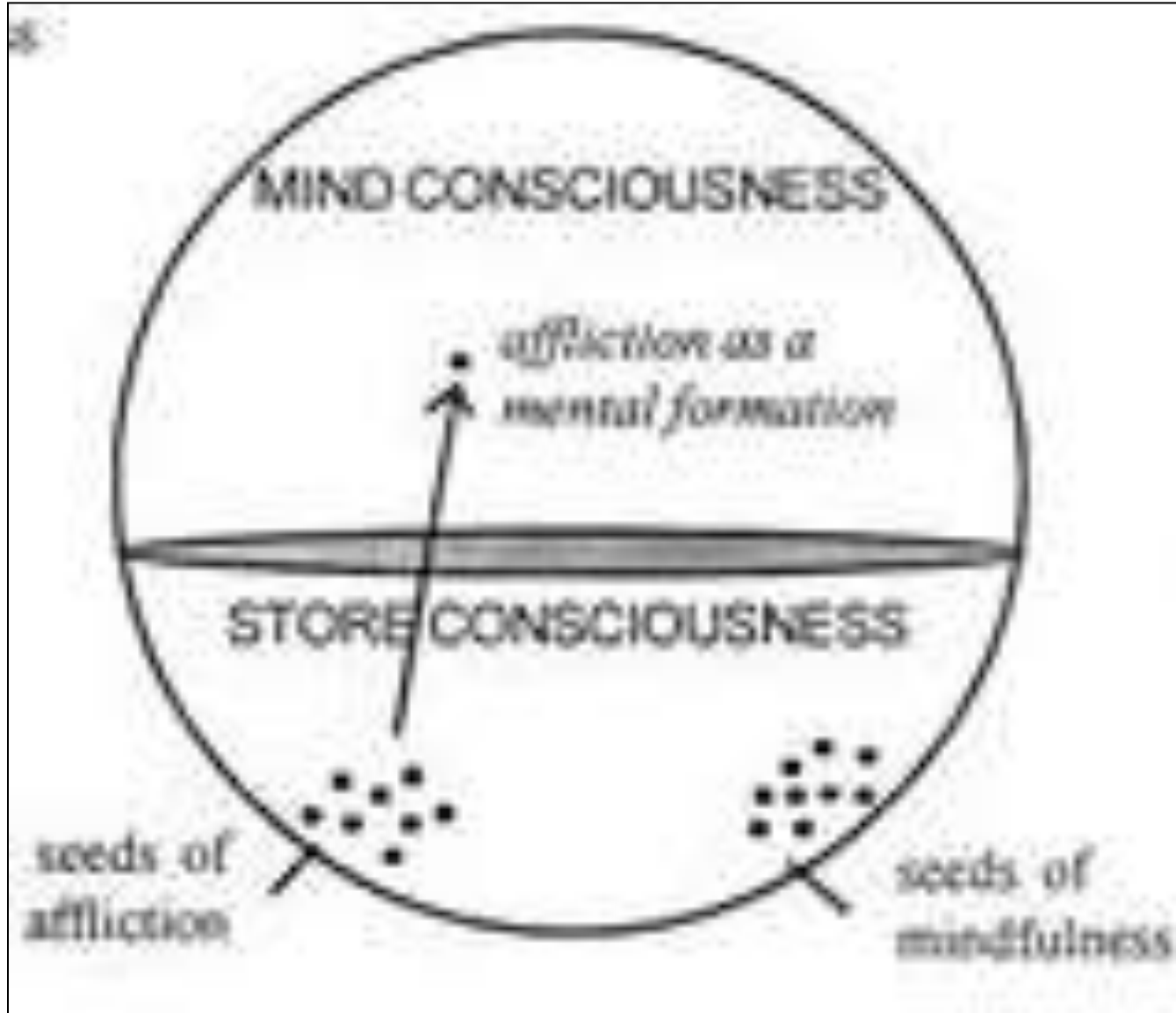
- Water positive seeds
- Keep positive seeds manifesting
- Try not to allow seeds of suffering to arise

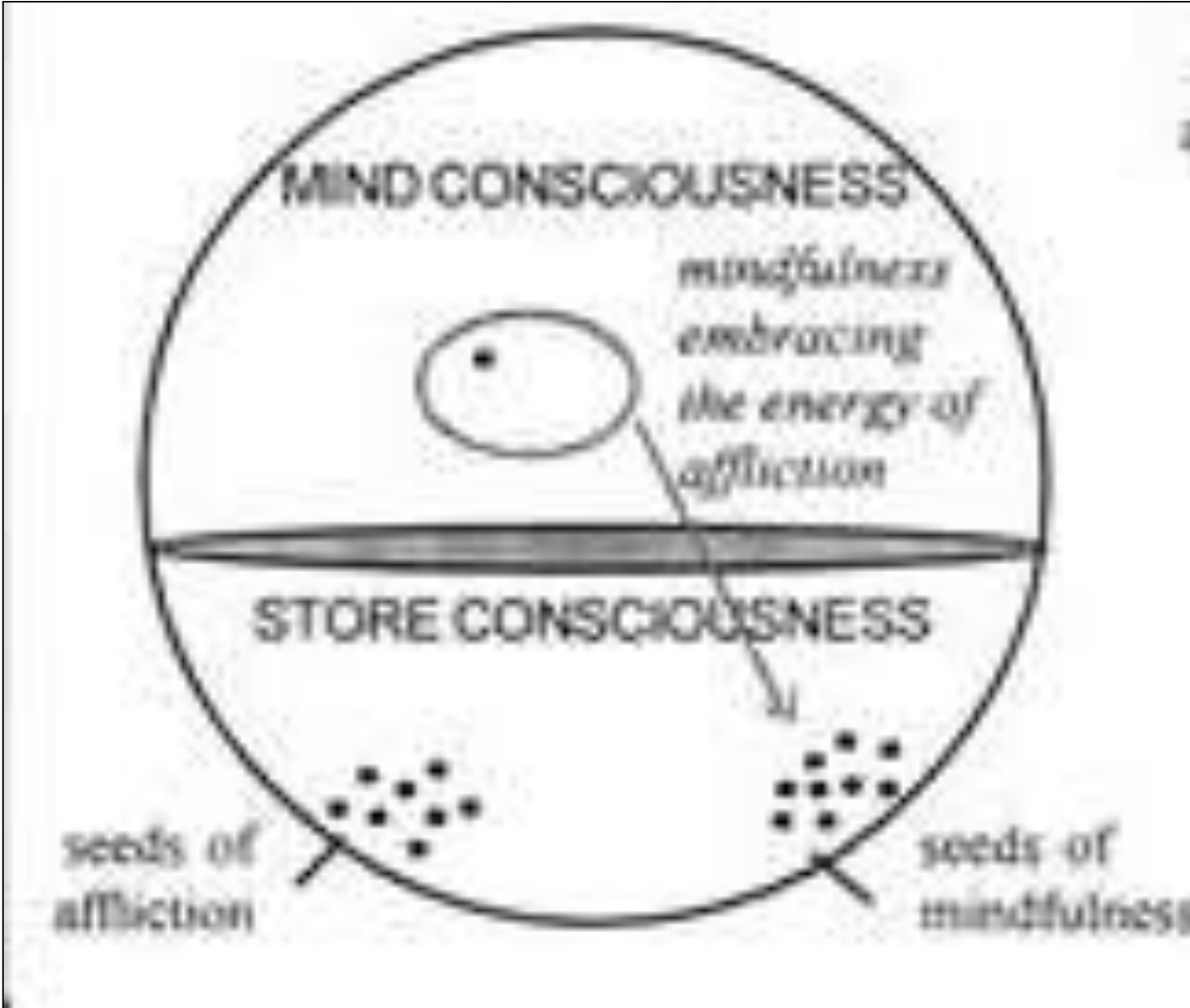
Right Diligence

- Water positive seeds
- Keep positive seeds manifesting
- Try not to allow seeds of suffering to arise
- Take care of seeds of suffering as soon as they arise

Right Diligence

- Take care of seeds of suffering as soon as they arise
 - Recognise / name
 - Accept
 - Embrace with mindfulness
 - Look deeply / insight
 - Transform





Right View

Right View – Understanding Interbeing

If we look deeply into the nature of our universe we can see all things as profoundly interdependent. In traditional Buddhism this was originally called *dependent co-arising*.

At the heart of this understanding is the realisation that we have no separate self, that everything is empty of a separate self in a universe which is in a constant state of flux and change. The interdependent nature of all phenomena is central to Buddhist teachings.

Emptiness is always emptiness of something, it is *empty of a separate self* – i.e. *interbeing*, meaning connected to everything.

Thich Nhat Hanh