

Five Obstacles and Their Antidotes to Achieving Sthiti or Mental Abiding

	Five Obstacles or Faults ⁱ	Eight Antidotes or Opponents to Obstacles--Remedies
LEVEL 1	<p>1-Laziness (<i>kausīdya</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -of virtuous activities like doing Buddha work, helping others. -of neutral activities like sleep, procrastination, talking, sewing, etc. -of not wanting to do anything. -of inadequacy (discouragement, feeling unworthy, fear of failure). - of attachment to negative activities, such as being busy with worldly things. 	<p>1-Belief (<i>śraddhā</i>), confidence, or faith of conviction in meditation by contemplating its benefits, it is valuable. You should contemplate the merit in attaining an enlightened mind and freedom from the sufferings of samsara. You can also consider that through meditation it is possible to achieve heightened states of consciousness or supernormal powers or supersensible cognition that can enable you to truly help others. Telepathy is needed, for example, to gain a clear perception of the total situation so that you can offer appropriate assistance. Having a pure motivation is not enough. The most well-meaning of intentions may inadvertently bring harm to others. You can also contemplate the harm that conflicting emotions cause in a distracted or confused mind.</p> <p>2-Aspiration (<i>chanda</i>) in seeking or achieving those benefits when you have something to aspire to. Also translated as inclination, intention, or interest.</p> <p>3-Joyous effort (<i>vyayama</i>) or conscious exertion in trying to achieve those benefits, perseverance, zeal, or vigor. This results from right aspiration.</p> <p>4-Suppleness or serenity (<i>praśrabdhi</i>) or pliancy of body and mind, which is the fruit or result of this effort and is an antidote at all levels. Flexible or sense of fitness, well trained.</p>
	<p>2-Forgetfulness (<i>avavādasamma</i>) where you lose the object of meditation and are unable to remember the instructions on how to meditate. You have a lack of mindfulness on how to do meditation properly or even the reasons you are meditating. You hold your mind in discursiveness, rambling.</p>	<p>5-Mindfulness or remembrance (<i>smṛti</i>) where you make a determination to maintain unbroken concentration throughout the session. Remember your posture and other instructions. Start over if you forget.</p> <p>WARNING: don't continue session if you are falling asleep. Stop, rest and start over. You do not want to create a habit of sleeping on your cushion. See <i>Great Dharma of Zen Practice</i> for other remedies.</p>
LEVEL 2	Same as Level 1 only less so.	Same as Level 1.

<p>LEVEL 3</p>	<p>Same as Level 1 only even less so.</p>	<p>Same as Level 1, using strong mindfulness. If you are not able to proceed beyond this point you may need to reflect on your situation and/or seek help from your Master. You may have to work on other aspects of cultivation before proceeding with concentration. Are the eight winds (gain, loss, honor, disgrace, praise, ridicule, pleasure or suffering)? Are there problems stemming from any of the delusions like anger, hate, lust, greed, pride, jealousy, ignorance, etc.? See antidotes for each delusion. Are there physical illnesses that interfere with your concentration? You will need to heal the emotional or physical distress before proceeding. You must realize that the screen of karma is too thick and heavy for you. Apply introspection to understand the situation and once the affliction is reduced, it is best to wait and rest for a while before continuing to cultivate concentration.</p>
<p>LEVEL 4</p>	<p>3A-Agitation or gross mental excitement (<i>auddhatya</i>). Mind moves to an object of attachment and cannot remain focused. Also translated as elation, ebullience, excitation, excitement, flightiness of mind, or “too tight.” There is an obvious kind of agitation in which one keeps thinking about what one has done or what fun one has had, so one is unable to rest the mind upon anything, in its subtle form one has apparent stability of mind, but there are still subtle thoughts that keep coming up.</p>	<p>4-Suptleness or Pliancy as noted in Level 1. 5-Mindfulness as noted in Level 1.</p>
<p>3B-Dullness or gross mental sinking (<i>laya</i>) or inattentiveness can happen a) through sleepiness or lethargy or b) when mind is excessively drawn within. Other translations include drowsiness, passivity, laxity, stupor, “too loose.” Gross form occurs when single-pointed concentration is strong, but its clarity and intensity diminish greatly. Inattentiveness or mental sinking (sometimes referred to as fading, numbness, listlessness or laxity) is not the same thing as foggy-mindedness or drowsiness. The latter is the cause of the former and is manifested in heaviness of body and mind leading to sleep and is a facet of delusion or ignorance.</p>	<p>6-Awareness or introspection (<i>samprajaña</i>) or discriminating alertness. Try to refresh or uplift the mind by either focusing on the details of the object or image on concentration or visualizing a bright or shiny object. You should reflect on the benefits of meditation even, if necessary, abandoning the object of meditation temporarily. A forceful and very effective technique for energizing the mind and overcoming gross mental sinking involves visualizing the mind situated at the heart in the form of intense white light. Then forcefully recite the syllable “PEI” while seeing this light rise quickly up through the body and out the crown of the head. The mind, in the form of this light, flies high up into space and becomes inseparable from it. Another technique is to visualize a thousand suns or look at an actual sunny location. If the obstacle is agitation or elation, we might try relaxing the technique, giving it a bit more room. We could give our outbreath more focus than our inbreath so that the mind has more freedom. If the obstacle is dullness or laxity, we need to tighten up our practice. We can bring more of our mind to the breathing overall. We could focus on the</p>	

		inbreath. We can stabilize our posture. We might try to perk up by removing a layer of clothing, opening a window, or raising our gaze.
	4-Non-application (<i>anabhoga</i> or <i>anabhisamskāra</i>).of the antidotes. Occurs when dullness or agitation appear in one's meditation and one recognize these thoughts, but doesn't apply a remedy. If one does not apply the remedy, meditation will not develop.	7-Application (<i>bhogata</i> or <i>abhisamskāra</i>): When you recognize that there is dullness or agitation during meditation, you should remember and apply the remedies with diligence. Performing the proper remedy will eliminate the defect of inactivity.
LEVEL 5	3B-Subtle Dullness or mental sinking or inattentiveness (dizziness) may result from excessive mindfulness. This occurs when concentration and clarity are both strong, but intensity has relaxed slightly because of withdrawal. This can be very difficult to detect and can be mistaken for a deep state of concentration.	4-Suptleness or Pliancy as noted in Level 1. 6-Awareness or discriminating alertness as noted in Level 4.
	4-Non-application of the antidotes.	7-Application: You must tighten the intensity of your concentration being careful not to cause subtle forms of excitement by increasing the intensity too much.
LEVEL 6	3A-Subtle Agitation or excitement (chaotic minds or ambition) from overly heightening of the mind to offset subtle sinking or inattentiveness. Subtle form occurs when only part of the mind is distracted, and the object of meditation is not completely lost.	4-Suptleness or Pliancy as noted in Level 1. 6-Awareness or discriminating alertness as noted in Level 4.
	4-Non-application of the antidotes.	7-Application: Since you are holding onto the object of meditation too tightly, you must relax the grip of the mind slightly and then continue to meditate.
LEVEL 7	3A-Very slight subtle agitation/excitement 3B-Very slight subtle dullness/mental sinking or inattentiveness	4-Suptleness or Pliancy as noted in Level 1.
	4-Non-application of the antidotes.	7- Very gentle Application as noted in Levels 5 and 6 above, keeping a careful balance.
LEVEL 8	5-Over-application or unnecessary application (<i>bhogata</i> or <i>abhisamskāra</i>) or continuing to apply antidotes after you are free from sinking or inattentiveness and excitement. Remedies should only be used when agitation and dullness appear; when they are eliminated, one should just rest in equanimity.	4-Suptleness or Pliancy as noted in Level 1. 8-Non-application (<i>anabhisamskāra</i>) or Impartiality (<i>upeksa</i>): desisting from application or equanimity.
LEVEL 9	5-Over-application or unnecessary application of the antidotes or the harm of excessiveness.	4-Suptleness or Pliancy as noted in Level 1. 8-Non-application or desisting from application or balanced equanimity.

ⁱ The five faults and eight antidotes are factors of Tibetan samatha meditation originating with the Yogachara tradition and Maitreya's *Separation of the Middle from the Extremes (Madhyānta-vibhāga)* and elaborated upon in further texts, such as Kamalaśīla's *Stages of Meditation (Bhāvanākrama)*. For more read Je Tsongkhapa's *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment (Lam Rim Chen Mo)*, Volume 3, "Meditative Serenity and Insight." The terms and categories of this table that go back to the 4th century CE are common to both the Theravada and Mahayana traditions, but they are used in different ways. See also Dorje Pamu's *Concentration, Contemplation, and Visualization Essential for Enlightenment*.