

Nine Stages of Sthiti or Mental Abiding ⁱ

Stages	Description of Level (Four Efforts & Their Six Supporting Forces or Powers)
LEVEL 1: Placing or Setting the Mind—The Memory Abode (<i>Cittasthapana</i>)	FORCIBLE ENGAGEMENT: You are barely able to hold onto the meditation object or image before losing it. You can begin to set the mind on the object or image of meditation but cannot hold it there. You will have to seek and find the object again and again and take hold of it. Conceptuality or discursiveness is being identified so that it may appear that there is more conceptuality than usual. Other types of conceptualizations appear more frequently than the object or image of meditation. At this stage you recognize and experience the many disturbing thoughts as they arise. Attained by force or power of HEARING instructions.
LEVEL 2: Continuous Placement or Setting the Mind—The Waiting Abode (<i>Samsthapana</i>)	FORCIBLE ENGAGEMENT: You are able to remain focused on an object or image for at least five minutes. Conceptuality is beginning to lessen and some of the mental disturbances are pacified, and others appear to slow down a little and become exhausted. Attained by force or power of THINKING or reflection on instructions.
LEVEL 3: Replacement or Resetting the Mind—The Secure Abode (<i>Avasthapana</i>)	MOIST or INTERRUPTED ENGAGEMENT: You are familiar with the object of concentration to the point where you can re-establish your hold on the object immediately after losing it and you no longer need to seek it. You are still bothered by distractions, only you can quickly return to the meditation object. Attained by the force or power of MINDFULNESS or the force of right knowledge and right view.
LEVEL 4: Close Placement or Setting the Mind—The Near Abode (<i>Upasthapana</i>)	MOIST or INTERRUPTED ENGAGEMENT: The point is reached through the force of intense mindfulness where you can hold onto the meditation object or image to the end of the session without ever breaking the continuity of your concentration. The object of observation or image will not be lost at this level. At this state the mind may begin to be withdrawn through the power of mindfulness. The power of mindfulness is now complete. You can begin to apply the power of discriminating alertness. During both levels 3 and 4 you are easily moved by states of attachment and have difficulty remaining focused. You will not have very long meditation sessions at this level because gross sinking or inattentiveness and excitement will still occur. Excitement and mental sinking or inattentiveness are also prevalent at earlier levels; only laziness and forgetfulness are the more pervasive problems and must be dealt with first. When laziness and forgetfulness are no longer problems, you are at Level 4. Attained by the force or power of MINDFULNESS or the force of right knowledge and right view.
LEVEL 5: Controlled or Disciplined Mind—The Regulating Abode (<i>Damana</i>)	MOIST or INTERRUPTED ENGAGEMENT: At this level, it is necessary to revivify or heighten the mind to overcome subtle sinking or inattentiveness. You generate the power of introspection and through your own power know the good qualities of meditation. Attained through the force or power of INTROSPECTION, being more conscious of the right views.

<p>LEVEL 6: Pacified Mind—The Tranquil Abode (<i>Samana</i>)</p>	<p>MOIST or INTERRUPTED ENGAGEMENT: Meditation is improved through knowledge of the faults of various obstacles. Due to the heightened awareness, there is danger of subtle excitement. Power of discriminating alertness complete. Attained through the force or power of INTROSPECTION, being more conscious of the right views.</p>
<p>LEVEL 7: Complete Pacification—The Most Tranquil Abode (<i>Vyupasamana</i>)</p>	<p>MOIST or INTERRUPTED ENGAGEMENT: Powers of mindfulness and discriminating alertness are now complete and your balance cannot be upset by subtle sinking or inattentiveness or by subtle excitement. Attained by the force or power of EFFORT.</p>
<p>LEVEL 8: Single Pointedness—The Concentration on One Destination (<i>Ekotikarana</i>)</p>	<p>ENGAGEMENT AT EASE or UNINTERRUPTED ENGAGEMENT: Engagement at Ease: Very little effort is required to remain focused upon the meditation object for the entire session without experiencing even the slightest interruption to concentration. Attained by the force or power of EFFORT.</p>
<p>LEVEL 9: Balanced Placement or Setting in Equipose—The State of Equal Holding (<i>Samadhana</i>)</p>	<p>ENGAGEMENT OF PURE WISDOM or SPONTANEOUS or ONE-POINTED ENGAGEMENT: The Engagement of Pure Wisdom: Ability to place the mind on the object of concentration with equanimity. Without effort you are able to maintain faultless concentration. Dorje Pamu talks about the force of FAMILIARITY or the force of right knowledge and remembrance at this point. At this level you should be natural and calm and attain the strength of right concentration to maintain the state of true samadhi.</p>

ⁱ This chart primarily summarizes a discourse given by Dorje PaMu that was printed in Chinese in *The Dharma of Concentration, Contemplation, and Visualization Essential for Enlightenment*. She refers to these principles as the step-by-step approach to acquire the essence of concentration and contemplation, i.e., the method of achieving concentration and contemplation. She says, “Concentration means imperturbability or that which cannot be disturbed; contemplation means to cultivate correct knowledge and correct mind; essence is the indispensable part, the essence of the essential. . . All who have successfully attained enlightenment or have become Buddhas and Bodhisattvas have practiced concentration and contemplation in order to realize truth and achieve Buddhahood. . . Therefore, concentration is the basis for realization and contemplation is the foundation for acquiring the correct knowledge and mind necessary for enlightenment.” Her work uses Je Tsongkapa’s *A Brief Treatise on The Stages of Enlightenment* and other sources. PaMu’s book has not been released in English.