

Seven Factors of Awakening

Qualities of mind or heart that lead to Awakening

Shortly before the Buddha died, he gave a short talk about what he had discovered in his own path and practice. Rather than talking about beliefs, he talked about particular qualities of mind and practices. The list of the seven factors of awakening was included in this short talk.

These factors create the conditions in the mind so the mind can do the kind of letting go that leads to Liberation. Prior to Liberation, the seven factors can be developed to the point of becoming inner strengths that facilitate the process of gradually releasing clinging. Experiences of non-clinging help us make different choices about how we live our lives. This, in turn, can support the process of developing the seven factors and further reducing clinging.

Recognizing the factors when they are present in us helps to develop them. It also gives us the opportunity to cultivate them further. Since the factors are sources of inner well-being, they reinforce the momentum to maturing one's practice.

1. **Mindfulness** (*sati*)
 - Being aware of what is happening in the present moment
 - The last six qualities arise from doing mindfulness practice
2. **Investigation** (*dhamma-vicaya*)
 - Investigation supported by wisdom.
 - Understands what are skillful/healthy states of mind and what are not.
3. **Energy** (*viriya*)
 - Increased engagement with practice, especially freeing oneself from unskillful states.
4. **Joy** (*piti*)
 - Feeling of delight
 - Arises when attention is absorbed
5. **Tranquility** (*passaddhi*)
 - Calming and stilling of body and mind
6. **Concentration** (*samadhi*)
 - The mind is focused, settled, and composed
 - The mind becomes unified around what we're concentrating on
7. **Equanimity** (*upekkha*)
 - Balance and non-reactivity of mind
 - Sublime and extremely satisfying "emotional" state

Suggested sutta reading: Chapter 46 "Connected Discourses on the Factors of Enlightenment" in *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha* (pp1567ff in Bhikkhu Bodhi's translation; Thanissaro Bhikkhu's translation can be found at <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/index.html#maha>)

"Just as the dawn is the precursor to the arising of the sun, so good (spiritual) friendship is the precursor to the arising of the seven factors of awakening." SN 46.12