

The following vignettes are for a research questionnaire. Their numbers refer to this accompanying structured document, outlining a hierarchy of Buddhist doctrinal concepts :

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1q5JEHX5F9\\_HcO-E4L-av2aBcuKAkppgBQ21unaZWqrl/edit?usp=drivesdk](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1q5JEHX5F9_HcO-E4L-av2aBcuKAkppgBQ21unaZWqrl/edit?usp=drivesdk)

The titles and numbers below are thus given just for reference only—if you were to need them. Please try to ignore them and project yourself in a questionnaire with a randomized order of standalone vignettes.

NOTE: My main constraint is to make the vignettes distinct from one another, which means I have to pick arbitrary facets of certain teachings so that they are not redundant throughout the questionnaire. This can create the impression that certain teachings are not fully developed within one vignette.

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Each vignette will be paired with these three Likert scales:

1. Familiarity: "How familiar are you with this concept?" (1=Not at all familiar, 7=Very familiar)
  2. Experience: "To what extent have you directly experienced this in your life?" (1=Never, 7=Very frequently OR intensely)
  3. Integration: "How central is this principle to how you live your life?" (1=Not at all central, 7=Very central)
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## VIGNETTES

*(Each starts with ">")*

## 1. THE CORE TEACHING: THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS (Ariya-sacca) [SN 56.11]

### 1.A. First Noble Truth: Suffering (Dukkha)

> Suffering is the common denominator to all. Every aspect of our temporary experiences are fundamentally unsatisfactory. It's not just the pains and sorrows of life, but the apparent gratifications too. We are subject to a constant flow of change, none of which can provide lasting happiness.

#### (SHORTEN PROPOSAL)

> All experiences, whether painful or pleasurable, are fundamentally unsatisfactory because everything is constantly changing and nothing can provide lasting happiness.

### 1.B. Second Noble Truth: Origin of Suffering (Samudaya)

> Our unhappiness originates from a fundamental misunderstanding of life's nature, generating intense desires and repulsions for transient phenomena. This lack of wisdom fuels a continuous cycle of challenging experiences.

#### (SHORTEN PROPOSAL)

> Our unhappiness stems from not understanding reality's true nature, which leads us to crave and resist temporary things in an endless cycle of dissatisfaction.

### 1.C. Third Noble Truth: Cessation of Suffering (Nirodha)

#### 1.C.3. Nibbāna as the unconditioned element [Ud 8.3]

> There is an eternal freedom beyond all becoming, a dimension that was never created, never changes, and stands outside of the space-time continuum. Without this unchanging reality, there would be no way out from the world of constant transformation. This element makes liberation from suffering possible.

#### (SHORTEN PROPOSAL)

> There exists an unchanging reality beyond the world of constant change that makes complete liberation from suffering possible.

#### 1.D. Fourth Noble Truth: The Path (Magga)

> It is possible to take practical steps for transcending life's struggles and finding lasting happiness. It requires an integrated approach, cultivating an experiential understanding of life's fabric, developing mental command and living with honest ethical values.

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> Lasting happiness can be achieved through practical steps that combine developing wisdom, training the mind, and living ethically.

### 2. THE PATH TO LIBERATION: THE NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH (Magga) [SN 45.8]

#### 2.A. Overview of the Path

##### 2.A.2. Ehipassiko

> True spiritual insights emerge from direct personal investigation rather than dogmatic acceptance. By testing principles through firsthand experience, we move beyond both excessive skeptical doubts and blind faith, toward authentic understanding and realization.

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> Genuine spiritual understanding comes from personally testing and experiencing encountered teachings rather than accepting them on blind faith or rejecting them with excessive doubt.

### 3. ETHICAL CONDUCT (Sīla) [AN 5.179] + 5.2. Right Intention [SN 45.8]

> Ethical development requires training the mind's underlying motivations by learning to let go of compulsive desires, actively developing benevolent intentions toward all beings, and committing to causing no harm through thought, word, or act. As guardrails, it's best to compassionately restrain oneself from any form of violence, theft, sexual misconduct, intoxicants, idle chatter, defamation, and harmful businesses.

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> Ethical development involves training the mind to let go of compulsive desires, cultivating kindness toward all beings, and restraining from actions, words and thoughts that cause harm.

#### 4. CONCENTRATION PRACTICES (Samādhi) [MN 44]

##### 4.1. Right Effort [SN 45.8]

> Transformative results stem from efforts aimed in the right direction, such as preventive action against negative tendencies, skillful abandonment of existing negative patterns, deliberate cultivation of positive qualities, and dedicated maintenance of actual positive qualities.

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> Inner transformation is possible with a balanced effort in both preventing and eliminating negative tendencies while cultivating and maintaining positive qualities.

##### 4.2. Right Mindfulness (Four Foundations of Mindfulness) [MN 10, DN 22]

> Mindfulness aims at uncovering the true nature of existence by systematically observing the full spectrum of our own experiences, with sustained, direct, non-judgmental attention. We strive to notice how it all unfolds and dissolves, while being careful not to be carried away by ingrained reactivity.

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> Mindfulness involves observing all experiences with sustained, non-judgmental attention to see how they arise and pass away without getting caught up in automatic reactions.

##### 4.3. Right Concentration (jhānas, formless attainments) [SN 45.8]

> Well calibrated concentration leads to deep tranquility through progressive stages of refinement, from very coarse experiences through the senses that become increasingly subtle, to deep internal absorptions that gradually stabilize in serene contentment, to expanded states of consciousness that break through spacious dimensions, culminating in the dissolution of all perception and sensation, transcending subject-object awareness entirely.

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> When steadily refined, concentration progresses from calming the senses into deep absorptions, moving through ever subtler states until perception and feeling fall away in complete stillness beyond duality.

## 5. WISDOM PRACTICES (Paññā) [MN 141]

5.1. Right View (Four Noble Truths, Three Characteristics) [SN 45.8] + 7.A. Five Aggregates (Khandha) [SN 22.59]

> All experiences are transitory, ultimately unfulfilling despite temporary pleasures, and lack any permanent controlling center. Neither external phenomena nor our sense of self possess fixed, inherent nature. What we call personal identity emerges from the dynamic interplay of physical embodiment, affective responses, perceptual categorization, intentional actions, and conscious awareness. These streams of experience arise in dependence upon certain conditions and dissolve with the fading of those conditions ; none provides a stable ground for identity. This groundlessness illuminates how our attachments and identifications fuel repetitive patterns, when the interdependent unfolding of cause and effect we are part of is really what governs experience at multiple levels.

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> What we call "self" has no permanent core, it is just transforming physical, mental and preceptive processes in a web of interdependent phenomena.

## 12.C.4. Paññā (Wisdom) [SN 45.1]

> A path of wisdom is the gradual unveiling of reality's true nature, not a restless search for certainty. It cuts through appearances, questions the familiar, and uncovers the subtle forces that govern life; seeing through the illusion of control of what is beyond mastery. This freedom-giving clarity does not cling to views and beliefs, but steadily erodes the roots of delusion, allowing a life shaped by truth rather than deception and blind conditioning.

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> Wisdom is a gradual process of experiencing the world as it truly is, rather than how we imagine it to be, progressively letting go of our need for certainty, control, and fixed beliefs.

## 6. SUPPORTING CONCEPTS FOR THE THREE TRAININGS [DN 2]

### A. Sīla: Ethical Foundations [AN 5.179]

#### 6.A.2. Moral sensitivity [AN 7.63] + 6.A.4. Benefits of ethical conduct [DN 2]

> Living ethically offers great benefits, as it nurtures harmonious relationships, it shields consciousness from remorse and distress, it steadies a scattered mind into clarity and tranquility, and thus it fosters the stable ground for personal transformation through deeper concentration. This inner depth then radiates a quiet beneficent influence to others.

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#### 6.C.4. The Buddha's pre-enlightenment experiences [MN 26]

> Wisdom involves accepting life's inherent limitations not through passive resignation, but by working skillfully within natural constraints. This means cultivating humility about our conditioned existence while finding a balanced approach between forceful striving and giving up entirely. True transformation emerges when we align our efforts with reality's boundaries rather than fighting against them, walking a balanced path, converting acceptance into genuine freedom.

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## 7. DOCTRINAL INSIGHTS [SN 22.59, SN 12.2]

### 7.B. Dependent Origination (Paṭicca-samuppāda) [SN 12.2]

> Certain conditions give rise to further conditions. This shapes awareness, embodiment, and interaction with the world. From perceptions arises feeling, from feeling craving, and from craving attachment and becoming further conditioned. This cycle explains both the surfacing of struggle and its ending, because the chain can be cut when seen clearly—at the link where raw sensation transforms into craving for example. Such conditionality discredits beliefs in both eternal determinism and complete meaninglessness.

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## 9. KAMMA, DEATH, AND REBIRTH [AN 6.63, MN 135]

### 9.B. Death and Rebirth Process

> Through the refinement of awareness, one may gain clear recollection of past existences, perceiving the continuity of life across innumerable forms and circumstances. This vision can extend outward, revealing how other beings universally pass from one condition to another in accordance with the ethical quality of their deeds. In this way, the scope of insight widens from personal memory to a universal law of becoming, culminating in the recognition that freedom lies not in the continuation of these cycles but in their transcendence.

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## 10. COSMOLOGY AND PLANES OF EXISTENCE [DN 1]

### 10.A. Theoretical Framework (Three Realms, 31 Planes)

#### 10.A.1. Sensuous Realm (Kāma-loka): 11 planes [DN 33, AN 9.68]

##### 10.A.1.a. Four Lower Realms (Apāya)

Consciousness exists across multiple dimensions, including hellish realms of unbearable torture and suffering, animal-like beings reduced to pure survival instinct, ghostly states of endless hunger and unfulfillable desire, and war-torn worlds of jealousy and mutual antagonism. These are experiential planes rooted in their predominant afflictions.

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#### 10.A.1.b. Human Realm (Manussaloka)

> Human existence is uniquely balanced between pleasure and pain. Unlike hellish realms of unrelenting suffering or heavenly realms of intoxicating bliss, it provides a rare equilibrium where one experiences sufficient dissatisfaction to recognize the limitations of one's existence while possessing adequate intelligence and motivation to engage in the systematic cultivation of awareness that leads to liberation from those very limitations.

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#### 10.A.1.c. Six Deva Realms (heavenly planes) + 10.A.2 Fine-Material Realm (Rūpa-loka) + 10.A.3 Immaterial Realm (Arūpa-loka)

> Consciousness exists across multiple dimensions, including elevated planes with beings of many kinds. Some dwell in glorious cities of light, enjoying happiness beyond imagining, some shine with tranquil radiance, sustained by serenity rather than desire, and others exist with no form at all, as infinite openness, awareness, absence, or subtle traces of consciousness.

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#### 10.B. Practical Applications [Really not sure how to word this]

> Deep contemplative absorption reveals a systematic correspondence between states of consciousness and the fundamental structures of reality, demonstrating that inner psychological conditions and cosmic dimensions operate according to identical organizing principles. Inner states of anguish and exalted joy parallel the wider fabric of existence.

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## 12. COMPASSION AND WHOLESOME DEVELOPMENT [SN 46.54]

### 12.A. Four Sublime States (Brahmavihāra) [AN 10.208]

> Emotional maturity can develop in four interconnected qualities : generous appreciation that genuinely celebrates others' success as an antidote to destructive envy and comparison ; compassionate engagement that tackles suffering while maintaining inner stability ; extensive kindness that radiates benevolent intention while transcending self-other boundaries and protecting from fear ; and impartial awareness that observes life's inevitable ups and downs without greed or repulsion. Together, they establish emotional clarity, ethical depth, and freedom from reactivity.

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### 12.C. Ten Perfections (Pāramī) [KN Bv, KN Cp]

#### 12.C.1. Dāna (Generosity) [AN 8.31]

> Giving and true generosity rests not merely in the transfer of possessions, but in loosening the grip of fear and self-centeredness. It embraces sharing material support, extending safety and reassurance to others, and offering the guidance of knowledge and understanding. Each form of giving dissolves the illusion of separation and becomes a practice of freedom, in which self and other are mutually uplifted.

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#### 12.C.3. Nekkhamma (Renunciation) [MN 19]

> Recognizing that endless pursuit of pleasures, possessions, and external validation creates a restless hunger no acquisition can satisfy, one develops the wisdom to step back from compulsive desires and find contentment through simplicity rather than accumulation. Mental

energy is thus reclaimed from distraction toward deeper insights. Because lasting peace emerges not from having more, but from needing less.

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#### 12.C.6. Khanti (Patience) [MN 21]

> Patience is the discipline of developing unshakeable gentleness—a quality that combines fierce inner strength with tender acceptance. It means enduring what is unpleasant without agitation, meeting hostility without revenge, and remaining even-minded through gain and loss. Such endurance is not resignation, but the unshakeable calm that allows one to move through difficulty with clarity, dignity, and an open heart. One is not merely unbroken, but genuinely transformed by hardship and opposition, converted into wisdom.

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#### 12.C.7. Sacca (Truthfulness) [MN 61]

> The cultivation of complete alignment between inner understanding and outer expression creates an unbreakable foundation. When speech, thought, and perception become perfectly concordant with what is actually present, one develops an unwavering capacity to discern truth from projection, leading to liberation from self-deception and the suffering it generates.

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#### 12.C.8. Adhiṭṭhāna (Determination) [AN 4.87] + 12.C.5. Viriya (Energy) [AN 4.13]

> Determination is the deliberate establishment of clear purpose, carried with unwavering steadiness through hardship, fatigue, and resistance. It unites clarity of intention with disciplined vitality, balancing intensity and gentleness, persistence and patience ; fine tuning effort to avoid

strain or laxity. This quiet strength is neither rigid nor restless, but a resilient momentum that safeguards against abandonment while fleeting intention ripens into lasting accomplishment.

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#### 12.C.11. Systematic development described in the Buddhavaṃsa and Cariyāpiṭaka

> The growth of character unfolds through a deliberate and balanced refinement of virtues, each one strengthening and guiding the others. Over time this systematic cultivation weaves generosity, integrity, patience, energy, clarity, and compassion into a coherent whole, forming a resilient yet open nature that matures into inner freedom and wisdom.

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#### 12.D. Integration of Practice

##### 12.D.4. Application to severe mental illness

> People with severe mental distress are best met through a balanced approach that unites compassionate intention, grounding through embodied awareness, and a gradual path of training adapted to individual capacities and conditions. When personal effort falters and inner resources are strained, the guidance and support of wise companions becomes an essential external scaffolding for maintaining stability. Some relief emerges from carefully distinguishing between unavoidable primary pains and the added turmoil born of secondary reactive resistance, allowing hardship to be met with clarity and compassion rather than compounded distress.

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### 13. ADVANCED PRACTICES AND CAUTIONS [MN 20]

#### 13.A. Skillful Approaches to Practice

13.A.6. Purification by knowledge and vision of what is path and not-path [MN 24] + 13.C.3. Mistaking states for stages [MN 50] + 13.C.4. The Kevatta Sutta's cautionary tale [DN 11] + 13.C.5. Misinterpretation of visions and experiences

> Authentic maturation requires discernment to distinguish genuinely transformative experiences from misleading ones. While expanded states and unusual perceptions may arise, overemphasizing or reacting to them obstructs progress. True development isn't found in accumulating extraordinary experiences and complex metaphysics, but in how clearly we live daily life and how completely we release what binds us from genuine happiness.

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#### 13.B.a Methods For Unwholesome States

> It's recommended to meet challenging inner states with open awareness and gentle acceptance, rather than tightening against them. Anchor your attention in the simple reality of your breath and body sensations. Wrap yourself in much kindness, understanding that even the most difficult patterns are transient. Allow the experience to unfold without judgment, trusting in your capacity to make it through.

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#### 13.B.b Methods For Unwholesome States

> When gentle observation isn't enough to break free from a difficult spiral, you can take proactive steps. Experiment with changing your breathing. Focus on a different object or sensation. Physically move to break the pattern. Cultivate warmth and goodwill for all. Redirect your mind to inspiring figures, ideas or memories. And so on and so forth, keep on channeling and mastering this overwhelming flow.

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### 13.C.7. Papañca (mental proliferation) as compensatory mechanism [MN 18]

> Our tendency to create complex mental images and narratives is rooted in misunderstandings and driven by certain desires and avoidant habits. They point to coping mechanisms and should be looked at as inherently flawed rather than taken too seriously.

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