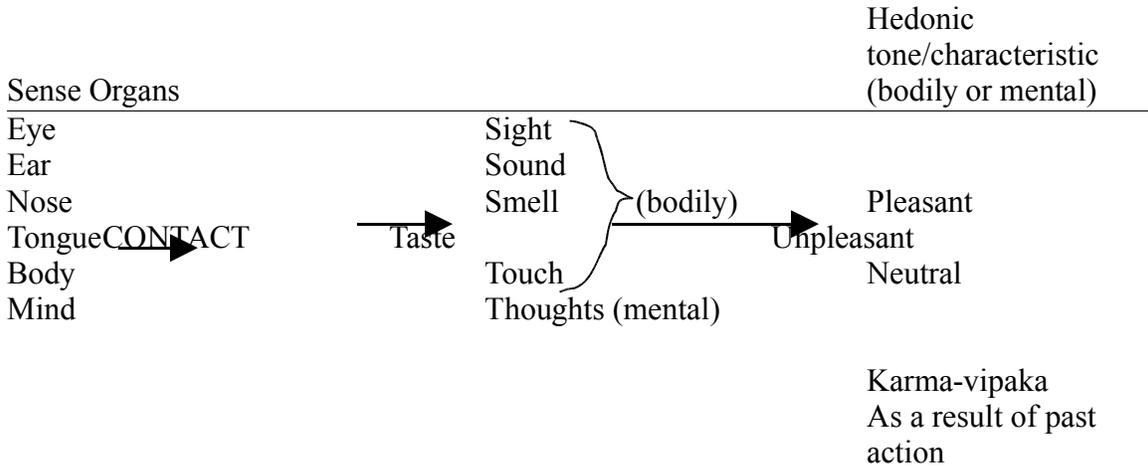


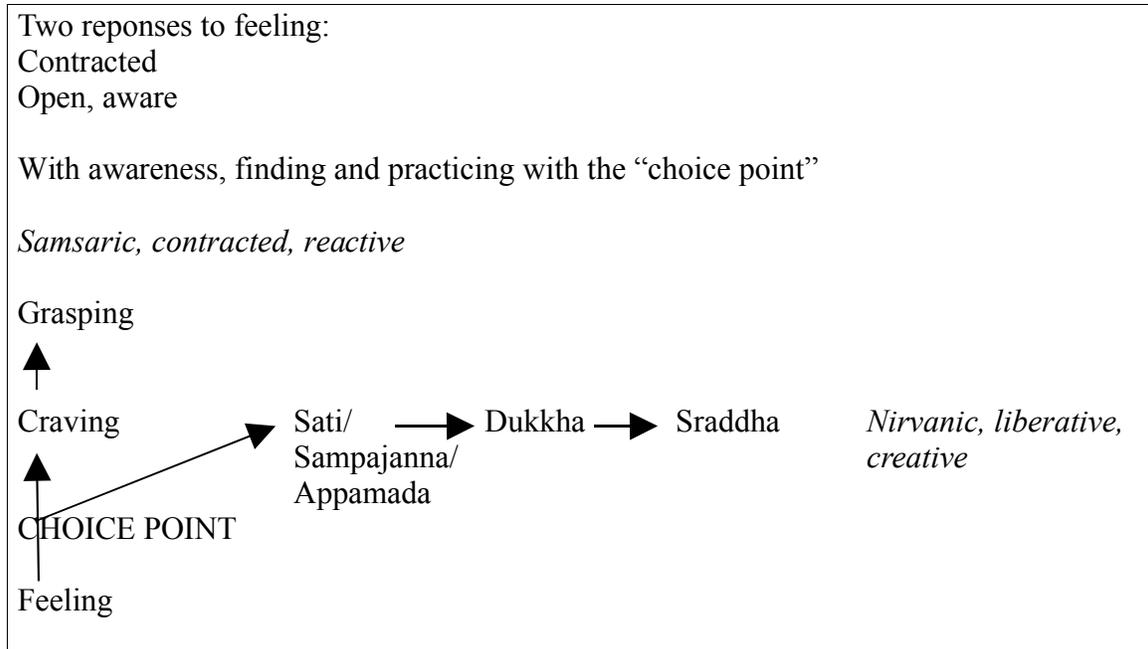
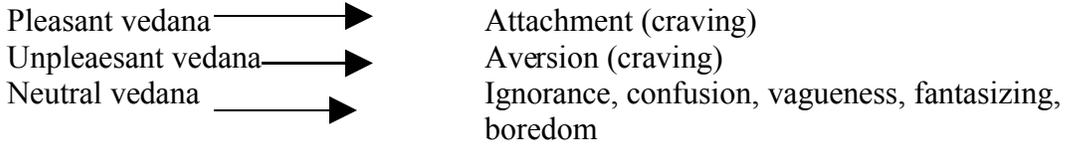
# INTRO TO 7<sup>TH</sup> AND 8<sup>TH</sup>

## THE DYNAMICS OF MENTAL PROCESSES



Bodily feeling = five senses  
Mental = thoughts

### Tendency without awareness for a chain reaction:



The feeling is karma vipaka.

How we repond is new karma.

Need

sampajanna (Sanskrit, samprajanya) – clear comprehension, to understand so we can respond skillfully

appamada (Sanskrit, apramada) – non-heedlessness, not letting our karmic patterns get further entrenched, seizing the opportunity for freedom

Introduce feelings using chart and the following two examples:

1. Feeling doesn't always lead to craving or ignorance. That's a tendency that causes suffering but there are other possibilities.  
For example of the beauty of the shrine, the colors, the smell of the incense, the image of the Buddha can lead to faith which is a skillful emotion.  
We can use the experience of pain to cultivate compassion and pleasure to cultivate mudita (we'll have a chance to do this on retreat) and neutrality to cultivate upekkha
2. But we are often suffering from feeling chain reacting into reactive emotion  
Pain in the leg becoming despondency/frustration becoming I'm no good  
Finding a color unpleasant and then having an aversion to a place

Why does feeling lead to craving?

The 4 foundations point out different aspects of our experience that we can understand or be tyrannized by

We tend to identify and solidify these different aspects of our experience. So we can solidify the body and obsess about the body

We can also identify with our feelings and obsess and hover over our feelings

Our ego grasping can manifest through the feelings and this is one of the primary ways it does manifest

We want what we identify as making us feel good, we don't want or hate what we identify as making us feel bad

This egoic self, perpetuates itself through craving and it has to constantly perpetuate itself. It only exists in this moment. It is also in that sense relatively easy to see through.

This chain reaction of feeling and craving is how our mind-made suffering comes to be  
Feelings conditions the mind. One thing we can learn from the 2<sup>nd</sup> tetrad as we can learn how the breath conditions the body and mind in the 1<sup>st</sup> tetrad.

Understanding this dynamic and learning how to work with it so as to become free from reactive suffering is a major emphasis in the Buddhist tradition. One cannot underestimate its importance.

Feeling, according to Buddhist psychology or the abidharma, is an omnipresent mental event.

- This means we are feeling all the time.
- It's part of our wiring

- That's a lot of time to build up reactive habits.
- Important to become learn about this dynamic

What can we do? This is the point of the 7<sup>th</sup> contemplation of becoming sensitive to mental processes.

Learn the difference between craving and grasping on the one hand and open awareness on the other

- Find the choice point
- Learn about the nature of the two paths and from that study, we'll naturally choose the path that leads away from suffering

To do this we have to be willing to experience the dukkha when we crave and grasp as well as the liberation when we are open and aware

Like learning fire burns

Can sound complicated but in practice it comes down to a simple sense of contracting or opening around experience

- Image of getting rope burn because we're grasping the moving rope of experience all the time. If we simply let go, we'd stop getting rope burn

Studying vedana we also come to see that these feelings are just coming and going all the time, that we don't create them, and they don't have to dictate the course of our lives, we can relax. In other words, they are impermanent

The breath can help us in this work as we become sensitive to mental processes

- Although the main focus is vedana and how that conditions the mind in the background is the breath helping us stay present and aware
- If we get lost or overwhelmed we can come back to a few conscious breaths and then start over again, becoming sensitive to mental processes

The 8<sup>th</sup> contemplation, calming mental processes grows naturally out of learning about them and how they work

What calms isn't the intensity of pain or pleasure

What calms is our reaction to vedana

We're not as reactive

At the point where the practice begins to ripen into mental processes calming, people often find themselves under attack by Mara, the forces of sensory distraction

All of the sudden there are a proliferation of fantasies

We are addicted to feeling and the plot line it gives our life

We're not used to resting in a more equanimous place, being more calm

Our addiction for entertainment can come in and fill the new found space with all sorts of distraction. Distraction as a mental event in the abidharma tradition is a state of mind in which the mind is led away from the object of concentration by attachment, hatred or confusion. So these states are trying to reassert themselves.

- Story of the Buddha under attack by Mara illustrates this
- Ayya Khema, Who is My Self, p. 66

Why silence is such a beneficial practice. We have to experience boredom (Boredom reading)

Try to relax into this newfound spaciousness and freedom and learn about that

Larry Rosenberg quote

Much of our habit energy goes into avoiding unpleasant experience.

Larry Rosenberg, p, 73

Any questions?

Easy to understand this dynamic but the practice comes in realizing it. Becoming wise.

SHRINE ROOM STUFF:

Exercise in pairs:

Both turn attention to experience and notice:

Pleasant vedana and our reaction

Unpleasant vedana "

Neutral vedana"

(if having difficulty can specifically tune into the body and then thoughts)

Check-in (optional – in silence retreat can skip)

Second exercise

Inquire into the nature of the experience

Is it changing?

Does it stay solid?

Check-in

After sit and walking meditation:

The idea of passionately letting go rather than passionately clinging which kills life.

Calming mental processes doesn't mean we become dead and unfeeling but rather we're more alive. We can just experience what's going on without having a whole reaction to it clouding our experience.

In the meditation session can mention:

It can be hard to locate vedana

Can notice wanting or not wanting and then work backwards to find the feeling

Same with dullness or boredom, can trace back to neutral vedana

Another interesting thing is that

Clarification – vedana day 2

Simply knowing how one feels

“This information offers a helpful additional source of information in everyday life, complementing the information gained through more rational modes of observation and consideration” (Analyo)

It may feel stilted or odd to be so specific about one element of our experience as if we're compartmentalizing our experience

But what we're actually aiming to do in these meditative exercises is facilitate a fuller, more whole experience that is grounded in what's actually happening

With practice becoming more authentic, more natural

In the vedana tetrad we're also becoming aware of emotion

Living with Awareness, Sangharakshita

The Pali term vedana refers to feeling not in the sense of the emotions, but in terms of sensation.

Vedana is whatever pleasantness or unpleasantness we might experience in our contact with any physical or mental stimulus. To understand what we would call emotion, Buddhism looks at the way in which that pleasant or painful feeling is interwoven with our reactions and responses to it. In Buddhist psychology, vedana is said to combine with sankhara, a volitional quality involving a tendency towards action. It is this combination of sensation with volition that approaches what we would recognize as fully developed emotion.

As we get more concentrated and piti and sukha arise the tradition speaks of moving from the kamaloka to the rupaloka. From the world of sense desire, being pulled outward to the realm of pure form or dhyanas.

Our energy is content to be with what is

Easing of the hunger for something else

Gnawing in the body/mind for appeasement from outside, to be "fed" (broadly speaking) eases up

Quality of body becomes much more subtle even dropping away (not from denial of the body but as a result of being fully aware of it)

Vedana when we're more concentrated can also become of a different quality. The Satipatthana sutta classifies worldly and unworldly feeling. Unworldly feeling born of concentration. Non-sensual joy that helps us be more present rather than tending to seek something from outside ourselves.

This begins in access concentration when hindrances are calming.

So when we're aware of mental processes we may be aware of a lot of vedana and consequent turbulent emotion

OR the whole thing might be very calm and seem very still even silent, contained in mindfulness. This process is parallel to the work of the body tetrad where the whole body calms.

When we hit this stillness there are two options.

- 1) to take the path of Mara, backing out and rebuilding our familiar sense of ourselves
- 2) or to relax into that newfound space and silence (Ayya Khema, Who is Myself, p. 66)