**THE EQUANIMITY AWAKENING FACTOR**

The culmination of the Seven Awakening Factors is the experience of *upekkha*, typically translated as *equanimity*. It represents the optimal balanced dynamic flow of the coordinated Awakening factors. As is the case with several of the other Awakening factors, it is found in different categories of the Buddhist conceptual structure: It is one of the Four Divine Abidings (Metta, Karuna, Mudita and Upekkha), one of the Ten Perfections, and characterizes the Fourth Jhana.

This commentary by Bhikkhu Bodhi was downloaded from Wikipedia:

“The real meaning of upekkha is equanimity, not [indifference](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indifference_(emotion)) in the sense of unconcern for others. As a spiritual virtue, upekkha means stability in the face of the fluctuations of worldly fortune. It is evenness of [mind](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mind), unshakeable [freedom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom_(philosophy)) of mind, a state of inner equipoise that cannot be upset by gain and loss, honor and dishonor, praise and blame, pleasure and pain. *Upekkha* is freedom from all points of self-reference; it is indifference only to the demands of the ego-self with its craving for pleasure and position, not to the well-being of one's fellow human beings. True equanimity is the pinnacle of the four social attitudes that the Buddhist texts call the '[divine abodes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brahma-viharas)': boundless [loving-kindness](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metta), [compassion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karu%E1%B9%87%C4%81), [altruistic joy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mudita), and equanimity. The last does not override and negate the preceding three, but perfects and consummates them.” (from *Toward A Threshold of Understanding*)

Another term that is synonymous with upekkha is tatramajjhattata. In his book “A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma” Bhikkhu Bodhi has this view of tatramajjhattata, on pages 86-87:

The Pali term for this cetasika literally means "there in the middleness." It is a synonym for equanimity ([upekkha](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Upekkha)), not as neutral feeling, but as a mental attitude of balance, detachment, and impartiality. It has the characteristic of conveying consciousness and the mental factors evenly. Its function is to prevent deficiency and excess, or to prevent partiality. It is manifested as neutrality. It should be seen as the state of looking on with equanimity in the citta and cetasikas, like a charioteer who looks on with equanimity at the thoroughbreds progressing evenly along the roadway.

In terms of the practice of anapanasati, mindfulness of breathing, upekkha brings balance to how breath awareness relates to all the other mental phenomena that are dynamically co-occurring. The flow of life experience has two elemental functions—affect (the urgency of emotion and impulsive reactivity) and cognition (how the mind creates meaning, derived from prior memories superimposed on current experience).

Breath awareness is affectively neutral (unless you are prevented from breathing!); other physical stimuli that are “attention grabbers”, with pain or pleasure providing the affective impulse. Using breath awareness as an ongoing and stabilizing point of reference helps “balance” the levels of impulsivity.

Cognitively, when the mind is affected by impulsive reactivity, there is a strong tendency to identify a self through whatever internal narrative is developed to make the event meaningful. Breath awareness, in its direct simplicity, doesn’t incline the mind towards a narrative, and this process provides a cognitive distancing from reactively identifying with an emerging narrative.

In this way, mindfulness of breathing provides a “there in the middleness” effect on direct experience. The mind is not too agitated or too sedated, and the cognitive function is not too identified with or too inattentive to the potential emerging of an internal narrative. Our internal experience is not driven by urgency (craving) or too much conviction (clinging) but is still alert and actively engaged in identifying and adapting to current circumstances, guided by Wisdom, that is, Clear Awareness and Benevolent Intention.