

Foundational Practices for Inner Peace: The Four Foundations of Mindfulness Syllabus

Teaching team: John Martin & Tuere Sala

COURSE OVERVIEW

If you've practiced mindfulness through meditation, Yoga, or even simple breathing, you already know its power to steady the mind and soften stress. What you may not know is that these modern practices trace back to a single, profound source: the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*—the Buddha's teaching on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness.

Satipaṭṭhāna is where mindfulness began. More than a single technique, it is a **complete map of 13 practices** that guide awareness into every dimension of life:

- **Body:** breathing, postures, daily activities, elements, and reflections on death.
- **Feelings:** noticing each moment as pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral, worldly or unworldly.
- **Mind:** recognizing the quality of awareness, from distracted or contracted to calm and liberated.
- **Phenomena:** investigating the patterns that shape our lives: the hindrances, the sense bases, the aggregates, the awakening factors, and the Four Noble Truths.

The Buddha called Satipaṭṭhāna the “*direct path to liberation*.” It matters because without it, we remain caught in habits, reactivity, and conditioning. With it, we learn to see clearly how experience arises and passes away, and how freedom is possible in each moment.

Studying Satipaṭṭhāna offers:

- A way to **root your mindfulness practice** in its original source.
- **Practical tools** you can use anywhere—on the cushion, at work, or in the midst of daily life.

- A chance to **find your own entry point** into awareness—whether through breath, feeling, or the heart and mind.
- The possibility of meeting life’s joys and sorrows with **greater clarity, balance, and compassion**.

Satipaṭṭhāna is both the **beginning and the culmination** of practice:

- For those starting out, it provides clear, step-by-step guidance.
- For experienced practitioners, it offers the subtle refinement that keeps practice alive, fresh, and transformative.

“Every time you come into the present moment, you are relearning Satipaṭṭhāna.”

Where Satipaṭṭhāna Fits in the Buddha’s Teachings

The Four Foundations of Mindfulness are not just another meditation method—they are the **living heart of the Buddha’s path**. Satipaṭṭhāna is:

- The **operational manual for Right Mindfulness** in the Eightfold Path.
- The **bridge between meditation and wisdom** in the Three Trainings.
- The **direct cause of the Seven Awakening Factors**, leading toward liberation.

This is why the Buddha called it the **direct path**: it doesn’t matter where you are on the journey—whether beginning or deep in practice, Satipaṭṭhāna provides the foundation for awakening.

What You’ll Gain from This Course

By the end of this program, you will:

- **Respond instead of react**: learn to pause, see clearly, and choose how you meet challenging moments.
- **Carry mindfulness into daily life**: from difficult conversations to joyful moments, every experience becomes part of your practice.

- **Strengthen steadiness and clarity:** develop the inner balance that supports both meditation and the ups and downs of work, family, and relationships.
- **Transform old patterns:** recognize habits of reactivity and conditioning, and discover the freedom to relate to them differently.
- **Grow the heart qualities of practice:** compassion, equanimity, and insight that ripple into how you show up for yourself and others.
- **Build a personal toolkit:** explore all 13 Satipaṭṭhāna practices and discover which ones resonate most deeply as anchors for your unique path.

Bringing Satipaṭṭhāna into Daily Life

It's easy to feel calm on the cushion, but what about when you're in the middle of a hard conversation, stuck in traffic, or scrolling through the news at midnight? Satipaṭṭhāna is designed for exactly these moments. It takes mindfulness out of the retreat and places it right in the heart of your everyday life.

- **Body:** Steady yourself with a single breath before you react in anger. Feel your feet on the ground when stress threatens to pull you off center.
- **Feelings:** Catch irritation before it spills into harsh words, or pause to really savor joy instead of rushing past it.
- **Mind:** Notice when your thoughts spiral into worry or judgment, and learn how to meet them with curiosity and compassion.
- **Phenomena:** Recognize the patterns—like desire, doubt, or restlessness—that quietly run your life, and discover how mindfulness gives you the freedom to respond differently.

With Satipaṭṭhāna, practice doesn't stop when the meditation bell rings. Every breath, every interaction, every challenge becomes an opportunity to return to presence. This is what makes Satipaṭṭhāna the Buddha's "direct path to liberation," because it transforms the way you live, not just the way you sit.

Imagine not just finding calm, but living with clarity and freedom in the very middle of your busy, complicated life. That is the gift of Satipaṭṭhāna.

Course Modules: The 13 Satipaṭṭhāna Practices

Over five months, we will explore all **13 Satipaṭṭhāna practices** step by step. Each foundation offers a different doorway into mindfulness—you may find one becomes your anchor, or you may weave them all into a living path of practice.

1. MINDFULNESS OF THE BODY

- Breathing as an anchor for presence
- Awareness of postures and daily activities
- Observing the body as elements (earth, water, fire, wind)
- Contemplating the body's parts to soften attachment
- Reflecting on death and impermanence to deepen perspective

2. MINDFULNESS OF FEELINGS

- Recognizing each moment as pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral
- Distinguishing between worldly and unworldly feeling tones
- Seeing how feelings shape reactivity and choice

3. MINDFULNESS OF THE MIND

- Noticing when the mind is restless, contracted, distracted, calm, or liberated
- Bringing curiosity and compassion to each state
- Deepening awareness of the hindrances that cloud the mind

4. MINDFULNESS OF PHENOMENA

- Investigating the **Five Hindrances** (desire, aversion, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, doubt)
- Exploring the **Six Sense Bases** (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, thinking)
- Understanding the **Five Aggregates** (form, feeling, perception, formations, consciousness)

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- Nurturing the **Seven Awakening Factors** (mindfulness, investigation, energy, joy, tranquility, concentration, equanimity)
- Applying mindfulness to the **Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path**, bringing practice into the full arc of the Dharma

What Makes This Program Unique

Many meditation courses touch pieces of Satipaṭṭhāna, but few offer the chance to explore all 13 practices in a clear, systematic way. This program is designed to help you not only **understand the teachings**, but also **live them** in your daily life.

- **A complete journey:** You'll walk through the full map of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, discovering how each practice can steady the body, open the heart, and clarify the mind.
- **Practical and grounded:** Teachings aren't left in theory—you'll receive guided practices, reflections, and tools to integrate mindfulness into ordinary moments, from work to relationships to walking down the street.
- **Support for every level:** Whether you're newer to Buddhist practice or a seasoned meditator, the structure of this course helps you find your own entry point—offering both a solid foundation and opportunities for refinement.
- **A community of practice:** You'll journey alongside fellow students, with buddy groups, small-group explorations, and a shared field of commitment to awakening.
- **Living Dharma:** Rather than studying mindfulness as an idea, you'll experience it as something alive—an awareness that grows and matures, bringing balance and freedom into your life.

This is not just a study of mindfulness. It is a training in how to live with clarity, compassion, and freedom, moment by moment.

Who Should Join

This program is for anyone who wants to bring mindfulness more fully into their life. It welcomes:

- **Newer meditators** who want a clear, structured entry point into the Buddha's teachings, with step-by-step guidance and plenty of support.
- **Experienced practitioners** who wish to refresh, deepen, or refine their practice by returning to the Buddha's original framework for mindfulness.
- **Everyday seekers** who want practical tools for meeting life's joys and challenges with more balance, clarity, and compassion.
- **Community-oriented learners** who value practicing alongside others, sharing insights, and growing within a supportive saṅgha.

Whether you are just beginning or have been practicing for years, Satipaṭṭhāna offers both the **foundation to start and the refinement to sustain** a lifelong path of mindfulness.

Wherever you are on the journey, Satipaṭṭhāna meets you there.

Program Components

- **Monthly Full Group Sessions** (5 total): Immersive two-hour sessions with teachings, guided meditation, small-group inquiry, and practice integration.
- **Weekly Guided Meditations** (17 total): Live 45-minute sits with short talks to establish rhythm and consistency.
- **Dharma Buddy Groups**: Monthly peer-led small groups for check-ins, guided inquiry, and mutual support.
- **Home practices & Reflections**: Readings, journaling prompts, and inquiry practices drawn from the Buddha's teachings.
- **Optional Mentorship**: 1:1 meetings with assistants for personalized practice support.

Investment in Your Practice

Enrolling in this program is more than signing up for a course; it's a commitment to yourself, your practice, and a path the Buddha called "*the direct way to liberation*."

To make this training accessible, we offer flexible pricing options:

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- **One-time payment:** \$699
- **Payment plan:** 11 monthly payments of \$69
- **Scholarships:** Available to ensure that financial need is never a barrier to practice

Your investment supports not only your own journey but also the continuation of these teachings for the wider community.

Schedule

- **Monthly Sessions:** Sundays, Jan 11 – May 3, 2026 (10 am – 12 pm PT)
- **Weekly Guided Meditations:** Wednesdays, Jan 14 – May 6, 2026 (8 am – 8:45 am PT)

About the Teachers

John Martin

John Martin has been devoted to dharma practice since 2001, and has been teaching since 2014. He serves as the Co-Chair of the Spirit Rock Guiding Teachers Council. John teaches *vipassanā*, *mettā* and LGBTQI-themed meditation retreats. He is on the teaching team leading the four year Spirit Rock/Insight Meditation Society teacher training program. John's spiritual path has included volunteer service work, including over 12 years as a hospice volunteer.

Tuere Sala

Tuere Sala is a Guiding Teacher at Spirit Rock Retreat Center and Seattle Insight. She is a retired prosecuting attorney who has practiced *vipassanā* meditation for over 30 years. Tuere is committed to lay practice and inspired by bringing the Dharma to nontraditional places. She is a strong advocate for practitioners living with high stress, past trauma and difficulties sitting still. Tuere has been teaching since 2010 and has a long history of assisting others in establishing and maintaining a daily practice.