

# BUDDHIST MIND SCIENCE Activating Your Potential

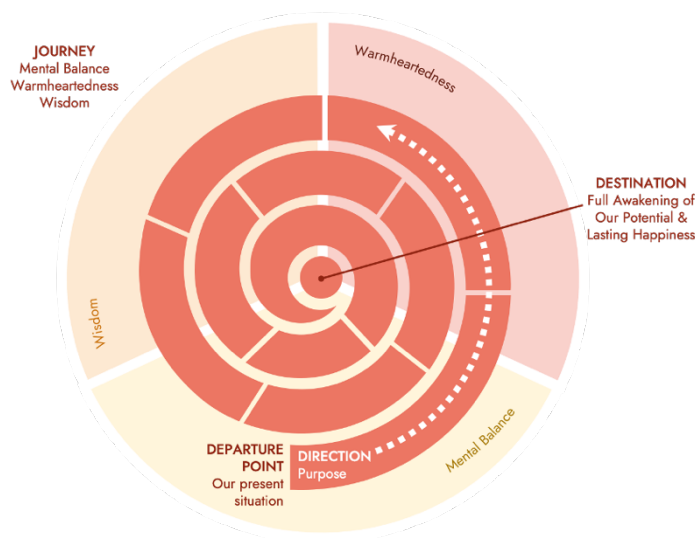


An FPMT Introductory Course

Discover the workings of the mind and the mechanisms of suffering and happiness. Unlock your potential for mental balance, compassion and wisdom.

Welcome to this journey to unlock our potential and cultivate lasting happiness. Buddhism is considered by some a “science of mind,” because it presents a comprehensive and deep description of the mind, it studies its various aspects and functions, and it provides methods to observe it directly and to discover and activate our inner potential. And it does so with one intention: to overcome suffering and its causes and to cultivate true, lasting happiness.

As interest in meditation in the modern world grows, the FPMT Wisdom Culture offers the course “Buddhist Mind Science: Activating Your Potential,” which introduces the Buddhist knowledge of the mind to provide practical techniques and insight on meditation, the mechanisms of suffering and happiness, finding purpose and mental balance, and how to discover and activate our inner potential for warmheartedness and wisdom, including a comparative modern scientific perspective and with the aim to contribute to the welfare in this world.



## The Course

The course follows a gradual approach, with a strong experiential component that invites everyone to reflect and check by themselves the different topics presented along the modules. With a strong emphasis on transforming daily life in meaningful ways, it provides both Buddhist and scientific perspectives. It consists of seven modules:

1. **Cultivating lasting happiness: What Buddhism and science have to say about it**, is an exploration of purpose in life and what leads to dissatisfaction and suffering, and what to happiness, for oneself and others. It also explores the value of warmheartedness and wisdom, and it lays out the general foundation for the following modules.
2. **Transforming the mind to cultivate lasting happiness**, focuses on meditation, mental balance, and emotions.
3. **Getting to know your mind**, focuses on the mind.
4. **Fundamental trainings to cultivate lasting happiness**, presents the foundations of the Buddhist paths.
5. **Wise paths to the heart**, focuses on warmheartedness.
6. **The nature of perception**, focuses on wisdom.
7. **Embodying warmheartedness and wisdom**, explores how to bring the values of warmheartedness and wisdom into the world.

Each module consists of six units that can be done in 1.5-hour sessions (9 hours) approximately, and can be engaged as a stand-alone course. They include readings, exercises, reflection, debate, and meditation.

# 1. CULTIVATING LASTING HAPPINESS

## What Buddhism and Science Have to Say about It

### Cultivating Lasting Happiness

What is it that we all are pursuing? Do we succeed in it? Should we explore more carefully and wisely how to fulfill our deepest yearnings? How could we contribute to others' happiness as well?

We will explore such questions from an experiential point of view, using both scientific and Buddhist knowledge of the mind and meditation, in a journey that may translate into increasing lasting happiness and a positive impact on oneself, others, and the world.

The course "Cultivating lasting happiness: What Buddhism and science have to say about it" focuses on an exploration of what leads to dissatisfaction and suffering, and what contributes to happiness for oneself and others. The fundamentals of meditation and mind training are introduced, especially in the areas of establishing a meaningful direction in life, balancing the mind with equanimity and a caring attitude, and nurturing warmheartedness and wisdom drawn from the Buddhist tradition. It is complemented by references to current scientific understanding on our nervous system, values, subjective well-being, neuroplasticity and altruism.

### The Journey

"Cultivating Lasting Happiness" gradually unfolds as a journey along different topics:

1. **A universal need** explores the common ground that we all want to find happiness and overcome suffering, and presents initial techniques to balance body and mind.
2. **Are we pursuing happiness in the best way?** is an initial exploration of the Buddhist Four Truths and a suggestion to probe into common ways to pursue happiness—are we succeeding?
3. **Following the scent of lasting happiness** encourages us to establish meaningful directions and to find ways to cultivate lasting happiness and activate our potential.
4. **Meditation and mind training** presents tools for doing so.
5. **Wisdom and warmheartedness as a source of lasting happiness** presents tools to cultivate the fundamental qualities of warmheartedness and wisdom and invites us to explore their contribution to our own and others' happiness.
6. **Enhancing wisdom and warmheartedness** further explores these fundamental qualities.

## 2. TRANSFORMING THE MIND TO CULTIVATE LASTING HAPPINESS

### Transforming the Mind

Are we free to choose what we pay attention to? How to be able to choose? Can we increase our mental balance? How to live a healthy emotional life?

We will explore such questions from an experiential point of view, using both scientific and Buddhist knowledge of the mind and meditation, in a journey that may translate into increasing lasting happiness and a positive impact on oneself, others, and the world.

The course “Transforming the mind to cultivate lasting happiness” explores what meditation is and focuses on calming the mind and refining attention with the breath, a healthy emotional life, and enhancing wholesome emotions and mental states as first foundations for cultivating lasting happiness. It is complemented by references to current scientific understanding on attention training, well-being, empathy, and emotions.

### The Journey

“Transforming the mind to cultivate lasting happiness” gradually unfolds as a journey along different topics:

1. **Settling the mind and focusing attention with the breath** explains breathing meditation to settle the mind and focus our attention, as a way to choose where we pay attention to and balance the mind.
2. **Stabilizing and analytical meditation** challenges some common notions about meditation and explores how to use our capacity to observe and analyze to enhance wholesome mental states and attitudes.
3. **Working with emotions** explores emotions, how some of them can be challenging or disturbing, and strategies to work with them.
4. **Emotions and afflictions** further deepens into it by presenting the Buddhist perspective on emotions and afflictions.
5. **A healthy emotional life** explores how regulating emotions is not only about dealing with the challenging ones, but also about gaining perspective over our own views and enhancing wholesome emotions and mental states.
6. **Bringing the practice to daily life** concludes with bringing more awareness to our emotions and to activities in daily life.

# 3. GETTING TO KNOW YOUR MIND

## Getting to Know Your Mind

What is our mind? What are the afflictions that obscure our inner potential? Can they be removed? Why do we often struggle with the same mental patterns? How deep and vast is the potential of our mind?

We will explore such questions from an experiential point of view, using both scientific and Buddhist knowledge of the mind and meditation, in a journey that may translate into increasing lasting happiness and a positive impact on oneself, others, and the world.

The course “Getting to know your mind” focuses on an exploration of the mind to understand what it is, its characteristics, and how can we become more aware of our mental processes and of our mind itself. It also deepens into techniques to diminish mental afflictions, and reflects on the possibility of the continuity of the mind and on karma. It is complemented by references to some current scientific understanding on the mind.

## The Journey

“Getting to know your mind” gradually unfolds as a journey along different topics:

1. **Refining attention** deepens into stabilizing meditation by presenting obstacles and qualities to cultivate when meditating in calming our minds.
2. **Introducing the nature of the mind** challenges our understanding of what the mind is by presenting the mind and its nature from a Buddhist perspective, with practices to put it under examination by meditating on the nature of mind.
3. **How the mind is stained** explores how, despite the nature of the mind is pure, afflictions arise and obscure us from seeing its deep nature.
4. **Removing the stains from the mind** presents strategies to diminish the power of afflictions so that we find better well-being and conducive conditions to further explore the mind and its possibilities.
5. **Exploring the depth, vastness, and continuity of the mind** explores the depth and vastness of the mind and continues to challenge us by suggesting an investigation about the possibility of the continuation of mind after this life.
6. **The continuity of actions** presents the notion of karma, how our actions leave an imprint that conditions us, and the role of intention in this process. It concludes with an exploration of the value of this life under these perspectives.

## 4. FUNDAMENTAL TRAININGS TO CULTIVATE LASTING HAPPINESS

### The Fundamental Buddhist Paths

What are the fundamental practices that lead to freedom from suffering and its causes? Why do we feel dissatisfaction? Is it possible to overcome it? Could ethical values, awareness, and wisdom contribute to a fundamental state of well-being and freedom from suffering? How? Is it possible to fully unlock our potential?

We will explore such questions from an experiential point of view, using both scientific and Buddhist knowledge of the mind and meditation, in a journey that may translate into increasing lasting happiness and a positive impact on oneself, others, and the world.

The course “Fundamental trainings to cultivate lasting happiness” is an introduction to the fundamental practices that Buddhism offers to cultivate the paths that lead to freedom from suffering and its causes. It concludes by presenting the possibility of awakening, the maximum expression of our potential. It is complemented by references to current scientific understanding on why is it that we feel unsatisfied, ethics, the development of attention, and wisdom.

### The Journey

“Fundamental trainings to cultivate lasting happiness” gradually unfolds as a journey along different topics:

1. **The possibility of liberation** starts by exploring how afflictions cloud our mind and our potential for well-being, thus producing suffering; and how by liberating ourselves from afflictions we can liberate ourselves from suffering and unlock our potential for happiness and well-being.
2. **Inner satisfaction** explores what struggles are we facing right now that keep us dissatisfied, and some mechanisms of dissatisfaction and satisfaction. We learn to cultivate inner satisfaction and contentment.
3. **Cultivating ethics** presents the importance of ethics in life and how it is a fundamental training in the path of liberation from suffering. We explore how to strengthen our ethical values in life.
4. **Cultivating concentration** presents the importance of being able to focus our attention and how concentration is a fundamental training in the path of liberation from suffering. We explore how to cultivate concentration in life.
5. **Cultivating wisdom** presents the importance of wisdom in life and how it is a fundamental training in the path of liberation from suffering. We explore how to start cultivating wisdom in life.
6. **Expanding it to others** expands the knowledge acquired so far about ourselves towards others, and explores the possibility of making room in our hearts and minds for all sentient beings and to develop them at their fullest, achieving full awakening with the highest aspiration of wishing to benefit all beings.

# 5. WISE PATHS TO THE HEART

## Warmheartedness

Is warmheartedness a source of well-being? Are human beings kind by nature? How to activate a sense of connection with oneself and others? How to make it a source of true happiness? How far can our inner qualities of love, compassion, joy and so on go?

We will explore such questions from an experiential point of view, using both scientific and Buddhist knowledge of the mind and meditation, in a journey that may translate into increasing lasting happiness and a positive impact on oneself, others, and the world.

The course “Wise paths to the heart” focuses on cultivating warmheartedness and prosocial attitudes, which are essential for human evolution, well-being, and flourishing. It presents the four immeasurable attitudes of loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity, as drawn from the Buddhist tradition, and explores the mind of awakening, which embraces all sentient beings. It is complemented by references to current scientific understanding on the nature and biological basis of altruism, empathy, compassion, and self-compassion.

## The Journey

“Wise paths to the heart” gradually unfolds as a journey along different topics:

1. **Warmheartedness as a source of well-being** explores whether warmheartedness is a source of well-being, with research on the nature of altruism and ethics, and on the biological basis of warmheartedness. We also explore whether it can be trained.
2. **To care for yourself to care for others** starts by seeing how to take care of oneself, and how taking care of oneself also entails taking care—or connecting—with others.
3. **The four immeasurables** works with specific aspects of warmheartedness and prosocial attitudes: the four immeasurable qualities of loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity. It also presents how to move from empathy to compassion.
4. **Warm heart fitness** deepens into the four immeasurables, by exploring their relation with wisdom, and by finding ways to replace afflictions for the four immeasurables.
5. **The mind of awakening** goes further to explore the possibility of fully developing our potential of warmheartedness and wisdom with the mind of awakening, which aims to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all beings.
6. **Alchemy of the heart** presents unique and provoking approaches to cultivating such a mind with methods that allow us to gradually replace egoism and self-centeredness for altruism and awareness of others.

# 6. THE NATURE OF PERCEPTION

## The Nature of Perception

How do we perceive things? Is the way we perceive things accurate? Does the way we perceive things influence in our experiences of happiness and suffering? What is the relationship within perception and wisdom? Could an accurate, wise, way of perceiving things be a source of well-being and freedom from suffering?

We will explore such questions from an experiential point of view, using both scientific and Buddhist knowledge of the mind and meditation, in a journey that may translate into increasing lasting happiness and a positive impact on oneself, others, and the world.

The course “The nature of perception” focuses on wisdom. It reflects on its meaning, relevance, and how it counteracts the causes of suffering. It goes deeper into the most profound aspect of wisdom: understanding the nature of reality. It concludes with the nature of mind which makes full awakening possible and it is complemented by references to current scientific understanding on wisdom and well-being and the process of perception.

## The Journey

“The nature of perception” gradually unfolds as a journey along different topics:

1. **Creating realities** introduces perception and wisdom, by exploring what is meant by wisdom, its aspects and relevance, and the scientific view on how perception works.
2. **Perception and conditioning** explores how our perception is conditioned by our actions and how in turn how such actions are also conditioned by the way we perceive things.
3. **The nature of reality** moves into the most profound aspect of wisdom, the wisdom that understands the nature of reality. The concepts of emptiness and dependent arising are presented, together with the different levels of dependent arising.
4. **What about my “self”?** then applies this understanding to the I, the sense of personal identity. It does so first from a more psychological point of view, and then moving into some meditations to explore the sense of self.
5. **Wisdom liberates us from suffering** deepens on how wisdom counteracts delusion and all the true causes of suffering, by going further to see how “conditioned” existences becomes “cyclic” existence, how wisdom liberates us, and how another way of existing and experiencing is possible, that of liberation and full awakening.
6. **Living wisdom and compassion** concludes the module by bringing this knowledge to our daily life, by means of exploring how to cultivate wisdom and compassion in life.

# 7. EMBODYING WARMHEARTEDNESS AND WISDOM

## Warmheartedness and Wisdom

How to walk the inner journey in today's world? How to then bring our inner values and qualities into the world? Can we make a difference? Which inner qualities will we need to strengthen? How to use even difficulties in our favor? Could warmheartedness and wisdom be our main tools for a meaningful life?

We will explore such questions from an experiential point of view, using both scientific and Buddhist knowledge of the mind and meditation, in a journey that may translate into increasing lasting happiness and a positive impact on oneself, others, and the world.

The course "Embodying warmheartedness and wisdom" focuses on how to bring our inner qualities into the world—and how to enhance them while living in it. It does so by presenting topics such as inner refuge, spirituality, and engaged compassion. It also includes helpful guidelines, such as the "six perfections," or how to deal with difficulties and use them in our favor. In a way, it is a call for a revolution of compassion. It is complemented by references to current scientific understanding on prosocial skills, life satisfaction, well-being, and happiness.

## The Journey

"Embodying warmheartedness and wisdom" gradually unfolds as a journey along different topics:

1. **Walking the inner journey in the world** starts by reflecting on how to practice while living a life that includes daily activities such as work, and by examining in which things we trust to bring about lasting happiness, to move to the meaning of an inner path and refuge.
2. **A revolution from within** reflects on how to bring this inner path and values into the world.
3. **Far-reaching attitudes** explores some of the qualities that will serve as an aid in this journey, by way of the "six perfections".
4. **Transforming difficulties** explores ways to skillfully deal with difficulties—both in life and in our practice—and to even use them to our advantage, to bring about inner strength and resilience.
5. **Tools for the path** deepens into it by using the tools and qualities we have been working with in this course—for instance, the sense of purpose, mental balance, warmheartedness, and wisdom.
6. **Walking the path** concludes with an overview of the principal aspects seen along the course—which will also give us an overview of the meditations in the Buddhist path—and an exploration on how to establish a daily practice to continue this journey.