

CONCENTRATION AND MINDFULNESS
TWO WINGS OF A BIRD

CONCENTRATION

"Shamata", "Calm Abiding"

Effortful

One-Pointedness

Absorption

Holding

Focusing

MINDFULNESS

"Sati"

Effortless Effort

Awareness, Noticing

Witnessing, Interest

Alertness

Watchfulness

Excerpts from Mindfulness in Plain English, by Venerable Henapola Gunarata:

Mindfulness picks the objects of attention and notices when attention has gone astray. Concentration does the actual work of holding the attention steady on that chosen object. If either of these partners is weak, your meditation goes astray.

Concentration should be regarded as a tool....Only mindfulness understands. Only mindfulness brings wisdom.

[Mindfulness] is a pure noticing factor. It is free to notice whatever comes up...It is not limited by any condition. Also, mindfulness has no fixed object of focus. It observes change.

Mindfulness cannot be cultivated by struggle. It grows by realizing, by letting go, by just settling down in the moment and letting yourself get comfortable with whatever you are experiencing. Mindfulness is cultivated by a gentle effort, by effortless effort. The meditator cultivates mindfulness by constantly reminding himself in a gentle way to maintain his awareness of whatever is happening right now. Persistence and a light touch are the secrets. Mindfulness is cultivated by constantly pulling oneself back to a state of awareness, gently, gently, gently.

If you have focused the mind on a stone, concentration will see only the stone. Mindfulness stands back from this process, aware of the stone, aware of concentration focusing on the stone, aware of the intensity of that focus, and instantly aware of the shift of attention when concentration is distracted.

Concentration and mindfulness go hand in hand in the job of meditation. Mindfulness directs the power of concentration. Mindfulness is the manager of the operation. Concentration provides the power by which mindfulness can penetrate into the deepest level of mind. Their cooperation results in insight and understanding....a balance is essential.

Mindfulness provides the needed foundation for the subsequent development of deeper concentration. ...Right concentration develops naturally in the wake of strong mindfulness. The more you develop the noticing factor, the quicker you will notice the distraction and the quicker you will pull out of it and return to the formal object of attention. The natural result is increased concentration, And as concentration develops, it assists the development of mindfulness. The more concentration you have, the less chance of launching off on a long chain of analysis about the distraction. You simply note the distraction and return your attention to where it is supposed to be.

