

A black silhouette of a person sitting in a meditative pose, possibly a Zen monk, is positioned on the left side of the slide. The person is facing right, with their back to the viewer, and their hands are resting on their knees. The background is a soft, misty landscape with mountains and a body of water, rendered in shades of light blue and green.

Buddhist Psychology: From Trauma to Enlightenment

Session 6: Transformation of Trauma and Self-Process

Presented by Lotus Vu, CCC, Zen Teacher & Psychotherapist
Clear Way Zen, Regina, Saskatchewan

Covered in this session

- Stages of Trauma Recovery Quick Review
- Six Realms of Existence
- Phase 1: Safety & Stability
- Phase 2: Processing (Openness & Wisdom)
- Phase 3: Integration or non-duality living

Stages of Trauma Recovery in Treatment

1. **Safety and Stabilization**

- Physical and emotional safety
- Learning skills to regulate emotions, grounding and coping
- Creating a sense of safety
- Skills: Mindfulness, sensory exercises, yoga, art, music etc.

2. **Processing and mourning the trauma**

- Processing emotions and losses
- Confronting trauma memories, working with grief and difficult feelings
- Making sense of experience

3. **Reconnecting and Integrating with Meaningful Narrative**

- Developing resilience, reconnecting with oneself and others
- Rebuilding relationships and community connections
- Maintaining healthy coping mechanism, building support system, pursuing personal/professional goals to facilitate integration.

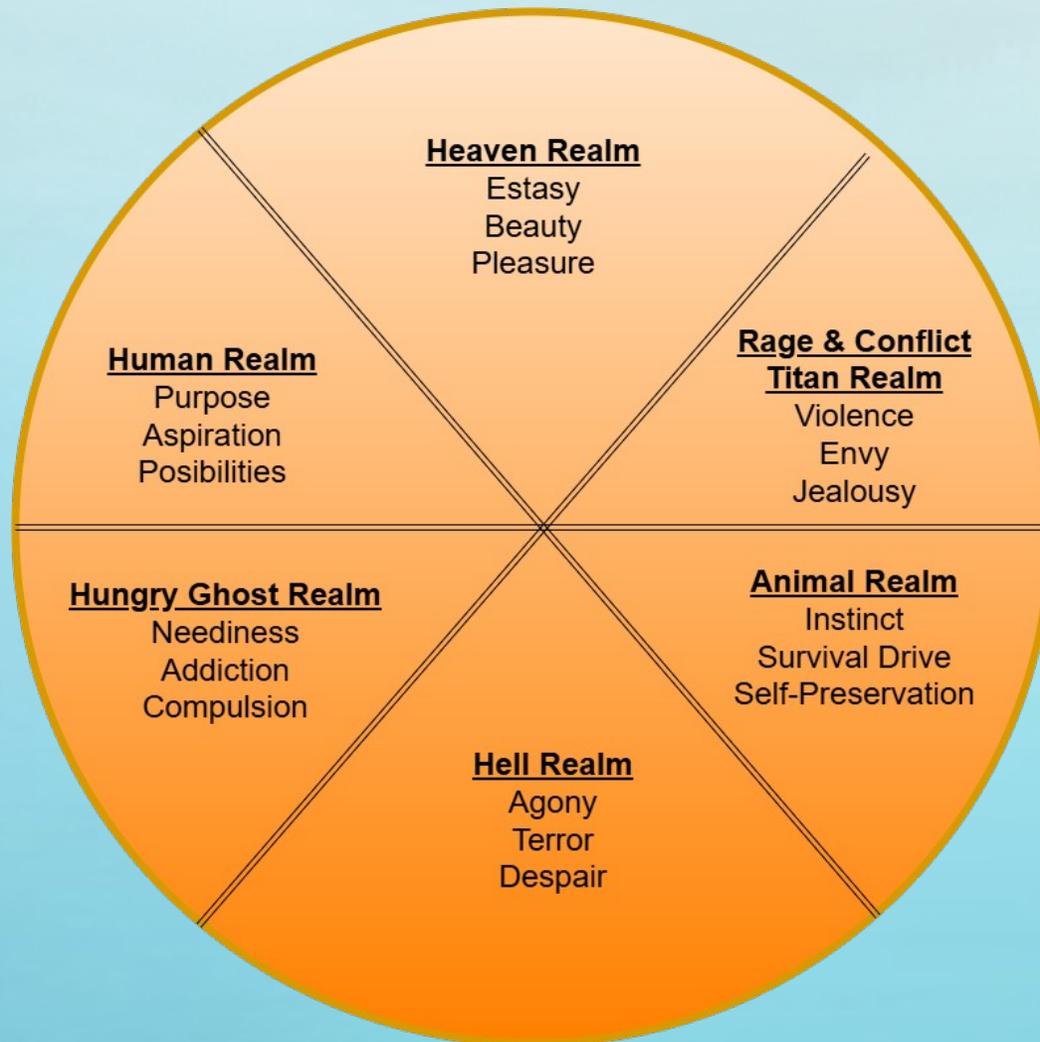
Review Quiz



Enlightenment of the Buddha

- <https://youtu.be/EiseKrDBVeQ?si=skWTWIRr2Dvw3OB6>

Buddhist Cosmology: Mental States Create Realms of Existence



- Depending on our states of mind, we experience these realms of existence, right here in this very life!
- Our traumatized conditionings likely lead us to unwholesome realms
- None of the realms are permanent and temporary depending on the persistence of conditionings

Phase 1 Safety ~ Buddhist Refuge

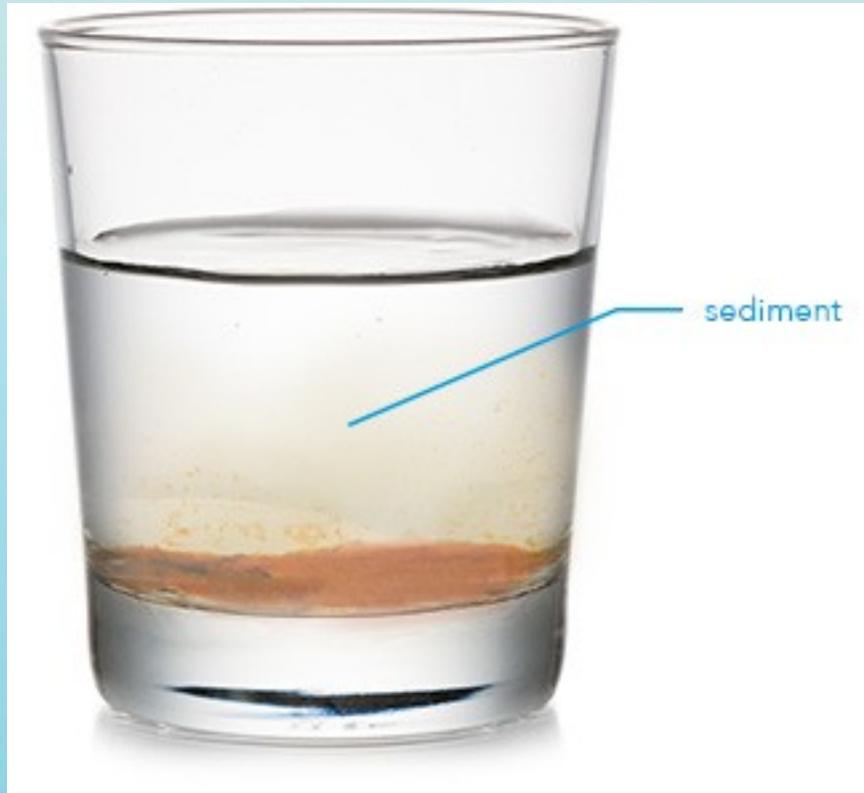
Trauma Therapy



Phase 1 Stability vs Calm Abiding



Jhana: Attention Training in Meditation

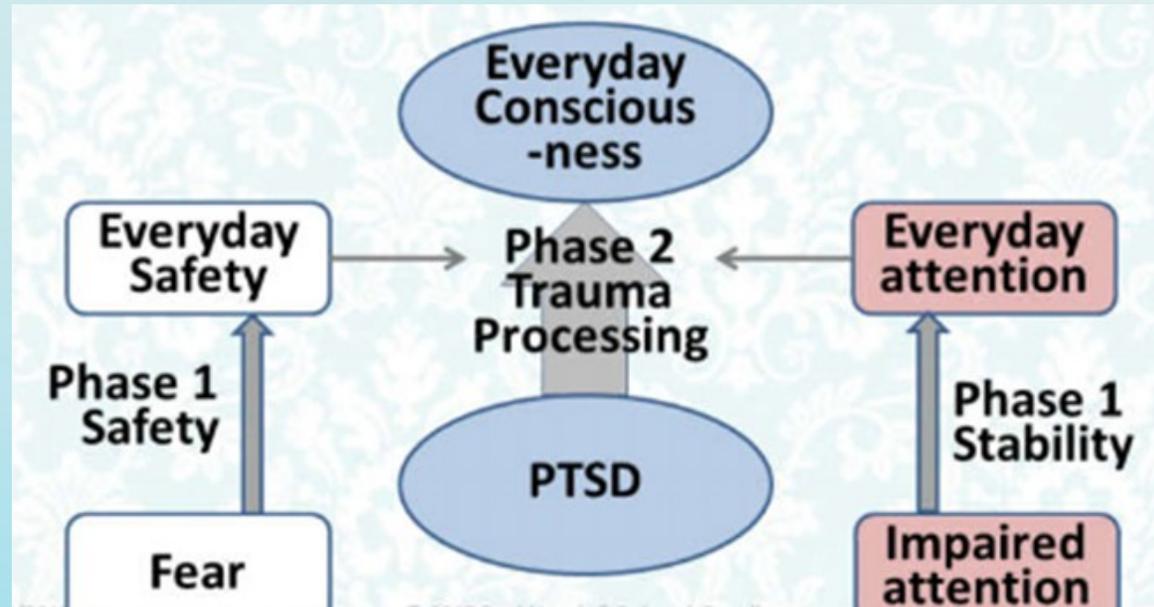


Zen training has its meditative practice roots in early Buddhism, focusing on the Jhanas (***Calm, relaxed, aware attentive states***)

Jhana -> Dhyana -> Chan -> Zen

The Jhanas and its successive levels help to clear the lens of observation to be able to experience deeper states of ***samadhi*** (tranquility) and practice rigorous and increasing clarity for ***meta-awareness observation*** (Sati/mindfulness)

Map of Buddhist Trauma Therapy



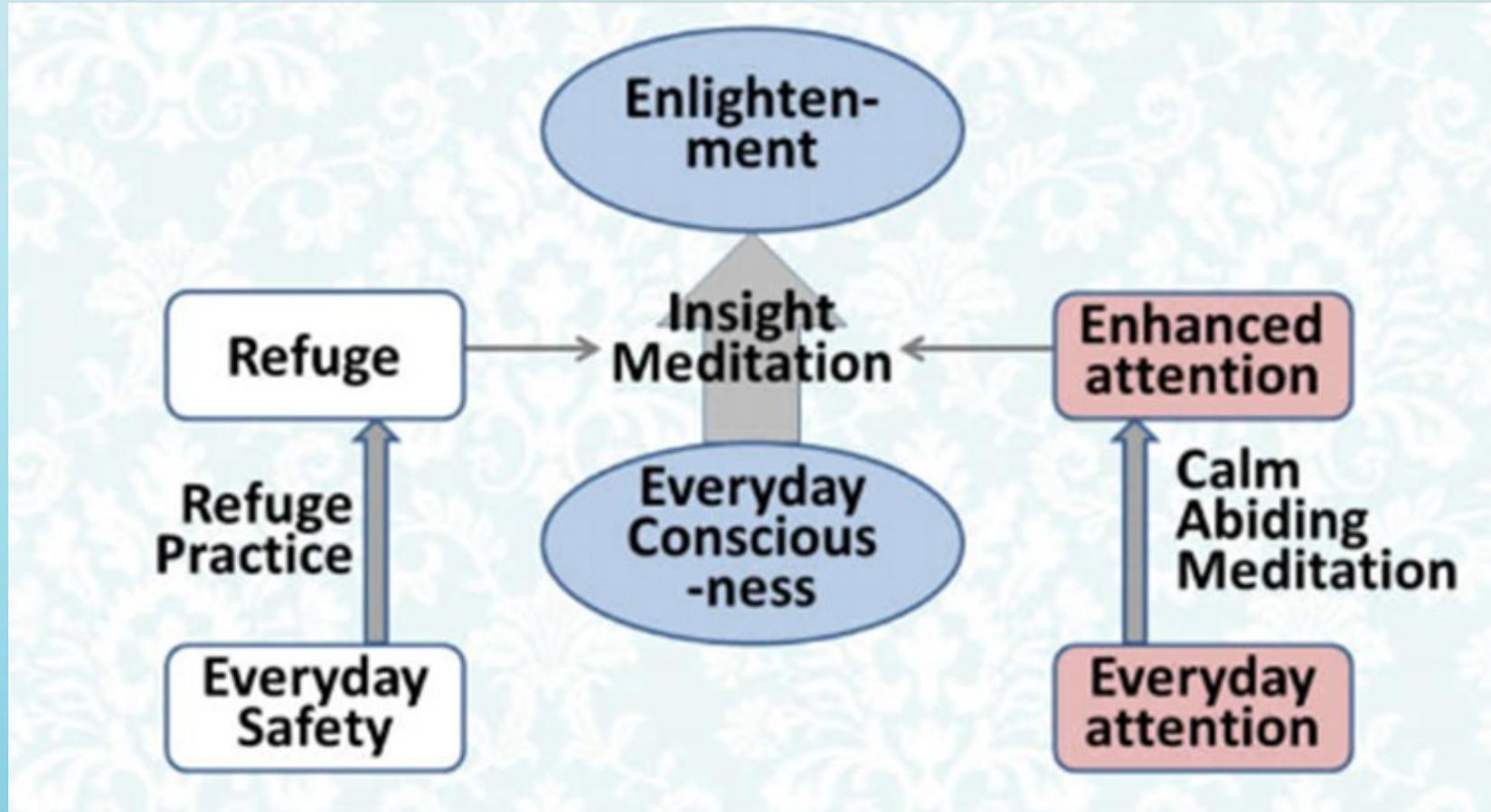
FEAR and IMPAIRED ATTENTION characterize PTSD, requiring **relational grounding** to begin healing.

Healing and processing begins with:

1. **Enough attentional stability to say with trauma material** in exposure for the **processing** to happen.
2. **Non-attachment** and **clarity** into the **trauma material and process** leading to **insight** which leads to further clearing out of the traumatic materials

Zen meditation solitary retreat is probably the most intense exposure therapy to the mental traumatic content that you'll experience!

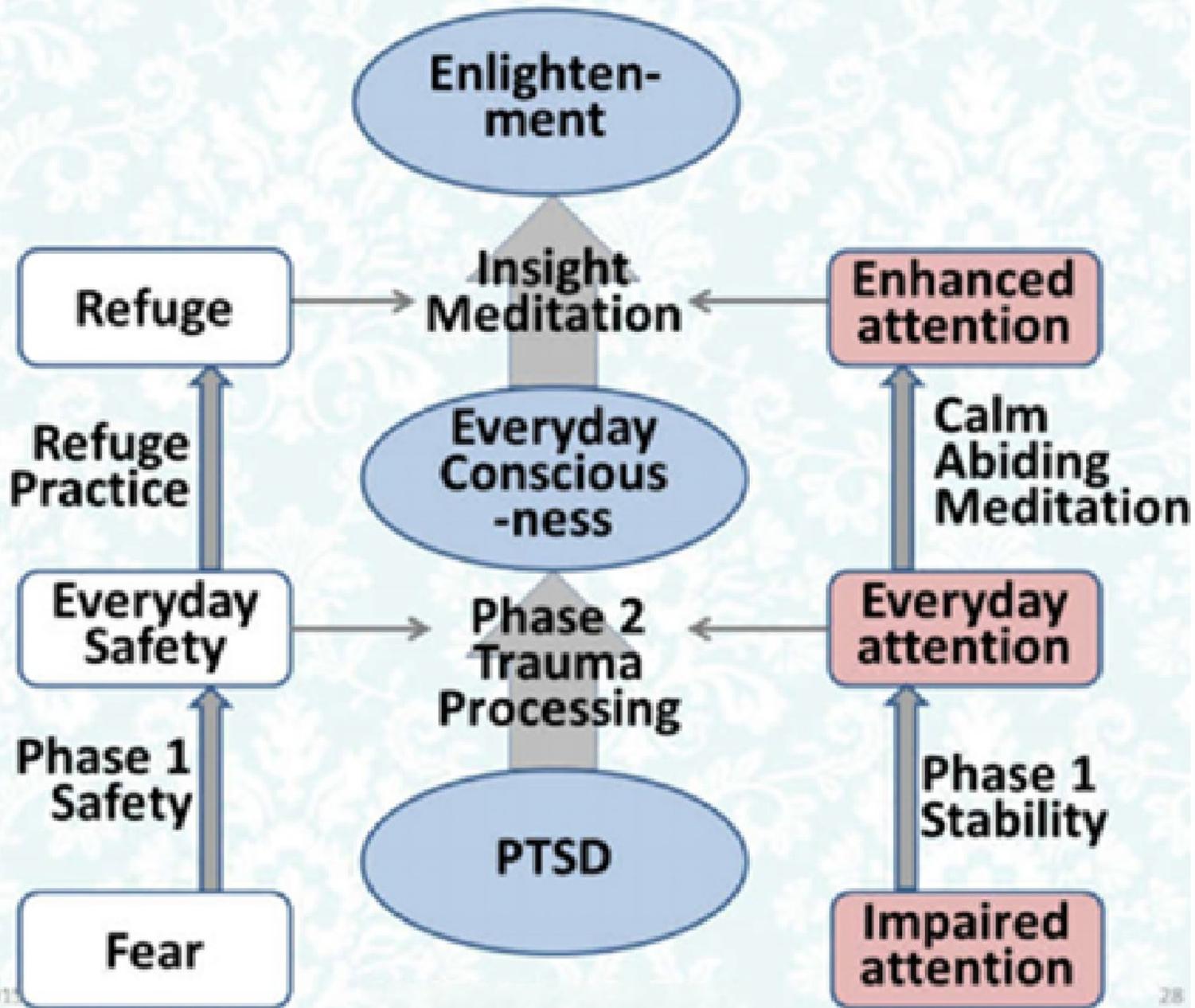
Buddhist Practice to Transform Everyday Patterns Developed Through Trauma & Conditioning



Elements of Zen Meditative Practice

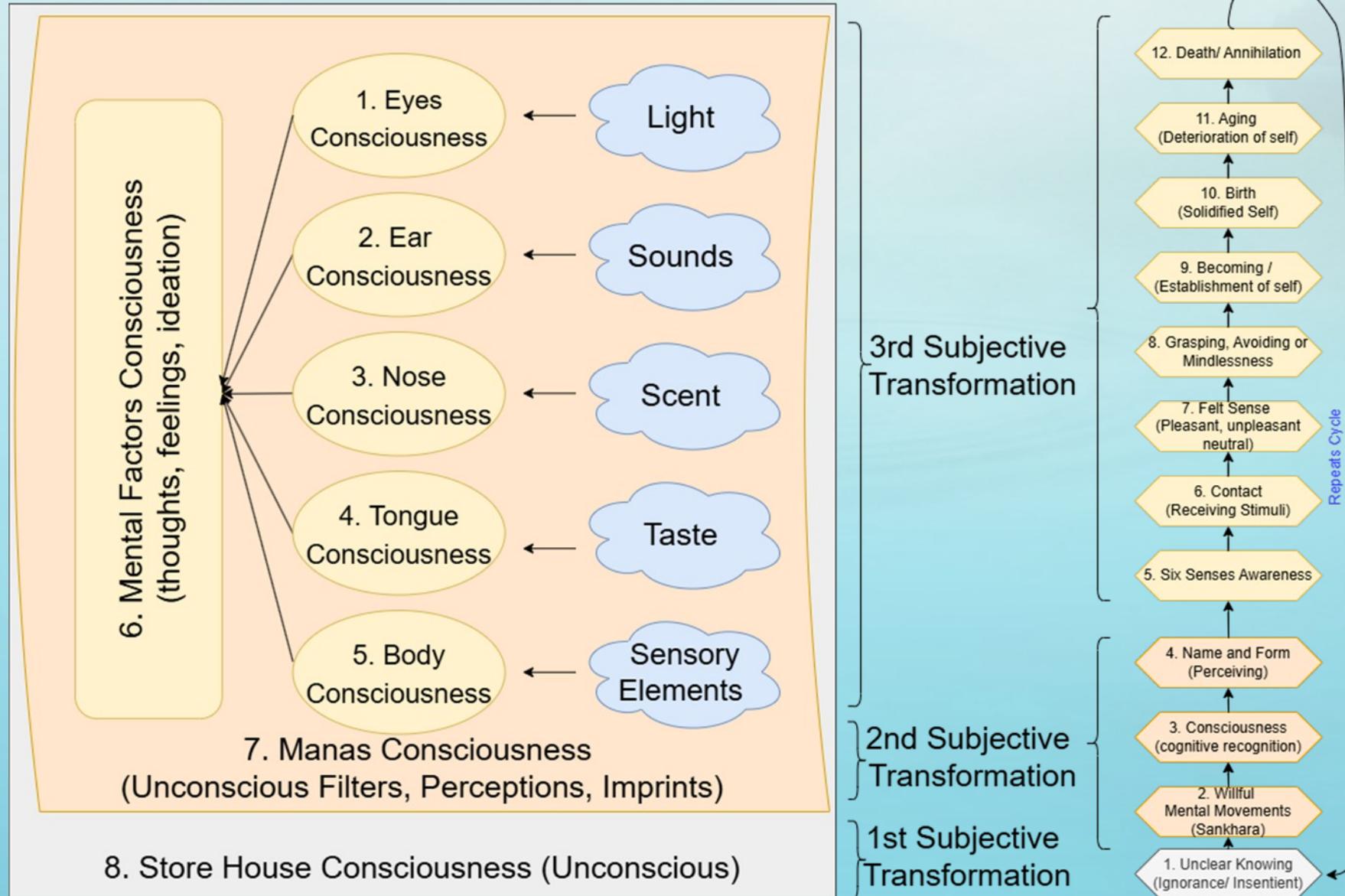
1. Attention training develops stability of attention (Jhana/Samatha)
2. Stability develops clear observation (Sati)
3. Clear observations combined with active inquiry and reflection develop insights which lead to wisdom (paññā/ prajñā)
 - Wisdom is a clear direct experiential understanding of the three characteristics (impermanence, dissatisfaction and non-self) which in the realization of Non-Self one experiences **Kensho/Satori (or Stream Entry)**
 - Wisdom is seeing through the process of self-identification or self-ing process of Dependent Origination
 - Wisdom is an intuitive knowing of what is present without thoughts or judgments, always present and accessible

BUDDHISM
TRAUMA



Yogacara: Buddhist Psychology of the Unconscious

8 Consciousness Structure & Dependent Origination



Meditative States		Description	Relations to 5 Aggregates
Access Concentration		Basic level concentration -Breath count, mindfulness of breathing, body scan, loving-kindness, mantra etc.	All present
1st Jhana	Awareness of Body & Duality	Shift attention to hold on to pleasant sensation erupts to Piti (glee) & Sukha (joy/happiness) sustained. Piti rises like gooseflesh all over the body, all your cells dancing with pure pleasure.	All Present w/ Increase feelings & sensory pleasantness
2nd Jhana		Background thoughts quieter/distant Inner tranquillity, unified through a calm, contented emotional experience, reduced Piti.	All present w/ Reduced feelings & increase Contentment & quietness
3rd Jhana		The pleasure of contentment goes away, emotionally neutral, no Piti. The body's perceptions of limbs come and go like it is not there.	Sensory experience reduced
4th Jhana		Steady stillness, in-distractibility, no more background thoughts A sharp mind with clarity	No thoughts
Base of Infinite Space		Expansive awareness, reduced awareness of body, joyous feelings of expansive freedom Loss of body awareness	No thoughts, no sensation, still subtle feelings, Perception and consciousness
Base of Infinite Consciousness	Oneness	Disappearance of object perception, everything is the watcher/observer. As if everything is pure consciousness/oneness. This is where most spiritual traditions falsely mistaken this place for enlightenment.	
Base of Infinite Nothingness	Non-Duality	Cessation of Feelings and Perceptions: Non-dual state, mind very clear. Outside of meditation, if experiencing this, all labels/Perception of objects perceived falls away.	No conceptualizing, no perception
Base of Neither Perception nor Non-Perception		Very reduced consciousness. Consciousness is collected in a small, dim center. Like REM sleep, mental formations appear like blurry phantom images in the background. You cannot tell what you are experiencing from the sensory input from outside.	no feelings, no sensory
Nirodha		Cessation of Perception, Feelings, and Consciousness (All Five Aggregates Absent)	No consciousness

Igniting the Path: Satori/Kensho

- Satori – Japanese for “Ah Ha” or “understand”
- Kensho – “Seeing your true nature.”
- Stream Entry – The first stage of Buddhism’s 4 stages to liberation, or the true beginning of the Buddhist Path.

Without Kensho, it’s challenging to experience steadily repeated experiences of Arupas or Formless Jhanas. The formless Jhanas help to propel the clearing out of unconscious materials through deep observation and reflection.

With a lack of faith in the path or continually re-experiencing non-duality after the first initial Kensho experience, a practitioner can go back to previous conditioning and identification with self-process.

Practicing the Zen Path

1. Preparatory Practice: Loving Kindness, Access Concentration, Forgiveness, Repentance, Generosity etc...
2. Kensho or Stream Entry to begin the transformation of the self-process
3. Understand and see clearer your behavioural patterns
4. Clear out chaotic internal environment
5. Understand your mind and motivations
6. Realizing the three marks of existence
7. Complete letting go of all conceptual or perceptual clinging which distorts reality

Next Week

Wrap up the course with the final destination!

What does liberation look like?

Is it optimal well-being?

A comparative perspective to Positive Psychology