Gradual Training workshop

The Gradual Training is the most common, extended expression of the Buddhist path of practice found in the *suttas*. In essence, it is a detailed and structured expansion of the Noble Eightfold Path. It helps any dedicated practitioner of the Dhamma navigate the path by clarifying the meaning and practice of its various elements, as well as assisting one in determining what aspects of the path one needs to emphasise. If you are serious about Buddhist practice, do not miss this workshop!

General reading:
Translation into English of the Chinese version of the Shorter Sutta on the Elephant's Footprint (MN 27):
https://bswa.org/bswp/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/MA-146-for-workshop.pdf

Samaññaphala Sutta as translated and explained by Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi
https://bswa.org/bswp/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/bp212s_Bodhi_Fruits-Of-Recluseship.pdf

Session 1: A gradual journey to Freedom.

Presenters – *Ajahn Brahmali & Ajahn Karunika*
Session description: This class introduces the structure, purpose, and doctrinal context of the Buddha's gradual training as presented in the early discourses. It examines its relationship to contemporary Vedic and Jain practices, explores the flexibility of its sequential steps, and considers its integration within the core teachings of the Middle Path.

Content:

- The Buddha's guide to freedom (MN 27)
- The Significance of Gradual Training
- Comparative studies of the gradual training (MN 39, SN 42.8)
- Distinctive features of Gradual Training compared to other contemporary religions (MN 95, MN 27,)
- How gradual training fits with noble eightfold path and other presentation of the path (SN 45.1, SN 45.8, AN 10.61, MN117)
- Gradual training similes, the training of an elephant (MN 125)
- Following the path the Buddha taught
    - The arising of a Buddha, right view (MN 27)
    - Teaching the Dhamma (MN 27)
    - Hearing the Dhamma and acquiring faith (MN 27)
    - Going forth, right intention (MN 27)

Summary of readings for session 1: MN 27, SN 45.1, SN 45.8, SN 48.9, MĀ 146, MN 39, SN 42.8, MN 125, MN 95, MN117.

Session 2: Happiness on the Path

Presenters – *Ajahn Mudito & Ajahn Karunika*
Session description: This session explores a joy that arises not from gaining, indulging, or escaping, but from living rightly. By living blamelessly, we experience the happiness of freedom in the present moment while laying the foundation for deeper peace and insight. The session highlights the transformative power of contentment, showing how peace and happiness can flourish in 'enough.' Through mastering the art of restraint, participants discover how conscious, ethical choices and sense restraint cultivate clarity and inner strength, ultimately leading to freedom.

Content:

- Blameless happiness AN 8.39, AN 4.62, AN 10.61, AN 11.3, MN 129,
- Right Livelihood: Pathway to Inner Bliss MN 27, DN 31, AN 8.54
- The joy of just this much MN 27, SN 16.1 AN 1.65 AN 4.27
- From restraint to release MN 2, SN 35.28, MN 143, SN 35.94
- The nexus of sense restraint and virtue AN 10.61, AN 8.81

Summary of readings for Session 2: AN 8.39, AN 4.62 AN 10.61, AN 11.3, MN129, MN 27, DN 31, AN 8.54, SN 16.1 AN 1.65 AN 4.27, MN 2, SN 35.28, MN 143, SN 35.94, AN 8.81, DN 31:3.5, DN 31:7.1.

Session 3: sense restraint in practice

Presenters – *Ajahn Munissara & Ajahn Brahmali*
Session description: This session will consist of an in-depth study of sense restraint, starting with its relationship to right effort. We will discuss will power versus wisdom power, and how this distinction is expressed in the *suttas*. We shall see that true restraint comes from wisdom, not from force.

Content:

- The four right efforts (SN 49.1)
- Right effort and connection to sense restraint (AN 4.14)
- Sense restraint formula, in detail (MN 27)
- Wisdom power vs will power, reflection (AN 2.11-13)
- Will power in practice (AN 6.20, AN 10.51)
- Wisdom power in practice:
    - Different Levels of Development of Sense Restraint (MN 152)
    - Connection between Sense Contact, Feeling, and Perception (MN 18, MN 43)
    - Practicing with feeling as part of sense restraint practice (SN 36.2, 36.6-9)
    - Abandoning unwholesome thoughts resulting from sense contact (MN 19, MN 20)
- Self-motivation vs. Dhamma motivation (AN 3.40)
- Role of right view (SN 47.3)

Summary of readings for session 2: SN 49.1, AN 4.14, MN 27, AN 2.11-13, AN 6.20, AN 10.51, MN 152, MN 18, MN 43, SN 36.2, SN 36.6-9, MN 19, MN 20, AN 3.40, SN 47.3.

Session 4: Mindfulness, clear comprehension, and wise attention

Presenters – *Ajahn Munissara & Ajahn Sunyo*
Session description: On the use of mindfulness and wise/proper attention in sense restraint and in other parts of the gradual training.

Content:

- Developing perceptions to enable sense restraint (AN 10.60, MN 54, AN 5.161–162)
- Mindfulness and clear comprehension related to sense restraint (MN 27)
- Mindfulness and clear comprehension in daily activities (MN 10)
- Mindfulness and clear comprehension regarding food, clothing, shelter, medicine (AN 3.16, MN 2)
- Wise/proper attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) throughout the gradual training (MN 2:3.1, AN 10.61)
- Wise/proper attention in developing *samādhi* (SN 46.2, SN 46.24)
- Wise/proper attention in contemplation (MN 2:7.2, MN 2:11.1, SN 22.122, SN 12.62)

Summary of readings for session 4: AN 10.60, MN 54, AN 5.161–162, MN 27, MN 10, AN 3.16, MN 2, MN 2:3.1, AN 10.61, SN 46.2, SN 46.24, MN 2:7.2, MN 2:11.1, SN 22.122, SN 12.62.

Session 5: *Samādhi* and insight

Presenters – *Ajahn Mudito & Ajahn Sunyo*
Session description: On the development of *samādhi* and insight based on it.

Content:

- The hindrances to *samādhi*: what are they? (DN 2:67.1, AN 5.193)
- How to abandon the hindrances. (AN 5.23)
- The nature of samādhi (AN 5.28)
- Why practice samādhi? (AN 1.45–46)
- Samādhi leading to insight (DN 2:83.1)

Summary of readings for session 5: DN 2:67.1, AN 5.193, AN 5.23, AN 5.28, AN 1.45–46, DN 2:83.1