

Four Divine Abodes (*Brahma-vihāras*)

Key points

- The *Brahma-vihāras* (“divine abidings”) are also called the Four Immeasurables or Four Boundless Qualities.
- They form one group of ancient meditation practices that the Theravada meditation manuals accommodate to the scheme of the *jhānas*, but it has been argued that they were originally conceived as a path to awakening in their own right.
- They are noble altruistic attitudes toward living beings and wholesome states of mind.

English	Pali	Defining Feature	Near Enemy: <i>A deceptively similar quality mistaken for the original</i>	Far Enemy: <i>The opposite quality</i>	Notes	Highest Level of <i>Jhāna</i>
Loving-kindness	<i>Mettā</i>	Intention of good will; the wish for the welfare and happiness of all beings.	Attachment, greed	Hatred, ill will	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counters aversion • Appreciates things as they are 	Suitable object for first, second and third <i>jhānas</i>
Compassion	<i>Karuṇā</i>	Wish to alleviate suffering	Pity, grief	Cruelty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counters fear, ignorance • Accepts things as they are 	Suitable object for first, second and third <i>jhānas</i>
Sympathetic or Altruistic Joy	<i>Muditā</i>	Rejoicing in the success of others; appreciation, joy at others good fortune	Joy tinged with insincerity or personal identification; forms of joy that are excessive such as elation, exuberance	Envy, jealousy, aversion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counters comparison, and boredom • Enjoys things as they are 	Suitable object for first, second and third <i>jhānas</i>
Equanimity	<i>Upekkhā</i>	Seeing equality in beings, balanced, non-reactive, non-partial, awareness; quieting of resentment and approval	Indifference, foolish unknowing	Greed, taking of sides, partiality, resentment, reactivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counters indifference, anxiety, and pride • Sees things as they are 	Suitable object for fourth <i>jhāna</i>

Suitable Phrases

- ***Mettā***: May you be free from danger and harm. May you be happy, free from mental distress. May you be healthy, free from illness and pain. May you live with ease.
- ***Karuṇā***: May you be free from suffering. May you be at peace.
- ***Muditā***: May your good fortune and success continue. May your happiness never end.
- ***Upekkhā***: All beings are the heirs of their own action. Their happiness and unhappiness depends upon their actions, not my wishes for them.