

Right Mindfulness

“One of the most striking features of mindfulness as taught in the modern world is how far it differs from the Canon’s teachings on right mindfulness. Instead of being a function of memory, it’s depicted primarily—in some cases, purely—as a function of attention to the present moment. Instead of being purposeful, it is without agenda. Instead of making choices, it is choiceless and without preferences.

“At best, they present a small part of the path as the whole of the practice; at worst, they discredit many of the skills needed on the path and misrepresent what it actually means to taste awakening.

“As [The Buddha] defined the term, right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*) is not bare attention. Instead, it’s a faculty of active memory, adept at calling to mind and keeping in mind instructions and intentions that will be useful on the path. Its role is to draw on right view and to work proactively in supervising the other factors of the path to give rise to right concentration, and in using right concentration as a basis for total release.”

Excerpts From: Bhikkhu, Thanissaro. “Right Mindfulness: Memory & Ardency on the Buddhist Path.”