

**TABLE 16.4**  
**Characteristic, Function, Manifestation and Proximate Cause of**  
**Mental Formations**

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**Key:**

**C = characteristic**

**F = function**

**M = manifestation**

**P = proximate cause**

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**ETHICALLY VARIABLE UNIVERSALS (7)**

1. Contact—*phassa*  
C: touching  
F: impingement; to cause the object and consciousness to impinge  
M: as the concurrence of consciousness, sense faculty (door), and object  
P: an object that has come into focus
  
2. Feeling—*vedanā*  
C: see Table 16.3
  
3. Perception—*saññā*  
C: perceiving the qualities of the object  
F: recognizing what has been previously perceived; or to make a sign as a condition for perceiving again “this is the same”  
M: as interpretation by comparing features that had been previously apprehended  
P: an object in whatever way that it appears
  
4. Volition—*cetanā*  
C: the state of willing  
F: to accumulate kamma  
M: as coordination or directing of action; the organizing of the associated mental factors to act upon an object  
P: the associated mental formations
  
5. One-pointedness—*ekaggatā*  
C: the unification of mind with its object; nonwandering, nondistraction  
F: to conglomerate or unite the associated mental factors; fixing the mind on its object  
M: as peace; or as wisdom in the mode of effect as the Buddha described: “One who is concentrated understands things as they actually are” (S: 35: 99–100; S: 35: 160–161; S: 22: 5–6; S: 56: 1–2)  
P: usually happiness

6. Life faculty—*jīvitindriya*
  - C: maintaining the associated mental formations in the same consciousness moment
  - F: to make them occur
  - M: as the establishing of their presence
  - P: the mental formations to be maintained
  
7. Attention—*manasikāra*
  - C: conducting the associated mental formations toward the object
  - F: to yoke the associated mental formations to the object
  - M: as confrontation with an object
  - P: the object

NOTE: Attention is likened to the rudder of a ship, which directs it to its destination, or a charioteer who drives well-trained horses towards their destination. Similarly, attention directs the associated mental factors towards the object. *Manasikāra* is a necessary factor of cognition, and therefore it should be distinguished from *vitakka*, which is an occasional factor. *Manasikāra* is responsible for turning the mind toward the object, whereas *vitakka* applies the mind to the object.

#### ETHICALLY VARIABLE OCCASIONALS (6)

1. Initial application—*vitakka*
  - C: the directing or mounting of the mind onto the object
  - F: to strike at and thresh the object
  - M: as the leading of the mind onto an object
  - P: the object; or material base, object, contact, and associated mental formations
  
2. Sustained application—*vicāra*
  - C: continued pressure and occupation with the object; the continued stroking of the object by examining it
  - F: sustained application of the associated mental formations to the object
  - M: as the anchoring of those phenomena on the object
  - P: the object; or material base, object, contact, and associated mental formations
  
3. Decision—*adhimokkha*
  - C: conviction
  - F: not to flounder with uncertainty like a blind man groping in the dark
  - M: as decisiveness
  - P: the object to be convinced about

4. Energy—*virīya*
  - C: supporting, exertion, striving, marshalling, or driving of the mental factors to fulfill their function
  - F: to consolidate or support associated mental phenomena
  - M: as noncollapse
  - P: a sense of spiritual urgency or anything that stirs one to vigorous action

NOTE: *Virīya* is compared to strong military reinforcements that enable a king's army to defeat its enemy; similarly, energy supports the associated mental factors enabling them to fulfill their function.
  
5. Rapture—*pīti*
  - C: endearing, pleasure, happiness, or satisfaction
  - F: to refresh the body and the mind; or to pervade and thrill with rapture
  - M: as elation
  - P: the object; material base, object, contact, and associated mental formations
  
6. Desire—*chanda*
  - C: desire to act toward wholesome or unwholesome deeds
  - F: searching for an object
  - M: as need for an object
  - P: that same object

NOTE: It should be regarded as the stretching forth of the mind towards the object.

#### BEAUTIFUL UNIVERSALS (19)

1. Faith—*saddhā*
  - C: placing confidence in, having faith, trusting
  - F: to clarify; to set forth or enter into, as one might set forth to cross a flood
  - M: as nonfogginess, resolution, or the removal of the mind's impurities
  - P: something worthy to place faith such as hearing the liberating teachings, good friends, wise attention, diligent practice etc.
  
2. Mindfulness—*sati*
  - C: not wobbling, not floating away from the object
  - F: absence of confusion or nonforgetfulness of the object
  - M: as guardianship of mind and object; or as confrontation with an objective field
  - P: firm perception; or the four foundations of mindfulness
  
3. Shame of wrongdoing—*hiri*
  - C: disgust at bodily, verbal, or mental misconduct
  - F: inhibition of evil actions due to the influence of modesty or internal restraints
  - M: as the shrinking away from evil due to internal restraints
  - P: respect for oneself

4. Fear of wrongdoing—*ottappa*
  - C: dread of bodily, verbal, or mental misconduct
  - F: inhibition of evil actions due to concern for the opinions of others, punishment, social consequences, or external restraints
  - M: as the shrinking away from evil due to external restraints
  - P: respect for others
  
5. Nongreed—*alobha*
  - C: non-attachment toward sensual or worldly objects; or nonadherence to the object like a drop of water on a lotus leaf
  - F: to not grasp; likened to a liberated bhikkhu
  - M: as detachment, not grasping things as *mine*
  - P: wise attention to the object
  
6. Nonhatred—*adosa*
  - C: lack of ferocity, savagery, aggression, aversion; or noncontention, like a gentle friend
  - F: to remove annoyance and aversive states
  - M: as agreeableness
  - P: wise attention to the object

Loving-kindness—*mettā*

- C: promoting the welfare of living beings
- F: to prefer their welfare
- M: as the removal of ill will and annoyance
- P: seeing beings as lovable

NOTE: Loving-kindness succeeds when it makes ill will subside; it fails when it produces selfish affection.

7. Evenness of mind—*tatramajjhataṭṭā*
  - C: conveying the associated mental factors and consciousness evenly
  - F: to prevent deficiency and excess; to inhibit partiality and attachment
  - M: as the state of looking on with equanimity, neutrality, and mental balance; evenness
  - P: wise attention; or the material base, object, and associated mental formations

Equanimity—*upekkhā*

- C: promoting the aspect of neutrality towards beings
- F: to see equality in beings
- M: as the quieting of resentment and approval; impartiality
- P: seeing ownership of kamma thus: ‘Beings are owners of their kamma’

NOTE: *Upekkhā* succeeds when it makes resentment and approval subside; it fails when it produces worldly-minded indifference, unknowing, or ignorance regarding experiences.

Equanimity in the third jhāna—*jhānupekkhā*

C: complete evenness of attention toward the object or *nimitta*

F: to prevent attraction to mundane sensual forms of happiness

M: as the state of balance which does not grasp even sublime bliss; ever-evenness

P: the fading away of rapture

8. Tranquility of associated mental factors—*kāyapassaddhi*

C: the quieting down of disturbance in the associated mental factors

F: to crush disturbance of the associated mental factors

M: as inactivity, peacefulness and coolness of the associated mental factors

P: the associated mental factors

NOTE: Counters the defilements of restlessness and worry, which create distress.

9. Tranquility of consciousness—*cittapassaddhi*

C: the quieting down of disturbance in consciousness

F: to crush disturbance of consciousness

M: as inactivity, peacefulness and coolness of consciousness

P: the associated consciousness

NOTE: Counters the defilements of restlessness and worry, which create distress.

10. Lightness of associated mental factors—*kāyalahutā*

C: the subsiding of heaviness in the associated mental factors

F: to crush heaviness in the associated mental factors

M: as nonsluggishness of the associated mental factors, swiftness

P: the associated mental factors

NOTE: Counters the defilements of sloth and torpor, which can create heaviness.

11. Lightness of consciousness—*cittalahutā*

C: the subsiding of heaviness in consciousness

F: to crush heaviness in consciousness

M: as nonsluggishness of consciousness, swiftness

P: the associated consciousness

NOTE: Counters the defilements of sloth and torpor, which can create heaviness.

12. Malleability of associated mental factors—*kāyamudutā*

C: the subsiding of rigidity in the associated mental factors, pliancy of associated mental factors

F: to crush rigidity in the associated mental factors

M: as nonresistance to the object

P: the associated mental factors

NOTE: Counters the defilements of wrong view and conceit, which can create rigidity.

13. Malleability of consciousness—*cittamudutā*  
 C: the subsiding of rigidity in consciousness, pliancy of consciousness  
 F: to crush rigidity in consciousness  
 M: as nonresistance to the object  
 P: the associated consciousness  
 NOTE: Counters the defilements of wrong view and conceit, which can create rigidity.
14. Workability of associated mental factors—*kāyakammaññatā*  
 C: the subsiding of unwieldiness in the associated mental factors  
 F: to crush unwieldiness in the associated mental factors  
 M: as success in making something an object of the associated mental factors  
 P: the associated mental factors  
 NOTE: Counters the remaining hindrances, which create unwieldiness of the associated mental factors. It is likened to the process of refining gold to produce a workable metal. A workable mind enhances trust in the things that should be trusted, and inclines toward beneficial actions.
15. Workability of consciousness—*cittakammaññatā*  
 C: the subsiding of unwieldiness in consciousness  
 F: to crush unwieldiness in consciousness  
 M: as success in making something an object of consciousness  
 P: the associated consciousness  
 NOTE: Counters the remaining hindrances, which create unwieldiness of consciousness. It is likened to the process of refining gold to produce a workable metal. A workable mind enhances trust in the things that should be trusted, and inclines toward beneficial actions.
16. Proficiency of associated mental factors—*kāyapāguññatā*  
 C: healthiness and effectiveness of the associated mental factors  
 F: to crush incompetence of the associated mental factors  
 M: as absence of disability of the associated mental factors  
 P: the associated mental factors  
 NOTE: Counters deficiencies of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom, which disable the associated mental factors.
17. Proficiency of consciousness—*cittapāguññatā*  
 C: healthiness and effectiveness of consciousness  
 F: to crush incompetence of consciousness  
 M: as absence of disability of consciousness  
 P: the associated consciousness  
 NOTE: Counters deficiencies of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom, which disable consciousness.

18. Uprightness of associated mental factors—*kāyujjukatā*  
C: rectitude or straightness of the associated mental factors  
F: to crush tortuousness of the associated mental factors  
M: as honesty, straightforwardness, noncrookedness, and nondeceptiveness of associated mental factors  
P: the associated mental factors  
NOTE: Counters hypocrisy, deception, and fraudulence, which create crookedness in the associated mental factors.
19. Uprightness of consciousness—*cittujjukatā*  
C: rectitude or straightness of consciousness  
F: to crush tortuousness of consciousness  
M: as honesty, straightforwardness, noncrookedness, and nondeceptiveness of consciousness  
P: the associated consciousness  
NOTE: Counters hypocrisy, deception, and fraudulence, which create crookedness in consciousness.

## BEAUTIFUL OCCASIONALS (6)

1. Right speech—*sammāvācā*  
C: nontransgression in the field of speech  
F: to refrain from verbal misconduct  
M: abstinence from harmful speech  
P: the special qualities of faith, shame of wrongdoing, fear of wrongdoing, fewness of wishes, etc.  
NOTE: Should be regarded as the mind's disinclination to do evil.
2. Right action—*sammākammanta*  
C: nontransgression in the field of bodily action  
F: to refrain from bodily misconduct  
M: abstinence from harmful bodily action  
P: the special qualities of faith, shame of wrongdoing, fear of wrongdoing, fewness of wishes, etc.  
NOTE: Should be regarded as the mind's disinclination to do evil.
3. Right livelihood—*sammāājīva*  
C: nontransgression in the field of livelihood  
F: to refrain from misconduct in livelihood  
M: abstinence from engaging in wrong livelihood  
P: the special qualities of faith, shame of wrongdoing, fear of wrongdoing, fewness of wishes, etc.  
NOTE: Should be regarded as the mind's disinclination to do evil.
4. Compassion—*karuṇā*  
C: to promote the alleviation of suffering  
F: being unwilling to disregard the suffering of beings  
M: as noncruelty  
P: seeing vulnerability in those overwhelmed by suffering  
NOTE: It succeeds when it makes cruelty subside, and it fails when it produces sorrow.
5. Appreciative joy—*muditā*  
C: gladness and rejoicing produced by the recognition of another's success  
F: being not envious  
M: as the elimination of aversion, envy, jealousy, and boredom  
P: seeing the success of others  
NOTE: *Muditā* succeeds when it makes envy, jealousy, and boredom subside, and it fails when it produces merriment, giddiness, exuberance, or exhilaration.



6. Wisdom faculty—*paññā*
- C: penetrating things according to their intrinsic and ultimate nature
- F: to illuminate the object like a lamp makes objects visible; to abolish the darkness of delusion which conceals the individual essence of states
- M: as clarity of perspective, lucid discernment, nonbewilderment, like a good guide in the forest
- P: wise attention; concentration, because the Buddha said: “One who is concentrated understands things as they really are.”  
(S: 35: 99-100; S: 35: 160-161; S: 22: 5-6; S: 56: 1-2)

#### UNWHOLESOME UNIVERSALS (4)

1. Delusion—*moha*
- C: unknowing
- F: to conceal the individual essence of an object
- M: as the absence of right understanding
- P: unwise attention
2. Shamelessness of wrongdoing—*ahirika*
- C: absence of disgust at bodily, verbal and mental misconduct; or immodesty
- F: to do evil out of an absence of modesty or internal restraint
- M: as not shrinking away from the evil
- P: disrespect for oneself
3. Fearlessness of wrongdoing—*anottappa*
- C: absence of anxiety and dread about bodily, verbal, and mental misconduct
- F: doing evil because of an absence of fear and dread of external consequences
- M: as not shrinking away from evil actions
- P: disrespect for others
4. Restlessness—*uddhacca*
- C: agitation, distraction, and disquiet, like water whipped by the wind
- F: unsteadiness, like a flag or banner whipped by the wind
- M: as turmoil, like ashes flung up when pelted with stones
- P: unwise attention to things that stimulate mental disquiet

#### UNWHOLESOME OCCASIONALS (10)

1. Greed, attachment—*lobha*
- C: grasping an object as *I* or as *mine*; craving for the object
- F: sticking or clinging as meat sticks to a hot pan
- M: as not giving up; adhering
- P: seeing enjoyment in things that lead to bondage
- Note: Greed (*lobha*) includes all forms and degrees of attachment, clinging, longing, and selfish desire.

2. Wrong view—*ditṭhi*
  - C: unwise interpretation of things
  - F: to presume
  - M: as wrong interpretation, as attachment to opinions, holding the belief that the object is permanent, satisfying, or has self-essence
  - P: unwillingness to see Noble Ones, hear the true teachings, and so on
  
3. Conceit—*māna*
  - C: haughtiness, pride
  - F: to promote arrogance and self-exaltation
  - M: as an attitude of vainglory or the desire to promote oneself, narcissism
  - P: greed dissociated from wrong views

Note: Conceit (*māna*) is an unwholesome mental state that is rooted in greed or attachment (*lobha*). Wrong view is excluded as a proximate cause because the presence of wrong view would generate a state categorized as *lobha ditṭhi* rather than *lobha mana*. An arrogant attachment to one's genuine accomplishments (meditative or professional) could be a proximate cause for conceit to arise if attachment was present and the event was neither misunderstood nor justified by opinions. Note that although wrong views might be absent, delusion (*moha*), as a universal feature of every unwholesome state, would still be present.
  
4. Hatred—*dosa*
  - C: savageness, ferocity, animosity
  - F: to spread like poison; or to burn up and consume one's own support, like a fire consumes a forest
  - M: as persecution, like an enemy who finds an opportunity to attack
  - P: the grounds for annoyance and ill will

Note: Hatred (*dosa*) includes all forms and degrees of aversion, ill will, anger, hostility, fear, impatience, aggression, intolerance, etc.
  
5. Envy—*issā*
  - C: being jealous of others' success and good fortune
  - F: to be dissatisfied with the accomplishments of others
  - M: as aversion toward the accomplishments of others
  - P: another's success
  
6. Possessiveness—*macchhariya*
  - C: avarice; concealing one's own success so that it will not benefit others
  - F: to obstruct sharing with others
  - M: as shrinking away to prevent sharing; as meanness or stinginess
  - P: one's own success or good fortune
  
7. Worry—*kukkucca*
  - C: subsequent regret
  - F: to sorrow about what has and what has not been done
  - M: as remorse
  - P: wrongs of commission and omission

8. Sloth—*thīna*
  - C: lack of driving power, stiffness
  - F: to dispel energy
  - M: as subsiding, sluggishness, or sinking mind
  - P: unwise attention to boredom and drowsiness
  
9. Torpor—*middha*
  - C: unwieldiness, dullness
  - F: to smother
  - M: as laziness, nodding, and sleep
  - P: unwise attention to boredom and drowsiness
  
10. Doubt—*vicikicchā*
  - C: uncertainty
  - F: to waver
  - M: as indecisiveness; or as taking various sides
  - P: unwise attention