

The Brahmaviharas

- o Brahmaviharas (literally “Abodes of the Gods”) are sublime or divine states of mind. There are four: Loving Kindness, Compassion, Sympathetic Joy, and Equanimity. They are said to be the natural states of mind
- o Brahmaviharas are taught as having near and far enemies. The “far enemy” is the opposite of the particular Brahmavihara. The “near enemy” is similar to the Brahmavihara but has an often-subtle quality of self-absorption instead of open generosity.
- o The four Brahmaviharas:
 - o **Metta:** Loving kindness.
 - Far enemy: anger or ill-will
 - Near enemy: “selfish affection”. True metta is not self-interested.
 - o **Karuna:** Compassion
 - Far enemy: cruelty
 - Near enemy: pity, which implies condescension
 - o **Mudita:** Sympathetic Joy. Happiness for others; for the good fortune of others
 - Far enemy: resentment or envy
 - Near enemy: “frivolous delight” or “exuberance”, implying a vicarious enjoyment
 - o **Upekkha:** Equanimity. Not the same as serenity or calm. Clarity and balance, even in the midst of chaos.
 - Far enemy: craving or clinging
 - Near enemy: indifference or apathy
- o The Brahmaviharas can be thought of in this way: Metta is a fundamental predisposition of mind. Karuna is Metta when it encounters someone having a bad time. Mudita is Metta when it encounters someone having a good time. Upekkha is the quality that sustains a balance.
- o A paradox: these states will arise as your practice deepens, yet cultivating them deepens your practice.