



This is the document to read out during a RAFT to Recovery meeting. The full document is available for download in the table available via this [link](#).

A section from this week's practice.

The Four Resolves: Skillful effort on the path

Cultivating the resolve to build and navigate our raft
Directing our energy wisely

“The chains of habit are too light to be felt until they’re too heavy to be broken.” ~ Samuel Johnson

“We are conditioned, and we can be reconditioned – even unconditioned.” ~ Vince Cullen

. Recognising the difficulties inherent in life (Gotama, the Buddha’s first reality), and the nature of our embodied experience naturally gives rise to the question: *“What do I do with the understanding that life is painful, difficult and disappointing?”*

The answer lies in cultivating skillful effort.

This chapter provides an overview of a crucial Buddhist practice known as the ‘Four Great Efforts’, also called the ‘Four Right Strivings’.

We will frame these as the **Four Resolves**, guiding principles that help us channel our energy wisely and compassionately away from harmful patterns and towards healing and freedom.

The Four Resolves are:

- ★ Resolving to **prevent** harmful cravings and compulsions. To recognise our triggers and to steer clear of risky situations, while avoiding the temptation to replace one addiction or unhelpful habit with another.
- ★ Resolving to **abandon** our harmful addictions and compulsions that are keeping us stuck in painful places. This is like patching up the biggest holes in our raft to prevent us from sinking.
- ★ Resolving to **cultivate** helpful, healthier and creative ways to live. In many ways, these healthy habits will replace our old unhealthy habits. For example, developing gratitude, new hobbies, healthier lifestyles and attending support groups.
- ★ Resolving to **maintain**, strengthen and ultimately embody our new healthier habits and lifestyle. For example, engagement with support networks, daily practices and ethical living.

As [Stephen Batchelor](#) notes, true resolve isn't about brute force: *"Resolve is not about forcing or pushing yourself to do something but about creating conditions in your life that naturally lead you to it. It's about reorganising your inner and outer life so that your mind and circumstances support what you truly wish to achieve."*

Self-Reflections

Consider your own patterns of effort, intentions and resolves:

- ★ Where does most of your energy seem to go currently in relation to your well-being?
- ★ Do we put more effort into avoiding difficulty, dwelling in negativity, seeking novelty, or nurturing the good?
- ★ Which of the Four Resolves (Prevent, Abandon, Cultivate, Maintain) feels most relevant or needed for you right now?
- ★ What are your biggest obstacles to applying skillful effort, for example, lack of motivation, feeling overwhelmed, perfectionism or

procrastination?

- ★ What does the word ‘resolve’ mean to you personally? Does the idea of ‘creating conditions’ (Batchelor quote) feel different from ‘forcing yourself’?
 - ★ Can you think of a time you successfully applied one of these resolves even in a small way?
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Remember to Remember

The ‘Four Right Efforts’, or **Four Resolves**, provide a vital, practical framework for channelling our energy wisely on the path away from our destructive cravings and habits and towards freedom. They offer a compassionate yet clear-sighted structure for recognising where effort is needed: preventing the harmful, abandoning what has arisen, cultivating the beneficial, and maintaining the progress made.

Understanding these intentions is a key part of recognising the landscape of our inner world and the tools available for navigating it. While ‘Right Effort’ is a core component of the ‘Eightfold Path’ explored fully in a later chapter, embracing these resolves now provides direction and empowers us to actively participate in our liberation from the outset. They remind us that transformation requires not just passive awareness, but also skillful, courageous, and persistent effort – the energy needed to build, maintain, and propel our raft towards the safe shore.

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