



This document is an extract from the full chapter which is available for download in the table via this [link](#) and is intended for use by participants of meetings.

## Dana – the gift of generosity

*“If beings knew, as I know, the results of giving and sharing, they would not eat without having given, nor would the stain of miserliness overcome their minds.”*

~ Gotama (the Buddha)

*“Attention is the rarest and purest form of generosity.”* ~ Simone Weil

## Generosity – the antidote to selfishness

### Gathering the first materials with open-heartedness

With our journey now begun – surveying the dangerous shore of suffering and disappointment – we now lay our hands upon the first, essential materials for building our vessel to freedom. At the very heart of this process is generosity (*dana*), which the early Buddhist tradition regards as a powerful, foundational attitude for our journey to freedom.

This practice invites us to begin building our inner raft with one of the oldest and most powerful practices in the Buddhist tradition: generosity. This is not merely about giving things away – it is about cultivating an open-hearted way of being that supports both personal healing and community connection.

Generosity extends far beyond the simple act of our giving away material possessions. It expresses a profound generosity of heart and mind – the deliberate antidote to the tightness, anxiety, and self-contraction that arise alongside our suffering and our human struggle with craving, grasping, and reactivity. Generosity, in this sense, is the opening of our hands, heart, and mind to life itself.

When we intentionally cultivate generosity, we are beginning to gather the initial materials needed to build our raft. With each act of generosity, whether it be a smile, a small kindness to a friend, an hour spent listening to someone in need, or a moment of patience with ourselves – we begin binding the pieces of our vessel together with the *ropes* of the ‘Appropriate Responses’: compassion, friendliness, appreciative joy, and equanimity (self-compassion, self-love, self-appreciation and self-balance).

When we practice generosity, we naturally foster gratitude and contentment. In Buddhist psychology, these qualities directly counteract our sense of *not enough* – the root of our harmful cravings and repetitive, self-defeating habits. As one teacher has said, ‘generosity is the antidote to today’s pervading *doctrine of insufficiency*.’

---

### **Self-reflections**

- ★ When have your own patterns of craving, avoidance, or self-doubt limited your capacity to be generous – with things, time, or your presence? What did those inner constraints or conflicts feel like?
  - ★ Recall a time you offered genuine generosity (to yourself or another). How did this act change your internal weather? Did giving feel different from surrendering to old habits or cravings?
  - ★ How might you cultivate an ‘*open heart, open hands, open mind*’ today, in small moments?
  - ★ Pause for a moment: what plank of generosity will you lay down today?
-

## Journaling prompts

- ★ **Binding your raft:** Describe your vision of *lasting freedom* or *authentic well-being*. How does practicing generosity, in any form, bind your raft and carry you closer to that vision?
  - ★ **What happens when you give:** Write about a recent time when giving – whether material, attention, time, or care, brought you a sense of deep peace or clarity. What sensations or feelings arose?
  - ★ **Self-care on the journey:** Using the RAFT metaphor: Imagine your raft – what act of self-generosity today would serve as an anchor or a fresh plank, steadying you for the onward journey?
  - ★ **Creating connections:** How might generosity, extended to others, create ropes of connection and reduce isolation? Who can you offer a gift of presence or support to today?
- 

## Remember to remember

Generosity (*dana*) lies at the heart of our journey from suffering to freedom. It is the open-handed, open-hearted practice that creates stability, cultivates contentment, and helps us to gather the first materials of our raft. With every act of giving, we gather new materials, bind each plank with kindness and compassion, and ensure our vessel is resilient for the voyage across life's unpredictable seas. The more we give – to others and to ourselves – the stronger, more joyful, and more spacious our raft becomes.

Generosity (*dana*) is the first active step from pain toward freedom. It begins our healing. It builds our raft. Every open hand, every shared story, every self-kindness strengthens the vessel we sail in. And the more we give, the lighter the journey becomes.

*“Generosity supports relinquishing, which supports morality, which supports truthfulness, which supports wisdom, which supports equanimity, and so forth.” ~ Allan Lokos*

*“We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.” ~*  
Norman MacEwan

---

The RAFT to Freedom programme is freely offered with open hands and open hearts, as Cathryn and Vince’s practice of generosity. If you would like to contribute towards the running costs of RAFT to Freedom, please email [contact@raft2freedom](mailto:contact@raft2freedom).

---

### Sutta References

[RAFT to Freedom](#) © 2025 by Dr Cathryn Jacob and Vince Cullen is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

To view a copy of this license, visit

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>

