



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.

Mindfulness of the present moment – Knowing what we're doing

Bringing wisdom to our present moment awareness

“Clear comprehension means you know what you are doing, why you are doing it, and whether it is worth doing.” - Ajahn Sucitto

Clear comprehension is an awareness with deeper understanding and wisdom, involving an awareness of our actions, intentions, and their appropriateness – a knowing of our internal and external landscapes.

“To be mindful means to be aware of what is happening in the present moment without judging or reacting. This awareness helps us to identify the roots of our suffering, including addiction, and to transform it with compassion.”

Thich Nhat Hanh

This vital quality, in the service of recognising what it is to be human, elevates our mindfulness beyond simple, bare attention. It involves not just *knowing* what the body is doing, but understanding the context, purpose, and appropriateness of our actions as they happen.

Gotama emphasised that mindfulness with clear comprehension allows us to understand the true nature of our pain, difficulties and disappointments

(dukkha), particularly the suffering caused by our attachments and cravings. By observing our bodily sensations and mental states with clear comprehension, we develop insight into how our desire and clinging cause suffering.

While mindfulness acts like the anchor keeping us present, **clear comprehension** is the skilful intelligence that guides our actions in the present moment.

Gotama, the Buddha, illustrates this mindfulness with clear comprehension, by describing awareness during our everyday activities:

“... a practitioner knows when he is going forward and when he is going back; he knows when he is looking ahead and when he is looking aside; he knows when he is bending and stretching; he knows when he is carrying his outer robe, bowl, and robe; he knows when he is eating, drinking, chewing, and tasting; he knows when he is defecating and urinating; he knows when he is walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep, waking up, talking, and remaining silent.”

This isn't just passive observation; it implies an awareness *infused with understanding and wisdom*.

Self-reflections

Consider your own experience with awareness of actions and intentions:

- ★ How often do you move through daily activities (like walking, eating, working, talking, and going to the toilet) on autopilot versus with conscious awareness?
- ★ Before acting, how often are you aware of your underlying intention or motivation?
- ★ Think of a recent action. Can you apply the four aspects of clear comprehension (Purpose, Suitability, Mindful presence, Unconfused) to it retrospectively?

- ★ When have you acted impulsively and later realised the action wasn't suitable or beneficial? What was missing in terms of clear comprehension?
 - ★ Can you recall moments where you acted with clarity and purpose, fully aware of what you were doing and why? What did that feel like?
 - ★ Could mindfulness with clear comprehension, change your relationship to cravings as they arise?
-

Journaling prompts

Use your journal to cultivate mindfulness with clear comprehension:

- ★ **Mindful routine:** Choose one simple daily routine (for example, brushing your teeth, making coffee/tea, washing dishes). Practice performing it with deliberate clear comprehension, paying attention to each movement, the purpose, and the sensations involved. Write about the experience.
 - ★ **Applying the four aspects:** Reflect on a specific decision or action you took today related to your well-being and journey to liberation. Analyse it using the four aspects: What was the *purpose*? Was the action *suitable* for the situation? Did you maintain mindful awareness (*mindful presence*) while doing it? Were you seeing the situation clearly (*Unconfused*)?
 - ★ **Autobiography in five chapters:** Read Portia Nelson's poem above. Where do you see yourself in that progression right now regarding a specific habit or pattern? How does clear comprehension relate to moving from falling in the hole habitually (Chapter III) to walking around it (Chapter IV), or choosing a different street (Chapter V)?
-

Remember to remember

Mindfulness with clear comprehension deepens our practice beyond bare awareness, infusing it with wisdom, purpose, and skilful understanding. It is the crucial navigational intelligence for our RAFT to Freedom, enabling us to

Recognise not just *what* we are doing, but *why* and *how*, and whether our actions truly serve our journey towards freedom.

By consciously cultivating awareness of purpose, suitability, mindful presence, and the absence of confusion, in our daily activities, we move from automatic reactivity towards intentional living. This careful attention helps us to dismantle the unconscious patterns of destructive cravings and compulsions and empowers us to make choices aligned with our deepest intentions. Let us carry this practice of 'knowing what we're doing' forward as we continue to explore the landscape of the body.

[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/>

