



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.

Confidence as a Defence

“In some ways, to be a person of faith is to be a person whose life is illuminated from within. There is a guiding light... It is trans-rational, yet it speaks with utter clarity, serving as our foundational, non-negotiable value or standard.” ~ Stephen Batchelor

*“Faith is taking the first step even when you don’t see the whole staircase.”
~ Martin Luther King Jr.*

From faith to verified trust

As we continue the second stage of our journey – focusing on *abandoning harmful cravings and compulsions* – we explore the first of the ‘Five Defenders’ – Confidence (*saddhā*), often translated as ‘Faith’. In the context of the RAFT to Freedom workbook, this quality is far from blind belief. Instead, it is the vital inspiration, motivation, trust, and growing conviction rooted in direct experience that allows us to undertake and sustain the challenging journey from suffering to freedom. The Buddhist teacher, Bernat Font Clos describes Confidence as *‘the inspiration, the motivation, and the commitment to practice’*.

The human struggle with harmful patterns of craving and avoidance often breed deep self-doubt, hopelessness, and cynicism, manifesting as thoughts like, "*I can't change*," or "*Nothing works*". Confidence is the direct antidote to these patterns. It is the willingness to believe that freedom is possible, that the path is trustworthy, and crucially, that we possess the inherent capacity to heal and grow.

This Confidence directly supports the second stage of our journey, by giving us the courage and motivation needed to face and begin 'abandoning harmful cravings and compulsions'. It also acts as a powerful defence against the hindrance of 'Immobilising Doubt', which can paralyse our efforts (explored in Chapter 42). In our RAFT to Freedom metaphor, Confidence is the fundamental belief in the possibility of reaching the safe shore and the trust in the design and materials of the raft – representing the teachings and practices.

Self-reflections

Use these questions to pause and look inward. They are not problems to solve but invitations to explore your living relationship with confidence and trust.

- ★ What most inspires confidence in the journey to freedom right now – a practice, a person, a past success, or an insight?
- ★ Where do doubt or hopelessness arise most strongly, and what patterns can be observed around them?
- ★ How deep is trust in the process of this path, even when it feels slow or difficult?
- ★ How much confidence is felt in your own capacity for wise choices, learning, and growth? What supports this self-trust – and what undermines it?
- ★ How does striving to live by the Five Gifts (ethical living), strengthen or weaken self-confidence in daily life?
- ★ When have you surprised yourself by being stronger or more resilient than you believed?

- ★ What obstacle to confidence feels the most challenging at present. How could it be addressed with the help of the defenders?
 - ★ In what ways does self-confidence act as protection against falling back into harmful habits?
 - ★ What gives rise to the belief that freedom is possible, even in the face of difficulty?
 - ★ Which practices have felt most reliable and supportive so far?
 - ★ When the process has been doubted in the past, what happened when you stayed with the course anyway?
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Journaling prompts

Writing makes inner experience visible. Use these prompts to deepen your confidence.

- ★ **Sources of inspiration:** Write about a person, story, or teaching that gives rise to hope. Which qualities inspire you, and how might you nurture those same qualities within yourself?
- ★ **Evidence log:** Keep a running list of small wins, moments of clarity, or skilful choices this week. At week's end, review the list. How does it shift your perspective on progress?
- ★ **Working with doubt:** When doubt arises, write down the exact words or feelings. Then write down counter-evidence that challenges them. What happens when both sides are seen together?
- ★ **Trusting experience:** Choose one practice (mindfulness, journaling, community, therapy). Describe in detail one benefit you've directly experienced. How does writing this encourage trust in the practice?
- ★ **Affirming confidence:** Create a personal affirmation such as "*Change is possible*" or "*I trust my capacity to grow.*" Write it daily for a week. What do you notice about its impact on your outlook?
- ★ **Moments of strength:** Recall a time you met difficulty without falling

back into harmful habits. Describe what you did and what inner resources supported you. What does this memory reveal about resilience?

- ★ **Confidence in connection:** Reflect on a time when community, friendship, or mentorship strengthened your confidence. How did their encouragement change your view of yourself?
- ★ **Facing setbacks:** Write about a recent setback. How could it be reframed as a lesson rather than a failure? What strengths did you discover in staying the course?
- ★ **Ethical choices:** Record one ethical choice you made this week that built self-respect. How does this choice act as another plank in your raft?
- ★ **Creative responsiveness:** Describe a moment when you responded differently than usual – more creatively, less reactively. What new possibilities opened from that choice?
- ★ **Evolving ‘Self’:** Write about how you are different now compared to a year ago. What does this show you about your capacity for growth and change?
- ★ **Impermanence in action:** Journal about a craving, feeling, or difficulty that eventually passed. How might this memory give you confidence to hold steady through future waves?

Remember to remember

Confidence, the First Defence of Freedom, is far more than wishful thinking. It is the steady trust that becomes our first line of defence against despair and doubt. Just as a sailor must believe in the strength of their vessel before setting out to sea, so too must there be trust in your raft and the capacity to steer it. Without this trust, a launch from the dangerous shore would never happen. With it, the courage is found to face uncertainty, craving, and fear with resilience.

Stephen Batchelor suggests it is an inner light that illuminates our path and

gives us the courage to take the first step and keep going. At first, this confidence may appear fragile, borrowed from the inspiration of others who have walked this path before us – mentors, companions, or those who have found freedom. Over time, through diligent effort and direct experience, it matures into something unshakable: a tested trust that no storm of craving or doubt can sink. Each time a skilful choice is made, a difficult craving is sat with, harmful urges are resisted, or life is lived in harmony with the Gifts, another plank of confidence is laid down in our raft.

Confidence is not blind faith; it is the lived experience that the path works, that change is real, and that freedom is possible. Remember to remember that confidence is already present. It is the inner light that ignites Courageous Effort, supports Healing Mindfulness, steadies the Gathered Mind, and opens the door to Discernment. Nurturing confidence is nurturing the very heart of the journey to freedom, ensuring our raft is launched with purpose and trust. When doubt arises, there can be a return to the truth that the raft is trustworthy, the path is trustworthy, and the capacity to heal is present.

“A person with confidence seeks what is skillful, associates with the wise, lives ethically, and develops wisdom.” ~ Gotama

“Faith is what allows us to take the next step when we don’t yet see the whole path.” ~ Sharon Salzberg

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