



## 47 – Energising Joy as a Support

### Catching the favourable winds and the buoyancy of the heart

*“From gladness comes joy; from joy, tranquillity; from tranquillity, happiness; and from happiness, the mind becomes collected.” ~  
Gotama (The Buddha)*

*“When we learn to delight in what is good in ourselves, we are no longer driven by lack. Joy becomes the expression of enoughness.” ~  
Christina Feldman*

### The clean uplift

In this Freedom stage of our journey, Joy does not mean excitement, pleasure, or getting what we want. It is not the buzz of stimulation, the rush of winning, or the relief of finally *having enough*. It means the mind is lighter: less clenched around craving, less braced against discomfort, less tangled in its own commentary. There is more room inside experience – a quiet buoyancy, a warmth, a simple aliveness that comes from not being weighed down by the constant push and pull of wanting and resisting. When ‘Liberating Mindfulness’ (Chapter 44) steadies awareness, ‘Penetrating Inquiry’ (Chapter 45) brightens interest, and ‘Enthusiasm’ (Chapter 46) becomes sustainable, a natural uplift appears – warmth, brightness, buoyancy, a sense of aliveness that is not dependent on drama or perfect conditions. Often it’s simple: the relief of not being tangled up for a moment.

### The uplift, the ease, and the heart’s gladness

In the early teachings, Energising Joy (*pīti* in Pali) equates to the fourth factor ‘Joy’ within the traditional ‘Seven Factors of Awakening’. It can be helpful to distinguish Energising Joy (*pīti*) from its two close Pali companions that are also translated as ‘Joy’ in English translations.

Energising Joy (*pīti*) is the *uplift*: the brightening, buoyancy, and aliveness that arrives when the mind is less burdened. It can feel like a warm surge, a

lightness in the body, a quiet thrill, a wave of refreshment – energy that rises and wakes the system up. The Pali term *Sukha*, by contrast, is the ease that can follow: calmer, smoother, more settled wellbeing. Where *pīti* has a *lift* to it, *sukha* has a *landing*. You could say *pīti* is the wind catching the sails; *sukha* is the steady glide once the raft is moving.

In the RAFT workbook, we have translated the third Pali term *muditā* as Appreciative Joy (Chapter 35), the heart's gladness in our own and another's wellbeing. *Muditā* is relational – it softens envy and comparison – whereas *pīti* and *sukha* describe the inner tone of a mind that is brightening and settling in practice. In the natural unfolding, *pīti* brightens, tranquillity steadies, *sukha* comforts, and from that ease the mind gathers more readily into 'A Unified Mind'.

A key nuance in the Seven Supports (Factors of Awakening) teachings is that Energising Joy is not cultivated as *positive emotion* for its own sake. It is directional. It is joy that grows when the mind steps back from stimulation, cools reactivity, and tastes moments of stopping – joy grounded in seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, and said to mature in release. In other words, Energising Joy is the kind of uplift that naturally leans toward letting go, not towards seeking more.

### **Wind in the sails**

If Enthusiasm is the steady rhythm that keeps the crossing going, Energising Joy is the moment the wind catches the sails. The effort does not vanish, but it becomes less gritty. The raft begins to move with a new ease – carried for a while by something larger than willpower.

In the past, many of us learned to rely on *loud* forms of aliveness – intensity, urgency, stimulation, winning, being admired, getting the next hit of reassurance. Those pleasures often come with a crash, and they keep the nervous system leaning forward. Energising Joy is different. It arises not from acquiring something, but from releasing burden – from a mind that is momentarily free of hindrance (Hazards). It has a clean, refreshing quality: enlivening without frenzy.

### **The spectrum of Joy: five grades**

Later Buddhist teachers reflected that Energising Joy can feel different in intensity. Sometimes it's only a small lift; sometimes it's a bigger wave of brightness or buoyancy. They described these variations simply to help people recognise what's happening.

In practice, we don't need to rate it or aim for a particular *level* of joy. Whatever form of joy is present is fine. Even a faint uplift can support our practice, and a stronger one can be enjoyed – without turning Joy into something to chase harder.

1. **Minor joy:** a slight lift, a subtle thrill, a flicker of interest.
2. **Momentary joy:** a brief flash – quick, bright, and gone.
3. **Showering joy:** a wave-like refreshment, as if something cool passes through the system.
4. **Uplifting joy:** lightness, buoyancy, as if the inner weight has been lifted.
5. **Pervading joy:** a steady suffusion – the whole body-mind feels quietly lit from within.

The point isn't to chase the stronger forms; it's to learn that even a small lift can support the crossing.

### **The pivot of Freedom: from getting to generating**

The pivot in this chapter is the shift from joy that depends on *having* to joy that comes from *being present*. In the early teachings this is described as the difference between *sāmisā pīti* (uplift tied to the five cords of sensual pleasure – joy with *bait* in it) and *nirāmisā pīti* (uplift not tied to sensuality – joy born of abandoning and non-reactivity). One relies on what we chase; the other arises from the quality of attention and the relief of letting go.

The discourses also hint at a further refinement: joy not tied to stimulation; joy born of inner clarity and a Unified Mind; and an even subtler joy that can arise when we recognise the mind's release from craving, aversion, and confusion. This matters in the Freedom stage because it helps us trust that the brightest joy is often the least dramatic – the glow of genuine unburdening. This is 'Freedom' personally experienced and verified, however briefly.

*“In the midst of hate, I found there was, within me, an invincible love.*

*In the midst of tears, I found there was, within me, an invincible smile.  
In the midst of chaos, I found there was, within me, an invincible calm.  
I realized, through it all, that in the midst of winter, I found there was,  
within me, an invincible summer.  
And that makes me happy. For it says that no matter how hard the  
world pushes against me, within me, there's something stronger –  
something better, pushing right back.” ~ Albert Camus*

The pivot turns when we realise: I don't have to hunt for joy outside. I can begin to generate brightness here – by noticing and *appreciating* what is wholesome, by letting ease register, by allowing the heart to lift when the mind is less entangled. This breaks the dependency loop. We discover that our raft can catch its own wind. Energising Joy is the uplift that naturally inclines toward tranquillity rather than stimulation. A natural outcome of noticing and appreciating is *gratitude*.

*“Joy is essentially the simplest form of gratitude.” ~ Karl Barth*

The Secular Buddhist teacher, Stephen Batchelor, often frames joy as the affective echo of a mind that has become less reactive: when the mind stills, settles, and opens into wonder, a sense of well-being naturally follows – joy, happiness, delight, as different shades of the same “this is okay” felt sense. He also points out something easily missed in dharma talks: the world is not just a *vale of tears*, it's not *all* pain, difficulties and disappointments!

If we look honestly, there is also joy, delight, and enchantment present in the middle of impermanence and difficulty. Rather than treating joy as a reward we must earn, we can understand it as what becomes available when we pause, stop feeding reactivity, and allow experience to appear freshly, like the practice of resting with the question “*What is this?*” until life is seen as surprising and mysteriously *alive*. In that kind of attention, joy doesn't depend on getting what we want; it arises from the ‘Freedom’ to be present, to respond more fully, and to sense life's immediacy without the old cravings, aversions and compulsions driving the moment.

### **The joy of appreciation and gratitude**

If *Energising Joy* is the wind in our sails, *gratitude* is the act of adjusting the rigging so the sails can catch it. We often think gratitude is something we

pay *after* receiving a gift, but on this crossing, it is an important attitude - a perspective that leads to a feeling of well-being.

Being mindful of simple *appreciation* – noticing the warmth of a cup of tea, the beauty of art and nature, the safety of this room, or the breath flowing freely – shifts the mind from *lacking* to *having*. It is the quickest way to *gladden* the mind. When we appreciate what is here, we stop scanning the horizon for what is missing, and in that pause, joy naturally arises.

“Joy does not simply happen to us. We have to choose joy...” ~

Henri Nouwen

### **HEAL: ‘Taking In the Good’**

Rick Hanson, a Buddhist psychologist and author of *Buddha’s brain*, offers the **HEAL** practice as a simple way to *grow joy into something that we notice*. Instead of letting a moment of joy vanish as soon as it arrives, we *pause, linger and savour*. It’s based on ‘*taking in the good*’: deliberately internalising positive experiences so they become steadier inner resources over time.

1. **H** is *Have* a beneficial experience (notice one already here, or gently create one).
2. **E** is *Enrich* it (stay with it, savour it, let it become more vivid).
3. **A** is *Absorb* it (let the feeling sink in—like warm sunlight soaking into the skin).
4. **L** is *Link* (optional): while the good experience is strong in the foreground, lightly bring to mind something difficult so the positive can soothe and gradually replace what’s painful.

Approached this way, Energising Joy becomes more than a passing mood—it transforms passing states into long-term traits.

### **How to practise: inviting the clean uplift**

1. **Subtle navigation:** We don’t try to manufacture joy. We just nudge conditions a little and notice how the system responds.
2. **Tone check-in:** We pause and sense the flavour of the moment – flat and grey, tight and driven, or quietly ready.

- a. **If it's flat, gladden:** We turn toward something wholesome and real – a kind moment, a skilful restraint, the fact that we showed up – and let it land as simple warmth.
  - b. **If it's tight, settle first:** When we're edgy or over-bright, we soften before we lift: eyes relax, jaw unclenches, shoulders drop, breath becomes ordinary. The tone often eases by itself.
3. **Savour without grabbing:** When a lift appears – warmth, ease, quiet brightness – we stay a few extra beats, not to cling, just to let the nervous system register it – *pause, linger, savour*.
4. **Let ease spread:** If comfort is present, we allow it to soak through the body a little more – simple nourishment, not a peak to chase.
5. **Don't make it a task:** If joy isn't there, we don't treat that as failure. We return to the causes – steadiness, balanced effort, patience – and let that be enough.
6. **Let joy hand off to calm:** Because joy is energising, we use it like medicine: it lifts dullness, but if we're already keyed up we don't push it. When it's present, we let it brighten and refresh, then allow it to settle naturally into 'Deep Calm' and a 'Unified Mind'.
7. **Weather wisdom:** We don't chase the wind – we use it when it comes, and return to good trim when it doesn't.

### Self-reflections

1. When a spark of joy or brightness appears, do I grip it – or can I let it come and go?
2. Do I feel guilty or undeserving when I experience joy?
3. Can I distinguish driven excitement from wholesome, sustaining joy?
4. Am I waiting for the world to make me happy, or noticing the small sources of wellbeing already here?
5. When I feel even a small moment of ease, do I let it register – or do I dismiss it as *nothing*?
6. When joy shows up, do I look for what might ruin it?
7. Do I *only* allow myself to feel good after I've *earned* it?
8. Do I withhold gratitude because I feel my current situation isn't 'perfect' enough yet?
9. How does the sensation in my chest change when I take a moment to simply say, 'thank you' for my breath?

### Journaling prompts

1. **Joy audit (micro-moments):** List three small moments of aliveness today (sound, light, warmth, kindness). For each, note *where you felt it in the body* and what happened to your breath.
2. **Rewriting the flat moment:** Describe a recent *grey* spell. What was happening (body, thoughts, environment)? What one gentle action might have shifted the tone (movement, contact, kindness, simplicity)?
3. **Clean uplift log:** Recall a time you felt energised *without* urgency, drama, or stimulation. What conditions supported it (sleep, company, purpose, nature, finishing something)? How long did it last, and what helped it fade into steadiness rather than crash?
4. **Gladdening in practice:** Write one paragraph about a wholesome choice you made (restraint, honesty, showing up, caring). Then write a second paragraph describing what it feels like to *let that goodness land* without minimising it.
5. **Piti and sukha map:** In the last week, note one moment of uplift (brightness, buoyancy) and one of ease (settled wellbeing). What helped each arise – and which one would support you most right now?
6. **Letter to the inner critic:** Write to the voice that doubts you *deserve* joy. Keep it simple: what does joy support in you (patience, steadiness, kindness), and what happens when you forbid it?
7. **Savouring without gripping:** Choose one pleasant experience from today and describe how you *stayed with it for 10–20 seconds* without trying to make it bigger. What changed when you allowed it to be small but real?
8. **The Gratitude Anchor:** Identify three ordinary things that supported you today (for example, a working kettle, a paved road, a friend’s text). Write down how these small things made the day easier.

### **Supporting material: scientific and philosophical perspectives**

For those interested in the scientific and philosophical underpinnings of ‘Energising Joy’ as a Support, the following overview highlights some key connections.

- ★ **Neuroscience:** Neuroscience often separates incentive salience (wanting) from hedonic impact (liking). We can feel strongly pulled toward something even when it isn’t especially pleasurable – a

pattern that shows up clearly in addiction, where cues can amplify wanting even as enjoyment is blunted.

One practical implication is that joy isn't *just more dopamine*.

Systems linked to enjoyment and contentment also involve opioid and endocannabinoid signalling in specific *pleasure hotspots*, and they respond to how we attend. When we slow down enough to register ease, kindness, safety, or clarity, we're strengthening the brain's capacity to notice subtle reward again – the sort of reward that doesn't demand chasing.

★ **Psychology:** A lot of therapy work here is about shifting from “I must get rid of this feeling” to “I can relate to this feeling differently.” In ACT, that's cognitive defusion: thoughts and urges are noticed as mental events rather than commands, which makes room for choice and values-based action.

Other approaches explicitly cultivate *clean uplift* by strengthening positive affect without tipping into craving. Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) trains decentering from rumination so the mind can stabilise and brighten without getting pulled into loops. Mindfulness-Based Relapse Prevention (MBRP) builds skills like urge-surfing and present-moment interest so reward can be found in steadiness rather than stimulation. Savouring practices, such as the HEAL practice, (used across wellbeing and compassion-based approaches) do something similar: they extend attention on wholesome experience just long enough for it to land, which helps counter anhedonia and the *nothing helps* bias.

★ **Philosophy:** Epicurus is often caricatured as a pleasure-chaser, but his core emphasis is closer to simplicity and ease: the most reliable pleasure is the quieting of distress – a steadier wellbeing rather than the rush of acquisition. His account distinguishes the relief of meeting a lack from the more settled pleasure of having enough, where the mind isn't being tugged forward by craving.

Read this way, Energising Joy isn't about piling on positive emotion. It's the brightness that can show up when the mind stops arguing with experience and stops chasing *the next thing*. Pleasure becomes less dramatic but more trustworthy: not the thrill of getting, but the lift of being unburdened – and, over time, a preference for what's nourishing over what's merely intense.

## Remember to remember

Energising Joy is not a luxury; it is part of how the path sustains itself. When the mind is less bound up in wanting, defending, or rehearsing, a natural gladness can appear – the simple uplift of being unburdened, even briefly. It might feel like warmth in the chest, a softening in the face, a quiet brightness, or a sense that life is workable again. This joy teaches the heart something important: ‘Freedom’ feels better than craving, aversion and compulsion – not as an inspiring slogan, but as a lived preference the body can recognise and remember.

When joy comes – whether as a small flicker or a fuller wave – we don’t have to seize it or turn it into a project. We can stay close for a few breaths, letting the nervous system register: *this is possible*. Then we allow it to do what it naturally does when it isn’t grabbed: it cools and settles. And when it fades, we don’t treat that as failure; we return to the steady causes – mindfulness, balanced effort, and the willingness to begin again. Joy brightens the crossing, but it doesn’t need to last forever; its deeper gift is that it hands us on, quite naturally, to ‘Deep Calm’ (tranquility) and a more ‘Unified mind’ (collectedness).

*“Reclaim the peace and joy that are your birthright.” ~ Jack Kornfield*

*“Every breath we take, every step we make, can be filled with peace, joy, and serenity.” ~ Thich Nhat Hanh*

## Sutta references

### ★ Upanisā Sutta (SN 12.23) – Prerequisites

- Summary: Presents a causal sequence in which freedom from remorse leads to gladness, gladness to joy, joy to tranquillity, tranquillity to happiness, and happiness to collectedness – placing joy as a bridge in the unfolding toward liberation.

### ★ Bojjhaṅga Saṃyutta (SN 46) – The Factors of Awakening

- Summary: Defines pīti-sambojjhaṅga as a factor that can be cultivated and fed by wise attention to inspiration and gladness, supporting the mind’s brightening and onward movement.

### ★ Ānāpānasati Sutta (MN 118) – Mindfulness of Breathing

- Summary: Includes explicit training in experiencing rapture/joy, showing how pīti can be integrated into a systematic path of cultivation that matures toward calm and collectedness.

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