



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.

Courageous Energy as a Creative Power: fueling our journey

“Let only my skin, sinews, and bones remain; let my flesh and blood dry up; I shall not give up my effort as long as I have not attained what can be attained by human strength, energy, and effort.” ~ Gotama (the Buddha)

“Better than a hundred years lived in idleness and in weakness is one day lived with courage and powerful striving.” ~ Gotama (the Buddha)

“Courage is the most important of all the virtues, because without courage, you can’t practise any other virtue consistently.” ~ Maya Angelou

The steady power propelling our raft

Cultivating the energy to keep going

Having explored ‘Noble Desire’ as the crucial spark, the wholesome aspiration and committed interest that ignites and fuels our journey. We now explore the second of the ‘Four Creative Powers’ needed for our journey to liberation: Courageous Energy (or Effort). If ‘Noble Desire’ is the aspiration and commitment that points us towards the safe shore, then ‘Courageous Energy’ is the persistent, balanced, and courageous effort we need to actually propel our raft across the water. Courageous Energy is the dependable power source of our raft, steadily propelling us from the dangerous shore of suffering towards the safe shore of freedom. It’s the force that translates our resolves into sustained action – the persistent paddling we need to cross the water, especially when we are rowing against the strong currents of craving or the doldrums of apathy.

Effort (*viriya*) is a cornerstone of Buddhist practice, so much so that it appears in many different guises that we will be exploring in future chapters including the 'Five Defences', 'Seven Supports' and the 'Land of the Middleway'. Its frequent appearance underscores its vital importance. Within our presentation of the Four Creative Powers, we are framing it as "Courageous Energy".

The Buddhist teacher and author Martine Batchelor emphasises:

"Great courage is going beyond our usual patterns... courage is also suddenly thinking that this is possible."

Self-reflections

Consider your personal relationship with courageous energy:

- ★ Do you tend more towards overexertion (striving, burnout) or underexertion (procrastination, lethargy) in your journey to freedom or in life generally?
- ★ What daily habits or actions consistently energise and sustain you?
- ★ How do you typically respond to challenges or setbacks? What helps you to persist?
- ★ What does 'courage' look like for you when facing cravings, difficult emotions, or challenging life situations?
- ★ Are you effectively balancing your efforts with rest and self-compassion?

Journaling prompts

Use writing to explore and cultivate Courageous Energy.

- ★ **The lute string:** Reflect on the lute simile. Where in your life (healing practices, work, relationships) might your effort be *too tight* (strained)?

Where might it be *too loose* (slack)? What would a more balanced approach look like in one of these areas?

- ★ **Obstacle strategy:** Identify one common challenge or obstacle you face on your journey to freedom (for example, a specific trigger, a recurring negative thought, social pressure). Brainstorm a strategy for meeting this challenge with courageous, balanced effort next time it arises.
- ★ **Daily courage intention:** Set a daily, achievable goal requiring balanced effort. At the start of your day, set one small, specific intention related to applying Courageous Energy skilfully (for example, ‘Today, *I will make the effort to practice mindful breathing for 5 minutes*’, ‘Today, *I will courageously face one small task I’ve been avoiding*’). At the end of the day, reflect briefly on how it went. Reflect on how this small daily commitment influences your overall well-being.
- ★ **Consistent momentum:** Keep a simple log for a week, noting down one small, consistent action you took each day that supports your journey to liberation. Acknowledge the effort involved, however small, to build a sense of momentum. Reflect weekly on the cumulative benefits (see the weekly Courageous Energy action plan above).

Remember to remember

Courageous Energy is the second essential creative power, providing the sustained fuel and driving force for our RAFT to Freedom. Ignited by Noble Desire, it empowers us to act consistently, face challenges with resilience, and persist on the path even when motivation wavers. Recognising our capacity for this balanced, determined effort is a key part of the first stage of our journey. Remember the wisdom of the lute string – find the balance between striving and slackness. Nurture your energy with self-compassion, celebrate small steps, and keep coming back to your practice and your purpose. With aspiration providing us with direction (Noble Desire) and energy providing momentum (Courageous Energy), we now turn to the creative power that keeps our mind steady and focused on the task at hand – the Heart’s Compass.

“You can choose courage or you can choose comfort, but you cannot choose both.” ~ Brené Brown

“Courage doesn’t always roar. Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying, ‘I will try again tomorrow.’” ~ Mary Anne Radmacher

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