



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.

39 The Five Hazards: Ill-Will

Cooling the fire of anger

“Hatred is never appeased by hatred in this world. By non-hatred alone is hatred appeased. This is an eternal law.” ~ Gotama (the Buddha)

“Even if bandits were to carve you up savagely, limb by limb, with a two-handled saw, whoever let their heart get angered would not be doing my bidding. Train thus: ‘Our mind will remain unaffected, filled with goodwill, without inner hate.’” ~ Gotama

Understanding the ‘Aversion Response’ and the ‘Tempest of Hostility’

Ill-Will is the second of the Five Hazards – the persistent push of the heart against people, situations, or even ourselves. It encompasses the full spectrum of aversion, ranging from mild irritation and coldness to resentment, hostility, bitterness, or full-blown rage.

When active, it swamps the mind, weakening both ‘A Gathered Mind’ (Chapter 32) and ‘Discernment’ (Chapter 33). This is why ill-will is treated not just as an unhelpful or destructive emotion, but in meditation as a specific obscuration.

In this third stage of our journey – Freedom – ‘Ill-Will’ matters profoundly because it blocks the warmth, clarity, patience, and ‘Forgiveness’ (Chapter 65) required for Joy-Gladness (Chapter 35) to arise.

Ill-Will begins as a protective impulse – an attempt by the mind to shield itself from pain, injustice, or threat. At its root is the perfectly human wish not to be

hurt; to stay safe and protected, usually at any cost. However, when this impulse becomes rigid or reactive, protection turns into hostility, and the heart contracts around aversion. Seeing Ill-Will as distorted self-protection helps to dissolve shame and opens the door to us meeting it with clarity and compassion.

The problem arises when this adaptive fight, flight, or freeze response becomes excessive or misdirected, escalating fear into hostility, hatred, and meanness. Early Buddhism likens Ill-Will to boiling water: when heated, the surface breaks, bubbles, and distorts, making clear reflection impossible. When the heat subsides, clarity returns.

Self-Reflection Questions

1. What triggers Ill-Will most frequently – tone of voice, injustice, shame, or fatigue?
 2. How does Ill-Will manifest in the body and behaviour?
 3. Which of the five tactics for removing unwholesome thoughts is most workable for the mind?
 4. When anger subsides, what qualities appear – clarity, warmth, or steadiness?
 5. Which of the Seven Supports most reliably balances the mind when resentment arises?
 6. What story keeps aversion alive, and what truer, kinder story loosens it?
 7. How does recognising “*this is a passing state, not me*” change the response?
-

Journaling Prompts

1. **Anatomy of an outburst:** Track one episode from trigger > peak > fade. What helped the mind let it pass?
2. **Five ways in action:** Practise one tactic to remove resentment each day for five days; note the effects on the feeling tone.
3. **Boundless practice:** Write about a brief Befriending session directed to a difficult person. What shifted in the heart?
4. **The quiet after:** Describe the bodily feel and mindset when anger ends. How can awareness dwell there longer?
5. **Reframing harm:** Journal a reflection on consequences: “*This being is heir*

to their actions” (karma). What softens?

6. **Micro-freedoms:** List three small moments this week when irritation did not stick – what allowed release?
 7. **Two kinds of thought:** Note a time the mind chose befriending over ill-will; what did that choice make possible?
-

Remember to remember

The heat of ill-will is a passing storm, not a permanent or fixed identity. When the heart begins to burn with aversion, it is often a distorted attempt at protection. However, by recognising the *Tempest of Hostility* early, we, the Navigator can widen the pause between the trigger and the reaction. In this space, the choice to cool the fire becomes an act of supreme self-care, ensuring our raft is not abandoned to the burning currents of reactivity.

True freedom is found in the clear, unagitated air that follows the storm. By mooring the heart in *kindness*, awareness learns to trust the spaciousness and warmth that emerge when hatred is released. Each moment of non-reactivity strengthens the vessel, proving that the heart can remain steady and unharmed even in rough weather. This lived experience of peace confirms that the path to the safe shore is paved with goodwill rather than the toxic currents of resentment.

“When we meet our anger with mindfulness, we create the conditions for insight, understanding, and healing.” ~ Jack Kornfield

“By doing this you are like a man who wants to hit another and picks up a burning ember or excrement in his hand and so first burns himself or makes himself stink.” ~ Buddhaghosa

“Suppose a person were seriously ill, in great pain, unable to enjoy food and with no strength in the body. Later, that person recovers from the illness, food tastes good again, and strength returns. The person would reflect: ‘Formerly I was ill, but now health is restored.’ In the same way, when Ill-Will is abandoned, the burning fever of anger subsides, restoring health and ease to the system.” ~ Gotama

[RAFT to Freedom](#) © 2025 by Dr Cathryn Jacob and Vince Cullen

is licensed under Creative Commons

Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International.

