



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.

42 - The Five Hazards: Immobilising Doubt

Steadying the compass: meeting doubt with clarity and trust

"Doubt is overcome not by finding answers to every question, but by the courageous willingness to proceed without certainty." ~ Sharon Salzberg

"It is like a man who has never tasted a mango; he may ask others what it tastes like, but he will never know the taste until he eats it himself." ~ Ajahn Chah

Understanding paralysis and the root of delusion

The fifth and final Hazard is Immobilising Doubt – the mental state that unravels confidence, fractures intention, and leaves the heart suspended in indecision. This form of doubt is debilitating and paralysing, and should be distinguished from wholesome, skillful doubt, which fuels curiosity, testing, and investigation.

Within our RAFT to Freedom framework, ‘Immobilising Doubt’ is rooted in Delusion – a misreading of what is happening, where uncertainty is mistaken for wisdom and hesitation is confused with care. It manifests as chronic uncertainty and self-distrust, characterised by endless second-guessing and indecision. If ‘Sensual Craving’ pulls, ‘Ill-Will’ pushes, ‘Tuning Out’ clouds, and ‘Anxiety and Agitation’ scatters, then ‘Immobilising Doubt’ simply stalls the journey. The mind freezes mid-movement, unable to commit to safety, clarity, or action.

In this stage of our journey – ‘Freedom’ – this hazard matters because without

confidence and commitment, Freedom can never be tested or verified in lived experience. The raft is intact, the waters may even be calm, yet nothing moves.

Self-Reflection questions

1. What specific statements are observed when Immobilising Doubt arises (for example, "This won't work," "I'm not ready," "What if I'm making a mistake?")?
2. What difficult emotion or action might Immobilising Doubt be protecting the being from facing (for example, fear of failure, change, commitment, or responsibility)?
3. What is the observable consequence of allowing Immobilising Doubt to run its course (for example, paralysis, avoidance, withdrawal, perpetual delay)?
4. If the awareness acted as if Confidence were already present, what would the next small step look like?
5. When examining current hesitations, which represent genuine need for information versus strategic postponement?
6. When doubt subsides, what quality appears immediately in the mind (for example, clarity, relief, willingness, energy)?
7. How can the law of *cause and effect* be practically tested to build certainty?

Journaling prompts

1. **Evidence Log:** Keep a running list of three small wins from this week—moments of clarity, steadiness, or skillful choice. How does reviewing this shift the sense of progress?
2. **Postponement audit:** Identify three areas where action has been repeatedly delayed. For each one, write honestly: "Am I genuinely gathering information, or am I avoiding commitment?"
3. **Skillful action log:** For one day, note each moment where a choice was made aligned with freedom. Record the action and the mental state that followed. What patterns emerge?
4. **Cultivating confidence:** Write about a person, teaching, or memory that

evokes trust. Which qualities stand out, and how might they be strengthened within?

5. **Non-identity reflection:** When doubt about personal capacity arises, explore the perspective of 'Non-identity' (*Anattā*). If thoughts are events rather than "me," how does that soften their grip?
6. **The target of doubt:** For one week, each time doubt arises, identify which target it's attacking: Is this doubt about the path? About guidance I'm receiving? Or about my own capacity? Does recognizing the pattern help?
7. **The next small step:** Choose one Support (for example, Enthusiasm, Deep Calm) to focus on next. How does committing to this clarify the immediate direction?

Remember to remember

Immobilising Doubt is the final inner hazard – the one that can halt the raft in swirling waters even when the vessel is sound. Its power lies in replacing movement with hesitation, turning every decision into an endless debate, every step into a question mark. The way through is not to gather more theories or seek absolute certainty, but to choose action over argument, taking one small step rather than waiting for perfect knowledge.

Remember, doubt dissolves through lived evidence, not through intellectual resolution. Each time we take a small, skillful step and observe the result – feeling the mind lighten, noticing how wholesome actions lead to beneficial outcomes – confidence strengthens. This is how doubt dissolves: not through perfect answers or guarantees, but through the accumulated evidence that the path works when walked, one committed step at a time.

The compass steadies not when every question is answered, but when the choice is made to move forward despite uncertainty, trusting that direction reveals itself through movement rather than prior to it.

"Uncertainty is where things begin, not where they end." ~ Anne Lamott (paraphrased)

"You can't plough a field by turning it over in your mind." ~ Gordon B. Hinckley

"Suppose a person with wealth and property were journeying through a trackless desert, where food is scarce and danger is great. Later, they cross over the desert and reach a safe village, finding security and ease. In the same way, when Immobilising Doubt is abandoned, the danger of being 'lost and adrift' is replaced by the security of arriving at a safe destination." ~ Gotama

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