



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.

## 43 – Overview: The Seven Supports

### **Advanced navigational aids and optimal operating conditions**

*“Freedom is not the absence of commitments, but the ability to choose – and commit myself to – what is best for me.” ~ Paulo Coelho*

*“When developed and cultivated, the seven factors of awakening lead to direct knowledge and liberation.” ~ Gotama (The Buddha)*

### **Operating in the ‘Land of Perpetual Dawn’**

Having navigated the perilous waters of the Five Hazards (Chapters 37–42), we now enter the calmer waters of the Freedom stage of our journey. We enter a metaphorical space we’ve called the ‘Land of Perpetual Dawn’. Here, the task shifts from the heavy lifting of survival – bailing water, plugging leaks and avoiding the jagged reefs – to the subtler art of navigation. We are no longer struggling simply to stay afloat; we are learning to sail with skill and ease. This is not our final destination, but it's a land where we learn to cultivate and solidify an embodied response to the ‘Hazards’ (on and off the cushion), as and when they emerge from the fog before us.

The Seven Supports form a precise balancing system, coordinated by ‘Liberating Mindfulness’. Each element has a clear function: one monitors conditions, three restore energy and clarity when the body/mind is dull, and three restore stability and steadiness when the body/mind is over-aroused.

### **★ The Balancing Factor**

- **Liberating Mindfulness:** Notices early shifts in inner conditions and coordinates the response.
  - ★ **The Power Triad:** Used when the body/mind is ‘Tuning Out’ (Chapter 40), dull, sluggish, or disengaging.
    - **Penetrating Inquiry :** Re-engages curiosity and clarity by investigating experience directly:
    - **Enthusiasm / Courageous Energy :** Mobilises engagement. It counteracts collapse and avoidance, restoring the willingness to stay present and act without forcing or strain.
    - **Energising Joy :** Provides wholesome uplift that sustains attention. Not stimulation or excitement, but a quiet gladness that makes practice viable and encourages continued engagement.
  - ★ **The Ballast Triad:** Used when the body/mind is ‘Anxious or Agitated’ (Chapter 41), restless, reactive, or over-driven.
    - **Deep Calm** Settles the nervous system and cools reactivity.
    - **A Unified Mind / Concentration** Gathers attention into a coherent whole, reducing fragmentation and overwhelm.
    - **Balancing Equanimity** Maintains steadiness amid changing experience – pleasant/unpleasant, gain/loss – without being pushed or pulled into reactivity. ‘Liberating Mindfulness’ sees
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### Self-Reflection questions

1. When under pressure, do I tend to drift more toward heaviness (sluggishness, boredom, low mood) or toward heat (restlessness, anxiety, busyness)?
2. Looking at the Seven Supports, which one feels most accessible or naturally present in my life right now?
3. When energy is low, do I habitually try to calm down (and sink further), rather than gently re-energising?
4. Can I recall a recent moment when I was outside my window of tolerance – either too activated or too shut down? Which Support might have helped me return?
5. How does the approach of feeding what helps and starving what harms change the way I relate to craving, aversion, or compulsion?
6. What would it look like for me to stop rehearsing the fight with my past and begin cultivating the conditions for my future?

7. Am I practising this path mainly as something I do (rules and techniques), or as someone I am becoming (the cultivation of character)?
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### Journaling prompts

1. **The instrument panel:** Draw a simple dashboard with seven gauges – one for each Support. Mark where each needle sits today (empty → full). Write one sentence for each gauge: What conditions raised it? What conditions lowered it?
  2. **Feeding and starving:** Describe a moment today when you noticed an unhelpful loop (craving, resentment, worry, self-attack) and *starved* it by withdrawing attention. What did you do instead, and what changed in your body or mind?
  3. **In the middle:** Recall a moment when you felt balanced – alert but not tense, relaxed but not dull. What conditions allowed that state to arise? What helped it last?
  4. **Energising the raft:** Write about an activity that reliably activates the Power Triad for you – Interest/Inquiry, Energy, and Joy – without tipping into stimulation or craving. What makes it wholesome and sustainable?
  5. **Calming the waters:** Write yourself a short ‘prescription’ for when you feel overwhelmed: “*When I’m agitated, the specific steps I will take to access Deep Calm are...*” (include body cues: breath, posture, grounding, simplifying your focus.)
  6. **Appropriate Attention:** Recall a difficult interaction. Rewrite the moment as if you had applied Appropriate Attention: what might you have noticed, valued, or responded to differently – either in yourself, the other person, or the wider conditions?
  7. **The long crossing:** Write a letter to your future self. Describe how the Seven Supports can help you navigate the long crossing of ordinary life – especially when the old Hazards return as sirens, storms, fog, or whirlpools. What do you want your future self to remember?
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### Remember to remember

The Seven Supports are the telltales on the sail and the instruments on the console of our raft. They confirm, moment by moment, whether the body/mind is trimmed correctly for the crossing – whether we are drifting

into dullness, being pulled by restlessness, or sailing steadily in balance. We began this journey looking for a way out of pain, difficulties and disappointments, and discovered something deeper: a way back into life. In the earlier stages of our journey, we learned to recognise hazards and abandon what was unhelpful; here, in the Freedom stage, the work becomes more subtle and more beautiful – we learn to live from the qualities that support a clear, steady mind.

As these supports strengthen, we no longer need the dangerous shore of old habits to comfort us, because we begin to carry our own refuge within. We can cool the system from the inside through ‘Deep Calm’, gather scattered attention into a ‘Unified Mind’, and meet experience with ‘Balanced Equanimity’ – not indifference, but steadiness – so pleasure and pain no longer throw us about like waves. When we lose our way, ‘Penetrating Inquiry’, ‘Enthusiasm’, and ‘Energising Joy’ restore momentum as a quiet, sustainable uplift rather than a rush of stimulation. This is the shift from *doing to being*: not forcing a permanent state, but repeatedly attuning, feeding what supports freedom, and returning again and again to a non-reactive way of meeting life – less governed by craving, aversion, and confusion, and more guided by clarity, balance, and care.

Most importantly, these Seven Supports enable us to taste Freedom, even if briefly, and once verified we know the direction our Heart should take.

*“The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new.” ~ ‘Socrates’, a fictional teacher in Dan Millman’s Way of the Peaceful Warrior*

*“Just as the dawn is the forerunner and precursor of the rising of the sun, so too, good friendship is the forerunner and precursor of the arising of the seven factors of awakening.” ~ Gotama*

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