



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.

49 - A Unified Mind as a Support

The stable platform and the clarity of the telescope

“Concentrate all your thoughts upon the work in hand. The sun’s rays do not burn until brought to a focus.” ~ Alexander Graham Bell

“The faculty of voluntarily bringing back a wandering attention, over and over again, is the very root of judgment, character, and will.” ~ William James

“The best way to take care of the future is to take care of the present moment.” ~ Thich Nhat Hanh

The raft running true

In this Freedom stage of our journey, as we move through the ‘Land of Perpetual Dawn’, we come to the sixth of the Seven Supports: ‘A Unified Mind’. This isn’t a strained concentration or a *tight focus face*. It’s what becomes possible when the inner weather has calmed enough for the mind to rest in one place without being dragged away by urgency, worry, or craving.

In this chapter we use the phrase ‘A Unified Mind’ to describe what early Buddhist teachings call *Collectedness* (often translated as *concentration* or *focus*). The word can sound like *trying harder to focus*, but in practice it

often means something simpler: the mind is less divided, less pulled in five directions at once, and more able to stay with what matters.

As agitation and inner friction reduce, attention can rest naturally. This is less about *forcing* focus and more about the mind settling into coherence – thinking, feeling, and sensing begin to work as one system rather than a committee in conflict. The deck stops lurching, the raft runs true, and we can see clearly where we're headed.

Self-reflections

1. Do I call it multitasking when it's really just my attention being pulled in too many directions at once?
 2. When I stop and sit quietly, does it feel more like coming home – or like something in me wants to escape?
 3. Can I tell the difference between tense, forced concentration and the softer steadiness that comes when interest holds the mind?
 4. What is the most important thing in this moment – and can I stop splitting myself long enough to stay with it?
 5. What are the usual *voices* in my inner committee – and what changes when I don't have to obey all of them?
 6. Do I treat being scattered as *just me*, or can I recognise the cues and habits that keep scattering my mind?
 7. When cravings, worries, or strong emotions surge, what would it look like to stay with one steady anchor instead of being swept into the storm?
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Journaling prompts

1. **The committee meeting:** Write a script of the argument in your head (for example, "Voice A: Do it." "Voice B: Don't do it."). Then write a final verdict from the Chairperson (Unified Mind) that settles the dispute.
2. **The serviceable mind:** Describe a task performed today with a unified mind (washing dishes, writing, walking). Was it easier? Was the result better? How did it feel?

3. **Distraction log:** For one ten-minute sitting, note how many times the mind wanders. Do not judge. Simply note the frequency. Does the frequency drop as the mind *gathers* toward the end?
 4. **The telescope analogy:** Imagine using a telescope on a rocking boat versus a stable dock. Journal on how this analogy applies to your understanding of emotional triggers and your ability to see the truth of a situation.
 5. **Attention at home:** Write a *Welcome Home* letter to your attention, describing the peace of no longer having to chase after distractions or escapes.
 6. **The glue of joy:** Reflect on a hobby or activity where you naturally concentrate (reading, gardening, music). Is it *effort* that keeps you there, or *enjoyment*? How can you bring that enjoyment to your well-being?
 7. **Wholeheartedness:** Write about one area of your life where you are currently *half-hearted*. What would it look like to be *whole-hearted* about it?
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Remember to remember

A Unified Mind isn't a trance or a blanking-out. It's a tuning: the mind isn't clenched into focus, it's simply less split. The inner committee quietens, the constant switching eases, and attention can stay with one thing without being dragged around by urgency, worry, or craving. It feels steady and workable – like the difference between gripping the steering wheel with white knuckles and letting the car track straight because the wheels are aligned. There's still movement, still sound, still thought, but less friction. We're not trying to *shut the mind down*; we're letting it become coherent.

Remember: we can't force stillness, but we can stop adding disturbance. Each time we soften the bracing, unclench the effort, and return to something simple — breath, body, one clear task — the mind gathers by itself. If we notice the urge to check, fix, rehearse, or jump ahead, that can be our cue to come back to what's in front of us and let the moment be enough. From that stability, things become easier to see — not only in meditation, but in decisions and conversations too — because clarity needs a steady platform to land on. And the more often we taste this less *divided* state, the more the mind learns that unity is not effortful strain, but a reliable way of being present.

“To be everywhere at once is to be nowhere at all.” ~ Seneca

“The mind is a wonderful servant, but a terrible master.” ~ Robin Sharma

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