



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.

52 – An Appropriate Response: Resilient Equanimity

The Captain's view and the wisdom of acceptance

“Resilient patience is the highest ascetic practice.” ~ paraphrased Gotama (The Buddha)

“Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.” ~ Reinhold Niebuhr (The Serenity Prayer)

The view from the bridge

In this Training stage of our journey, we are learning to navigate the open ocean of life using ‘Gotama’s Middle Way Programme’ – our Operating Manual. But the ocean is vast, and the weather is unpredictable. To travel well, we need a particular inner capacity: something that steadies us in a storm and keeps us awake in calm seas. This is ‘Resilient Equanimity’ – the fourth and final Appropriate Response (Heart Practice). Just as we cultivated ‘Compassion’ (Chapter 06) to recognise what it is to be human, ‘Befriending’ (Chapter 26) to meet powerful urges, ingrained patterns, and the discomfort of letting go, and ‘Appreciative Joy’ (Chapter 35) to respond with gladness to wellbeing, successes, and small moments of goodness in ourselves and others, we now cultivate ‘Resilient Equanimity’ as part of our training on the path – Gotama’s fourth realisation that freedom can be cultivated – so we can meet things as they are, without panic, clinging, or collapse.

Because it is the final of the four Appropriate Responses, it also completes the set. ‘Resilient Equanimity’ is what keeps the other three from sliding into their distorted versions: it stops befriending becoming attachment, compassion becoming overwhelm, and joy becoming agitation. It is the capacity for self-balance – to care fully, feel honestly, and still remain steady enough to choose well.

Self-reflections

1. When I feel stressed, do I go into control mode – trying to manage everything – or can I focus on what I *can* influence and let the rest be?
 2. In my body, what’s the difference between indifference (shutting down) and equanimity (staying present and steady)? Can I sense the difference between giving up and letting go?
 3. What would patience look like in one current difficulty – not gritting my teeth, but staying steady without becoming harsh?
 4. Do I sometimes use worry as a way of trying to stay safe – as if worrying hard enough will stop bad things happening? What does that cost me?
 5. Can I let other people have their own learning curve – including the right to make mistakes – while still caring and setting wise boundaries?
 6. When I don’t get the outcome I want, can I notice what opens up if I release the struggle? What energy becomes available for the next helpful step?
 7. Can I allow this moment to be imperfect – even emotionally messy – and still stay kind to myself? In other words: can I be okay with not being okay right now?
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Journaling prompts

1. **The circle of control (The serenity sort):** Draw a circle. Inside, write what you can control in a current stressor (your effort, your words, your boundaries, your next action). Outside, write what you can’t (other people’s choices, timing, outcomes, opinions). Then write a few lines on what it feels like – mentally and physically – to release the *outside* items, even for

today.

- 2. The *not mine* label:** List three burdens you're carrying. Next to each, write: "I care about this, but I do not control it." Then add one sentence: "The part that *is* mine is..." (for example: how I show up, what support I seek, what boundary I hold, what action I take).
 - 3. The indifference check:** Think of a recent moment you said, "I don't care." Was it genuine peace and perspective – or was it numbness, armour, or overwhelm in disguise? What would 'warm steadiness' have sounded like instead?
 - 4. The supple raft:** Describe a time you held rigid expectations and ended up breaking – emotionally, relationally, or practically. What was the rigid belief underneath ("it must go this way")? Now rewrite the moment with *supple steadiness*: what could you have accepted, what could you have adjusted, and what could you have done differently?
 - 5. Boundless balance (Equanimity phrases):** Write the phrase: 'May I meet life's changes with balance and peace.' Then try holding the intention for someone you struggle with. Notice what happens in the body (tightening, softening, resistance). Write honestly about what's possible right now – no forcing.
 - 6. Worldly winds audit:** Which of the eight worldly winds (Chapter 50) is blowing hardest right now and taking you off course – winning or losing, approval or rejection, complements or criticism, comfort or discomfort. Write how it shows up in your thoughts, body, and behaviour. Then write how Resilient Equanimity could return you to the centre when that wind picks up.
 - 7. The Serenity Prayer (in your own words):** Rewrite the Serenity Prayer in your own language, applied to one specific situation you're living with. Make it concrete: name what you are accepting, what you are changing, and how you'll tell the difference this week.
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Remember to remember

Resilient Equanimity is the great stabiliser. It keeps our Befriending from turning sticky, our Compassion from tipping into overwhelm, and our Appreciative Joy from spilling into restless excitement. This is why it matters so much in this Training stage: it doesn't cancel the heart practices – it completes them. It is the fourth rope that binds the raft without making it rigid, giving the whole vessel a

flexible strength. When life hits hard, Resilient Equanimity doesn't harden us; it helps us stay tender without being torn. It doesn't ask us to stop caring. It helps us care in a way that is sustainable.

Resilient Equanimity is not the absence of feeling; it is the presence of wisdom. It is the inner spaciousness that allows joy and sorrow, praise and blame, gain and loss to rise and fall without capsizing the mind. And it brings us back to a simple truth: we are the Captain of the raft, not the Captain of the Sea. We can set the sails, train the crew, and choose the next wise action – again and again. The waves, the wind, and the tides are not ours to command. So we practise meeting conditions as they are, releasing what we cannot control, and turning faithfully toward what we can: our effort, our intention, our words, our actions, and our capacity to begin again. Trust the training, hold the course, and let the ocean be the ocean.

“Even a happy life cannot be without a measure of darkness, and the word 'happy' would lose its meaning if it were not balanced by sadness.” ~ Carl Jung

*“This life is but a play of joy and sorrow
may we remain undisturbed by life's rise and fall.
I care deeply about you, but you are the owner of
your actions and their fruit, and sadly I can not
keep you from distress.”*

~ Srilankan monastic blessing translated by John

Peacock

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