



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.

## 54 – The five components of selfing

### **Consulting the manual – the schematics of the navigator**

*‘Form is like a lump of foam, feeling like a water bubble; perception is like a mirage, volitions like a plantain trunk, and consciousness like an illusion.’ ~  
Gotama (the Buddha)*

*‘You are not a noun; you are a verb. You are not a thing, but a process.’ ~  
Buckminster Fuller*

This is the part of the manual that helps us explore the felt sense of ‘me’ and break it down into workable pieces – so we stop turning passing states into a fixed identity, and start navigating with more freedom.

In this Training stage of our journey, we’re consulting the navigator’s handbook – the section of the workbook we call ‘remember to remember’. Having already surveyed the Five Hazards (hindrances) in Chapters 37–42, we now turn to the lived sense of being the one who steers the raft – ‘me’. The question is simple, and surprisingly practical: how is the feeling of ‘me’ being assembled right now?

Rather than treating the self as a fixed thing, the teachings point to five aspects of experience that, when we grasp them, create the felt sense of ‘I’, ‘mine’, and ‘this is me’. Across all five aspects, clinging shows up in the same move: ‘This is mine.’ ‘This is me.’ ‘This is myself.’

We’re not doing this as abstract philosophy. We’re doing it because compulsive

loops depend on a fixed identity story. When experience feels like a fixed person with a fixed problem, the loop tightens. But when we learn to see experience as processes in motion – conditions arising, shifting, and passing – the spell begins to loosen. And in that loosening, choice becomes possible.

### **What we experience – the five components of selfing**

- ★ **Form** : Form is the physical side of life: our bodies, other bodies, and the material world.
  - ★ **Feeling tone** : Feeling tone is the instant ‘I like it / I don’t like it / neither’ signal that appears the moment something is experienced.
  - ★ **Perception – how the mind makes things seem solid**: Perception is how the mind makes sense of experience.
  - ★ **Impulses and urges**: Impulses and urges are the ‘do something’ energy that follows feeling tone and perception.
  - ★ **Consciousness**: Consciousness is the basic knowing of what’s present – knowing sensations in the body, knowing feeling tone, knowing the label, knowing the urge.
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### **Self-reflections**

1. When a strong moment hits (craving, shame, panic, anger), can I name what’s actually here – body sensation, feeling tone, label, urge, and the simple knowing of it – and what story is being added on top?
2. What is the main label running right now (for example, ‘danger’, ‘relief’, ‘failure’, ‘not enough’, ‘connection’), and what changes if I treat it as a label rather than a fact?
3. If I do the control test right now – ‘Did I choose this, and can I command it to stop instantly?’ – what happens to blame, shame, or the sense of personal defect?
4. If I run this experience through the three checks (is it stable, is it reliable when clung to, is it ‘me’ or ‘mine’), what becomes obvious that wasn’t obvious five minutes ago?
5. What would it be like to apply the refrain gently – ‘not mine, not me, not my self’ – and then take one small, decent action anyway?
6. Where did the ‘me-movie’ get loud today (replaying the past, rehearsing

the future, narrating a verdict about ‘me’), and what helped the return to direct experience?

7. When I practise ‘not-self’, do I feel clearer and more able to respond with care – or do I start to feel cold, floaty, or unreal? What grounding step brings me back (feet, breath, naming what’s here, next sane thing)?
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## Journaling prompts

1. **Deconstructing the urge:** Choose a recent craving or desire and take it apart into the five components. What was happening in the body (form)? What was the pleasant/unpleasant/neutral tone (feeling tone)? What label got stamped on it (perception)? What urges or justifications appeared (inclinations)? What was it like to simply know all of this (consciousness)?
2. **The control experiment:** Record one moment today when the body or mind did something you didn’t ask for (tiredness, anxiety, irritation, distraction). Describe what happened, then write three lines: ‘I did not order this.’ ‘This is not my servant.’ ‘This is not me.’
3. **The freedom of zero:** Describe a moment recently when you ‘forgot yourself – absorbed in something simple (walking, making tea, gardening, helping someone, music). What was different? Did the absence of ‘me’ feel unsettling, neutral, or quietly freeing?
4. **The ship of Theseus:** Write about how you’ve changed over time. Compare ‘me ten years ago’ with ‘me now’, what has been replaced – body, moods, beliefs, habits, preferences, fears? What, if anything, stays consistent, and what does that suggest about a fixed self?
5. **Perception audit:** List three labels you regularly apply to yourself ( for example, ‘too much’, ‘not enough’, ‘lazy’, ‘broken’, ‘successful’). For each: ‘When did I learn it?’, ‘What does it make me do?’, and ‘What would be a more accurate, kinder re-label for today?’
6. **Weather and sky:** Describe a difficult moment as weather passing through (sensations, tones, thoughts, urges). Then describe what it’s like to be the simple knowing of it – not as a special ‘true self’, but as the capacity to notice without being swallowed.
7. **The ‘not mine’ log:** Write three things you usually claim as ‘mine’ (my anxiety, my past, my body, my craving, my reputation). Next to each, describe it as a process with causes and conditions – changing,

influenced, and not fully controllable – and finish with: ‘This is happening, but it is not who I am.’

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### **Remember to remember**

Consulting the instruction manual about the five components of selfing is a cornerstone practice for the Training stage because it shows us, again and again, what the mind keeps forgetting: the ‘self’ we feel so strongly is not a solid owner at the centre of experience. It’s an activity – assembled moment by moment from what the body is doing, what the system registers as pleasant or unpleasant, what the mind labels, what the habit-energy pushes towards, and the simple knowing of all of this. When we look closely, we don’t find a fixed ‘me’ in charge; we find a living process unfolding according to causes and conditions. And that matters, because compulsion feeds on solidity: it needs the sense that ‘this is who I am’ and ‘this is what I must do’ to keep the loop running.

When we learn to see these components as changing and conditioned, selfing starts to lose its justification. This is the practical meaning of ‘not-self’: not a bleak idea, but a release from the extra suffering created by a fixed identity. It loosens labels like ‘the victim’ or ‘the failure’ without erasing responsibility; we can still own our actions, repair what needs repairing, and choose the next right step – we just don’t have to wear a permanent verdict while we do it. In RAFT terms, this is what helps the navigator steer wisely: we begin to respond to what’s actually happening, rather than protecting a story of who we are. And far from making us indifferent, this freedom makes care easier – because we’re no longer defending an identity; we’re simply meeting life with steadiness, honesty, and kindness.

*‘It is remarkable how liberating it feels... to see that your thoughts are just thoughts and that they are not ‘you’ or ‘reality’: ~ Jon Kabat-Zinn*

*‘Neuroscientists like to say that your day-to-day experience is a carefully controlled hallucination, constrained by the world and your body but ultimately constructed by your brain.’ ~ Lisa Feldman Barrett*

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