



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.

55 – Our lens on the world: the six sense doors

How contact builds our world

The doors of perception and reaction

“I will teach you ‘the all’... And what ... is ‘the all’? The eye and forms, the ear and sounds, the nose and smells, the tongue and tastes, the body and tangibles, the mind and mind-objects. This ... is called ‘the all’” ~ Gotama (The Buddha)

“In the seen will be merely the seen; in the heard will be merely the heard; in the thought will be merely the thought; in the known will be merely the known.” ~ Gotama

The world as contact

In this Training stage of the journey, having learned how self-identity is assembled from the ‘five components of selfing’ (Chapter 54), we now open the instruction manual to the section on the ‘six sense bases’. Most of us were taught we have five senses, but in Buddhism there are six: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and thinking. Each is a channel through which experience arrives – sights, sounds, smells, tastes, bodily sensations, and the mind’s own events: thoughts, memories, images, plans, and ideas.

This matters because experience doesn’t arrive as one big lump called ‘my life’. It arrives through these channels, moment by moment. A sound is heard, a thought appears, a sensation flickers – and immediately there is contact, ‘Feeling Tone’

(Chapter 27), a label, and the beginnings of reaction. When we learn to notice the channel where a spiral starts, we can catch it earlier. Instead of being yanked straight into the story, we can recognise: ‘seeing is happening’, ‘hearing is happening’, ‘thinking is happening’. That small shift makes experience more workable.

Here’s the radical simplicity of the teaching: our lived world is built at these sense doors, through contact. From contact, feeling tone arises; and when mindfulness is absent, craving can ignite. Seen clearly, this isn’t abstract philosophy – it’s the practical hinge where we either run the old reaction, or we choose a wiser response.

Self-reflections

1. Which sense door is my primary trigger for stress or craving? (for example, Do I get triggered by what I see on screens, or what I *think* in silence?)
2. Can I actually watch a thought arise like a sound, or do I immediately jump inside it and ride it?
3. At which sense door do I lose balance most often, and what earliest cue tells me that a handover is about to be messy?
4. Do I leave the doors of my senses wide open to anything (violent media, toxic gossip), or do I guard what enters the vessel?
5. Can I catch the split-second gap between *seeing* an object and *wanting* it?
6. When nothing interesting is happening at the sense doors, do I get bored and look for trouble, or can I rest in the quiet? How could I honour neutrality as a valid, freeing texture rather than as nothing is happening?
7. Do I suffer more from what is happening *outside* (sights/sounds) or what is happening *inside* (memories/plans)?

Journaling prompts

1. **A day through the doors (sense audit):** Document one ordinary day by noting three moments of contact (for example, ‘Eye saw notification,’ ‘Mind thought trouble’). Record the tone for each, the flow of reaction, and the step you chose from the pause.
2. **The gatekeeper's report:** Write a fictional report from your internal

gatekeeper to the Captain. ‘Today at the ear door, we received insults. I labeled them ‘unpleasant sounds’ and did not let them reach the engine room.’ Include instructions on who to let in (wholesome states) and who to turn away (hindrances).

3. **Trigger race:** Choose a recent strong reaction. Trace it back. What was the initial sensory input? What feeling tone arose? When did the reaction start?
 4. **The pinball replay:** Describe a recent situation where you felt batted around by stimuli. Rewrite the scene: how would the ‘Gatekeeper’ have handled the intake of information differently?
 5. **A sense fast:** Experiment with closing one sense door for an hour (for example, silence/no audio, or eyes closed/no screens). Journal on how the *other* senses changed in clarity.
 6. **De-conditioning a trigger:** Pick one visual or auditory trigger that usually causes craving. Write a description of it using *only* dry, physical data (for example, instead of ‘delicious wine,’ write ‘red liquid in curved glass’).
 7. **The ‘all’ reflection:** Gotama said the six senses are ‘the all.’ Write on the idea that there is no problem in your life that exists *outside* of these six inputs. Does this make life feel smaller and more manageable?
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Remember to remember

Contact can be a hinge. A moment arrives at a door – seeing, hearing, thinking – and there’s often a beat before the mind starts explaining it, defending against it, or reaching for something else. Noticing ‘eye–form’ or ‘mind–idea,’ calling the tone, and taking one breath can shift the whole atmosphere. Attention doesn’t have to collapse onto the object; it can widen to include the body, the room, the larger field of experience, and whatever is already true without commentary.

Neutrality turns out to be more valuable than it sounds. Much of the day is neither pleasant nor unpleasant – just ordinary, middling, nothing special. Resting there for a few seconds can feel like the system unclenching, as if the nervous system is finally allowed to stop chasing and stop bracing. In that steadier space, craving often has less to argue with, and the next step doesn’t need to be heroic. A small, workable, kind response – or even three quiet breaths – can be enough.

“Our conscious experiences... are kinds of controlled hallucinations.” ~ Anil Seth

“Nothing in life is as important as you think it is while you are thinking about it.” ~ Daniel Kahneman

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