



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.

66 – Conclusion: Living skilfully on the Safe Shore

Putting down our raft – from surviving to thriving

“The whole of this spiritual life, Ānanda, consists of good friendship, good companionship, and good comradeship.” ~ Gotama (the Buddha)

“I have shown you the Dhamma ... as being like a raft, for the purpose of crossing over, not for the purpose of holding onto.” ~ Gotama

Our journey completed

We have now reached the end of our shared crossing through the RAFT to Freedom workbook. Together, we have drawn upon the enduring wisdom of early Buddhist psychology, enriched by insights from modern neuroscience, psychology, and philosophy. With these tools, we navigated from the Dangerous Shore – the shore of compulsion, reactivity, shame, and despair – toward the Safe Shore of steadiness, clarity, and a deepening sense of well-being.

Now, as the keel touches the sand of the Safe Shore, we encounter the final and most subtle challenge:

Putting down the raft.

In Gotama’s talk on the Simile of the Raft, he describes a man who builds a raft to leave a dangerous shore. Through effort and ingenuity, the man reaches the

safety of the far shore. Once there, he reflects, 'This raft has served me well. Perhaps I should lift it onto my head and carry it with me wherever I go.' Gotama asks: 'Would this be wise? Of course not. The raft is for crossing over, not for clinging to.'

In our journey, the raft is the framework of practice itself – the workbook, the language, the structures, even the identity of being someone who is 'working on themselves.' At first, we needed the planks, the engine, the compass. We needed to train deliberately. But there comes a point when the qualities of mindfulness, patience, ethics, discernment, and composure are no longer external supports. They have become embodied.

We no longer need to carry the identities of 'the struggler' or 'the broken one' as our deepest names, or to see ourselves only through the lens of what we have had to heal from. These identities may have helped us make sense of the crossing, but they are not the whole of who we are. The crossing has done its work when the principles no longer feel like instructions imposed from outside, but capacities arising from within. We move from trying to get better to living with greater honesty, steadiness, kindness, and care.

We lay the raft down and we walk.

Self-reflections – looking forward

1. Am I ready, even tentatively, to loosen the identity of 'the one who is surviving' and begin to inhabit the identity of 'one who is thriving'?
2. Which elements of the RAFT to freedom programme have become embodied habits – so natural that they arise without conscious effort?
3. When I look back at the dangerous shore, can I do so without aversion – perhaps even recognising the lessons it revealed?
4. Now that more energy is available, what creative, relational, or service-oriented impulse begins to surface?
5. How will I continue to inspect the hull of my ethics and recalibrate the compass of my perspective, even when there is no immediate crisis?
6. Who journeys beside me on this safe shore, and what intentional steps can I take to deepen those connections?
7. When I find myself back in rough water, do I now have the appropriate

skills within me – can I find my way back to the safe shore?

Journaling prompts – continuing the voyage

1. **The vision of arriving:** Imagine your life one year from now, as you move from merely surviving towards thriving. Picture yourself living more steadily on the safe shore. What does an ordinary day look and feel like? What has become possible again – in your relationships, your interests, your work, your creativity, or your capacity for joy?
2. **The gratitude inventory:** List five specific tools, insights, or turning points from this workbook that steadied you when the waters were rough. Write a brief note of appreciation to each one. What changed because you practised it?
3. **Leaving the identity:** Reflect on the phrase: ‘I am no longer defined by my past struggles; I am defined by my present capacity for care.’ What resistance arises? What relief?
4. **The integration plan:** Choose one factor from Gotama’s Middle Way Programme – such as perspective, speech, or livelihood. Describe how this will remain active in your daily life without external prompting. What rhythms, reminders, or habits will sustain it?
5. **The letter to the past:** Write a compassionate letter to the version of yourself who began this journey. Acknowledge their fear, confusion, or determination. Tell them what has changed. Thank them for not giving up.
6. **Navigating future storms:** Imagine a future challenge (examples include, loss, change, pressure, uncertainty). Describe how you will meet it using the skills of the RAFT, not from desperation, but from steadiness. What will you remember first?
7. **The vow of friendship:** Write a simple personal commitment to be a wise and steady friend to others. How will you offer stability without rescuing? How will you share kindness without judgement? How will you protect your own balance while supporting someone still crossing?

Remember to remember

As we close this workbook, we pause not in triumph, but in recognition. This journey has asked for courage. It has asked for honesty. It has asked us to look at what we once avoided and to practise what once felt unnatural. We have learned to recognise the currents, to abandon what sinks us, to feel the resulting freedom, and to train with steadiness. That work matters. It deserves acknowledgement – not as achievement, but as evidence of our willingness and capacity to grow.

We remember that the safe shore is not a place without weather. It is a way of standing in weather without being blown away. Storms will still pass through. Old habits may still whisper. Difficult emotions will still arise. But we now know how to pause. We know how to breathe. We know how to check the hull and recalibrate the compass. We know that freedom is not perfection; it is responsiveness.

We remember that we are not defined by the dangerous shore. We are shaped by what we practise. The skills we have cultivated are no longer external instructions. They are capacities within us. They can be forgotten, but they cannot be lost.

We remember that beginning again is always available. If we drift, we can regather. If we run aground, we can repair. If we are pulled under briefly, we know how to surface. The crossing has taught us something deeper than technique – it has taught us trust.

And so we continue:

We continue choosing clarity over confusion.
We continue choosing care over retaliation.
We continue choosing steadiness over panic.
We continue choosing truth over self-deception.
We continue choosing the next skilful step.

Keeping these aspirations in mind:

May we trust the freedom already growing within us.
May we live fully on this shared shore.
May we meet life as it is – with courage, humility, tenderness, and quiet strength.
May we remember that peace is not possessed, but practised.

May we remember that no sincere beginning is ever wasted.

May we remember that we can begin again.

May we walk the shore together.

“In the midst of winter, I found there was, within me, an invincible summer.”

~ Albert Camus

“Suppose I were to haul the raft onto the dry land or set it adrift in the water, and then go wherever I want.” ~ Gotama

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