



01 - An introduction to The RAFT to Freedom

This document is an extract from the full chapter, which is available for download in the table via this link: <https://raft2freedom.org/raft-to-freedom-downloads/>

Suppose there was a person traveling along the road. They'd see a large deluge, whose near shore was dubious and perilous, while the far shore was a sanctuary free of peril. But there was no ferryboat or bridge for crossing over. They'd think, 'Why don't I gather grass, sticks, branches, and leaves and make a raft? Riding on the raft, and paddling with my hands and feet, I can safely reach the far shore.'

- Gotama, Alagaddūpama Sutta (the raft simile), MN 22, translated by Bhikkhu Sujato

This workbook offers a path through the pain, difficulties and disappointments of being human, blending early Buddhist teaching with insights from modern psychology and neuroscience. No diagnosis, label or Buddhist identity is required - only an open, caringly curious mind. The whole path can be held in four simple tasks: Recognise the pain, Abandon the craving, Feel the resulting freedom, Train the body-mind.

Gotama (the Buddha) described our everyday struggle as a 'dangerous shore' and pointed to a 'safe shore' of peace and clarity. These aren't different places - both are here, in this same life, as states of heart and mind. The crossing is made by building a raft: an ethical foundation, supportive practices, and the tools of mindfulness and wisdom, all steered by each of us as our own captain and crew.

This raft is one support among many - therapy, community, healthy habits and relationships all have their own honoured place alongside it, not folded into it. What follows in this workbook is a map for that crossing, chapter by chapter.

Self-reflections

Before turning the page to begin this journey, take a few moments to reflect quietly.

1. What pain, difficulty or disappointment is prompting my search for change, right now? ([view card](#))
2. Which qualities would mark my own 'safe shore' - what would freedom actually feel like, here, in my life? ([view card](#))
3. What strengths do I already have for building this raft, and which existing supports - people, practices, and professionals - are already keeping me afloat? ([view card](#))
4. What is my deeper motivation for undertaking this crossing - what makes it worth the effort to me? ([view card](#))
5. What expectations, doubts, or preconceptions might I need to set aside so I can approach this crossing with an open, caringly curious mind? ([view card](#))
6. Who might form part of my crew - which wise friends or community could share my journey? ([view card](#))
7. What might help me stay with this journey when enthusiasm fades, life gets busy, or the work feels difficult? ([view card](#))

Journaling prompts - charting our course

Spend some time with a journal.

1. **The dangerous shore:** describe, with compassion, your present struggles with pain, difficulties and disappointments.
2. **The safe shore:** picture clearly what a safe shore means to you.
3. **An inventory of resources:** list the inner strengths, outer supports, and helpful practices already available to you - the other supports already carrying you.
4. **Preparing for the crossing:** what conditions would help you make space for this journey - perhaps time, place, routine, community, boundaries, or practical support?
5. **Naming the pull:** what recurring harmful pattern most often sets you off course?
6. **Laying down the burden:** What unnecessary weight or old storyline are you ready to leave behind on the dangerous shore as you step aboard your raft?
7. **Setting the intention:** write down your core intentions for engaging fully with the crossing ahead.

For a printable reminder to carry this stage's practice into daily life, see the Daily Intentions card: <https://raft2freedom.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/appropriate-response-daily-intentions.png>

Remember to remember

RAFT to Freedom provides a structured yet flexible approach, integrating ancient wisdom with modern sciences to guide our individual journeys from pain, difficulties and disappointments towards lasting freedom. We don't need a diagnosis, a label, nor be a Buddhist, to benefit from this programme. We just come as we are.

Embarking on the path of liberation is a profound act of courage and self-care. RAFT offers a reliable structure, integrating ancient wisdom with a modern understanding to guide our way. Trusting in our capacity to learn, grow, and heal, patiently and persistently.

For me, there is no happiness without freedom, and freedom is not given to us by anyone; we have to cultivate it ourselves.

- Thich Nhat Hanh, *Be Free Where You Are* (Parallax Press)

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