The Fortress of the Mind - An Already Here Adventure

A choose-your-own-adventure practice book

An original temple welcome, complete practices, and choices you can follow on paper.

Begin at The temple garden on page 2.

Scenes are shuffled. Follow the page numbers at the end of each scene. You can stop or change direction whenever you choose.

The temple garden

An original fictional welcome

You step through a small gate into a well-kept garden. Beyond it stands a small but beautiful Theravada Buddhist temple. Inside, one man sits in meditation. His face resembles Siddhartha as you have seen him imagined in art. Incense is burning. Three meditation pads lie before him.

You may sit or move on. If you sit, he opens his eyes, smiles, and greets you: “Welcome. The path is wide. You may begin with your own ordinary experience, and see what it reveals.”

Your adventure

The Fortress of the Mind. Walk a frontier town: direction, conscience, learning, effort, mindfulness, discernment, and room to be nourished.

“Try each invitation gently. You can question it, change direction, rest, or leave. Keep what helps and let the rest go. Ancient wisdom is an invitation to investigate, not a promise of an experience.”

Reading this book

Start using either choice below. After that, follow the page numbers rather than reading straight through. Scenes are deliberately shuffled; one scene may run over several pages. Choices appear at its end. In a PDF reader you can also click them. Keep a finger or bookmark at your current page when you pause. Two optional meetings with the man lead back to the exact scene you left.

Story and practice

This adventure is original fiction with modern practice pauses inspired by ancient wisdom. Choices and consequences are story devices, not historical events.

Detailed adaptation notes and gaps are available at the back of the book, so the telling can unfold without stopping for every editorial explanation.

Sources and wisdom

The Fortress · Nagara

Choose what comes next

Sit, listen, and begin - turn to page 17.

Move on and enter the adventure - turn to page 17.

Optional: read how this telling was made - turn to page 51.

Second store · less commentary

The second corresponds to the second level of deep collectedness, where directed thought and evaluation settle. Allowing useful thinking to rest briefly does not establish that state.

Grain waits in another store. The man describes the next depth of collectedness: directed thought and evaluation settle, and a more unified joy and ease remain. The town's modern pause lets some commentary rest. It does not rename an ordinary comfortable moment as the complete state described in the teaching.

Practice pause

Let useful thinking rest

1. Notice

After dealing with immediate needs, notice what your thinking is doing.

2. Distinguish

Is the current commentary useful, or simply continuing?

3. Watch

If it can wait, leave it alone and attend to an ordinary breath or comfortable sitting.

4. Release

Return to thinking when useful. No blankness is required.

5. Return

Let the exploration end. Notice your surroundings and the support beneath you. Resume ordinary activity when you feel ready.

6. Make It Yours

If this works for you, make it part of your practice. If it does not, let it go.

Notice, without grading

What would support a useful next action?

Sources and wisdom

Relaxation of thoughts

The Fortress · Nagara

Two sorts of thinking

Choose what comes next

Continue - turn to page 26.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 21.

Carry the direction into the day

Missing what you enjoy is painful; meeting what you dislike is painful too.

The gates open onto daily life. You can leave the image and this sequence behind while taking one useful intention into an ordinary task.

The tour ends where work continues. The keeper opens the gate rather than asking you to stay and admire the defenses. Take an intention into the ordinary road, the man suggests in this original telling. An image that has helped you remember care, learning, effort, and rest can now be allowed to become an image again.

Practice pause

Ease without a review

1. Notice

If an easy moment is present, notice it. If not, simply sit comfortably.

2. Distinguish

Distinguish ease from excitement about being calm or checking whether it will last.

3. Watch

Let that extra evaluation rest briefly. Notice what remains.

4. Release

Look around and continue your day. There is no state to preserve.

5. Return

Let the exploration end. Notice your surroundings and the support beneath you. Resume ordinary activity when you feel ready.

6. Make It Yours

If this works for you, make it part of your practice. If it does not, let it go.

Notice, without grading

What would support a useful next action?

Sources and wisdom

Mindfulness of breathing

The Fortress · Nagara

Two sorts of thinking

Choose what comes next

Continue - turn to page 24.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 21.

A courtyard that opens outward

A protective representation may be revised or left behind. Compare any image with your actual surroundings, then choose an ordinary next action.

The man distinguishes this doorway from the old teaching. A represented place or remembered experience may help someone explore attention; another person may find nothing useful in it. Neither response needs a defense. This part of the story gives you permission to experiment without treating a vivid image as evidence of an external event or a spiritual result.

Practice pause

Build a courtyard that opens outward

Before you begin

Choose a comfortable resting position and briefly represent an open courtyard, window, or path. Name one detail of the imagined place without needing a vivid picture.

Take care

Keep this brief, seated or lying safely. Stop at dizziness, panic, disorientation, an unsettling sense of unreality, or other concerning effects. Use the return steps. Do not push through; if effects persist or worry you, seek professional support. Unusual does not mean advanced.

1. Prepare

Choose a comfortable resting position and briefly represent an open courtyard, window, or path. Name one detail of the imagined place without needing a vivid picture.

2. Experiment

If comfortable, imagine a doorway opening or a wall softening. Notice whether the boundary of “me” feels more or less defended, or unchanged. Then name one real sound, color, or texture. Move a hand comfortably if available, comparing the imagined place with the actual setting.

3. Compare

You can let the scene go without forcing any change to your sense of self. Protection can be set aside when useful; you do not have to stay inside. Feel your seat and begin a small activity: read a sentence, put an object away, or contact someone. If you feel detached or disoriented, stop the imagery and use the shared return steps.

4. Return

Look around and name familiar objects. Feel the chair or floor. Move your hands and feet. Stand or walk only when steady and appropriate, then resume ordinary activity.

5. Make It Yours

If this works for you, make it part of your practice. If it does not, let it go.

An optional personal exploration

This modern method is not established as an instruction in the referenced teaching. Try it only if useful; its relationship and limits are explained in the adaptation notes.

Notice, without grading

Opening an imagined courtyard is a modern option, not a source-based instruction or proof of release.

Sources and wisdom

Fruits of the contemplative life

The Fortress · Nagara

Choose what comes next

Finish the shared walk - turn to page 6.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 21.

Optional: visit the man in the temple - carry only what helps - turn to page 45.

The encircling road · concern for consequences

Walking around the town makes room to consider who an action affects. If harm occurred, a concrete acknowledgment or repair may be more useful than self-condemnation.

The broad road around the town gives a view of places hidden from the gate. A careless act can reach farther than the person doing it first imagines. Here the man tells of care about consequences. Looking outward is not endless self-accusation; it makes room to notice who might need an acknowledgment or repair.

A modern practice pause

After the choice

Before you begin

Choose a safe, ordinary situation. You may pause or finish at any time.

Take care

Repair does not require renewed contact with an unsafe person.

1. Invitation 1

Feel your support and recall one actual action from this adventure. If you only rehearsed it, keep that distinction clear.

2. Invitation 2

What effects did you observe on yourself and others? Separate observations from predictions, hopes, and bodily impressions.

3. Invitation 3

If you caused harm, acknowledge the specific action and consider a safe correction or repair. Ask a trusted person for guidance when needed; do not demand forgiveness.

4. Invitation 4

If the action was helpful, identify the conditions that made it easier and one way to repeat them. If the effects are unknown, leave them unknown and check later if appropriate.

5. Invitation 5

Set down the review. Return to an ordinary responsibility or rest; you do not need a verdict about your whole character.

After the practice

What will you keep, change, or check next time?

Notice, without grading

What would support a useful next action?

Sources and wisdom

Recognizing the direction

Reflection on action

The Fortress · Nagara

Choose what comes next

Continue - turn to page 28.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 21.

What is the gate protecting?

A crowded morning tests the town’s priorities. These fictional options explore consequences; you are not asked to rehearse harmful conduct.

The man returns to another part of the lesson while the next choice has room to form.

Go to the storehouses. The four supplies are compared with four deep levels of collectedness. First there is joy and pleasure born of seclusion, while directed thought and evaluation remain. Then those activities settle into a more unified joy and ease. Next the uplift fades while mindful balance and bodily ease remain. Finally the account describes a purified evenness beyond pleasure and pain.

Notice, without grading

What would support a useful next action?

Sources and wisdom

The Fortress · Nagara

Choose what comes next

Keep necessary contact and give checking a boundary - turn to page 35.

Explore a personal gate image - turn to page 18.

Explore the story of shutting everyone out - turn to page 46.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 21.

Choose a way of representing

An image, a few words, a sketch, or no representation at all can accompany the walk. This is a modern option, separate from the source’s teaching.

The man distinguishes this doorway from the old teaching. A represented place or remembered experience may help someone explore attention; another person may find nothing useful in it. Neither response needs a defense. This part of the story gives you permission to experiment without treating a vivid image as evidence of an external event or a spiritual result.

Notice, without grading

What would support a useful next action?

Sources and wisdom

The Fortress · Nagara

Choose what comes next

Try a simple imagined place - turn to page 43.

Use words or a sketch while walking - turn to page 41.

Continue without representing a place - turn to page 33.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 21.

First store · making room

Do not live carelessly.

The first supply corresponds to the first level of deep collectedness: pleasure and uplifting joy from seclusion, with directed thought and evaluation. This ordinary pause only explores conditions for quiet.

The keeper refuses to end the tour at the wall. People need food and practical stores. In the old comparison, the first supply stands beside a first deep collectedness, where joy and ease arise from seclusion while directed thought remains. Our room for quiet is a modest beginning, not a certificate for that state.

Practice pause

Conditions for quiet

1. Notice

Sit comfortably somewhere you can pause safely.

2. Distinguish

Notice breathing and any unnecessary effort around it. Change position if needed.

3. Watch

Allow breathing to remain natural while effort softens if it can.

4. Release

End gently. A busy mind is not a failed attempt.

5. Return

Let the exploration end. Notice your surroundings and the support beneath you. Resume ordinary activity when you feel ready.

6. Make It Yours

If this works for you, make it part of your practice. If it does not, let it go.

Notice, without grading

What would support a useful next action?

Sources and wisdom

Mindfulness of breathing

The Fortress · Nagara

Choose what comes next

Continue - turn to page 4.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 21.

A town with gates that open

You arrive at a fictional frontier town preparing for an ordinary busy day. Its protection will be measured by how its people act and care for one another. You can follow the comparison in plain language or explore a personal image alongside it.

The man begins a telling that will accompany the choices ahead. Its ancient lesson is larger than these brief exercises; the present-day scene is our invented doorway into it.

A frontier fortress stands where danger may come from outside or through an unreliable ally. The teacher asks the listeners to look at what makes it ready. First there is a foundation post sunk firmly into the ground. Around the town run a deep moat and a broad surrounding road. Inside are stored weapons and trained defenders. At the entrance a capable gatekeeper recognizes who should come through. Thick, well-finished walls complete the protection.

Notice, without grading

What would support a useful next action?

Sources and wisdom

The Fortress · Nagara

Choose what comes next

Walk the town without imagery - turn to page 41.

Consider a personal image first - turn to page 14.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 21.

Optional: visit the man in the temple - the garden does not hurry - turn to page 34.

A boundary that can be revised

Try a modest gate image if useful. Let it suggest a practical boundary you can communicate, rather than a claim to control other people or every thought.

The man distinguishes this doorway from the old teaching. A represented place or remembered experience may help someone explore attention; another person may find nothing useful in it. Neither response needs a defense. This part of the story gives you permission to experiment without treating a vivid image as evidence of an external event or a spiritual result.

Practice pause

Give the gate a boundary

Before you begin

Choose a low-stakes request you want to limit. Rest your hands and notice your posture. Represent a gate that you can open and close, or write the word boundary on a card.

Take care

Keep this brief, seated or lying safely. Stop at dizziness, panic, disorientation, an unsettling sense of unreality, or other concerning effects. Use the return steps. Do not push through; if effects persist or worry you, seek professional support. Unusual does not mean advanced.

1. Prepare

Choose a low-stakes request you want to limit. Rest your hands and notice your posture. Represent a gate that you can open and close, or write the word boundary on a card.

2. Experiment

Imagine closing the gate, opening it a little, or changing the wall around it. Notice any sense of protection, space, or effort. Then rehearse “I can help for ten minutes,” or “I cannot take that on.” Use your usual communication method if speech is unavailable.

3. Compare

Protection and openness are choices to explore. You can soften the imagined boundary or leave it as it is; notice what feels workable. The gate can also stand for choosing access to your time. Set it aside when finished. Choose a safe real-world boundary; where refusal could bring retaliation, prioritize support and safety over confrontation.

4. Return

Look around and name familiar objects. Feel the chair or floor. Move your hands and feet. Stand or walk only when steady and appropriate, then resume ordinary activity.

5. Make It Yours

If this works for you, make it part of your practice. If it does not, let it go.

An optional personal exploration

This modern method is not established as an instruction in the referenced teaching. Try it only if useful; its relationship and limits are explained in the adaptation notes.

Notice, without grading

The Fortress · Nagara’s gatekeeper stands for mindfulness. This imagined gate is a modern personal exploration; it need not help.

Sources and wisdom

Fruits of the contemplative life

The Fortress · Nagara

Choose what comes next

Continue to discernment - turn to page 35.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 21.

Sometimes the next step is elsewhere

You can leave for a task, company, rest, or another practice. The town does not need you to keep it in mind.

The man leaves the gate unlatched. The imagined scene can remain unfinished while you answer a person, move your body, eat, or rest. Leaving the path is not made into a flaw in your character. A bookmark is an invitation, not a debt; the story can meet you again if returning is useful.

Notice, without grading

Your previous place is saved to your account when signed in, or in this browser for guests when storage is available.

An ordinary pause

You may close the book, explore ordinary life, and return to this page whenever you choose. Leaving can be part of walking the path.

Leaving the path

The man in the temple offers a quiet farewell. You can return to ordinary life now, or return to your bookmarked page another day. This pause is not a completed journey.

Sources and wisdom

The Fortress · Nagara

Choose what comes next

Visit the temple again - turn to page 2.

Fourth store · evenness

The fourth corresponds to the fourth level of deep collectedness, with neither pleasure nor pain and purified steadiness of mind and mindfulness. Ordinary care amid mixed feeling is an introductory exercise, not this attainment.

The last stores include oil, butter, honey, and salt. Their sustaining richness accompanies the fourth comparison: a deep evenness beyond the alternation of pleasure and pain. The town's little experiment cannot establish it. Yet it can ask whether a person can remain caring when the day's feelings refuse to stay on one side.

Practice pause

Steady care

1. Notice

Think of someone you care about in an ordinary situation.

2. Distinguish

Distinguish wishing them well from needing a particular outcome.

3. Watch

Can care and steadiness be present together, even briefly?

4. Release

Keep appropriate responsibilities and boundaries. Release only the extra struggle you can leave.

5. Return

Let the exploration end. Notice your surroundings and the support beneath you. Resume ordinary activity when you feel ready.

6. Make It Yours

If this works for you, make it part of your practice. If it does not, let it go.

Notice, without grading

What would support a useful next action?

Sources and wisdom

Cultivating care and steadiness

The Fortress · Nagara

Choose what comes next

Continue - turn to page 37.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 21.

A fortress in service of living

The story ends with people able to listen, care, learn, rest and act. Let the fictional town go. No defense needs to be maintained for the sake of completing this adventure.

The place you have been exploring continues beyond your part in it. There is still work to do and information nobody possesses yet. The man is waiting at the temple to receive an ordinary person, not an example of a completed teaching. A useful direction can be carried without making the story’s ending settle the rest of your life.

Notice, without grading

Which small action would be useful now? Finishing establishes no spiritual attainment.

Back at the temple

You return through the well-kept garden to the small temple. Incense drifts past the three meditation pads. The man opens his eyes, smiles, and welcomes you back.

The man speaks

You walked the town through care, learning, effort and nourishment. Protection is useful when it leaves room to listen, learn and live beyond its walls.

“You are welcome to walk another adventure, or return to ordinary life. There is nothing you need to prove before you go.”

An ending

To return to ordinary life, close the book here. Finishing marks participation, not an attainment.

Sources and wisdom

The Fortress · Nagara

Choose what comes next

Sit in the temple and begin a fresh visit - turn to page 2.

Third store · a quieter nourishment

The third corresponds to the third level of deep collectedness: uplifting joy fades, with mindful steadiness of mind and bodily pleasure. Our pause explores a small pleasant experience without holding it.

At the third storehouse, the keeper pours beans into a measure. The corresponding meditation in the source is less stirred by uplift, with mindful balance and bodily ease. The story gives nourishment a quieter sound here. You can receive a pleasant detail without requiring it to remain available whenever fear returns.

Practice pause

Pleasant without holding

1. Notice

Choose a pleasant contact, sound, or sight already present. Use a sense available to you; do not buy or create a stronger sensation.

2. Distinguish

Describe the detail itself, then notice any plan to repeat, improve, or prolong it. These may overlap.

3. Watch

Stay with the detail for a few seconds without adding another plan. Can you distinguish enjoyment from planning, or is the boundary unclear? You do not have to stop either.

4. Release

Enjoy what remains or move on freely.

5. Return

Let the exploration end. Notice your surroundings and the support beneath you. Resume ordinary activity when you feel ready.

6. Make It Yours

If this works for you, make it part of your practice. If it does not, let it go.

Notice, without grading

What would support a useful next action?

Sources and wisdom

The Fortress · Nagara

The arrow

Choose what comes next

Continue - turn to page 22.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 21.

The store of tools · retained learning

Each person is responsible for their own harmful or helpful conduct; no one can do that inner work for someone else.

The source compares learned teachings to stored weapons. Here the tools serve understanding and harmless conduct: recall a teaching, check it, and examine how to use it.

Inside a storehouse, the keeper finds what was put away before today's difficulty arrived. The source compares remembered teachings with a supply of weapons. Our telling does not turn people or thoughts into targets. A recalled lesson can interrupt confusion, and it is worth checking whether the remembered lesson is actually what was taught.

A modern practice pause

Recall, check, and put into practice

Before you begin

Choose a short, relevant passage in Sources and wisdom. Keep the reference available.

Take care

Use an ordinary, low-stakes example. Recollection is fallible; checking is part of the practice.

1.

Read a short passage once. Set it aside and recall its practical point in your own words, without claiming to quote it.

2.

Open the source again. Notice a detail you missed or changed. Correct your recollection; leave unclear points as questions.

3.

Consider one ordinary situation in which that teaching could guide a harmless action. Separate what the passage says from your own interpretation.

4.

Try one suitable small action, or plan when to try it. Later compare the result with your expectation. Discuss unresolved questions with a knowledgeable person if useful.

5.

End the rehearsal and return to your surroundings. Keep what helps; leave the exercise if it does not.

After the practice

What did checking change? Remembering a sentence is a beginning, not mastery of a teaching.

Notice, without grading

What would support a useful next action?

Sources and wisdom

The Fortress · Nagara

Choose what comes next

Continue - turn to page 30.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 21.

The defenders · persistence

The morning brings repeated small temptations to rush. Protection needs a workable effort that can be renewed, rather than one heroic effort that exhausts everyone.

The town cannot live by one heroic afternoon. Bread is baked again, a broken latch is repaired, and a tired worker asks for help. Steady effort is the protective force in the source's comparison. What serves here is something people can renew, rather than a display that exhausts everyone it claims to defend.

A modern practice pause

Choose what to cultivate

Before you begin

Choose a safe, ordinary situation. You may pause or finish at any time.

Take care

Having an unwanted thought is not wrongdoing. Work with what you cultivate and do.

1. Invitation 1

At a comfortable pause, choose one small unhelpful pattern and one helpful quality. For example: rehearsing blame and being willing to ask a clear question.

2. Invitation 2

Prevent: change one condition that would invite the unhelpful pattern, such as rereading a provocative draft. This is about conduct and attention, not preventing every unwanted thought.

3. Invitation 3

Abandon: if blame is already being rehearsed, stop adding the next accusation. Return to ordinary contact; take practical action if a problem needs it.

4. Invitation 4

Develop: deliberately offer a truthful question or a wish for the other person’s well-being. Use an unsent draft if no interaction is appropriate.

5. Invitation 5

Maintain: if care or clarity is already present, give it time and supporting conditions. Repeat a useful action without forcing a feeling.

6. Invitation 6

End by choosing one manageable action. Effort can be steady without becoming harsh.

After the practice

Which effort fits the situation now? It may change next time.

Notice, without grading

What would support a useful next action?

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

The Fortress · Nagara

Two sorts of thinking

Choose what comes next

Continue - turn to page 47.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 21.

When protection becomes a prison

The fictional council dismisses evidence of a blocked waterway because its map says the water must flow. Supplies run short. Defending certainty has displaced learning and caused avoidable suffering.

The man does not rescue the imagined situation with a sudden lesson that makes its cost disappear. Someone has been left unheard, a need has gone unmet, or attention has become a wall. This consequence belongs to the fiction. You can retrace the turn and consider another response without practicing harm in your own life.

Notice, without grading

Being willing to check is available again. This is an invented consequence, not an ending in the source.

Leaving the path

The man in the temple offers a quiet farewell. You can return to ordinary life now, or return to your bookmarked page another day. This pause is not a completed journey.

Sources and wisdom

The Fortress · Nagara

Choose what comes next

Try another direction - turn to page 40.

Visit the temple again - turn to page 2.

No inner picture is required

The town can remain a story you read. An ordinary room and an ordinary next action are sufficient for every shared practice.

The man returns to another part of the lesson while the next choice has room to form.

Walk the boundary and hear the comparison unfold. Confidence in awakening is the deeply set foundation. Conscience is the moat: a reluctance to choose harm. Care about consequences is the surrounding road, giving room to see what an act may do. Learned teachings become a store of usable resources; steady effort becomes the defenders; remembering becomes the gatekeeper; discernment becomes the protective finish of the walls.

Notice, without grading

What would support a useful next action?

Sources and wisdom

The Fortress · Nagara

Choose what comes next

Begin with actual support - turn to page 41.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 21.

The garden does not hurry

An optional meeting - original fiction

You find the man beside the temple garden. He makes room for you to sit. This meeting is a pause in the adventure, not a required practice.

The man speaks

“A protective wall is useful when it supports a life beyond the wall. Let care, learning, effort, and attention protect what matters without making every unfamiliar thing an enemy.”

He smiles. “When you are ready, return to where you left the story.”

Sources and wisdom

The Fortress · Nagara

Choose what comes next

Return to “A town with gates that open” - turn to page 17.

The ramparts · discernment

The source assigns discernment a protective role. In this introductory pause, notice a small want and what feeding it does. A moment of noticing is not liberating discernment in its fullness.

Along the wall, a worker checks the finish for cracks. The source gives discernment this covering role, a protection directed toward understanding suffering and its ending. An introductory pause in our town is much smaller. You can notice what a particular want does when supplied, without calling that observation the whole of liberating wisdom.

Practice pause

Catch a small want

1. Notice

While safely waiting, notice a wish to check your phone or have a page finish loading.

2. Distinguish

How is the want apparent: words, bodily tension, an image, or something else?

3. Watch

Notice whether it persists, shifts, or disappears.

4. Release

Choose what to do. Observing does not obligate you to refuse the want.

5. Return

Let the exploration end. Notice your surroundings and the support beneath you. Resume ordinary activity when you feel ready.

6. Make It Yours

If this works for you, make it part of your practice. If it does not, let it go.

Notice, without grading

What would support a useful next action?

Sources and wisdom

Establishing mindfulness

The Fortress · Nagara

Choose what comes next

Continue - turn to page 15.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 21.

Protection with room to learn

The shared walk is nearly complete. A resident proposes that the town should never need to question itself again. How would you like to explore that proposal?

The man returns to another part of the lesson while the next choice has room to form.

Walk the boundary and hear the comparison unfold. Confidence in awakening is the deeply set foundation. Conscience is the moat: a reluctance to choose harm. Care about consequences is the surrounding road, giving room to see what an act may do. Learned teachings become a store of usable resources; steady effort becomes the defenders; remembering becomes the gatekeeper; discernment becomes the protective finish of the walls.

Notice, without grading

What would support a useful next action?

Sources and wisdom

The Fortress · Nagara

Choose what comes next

Leave room for questions and return to daily life - turn to page 6.

Try an optional courtyard opening - turn to page 8.

Follow the fictional demand for certainty - turn to page 40.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 21.

The moat · conscience

A resident is tempted to send a cutting reply. Before an action, there is room to remember the wish not to cause harm. Your worth as a person is not on trial.

At the moat, a resident stops with a harsh message ready to send. No guard has seized the person's hand. There is simply a remembered reluctance to cause harm. In the old comparison, conscience offers this protection. The modern scene leaves human worth intact while asking what action a person wants to stand behind.

A modern practice pause

Before the reply

Before you begin

Choose a safe, ordinary situation. You may pause or finish at any time.

Take care

No message needs to be sent. Keep boundaries and necessary protective action.

1. Invitation 1

Use a low-stakes message, real or imagined. Keep your hands comfortably supported. Leave urgent or unsafe situations to practical care.

2. Invitation 2

Before replying, ask whether the words are truthful and whether sending them is likely to harm you, the other person, or both. Bodily tension is information, not the answer to that question.

3. Invitation 3

Draft one accurate sentence without an accusation about a motive you cannot know. If it would cause avoidable harm, revise it or choose not to send it.

4. Invitation 4

If you speak or send, remain attentive to the effects. Stop or correct course when harm becomes apparent. You can also leave the draft unsent.

After the practice

What did you choose, and what still needs checking?

Notice, without grading

What would support a useful next action?

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Reflection on action

The Fortress · Nagara

Choose what comes next

Continue - turn to page 11.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 21.

Does certainty need defending?

In the fictional council, a polished map starts to matter more than what happens outside. You can follow that turn or set the map down.

A shortcut offers to remove the uncertainty that has made the journey human. You can hear why the offer is attractive without accepting its terms. The man leaves the fictional consequence available to inspect, and leaves another direction open. The point is discovery, not catching a reader in a mistake.

Notice, without grading

What would support a useful next action?

Sources and wisdom

The Fortress · Nagara

Choose what comes next

Follow the council that refuses correction - turn to page 32.

Allow correction and finish the walk - turn to page 6.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 21.

The ground beneath the story

Care for yourself like a frontier town guarded both inside and out.

The town can wait while you notice your actual position. No particular bodily state is required.

From the temple path you can see the frontier town. Someone is carrying water through the gate, someone else is mending a cart, and a child waits for a loaf to cool. The man begins the old comparison by asking you to notice who needs protection. A fortress exists for a life inside it, not for the glory of its walls.

Practice pause

Knowing this position

1. Notice

Notice whether you are sitting, standing, walking, or lying down.

2. Distinguish

How do you know? Notice contact and position without adjusting them.

3. Watch

Stay with that ordinary knowledge briefly.

4. Release

Continue your activity; there is nothing to retain.

5. Return

Let the exploration end. Notice your surroundings and the support beneath you. Resume ordinary activity when you feel ready.

6. Make It Yours

If this works for you, make it part of your practice. If it does not, let it go.

Notice, without grading

What would support a useful next action?

Sources and wisdom

Establishing mindfulness

The Fortress · Nagara

Choose what comes next

Continue - turn to page 49.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 21.

An optional imagined place

Keep your actual surroundings available. A modest representation is enough, and you may set it aside at any time.

The man distinguishes this doorway from the old teaching. A represented place or remembered experience may help someone explore attention; another person may find nothing useful in it. Neither response needs a defense. This part of the story gives you permission to experiment without treating a vivid image as evidence of an external event or a spiritual result.

Practice pause

A mental fortress

Take care

Keep this brief, seated or lying safely. Stop at dizziness, panic, disorientation, an unsettling sense of unreality, or other concerning effects. Use the return steps. Do not push through; if effects persist or worry you, seek professional support. Unusual does not mean advanced.

1. Prepare

Choose a safe ordinary moment with no task demanding your attention. Decide what you expect to notice.

2. Experiment

Choose a small invented room, garden, or fortress. Give it an entrance and three landmarks. Imagine being within it while feeling your actual support. Try opening a door, changing a wall, or softening an edge. Revisit briefly if useful.

3. Compare

Notice whether protection or openness changes the feel of attention, effort, or “me.” Leave the meaning open, then set the place aside.

4. Return

Look around and name familiar objects. Feel the chair or floor. Move your hands and feet. Stand or walk only when steady and appropriate, then resume ordinary activity.

5. Make It Yours

If this works for you, make it part of your practice. If it does not, let it go.

An optional personal exploration

This modern method is not established as an instruction in the referenced teaching. Try it only if useful; its relationship and limits are explained in the adaptation notes.

Notice, without grading

This imagery is a personal exploration, not a method given in The Fortress · Nagara. What, if anything, was useful?

Sources and wisdom

Fruits of the contemplative life

The Fortress · Nagara

Choose what comes next

Return to actual support - turn to page 41.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 21.

Carry only what helps

An optional meeting - original fiction

You find the man beside the temple garden. He makes room for you to sit. This meeting is a pause in the adventure, not a required practice.

The man speaks

“A town needs nourishment as well as defenses. Ask what restores a steady, workable attention. The imagined fortress is a modern aid; it is not the whole training described by the teaching.”

He smiles. “When you are ready, return to where you left the story.”

Sources and wisdom

The Fortress · Nagara

Choose what comes next

Return to “A courtyard that opens outward” - turn to page 10.

A silent town, a narrower life

In this fictional branch the town refuses every visitor, including a friend bringing help. Its quiet becomes isolation; needed repairs go unnoticed and mistrust grows. Trying to exclude all experience has added suffering.

The man does not rescue the imagined situation with a sudden lesson that makes its cost disappear. Someone has been left unheard, a need has gone unmet, or attention has become a wall. This consequence belongs to the fiction. You can retrace the turn and consider another response without practicing harm in your own life.

Notice, without grading

This outcome belongs to the invented story. You can retrace it, accept useful support, or leave for now.

Leaving the path

The man in the temple offers a quiet farewell. You can return to ordinary life now, or return to your bookmarked page another day. This pause is not a completed journey.

Sources and wisdom

The Fortress · Nagara

Choose what comes next

Try another direction - turn to page 13.

Visit the temple again - turn to page 2.

The gatekeeper · mindfulness

Remembering what matters can interrupt a checking loop. A gate can allow necessary messages through while leaving an unnecessary check for later.

At the gate, the keeper recognizes a familiar messenger and lets necessary news through. A trader also tries to call everyone's attention to a rumor for the fifth time. Remembering what matters does not require a sealed entrance. The gatekeeper is the old image for mindfulness: retaining and calling back what helps a situation be met wisely.

A modern practice pause

Give the next check a boundary

Before you begin

Choose a safe, ordinary situation. You may pause or finish at any time.

Take care

This is voluntary restraint, never withholding food, care, communication, or urgent action.

1. Invitation 1

Feel your seat or another ordinary contact. First check whether you need the device for safety, care, work, or another real responsibility.

2. Invitation 2

For a nonessential check, notice the sight or thought that invites another look. Recognize any anticipated reward and the cost of repeating the loop.

3. Invitation 3

Choose a small boundary: close the extra tab, put the device within hearing but out of view, or choose a realistic time to check. Leave necessary notifications available.

4. Invitation 4

Turn to one useful activity. When the invitation returns, remember the boundary without arguing with the thought. Adjust the plan if circumstances change.

After the practice

Did the boundary help, hinder, or need changing?

Notice, without grading

What would support a useful next action?

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Gradual training

The Fortress · Nagara

Choose what comes next

Continue - turn to page 13.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 21.

The foundation · conviction

In the source, the foundation represents conviction in awakening. For this modern pause, identify the direction of one intention without pretending that a feeling of certainty proves it true.

A foundation post is sunk deep beneath the entrance. The keeper taps it with a hand and speaks of confidence in the possibility of awakening. Confidence is not the same as refusing to examine anything. It gives a direction worth testing through conduct and practice, as a sound foundation lets the town begin its work.

Practice pause

Recognition and intention

1. Notice

Look at an ordinary object such as a cup.

2. Distinguish

Distinguish its visible appearance, recognizing “cup,” and any intention to pick it up.

3. Watch

Is every part equally apparent? Does recognizing it immediately lead to doing something?

4. Release

Leave the cup alone or use it. Finish with ordinary activity.

5. Return

Let the exploration end. Notice your surroundings and the support beneath you. Resume ordinary activity when you feel ready.

6. Make It Yours

If this works for you, make it part of your practice. If it does not, let it go.

Notice, without grading

What would support a useful next action?

Sources and wisdom

How elaboration gathers

The Fortress · Nagara

The fourfold round

Choose what comes next

Continue - turn to page 38.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 21.

How this telling was made

Original telling and modern practice

The temple man, present-day settings, connective descriptions, and reader choices are original literary framing. Historical stories retain their recorded direction. Dialogue is modern paraphrase, not a claimed historical quotation. Practice pauses are modern invitations; reading an outcome does not establish that outcome in the reader.

About the adaptation

An original interactive adaptation of the fortress comparison in The Fortress · Nagara. The town and its choices are invented; modern practice pauses and optional imagery are not events or methods prescribed by the discourse.

The comparison and its modern setting

The seven correspondences come from the wisdom reference. The town, its troubles and choices are invented. The comparison concerns cultivated qualities, not the construction of a literal inner fortress.

Conviction and ethical care

The foundation in the source is conviction in the Buddha’s awakening. A modest intention and evidence from an exercise do not replace that meaning. Conscience and concern for consequences here are invitations to avoid and repair harm, not shame about being a person or blame for involuntary distress.

Learning that is retained and examined

A new recall-and-check practice introduces remembering, examining and applying a teaching. A short passage does not replace wide learning, discussion, or sustained ethical training.

Optional personal imagery

Imagined gates, guardians and courtyards are modern personal explorations. The Fortress · Nagara does not prescribe constructing or inhabiting a visualization. Try an image, words, or a sketch if useful; the direct route needs none. Vividness is not proof of protection or attainment.

Four stores, four levels of deep collectedness

The four supplies correspond to the four levels of deep collectedness, not four relaxation tricks. Modern pauses below introduce supportive conditions only. The app neither teaches their full cultivation nor verifies deep collectedness, immunity from distress, a lasting shift toward awakening or liberation. Completion records participation.

Build a courtyard that opens outward

uncertain. Build a courtyard that opens outward: An imagined form has a thematic resemblance to the mind-made-body passage; it may also be explored for its practical value. The uncertainty concerns textual correspondence, not a verdict on personal usefulness. Fruits of the contemplative life places the described a body represented in the mind after extensive conduct and concentration. These modern constructions are optional personal explorations, not evidence of that attainment. Keep what helps and let the rest go.

Give the gate a boundary

uncertain. Give the gate a boundary: An imagined form has a thematic resemblance to the mind-made-body passage; it may also be explored for its practical value. The uncertainty concerns textual correspondence, not a verdict on personal usefulness. Fruits of the contemplative life places the described a body represented in the mind after extensive conduct and concentration. These modern constructions are optional personal explorations, not evidence of that attainment. Keep what helps and let the rest go.

A mental fortress

uncertain. A mental fortress: An imagined form has a thematic resemblance to the mind-made-body passage; it may also be explored for its practical value. The uncertainty concerns textual correspondence, not a verdict on personal usefulness. Fruits of the contemplative life places the described a body represented in the mind after extensive conduct and concentration. These modern constructions are optional personal explorations, not evidence of that attainment. Keep what helps and let the rest go.

Knowing this position

adaptation. Knowing this position: This invitation adapts an operation from the cited discourse: knowing the body. This modern sensory comparison omits the full mindfulness framework and does not establish insight.

Recognition and intention

adaptation. Recognition and intention: This invitation adapts an operation from the cited discourse: distinguishing experiential categories. Changes in viewpoint, naming, or boundaries do not establish not-self, nonduality, or release.

Pleasant without holding

adaptation. Pleasant without holding: This invitation adapts an operation from the cited discourse: recognizing feeling and response. Acceptance, soothing, or reduced distress alone does not establish source-based steadiness of mind or require accepting harm.

Steady care

adaptation. Steady care: This invitation adapts an operation from the cited discourse: cultivating care. Modern imagery, permission, and interpersonal techniques are adaptations; the full cultivation is not covered.

Ease without a review

adaptation. Ease without a review: This invitation adapts an operation from the cited discourse: settling body and mind. Natural breathing and temporary ease do not cover the sixteen trainings or establish deep collectedness.

Before the reply

adaptation. Before the reply: New practice addressing: Conduct in daily life. Original contemporary script. It introduces part of the cited training and requires real-world repetition; no attainment is inferred.

After the choice

adaptation. After the choice: New practice addressing: Conduct in daily life. Original contemporary script. It introduces part of the cited training and requires real-world repetition; no attainment is inferred.

Recall, check, and put into practice

adaptation. Recall, check, and put into practice: New practice addressing: Retaining and examining a teaching. Original contemporary script. It introduces part of the cited training and requires real-world repetition; no attainment is inferred.

Choose what to cultivate

adaptation. Choose what to cultivate: New practice addressing: All four efforts. Original contemporary script. It introduces part of the cited training and requires real-world repetition; no attainment is inferred.

Give the next check a boundary

adaptation. Give the next check a boundary: New practice addressing: Protecting attention. Original contemporary script. It introduces part of the cited training and requires real-world repetition; no attainment is inferred.

Catch a small want

adaptation. Catch a small want: This invitation adapts an operation from the cited discourse: recognizing and investigating wanting. Regulation or preference alone does not establish ethical skillfulness; all four efforts and consequences need consideration.

Conditions for quiet

adaptation. Conditions for quiet: This invitation adapts an operation from the cited discourse: settling body and mind. Natural breathing and temporary ease do not cover the sixteen trainings or establish deep collectedness.

Let useful thinking rest

adaptation. Let useful thinking rest: This invitation adapts an operation from the cited discourse: settling body and mind. Natural breathing and temporary ease do not cover the sixteen trainings or establish deep collectedness.

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Cultivating care and steadiness

Establishing mindfulness

Fruits of the contemplative life

Gradual training

How elaboration gathers

Mindfulness of breathing

Recognizing the direction

Reflection on action

Relaxation of thoughts

The Fortress · Nagara

The arrow

The fourfold round

Two sorts of thinking

Choose what comes next

Return to the temple garden - turn to page 2.