A Mirror for Action - 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

A Mirror for Action. Rāhula receives a lesson about truthfulness and a mirror for examining action.

“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

The source story follows its recorded direction. Modern practice pauses and the temple framing are editorial additions, not episodes from the original story.

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

Reflection on action

Choose what comes next

Sit, listen, and begin - turn to page 30.

Move on and enter the adventure - turn to page 30.

Optional: read how this telling was made - turn to page 34.

Practice pause · Before the reply

Rahula is asked to look before acting. Consider a small, safe action and what its likely effect might be on yourself and someone else.

Here the man allows a longer silence. This editorial addition can be tried without producing the lesson's supposed correct feeling. Notice what the invitation actually does, and stop if ordinary care asks for something else.

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, if anything, was useful in this pause? The source’s reported result is not a result the app can establish.

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Reflection on action

Choose what comes next

Continue to the next practice pause - turn to page 22.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 33.

Practice pause · Hands at rest

Before the lesson becomes an argument about good and bad people, return to the small acts of care that opened the meeting. Notice the support available to you now.

The man pauses before the next part of the telling. You can try this editorial addition in the room where you are, without imagining yourself inside the historical event. There is time to notice what the beginning has stirred.

Practice pause

Hands at rest

1. Notice

Place your hands on a comfortable surface. Notice their temperature and points of contact.

2. Invite

Notice the contact of your palm and fingers separately. If moving is comfortable, lift one finger a little and set it down; otherwise compare two points of contact.

3. Listen

Compare the pressure before and after, or between the two points. Which details can you describe? Temperature or pressure may stay unchanged.

4. Respond

When ready, pick up an ordinary object and notice its contact with your hands.

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, if anything, was useful in this pause? The source's reported result is not a result the app can establish.

Sources and wisdom

Establishing mindfulness

Reflection on action

Choose what comes next

Continue to the next practice pause - turn to page 18.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 33.

Optional: visit the man in the temple - carry only what helps - turn to page 12.

A continuing practice

The lesson gathers the three times together: before, during, and after. It also gathers the three fields of action: body, speech, and mind. This is how the training is described as being purified, not by declaring oneself a good person once and keeping that declaration beyond question.

The dipper can now be put down. Its emptiness was never meant to become a verdict that Rahula himself was worthless. The practical matter is whether the next action can be met honestly. In the modern pauses that follow, a mirror is a way of looking with enough steadiness to change course, make repair where possible, and continue learning.

Notice, without grading

Read at your own pace. The next two pauses are contemporary invitations, not recorded events in the source.

Sources and wisdom

Reflection on action

Choose what comes next

Continue to a contemporary practice pause - turn to page 10.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 33.

Before and during

Before an action, Rahula is to ask about its likely effects. Will this hurt himself, someone else, or both? An action that leads toward harm is not made wise by the strength of the wish to do it. The same looking is needed while the action is under way. New information can arrive after a beginning. There may still be time to stop.

The mirror does not belong only to the hands. Speech and mental activity also have consequences. The lesson returns to them patiently, refusing the comfortable division in which an outwardly quiet person imagines that intentions and words no longer need attention. Looking is part of the doing, not a reward saved for afterward.

Notice, without grading

Read at your own pace. The next two pauses are contemporary invitations, not recorded events in the source.

Sources and wisdom

Reflection on action

Choose what comes next

Continue to a contemporary practice pause - turn to page 4.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 33.

Practice pause · Choose what to cultivate

The mirror belongs in ordinary life. Choose one place where checking an intention could be useful after you leave the story.

The story is nearing its ending, but your day has its own pace. This editorial addition asks whether anything small can travel with you into that day. It need not resemble the result reported in the account.

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, if anything, was useful in this pause? The source’s reported result is not a result the app can establish.

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Reflection on action

Two sorts of thinking

Choose what comes next

Continue to the next practice pause - turn to page 16.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 33.

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

“When an action has caused harm, reflection can lead to acknowledgment, repair, and a different intention. Repeating blame is not the same as learning.”

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

Sources and wisdom

Reflection on action

Choose what comes next

Return to “Practice pause · Hands at rest” - turn to page 7.

Let the story rest

The retelling and its modern practice pauses can end here. You can read the full wisdom reference, return to ordinary activity, or explore another adventure.

The man closes the telling without turning its reported ending into a result you are expected to claim. The people in the old account have their own training and consequences. What you can carry is a question or an intention that meets your own ordinary life with a little more care.

Notice, without grading

Participation in these pauses does not establish the attainments described in the source.

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 met the mirror of actions before, during and afterward. An honest correction can begin with one particular deed.

“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

Reflection on action

Choose what comes next

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

After an action

Harmful actions are easy to do; doing what is beneficial and good is difficult.

Afterward, the question changes from what might happen to what did happen. If a bodily or spoken action has caused harm, Rahula is told to acknowledge it to a teacher or a capable companion and develop restraint for the future. The story gives no place of honor to concealment.

For harmful mental activity, the response includes recognizing the danger and turning away from repeating it. For actions that prove harmless and helpful, the instruction is not to invent a fault. There can be gladness, and a renewed wish to keep training. The mirror can reveal something worth continuing as well as something that needs repair.

Notice, without grading

Read at your own pace. The next two pauses are contemporary invitations, not recorded events in the source.

Sources and wisdom

Reflection on action

Choose what comes next

Continue to a contemporary practice pause - turn to page 27.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 33.

Practice pause · Ease without a review

Do not neglect your own responsibility for someone else’s, however important it seems; understand your responsibility and give it steady attention.

Let the review itself have an ending. Honesty does not require keeping yourself under constant examination.

For this last editorial addition, the man leaves room to finish. You can set down the exercise along with the book. An unfinished question may remain useful without being carried as an obligation.

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, if anything, was useful in this pause? The source’s reported result is not a result the app can establish.

Sources and wisdom

Mindfulness of breathing

Reflection on action

Two sorts of thinking

Choose what comes next

Continue the story - turn to page 13.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 33.

Practice pause · Knowing this position

The empty dipper points toward honesty. This contemporary pause asks for an observation, not a confession or a judgment of your character.

The telling remains open while you try another small invitation. This editorial addition does not ask you to decide what the characters should have felt. Let one ordinary experience of your own receive a little attention.

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, if anything, was useful in this pause? The source's reported result is not a result the app can establish.

Sources and wisdom

Establishing mindfulness

Reflection on action

Choose what comes next

Continue the story - turn to page 24.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 33.

Practice pause · After the choice

A helpful action deserves to be recognized too. Let this exercise explore what can be continued without turning it into a claim about being finished.

The man has not asked for a report. This editorial addition lets you listen to the effects of a practice privately. Keep what is usable, and leave what has become unnecessary work.

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, if anything, was useful in this pause? The source's reported result is not a result the app can establish.

Sources and wisdom

Recognizing the direction

Reflection on action

Choose what comes next

Continue the story - turn to page 8.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 33.

Practice pause · A brief gap

There can also be looking in the middle of an action. This pause is a chance to notice a change while there is still room to respond.

The turn in the story need not become a demand on you. This editorial addition offers another modest experiment. Something useful may appear; nothing in the characters' lives depends on whether it does.

Practice pause

A brief gap

1. Notice

Notice a nonessential impulse, such as opening another video.

2. Distinguish

If comfortable, allow a few seconds before acting. The duration is unimportant.

3. Watch

What is the impulse doing during this pause? Does another thought join it?

4. Release

Act or leave it. Do not delay necessary care or attention to your surroundings.

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, if anything, was useful in this pause? The source's reported result is not a result the app can establish.

Sources and wisdom

Establishing mindfulness

How elaboration gathers

Reflection on action

Choose what comes next

Continue the story - turn to page 15.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 33.

The mirror’s use

The teacher gives another demanding image, of a battle elephant holding something in reserve and then committing everything. The point is not to train Rahula for battle. It is to make him see what is lost when deliberate lying no longer feels like a boundary. If that restraint is abandoned, there is little a person cannot talk themselves into doing.

Rahula is asked to take truthfulness seriously even in play. Then the lesson changes its instrument. What is a mirror used for? It lets you look. The teacher brings that familiar act of looking toward conduct: an action can be examined rather than merely followed because an impulse has appeared.

Notice, without grading

Read at your own pace. The next two pauses are contemporary invitations, not recorded events in the source.

Sources and wisdom

Reflection on action

Choose what comes next

Continue to a contemporary practice pause - turn to page 25.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 33.

Practice pause · Recognize a thought

A mirror lets a detail become visible. Try separating something you actually observed from the explanation that arrived with it.

The man leaves the story's image with you rather than explaining it again. This editorial addition is a chance to meet an everyday version of the question. A small, safe example will do.

Practice pause

Recognize a thought

1. Notice

Sit comfortably and notice a thought when you become aware of one.

2. Distinguish

Is it a plan, a wish, an objection, or another kind of thinking?

3. Watch

Can you notice the thinking as well as its subject? There is no need to find a separate observer.

4. Release

Let attention return to the room. Nothing must be silenced.

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, if anything, was useful in this pause? The source's reported result is not a result the app can establish.

Sources and wisdom

Reflection on action

Two sorts of thinking

Choose what comes next

Continue to the next practice pause - turn to page 31.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 33.

Practice pause · Repair without disappearing

An honest review can lead toward repair rather than endless self-criticism. Stay with a manageable example instead of searching for the worst thing you have ever done.

The next part can wait while the lesson meets an ordinary choice. This editorial addition stays close to a real, manageable situation rather than asking you to reproduce the events or achievements in the telling.

Practice pause

Repair without disappearing

1. Notice

Recall a manageable recent interaction where your behavior caused a problem. Notice support beneath your body.

2. Invite

Name the specific action and its likely impact without explaining it away or declaring yourself a bad person.

3. Listen

Rehearse a repair: “I interrupted you. I am sorry. I want to hear the rest.” Let the words be plain.

4. Respond

Make the repair if appropriate and follow through. The other person does not owe immediate forgiveness or reassurance.

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, if anything, was useful in this pause? The source's reported result is not a result the app can establish.

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Reflection on action

Choose what comes next

Continue to the next practice pause - turn to page 20.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 33.

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 mirror is useful before, during, and after an action. Look for harm while there is still room to change direction. Honesty is a practical support, not an invitation to self-punishment.”

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

Sources and wisdom

Reflection on action

Choose what comes next

Return to “A lesson in truthfulness” - turn to page 30.

A lesson in truthfulness

First guide your own conduct well, then teach others; a wise person avoids trouble this way.

Rahula sees the Buddha approaching and prepares a seat and water for washing. The meeting begins with that ordinary act of care. After washing, the teacher leaves a little water in the dipper and draws the young monk's attention to it. Such a small amount can serve as an image of how little remains of a training when deliberate dishonesty is treated as unimportant.

The dipper becomes the lesson. Water is thrown away; the vessel is turned over; then it is shown empty. Rahula is asked to look, not merely agree with a slogan about honesty. A container that will not hold what it is meant to hold cannot serve its purpose. The training needs a willingness to tell the truth about what one does.

Notice, without grading

Read at your own pace. The next two pauses are contemporary invitations, not recorded events in the source.

Sources and wisdom

Reflection on action

Choose what comes next

Continue to a contemporary practice pause - turn to page 6.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 33.

Optional: visit the man in the temple - the garden does not hurry - turn to page 29.

Practice pause · Recognition and intention

Practice what you teach before trying to guide others; training yourself is difficult.

The lesson is moving from a dramatic image toward an everyday action. Give one ordinary intention a little room to be known before carrying it out.

Before the telling moves on, there is another way to approach this moment. As an editorial addition, the exercise belongs to your present life. You can adapt it or let it pass without changing anyone's part in the old story.

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, if anything, was useful in this pause? The source’s reported result is not a result the app can establish.

Sources and wisdom

How elaboration gathers

Reflection on action

The fourfold round

Choose what comes next

Continue the story - turn to page 9.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 33.

You can leave the story here

Reading, resting, and living the rest of your day are also available. There is no obligation to finish this retelling or return to it.

The man makes no attempt to draw you back into the telling. A story can wait while a person meets the needs of a real day. Leave its characters where they are for now. If you return, the page can be opened without an apology for the time spent elsewhere.

Notice, without grading

Your previous place remains available in your account when signed in, or in this browser for guests when storage works.

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

Reflection on action

Choose what comes next

Visit the temple again - turn to page 2.

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 short retelling of the cited discourse episode. Historical narrative is distinguished from contemporary practice invitations; no invented choices change the recorded events.

Story, practice, and the full source

The vessel and mirror episodes and the before/during/after framework are paraphrased from the discourse. These brief practice pauses are editorial additions. The source treats bodily, verbal, and mental action in detail, including responses to harmful action that these gentler invitations do not reproduce in full.

Hands at rest

supporting. Hands at rest: Attending to ordinary physical experience can prepare bodily mindfulness. This modern sensory comparison omits the full mindfulness framework and does not establish insight.

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.

Recognize a thought

adaptation. Recognize a thought: This invitation adapts an operation from the cited discourse: recognizing and not feeding unhelpful thought. Regulation or preference alone does not establish ethical skillfulness; all four efforts and consequences need consideration.

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.

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.

A brief gap

adaptation. A brief gap: 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.

Repair without disappearing

supporting. Repair without disappearing: Pausing and considering a response can support truthful, non-harming speech. Assertiveness or bodily confidence alone does not fulfill right speech; assess truthfulness, harm, and effects.

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.

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.

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.

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Establishing mindfulness

How elaboration gathers

Mindfulness of breathing

Recognizing the direction

Reflection on action

The fourfold round

Two sorts of thinking

Choose what comes next

Return to the temple garden - turn to page 2.