Right Effort - 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

Right Effort. A reply has not arrived. There is room to choose what you feed next.

“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

Analysis of the path

Choose what comes next

Sit, listen, and begin - turn to page 35.

Move on and enter the adventure - turn to page 35.

Optional: read how this telling was made - turn to page 94.

Their day is not yours to arrange

You can care about the person and still need something from them. Explore the difference between care and requiring a particular outcome.

Their day remains theirs. That fact can disappoint the wish to arrange an ending, and can also loosen some unnecessary work. You can choose conduct, a boundary, a question, or a next task. You cannot make another life become an extension of this room's need for relief.

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 responsibility remains yours, and what cannot be settled here?

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Cultivating care and steadiness

Choose what comes next

Continue - turn to page 92.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

There is more than one way to answer

You could begin with a plain sentence, or make room to hear something you do not yet know. Neither requires sending a real message now.

A reply need not settle every feeling before it is useful. You can ask a clear question, offer a particular fact, or make room for the other person's answer. The man leaves you with the ordinary freedom to choose how much this message needs to carry, rather than loading the whole relationship into one sentence.

Notice, without grading

Follow what interests you. You can retrace your steps or step off the path.

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Reflection on action

Choose what comes next

Rehearse a clear beginning - turn to page 51.

Practice listening before answering - turn to page 7.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

A place for an answer

Imagine the person does reply. There may be more to hear than the explanation you prepared.

An answer, if it comes, may not follow the script. Listening is a different intention from arranging the other person's turn so that your next turn will win. The practice here gives that intention a place to be rehearsed gently, before there is another person's voice to hear.

Practice pause

Mindful conversation

1. Notice

Notice your current posture, breathing, and urge to act.

2. Name

Name the present situation as simply as you can.

3. Choose

Choose this invitation if it suits the moment. You can leave it at any point.

4. Try

Describe the relevant facts, state how you feel, and ask clearly for what you need or say no. Explain why cooperation would help. Keep returning to the objective; use a steady manner and negotiate where appropriate.

5. Observe

Notice what followed, including little or no change. Decide what the situation needs next.

6. Return

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

7. 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 might listening change about your next response?

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Reflection on action

Choose what comes next

Continue - turn to page 92.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

Can the moment be held still?

Whether ease arrived or the waiting remained awkward, experience has its own changes. Look gently at the wish to keep it fixed.

You might like to save the useful moment in the way you can save a message. The effort to keep it reveals another kind of checking. The scene invites an ordinary distinction: remembering what helped is not the same as requiring the feeling itself to stay. One can guide a next action; the other can become another demand.

Practice pause

Can this be kept?

1. Notice

Choose a comfortable, mild experience already present.

2. Distinguish

Notice any wish to keep it exactly as it is.

3. Watch

Without holding your breath or tightening, ask whether you can prevent every change.

4. Release

Let the experiment end. This says nothing you must believe about who you are.

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 did this brief observation establish, and what did it leave open?

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

The not-self characteristic

Choose what comes next

Continue - turn to page 89.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

Build it, change it, leave it

Use only the simple cup you just explored. Try changing and releasing the representation while keeping your actual support clear. This is a personal exploration of making and letting go, with an uncertain textual correspondence.

An image can be built, altered, and allowed to go. The experiment makes a small, visible version of holding and release, if imagery is useful for you. The man keeps the distinction intact: a represented event can matter as an experience without becoming a fact about the room or another person's mind.

Practice pause

Build, revise, release

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

Recall one simple construct. Change one chosen property, restore it, and then deliberately let it fade. Keep the session brief; do not chase vividness or permanence.

3. Compare

Notice the difference between choosing a change and trying to hold every detail in place. Can the construct fade without needing to keep it as “mine”? No change is required. Feel your support and return to an ordinary task.

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

Was anything useful in changing or releasing the construct? No change is a valid observation.

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Fruits of the contemplative life

Choose what comes next

Continue - turn to page 55.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

What kind of attention is here?

You do not have to diagnose yourself. Choose the description that is useful now, or continue without choosing a label.

You ask what sort of attention is available rather than which sort a good practitioner should have. A dull mind and an agitated mind may need different care. The old teaching's fire image makes sense here: the same handful of fuel that revives a small flame can feed a blaze already too strong.

Notice, without grading

Each branch returns to the story. A busy or tired mind has not failed.

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Fire

Choose what comes next

Restless; I would like to settle - turn to page 22.

Sluggish; a little movement could help - turn to page 49.

Ordinary, mixed, or uncertain - turn to page 70.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

Something else is happening

An ordinary sound is already part of this moment. It does not have to carry a message for you.

A sound arrives and ends without reporting on the silence in the inbox. You can let it be heard before asking what else has happened. The man called this a training of direction, not an order to exclude thought. The sound gives attention somewhere real to meet rather than somewhere else to demand an answer.

Practice pause

One sound

1. Prepare

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

2. Experiment

Choose a comfortable sound. Attend to its onset, variation, pauses, and ending without increasing the volume.

3. Compare

Which changes were clear? If using a recording, replay the same passage to check a specific detail.

4. Return

Let the experiment end. Return to your surroundings and ordinary activity. Keep observation separate from interpretation.

5. 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 did listening reveal, including uncertainty?

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Establishing mindfulness

Choose what comes next

Continue - turn to page 24.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

A path with room to turn

There is a shared stretch of practices, with places to explore along the way. A choice can open another choice, a practice, a detour, or a dead end in the story. Leaving is part of walking too. These are invitations to discover what follows, not tests with a hidden score.

In the old teaching, effort has four directions. Some trouble can be prevented from taking root; some already present can be left without another feeding. Something helpful can be begun, and something helpful already present can be sustained. The man describes these as work for a whole life. Your waiting message offers one safe place to begin distinguishing them.

Notice, without grading

The route offers practice, not a promise of a changed state.

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Fire

Choose what comes next

Start with the body - turn to page 24.

Explore the room first - turn to page 79.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

The day is larger than the inbox

Waiting does not have to occupy every corner of attention. You can explore setting commentary down, or simply return to a useful ordinary activity.

Waiting can be a chosen interval rather than an occupation that consumes everything nearby. You consider what would make the next portion of the day livable without requiring a new message. The man points out that leaving an unnecessary pursuit is not the same as abandoning a real commitment.

Notice, without grading

Follow what interests you. You can retrace your steps or step off the path.

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Relaxation of thoughts

Two sorts of thinking

Choose what comes next

Try resting the extra commentary - turn to page 47.

Choose an ordinary next task, then reflect - turn to page 92.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

The feeling and the demand

Use only a harmless irritation that is already present. Make yourself comfortable whenever you wish.

The unpleasant feeling deserves care before any lesson is drawn from it. The man tells of two arrows, distinguishing pain from the extra distress that can gather around it. This small scene is not asking you to endure danger alone. It asks whether a mild feeling is being made to carry a demand it cannot fulfill.

Practice pause

Unpleasant, and the response

1. Notice

If a harmless itch or small irritation is already present, notice it briefly. Never create discomfort.

2. Distinguish

Notice the unpleasant quality and any demand that it end.

3. Watch

Are these distinguishable? Adjust or scratch whenever you wish; do not endure pain.

4. Release

Take care of your comfort and finish the experiment.

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 is sensation, and what is your response?

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

The arrow

Choose what comes next

Continue - turn to page 85.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

Firm words, room to breathe

Choose a small boundary in a situation you can approach safely. A shaking voice does not cancel what you need to say.

You rehearse firm words with enough room to breathe. The sentence states what is needed and what you will do, rather than pretending to control the other person's choice. The practice can be revised if it becomes another accusation in careful clothing. A clear edge can leave more room for both people.

Practice pause

Firm words, ordinary breath

1. Notice

Rest your hands and identify the specific behavior that needs to change. Let your breathing stay natural.

2. Invite

Rehearse one plain sentence: “Please let me finish,” or “I will continue this conversation when we can speak without insults.”

3. Listen

Say it at a comfortable volume, or use your usual communication method. Leave a short pause afterward. Notice pace, breath, and any urge to retract the boundary. Firmness can coexist with shaking, tension, or anger; you do not need perfect composure.

4. Respond

Follow through on a safe, realistic action you control. If you caused harm, name it and offer repair without blaming the feeling for your behavior.

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 part of this boundary is an action you can control?

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Reflection on action

Choose what comes next

Continue - turn to page 92.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

Let the extra work soften

You have been rehearsing the possible reply. Explore a little less effort before investigating further.

The waiting has acquired unnecessary labor. You may be trying to force a calm feeling before allowing the day to continue. That task can quietly become another way of circling the message. The man offers a smaller possibility: see whether some work can be set down while the concern remains unresolved.

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

Settled or still busy: which description is honest?

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Mindfulness of breathing

Choose what comes next

Continue - turn to page 70.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

Here, before the screen

When you do something good, do it again and take joy in it; happiness grows from doing good.

Before deciding what the silence means, know how you are sitting or standing. There is an ordinary place to begin.

The body has been waiting with you. A shoulder lifted, a hand poised, a breath held just beyond comfort: some details may be present and some may not. There is no correct posture for having this concern. A little honest contact gives the next choice a place to begin that is not only a thought.

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 lets you know this position?

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Establishing mindfulness

Choose what comes next

Continue - turn to page 36.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

Another way to explore

The library includes practices developed through William's personal exploration. You can try a small imagery experiment here, or continue with ordinary observation. Its precise relationship to the wisdom references is uncertain; that does not decide whether it will help you.

There is another way to investigate how attention makes and holds a world. The man is clear about its status: these are optional modern explorations from personal practice, not instructions recovered from the old discourse. You can be interested without making a claim for them, and uninterested without missing the main story.

Notice, without grading

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

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Fruits of the contemplative life

Choose what comes next

Try the optional imagery exploration - turn to page 57.

Continue with ordinary observation - turn to page 55.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

A little beyond the screen

Let the screen be one object among other visible details. Choose an available sense without straining.

A familiar object has an unexamined side. Light reaches it differently when you stop using it merely as part of the background to waiting. Nothing about the object is a message from the other person. That is part of the relief of meeting it: it does not need to settle the question.

Practice pause

A wider view

1. Notice

Sit somewhere still and look at a comfortable point in front of you.

2. Invite

Keep the object in view and notice a color or shape beside it. Blink and move your eyes naturally; do not strain or fix your gaze. If vision is unavailable, compare one sound with the sounds around it.

3. Listen

Switch emphasis between the object and its surroundings once. Which details became easier to notice? An unchanged or uncertain result is useful too.

4. Respond

Return to your ordinary gaze whenever you wish.

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 entered attention when the screen was no longer its only destination?

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Establishing mindfulness

Choose what comes next

Continue - turn to page 24.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

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

“You cannot make a reply arrive by checking again. You can notice what the next check feeds. Protecting a little room for a useful action is already an effort worth tending.”

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

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Choose what comes next

Return to “The reply has not arrived” - turn to page 35.

The page has become a small room

In this fictional branch, the character keeps checking. Each blank refresh promises an answer and returns another moment of waiting. The shoulders tighten; the room and the rest of the day recede. Trying to buy certainty with another check has added strain without producing certainty.

The fictional afternoon grows smaller with each check. A task is missed, the cup goes cold, and there is less to remember about the room than about the absence on the screen. No disaster was needed to make the cost real. This branch shows attention being spent without the situation becoming more answerable; you can retrace it.

Notice, without grading

This is a dead end in the story, not a verdict about you. Retrace your steps to try another direction, or leave the adventure here.

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

Analysis of the path

The arrow

Two sorts of thinking

Choose what comes next

Try another direction - turn to page 90.

Visit the temple again - turn to page 2.

Back to an ordinary day

The adventure can end while life is still unresolved. Feel your support, look or listen around, and choose an ordinary next action. Keep what was useful and leave what was not.

You leave the screen where it is and find the temple garden again. The man has not been waiting to inspect a perfectly resolved relationship. He receives a person who has practiced choosing what to feed. Preventing, leaving, beginning, and sustaining can now be remembered as work within an ordinary life, not four boxes completed forever.

Notice, without grading

Finishing records participation. It does not establish insight, concentration, or release. You can return on a different day and choose differently.

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 with an unanswered message and explored what you could stop feeding, begin, and sustain. A small choice can matter without settling the whole situation.

“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

Analysis of the path

Gradual training

Recognizing the direction

Choose what comes next

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

Before words become actions

A sharp follow-up could be typed quickly. Give the possible action a little more consideration. You may rehearse without sending.

Before a message is sent, it is still possible to look at the action it will become. The man recalls a young practitioner taught to examine conduct before, during, and afterward. Here is a modern version of the mirror: a sentence poised to leave your private rehearsal and enter someone else's day.

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 be truthful and useful to say?

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Reflection on action

Choose what comes next

Continue - turn to page 13.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

The reply has not arrived

You sent an ordinary message. The screen is quiet, but the next check is already forming. A cup rests nearby. The room carries on around you. Use a small everyday example, or explore this as a fictional story.

The man from the temple has left you with a question about effort. Not how much you can exert, but what the next action will nourish. Now the question has a small, unglamorous place to live: a message you sent, a reply that has not arrived, and a day quietly beginning to bend around the screen.

Notice, without grading

You can take this over several visits. Nothing requires a particular feeling.

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Reflection on action

Choose what comes next

Begin with where I am - turn to page 24.

Look around and see what draws me - turn to page 79.

See the shape of this adventure - turn to page 16.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

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

One ordinary breath

The screen does not need attention for this breath. Let breathing have its usual movement.

Breathing continues through the unanswered question. It has no opinion about what the silence means. The man had warned against making a small support carry the whole promise of freedom. Let this breath be a support, then, without requiring it to finish the feeling or arrange the other person's response.

Practice pause

An ordinary breath

1. Notice

Notice a natural breath while seated comfortably.

2. Distinguish

Is this breath relatively long or short? There is no preferred length.

3. Watch

Follow its beginning, continuation, and ending without extending it. What is sensation, and what is the phrase “I am breathing”?

4. Release

Let the question go. Breathe normally and look around.

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 did you actually notice, including uncertainty?

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Mindfulness of breathing

Choose what comes next

Continue - turn to page 87.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

Care can have an edge

Perhaps another message is unnecessary, or perhaps something needs to be said plainly. Sometimes the useful step is to involve another person.

Care has reached an edge. Perhaps the silence concerns something that needs a deadline, or a pattern that cannot keep being accommodated. The old concern for harmless speech does not require hiding this fact. A boundary can be spoken plainly without being sharpened into a punishment.

Notice, without grading

Follow what interests you. You can retrace your steps or step off the path.

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Reflection on action

Choose what comes next

Find words for a boundary - turn to page 20.

Explore asking for support - turn to page 81.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

A boundary for attention

Remembering the good you have done brings happiness, and continuing to do good brings greater happiness.

There may be a practical way to stop inviting the same loop. Choose a boundary that still respects your responsibilities.

Preventing a harmful pattern is different from fighting it once it has filled the room. You consider a boundary around nonessential checking: something workable, not a vow never to want an answer. A clear time or a practical change can protect attention while necessary contact remains possible.

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 make this boundary workable?

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Gradual training

Choose what comes next

Continue - turn to page 26.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

Optional: visit the man in the temple - carry only what helps - turn to page 84.

Leaving can be part of the walk

You can set the story down. An ordinary task, a different practice, company, or simply living the rest of the day may be the next part of the path. You do not owe this adventure a return.

The temple door does not close behind you as a punishment for leaving early. A task, a friend, rest, or a simple need may be the next honest part of the path. Put a bookmark where you left the story if you wish. Nothing has to be completed to make ordinary care worth returning to.

Notice, without grading

Your previous place remains available in your account when signed in, or in this browser for guests when storage works. Come back if it becomes useful, or let this be enough.

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

Analysis of the path

Recognizing the direction

Choose what comes next

Visit the temple again - turn to page 2.

Choose what receives another turn

There is more to effort than stopping. You can also invite care and give an already useful quality conditions to continue.

The four directions now have faces in the room. A boundary can prevent another needless loop. An accusation can lose its next rehearsal. A useful response can be begun, and a kind intention can be remembered after the first good moment passes. You are not being asked to do all four with the same force at once.

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

Which of the four efforts fits now?

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Two sorts of thinking

Choose what comes next

Continue - turn to page 75.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

Ordinary has detail

The room may offer no particular reward or problem. It can still be known.

Nothing dramatic is happening, and the mind nearly treats that as a failure of the exercise. The room still has sound, contact, and space. Neutral experience can reveal the habit of seeking a stronger signal before anything seems worth attention. The missing reply does not have to supply that signal for the whole day.

Practice pause

Neutral has detail

1. Notice

Notice a familiar wall, background sound, or comfortable clothing contact.

2. Distinguish

Does it feel neither particularly pleasant nor unpleasant? Do not force neutrality.

3. Watch

Look for detail without trying to make it interesting. Is boredom a separate response?

4. Release

Let this ordinary experience return to the background.

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

Is boredom present, or is that uncertain?

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Establishing mindfulness

Choose what comes next

Continue - turn to page 85.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

The sharp reply

This is a fictional turn, not an invitation to send anything. The character writes, “You never care about anyone but yourself.” The sentence promises relief through making the other person responsible for all the waiting.

The sharp reply returns, offering the quick satisfaction of making pain visible. The fictional branch lets you look at where it leads without sending harm to anyone. If you follow it, the consequence is a part of the story that can be retraced. Curiosity need not become a rehearsal for injury.

Notice, without grading

Follow what interests you. You can retrace your steps or step off the path.

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Reflection on action

Two sorts of thinking

Choose what comes next

In the story, send the accusation - turn to page 80.

Reread it and explore a different response - turn to page 6.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

Let the rehearsal rest

The useful part of thinking may be finished for now. Explore leaving the commentary without needing silence.

The unfinished conversation can remain unfinished for a while. A thought may return to collect you; you can recognize the invitation and meet the task in front of you again. This small return is part of sustaining a helpful direction, rather than an attempt to prevent the mind from ever wandering.

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 could receive attention while the message remains unanswered?

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Relaxation of thoughts

Two sorts of thinking

Choose what comes next

Continue - turn to page 92.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

A small waking up

If movement is safe, know a few ordinary steps. If walking is unavailable, notice a change in sound or contact without moving.

The room has become flat around the screen. Another check is not quite interest and not quite a decision. You can renew a modest intention by noticing detail, changing position, or meeting an actual task. This is not a demand to feel inspired; it is a question about what might make attention more usable.

Practice pause

Three ordinary steps

1. Notice

Choose a clear, level place where walking is comfortable and safe.

2. Distinguish

As you walk normally, notice movement and foot contact. No slow-motion sequence is needed.

3. Watch

Know three steps as well as feels easy, keeping attention on your surroundings.

4. Release

Return to your usual walking. Skip this if balance needs your full attention.

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

Is attention clearer, unchanged, or ready for rest?

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Establishing mindfulness

Mindfulness immersed in the body

Choose what comes next

Continue - turn to page 70.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

A sentence you could actually use

Give a small, truthful sentence a comfortable pace. Rehearsal can be enough for this visit.

You try a sentence that could exist outside the book. It may sound less satisfying than the sharp draft because it has left room for a real answer. That room is not weakness. It is a way for the next exchange to meet what happens rather than only confirm what the waiting mind had already decided.

Practice pause

Before the words

1. Notice

Before a low-stakes conversation, choose a sentence you can actually use: “Give me a moment to think,” or “Could you say that again?”

2. Invite

Say the sentence at a comfortable pace, or silently rehearse it if speaking is unavailable. Notice where you rush, pause, or hesitate.

3. Listen

Try it once more with a pause before the first word. Compare the effort and pace, without trying to sound perfectly composed.

4. Respond

Enter the conversation with permission to pause or ask for time. You do not have to maintain a special state.

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 you want these words to make possible?

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Reflection on action

Choose what comes next

Continue - turn to page 92.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

Leave the review here

A learner discovers the clearly shown path of goodness, as a skilled gardener finds the right flower.

There is no need to check whether you have become calm enough. Let an ordinary moment be available before the next task.

The review can end too. It has done its work when it offers something usable for the next occasion. Continuing until every uncomfortable feeling has disappeared would turn it into another version of checking. There is a room to return to, and a day larger than the question that opened this story.

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 can be left unfinished for now?

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Mindfulness of breathing

Two sorts of thinking

Choose what comes next

Continue - turn to page 31.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

How silence becomes a story

“No reply” may have become “They do not care.” Compare what arrived through the senses with what was added.

The silence has begun to speak in a voice that sounds like yours. It says what the other person thinks and what the future will be. The old teaching follows how contact, feeling, recognition, and thought can grow into a world of elaboration. Here the world fits inside a message that has not yet been answered.

Practice pause

How a story gathers

1. Notice

Notice a mild irritation or expectation.

2. Distinguish

Separate what was seen or heard from recognition, feeling tone, and subsequent thinking.

3. Watch

Where do memory, prediction, and an urge join in? Do not assume you can recover the exact sequence.

4. Release

Leave the unfinished map and choose a useful next action.

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 remains unknown about the other person?

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

How elaboration gathers

Choose what comes next

Continue - turn to page 60.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

A cup, remembered and checked

For a moment, leave the unanswered message and represent an ordinary cup. Words, shape, touch, or another available mode can work. The comparison matters more than vividness.

The cup is remembered before it is looked at again. Its represented shape may be vivid, vague, or absent. Comparing the memory with the actual object can make the difference between representation and contact easier to notice. The experiment belongs to curiosity; nothing in the ancient lesson depends on producing an image.

Practice pause

Simple object

1. Prepare

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

2. Experiment

Represent a familiar cup through shape, orientation, texture, or words. Use whichever mode is available.

3. Compare

Compare with the real cup. Separate recalled details from invented ones.

4. Return

Let the experiment end. Return to your surroundings and ordinary activity. Keep observation separate from interpretation.

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

What was remembered, invented, or uncertain? You can leave the optional branch at any time.

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Fruits of the contemplative life

Choose what comes next

Continue - turn to page 11.

Leave this exploration and return to the story - turn to page 55.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

An unfinished sentence

The draft begins, “You always…” Before the sentence becomes a conclusion, there are other directions it could take.

A sentence is already being written in the mind. It knows what the silence means and how the other person ought to be corrected. You have not sent it. That fact is a little open space in the story, a place where the imagined conversation has not yet become another person's problem.

Notice, without grading

Follow what interests you. You can retrace your steps or step off the path.

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Reflection on action

Choose what comes next

Find a truthful beginning - turn to page 73.

Leave the sentence open and notice my body - turn to page 24.

Turn toward the room instead - turn to page 91.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

Leave one accusation unfinished

You do not have to finish the next internal rebuttal. The underlying need can still matter.

One accusation can remain unfinished. The mind may still offer the next clause; you do not have to hate it for doing so. Leaving a harmful pattern without another feeding is one of the four efforts. Its ordinary form can be less dramatic than victory: a sentence that does not become a message.

Practice pause

Pause the next sentence

1. Notice

Choose a minor repetitive argument, not an urgent problem. This is an experiment with your thinking; no bodily response is required.

2. Distinguish

Notice the next example, rebuttal, or sentence you are about to add. Name its job: defending, predicting, blaming, or something else.

3. Watch

For a few seconds, leave that contribution unfinished and notice one ordinary sound or visible object. Does the argument keep going, pause, or return? “Still arguing” is an honest observation.

4. Release

Return to something ordinary. If the thought continues, do not wrestle with it.

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

Did the thought pause, continue, or return?

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Relaxation of thoughts

Two sorts of thinking

Choose what comes next

Continue - turn to page 42.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

The cup can wait too

The cup offers something other than the screen to meet. Rest your hands first; there is no need to pick it up.

The cup asks for nothing. It has weight and an edge and a place to be put down. You do not have to imagine that touching it will solve the relationship. It can simply return a little attention to a world in which the missing reply is not the only event.

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 was available here before another reply arrived?

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Establishing mindfulness

Choose what comes next

Continue - turn to page 24.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

A good moment can pass

Perhaps there is a comfortable sound or contact. Explore enjoyment and the plan to keep it.

A pleasant memory of the person appears. For a moment the silence seems easier to bear, and then the wish to preserve that relief begins its own work. The old inquiry reaches even here. A good moment can be received without being required to become permanent proof that the relationship is safe.

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

Can enjoyment and planning be distinguished?

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

The arrow

Choose what comes next

Continue - turn to page 85.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

An answer is still missing

Not knowing leaves several possibilities alive. You could inspect a thought, explore care without controlling an outcome, or leave the decision open.

The missing information is still missing. No amount of attending carefully has made it available. The useful question is whether not knowing can be acknowledged without being turned into a certainty of the worst. The story leaves this door open because ordinary life so often asks us to walk through it.

Notice, without grading

Follow what interests you. You can retrace your steps or step off the path.

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Cultivating care and steadiness

Two sorts of thinking

Choose what comes next

Notice the thought I am treating as a fact - turn to page 68.

Explore caring without choosing their outcome - turn to page 4.

Leave the answer open and reflect - turn to page 92.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

What draws you closer?

The screen holds both the last message and the space where a reply might appear. A sentence is forming that you have not sent.

The screen has become a place where relief might appear at any moment. It is easy to feel as though another check would be an action taken on the situation itself. Yet the other person's day is elsewhere. The small action available here concerns what you keep making larger in your own attention.

Notice, without grading

Follow what interests you. You can retrace your steps or step off the path.

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Reflection on action

Choose what comes next

Explore the unsent sentence - turn to page 59.

Notice the hand reaching toward it - turn to page 24.

In the story, check once more for certainty - turn to page 90.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

A thought can be recognized

“They are ignoring me” may be a thought, a fear, or an inference. Explore noticing the thinking without pretending to know the other person’s mind.

A thought about the silence appears with the force of a discovery. You can notice it as a thought before deciding whether it is a reliable account. The man does not ask you to replace it with a comforting invention. There may simply be more honesty in saying that an answer is not yet known.

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

Which part is known, and which part remains a thought?

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Two sorts of thinking

Choose what comes next

Continue - turn to page 92.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

Before the explanation

People who mistake falsehood for truth and truth for falsehood follow empty desires and miss what matters.

The same silence can feel hopeful, unpleasant, or merely ordinary. Attend to that quality before the next story.

Before the explanation of the silence comes a felt leaning: pleasant, unpleasant, or nearly neutral. You can sometimes know the leaning before it becomes a complete account of the relationship. The gap is small. It is large enough to ask whether a feeling must also supply an accusation.

Practice pause

The first lean

1. Notice

Notice an ordinary sound, contact, or sight.

2. Distinguish

Is its quality pleasant, unpleasant, or neither? Unclear is an acceptable answer.

3. Watch

Does wanting more or less follow? Is that the same as the original quality?

4. Release

Let the moment continue without completing an analysis.

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

Is feeling distinguishable from wanting more or less?

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Establishing mindfulness

Choose what comes next

Continue - turn to page 72.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

Follow the feeling that is available

Choose an ordinary detail already here. You do not have to intensify it or find the right category.

The man does not send everyone through the same emotional gate. A good memory may be what draws you, an uncomfortable moment may need care, or the waiting may feel mostly ordinary. Choose what is honestly available. A vivid feeling is not more valuable evidence than a quiet one.

Notice, without grading

Uncertainty has its own way forward.

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

The arrow

Choose what comes next

Something is pleasant - turn to page 64.

There is a mild irritation - turn to page 18.

Mostly neutral, mixed, or unclear - turn to page 44.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

Before the first word

The draft can remain unsent. Explore the space before speaking, without trying to sound perfectly composed.

The man had spoken about helpful beginnings as well as harmful endings. Perhaps the first useful beginning is very small: hearing the draft as a draft. There can be truth in what you need to say without every sentence that arrives being the best way to say it. The next word still has room.

Practice pause

Before the words

1. Notice

Before a low-stakes conversation, choose a sentence you can actually use: “Give me a moment to think,” or “Could you say that again?”

2. Invite

Say the sentence at a comfortable pace, or silently rehearse it if speaking is unavailable. Notice where you rush, pause, or hesitate.

3. Listen

Try it once more with a pause before the first word. Compare the effort and pace, without trying to sound perfectly composed.

4. Respond

Enter the conversation with permission to pause or ask for time. You do not have to maintain a special state.

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 becomes possible when the first sentence is not inevitable?

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Reflection on action

Choose what comes next

Continue - turn to page 24.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

One moment has an ending

Who will discover the clearly shown path of goodness, as a skilled gardener finds the right flower?

A sound or breath offers a small event to investigate. You need not produce a conclusion.

Something in the waiting has already changed, whether or not the inbox has. The change may be small enough that a grand account would cover it up. The man asks for the size of observation the scene can honestly support. An ending in experience need not become a claim that all clinging has ended.

Practice pause

Arriving, present, gone

1. Notice

Choose a naturally occurring sound or breath.

2. Distinguish

Notice its arrival, its presence, and any ending you can discern.

3. Watch

If you miss a stage, leave it missed. Do not reconstruct it as direct observation.

4. Release

Return to the room without waiting for another event.

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

Which stages were actually apparent?

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Establishing mindfulness

Mindfulness of breathing

Choose what comes next

Continue - turn to page 9.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

A little space before reaching

A nonessential check can wait a few seconds if you choose. Necessary action remains available.

A little space opens between wanting and doing. You are not asked to make that space last all afternoon. One small interval can be enough to reveal that the next check is a choice rather than a law. The man calls this a place for careful work, not a test of personal strength.

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 happened during the pause? No change is information.

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Establishing mindfulness

How elaboration gathers

Choose what comes next

Continue - turn to page 39.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

Three things in the waiting

The message has not changed. Your attention could go toward the screen, the cup, or the room beyond it. Each opens a different part of this ordinary moment.

You look up before choosing. The screen, the cup, and the room are not competing teachers; each reveals a different part of the same waiting. One draws the hand, one offers contact, one reminds you that a world continues outside the answer you want. Curiosity can choose an entrance without deciding the rest of the day.

Notice, without grading

Follow what interests you. You can retrace your steps or step off the path.

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Reflection on action

Choose what comes next

Stay beside the screen - turn to page 67.

Settle beside the cup - turn to page 62.

Explore the room around me - turn to page 91.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

Now there are two things to carry

In this version of the story, the accusation is sent. A defensive answer arrives. The original uncertainty is still there, with a hurtful exchange added to it. The momentary release of sending has become something else to rehearse. These are this story's consequences, not a prediction of every real conversation.

In the imagined exchange, the accusation does not settle the silence. It adds a second problem: words that now need their own explanation or repair. The story does not require the other person to be innocent for this consequence to matter. Meeting a difficulty with another injury can make both harder to care for.

Notice, without grading

You have discovered where this branch leads: added conflict and suffering. You can turn back without grading yourself. Nothing in this fictional scene needs to be acted out.

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

Analysis of the path

Reflection on action

Two sorts of thinking

Choose what comes next

Try another direction - turn to page 46.

Visit the temple again - turn to page 2.

You do not have to carry this alone

There may be someone who can help you understand, act, or simply take a break. You can rehearse a request or leave the story and seek that support.

The story has room for another person. You may have been treating the concern as a private examination you should pass alone. A dependable companion could help you see what is happening without taking over your decisions. Asking for support is one ordinary way conditions can change.

Notice, without grading

Follow what interests you. You can retrace your steps or step off the path.

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Reflection on action

Choose what comes next

Rehearse asking for what I need - turn to page 82.

Choose practical support, then reflect - turn to page 92.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

A request without an apology for existing

Make room for a simple request. The other person can have a choice too.

A request can be specific enough to answer. You do not have to begin by apologizing for having a need, or finish by asking another person to carry the whole uncertainty. The man lets the practice be human in scale: an honest account, a particular request, and room for an honest response.

Practice pause

Ask without apologizing for the need

1. Notice

Notice where asking feels tense. Let that tension be present while you identify what you need.

2. Invite

Separate the request from the story about what someone should already know.

3. Listen

Say “Would you be willing to…” followed by one observable action and a useful time frame. Compare a rushed version with one at your ordinary speaking pace; notice effort and clarity. Write or use your usual communication method if speech is unavailable.

4. Respond

Ask, then leave room for an answer. Another person can decline; you can still respect your need and consider other options.

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 help would actually fit, and who might be able to offer it?

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Reflection on action

Choose what comes next

Continue - turn to page 92.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

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

“Effort includes preventing, leaving, beginning, and sustaining. Ask which of these is needed now. More force is not always more care.”

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

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Choose what comes next

Return to “A boundary for attention” - turn to page 40.

The next check takes shape

A hand reaches, an image appears, or a sentence says “just once more.” See what wanting looks like this time.

The hand knows the route back to the screen. Wanting can begin in the body before the sentence I should check arrives to justify it. You do not have to stop the hand by force. The story has simply reached a moment where an intention can be noticed before it receives another automatic action.

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

Did the wanting persist, change, or become hard to find?

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Establishing mindfulness

Choose what comes next

Continue - turn to page 77.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

Someone is on the other side

The person who has not replied also has a day you cannot see. You can wish them well while keeping your own needs clear.

The person beyond the screen has a life you cannot see from this room. You need not invent a flattering explanation to acknowledge that absence of knowledge. Care can leave space for their circumstances while still recognizing your own need for clarity. Two people can matter before either has supplied an answer.

Practice pause

Wishing well

1. Notice

Think of someone easy to like.

2. Distinguish

Offer a simple wish for their safety and well-being.

3. Watch

Notice the response. Later, if comfortable, include someone you feel neutral about.

4. Release

Let the wish rest. You need not start with a difficult relationship.

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

Can care be an intention even without a warm feeling?

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Cultivating care and steadiness

Choose what comes next

Continue - turn to page 33.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

What does the situation need?

The message may still be unanswered. Several directions are available. You can explore a response, give the waiting room, find support, or leave a question unresolved. One fictional direction follows an accusation and its consequences.

The day has more than one reasonable direction. You might respond, wait, set a boundary, ask for help, or acknowledge that the answer remains unknown. The story does not hide a single virtuous choice behind the labels. What matters is whether the direction meets the actual situation with truth and care.

Notice, without grading

Your need and the other person’s circumstances can both count. Choose a direction to discover what follows.

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Reflection on action

Choose what comes next

Explore a truthful response - turn to page 6.

Leave room for the waiting - turn to page 17.

Find a boundary or practical support - turn to page 38.

Stay with what is still unknown - turn to page 66.

In the story, follow an accusation - turn to page 46.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

Perhaps the next check will settle it

Explore this branch as fiction. The character refreshes the page. There is no reply. For a moment the hand relaxes, then reaches again. What happens next in the story?

The next check offers a familiar bargain: a brief motion of the hand in exchange for the possibility of relief. You know the bargain because it has already been made today. The choice here is fictional, but its direction is recognizable. A habit can ask for another turn without having earned the right to direct the afternoon.

Notice, without grading

Follow what interests you. You can retrace your steps or step off the path.

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

The arrow

Two sorts of thinking

Choose what comes next

Keep refreshing until certainty arrives - turn to page 30.

Set the screen down and turn to the cup - turn to page 62.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

The room has another invitation

A color rests at the edge of vision. A sound begins and ends somewhere nearby. You can explore either without needing the room to change.

A doorway in the room has been there all along. You notice how a waiting mind can turn a whole place into a corridor leading back to one device. Here is another direction: a look or a sound that is happening independently of the explanation you have been rehearsing.

Notice, without grading

Follow what interests you. You can retrace your steps or step off the path.

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Establishing mindfulness

Choose what comes next

Follow a visible detail - turn to page 27.

Listen to one ordinary sound - turn to page 14.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

What followed the choice?

If you acted, consider what actually happened. If you rehearsed, review the rehearsal and leave its real-world effects unknown.

Something has been chosen, even if the choice was to wait. The man brings back the mirror of action: what followed, what helped, and what added strain? A review can be particular. It does not need to become a case for being a good person or a bad one.

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 is worth repeating, correcting, or checking later?

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Recognizing the direction

Reflection on action

Choose what comes next

Continue - turn to page 53.

Step off the path for now - turn to page 41.

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.

Conduct in daily life

The new action and speech practices introduce checking harm and making repair. Honesty, non-harming, and livelihood require ongoing action beyond this story.

Protecting attention

A new practice explores not feeding a nonessential checking loop. This is one small adaptation of guarding the senses.

All four efforts

A new practice includes preventing, abandoning, developing, and maintaining. These require repetition in changing circumstances.

Sustained collectedness and release

This story does not teach or verify the four levels of deep collectedness, complete the eightfold path, or establish freedom from craving. Finishing records participation only.

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.

Firm words, ordinary breath

supporting. Firm words, ordinary breath: 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.

An ordinary breath

adaptation. An ordinary breath: 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.

Wishing well

adaptation. Wishing well: 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.

Arriving, present, gone

adaptation. Arriving, present, gone: This invitation adapts an operation from the cited discourse: noticing change. 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.

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.

Before the words

supporting. Before the words: 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.

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.

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.

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.

Can this be kept?

adaptation. Can this be kept?: This invitation adapts an operation from the cited discourse: investigating change and control. Changes in viewpoint, naming, or boundaries do not establish not-self, nonduality, or release.

Mindful conversation

supporting. Mindful conversation: 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.

Neutral has detail

adaptation. Neutral has detail: 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.

Simple object

uncertain. Simple object: 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.

Build, revise, release

uncertain. Build, revise, release: 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

One sound

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

A wider view

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

Pause the next sentence

adaptation. Pause the next sentence: 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.

Three ordinary steps

adaptation. Three ordinary steps: 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.

How a story gathers

adaptation. How a story gathers: 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.

Ask without apologizing for the need

supporting. Ask without apologizing for the need: 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.

The first lean

adaptation. The first lean: 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.

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.

Unpleasant, and the response

adaptation. Unpleasant, and the response: 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.

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.

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.

Sources and wisdom

Analysis of the path

Cultivating care and steadiness

Establishing mindfulness

Fire

Fruits of the contemplative life

Gradual training

How elaboration gathers

Mindfulness immersed in the body

Mindfulness of breathing

Recognizing the direction

Reflection on action

Relaxation of thoughts

The arrow

The not-self characteristic

Two sorts of thinking

Choose what comes next

Return to the temple garden - turn to page 2.