

# Sitting with Pointlessness - Living with Potentiality

Quotes and references from a talk for [Sangha Live - October 16, 2022](#) - [Vince Cullen](#)

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The Buddha's R.A.F.T.



- **Recognise**  
*what it is to be human.*
- **Abandon**  
*painful compulsions & addictions*
- **Familiarise**  
*yourself with what it feels like to be  
free from compulsions & addictions*
- **Train**  
*your body & mind to live a good life.*

Dharma is Everywhere - Fifth Precept Meditation Sangha - [www.5th-precept.org](http://www.5th-precept.org)

An appropriate response to the Buddha's Four realisations (or noble truths) might look like this:

- **Recognise** *what it is to be human.*
- **Abandon** *painful compulsions and addictions.*
- **Familiarise** *ourselves with freedom from compulsions.*
- **Teach** *our body and mind to live a good life.*

~ Vince Cullen<sup>1</sup>

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## **Books, Articles and Videos:**

['Meditations' – Marcus Aurelius](#)

['How Emotions Are Made: The Secret Life of The Brain' – Lisa Feldman Barrett](#)

['Seven & A Half Lessons About the Brain' – Lisa Feldman Barrett](#)

['Being You' – Anil Seth \(Guardian article\)](#)

['Your Brain Hallucinates Your Conscious Reality' – Anil Seth \(TED Talk\)](#)

[The Science of Consciousness : Anil Seth Website](#)

[A Thousand Brains: A New Theory of Intelligence - Jeff Hawkins](#)

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<sup>1</sup> [The Buddha's Raft image](#)  
[Hungry Ghost Retreats](#)

## Quotes

*"Everything we hear is an opinion, not a fact.  
Everything we see is a perspective, not the truth."<sup>2</sup>*

~ Marcus Aurelius

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["And what is the power of mindfulness?"<sup>3</sup>](#)

*"It's when a practitioner is mindful. They have the utmost mindfulness and alertness and can remember and recall what was said and done long ago.  
This is called the power of mindfulness."*

~ Buddha

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[Wise Heartedness Meditation<sup>4</sup>](#)

*May I have stillness... in the midst of chaos.  
May I be at ease... in the midst of discomfort.  
May I be safe & well... in the midst of uncertainty.  
May I live with kindness... in the midst of all that is difficult.  
May I find joy... in the midst of the ordinary and the mundane.*

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Famous Zen saying that goes like this:

*"Great doubt, great awakening.  
Little doubt, little awakening.  
No doubt, no awakening".<sup>5/6</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> Marcus Aurelius, the Roman emperor and a Stoic philosopher: Meditations

<sup>3</sup> The five powers explained in detail: <https://suttacentral.net/an5.14>

<sup>4</sup> Influenced and inspired by the teachings of [Christina Feldman](#)

<sup>5</sup> <https://buddhisttemple.ca/no-doubt-no-awakening/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://pacificmindfulness.com/blog/doubt-last-hindrances>

[Hungry Ghost Retreats](#)

*"[It] enlarges our thoughts and frees them from the tyranny of custom... it removes the somewhat arrogant dogmatism of those who have never travelled into the region of liberating doubt".*

~ Bertrand Russell<sup>7</sup>

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The influential [Satipatthana Sutta](#) - is Buddha's talk on the establishment of Mindfulness<sup>8</sup>

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*Doubt as a hindrance leads to inaction and giving up. Questioning doubt inspires action and the impulse to understand. It can, in fact, be helpful for mindfulness practice. A questioning attitude encourages deeper investigation. It is a healthy doubt that can overcome complacency and loosen preconceived ideas.*

~ Gil Fronsdal<sup>9</sup>

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*People consciously see what they expect, rather than what violates their expectations<sup>10</sup>*

~ Anil Seth<sup>11</sup>

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*[L]ife is a state of continual striving. We have to expend effort to ward off unpleasantness — for example, to prevent pain, assuage thirst, and minimise frustration. In the absence of our strivings... the unpleasantness comes all too easily, for that is the default.<sup>12</sup>*

~ [David Benatar](#)

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<sup>7</sup> <https://buddhisttemple.ca/no-doubt-no-awakening/>

<sup>8</sup> [The Discourse on Mindfulness Meditation](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Doubting Doubt: Practicing With the Final Hindrance adapted from a talk by Gil Fronsdal, December 5th, 2004](#)

<sup>10</sup> [The hard problem of consciousness is a distraction from the real one | Aeon Essays](#)

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.anilseth.com/>

<sup>12</sup> As quoted in [Suffering-Focused Ethics: Defense and Implications](#) by Magnus Vinding  
[Hungry Ghost Retreats](#)

## Two Kinds of Disease ~ Roga Sutta [extract] (AN 4.157)

*"... there are two kinds of illness. What two? Mental and physical. Some sentient beings are seen who can claim to be free of physical illness for a year, or two, or three years, or four years, or five years, or ten, twenty, thirty, forty or fifty years... even up to a hundred years or more. But it's very hard to find **any** sentient beings in the world who can claim to be free of mental illness even for a moment, apart from those who have overcome the intoxicating inclinations<sup>13</sup>."*

~ Buddha

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A student monk once asked Master Yunmen,  
"What are the teachings of a whole lifetime?"

Master Yunmen answered, "An appropriate response."

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The philosopher, Thomas Metzinger, in conversation with Sam Harris<sup>14</sup>

- *Our evolved self-model is NOT optimised to make us happy -*
  - *it is optimised to survive,*
  - *to have children*
  - *and to continuously compete*
  - *Survival Machines - "You must not die"*
  - *Mental conflict with reality*
  - *'Preference frustration'*
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<sup>13</sup> ASAVA - Intoxicating inclinations are "karmic propensities for sensual pleasures (kāmāsava), karmic propensities for existence (bhavāsava), and karmic propensities for ignorance (avijjāsava)" ~ Bhikkhu Bodhi.

ASAVA - spirit, the intoxicating extract or secretion of a tree or flower.

ASAVA - In psychology, certain specified ideas which intoxicate the mind (bemuddle it, befoozle it, so that it cannot rise to higher things).

<sup>14</sup> [Making Sense: Conversations on Consciousness, Morality and the Future of Humanity](#)  
[Hungry Ghost Retreats](#)

## The Raft Simile

*"I have taught the Dhamma compared to a raft, for the purpose of crossing over, not for the purpose of holding onto. Understanding the Dhamma as taught compared to a raft, you should let go even of Dhammas, to say nothing of non-Dhammas."*

~ Buddha<sup>15</sup>

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## Definition of Recovery from Mental Health and Substance Use difficulties:

*A process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential.<sup>16</sup>*

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*Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?  
Tell me, what is it you plan to do  
With your one wild and precious life?*

~ Mary Oliver<sup>17</sup>

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*"My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive; and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humour, and some style."*

~ Maya Angelou

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## Paraphrase of the Buddha's final words -

*"Remember, everything falls apart... now proceed with care!"<sup>18</sup>*

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<sup>15</sup> [Alagaddupama Sutta \(MN22\)](#)

<sup>16</sup> [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#)

<sup>17</sup> The Summer Day - Mary Oliver > [http://www.phys.unm.edu/~tw/fas/yits/archive/oliver\\_thesummerday.html](http://www.phys.unm.edu/~tw/fas/yits/archive/oliver_thesummerday.html)

<sup>18</sup> [Mahāparinibbāna Sutta - The Great Discourse on the Buddha's Extinguishment \(DN16\)](#)