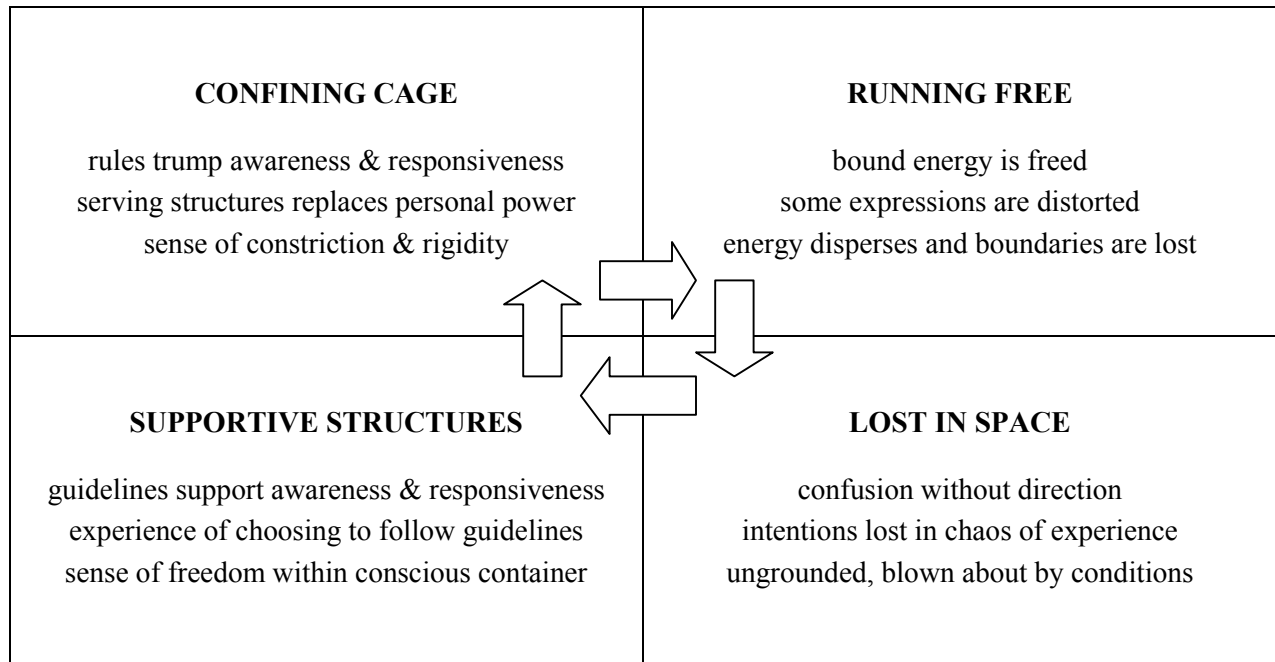


Internal and external supports for structure and freedom



When do we need to rely on internal or external structures to support awareness and intentions?

How do we know -- physically, emotionally, mentally -- when we need structure?

How do we choose structures? How do we set them up and adapt them to our needs?

How do we know when structures have become cages preventing us from being aware and responsive?

How do we know that -- physically, emotionally, mentally?

How do we free ourselves from structures when they become cages?

When does too much freedom become chaos and confusion and the loss of intentions?

How do we know that -- physically, emotionally, mentally?

How do we reintegrate supportive structures after a period of chaos and confusion?

How do internal and external structures interact, complement, and conflict with each other?

How do we cultivate ongoing flexibility and responsiveness with external and internal structures?

How do we adopt and adapt structures to balance individual and group needs and dynamics?

Structures that can support awareness and responsiveness

Motivation, refuge, and dedication

- At the beginning of each session, reflect on one or more of the four reminders (the truths of opportunity, impermanence, action and fruit, and reactivity is suffering)
- Then take refuge in awareness and compassion (responsiveness).
- At the end of each session, dedicate the benefit of the session to all beings.

Be clear about the need to balance and integrate the various aspects of practice:

- Returning and resting that leads to stability and calm abiding (shamatha)
- Looking deeply that leads to clarity and insight (vipashyana)
- Practices in responding to the world (kindness, compassion, power)
- Raising, balancing, and transforming energy through concentration, breath exercises, yoga, qigong, devotion, etc

The body is the first foundation of awareness. Practice body-based movement daily to ground and integrate the emotional and mental aspects of practice. Effective methods include yoga, qigong, some martial arts, Feldenkrais, slow and rapid walking meditation.

Continue to work with teachers who have trained deeply and manifest that training in skillful and compassionate behavior. Clarify the purpose and method of “conflicting” approaches and use them appropriately.

Group practice involves shared aims and ongoing communication.

There are a range of methods for facilitating discussion, including:

- Rotating facilitators to provide structure, cultivate personal power, and undermine hierarchy.
- Balancing and integrating social interaction with cultivation of insight and deep transformation.
- 1, 2, or 3-minute egg timer go-rounds: gives extroverts the power to be succinct; gives shy people the power to express their truth; keeps the discussion flowing within time constraints
- Gregory Kramer’s Insight Dialogue extends the natural process of vipassana into interaction with others, providing a reliable method for group discussion and in daily life.
- Ken McLeod’s one-sentence and Probing Presence methods cut through stories and brings teacher-student dynamic into peer practice.

Regularly review personal and group intentions, and reflect on whether your internal and external structures are supporting those intentions.

Intentions, techniques, and structures need to evolve over time.