

Captured Factors

Addiction is not a mind missing its capacities. Everything is fully working, but captured, aimed at the wrong object. So one useful way to see recovery is as redirection, not construction from nothing. Nothing has to be conjured. If we look closely, everything we need is already here.

Buddhist psychology names five factors whose whole job is to fasten the mind onto an object: aspiration, appreciation, recollection, concentration, and intelligence. On their own they are neither good nor bad. They take on the color of whatever they travel with. Let us take them one at a time.

Aspiration is the wish to act, the energy that moves the mind toward something. On its own it is neutral. It goes wherever it is steered. When captured, it becomes craving: craving to get, or craving to get away. In this sense, desire is the root of our suffering. But when freed, that same energy is simply the wholesome wish to act. It is the same force in both directions. Desire is both the problem and the way out. The Thai monk and scholar Venerable Payutto puts the difference simply: craving ends by abandonment; chanda, wholesome desire, ends by accomplishment.

Appreciation is the factor of mind that decides. When captured, it is the deal-maker. One old manual says this is the factor that makes the decision "this very one, and no other." We know that voice: just this one, just this last time. When freed, it is settled confidence in what we have seen to be true. The decisiveness does not go away. It decides for the path. It is the conviction to make the phone call instead of the deal. And the tradition notices something useful here: this deciding factor cannot arise in a mind caught in doubt. That does not make doubt a virtue. But an honest pause, a real "am I actually sure about this?", can interrupt the deal before it is made.

Recollection, when captured, is a kind of forgetting. Not blankness, but vivid memory of the wrong thing: the high we chased, remembered without the wreckage that came with it. When freed, it is the simple refusal to let what we know slip away. It is remembering the consequences. It is remembering why.

Concentration, when captured, is one-pointed focus aimed at our craving: at our temporary discomfort, at the old solutions, at reminiscing about the past or worrying about the future. Craving is not scattered. Craving is focused. That

narrow, gripping attention is concentration doing exactly what it does, just pointed the wrong way. When freed, concentration is not standalone focus either. The Buddha describes it as a unified mind held up by the rest of the path. It is collectedness, supported by everything else.

Intelligence, when captured, takes two forms. One is acting automatically due to our conditioning, without really knowing what we are doing. A trigger fires, and we respond with no awareness in the gap. The other is the clever wrong idea: an intelligence that takes this body and mind as solidly "I" and "mine" and builds mistaken stories on top. "I'm different." "I've got this one handled." "This is just who I am." When the mind produces a clever scheme to act on our addiction, that is intelligence in full force, not its absence. When freed, it is discernment: seeing clearly what actually helps and what harms, and clearing away the confusion between them.

Taken together, these show us a few windows where a lapse can happen. We can forget. We can decide. We can narrow our attention. We can rationalize. And each of those windows is also a place where we can catch it.

In the discourse called the Great Forty, the Buddha says that in a person of right mindfulness, wrong mindfulness falls away; in a person of right concentration, wrong concentration falls away, and so on through the whole path. Nothing is added. Nothing is added. For us, that falling away is the whole work: recognizing where these factors have been captured, and turning each one back toward freedom.

There is an old story where a brahmin challenges Ānanda: surely you cannot abandon desire by means of desire. Ānanda asks him whether his desire to walk to the monastery had faded once he arrived. It had. Wholesome desire ends by arriving. We can do the same, and it begins with the desire to be free.