

The Challenges & Rewards of Commitment



IN ORDER TO MOVE BEYOND YOUR FEAR OF COMMITMENT—WHETHER IT'S TO YOUR SPIRITUAL PRACTICE, A RELATIONSHIP, OR YOUR CAREER—YOU MUST FIRST EVALUATE WHAT IS WORTHY OF YOUR COMMITMENT.

For many of us “commitment” is a charged word, bringing to mind loss of freedom and the need for hard work. However, commitment is very rewarding when it is practiced with integrity, mindfulness, and skillfulness.

Here are just a few rewards commitment can bring:

- It can give greater meaning to your life. Commitment to something larger than satisfying your desires can provide you with a sense of purpose, which can be very comforting and calming.
- It can make you feel grounded and provide a sense of identity.
- It can provide direction in your life.
- It can give you something to serve.
- It can help you mature emotionally and psychologically.
- It can provide a context for making decisions.
- It can prevent you from acting on unhealthy impulses.
- It can unify your mind.

Clarifying Your Commitments

In order to move beyond your fear and fully commit to something—whether it's your spiritual practice, a relationship, or your career—you must first evaluate what is worthy of your commitment. This is where wise understanding, the first factor in the Buddha's Eightfold Path, can support you. Through developing wise understanding you come to know what matters most to you and what your core values are. Your values then provide the foundation for your wise intention, the second factor in the Eightfold Path. Wise intention, which is sometimes referred to as right resolve, empowers you to commit to something worthwhile and to sustain your effort with mindfulness.

Once you've made a commitment, it may feel unpleasant at times, but mindfulness can help bolster your resolve despite your unease. Mindfulness “reminds” you that you've chosen to make this commitment because you have deemed that it is worthy. And it provides the energy to maintain the discipline necessary for fully living your commitments.

Making a commitment to something may mean renouncing other desires. For instance, if you're committed to having a morning meditation practice, you may have to get up 30 minutes earlier than you normally would. Even though you may

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Phillip Moffitt

At the peak of his career, former CEO and Editor-in-chief of Esquire magazine, Phillip Moffitt, traded in his worldly aspirations to explore the inner life. He subsequently founded the [Life Balance Institute](#) and now teaches vipassana meditation with an emphasis on living the dharma in daily life. Phillip is a co-guiding teacher at [Spirit Rock Meditation Center](#) and the author of [Emotional Chaos to Clarity](#) and [Dancing with Life](#).



What Is Dharma Wisdom?

Emotional Chaos to Clarity

How to Live More Skillfully, Make Better Decisions, and Find Purpose in Life

Emotional Chaos to Clarity can be purchased in bookstores and on the Internet. It is available in hardcover, paperback, e-book, and audiobook.

be tempted to sleep in some days, you get up and sit because that's the commitment you've made. When you are clear about your commitments, renunciation becomes a source of joy, rather than a sacrifice.

When you make a new commitment, making a ritual around it can strengthen your resolve. For example, in our culture, we use the marriage ritual to signify a commitment to a long-term intimate relationship.

The Challenges of Sustaining Commitments

What is worthy of your commitment changes throughout your life as your circumstances change; therefore, it is wise to periodically revisit your commitments. However, if you constantly review your commitments, you will undermine them. Also, if you cling to a commitment that no longer aligns with your values, you will lose confidence in your ability to be a committed person.

When you make a commitment, it doesn't necessarily mean that you will reap the results you desire. The outcome of your commitment depends upon a lot of conditions that are beyond your control. Therefore, you aren't committing to a certain result, you are committing to making your best effort. The rewards come from acting on your commitment.

For your reflection:

Name those things that you are committed to in your life. Are your commitments aligned with your values and intentions?

- Is there anything that's stopping you from fully living your commitments? What might you need to give up in order to fully live your commitments? What capacities do you need to develop in order to fully live your commitments? Discipline? Persistence? Patience?

What sort of ritual might you create to strengthen a new commitment or to renew a commitment?

For further study, listen to Phillip's talk on patience and determination:

Patience and Determination

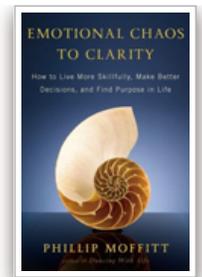
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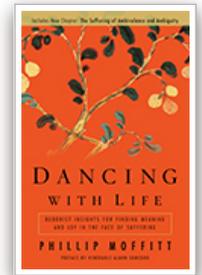
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