

Reading bell

As you read this magazine you have an opportunity to go back to the present moment.

Before you read on, take the time, right now, to give your attention to at least three in and out breaths. Just give your attention to each breath and smile. Really be, tenderly, with each breath.

Do you feel calmer? Can you sense your body smiling back to you for this little gift?

Now as you read on you can do so gently holding the energy of mindfulness alight in you. You will notice a bell: 🛕

When you come to each bell, you may like to stop reading, clear your mind and return to your breath before continuing.

Reading the magazine like this helps us develop the art of mindful living as a practice - not just as a theory.

Tea meditation

Tea meditation is a time to be with the Sangha in a joyful and serene atmosphere. Just to enjoy our tea together is enough. It is like a 'good news' occasion, when we share our joy and happiness in being together.

At times, when we are drinking tea with a friend, we are not aware of the tea or even of our friend sitting there. Practicing tea meditation is to be truly present with our tea and our friends. We recognize that we can dwell happily in the present moment despite all of our sorrows and worries. We sit there relaxed without having to say anything. If we like, we may also share a song, a story or a dance. It is an opportunity for us to water the seeds of happiness and joy, of understanding and love in each one of us. 🛕

But you don't have to be with others to enjoy a tea meditation. Whether you are with the Sangha or drinking a cup of tea at home or in a café, it is wonderful to

allow enough time to stop and really appreciate your tea. Holding a cup of tea in your two hands you can recite this gatha:



Breathe in and recite the first line, breath out and recite the second. The next inhalation is for the third line, and the exhalation is for the fourth. Breathing mindfully in this way we recuperate ourselves, and the cup of tea reclaims its highest place. If we are not mindful, it is not the cup of tea that we are drinking but our own illusions and afflictions. 🛕

....continued on page 3

An enforced break

Recently the idea of a summer "break" took on new meaning for me when I fractured a bone in my right foot. The injury is not severe, but its positioning makes it slow to heal. It needs rest and I must wear a space-age cast for 8 weeks.

I am trying to use this unwanted circumstance as an opportunity to further my practice. For example, I opted for a plastic/foam 'boot' because it's easier to manage than a fibreglass cast. It's lighter and can be taken off for showers. But it is less safe and I must make sure I don't put any weight on it. I am taking this as a prompt to be mindful, to know what I doing with my foot in the present moment, every moment. 🍵

Accepting the way it is

The plans I had for the coming months must now be reconsidered. I was going carry out interviews for my research project, but these must now wait for another day. I was planning to join Thay's May retreat in Vietnam but I am not sure if I can now go ahead with this. It is also more difficult for me to attend mindfulness meditation class, visit friends or go to the gym. Even just carrying a cup of tea is no longer straightforward. Of course none of these things are exactly life and death issues, let's keep it all in perspective, but I have a habit-energy to be 'doing' things.

So my first challenge is to learn to accept the way things are for me right now and to use this time to grow my practice. I am grateful then to Coral for lending me the

book "Radical Acceptance" by Tara Brach; it seems most appropriate. I started to read it immediately...or is that just another project?

Slowing and Stopping

Thay tells us that it is hard to be at peace if you fill your life with too many projects. He teaches that we need to slow down and come to a stop. The universe is now requiring my body to slow down and with that I have the opportunity to still the mind. 🍵



I have constructed a new 'lion seat' for myself in the garden where I can sit, still my mind and contemplate. I am particularly fond of just listening; as the sounds of birds and the rustle of trees fill my mind and the distant echo of an oboe drifts on the wind my mind settles. And as my mind calms so I can reflect more wisely on life's priorities: do I really want to give so much time to paid work? Does it really help me to be driven by projects or get anxious about having not done quite enough of this or that just yet? I have also taken the opportunity to re-learn some gathas and put them into

practice. I have been practicing.... Oh, but is this just another project? 🍵

Gratitude and dependence

Although my broken foot is not particularly painful nor my limitations too severe I do need help with some daily tasks: shopping, cooking, cleaning, doing the laundry and getting up the steps and out of the house are more awkward than usual. I have become more dependent on my partner. Could you please carry that cup of tea for me please Freya? Could you drive me to the hospital please Freya? Thank you for my dinner Freya. Accepting a certain degree of dependence on others takes practice I find. But I am taking this opportunity to develop my gratitude to her and to all my friends who have shown their love and concern. Once, a few years ago, I felt isolated and alone, today I feel truly blessed to have people who care for me. So, I aim to develop more gratitude, ...Whoops! Another project.

Just stopping and sitting still is not always easy. Just 'accepting' takes practice. But when I have been able to just allow this opportunity of stillness to be a gift I have felt the benefits of a peaceful heart.

And if I have the habit energy to make plans, well, I can accept that too.

🍵 Chris Barker

Short bits...

Dear Sangha,

Does anyone have a short poem, saying or reflection on your practice that you would like to offer The Lotus Bud? We would really value your thoughts about the ups and downs of developing mindfulness.

And contributions to our magazine don't have to be lengthy. We hope to develop a style that mixes short pieces with the page length articles. This month we've included some short bits by Thay, but we would love them to be by you in another edition.

And they don't have to be in the running for a literary prize either. So please, send them all, the long and the short and the tall....

A lotus for everyone - from the editorial team. 🍵

Plum Village Monastic Visit in 2008

Several nuns and one monk from Thich Nhat Hanh's tradition will visit Australia in March/April. 🍵

At Easter there will be a monastic led retreat and blessing ceremony at the Green Bamboo Centre in Ballarat Victoria. There will be a monastic led retreat at Waterfall, Sydney from 4-6 April 2008.

More details will be available soon on our website. *Note there is no retreat in Sydney this Easter.* 🍵

Kiss the earth

Walk and touch peace
every moment.

Walk and touch happiness
every moment.

Each step brings
a fresh breeze.

Each step makes
a flower bloom.

Kiss the Earth with your feet.

Bring the Earth your
love and happiness.

The Earth will be
safe when we feel
safe in ourselves. 🍵

Image by Joshua Davis

Be a bud

Be a bud sitting
quietly on the hedge.

Be a smile, one part
of wondrous existence.

Stand here. There is
no need to depart. 🍵

Image by Cobalt123

Poems by Thich Nhat Hanh

Tea meditation continued...

Often in daily life, our body and our mind are not together. Sometimes our body may be here but our mind is lost in the past or in the future. We may be possessed by anger, hatred, jealousy or anxiety. If we practice the teaching of the Buddha on how to breath mindfully, we can bring mind and body together once again. 🍵

When our mind and body have become one and we are awake, we are ourselves,

and we can encounter the tea. If the tea becomes real, we become real.

When we are able to truly meet the tea, at that very moment, life is. As we drink the tea we are well aware that we are drinking the tea. Drinking tea becomes the most important thing in life at that moment. This is the practice of mindfulness. 🍵

WHO WE ARE

The Communities of Mindful Living are inspired by the Buddhist teachings of Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh (pictured).



We aspire to live fully in each moment for the peace and happiness of ourselves and all beings. We meet regularly to observe the art of mindful living and to foster a supportive community of practitioners. 🙏

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www.lotusbudsangha.org

All images for this issue found on www.flickr.com 🙏

Our main activities

Wednesday Mindfulness Meditation at Camperdown

We welcome all to come join us for meditation practice - We meet at 7:30 pm each Wednesday at the Buddhist Library, Church St, Camperdown, Sydney.

Mindfulness Days - monthly

Once a month we offer a day of mindful practice and contemplation. The day normally consists of chanting sitting meditation, outdoor walking meditation (if weather permits), a dharma talk and lunch.

How to contribute to *The Lotus Bud*

If you have something you would like to contribute to *The Lotus Bud* please offer it to Chris Barker in the following ways:

- In person at the Wednesday night group
- By e-mail to: cbarker@uow.edu.au
- By post to: Chris Barker, Faculty of Arts, Uni of Wollongong, 2500

Please write an account of your practice, a poem, pass on news or anything else that inspires you. Contributions can be short or long but need to be under 600 words.

Coming events...

Sunday March 16th
Half Day of Mindfulness at 1 The Avenue, Hurlstone Park
9.30am start to 1.30am finish (shared veg lunch) Contact: John Barclay
ph: 9559 8805

21-24 March - Monastic Retreat Ballarat - See website for details

4-6 April - Monastic Retreat Waterfall - See website for details

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