



THE LOTUS BUD

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Right thinking



When Right View is solid in us, we have Right Thinking (*samyak samkalpa*). We need Right View at the foundation of our thinking. And if we train ourselves in Right Thinking, our Right View will improve. Thinking is the speech of our mind. Right Thinking makes our speech clear and beneficial. Because thinking often leads to action, Right Thinking is needed to take us down the path of Right Action. 🙏

Right Thinking reflects the way things are. Wrong thinking causes us to see in an "upside-down way" (*viparyasa*). But to practice Right Thinking is not easy. Our mind is often thinking about one thing while our body is doing another. Mind and body are not unified. Conscious breathing is an important link. When we concentrate on our

breathing, we bring body and mind back together and become whole again. Much of our thinking is unnecessary. Those thoughts are limited and do not carry much understanding in them. Sometimes we feel as though we have a cassette player in our head — always running, day and night — and we cannot turn it off. We worry and become tense and have nightmares. When we practice mindfulness, we begin to hear the cassette tape in our mind, and we can notice whether our thinking is useful or not. 🙏

The Buddha offered many ways to help us to transform troublesome thoughts. One way, he said, is to replace an unwholesome thought with a wholesome one by "changing the peg," just as a carpenter replaces a rotten peg by hammering in a new one. If we are constantly assailed by unwholesome patterns of thought, we need to learn how to change the peg and replace those patterns with wholesome thoughts. The Buddha also likened

unwholesome thinking to wearing a dead snake around your neck. The easiest way, he said, to keep unwholesome thoughts from arising is to live in a wholesome environment, a community that practices mindful living. With the help and presence of Dharma sisters and brothers, it is easy to sustain Right Thinking. Dwelling in a good environment is preventive medicine. Right Thinking is thinking that is in accord with Right View. It is a map that can help us find our way. But when we arrive at our destination, we need to put down the map and enter the reality fully. "Think non-thinking" is a well-known statement in Zen. When you practice Right View and Right Thinking, you dwell deeply in the present moment, where you can touch seeds of joy, peace, and liberation, heal and transform your suffering, and be truly present for many others. 🙏

Thich Nhat Hahn (1999) *The Heart of the Buddha's Thinking* Broadway Books: New York . (extracts pgs 59-63).

My take on Right Thinking...

Excerpts from Philip's talk to the Lotus Buds Sangha a few weeks ago.

Thich Nhat Hanh provides us with four practices to improve our right thinking and I'd like to share some of my experiences of these:

Practice 1: "Are You Sure?"

The first practice is to ask ourselves if we are sure our thinking about a certain situation is correct or if there is a more helpful way to think about it.

Living in a two storey house I'm often annoyed about having to go back up stairs when I forget something. When I asked "Are You Sure?" it's such a bad thing I remembered that I'd also really like to get more exercise. By "changing the peg" mentality and thinking about the stairs as exercise I now don't mind going up and down. 🧘

My partner and I are currently building a new house and during the construction the brick wall between our bedroom and ensuite was built in the wrong place so there was no room for our wardrobe and the bedroom power point was actually inside the shower! Initially I thought this was very bad, but it allowed us to see that the ensuite would be too dark and when the wall was torn down and rebuilt we were

able to put in some windows at the top to let in light.

This made me realise that we really don't know the long term results of anything that happens. Something that at first appears bad may allow us to have a better opportunity in the future or may have delayed us so we don't have a car accident or may allow us to discover something very important. Whenever I'm dwelling on, "I wish that never happened", remembering to ask "Are You Sure?" really helps me to let go of it. 🧘



Image by bozolev

Practice 2: "What Am I Doing?"

The second practice is to ask ourselves, "What Am I Doing?" This helps to bring us back to the present moment. It relates to right thinking because often our thoughts can carry us away.

I can easily get caught up in something I'm doing and often forget to eat properly or have a break. When I go to make a cup of tea at work I try to step into an empty room and do a few mindful movements or take a few mindful breaths. Also whenever I remember to ask myself "What Am I Doing?" instead of just doing the next thing, for example lifting my water bottle, I try to think, "I'm going to lift my water bottle" and then breath out before I actually do it. 🧘

At home I've tried to develop one thing which I do in mindfulness which is stacking the dish washer. By treating it like a meditation I've really come to enjoy it and also found practices to make it more enjoyable. I've got my own system of where I like to place things, not that it's better than anyone else's but for me it's like constructing a pattern. Also I start from one side of the kitchen and work across so I can really see and enjoy the clean area as it expands. I think that one of the highest achievements is doing something in mindfulness, no matter what the actual task is. *(continued over page)*

Practice 3: “Hello, Habit Energy.”

We are creatures of habit and because of this probably each of us will have several thoughts or types of thoughts that keep coming up. It's useful to be able to identify these, to be friends with them, so we can smile to them and let them come and go without holding on to them.

One habit energy I have is worrying and with building a house my worrying has reached a whole new level! So I decided to give myself worry free times. Going on the bus to work I'd say to myself "this is my time to relax and not worry about anything".

Whenever I realised I was worrying I would focus on breathing in and out and allow myself to let go of the worrying thought. When I'm in noisy situations like the bus I imagine a clock face and breath in and out around the clock. I found that after twelve breaths (once around) I'd usually managed to let go of my worry. Next I expanded my time to having a whole worry free day and then I thought why not make all my time worry free.

To my surprise I found I could actually still function without worrying! I realized that worrying was just going over things I'd already thought out. 🧘

Practice 4: “Mind of love” or Bodhichitta

A big part of love is understanding what nourishes ourselves and others. To relieve suffering and create happiness in ourselves and others it's useful to train our thoughts in this direction. To help me with nourishing myself I've added to the practice “What am I doing?” a new practice “How am I feeling?” or am I being kind to myself

Ever since my son Luke was born three years ago I've been trying to find a time to do sitting meditation. I have a forty-five minute bus ride to work in the mornings and usually I have a few books I'm reading or several podcasts to listen to. On the bus when I asked myself, “How am I feeling?” I realized that all these activities were not making me relaxed but were making me more tense. Then it hit me that this was the perfect time for me to meditate and ever since then I've been doing my sitting meditation on the bus – when I can get a seat that is! Though standing meditation works just as well. 🧘

Much of Right Thinking involves letting go of thoughts which are not useful. Doing this sharing has made me realise that most of my suffering is actually caused by thoughts, but when my thoughts are thoughts of the present moment I'm happy and at peace.

Every Thursday I'm lucky enough to have the day looking after my three year old son Luke. On that day I try to practice aimlessness which means not focusing on my aims or goals for the day but just being there with my son in the present moment. It's my way of trying to “Think, Non-thinking” and it's become one of the most enjoyable days of my week. 🧘

Philip Rutherford



Image by tanakawho

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. 

Contacts

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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.

Retreat - I have arrived, I am home

4th - 6th October 2008 - Garland Valley | NSW

This year's Lotus Buds October Long Weekend Retreat will be held at the Lotus Buds property near Garland Valley.

Cost of the 3 days will be \$100 which covers meals.

For further details and registration please contact:

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Reading bell

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

You will notice a bell: throughout the magazine.

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

Coming events...

Sunday October 19th
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