



THE LOTUS BUD

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Mindfulness all day long...

The fourth establishment of Mindfulness is mindfulness of phenomena (*dharmas*) in phenomena. "Phenomena" means "the objects of our mind." Each of our mental formations has to have an object. If you are angry, you have to be angry at someone or something, and that person or thing can be called the object of your mind. When you remember someone or something, that is the object of your mind.

When we are attentive to a bird singing, that sound is the object of our mind. When our eyes see the blue sky, this is the object of our mind. When we look at a candle, an idea or image of the candle arises in our mind. That object of perception is a sign. 

The Buddha taught that all our anxieties and difficulties come from our inability to see the true face, or true sign of things, which means that

although we see their appearance, we fail to recognize their impermanent and interbeing nature. If we are afraid or insecure, at the root of our fear or insecurity is that we have not yet seen the true face of all dharmas. If we investigate and look deeply we can transform our ignorance and overcome fear.

Happiness can be true happiness or deception, so we have to look into its substance and go beyond attachment. True happiness will be of benefit and nourish ourselves and others. Deceptive happiness brings temporary pleasure and helps us forget our suffering, but is not of lasting benefit and can actually be harmful, like a cigarette or a glass of wine. 



Image by Bemep

When something causes us to suffer, if we look deeply, we see that it is exactly what we need to restore our happiness.

If we look deeply into our craving, we see that we already have what we crave, because everything is already a part of everything else. This insight can take us from the realm of craving into the realm of freedom. The fire of anger burns in us day and night and causes us to suffer — even more than the one at whom we are angry. When anger is absent, we feel light and free. To live in the realm of non-harming is to love. Our world is full of hatred and violence, because we do not take the time to nourish the love and compassion that are already in our hearts. Non-harming is an important practice. 

Every time we practice Right Mindfulness, it is like jumping into that cool lake. If we are standing, we only have to know that we are standing. If we are sitting, we only have to know that we are sitting. We don't have to add or take away anything. We only need to be aware.

Contemplation on interdependence is a deep looking into all dharmas in order to pierce through to their real nature, in order to see them as part of the great body of reality and in order to see that the great body of reality is indivisible. It cannot be cut into pieces with separate existences of their own. The object of our mind can be a mountain, a rose, the full moon, or the person standing in front of us. We believe these things exist outside of us as separate entities, but, these objects of our perceptions *are* us. This includes our feeling.

Mindfulness is mindfulness of the body, feelings, perceptions, any of the mental formations, and all of the seeds in our consciousness. The Four Establishments of Mindfulness contain everything in the cosmos. Everything in the cosmos is the object of our perception, and, as such, it does not exist only outside of us but also within us. 🧘

Sitting and watching our breath is a wonderful practice, but it is not enough. For transformation to take place, we have to practice mindfulness all day long, not just on our meditation cushion. Do not lose yourself in the past- Do not lose yourself in the future. Do not get caught in your anger, worries, or fears. Come back to the present moment, and touch life deeply. This is mindfulness.

Thich Nhat Hanh (1999) The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching. Broadway Books: New York. Pgs: 76-81. (edited extract)

A day of mindfulness

It is a surprisingly warm autumn morning, and I am standing in a schoolyard, smiling over the rim of my teacup. I am watching people arrive, getting out of their cars, arms laden with food. Many of them I do not yet know, but what makes me smile is what many of them are wearing: the short brown robe of those who have taken the fourteen mindfulness trainings of the Order of Interbeing. 🧘

The sight reminds me of what Venerable Kovida, the resident monk at the Katoomba temple where I and my fellow Smiling Heart Sangha members meet weekly, affectionately calls such people—‘half monks’ and ‘half nuns’. And there

are many of them attending today's mindfulness day in the Blue Mountains.

Our day begins with greetings and well-earned cups of tea for those who've made the trip from Sydney. We are privileged to be joined for the day by two Plum Village monastics, Sister Luong Ngiem and Thay Phap Co.

After a short welcome, we start our practice with walking meditation through the bush behind the school. Down a gently winding path we tread, perhaps forty of us, all in silence, leaves and twigs softly crunching underfoot. A black cockatoo squawks in the distance. On returning to the school grounds we then wind our way up to an Aboriginal sacred site for a few special moments of contemplation.



Image by Pink Sherbert Photography

We then take our places in one of the classrooms, which has been transformed for the day into a meditation hall, including an altar festooned with autumn branches covered in leaves in rich hues of red, orange and gold.

After a session of sitting meditation, the incense offering takes place, followed by the recitation of the fourteen mindfulness trainings, led by Sister Luong Ngiem, the rhythm and flow of the Vietnamese chanting warming the air. 🙏

After an all-hands-on-deck preparation, lunch is enjoyed in silence in the school's amphitheatre, overlooking the surrounding bush. We then make our way back to the classroom, where we are treated to some insights by Sister Luong Ngiem into the lives of the nuns at the Bat Nha temple and how they are adjusting to life in Vietnam.

Sister then teaches us a beautiful song: 'We are the leaves of one tree', and all too soon our day ends. What I take home with me from this day is a feeling of deep peace—and also of humility. What an honour it is to be considered a leaf on the same tree, a star in the same sky as those with whom I have just spent the day. Their openness, kindness and obvious compassion makes it clear that they work hard at the art of mindfulness, and at practising the trainings. If I can aspire to be even a little like them then I'll be following the right path. 🙏

Karen Gee

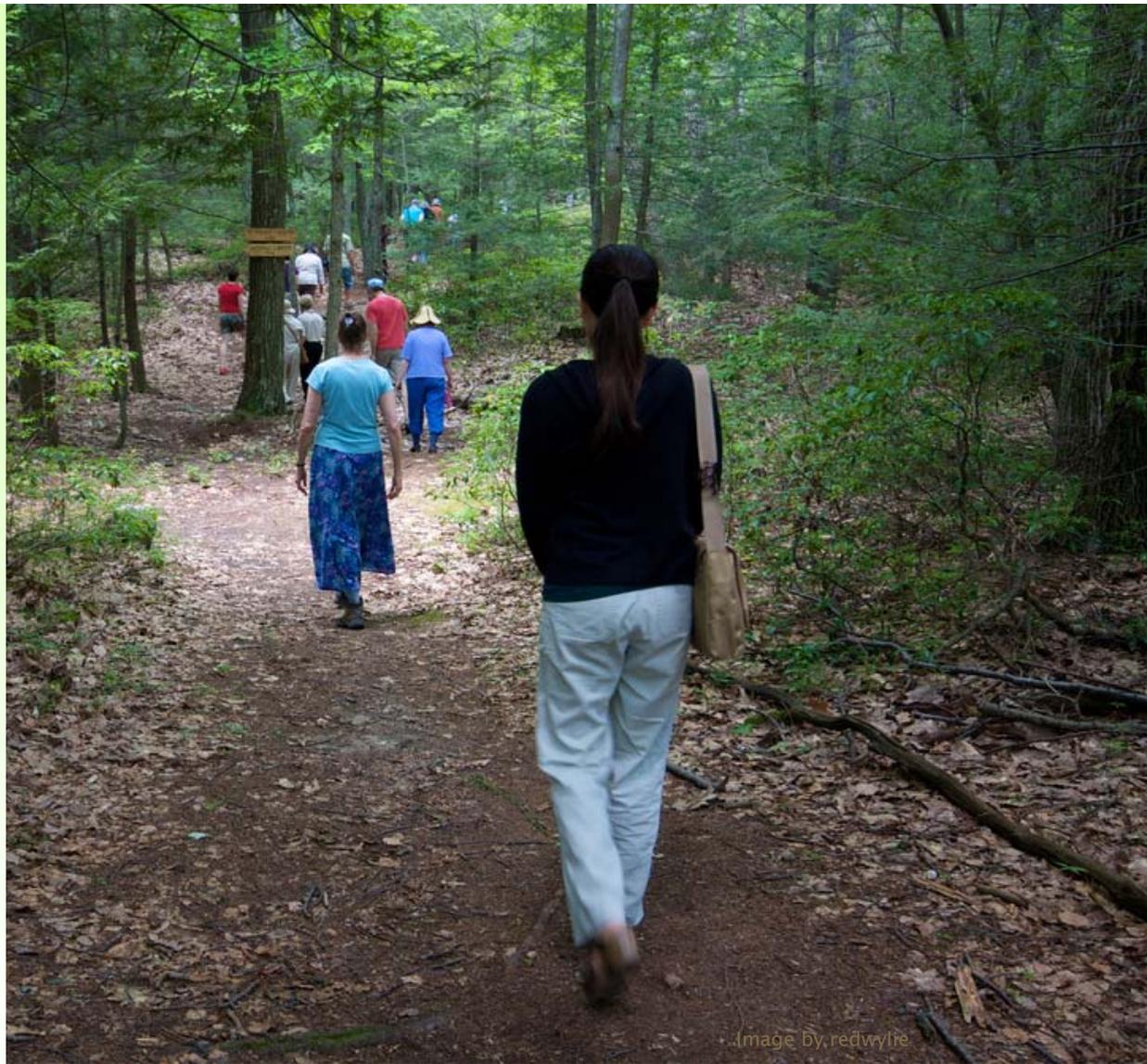


Image by redwylie

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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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*

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
Contributions can be short or long but need to be under 600 words.

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.