



# THE LOTUS BUD

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## *Smile at your habit energy*

*Dear Sangha,*

In this month's magazine we are approaching the question of habit energies, which may be negative or positive. They teach that our joy and peace depend on our ability to recognize and transform our negative habit energies. In his book 'Be Free Where You Are' he writes:

*There is a strong energy in every one of us called habit energy. Vasana is the Sanskrit word for habit energy. Every one of us has habit energies that push us to say and do things we don't want to say or do. These habit energies damage us and our relationships to other people. Intellectually we know that saying or doing a certain thing will cause a lot of suffering, and yet still say or do it. And once you say or do something, the damage is done. Then you regret it. You beat your chest and pull your* 🙏

*hair. You say, "I am not going to say or do that thing again." But though you say this with sincerity, the next time the situation presents itself, you say and do the same thing. This is the power of habit energy that your parents and ancestors may have transmitted to you. Mindful breathing can help you recognize habit energy when it emerges. You don't have to fight that energy; you only have to recognize it as yours and smile at it. That is enough. "Hello there my habit energy. I know you're there, but you cannot do anything to me." You smile at it, and then you are free. This is a wonderful protection. It is why I said mindfulness is the energy of God, the energy of the Buddha protecting us.* 🙏

While there are negative habit energies that we have to recognize, embrace and transform, there are also positive habit energies that would benefit from cultivation.



We might call these 'Zen Habits'. I recently discovered a web blog with this name and theme. With the permission of the author I reproduce a posting that I found valuable over the next two pages. You may care to visit and explore the site further for yourself. 🙏

*Chris /True Dwelling of the Mind*

## Twelve Essential Rules To Live Like a Zen Monk

### 1. Do one thing at a time.

This rule (and some of the others that follow) will be familiar to long-time Zen Habits readers. It's part of my philosophy, and it's also a part of the life of a Zen monk: single-task, don't multi-task. When you're pouring water, just pour water. When you're eating, just eat. When you're bathing, just bathe. Don't try to knock off a few tasks while eating or bathing. Zen proverb: "When walking, walk. When eating, eat." 🧘

### 2. Do it slowly and deliberately.

You can do one task at a time, but also rush that task. Instead, take your time, and move slowly. Make your actions deliberate, not rushed and random. It takes practice, but it helps you focus on the task.



**3. Do it completely.** Put your mind completely on the task. Don't move on to the next task until you're finished. If, for some reason, you have no choice but to move on to something else, try to at least put away the unfinished task and clean up after yourself. If you prepare a sandwich, don't start eating it until you've put away the stuff you used to prepare it, wiped down the counter, and washed the dishes used for preparation. Then you're done with that task, and can focus more completely on the next task.

**4. Do less.** A Zen monk doesn't lead a lazy life: he wakes early and has a day filled with work. However, he doesn't have an unending task list either — there are certain things he's going to do today, and no more. If you do less, you can do those things more slowly, more completely and with more concentration. If you fill your day with tasks, you will be rushing from one thing to the next without stopping to think about what you do. 🧘

### 5. Put space between things.

Related to the "Do less" rule, but it's a way of managing your schedule so that you always have time to complete each task. Don't schedule things close together — instead, leave room between things on your schedule. That gives you a more relaxed schedule, and leaves space in case one task takes longer than you planned.

**6. Develop rituals.** Zen monks have rituals for many things they do, from eating to cleaning to meditation. Ritual gives

something a sense of importance — if it's important enough to have a ritual, it's important enough to be given your entire attention, and to be done slowly and correctly. You don't have to learn the Zen monk rituals — you can create your own, for the preparation of food, for eating, for cleaning, for what you do before you start your work, for what you do when you wake up and before you go to bed, for what you do just before exercise. Anything you want, really. 🧘

**7. Designate time for certain things.** There are certain times in the day of a Zen monk designated for certain activities. A time for bathing, a time for work, a time for cleaning, a time for eating.

This ensures that those things get done regularly. You can designate time for your own activities, whether that be work or cleaning or exercise or quiet contemplation. If it's important enough to do regularly, consider designating a time for it.

**8. Devote time to sitting.** In the life of a Zen monk, sitting meditation (zazen) is one of the most important parts of his day. Each day, there is time designated just for sitting. This meditation is really practice for learning to be present. You can devote time for sitting meditation, or do what I do: I use running as a way to practice being in the moment. You could use any activity in the

*Continued over the page...*



Image by Eduardo Deboni

same way, as long as you do it regularly and practice being present.

**9. Smile and serve others.** Zen monks spend part of their day in service to others, whether that be other monks in the monastery or people on the outside world. It teaches them humility, and ensures that their lives are not just selfish, but devoted to others. If you're a parent, it's likely you already spend at least some time in service to others in your household, and non-parents may already do this too. Similarly, smiling and being kind to others can be a great way to improve the lives of those around you. Also consider volunteering for charity work. 🙏

**10. Make cleaning and cooking become meditation.** Aside from the zazen mentioned above, cooking and cleaning are two of the most exalted parts of a

Zen monk's day. They are both great ways to practice mindfulness, and can be great rituals performed each day. If cooking and cleaning seem like boring chores to you, try doing them as a form of meditation. Put your entire mind into those tasks, concentrate, and do them slowly and completely. It could change your entire day (as well as leave you with a cleaner house).

**11. Think about what is necessary.** There is little in a Zen monk's life that isn't necessary. He doesn't have a closet full of shoes, or the latest in trendy clothes. He doesn't have a refrigerator and cabinets full of junk food. He doesn't have the latest gadgets, cars, televisions, or iPod. He has basic clothing, basic shelter, basic utensils, basic tools, and the most basic food (they eat simple, vegetarian meals consisting usually of rice, miso soup, vegetables, and pickled vegetables). Now, I'm not saying you should live exactly like a Zen monk — I certainly don't. But it does serve as a reminder that there is much in our lives that aren't necessary, and it can be useful to give some thought about what we really need, and whether it is important to have all the stuff we have that's not necessary. 🙏

**12. Live simply.** The corollary of Rule 11 is that if something isn't necessary, you can probably live without it. And so to live simply is to rid your life of as many of the unnecessary and unessential things as you can, to make

room for the essential. Now, what is essential will be different to each person.

For me, my family, my writing, my running and my reading are essential. To others, yoga and spending time with close friends might be essential. For others it will be nursing and volunteering and going to church and collecting comic books. There is no law saying what should be essential for you — but you should consider what is most important to your life, and make room for that by eliminating the other less essential things in your life. 🙏

*Leo Babauta*

<http://zenhabits.net/2008/03/12-essential-rules-to-live-more-like-a-zen-monk/>



Image by Jenny Dowling

## 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.

## How to contribute to *The Lotus Bud*

In person at the Wednesday night group

- By e-mail to: [cbarker@uow.edu.au](mailto: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.

## Coming events...

Saturday July 11th  
Mindfulness Day, 3 Mary Street,  
Hunters Hill 9am to 4pm

Sunday August 9th  
Rose Ceremony - Details to be  
advised on the website