



THE LOTUS BUD

Magazine of Mindful Living ~ Issue No 26, June 2010

Letting go of attachment, from A to Zen

*Feelings are like clouds
in a windy sky,
Conscious breathing is
my anchor.*

In this edition we present a piece about the practice of non-attachment. Although the article is not written by a practitioner in the Thich Nhat Hanh tradition, it is entirely consistent with it. For example the second precept of the Order of Interbeing asks us to "Learn and practice nonattachment from views in order to be open to receive others' viewpoints." Thay has written: "To me, this is the most essential practice of peace" And in the gatha above he advises us to see emotion as impermanent and not to hang on to it.

We hope that you enjoy the article that follows.

If there's one thing we all have in common it's that we want to feel happy; and on the other side of that coin, we want to avoid hurting. Yet we consistently put ourselves in situations that set us up for pain.

We pin our happiness to people, circumstances, and things and hold onto them for dear life. We stress about the possibility of losing them when something seems amiss. Then we melt into grief when something changes—a lay off, a break up, a transfer.

We attach to feelings as if they define us, and ironically, not just positive ones. If you've wallowed in regret or disappointment for years, it can seem safe and even comforting to suffer. 🍵

In trying to hold on to what's familiar, we limit our ability to experience joy in the present. A moment can't possibly radiate fully when you're suffocating it in fear.

When you stop trying to grasp, own, and control the world around you, you give it the freedom to fulfill you without the



Image by cyberqz

power to destroy you. That's why letting go is so important: letting go is letting happiness in.

It's no simple undertaking to let go of attachment—not a one-time decision, like pulling off a band-aid. Instead, it's a day-to-day, moment-to-moment commitment that involves changing the way you experience and interact with everything you instinctively want to grasp.

The best approach is to start simple, at the beginning, and work your way to Zen.

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Experiencing without attachment

Accept the moment for what it is. Don't try to turn it into yesterday; that moment's gone. Don't plot about how you can make the moment last forever. Just seep into the moment and enjoy it because it will eventually pass. Nothing is permanent. Fighting that reality will only cause you pain.

Believe now is enough. It's true—tomorrow may not look the same as today, no matter how much you try to control it.

A relationship might end. You might have to move. You'll deal with those moments when they come. All you need right now is to appreciate and enjoy what you have. It's enough.

Call yourself out. Learn what it looks like to grasp at people, things, or circumstances so you can redirect your thoughts when they veer toward attachment. When you dwell on keeping, controlling, manipulating, or losing something instead of simply experiencing it. 🧘

Define yourself in fluid terms. We are all constantly evolving and growing. Define yourself in terms that can withstand change. Defining yourself by possessions, roles, and relationships breeds attachment because loss entails losing not just what you have, but also who you are.

Enjoy now fully. No matter how much time you have in an experience or with someone you love, it will never feel

like enough. So don't think about it in terms of quantity—aim for quality, instead.

Attach to the idea of living well moment-to-moment. That's an attachment that can do you no harm.

Letting go of attachment to people

Friend yourself. It will be harder to let people go when necessary if you depend on them for your sense of worth. Believe you're worthy whether someone else tells you or not. This way, you relate to people—not just how they make you feel about yourself. 🧘

Go it alone sometimes. Take time to foster your own interests, ones that nothing and no one can take away. Don't let them hinge on anyone or anything other than your values and passion.

Hold lightly. This one isn't just about releasing attachments—it's also about maintaining healthy relationships. Contrary to romantic notions, you are not someone's other half. You're separate and whole. You can still hold someone to close to your heart; just remember, if you squeeze too tightly, you'll both be suffocated.

Interact with lots of people. If you limit yourself to one or two relationships they will seem like your lifelines. Everyone needs people, and there are billions on the planet. Stay open to new connections. Accept the possibility your future involves a lot of love whether you cling to a select few people or not.



Justify less. I can't let him go—I'll be miserable without him. I'd die if I lost her—she's all that I have. These thoughts reinforce beliefs that are not fact, even if they feel like it. The only way to let go and feel less pain is to believe you're strong enough to carry on if and when things change. 🧘

Letting go of attachment to the past

Know you can't change the past. Even if you think about over and over again. Even if you punish yourself. Even if you refuse to accept it. It's done. The only way to relieve your pain about what happened is to give yourself relief. No one and nothing else can create peace in your head for you.

Love instead of fearing. When you hold onto the past, it often has to do with fear: fear you messed up your chance at

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happiness, or fear you'll never know such happiness again. Focus on what you love and you'll create happiness instead of worrying about it.

Make now count. Instead of thinking of what you did or didn't do, the type of person you were or weren't, do something worthwhile now. Be someone worthwhile now. Take a class. Join a group. Help someone who needs it. Make today so full and meaningful there's no room to dwell on yesterday.

Narrate calmly. How we experience the world is largely a result of how we internalize it. Instead of telling yourself dramatic stories about the past—how hurt you were or how hard it was—challenge your emotions and focus on lessons learned. That's all you really need from yesterday.

Open your mind. We often cling to things, situations or people because we're comfortable with them. We know how they'll make us feel, whether it's happy or safe. Consider that new things, situations and people may affect you the same. The only way to find out is to let go of what's come and gone. 🧘



Letting go of attachment to outcomes

Practice letting things be. That doesn't mean you can't actively work to create a different tomorrow. It just means you make peace with the moment as it is, without worrying that something's wrong with you or your life, and then operate from a place of acceptance.

Question your attachment. If you're attached to a specific outcome—a dream job, the perfect relationship—you may be indulging an illusion about some day when everything will be lined up for happiness. No moment will ever be worthier of your joy than now because that's all there ever is. 🧘

Release the need to know. Life entails uncertainty, no matter how strong your intention. Obsessing about tomorrow wastes your life because there will always be a tomorrow on the horizon. There are no guarantees about how it will play out. Just know it hinges on how well you live today.

Serve your purpose now. You don't need to have x-amount of money in the bank to live a meaningful life right now. Figure out what matters to you, and fill pockets of time indulging it. Audition for community theater. Volunteer with animals. Whatever you love, do it. Don't wait—do it now.

Teach others. It's human nature to hope for things in the future. Even the most enlightened people fall into the habit from time to time. Remind yourself to stay open to possibilities by sharing the idea with other people. Blog about it. Talk about it. Tweet about it. Opening up helps keep you open.

Letting go of attachment to feelings

Understand that pain is unavoidable. No matter how well you do everything on this list, or on your own short list for peace, you will lose things that matter and feel some level of pain. But it doesn't have to be as bad as you think. As the saying goes, pain is inevitable, suffering is optional.

Vocalize your feelings. Feel them, acknowledge them, express them, and then let them naturally transform. Even if you want to dwell in anger, sadness or frustration—especially if you feel like dwelling—save yourself the pain and commit to working through them. 🧘

Write it down. Then toss it out. You won't always have the opportunity to express your feelings to the people who inspired them. That doesn't mean you need to swallow them. Write in a journal. Write a letter and burn it. Anything that helps you let go.

Xie Xie. It means thank you in Chinese. Fully embrace your happy moments—love with abandon; be so passionate it's contagious. If a darker moment follows, remember: it will teach you something, and soon enough you'll be in another happy moment to appreciate. Everything is cyclical. 🧘

Yield to peace. The ultimate desire is to feel happy and peaceful. Even if you think you want to stay angry, what you really want is to be at peace with what happened or will happen. It takes a conscious choice. Make it.

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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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Zen your now. Experience, appreciate, enjoy, and let go to welcome another experience.

It won't always be easy. Sometimes you'll feel compelled to attach yourself physically and mentally to people and ideas—as if it gives you some sense of control or security. You may even strongly believe you'll be happy if you struggle to hold onto what you have. That's OK. It's human nature.

Just know you have the power to choose from moment to moment how you experience things you enjoy: with a sense of ownership, anxiety, and fear, or with a sense of freedom, peace and love.

The most important question: what do you choose right now?

Written by: Lori Deschene of 'Tiny Buddha' found at: <http://@zenhabits.net/zen-attachment/>

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.

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.