



THE LOTUS BUD

Magazine of Mindful Living ~ Issue No 30, February 2011

Dear Sangha,

Welcome to the first edition of The Lotus Buds for 2011. Following the Christmas break we begin appropriately with a talk by Thay on our practice in the New Year. No doubt many of us are promising ourselves a new start in 2011 in some aspect of our lives. Indeed, we end with a short 'guide to life', taken from the Zen Habits website to which we are often indebted, that may help us find our path in the coming year. Between the New Year address and the guide to life we offer an interview with Thay on the theme of love-always at the heart of our practice.

May you New Year bring you peace

The Lotus Buds Team

NEW YEAR MESSAGE ON SUFFERING

"The New Year is a great opportunity to begin anew. Because many people look at the new year, the year to come, with hope. "I will do better next year," you promise yourself...Of course we have made mistakes. Of course we have been not very skillful. Of course we have made ourselves suffer. Of course we have made the people around us suffer. But that does not prevent us from beginning anew and to make things much better next year, or even the next moment. 🧘"

We should look at our suffering in such a way that the suffering can become a positive thing. Of course you have made some mistakes. You have been unskillful. All of us are the same. We always make mistakes. We are very often unskillful. But that does not prevent us from improving, from beginning anew, from transforming. The Buddha said that if you have not suffered, there is no way you can learn. If the Buddha has arrived at full

enlightenment, that is just because he had suffered a lot. The suffering was the path that helped him to arrive at full enlightenment, at full compassion, at full understanding. If you want to go to the Buddha, you need your suffering. Because if you do not know what is suffering, then there is no way you can come to the Buddha. 🧘

You have to come to the Buddha with all your suffering. Suffering is the path.



Image by muffinbasket

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By true suffering you can see the path of enlightenment, the path of compassion, the path of love. According to the teaching of the Buddha, it is by looking deeply into the nature of your sorrow, your pain, of your suffering, that you can discover the way out. If you have not suffered, you cannot go to the Buddha. You have no chance to touch peace, to touch love. It is exactly because of the fact that you have suffered, that now you have an opportunity to recognize the path leading to liberation, leading to love, leading to understanding.

Don't be discouraged when you see that in the past you have suffered and you have made other people suffer. If we know how to handle the suffering, we will be able to profit from our suffering. It is like an organic gardener. If she knows how to handle the garbage, she will get a lot of compost for the growth of her vegetables and her flowers. It is with the compost of the suffering that we can nourish the flower of understanding, of peace, of love. That is why we have to learn how to manage our suffering, how to cherish our suffering, how to transform our suffering."



Thich Nhat Hahn

Love and liberation

An interview with Thich Nhat Hanh

Melvin McLeod: Why is mindfulness the key to happiness?

Thich Nhat Hanh: Mindfulness brings concentration. Concentration brings insight. Insight liberates you from your ignorance, your anger, your craving. When you are free from your afflictions, happiness becomes possible. How can you be happy when you are overloaded with anger, ignorance, and craving? That is why the insight that can liberate you from these afflictions is the key to happiness. There are many conditions of happiness that are present, but people don't recognize them because they are not mindful. 🍵

When body and mind are together, you are fully present. You are fully alive and you can touch the wonders of life that are available in the here and the now. So you practice not only with your mind but with your body. Body and mind should be experienced as one thing, not two. On that ground, you see that everything you are looking for is already there. Whether it is enlightenment, nirvana, liberation, Buddha, dharma, sangha, or happiness, it is right there. In fact, that is the only place, the only moment, where you can find these things.

Conversely, when mind and body are separate, when we're lost in thought and are not in the present, we lead what you've described as a kind of corpse-like existence.

Maybe intellectually people know that they should live in the present moment, but the habit energy that has been there for a long time is always pushing them to rush around, so they have lost their capacity to be in the present moment in order to lead their life deeply. That is why the practice is important, and talking is not enough. You have to practice enough to really stop your running around so that you can establish yourself in the present moment. That is the very beginning of the practice: stopping. Stopping, looking deeply, and finding happiness and liberation—that is the Buddhist path. 🍵



Image by fmgbain

You emphasize taking joy and pleasure in the practice—the joy of walking on this Earth, the pleasure of taking an in-breath mindfully.

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Maybe it's our puritanical background, but I think it's easy for us to look on Buddhist practice as something that's supposed to be strict and joyless. It can almost feel wrong to associate religion with pleasure and celebration.

I think when people listen to the teachings of the four noble truths, they hear the words ill-being and suffering, and they think that Buddhism is only about suffering. But they don't know that the third noble truth is about happiness, the opposite of suffering. There is suffering, and there's a path leading to suffering.

But there is also the cessation of suffering, which means happiness, and there is a path leading to happiness. Maybe it would be good to put the second two noble truths first. The first truth would be happiness, and the second truth would be the path leading to happiness. Then the third truth would be suffering, and the fourth would be the causes of suffering.

When we are mindful we discover joy, but we also discover the pain and wounds within us, which is a difficult experience. What do you teach people about how to relate to that suffering when it arises? 

Suffering and happiness inter-are. We can recognize happiness only against the background of suffering. It's like when you recognize the white against the background of the black. Only if you have been hungry can you experience the joy of having something to eat. If you experience the suffering of war, you can recognize the value of peace. Otherwise, you don't appreciate peace, and you want to make war. So your experience of the suffering of war serves as the background for your happiness about peace. Therefore, to have some suffering is very important. You learn from suffering, and against that background, you can recognize happiness. 

Excerpted from the July 2010 issue of the Shambhala Sun

A brief guide to life...

'A few strong instincts and a few plain rules suffice us.' ~
Ralph Waldo Emerson

Life can be ridiculously complicated, if you let it. I suggest we simplify. Thich Nhat Hanh offers us the shortest guide to life you'll ever need:

"Smile, breathe, and go slowly."

If you live your life by those five words, you'll do pretty well. For those who need a little more guidance, I've distilled the lessons I've learned (so far) into a few guidelines, or reminders, really. And as always, these rules are meant to be broken. Life wouldn't be any fun if they weren't.

The brief guide

less TV, more reading
less shopping, more outdoors
less clutter, more space
less rush, more slowness
less consuming, more creating
less junk, more real food
less busywork, more impact
less driving, more walking
less noise, more solitude
less focus on the future, more on the present
less work, more play
less worry, more smiles
breathe

Image by anguila40

[Leo Babauta](http://zenhabits.net/brief-guide/)

<http://zenhabits.net/brief-guide/>

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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Notices...

Wednesday night Lotus Bud Sangha at the Buddhist library in Camperdown starts Feb 2nd 2011. All welcome.

Mindfulness Day in Hazelbrook, Blue Mountains on Sunday 6 March 2011, from 9.30am till 3pm. It will be held at the Steiner School, 83 Clearview Parade, Hazelbrook.

Sister Thuan Tien from Nhap Luu will be there and possibly Sister Can Nghiem will be too.

Please bring a plate of vegetarian food to share for lunch.

How to contribute

Email to: cbarker@uow.edu.au

Post to: Chris Barker, Faculty of Arts, Uni of Wollongong, 2500

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.

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.

Mindfulness Days at Nhap Luu (Entering the Stream) Meditation Centre
221 Maria's Lane
Beaufort VIC 3733
streammpc@gmail.com
www.plumvillageasia.org

Ian Roberts is a neighbour of Nhap Luu and a member of the Present Moment Sangha Melbourne 03 5349 2729