



THE LOTUS BUD

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Dear Sangha,

Our theme in this edition of the magazine is habits.

As Thay explains below, our practice involves developing good habits; habits that bring us joy and peace.

Actions have to be practiced in order to become habits, and Leo Babatua gives us some suggestions about developing habits which we can apply to our practices of mindful walking, eating, speaking, listening and so forth.

We wish you well in developing your good habits.

Best wishes

The Lotus Buds team

Taking Good Care of Our Habit Energies

My dear friends, we have several kinds of energies within ourselves. There are positive energies that we should cultivate, and there are negative energies that we should be able to transform.

We have habits. We have good habits and we have bad habits, and the practice of Buddhist meditation is to recognize our habits, in the form of energies, and to transform them or nourish them. 🍵

When you hear the telephone ring, or when you hear the sound of the bell, if you have the habit of the practice, you need no one to remind you. You just stop you thinking and enjoy breathing in and out. This is a good habit. In Plum Village all of us have that good habit. Every time we hear the bell. Every time we hear the clock playing the music, or the telephone ringing, we always naturally go back to

our breathing, and we enjoy our in-breath and out-breath and smile. We don't make any effort because it has become a habit, a good habit. We learn to do it in a way that makes the moment pleasant. There is no point of practicing if it is not pleasant. The practice should be pleasant. This is very important. When you practice listening to the bell, the practice should be pleasant and nourishing. 🍵



Image by Salin

Otherwise, why should we practice? The same is true with the practice of sitting, walking, eating in silence, and so on. There are many people who practice sitting meditation, walking meditation, sharing a silent meal, but not everyone enjoys the practice.

If you don't enjoy your practice, it means you are not doing it the way you should do it. The question is not to practice or not to practice. The question is to practice in such a way that you get the healing, the transformation, and the joy of the practice. In our tradition the practice of meditation is seen as a source of nourishment. 🍌

So it is very important that we make the practice pleasant, joyful and nourishing. If while sitting you suffer, then you should know that your way of sitting is not correct. If you are sharing a silent meal and you don't feel happy, it means that your way of eating is not correct. Something has to be corrected in your way of practicing, your way of looking at the practice, your way of conducting the practice. We have brothers and sisters around, we can always consult them and ask them for their experiences. They will show you. Many of us have been in the practice for a long time and we can help you to practice with more joy.

We have to practice with intelligence. Suppose we have the habit of walking very quickly, very fast. Suddenly, when we arrive at Plum Village, we are requested to slow down. We feel it is not pleasant. Since everyone is walking slowly, you have to slow down and you don't feel happy. So your practice is a cause for your suffering.

Walk slowly, yes, but walk in such a way that it makes you happy, relaxed and calm, that is the point. We have to ask how to walk slowly and yet not to suffer and to enjoy the walking. So it requires some understanding, some insight, some practice, to enjoy walking meditation. You are facing a kind of habit, the habit of walking very quickly, running. That habit is rooted very deeply in our daily life. Maybe our ancestors used to walk very quickly and they have transmitted to us that way of walking. Perhaps many generations of people have believed that happiness is somewhere there in the future. 🍌

We have to go there in order to be happy. Happiness is not possible right now, right here. That kind of belief, conscious or unconscious, has become very strong in us. We believe happiness is impossible here and now. That is why there is a kind of energy pushing us to run, to run all our life, searching for a time, a place, when happiness is possible.

So we understand why we get caught in that kind of habit, always running. We are determined to stop, to transform that habit, and we learn how to make steps that can allow us to touch life deeply in each moment. With that kind of learning and practice we will be able to walk more slowly and we will begin to enjoy touching the earth with our feet, combining our steps with our in-breath and out-breath. We just feel wonderful to walk like that, walking without any intention of arriving. That is new for us. We have to learn to develop the new habit. And as we get the energy of the new habit, we will enjoy walking.

So the practice is to recognize the old habit, the negative habit, the bad habit, to recognize the energy of our habits and smile to them. And also to cultivate the new habit, the good habit, until the new habit begins to produce energy. When we have the new kind of energy, we don't have to make any effort, we just enjoy listening to the bell, we just enjoy walking slowly, we just enjoy eating in silence, because we like it. We get the nourishment, the joy, of doing so. Suddenly, the practice becomes pleasant, joyful, nourishing. 🍌

Thich Nhat Hahn

(extract from Dharma Talk July 16, 1997 in Plum Village; found at: www.abuddhistlibrary.com)

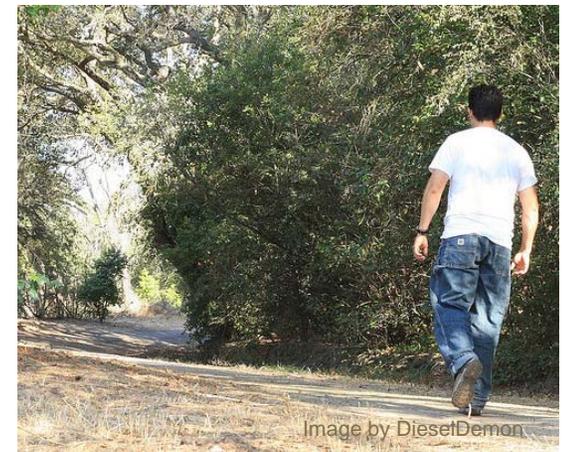


Image by DieselDemon

The Anatomy of Remembering Habits

So, how do I deal with my own habits? The same way most people do, I suspect. I do them without thinking. That's what makes them habits. Of course, in order for them to become habits, I have to concentrate on them and be reminded of them.

Let's take my habit of putting things away when I'm done with them. I don't have that on a to-do list. When I finish with something, I pause and look at my mess, and clean it up, mostly without thinking. However, I wasn't born with that habit. I learned it, and had to focus on it for at least a month before it became something I didn't have to think about. 

That's the same with any of our habits: brushing our teeth, getting dressed, taking a shower, eating, smoking - we don't think about them. It took awhile for them to become ingrained habits, though.

The key to not having to remember habits: a trigger. Habits are triggered by an external event. That event could be a habit list (although you'll first have to develop the habit of checking the list), but more often it's something we do every day.

For example, I wake up at 4 a.m., after being triggered by an alarm clock. My getting up triggers my habit of starting my coffee and drinking water. Now, I'll use the drinking water as a trigger to exercise.

Each thing triggers something after it. The same is true of any ingrained habit: there's an external trigger. 

The 6 Rules of Remembering Habits

So, after examining the above reflections, here are the rules for remembering habits each day (or each week):

1. Identify a trigger. In order for a habit to be a habit, you need to have a trigger. For example, you might brush your teeth after showering - the shower is the trigger for the brushing. And you know you're going to shower each day, so you know you will brush your teeth. When do you want to do your habit? What do you do at that time of day, every day? If you want to do something weekly, is there a weekly trigger that could precede it?

2. Focus on developing the habit. Once you've identified the trigger, you have to do the habit every single time you do the trigger, without exception, in order for it to become deeply ingrained. Focus on developing that habit for one month. Make it something easy, as you are more likely to not do the habit if it is difficult.

3. Only focus on that one habit. I've said this many times before, but if you are trying to establish more than one habit at a time, your focus will be diluted. It's much harder. If you're good at developing habits, you can get away with 2 or 3 at a time. But most of us aren't good at it, so focus on that one habit, for a month.

After the month, you can work on a new habit. This may seem difficult, as you probably have a bunch of habits you'd like to adopt, but think long term: after a year, you'll have 12 great new habits.

4. Log it. If the habit is important, you should log it. Make the logging easy, and do it immediately after the activity. Don't put it off. This will make the habit more deeply ingrained.

5. Report it to others. Tell others you are going to do this habit for a month, and then report to them daily. If others are expecting your report, you will be more likely to stick to it. The more public pressure you put on yourself, the better. Put it on your blog, or join an online forum or some other group, have a coach, or email all your friends and family each day.

6. Once it's ingrained, you don't need a list. If a habit is firmly ingrained, and strongly attached to its trigger, you won't need to put it on your task list or any other list. You will just do it once the trigger goes off. And that's the payoff: good habits, without any of the thinking. 

Leo Babatua

Found at: <http://zenhabits.net/6-rules-for-dealing-with-habits-vs-tasks/>

Image by HaPe_Gera

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 All welcome.

Please note your calendars for **October Long Weekend** Health Retreat - Waterfall, Sydney and the following weekend the **Retreat in Nhap Luu Centre** - Beaufort, Victoria.

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
Contact: 0431 470 172
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www.plumvillageasia.org

Ian Roberts is a neighbour of Nhap Luu and a member of the Richmond Sangha in Melbourne
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