



# THE LOTUS BUD

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*Dear Friends,*

Many of us were raised to work hard at tasks in order to get something else. We worked hard on homework, in order to get good grades. We got good grades, in order to get into better schools. We worked hard at jobs, in order to advance, be recognized, or earn more money. We moved down a track laid down by the expectations of our parents, our teachers, and of the world immediately around us. 🙏

Some of us were not able to move along the tracks as fast or as far as others, and often we felt like failures. Others of us sped along, getting reward after reward, but then we realize one day we feel hollow or empty inside. All our efforts have not brought us happiness or contentment. Mindfulness meditation offers a very different approach to life. We are urged to 'be here now', to become present to our moment by moment experience of our life and to the world around us. We practice conscious breathing, sitting meditation, or

walking meditation because when we do them we feel alive, in touch with life. Ironically, when we let go of our intense desire for future rewards, our life transforms. New possibilities appear. 🙏

Recently, I heard Thich Nhat Hanh address these issues in terms of the eight fold path of the Buddhist way. The sixth element, samyak pradhana in Sanskrit, is usually translated as right effort. Thich Nhat Hanh prefers the term right diligence. For Thay, efforts can tire us out. When we practice, we should feel energized, not tired. His way of practice is continuous, regular practice, not intensive, effortful practice. An excerpt from Thich Nhat Hanh's Dharma Talk is on the following page. Peace and joy to you, 🙏

*Mitchell Ratner*  
Still Water Sangha ☐  
[www.stillwatermpc.org/  
dharma/dh20090702.htm](http://www.stillwatermpc.org/dharma/dh20090702.htm)

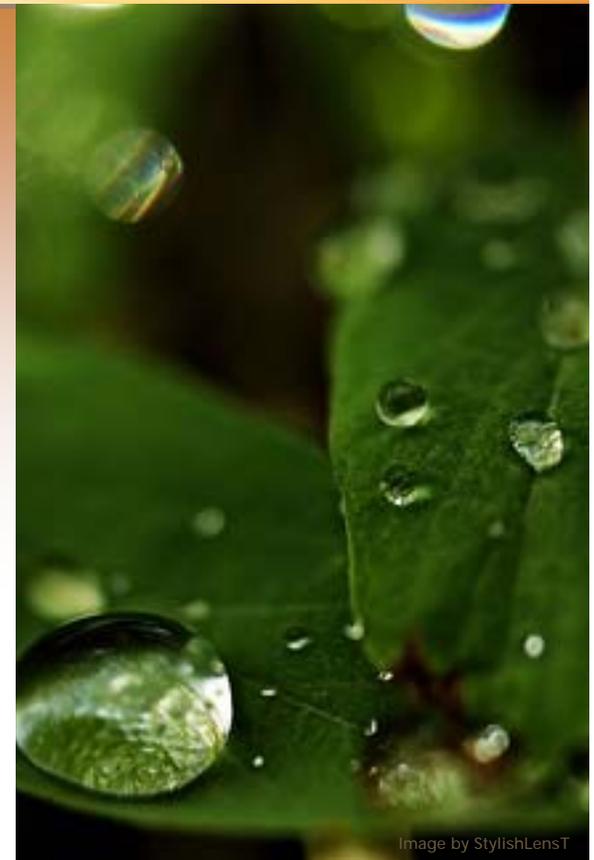


Image by StylishLensT



## Right diligence

From a Dharma Talk by Thich Nhat Hanh, June 11, 2009.

I prefer the term right diligence rather than right effort. Making efforts can make you tired, but when you are diligent, you don't need to be tired.

I don't want intensive practice, I want regular practice, diligent practice. There are those of us who practice very intensively for a few weeks and then after that abandon the practice. But there are those of us who practice regularly, not intensive but continuously, that will bring good results. That is why I prefer the word diligence. 🍌

Why do you continue to do it? Because I like it. That is a good answer. Because I enjoy doing that. That applies to the practice. If you don't enjoy the practice you have to make an effort, you get tired, and finally you abandon the practice.

You continue to do it because you like it. It is not because you have to do it. Why did you practice sitting meditation. The best answer is: because I like it. Why do you practice walking meditation? Because I like it...

That is true diligence, right diligence. We know that right diligence brings well-being. The practices of mindful walking, mindful breathing, smiling, bring well-being, happiness. 🍌

The Buddha after his enlightenment continued to practice. So practicing is not to become a Buddha. The Buddha is already

a Buddha, why does he have to practice? Because he likes it. He likes breathing like that, he likes walking like that, he likes sitting like that, he likes eating like that, because it brings him well being, not because he wants to become a buddha.

So when you ask the Buddha: Dear Buddha, why do you continue to practice sitting meditation, walking meditation, because you are already a Buddha. Because I like it, not because I want to become a Buddha. So that is the best answer: Because I like it.

But there are those of us who do not practice right diligence. They are very diligent, but their diligence is wrong diligence. Wrong diligence can bring ill-being. They are caught in their work. They become workaholic. They don't have time to take care of themselves. 🍌

They don't have time to take care of their beloved ones. They are sucked into the work. They are caught in their work. They cannot leave their computer.

[Someone like that is] always reading the Wall Street Journal instead of looking at his children. At breakfast, instead of looking and smiling at his children, he holds the Wall Street Journal and hides himself from his family. He is totally caught and sucked into his work. He is very diligent. He wants success as a businessman. He always thinks of the value of his stocks. He goes up and down with his stocks. He is very diligent, but that is not right diligence. He is working so hard. He is making a lot of effort. He is very diligent in his work. But there is no happiness. 🍌

## Watering the seeds of joy

An essential part of any mindfulness practice or spiritual transformation is **learning to water the seeds of joy**. It is important to take back our lives by participating in things that bring us joy.

I remember Thay telling a story about how a visiting friend suggested that it really was a waste of Thay's time to be gardening and growing lettuce. He should be using his time, the friend said, to write poetry and books for others to read, because what he had to say was very important. Thay's response was that if he did not grow lettuce, he could not cultivate the energy of mindfulness that produces the poems and books he writes. In other words, enlightenment is not separate from growing lettuce, if that is what brings you joy and wonder and the ability to be present in the moment. We all should think about what activities bring us in touch with the tenderness and mystery of life so that you fall into a space of joy and gratitude when participating in those activities. 🧘

These are the doors to a mindfulness practice. When we enter into any activity with our whole heart, we awaken, deepen, and sustain the contemplative experience in the present moment. Our Zen activities can be sports, gardening, cooking, being in nature, or any activity that resonates for us personally and nurtures a sense of faith, joy, and gratitude. If we are faithful

to the practice and the things that bring us joy, our practice will be faithful to us. And when we participate in the things that we enjoy deeply, we're participating in our own enlightenment.

Now here's the ironic and paradoxical thing about this—if you wait until you feel like doing the things that bring you joy, given the frantic pace at which most of us are living, you won't do them. So this is the trick I've learned and I urge all of you to do this. I bought my calendar in July or August and I put in it all the things that I want to do in the year. Now I can schedule everything else around dates and they are no longer at the mercy of the things that just come up. It's the most important trick that I've discovered for making sure that the things that matter the most are not at the mercy of the things that matter the least. 🧘

Mindfulness can also be found in the mundane activities of our daily life. It's the old Zen lesson that enlightenment can be found in how we chop wood and carry water. It can also be found in how we drive, how we do the dishes, and especially in how we engage with others. For example, when you do the dishes, can you feel the water or you are you lost in thought? This is how we miss our life, by not being aware of what we are doing in the present moment. If we can be truly present to our own lives, then we can find the courage to have our hearts broken open in love, rather than protected. We can enjoy feeling deeply

and to continually work on the capacity to understand and love others. We can do this by simply planting the intention to do so in our minds and hearts. Our intention always sets the course. We can simplify things a great deal by simply asking ourselves if what we are saying or doing in any given moment is making us kinder, more understanding, and more loving. 🧘

*Cheri Maple has worked as a police officer and detective in Madison, Wisconsin, Wisconsin Assistant Attorney General, and head of Probation and Parole for the Wisconsin Department of Corrections. In 2008, she was ordained a dharma teacher by Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh, her long-time spiritual teacher.*



Image by Christopher Gray

## 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.

### Mindfulness Day

Peace Park, Oxford Falls (opposite Oxford Falls Grammar School)  
Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> February, 9am to 3pm  
Bring a vegetarian plate to share  
Suggested donation: \$10  
Contact: Ann Munroe 0414 526 503

## 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](mailto:streammpc@gmail.com) [www.plumvillageasia.org](http://www.plumvillageasia.org)

Ian Roberts is a neighbour of Nhap Luu and a member of the Present Moment Sangha  
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