



THE LOTUS BUD

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Dear Sangha,

This is the time of year when many people make new year's resolutions, and although we might disparage the term, the idea of intention is important in Buddhism. We may call it a vow or a resolution or a commitment or an intention- perhaps in Thay's tradition we might call it 'beginning anew'- either way now might be a good time to commit to strengthen your practice. 🧘

In each moment, we possess the power and freedom to change. The beginning of a new year is an excellent reminder of this. We're prompted to reflect upon our goals, accomplishments and lessons learned.

*Let joy be your
New Year's resolution...*

It's not often in our fast-paced world that the pause is a national norm or embraced. This is truly a unique time. In the new year let us seize this opportunity to stop, breathe and make intentional decisions that are truly aligned with our hearts.

So here is a Lotus Buds suggestion for a commitment in the coming year which is congruent with the 'Spirit of Christmas' and the practice of mindfulness:

'Everything you do today, let it be filled with joy and serenity by being awake in the present moment.' 🧘

Thich Nhat Hanh



Cultivating the Mind of Love

We all have the tendency to struggle in our bodies and in our minds. We believe that happiness is possible only in the future. The realization that we have already arrived, that we don't have to travel any further, that we are already here, can give us peace and joy. The conditions for our happiness are already sufficient. We only need to allow ourselves to be in the present moment, and we will be able to touch them. What are we looking for to be happy? Everything is already here. We do not need to put an object in front of us to run after, believing that until we get it, we cannot be happy. That object is always in the future, and we can never catch up to it. We are already in the Pure Land, the Kingdom of God. We are already a Buddha. We only need to wake up and realize we are already here 🍵

This silence is called 'great joy'

A teaching by Thich Nhat Hanh on the truth beyond our usual truths.

There are two kinds of truth, conventional truth and absolute truth, but they are not opposites. They are part of a continuum. There is a classic Buddhist *gatha*:

All formations are impermanent. They are subject to birth and death. But remove the notions of birth and death, and this silence is called great joy. 🍵

This beautiful poem has only twenty-six words, but it sums up all of the Buddha's teaching. It is one of the greatest poems of humanity. If you are a composer, please put it to music and make it into a song. The last two lines should sound like thundering silence, the silencing of all speculation, of all philosophies, of all notions and ideas.

The *gatha* begins in the realm of conventional truth and ends in the realm of absolute truth. The first line describes reality as we usually perceive it. 'All formations are impermanent.' This is something concrete that we notice as soon as we start paying attention. The five elements that make up our sense of personhood, 'form, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, consciousness' are flowing and changing day and night. We can feel their impermanence and so we are tempted to say that the first two lines of this *gatha* are true.

But the danger of this statement is that we may believe that formations are real and

impermanence is an absolute truth. And we may use that kind of truth as a weapon in order to fight against those who don't agree with our ideas. 'Formations' is a notion, an idea. 'Impermanence' is another notion. Neither is more true than the other. When you say, 'All formations are impermanent,' you are indirectly confirming their permanence. When you confirm the existence of something, you are also implying the existence of its opposite. When you say the right exists, you have to accept the existence of the left. When you confirm that something is 'high', you're saying something else is 'low'. Impermanence becomes a notion that opposes the notion of permanence. So though perhaps it tried to escape, the first two lines of the *gatha* are still in the realm of conventional, relative truth. 🍵

To reach the absolute truth, the ultimate truth, you need to release the conventional truth found there. There's a Chinese term that means halfway truths and another that means all-the-way, hitting-the-bottom truths. The first two lines are a halfway truth and the third and fourth lines try to remove what we learned in the first two. When the notions are removed, then the perfect silence, the extinction of all notions, the destruction of all pairs of opposites, is called great joy. That is the teaching of absolute truth, of nirvana. What does nirvana mean? It is absolute happiness. It's not a place you can go; it's a fruit that you can have wherever you are. It's already inside us. The wave doesn't have to seek out the water. Water is what

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Thich Nhat Hanh, *Cultivating the Mind of Love: the Practice of Looking Deeply in the Mahayana Buddhist Tradition*, Parallax Press, 1996

The Do Plan

Of course you have made resolutions before and not stuck to them. Why not try 'The Do Plan':

Learn by doing.

Don't learn by reading. Of course, a little reading is helpful, but if you read, just read a little, then do.

Write down your fears.

If you're having trouble doing, fear is stopping you. Write your fears down. The writing is an action.

Now do away your fears in small steps.

Just do 2 minutes of it. By doing something in such small steps, we learn that the fears aren't true – that we can do it and not completely fail.

See failure as a learning tool.

We're deathly afraid of failing, because we see this as a statement that we suck. But it's not. Failure is an indication of something we can learn. Failure is a necessary step in learning

Adjust, and do some more.

The process is act, fail, learn, adjust, then act again. Once you've failed at something, figure out how you can adjust, then try again. 🧘

(Adapted from: <http://zenhabits.net/do/>)

the wave has to realize as her own foundation of being.* 🧘

It is crucial to look deeply at your thoughts and your views. What are you holding on to? Whether you are an artist or a businessperson, a parent or a teacher, you have your views about how to live your life, how to help other people, how to make your country prosperous, and so on. When you are attached to these views, to the idea of right and wrong, then you may be get caught. When your thinking is caught in these views, then you create misunderstanding, anger, and violence. That is what you are becoming in this very moment.

When you are mindful of this and can look deeply, you can produce thoughts that are full of love and understanding. You can make yourself and the world around you suffer less. 🧘

You are not static. You are the life that you are becoming. Because 'to be' means to be something: happy, unhappy, light or heavy, sky or earth. We have to learn to see being as becoming. The quality of your being depends on the object of your being. That is why when you hear Rene Descartes' famous statement 'I think, therefore I am', you have to ask, 'you are what?' Of course you are your own thinking - and your happiness or your sorrow depends very much on the quality of your thinking. So you are your view, you are your thinking, you are your speech, you are your action, and these things are your continuation. You are becoming now, you are being reborn now in every second. You don't need to

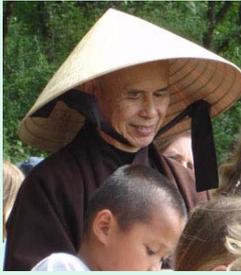
come to death in order to be reborn. You are reborn in every moment; you have to see your continuation in the here and the now.

I don't care at all what happens to me when I die. That's why I have a lot of time to care about what is happening to me in the here and the now. When I walk, I want to enjoy every step I take. I want freedom and peace and joy in every step. So joy and peace and lightness are what I produce in that moment. I have inherited it and I pass it on to other people. If someone sees me walking this way and decides to walk mindfully for him or herself, then I am reborn in him or in her right away - that's my continuation. That's what is happening to me in the here and the now. And if I know what is happening to me in the here and the now, I don't need to ask the question, 'What will happen to me after this body disintegrates?' There is no 'before' and 'after', just as there is no birth and death. We can be free of these notions in this very moment, filled with the great joyful silence of all that is. 🧘

http://www.shambhalasun.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3124&Itemid=247 ↪ Unified Buddhist Church. Used with permission of Parallax Press. As published in the September 2007

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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Notices...

Wednesday night Lotus Bud Sangha at the Buddhist library in Camperdown.

All welcome.



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
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Beaufort VIC 3733
streammpc@gmail.com www.plumvillageasia.org