



THE LOTUS BUD

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Dear Sangha,

Each day, our culture sends innumerable messages urging us to consume. Yet we can see that many human consumption patterns threaten the air we breathe, the forests we admire, the other species we profess to love, and even the ability of less fortunate people to earn a living wage under adequate working conditions. Despite this we struggle to curb our desire to consume even more, even when we've sensed that compulsive consuming thwarts—rather than enhances—our ability to live happily and to be truly free.

Our habit energies know us well, and we often feel stuck in them. Think of all the energy we expend on this never-ending, never satisfied cycle of appeasing our wants! The teachings of the Buddha look deeply into the connection between desire and suffering. In particular the Second Noble Truth observes that grasping and clinging are often a direct cause of this suffering. We may well find that it is unhealthy to incessantly feed the flames of desire, yet we do. 🙏

The Fifth Mindfulness Training: Nourishment and Healing

Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful consumption, I am committed to cultivating good health, both physical and mental, for myself, my family, and my society by practicing mindful eating, drinking, and consuming. I will practice looking deeply into how I consume the Four Kinds of Nutriments, namely edible foods, sense impressions, volition, and consciousness.

I am determined not to gamble, or to use alcohol, drugs, or any other products which contain toxins, such as certain websites, electronic games, TV programs, films, magazines, books, and conversations. 🙏

I will practice coming back to the present moment to be in touch with the refreshing, healing and nourishing elements in me and around me, not letting regrets and sorrow drag me back into the past nor letting anxieties, fear, or craving pull me out of the present moment.

I am determined not to try to cover up loneliness, anxiety, or other suffering by losing myself in consumption. I will contemplate interbeing and consume in a way that preserves peace, joy, and well-being in my body and consciousness, and in the collective body and consciousness of my family, my society and the Earth. 🙏

Mindful consumption

What we need is transformation of our consciousness, our idea of happiness, our lifestyle. Not only are those of us in the West attached to a high-consumption lifestyle, in Asian countries people are very much doing the same. We like to buy new and exciting things. We are seeking for happiness, but there is suffering inside of us. There is a big vacuum inside of us. That is why we are looking to fill up that vacuum inside. That is our situation. We don't feel at peace with ourselves. We think that if we can buy new and exciting things we can then forget the vacuum inside. That does not seem to have an effect. We are buying more and more, but we do not feel the kind of fulfilment we need. We need love, we need peace, but we don't know how to recreate peace, so we are looking for other things to cover up the suffering and the vacuum inside of us. 🙏

Of course there must be some sort of lifestyle that can help us create love and joy and we don't have to go to the market to buy things. Unless you know how to create that kind of life you continue to go and buy things. Unless you know how to create that kind of life then you will continue to go and buy these things.

Reading the fifth mindfulness training we can see mindful consumption is the way out. All of five mindfulness trainings are part of the answer to the question about our attachment to a high consumption lifestyle.

This is the key practice: consumption. We cannot get out of this difficult despairing situation unless we make a resolution in the way we consume. I will be aware of what I eat and consume through my senses and what intentions and mental state I cultivate in my consciousness. 🙏

Can you be both rich and spiritual? Do you need to be rich, do you need to make money? We need money, but not to consume things. We need it to organise trips, to hire a bus, to build a meditation hall. When we go to a city we need some money in order to buy the tickets for our monastic brothers and sisters because we know that transformation in a retreat would require enough teachers and monistic practitioners.

But we seek financial support not for buying new and exciting things, but to have more place for practitioners to stay during their retreat and to bring more monastic to retreats, to build a meditation hall and quarters, but that has always come if our spiritual practice brings fruit and then there will be friends who will help us on the financial side. But it is very clear that spiritual practice can bring a lot of happiness, love and fulfilment and you don't need a lot of money to be happy, so this is no longer a problem. If there is some financial help then more people will benefit from the practice. If we are limited by financial conditions then the number of practitioners will not increase, but we do not sacrifice our spiritual life for financial realisation. 🙏

Thich Nhat Hanh



Image by AndyCoulson

Suburban simplicity

For some time now I have been edging towards a simpler style of life. In part this is because I want to spend less time in paid employment and in part because I want to live a more sustainable lifestyle. I think it is clear that we in the economically advanced world cannot go on living as we do without dire consequences. That said, I don't live on a farm and I don't live in the country, let alone in the wilderness. I live in a coastal town in NSW which has many of the characteristics of suburbia. So here I am in my suburban house with my suburban garden aiming for simplicity. And that is not such a bad thing. We must all do what we can where we are. Here are some broad-brush reasons why I want to live more simply. 🧘

More time, less work. Life is short and time is precious. I want to spend less time in paid employment doing things that other people want me to do and more purposeful activity that I want to do (which we may also call work). Happiness is founded on the meaningful life and on my death bed I can't imagine thinking, oh, I wish I had spent more time at the office.

A less cluttered mind. A busy life leads to a busy mind that is soon filled up with swirling thoughts that generated agitation and stress. Rumination is a well-researched feature of anxiety and depression. I want to quieten my monkey-mind (as Zen calls it) and live more mindfully in the present moment.

By mindful I mean paying attention to one's experience in the present moment without judgement.

Spend less, waste less. As I spend less time in paid employment- and especially as I get older- I will have less income and with less income I will need to spend less money. However, it is not simply a matter of needing to spend less but of a commitment to a not owning as much stuff and not creating as much waste. Too much stuff clutters one's life and depletes the earth resources while waste seems unethical in the context of world where so many people even the basics of life.

Good health. A simple life offers the opportunity for a healthier life. As I see it simplicity means growing food where possible; cooking and eating simple organic food; undertaking walking, gardening, cycling and other forms of activity; reducing chemicals in ones' environment; and spending time outside in nature.

Self-reliance. A simpler life implies greater self-reliance. On a macro level climate change and the peak oil crisis suggest that long term survival may depend on the capacity for self-reliance while on a micro level self-reliance fuels personal confidence and resilience. Although it is now something of an old-fashioned notion, self-reliance builds virtuous 'character'. 🧘

Nurture relationships. I hope that a simpler life will enable be to nurture my relationships more. Relationships take

time and energy that tends to be in short supply when one is working full time in a busy job. I am aware that relationships with others are an important part of a happy and purposeful life. I am also aware that I don't put as much effort into relationships with others as I could, or indeed as I think I should, for my own well-being as well as that of others. I have certainly got better at this in recent years- but this is still a domain of my life I could work on.

A flourishing life. I prefer the concept of flourishing to that of happiness- which sometimes suggest short term feelings- because like a flower in the garden a life that flourishes may still experience good days and bad days, days of drought and days of rain, and yet because it is nurtured, fed and cared for in the right soil conditions, this plant-life flourishes over its life span. All the happiness/ well-being research available now shows us that a less stressful, more meaningful, healthier, and mindful life that is embedded in network of significant relationships is a life more able to flourish. 🧘

*Chris Barker
True Dwelling of the Mind*

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

Sydney, Inner West - John Barclay
barclayjohn0@gmail.com

Sutherland Area - Lorraine Curtain
loricurtain@optusnet.com.au

Northern Beaches - Dharma Boat Sangha
Andrew Condell raandrops@gmail.com

Blue Mountains - David Moore and Ann Le
edenimages@bigpond.com

Lismore Area - Tony Mills and Jenny Pittman
fivemountains@hotmail.com

Caboolture Qld - Joyce and Rhys Davies
rhystdavies@yahoo.com.au

www.lotusbudsangha.org

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Coming events...

Rose Ceremony, 11 Aug 9am – 3pm at
49 Ferngrove Rd Canley Heights.

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A retreat will be held from 21–23
September, at St Joseph Conference
Centre, 30 Tyson Road, Bringelly.

The monastic delegation leading the
retreat will comprise Brother Phap Kham
& Brother Phap Dung from *Plum Village
Hongkong*, and the sisters from *Entering
the Stream Monastery* in Victoria.

We would love to hear from you.
We want the The Lotus Bud to be a
place for sharing our experiences
and building the Sangha; so why
not write a short piece about your
experiences with mindfulness ?

Email: cbarker@uow.edu.au

Post: 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
Sydney, Inner West

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.

Meditation and monthly
Mindfulness Days at
Canley Heights

Southwest Sydney - 7.30pm
Friday Night Meditation and
Monthly Mindfulness Days.
49 Ferngrove Rd Canley
Heights.

Mindfulness Days at Nhap Luu
(Entering the Stream)
Meditation Centre
221 Maria's Lane
Beaufort VIC 3733
streammpc@gmail.com
www.plumvillageasia.org
0431 470 172