



THE LOTUS BUD

Magazine of Mindful Living ~ Issue No 53, September 2013

Dear Sangha,

In this edition of *The Lotus Bud* we explore the idea that we have enough in our lives to be happy right now if we were to let go of our expectations of how life should be. What often prevents us from being happy is our notion of what happiness is and what we need to be happy. Perhaps to be happy we need to learn to recognise and let go of our fixed ideas of how things should be.

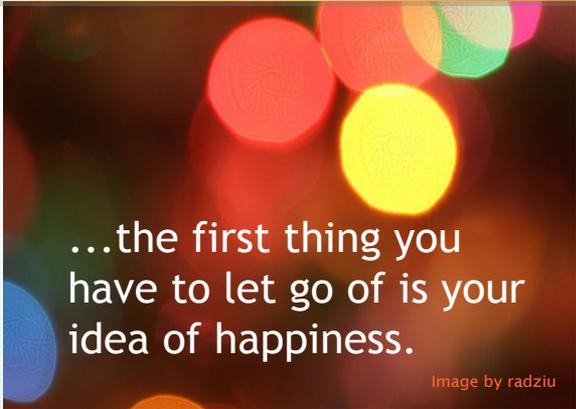
More than enough

It is possible to live happily in the here and now. So many conditions of happiness are available—more than enough for you to be happy right now. You don't have to run into the future in order to get more. 🙏

Thich Nhat Hanh

We may have a habit within ourselves of looking for happiness elsewhere than in the here and the now. We may lack the capacity to realize that happiness is possible in the here and now, that we already have enough conditions to be happy right now. The habit energy is to believe that happiness is not possible now, and that we have to run to the future in order to get some more conditions for happiness. That prevents us from being established in the present moment, from getting in touch with the wonders of life that are available in the here and now. That is why happiness is not possible.

Everyone seems to have an idea about happiness. We believe that happiness is only possible if we “get this” or “get rid of that”, and because of that we are not happy. Looking around we see many people who don't have “it” and are happy; and those that cannot get rid of “it” and are still happy. So, the first



...the first thing you have to let go of is your idea of happiness.

Image by radziu

thing you have to let go of is your idea of happiness. You may think that a diploma is crucial for your happiness; that a position in society is crucial to happiness. But according to this practice, the more you let go, the happier you become.”

Say you have a notion of happiness, an idea about what will make you happy. That idea has its roots in you and your environment. The idea tells you what conditions you need in order to be

happy. You've entertained the idea for ten or twenty years, and now you realize that your idea of happiness is making you suffer. There may be an element of delusion, anger, or craving in it. On the other hand, you know that you have other kinds of experiences: moments of joy, release, or true love. You recognize these as moments of real happiness. When you have had a moment of real happiness, it becomes easier to release the objects of your craving, because you are developing the insight that these objects will not make you happy.

Letting go is a practice; it's an art. One day, when you're strong enough and determined enough, you'll let go of the afflictions that make you suffer. With the energy of mindfulness and concentration, we can look deeply and discover the roots of the idea, the feeling, the emotion, the desire. 🧘

Answers from the Heart (2009) by Thich Nhat Hanh. Parallax Press, Berkeley, California



Image by I-Man-10N

One day The Buddha was out in the field with a group of monks. A very worried man approached them and asked, "Venerable monks have you seen my cows passing this way?"

Buddha said, "What cows?"

The man answered, "This morning I had 5 cows and they ran away. And insects have eaten up my sesame plantation! How can I go on without my cows and my sesame plantation?"

Out of compassion the Buddha said, "Dear friend we have not seen your cows, but you may look for them in the other direction."

After the man left, The Buddha said to the monks, "You are very lucky you don't have any cows to lose."

They are happy because they do not have any cows. Each of us has a number of cows, we should write down the cows on a sheet of paper: they may be a house, a person, a position... Look deeply to see what cow you can let go of now. According to The Buddha, the more cows you let go, the happier you become." 🧘

Let go of attachment

Letting go gives us freedom and freedom is the only condition for happiness. *Thich Nhat Hanh*

A wise old soul once told me that I needed to practice not being attached. At that point in my life, I hadn't discovered for myself what being attached looked or felt like. I was doing the "normal" things a "normal" person does. I had gotten through school, failed at a few relationships, bought a house, got a car payment and a cat, and was building a business. Life was just going along, seemingly building on experiences and things as the years went by. I was building the life I thought would make me happy.

Then, like magic, life started to give me opportunities to discover for myself what those smart people were really teaching about attachment. 🙏

Two years ago, I lost my house. I remember my mother asking me if I was really sad to be losing the house where both of my children were born. I was embarrassed that the thought hadn't even crossed my mind. I thought there was something wrong with me that I hadn't put any significance on that.

Ah Ha! My first discovery about attachment: I had the choice to give significance to any circumstance. I could choose to make it mean something that caused me to suffer, or not.

I thought, "Hey, I've got this un-attached thing mastered." Right.

Very recently I was blind-sided with the possibility of losing the business that I have spent the last 15 years creating. I started looking from every tool and teaching I had ever learned about dealing with challenging situations. I remembered the lesson on attachment. I actually found the notes I had written down, a gift from that wise old soul, so many years ago.

He had said, "Attachment is the emotional dependence we put on things, or people, with some degree of our survival interwoven into the precious thing we hold so dear."

Ugh. I guess that means my business too. That thought annoyed me, and I was vehemently resisting even considering that. I'd gotten angry at the circumstances that caused this to happen. I'd made myself wrong for putting so much into something that seemed to be real, but turned out to be quite elusive. I played the victim and wondered why in the world this was happening to me.

And then I realized that all of that chatter in my head, and all of that upset and suffering was a function of me throwing a childish little (ok big) temper tantrum because things weren't going the way I wanted them to go. The universe was not aligning itself around what I wanted. 🙏

And then I had another thought: maybe all of that stuff I did and built, to have the life I wanted, wasn't it. What if I *didn't* know better?



Image by "Caveman Chuck" Coker

What if what I needed to get what I really want in life—peace and happiness—looked different than what I had imagined?

That was worth pondering. If I was brutally honest with myself, my business didn't bring me real joy; it was just something I was good at. I thought, "Wow, maybe this is the opportunity to really pursue what I want to do with the rest of my life! What if the universe was just gently pushing me out of my comfortable nest, and forcing me to fly?" And thus I have discovered: Sometimes the dreams we chase and the life we design for ourselves really do provide us with happiness and peace, and yet sometimes it takes letting go, and having faith like we have faith in our next breath... 🙏

<http://tinybuddha.com/blog/let-go-of-attachment-you-can-be-happy-even-if-things-change/>

Cherie DiNoia

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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Coming events...

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
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