



# THE LOTUS BUD

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## *Dear Sangha,*

In this edition of *The Lotus Bud* we explore the value in our practice of 'not knowing', and with it a questioning of the truth of our perceptions.

## **The value of not knowing**

Whatever the situation that we face, when we accept that we 'don't know' (what will happen, what we should do etc.) we are open to what actually does happen in a non-judgmental way, and are thus able to be with it in an open flexible fashion. To not know, to put aside our certainty about how things are, or how they should be, is to be open to what is rather than impose upon it what we believe or hope or want it to be. It is a form of acceptance and non-attachment.

With regard to our perceptions of a given situation we might, as Thich

Nhat Hanh's suggests, ask ourselves, 'are you sure?' Often it is our beliefs about how things are or should be that cause us to suffer. Whenever we hear the word 'should' it is wise to beware for we will surely suffer and /or cause others to suffer. 

Our 'not-knowing' leads us to question our beliefs, attitudes and our actions. We must ask ourselves what kind of human being we want to be. This includes questions about us as individuals - who we want to be - and questions about our relations to fellow human beings - how shall we treat others?

This does not mean that we have no values or that we cannot act in the world. We cannot escape values and we will need to act. When we act we will act according to our values, so it is just as well to know what our values are. And Buddhism clearly teaches the values of peace, contentment, compassion, non-violence, and the Buddha nature of all beings.

We need then to live with the paradoxical combination of acceptance / not knowing with a commitment to our values. It is not necessary or possible to 'solve' this 'problem' in some formal philosophical way. It is more a question of practice and strategy, of knowing when to not-know and when to act. And in that lies wisdom.

This means stopping and calming ourselves, doing nothing, so that we can accept what is and not impose our beliefs on the world or be driven by unconsidered emotional response (like anger). The great value of not knowing is being still with what is. Not knowing comes first. 

As we sit with 'not-knowing' we may then come to 'understand' what we need to do; that which is in line with our values.

*Chris/ True Dwelling of the Mind*

## On not knowing

What do I mean by not knowing? Not knowing is simply not being attached to any particular piece of knowledge. In the same way, it is also not rejecting any piece of knowledge. You hear something and say "Ah! That's ridiculous! Forget it!" If you hear something, try responding "Well, maybe that is possible also." "Oh! That's another way of looking at it." Add that to your set of knowledge; don't exclude anything. Keep adding, and don't stick to one piece of information as if that's the correct way. The state of not knowing is not being attached to any of the packages that you have. 🧘

Let's say here at Harvard you have to write a term paper. You figure out, "That's what they like!" Therefore you write the term paper according to what you believe is going to give you the best grade, or put in favor with the teacher, and so on. That is knowing. Not knowing is to hear the subject of the paper and then to just freshly write it based on all your own understanding and experience; you don't presuppose anything.

Where does knowing happen mostly? It happens when you are talking to somebody. You hear them talking and before they finish you know what they are saying, You reply with your answer, your rebuttal, your ideas. You are not doing deep listening, not being totally open.



We will talk about a way of council, which is to work in a group in which the first premise is to listen deeply, not presupposing anything. Can you do that? No. I can't do that. Can I attempt to? Can I train? Yes. 🧘

*Roshi Bernie Glassman*  
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## Are you sure?

We suffer because of our fear, which is born from that wrong perception. The degree of Right View in us depends on our perceptions. That person has love for us. She really wishes us to be happy, but we don't see it. We think she hates us and is trying to destroy our reputation. That person may be your mother, your lover, or your friend. It happens all the time. We are unable to see things clearly. We have wrong perceptions that prevent us from having Right View so our level of understanding and awakening is quite low.

In daily life, we have to look deeply at our perceptions and not believe so easily in them. We must always return to our perceptions and question whether we got it right or not. To do that, we have to practice mindfulness and concentration in daily life. Otherwise we might take this sound or that image in ways that are opposite of what they really are, of what was intended. 🙏

I know one young man who suffered terribly because of a wrong perception. His father had been away, and when he returned home, he learned that his wife was pregnant. His neighbor had been visiting regularly and been very helpful, and the father was sure that the child was not his but his neighbor's, and this wrong perception settled in so deeply that he became icy and distant from his wife. She had no idea why he had become so cold, and she suffered a lot.

And of course, the baby within her also suffered. All three of them suffered, as did other members of their family seeing them like that. One wrong perception made many people suffer for many years.

The child was born and grew in that atmosphere of suspicion and wrong perceptions. When he was twelve, his uncle, who was visiting, commented on how much the boy looked like his father and only then did the boy's father accept him as a son. Much damage had been done in twelve years to the whole family, and now, many years later, the extent of the damage continues to reveal itself. 🙏

We have to be very careful about our perceptions. We may think that the other person hates us, and much suffering can come from just one wrong perception. The Buddha said that most of our suffering comes from wrong perceptions. That is why we have to listen and look carefully and avoid wrong perceptions as much as possible. We must always go to the person who said or did something and ask him if our perception was correct. We have to learn to see things more clearly in our daily lives and avoid wrong perceptions as much as possible. Our Right Views have very much to do with our perceptions.

Wrong thinking also has to do with wrong perceptions and Wrong Views. Because all eight folds of the path are linked to each other, we cannot practice just one. To practice is to practice all eight. We have to remember the nature of interbeing of the eight elements of the path.



Image by Leo Reynolds

The poor father was so caught in his pride that he suffered enormously. Although he suspected that the child was not his, he did not have the courage to tell his wife. That is always a huge mistake. Don't be so sure of your impressions. If you suspect something, go to the other person and ask. Pride has no place in true love. Do not let pride stand between you and that person. Always go to the other person and say, "I suffer. Please help me. Please tell me, why did you do that?" If you act like the father, you will cause suffering to yourself, to the one you love, and to many other people. The mantra I would like you to practice is, "Are you sure?" Are you sure of your perceptions? Don't stick to that feeling, that perception, that belief, that impression. You will avoid a lot of suffering in the future if you are open to reexamine and explore each of your views. 🙏

Thich Nhat Hanh  
[Mindfulnessbell.org](http://Mindfulnessbell.org)

## 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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[www.lotusbudsangha.org](http://www.lotusbudsangha.org)



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 ?

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## 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)

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