



# THE LOTUS BUD

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## *Dear Sangha,*

The New Year is time when we think of 'beginning anew' or 'starting over', which may involve reconciliation with other people with whom we have been in conflict. But before we can fully reconcile with others we may need to reconcile the conflict within ourselves. This New Year let us heal ourselves in order to be at peace with others. 🙏

*Chris / True Dwelling of the Mind*



Image by Tonio

## *Reconciliation: healing the inner child*

In each of us, there is a young, suffering child. We have all had times of difficulty as children and many of us have experienced trauma. To protect and defend ourselves against future suffering, we often try to forget those painful times. Every time we're in touch with the experience of suffering, we believe we can't bear it, and we stuff our feelings and memories deep down in our unconscious mind. It may be that we haven't dared to face this child for many decades.

But just because we may have ignored the child doesn't mean she or he isn't there. The wounded child is always there, trying to get our attention. The child says, "I'm here. I'm here. You can't avoid me. You can't run away from me." We want to end our suffering by

sending the child to a deep place inside, and staying as far away as possible. But running away doesn't end our suffering; it only prolongs it. 🙏

The wounded child is also in each cell of our body. There is no cell of our body that does not have that wounded child in it. We don't have to look far into the past for that child. We only have to look deeply and we can be in touch with him. The suffering of that wounded child is lying inside us right now in the present moment.

But just as the suffering is present in every cell of our body, so are the seeds of awakened understanding and happiness handed down to us from our ancestors. We just have to use them. We have a lamp inside us, the lamp of mindfulness, which we can light anytime.

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## Listening

When we speak of listening with compassion, we usually think of listening to someone else. But we must also listen to the wounded child inside of us. Sometimes the wounded child in us needs all our attention. That little child might emerge from the depths of your consciousness and ask for your attention. If you are mindful, you will hear his or her voice calling for help. At that moment, instead of paying attention to whatever is in front of you, go back and tenderly embrace the wounded child.

You can talk directly to the child with the language of love, saying, "In the past, I left you alone. I went away from you. Now, I am very sorry. I am going to embrace you." You can say, "Darling, I am here for you. I will take good care of you. I know that you suffer so much. I have been so busy. I have neglected you, and now I have learned a way to come back to you." If necessary, you have to cry together with that child. Whenever you need to, you can sit and breathe with the child. "Breathing in, I go back to my wounded child; breathing out, I take good care of my wounded child." 

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You have to talk to your child several times a day. Only then can healing take. With practice, we can see that our wounded child is not only us. Our wounded child may represent several generations. Our mother may have suffered throughout her life. Our father may have suffered. Perhaps our parents weren't able to look after the wounded child in themselves. So when we're embracing the wounded child in us, we're embracing all the wounded children of our past generations. This practice is not a practice for ourselves alone, but for numberless generations of ancestors and descendants.

Our ancestors may not have known how to care for their wounded child within, so they transmitted their wounded child to us. Our practice is to end this cycle. If we can heal our wounded child, we will not only liberate ourselves, but we will also help liberate whoever has hurt or abused us. The abuser may also have been the victim of abuse. There are people who have practiced with their inner child for a long time who have had a lessening of their suffering and have experienced transformation. Their relationships with their family and friends have become much easier. 

Thich Nhat Hanh  
[Online source](#)

## Healing the inner child

Interview with Joanne Friday

*Question: In the book [Reconciliation: healing the inner child](#) you tell a wonderful story of transforming your anger to compassion by connecting with your inner three-year-old. Do you connect with your inner child on a regular basis? What have you found helpful in keeping her nourished and happy?*

JF: When I went to my first retreat, I signed up for a consultation with Thay Phap An. I was brain-injured from a car accident and I was in a state of real confusion. I wanted to talk about a woman who had been very angry with me, so I said, "There's this woman, she's a really angry person." And he said, "That's not correct." He said that whenever we assign a label to anyone or anything, it's incorrect, because everything is impermanent. So we're assigning a permanent status to something that is inherently impermanent. That has been a wonderful teaching; I use it all the time.

And then he went on to teach me about healing the past in the present moment and doing *Beginning Anew* with myself. It was such a training in the ability not to hold on to resentment and anger. And to look at myself and ask, "What is this person bringing up in me?"

I've been doing the practice of healing the inner child ever since. There's hardly been a day that I haven't used it, in one way or another. When I'm experiencing a strong

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emotion, I simply notice and embrace that feeling, breathe with it, and hold it. For me, just being with that feeling will usually bring a memory back of another time and place. It might have been last week or it might have been when I was three.

Many people do not access memories from the past when they embrace difficult emotions. If that is the case, you can breathe and send metta to yourself in the present because that child is still alive inside of you. A lot of healing can happen by doing this practice—accepting what is in the present moment and accepting ourselves unconditionally. 🧘

*Question: How is your inner child today?*

JF: I think that she is doing better and better, every day in every way. [Laughs.] I find there are fewer times that I need to spend a lot of time with her. Mostly now it's a recognition, like Thay says about his anger: "Hello anger, my little friend, you're back again."

About fifteen years ago, my husband Richard and I were at a retreat and we were practicing noble silence. He gave me a note that said, "I called home, and so-and-so left a message. She wanted to borrow this thing of yours, so I called her back and said sure." I was over-the-top enraged. And I was surprised at how angry I was, because I thought, "If I had retrieved the phone call, I would have called her back and said sure." So I knew

there was more to this than was meeting my eye.

Luckily we were in noble silence, so I couldn't say a word. I sat myself down, did my breathing, did my metta for myself, and then I invited that feeling up and what I found was [a feeling of] not being considered. When I invited the rage up in me, I was transported back to being eleven years old. At that time, I had a surrogate father. This guy who lived upstairs fell in love with me when I was a month old, and he was a blessing in my life. He showed me unconditional love and was prominent in my life until I was eleven, when he died of a heart attack. 🧘

Sitting on my cushion, when I got in touch with the rage, I was transported right back to the conversation when my parents told me he had died. They said he had the heart attack two days before, but they didn't want to tell me because they didn't want me to see him with tubes in his body; they thought that would be too upsetting for an eleven-year-old. And now he was dead. I realized that I had completely buried that memory. If you had asked me a week before, I would have had no recollection of that conversation ever happening.

As I was sitting, I realized that to be told someone is dead when you are eleven—there's nothing you can do about that. So I surmise that I was enraged because they had made a decision concerning the most important thing in my life and nobody

asked me.

When I went back to revisit the conversation as an adult, I could give that eleven-year-old all the understanding and love and compassion that she needed, that she didn't get at that time. To see it all with no criticism, no blame for any of us, just understanding and compassion. Thay says mindfulness leads to concentration, concentration to insight, insight to understanding, understanding to compassion. That's how it works. I find that to be true every time. 🧘

*Joanne Friday is a Dharma teacher in the Order of Interbeing. Here she is interviewed by Sandra Duban in "The Mindfulness Bell"*

[Online source](#)



## 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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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](mailto:cbarker@uow.edu.au)

Post: Chris Barker, Faculty of Arts,  
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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 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](mailto:streammpc@gmail.com)  
[www.plumvillageasia.org](http://www.plumvillageasia.org)  
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Online source for articles in this issue:

<http://www.wisdom-books.com/ProductExtract.asp?PID=22364>

<http://www.mindfulnessbell.org/wp/tag/reconciliation-healing-the-inner-child/>