



# THE LOTUS BUD

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*Dear Sangha,*

It is a foundational practice of Buddhism to stop and calm our restless mind and body so that we can look deeply and act more wisely. In this edition of the *The Lotus Bud*, Thay explains to us how and why we need to stop our rampaging habit energies and focus our mind in stillness, a theme taken up by Leo Babauta of the blog Zen Habits in the context of our high-energy modern world of rushing here and there.

May we all be calm, contented and wise. 🙏

*Chris / True Dwelling of the Mind*

*Stopping, calming,  
looking deeply*

There is a story in Zen circles about a man and a horse. The horse is galloping quickly, and it appears that the man on the horse is going somewhere important. Another man, standing alongside the road, shouts, "Where are you going?" and the first man replies, "I don't know! Ask the horse!" This is also our story. We are riding a horse, we don't know where we are going, and we can't stop. The horse is our habit energy pulling us along, and we are powerless. We are always running, and it has become a habit. We struggle all the time, even during our sleep. We are at war within ourselves, and we can easily start a war with others. 🙏

We have to learn the art of stopping - stopping our thinking, our habit energies, our forgetfulness, the strong emotions that rule us. When an emotion rushes

through us like a storm, we have no peace. We turn on the TV and then we turn it off. We pick up a book and then we put it down. How can we stop this state of agitation? How can we stop our fear, despair, anger, and craving? We can stop by practising mindful breathing, mindful walking, mindful smiling, and deep looking in order to understand. When we are mindful, touching deeply the present moment, the fruits are always understanding, acceptance, love, and the desire to relieve suffering and bring joy.

But our habit energies are often stronger than our volition, We say and do things we don't want to and afterwards we regret it. We make ourselves and others suffer, and we bring about a lot of damage. We may vow not to do it again, but we do it again. Why? Because our habit energies (vashana) push us. 🙏

We need the energy of mindfulness to recognise and be present with our habit energy in order to stop this course of destruction. With mindfulness, we have the capacity to recognise the habit energy every time it manifests. "Hello, my habit energy, I know you are there" If we just smile to it, it will lose much of its strength. Mindfulness is the energy that allows us to recognise our habit energy and prevent it from dominating us. The first function of meditation - shamatha - is to stop. 🧘

The second function of shamatha is calming. When we have a strong emotion, we know it can be dangerous to act, but we don't have the strength or clarity to refrain. We have to learn the art of breathing in and out, stopping our activities, and calming our emotions. We have to learn to become solid and stable like an oak tree, and not be blown from side to side by the storm. The Buddha taught many techniques to help us calm our body and mind and look deeply at them.

They can be summarised in five stages:

(1) **Recognition** - If we are angry, we say, "I know that anger is in me."

(2) **Acceptance** - when we are angry, we do not deny it. we accept what is present.

(3) **Embracing** - We hold our anger in our two arms like a mother holding her crying baby. Our mindfulness embraces our emotion, and this alone can calm our anger and ourselves.

(4) **Looking deeply** - when we are calm enough, we can look deeply to understand what has brought this anger to be, what is causing our baby's discomfort.

(5) **Insight** - The fruit of looking deeply is understanding the causes and conditions, primary and secondary, that have brought about our anger, that are causing our baby to cry. Perhaps our baby is hungry, perhaps his nappy pin is piercing his skin. Our anger was triggered when our friend spoke to us meanly and suddenly we remember that he was not at his best today because his father is dying. We reflect like this until we have some insights into what has caused our suffering. With insight, we know what to do and what not to do to change the situation. 🧘

*From The Heart of the Buddha's Teachings Thich Nhat Hanh.*  
[Online source](#)



Image by Marcel Van den Berge

## *Be still*

Be still.

Just for a moment.

Listen to the world around you. Feel your breath coming in and going out. Listen to your thoughts. See the details of your surroundings.

Be at peace with being still.

In this modern world, activity and movement are the default modes, if not with our bodies then at least with our minds, with our attention. We rush around all day, doing things, talking, emailing, sending and reading messages, clicking from browser tab to the next, one link to the next.

We are always on, always connected, always thinking, always talking. There is no time for stillness — and sitting in front of a frenetic computer all day, and then in front of the hyperactive television, doesn't count as stillness. 🧘

This comes at a cost: we lose that time for contemplation, for observing and listening. We lose peace.

And worse yet: all the rushing around is often counterproductive. I know, in our society action is all-important — inaction is seen as lazy and passive and unproductive. However, sometimes too much action is worse than no action at all. You can run around crazily, all sound and fury, but get nothing done. Or you can get a lot done — but nothing important. Or you can hurt things with your actions, make things worse than if you'd stayed still.

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And when we are forced to be still — because we're in line for something, or waiting at a doctor's appointment, or on a bus or train — we often get antsy, and need to find something to do. Some of us will have our mobile devices, others will have a notebook or folder with things to do or read, others will fidget. Being still isn't something we're used to.

Take a moment to think about how you spend your days — at work, after work, getting ready for work, evenings and weekends. Are you constantly rushing around? Are you constantly reading and answering messages, checking on the news and the latest stream of information? Are you always trying to Get Lots of Things Done, ticking off tasks from your list like a machine, rushing through your schedule?

Is this how you want to spend your life? 🧘

If so, peace be with you. If not, take a moment to be still. Don't think about what you have to do, or what you've done already. Just be in the moment.

Then after a minute or two of doing that, contemplate your life, and how you'd like it to be. See your life with less movement, less doing, less rushing. See it with more stillness, more contemplation, more peace.

Then be that vision.

It's pretty simple, actually: all you have to do is sit still for a little bit each day.

Once you've gotten used to that, try doing less each day. Breathe when you feel yourself moving too fast. Slow down. Be present. Find happiness now, in this moment, instead of waiting for it.

Savor the stillness. It's a treasure, and it's available to us, always. 🧘

*Leo Babauta [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,  
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 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.alexox.com/sangha/StoppingCalmingRestingHealing.pdf>

<http://zenhabits.net/be-still/>