



THE LOTUS BUD

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Dear Sangha,

In this edition of the *The Lotus Bud* we explore the idea that we should not run away from our suffering but rather embrace it as an integral dimension of being alive. Suffering, which is no less a part of life than happiness, can be our teacher. The Buddha, says Thay, teaches us about the non-duality of happiness and suffering and thus the need to practice like the earth - with acceptance of all that comes our way. 🙏

Chris / True Dwelling of the Mind

Embrace your suffering

Suffering is very important for your happiness. You cannot understand, you cannot love, until you know what suffering is. The joy of having something to eat is possible only if you know what hunger is. In some areas of China, when people meet each other, instead of asking, "How do you do?" or "How are you?" they ask, "Have you eaten yet? Have you gotten something to eat?" Because we know there is hunger, death. So our love is expressed in a very simple way: Have you eaten yet? Have you gotten anything to eat yet?

The tendency is to want to remove and to clear away the blocks of pain and sorrow and despair in us. We just want the Buddha or God to be like a surgeon who can cut out anything we don't want of ourselves, get it out of our system. In the light of non-duality, not only are we

flowers, but we are also the garbage in us. We cannot just get rid of us. Sometimes we are love, sometimes we are anger; love is us, but anger is also us. So we have to treat both love and anger on an equal basis, like the Buddha was treating Mara. Mara didn't understand. Ananda also didn't understand. But the Buddha, he understood. He was teaching both of them the nature of non-duality between suffering and happiness. 🙏

The energy of mindfulness is the energy that allows us to be in the present moment, to embrace ourselves, our suffering, our despair, our sorrow; and also the seeds of joy and peace and love that have become weak in us because we have not been able to water and cultivate these seeds to help them to be stronger. So the practice is the practice of embracing, and it is clear that the energy with which you can embrace yourself is the energy of mindfulness.



“Darling, I am there for you.” When we love someone we want to make such a declaration, “Darling I am there for you.” And you have to be really there for her. Your presence is the greatest gift you can make to the person you love. To be there, it’s not easy. You have to be there with one hundred per cent of yourself. You have to be really mindful, with all your attention.

That energy has the power of healing and of making the other person happy. In this case it is self-love, and we all know that the love we have for another depends on our self-love. If we know how to take care of ourselves, if we know how to nourish and to transform ourselves, we will be able to take care of the other person. So the object of love is our self first—our body and our consciousness. Embracing yourself in the present moment is the practice 🧘

By being there entirely, you recognise that not only suffering is there, something else is there—the wonders of life, the refreshing and healing elements from within and around and you may like to practice touching them. Look at the sky; listen to the rain, smile to it. It’s wonderful that it’s raining, it’s wonderful that the sky is blue this morning, it’s wonderful that I am here, alive. It’s wonderful that I can walk, it’s wonderful that my heart still functions normally. There are so many things you can enjoy. When one tree in the garden dies you may forget that all the other trees are still alive. You let your sorrow dominate, and

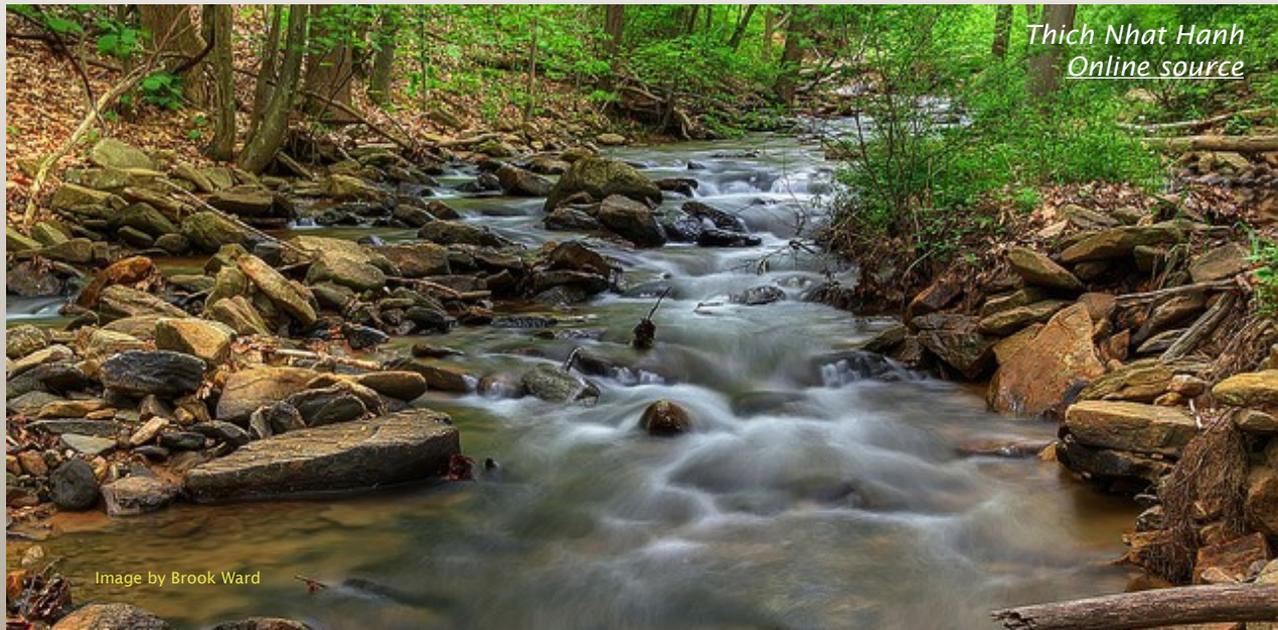
suddenly you lose everything. When a tree is dying in my garden, yes, I know it, but there are other trees that are still green, healthy. If you remember that, you will not be drowned by your sorrow, and you will have enough strength to save the tree that is dying or replace it with another tree. 🧘

Make your heart large so that you may be able to see that the conditions for your happiness are there, and injustice, cruelty, or meanness is not enough to ruin your life. You can accept it easily, because your heart is large, and you can receive it without resentment and anger. It’s like when you throw some dirt into the river, the river would not be angry. The river is willing to accept that dirt, and it can transform that dirt overnight. There’s so much water in the river, so much mud in the water that the amount of dirt that you throw into the river will be transformed overnight.

If you throw that dirt into a container of water in your home that would not be the same thing. You know that the water in the container will no longer be drinkable, you have to throw it away. But when you throw that amount of dirt into the river, people from the city still continue to drink the water from the river because it’s large. The river has the capacity of transforming and healing. So practice being like a river, that is what the Buddha recommended to us.

Practice being like the earth. Whether people throw on earth flowers, perfumes, rice, curries or they throw on it urine, excrement, the earth will be willing to accept all without any resentment, because earth is large and earth has the power to transform.

And earth is always there for us. So the Buddha told Rahula, “My dear, practice like earth, practice like water in the river and you will not suffer because your heart is big.” 🧘



*Thich Nhat Hanh
Online source*

Image by Brook Ward

Making good use of suffering

MB: What experiences in your own life have been most valuable in serving you as a Dharma teacher?

JF: I would say suffering. There's nothing quite like it to help us to wake up. Thay says that he wouldn't want a nirvana without suffering, and I can see why. The brain injury from a car accident is what brought me to the path, so suffering got me here. I look back at any suffering I've had in my life and ask: "What did it have to teach me? Did I benefit? Did I make good use of it?" If I didn't make good use of the suffering, then it's a waste of time.

MB: In Reconciliation, you write that you "discovered that mindful speech isn't just choosing the right words to say—it's transforming the ill will in my heart." What guidance would you give to someone who wants to transform the ill will in his or her heart? 

JF: One of the things I've been practicing with a lot is looking at stories that I've been told about myself or that I make up about myself and others. And getting caught in the surface of those stories and believing them. When someone does or says something hurtful, Thay invites us to look deeply, to not get caught in the surface of things, and that's what

leads to understanding, and with that comes compassion; it's unavoidable. When I can understand somebody else's suffering, any ill will is transformed into compassion.

When I've been able to cut through the story I've been telling myself, I feel almost childlike. I can simply show up without a story, show up not needing to make up one, and experience whatever is happening. It's so delightful. When people ask me what I do for a living, I say I try my best to show up, pay attention, and respond skillfully to life.

MB: It seems like it's about you, but not about you—like you've made yourself into a fertile ground for these seeds to grow, but anyone can do that.

JF: Anybody can. If I can do it, anybody can. I'm the perfect example. I feel so blessed to have come into contact with the Dharma as transmitted through Thay in this lifetime. He has spent his life looking deeply and doing everything possible to make the Buddha's teachings understandable—even to me. He says he has a fire in his heart. I feel that that fire is what he transmits to us. We are the luckiest people in the world and this is a very happy continuation day for all of us.



Extract from an interview with Dharma Teacher Joanne Friday.

[Online source](#)

Embrace reality

When you deny the reality of life, you appreciate it less. Meditate on the Buddha's *Five Remembrances* and rediscover the magic of life just as it is.

I am of the nature to grow old.
There is no way to escape growing old.

I am of the nature to have ill health.
There is no way to escape ill health.

I am of the nature to die.
There is no way to escape death.

All that is dear to me and everyone I love
are the nature to change.

There is no way to escape
being separated from them.

My actions are my only true belongings.
I cannot escape the consequences of my actions.

My actions are the ground upon which
I stand. 

from: The Plum Village Chanting Book

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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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 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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Online sources for articles in this Issue

<http://plumvillage.org/transcriptions/mara-and-the-buddha-embracing-our-suffering/>

<http://plumvillage.org/news/unconditional-acceptance/>