



THE LOTUS BUD

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Dear Sangha,

In this edition of *The Lotus Bud* we consider the question of habits: there are positive habits and negative habits, habits that support our wellbeing and habits that harm us. We often vow to let go of bad habits and strengthen positive ones. But we know that saying is one thing and doing is another. Perhaps now as we enter a new year it is the time to bring our right diligence' to bear on beginning our practice anew. 🙏

Chris / True Dwelling of the Mind

Transforming habit energies

Our joy, our peace, our happiness depend very much on our practice of recognising and transforming our habit energies. There are positive habit energies that we have to cultivate, there are negative habit energies that we have to recognise, embrace and transform. The energy with which we do these things is mindfulness. Mindfulness is a kind of energy that helps us to be aware of what is going on. Therefore, when the habit energy shows itself, we know right away. "Hello, my little habit energy, I know you are there. I will take good care of you." In recognising it as it is, you are in control of the situation

A practitioner is someone who has the right to suffer, but who does not have the right not to practice. People who are not practitioners allow their pain, sorrow and anguish to overwhelm them, to push them to say and do things they don't want.

We, who consider our selves to be practitioners, have the right to suffer like everyone else, but we don't have the right not to practice. Therefore, we have to do something, to call on the positive things within our bodies and our consciousness, to take care of our situations. It's okay to suffer, it's okay to be angry, but it's not okay to allow yourself to be flooded with suffering. We know that in our bodies and our consciousness there are positive elements that we can call on for help. We have to mobilise these positive elements to protect ourselves and to take good care of the negative things that are manifesting in us. 🙏

What we usually do is to call on the seed of mindfulness here to come up. The energy of mindfulness has the capacity of recognising, embracing, and relieving the suffering, calming and also transforming. In every one of us the seed of mindfulness exists, but if we have not practiced the art of mindful living, then that seed may be very small.

We can be mindful, but our mindfulness is rather poor. Of course, when you drive your car, you need your mindfulness. We know that all of us have some energy of mindfulness, and that is the kind of energy we need very much to take care of our pain and our sorrow.

For those of us who practice mindfulness as an art of daily living, the seed of mindfulness in our store consciousness becomes very strong; and any time we touch it, we call on it for help, then it will be ready for us, just like the mother who, although she is working in the kitchen, is always ready for the baby every time the baby cries. So our mindfulness is there so that we may recognise, because mindfulness is defined first of all as the energy that helps us to know what is going on in the present moment. 🧘

When you drink your water mindfully, you are concentrated on your drinking. If you are concentrated, life is deep, and you can get more joy and stability just by drinking your

water mindfully. You live deeply each moment of your daily life, and we all know that mindfulness and concentration will bring about the insight that we need.

If you don't stop, if you don't become mindful, if you are not concentrated, then there is no chance that you can get the insight. Buddhist meditation is to stop, to calm yourself, to be concentrated, and to direct your looking deeply into what is there in the here and now. Stopping means not to run anymore, to be mindful of what is happening in the here and the now.

Mindfulness helps your stopping to be realized. You stop running because you are really there. You stop being carried by your habit energy, by your forgetfulness. And when you touch something beautiful, with mindfulness, that something becomes a refreshing and healing element for you. 🧘

Thich Nhat Hanh
[Online source](#)

How to establish a daily practice of almost anything, in six steps

Going to a retreat or program is a wonderful way to deepen our meditation practice. But how do we stay connected with these waking-up practices when we go home to the myriad projects, emails, responsibilities, and distractions waiting for us?

This is a question that applies not just to meditation, yoga, and other spiritual practices, but to any creative art we want to commit to, such as painting, writing, or playing an instrument.

You may start each day intending to spend half an hour on your zafu, practice walking meditation in the park, or write three haikus capturing the essence of your insights. But you're out of yogurt and broccoli, there are 237 unread emails in your inbox, your taxes were due last week, and your child has knocked out a tooth skateboarding or needs you to buy Japanese print fabric for a history project. So you put off meditating or working on your memoir for one more day. And then one more. And then one more. 🧘

Lately I've been offering students a six-step plan that I've found effective for



establishing and maintaining a home practice of almost anything—even in the middle of a crazily busy life.

1. Set your intention

Get very clear about what you want to commit to—and even more important, why.

Why is it important to you that you sustain a meditation practice—or do tai chi, or paint wildflowers? What part of you does it nourish? Write down your reasons. The more specific you are, the more likely you will be to do it. It's not just "I want to meditate more." It's "I commit to meditating for ten minutes before I wake up the kids for school because it keeps me calm, grounded, and more present for my family." To make your intention even stronger, share it with someone close to you. However, be careful about talking about it too widely—that can dissipate the energy. 🧘

2. Establish a cue

This is what reminds you to start your practice. The most simple and reliable cue is a specific time. For instance, you decide you will meditate every evening from 9 to 9:30 p.m.

It can also be a floating cue: you will do half an hour of yoga right after you finish work, whenever that happens to be. Or you will take ten mindful breaths whenever you are about to launch your email program. To ensure that your good intentions don't get overrun by other plans, carve out the

time in advance. Write it into your calendar and don't schedule anything else during that period. Be sure to build in time for any preparations or cleanup that are necessary.

Remember, start modestly. Meditating for ten minutes every day for a year is more beneficial than meditating an hour a day for three days, then burning out. Again, it can help to let the people close to you know what you are doing, especially if you live together. That way they can support you in your commitment.

3. Round up your supplies

Make sure you have everything you need for your practice in a place where you can find it easily. That way you don't have to waste your precious time hunting them down. Maintain a meditation nook with an inviting cushion, a small altar, and a supply of incense and matches. If you want to write down your dreams every morning, place a notebook and pen on your bedside table. 🧘

4. Do your practice

So you don't spend your dedicated practice time spacing out or trying to figure out where to get started, it helps to have a plan in place, especially at first. Know what meditation method you intend to practice—for example, breath meditation or loving-kindness practice—and stick with one method for at least a week before switching. (If you're planning on using a guided meditation, download or bookmark the instructions in advance,

so you don't eat up your meditation time surfing the web.)

5. Reward yourself

Yes, theoretically the practice is its own reward. But especially when you're establishing a new pattern, it helps to have an external reward as well. After your dawn meditation, make yourself a cup of green tea and sip it slowly while watching the sun come up. After your evening yoga, watch a silly movie with your kids. After you draw in your art journal, put a gold star sticker on your calendar. Our brains love this kind of positive reinforcement.

6. Track your progress

Keeping a record of what you have and haven't done increases your sense of accountability. Make this part fun! You can go the old-fashioned route by checking off boxes on a calendar. Or you can use one of the many new habit-tracking apps that are available.

Remember, this is about celebrating your accomplishments, not beating yourself up when you miss a day. Through daily small changes of routine, your whole life can shift over time to a new trajectory. Just remember to enjoy the journey. 🧘

Anne Cushman
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. 🧘

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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
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Online sources for articles in this issue

http://www.dhammatalks.net/Books2/Thich_Nhat_Hanh_Transforming_Negativity

<http://www.lionsroar.com/how-to-establish-a-daily-practice-of-almost-anything>