



THE LOTUS BUD

Magazine of Mindful Living ~ Issue No 81, June/July 2016

Dear Sangha,

We all face difficult situations and feelings from time to time and our practice can help us in those hard moments. But the solution to our predicaments according to Buddhist teachings is not to avoid or turn away from our difficulties but to face them and embrace them with mindfulness.

In this issue of *The Lotus Bud* we explore the practice of embracing difficult emotions. 🙏

Chris / True Dwelling of the Mind

Treating anger with tenderness

Mindfulness does not fight anger or despair. Mindfulness is there in order to recognize. To be mindful of something is to recognize that something is there in the present moment. Mindfulness is the capacity of being aware of what is going on in the present moment. “Breathing in, I know that anger has manifested in me; breathing out, I smile towards my anger.” This is not an act of suppression or of fighting. It is an act of recognizing. Once we recognize our anger, we embrace it with a lot of awareness, a lot of tenderness. 🙏

When it is cold in your room, you turn on the heater, and the heater begins to send out waves of hot air. The cold air doesn’t have to leave the room for the room to become warm. The cold air is embraced by the hot air and becomes warm—there’s no fighting at all between them. We practice taking care of our anger in the same way. Mindfulness recognizes anger,

is aware of its presence, accepts and allows it to be there. Mindfulness is like a big brother who does not suppress his younger brother’s suffering. He simply says, “Dear brother, I’m here for you.” You take your younger brother in your arms and you comfort him. This is exactly our practice.

Imagine a mother getting angry with her baby and hitting him when he cries. That mother does not know that she and her baby are one. We are mothers of our anger and we have to help our baby, our anger, not fight and destroy it. Our anger is us and our compassion is also us. In Buddhism, the practice of meditation should be the practice of embracing and transforming, not of fighting.



Using anger, using suffering

To grow the tree of enlightenment, we must make good use of our afflictions, our suffering. It is like growing lotus flowers; we cannot grow a lotus on marble. We cannot grow a lotus without mud.

Practitioners of meditation do not discriminate against or reject their internal formations. We do not transform ourselves into a battle field, good fighting evil. We treat our afflictions, our anger, our jealousy with a lot of tenderness. When anger comes up in us, we should begin to practice mindful breathing right away: "Breathing in, I know that anger is in me. Breathing out, I am taking good care of my anger." We behave exactly like a mother: "Breathing in, I know that my child is crying. Breathing out, I will take good care of my child." This is the practice of compassion. 🙏

If you don't know how to treat yourself with compassion, how can you treat another person with compassion? When anger arises, continue to practice mindful breathing and mindful walking to generate the energy of mindfulness. Continue to embrace tenderly the energy of anger within you. Anger may continue to be there for sometime, but you are safe, because the Buddha is in you, helping you to take good care of your anger. The energy of mindfulness is the energy of the Buddha. When you practice mindful breathing and embrace your anger, you are under the protection of the Buddha. There is no doubt about it: the Buddha is embracing you and your anger with a lot of compassion.

Recognizing, embracing, relieving the suffering of anger

The first function of mindfulness is to recognize, not to fight. "Breathing in, I know that anger has manifested in me. Hello, my little anger." And breathing out, "I will take good care of you." Once we have recognized our anger, we embrace it. This is the second function of mindfulness and it is a very pleasant practice. Instead of fighting, we are taking good care of our emotion. If you know how to embrace your anger, something will change.

It is like cooking potatoes. You cover the pot and then the water will begin to boil. You must keep the stove on for at least twenty minutes for the potatoes to cook. Your anger is a kind of potato and you cannot eat a raw potato. 🙏

Mindfulness is like the fire cooking the potatoes of anger. The first few minutes of recognizing and embracing your anger with tenderness can bring results. You get some relief. Anger is still there, but you do not suffer so much anymore, because you know how to take care of your baby. So the third function of mindfulness is soothing, relieving. Anger is there, but it is being taken care of. The situation is no longer in chaos, with the crying baby left all alone. The mother is there to take care of the baby and the situation is under control. 🙏

Thich Nhat Hanh [online source](#)

The face-everything technique

Why avoiding difficulties doesn't help

We are, all of us, amazing at avoiding things.

I'll give you a few examples:

Right now you're reading this article but probably avoiding the difficult thing you don't want to think about.

We are constantly checking messages, news, feeds, notifications ... to avoid doing something we don't want to face.

When we're facing difficulties in life, we try to tell ourselves that's it's OK because (fill in the blank), or get busy with some activity or numbing agent (like alcohol) so we don't have to face the difficulties.

When a problem comes up, our reaction is to want to go do something else, put it off.

We put off paying bills, doing taxes, dealing with long emails, dealing with clutter, because we don't want to face these difficulties.

We put off exercise because it's uncomfortable.

In fact, there are thousands more examples, every day, that come up and

that we don't even notice, because our minds switch to thinking about something else.


Try this right now: pause for a minute and think about what difficulty you're avoiding thinking about right now.

You will either notice a difficulty you don't like, or your mind will quickly turn to doing something else before the minute is up.

What you've done is part of what I call the Face Everything Technique ... which I'll explain in a minute, after we talk about why avoiding everything is an ineffective strategy.

Avoidance doesn't work

Our minds want to run from whatever discomfort, pain, difficulty we're facing ... and this is a good strategy for temporarily not having to deal with difficulty and pain. So in the present moment, we might feel some temporary relief.

But what it does is relegate us to a life of running. A life of distraction and never facing what ails us. We keep ourselves busy, but never learn to deal with what's inside us, what's in front of us. 

This means we are at the mercy of our fears, of our discomforts. We are like little children who don't want to do any hard work, but want the latest shiny fun thing.

This results in not working on the important work (or at least putting it off until it starts to get painful). The same is true of exercise, healthy eating, finances, clutter, relationships, and more.


In the end, we usually have to deal with these things, but they've just gotten worse. It would have been better to face them early on, when they weren't such a big deal.

The face-everything technique

This technique is based on the idea that it's better to be aware of things, and to deal with them like an adult, instead of running. And if we do, none of it's that big of a deal.


Here's how it works:

Create awareness by asking, "What am I doing right now?" Throughout the day, set reminders or put little notes that remind you to ask, "What am I doing right now?" The answer might be, "Checking Facebook," or "Switching to a new browser tab," or "Eating some chips." Something simple and mundane like that, but just ask yourself what you're doing, to start to bring awareness.

Next, ask yourself, "What am I avoiding?" When things get difficult or uncomfortable, we automatically switch to something else. We run. We avoid, like crazy. You're doing it all day long, but not realizing it. Ask what you're avoiding: some fear, some difficult task, some difficult emotion, some discomfort, or just staying present in the current moment? Name what you're avoiding. 

Now face it. Just stay with this fear, discomfort, difficulty, in the present moment. Not your story about it that you're telling yourself in your head, but the actual physical feeling in your body in the present moment. How bad is it? You'll find that it's No Big Deal. Stay with it for a little longer. And a little longer after that — challenge yourself.

Take appropriate action. Now that you've faced it and have seen that it's not such a big deal, you can act like an adult rather than a little child: you can decide what the best action is right now. If you're afraid of doing some task, but you've faced it and seen that the fear is not such a big deal ... you can remind yourself that the task will benefit you and others, and is much more important than your little fear. If you're avoiding a difficult conversation with someone because you're angry, you can see that the anger and offense is not such a big deal, and you can talk to the person calmly and appropriately, with empathy and compassion, and figure out a solution.

Of course, not all problems will just evaporate using this method, but I can tell you that you'll be able to face many more things as you practice this method. 

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. 🧘

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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.
85 Queen St
Canley Heights.

Mindfulness Days at Nhap Luu (Entering the Stream)
Meditation Centre
221 Maria's Lane
Beaufort VIC 3733
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www.plumvillageasia.org
0431 470 172

Online sources for articles in this Issue

<http://www.lionsroar.com/loosening-the-knots-of-anger/>

<http://zenhabits.net/face-everything/>