



THE LOTUS BUD

Magazine of Mindful Living ~ Issue No 85, January 2017

Dear Sangha,

When we both look deeply at the world around us and examine ourselves within we can see that fear plays a major part in driving our behaviour. Not only can fear rob us of the joy of living but it can lead to violence and the extinguishing of compassion. As we enter a new year perhaps we might like to set the intention to be mindful of our fear so that we may reduce it and prevent it from being our habit energy.

The Lotus Buds team wishes you a happy, calm and compassionate New Year. 🙏

Chris / True Dwelling of the Mind

Fearlessness

Most of us experience a life full of wonderful moments and difficult moments. But for many of us, even when we are most joyful, there is fear behind our joy. We fear that this moment will end, that we won't get what we need, that we will lose what we love, or that we will not be safe. Often, our biggest fear is the knowledge that one day our bodies will cease functioning. So even when we are surrounded by all the conditions for happiness, our joy is not complete. ☐☐

We may think that if we ignore our fears, they'll go away. But if we bury worries and anxieties in our consciousness, they continue to affect us and bring us more sorrow. We are very afraid of being powerless. But we have the power to look deeply at our fears, and then fear cannot control us. We can transform our fear. Fear keeps us focused on the past or worried about the future. If we can acknowledge our fear, we can realize that right now we are okay. Right now, today, we are still alive, and our bodies are

working marvelously. Our eyes can still see the beautiful sky. Our ears can still hear the voices of our loved ones. 🙏

The first part of looking at our fear is just inviting it into our awareness without judgment. We just acknowledge gently that it is there. This brings a lot of relief already. Then, once our fear has calmed down, we can embrace it tenderly and look deeply into its roots, its sources. Understanding



Image by Kátia Goretti
Dias Vazzoller

the origins of our anxieties and fears will help us let go of them. Is our fear coming from something that is happening right now or is it an old fear, a fear from when we were small that we've kept inside? When we practice inviting all our fears up, we become aware that we are still alive, that we still have many things to treasure and enjoy. If we are not pushing down and managing our fear, we can enjoy the sunshine, the fog, the air, and the water. If you can look deep into your fear and have a clear vision of it, then you really can live a life that is worthwhile. 🙏

The Buddha was a human being, and he also knew fear. But because he spent each day practicing mindfulness and looking closely at his fear, when confronted with the unknown, he was able to face it calmly and peacefully. There is a story about a time the Buddha was out walking and Angulimala, a notorious serial killer, came upon him. Angulimala shouted for the Buddha to stop, but the Buddha kept walking slowly and calmly. Angulimala caught up with him and demanded to know why he hadn't stopped. The Buddha replied, "Angulimala, I stopped a long time ago. It is you who have not stopped." He went on to explain, "I stopped committing acts that cause suffering to other living beings. All living beings want to live. All fear death. We must nurture a heart of compassion and protect the lives of all beings." Startled, Angulimala asked to know more. By the end of the conversation, Angulimala vowed never again to commit violent acts and decided to become a monk. ☐☐

How could the Buddha remain so calm and relaxed when faced with a murderer? This is an extreme example, but each of us faces our fears in one way or another every day. A daily practice of mindfulness can be of enormous help. Beginning with our breath, beginning with awareness, we are able to meet whatever comes our way. ☐

Fearlessness is not only possible, it is the ultimate joy. When you touch nonfear, you are free. If I am ever in an airplane and the pilot announces that the plane is about to crash, I will practice mindful breathing. If you receive bad news, I hope you will do the same. But don't wait for the critical moment to arrive before you start practicing to transform your fear and live mindfully. Nobody can give you fearlessness. Even if the Buddha were sitting right here next to you, he couldn't give it to you. You have to practice it and realize it yourself. If you make a habit of mindfulness practice, when difficulties arise, you will already know what to do. 🙏

Thich Nhat Hanh [online source](#)

The path of fearlessness

The more I work with people who are struggling with habits or life problems, the more I see how fears are holding us back.

Fears stop us from building healthy and productive habits. Fears cause us to procrastinate, keep us from finding work that is meaningful (or doing that work if we've found it). Fears keep us from finding friends or connecting with people on a deeper level. Fears keep us from being happy in each moment. 🙏

Underlying all of those fears are a few key fears:

- Fear of failure or being unprepared
- Fear of uncertainty
- Fear of being inadequate or being rejected

The two key fears are the fears of uncertainty and not being good enough, and in my experience, they're both the same thing. We're afraid of the uncertain future (and uncertain situations) because we don't think we're good enough to handle whatever might come out of the chaos.

These two fears (uncertainty and inadequacy) affect our lives in so many ways, and yet we rarely face them. *We don't want to feel these fears, so we run.* We distract ourselves. We keep busy.

Continued over page...

instead of being still to feel them. We find comfort in food and smoking and alcohol and TV.

In the end, the running doesn't work, but only makes things worse.

There's an alternative: the Path of Fearlessness.

Three keys to developing fearlessness

What would our lives be like if we didn't have fear holding us back? We might find the freedom and joy that comes in being present with each moment. We might find the underlying goodness that's always there in each of us. We might be able to finally live the lives we've always wanted to live. So how do we walk this Path of Fearlessness?

Three practices to work with:

Facing the fear mindfully. The truth is, we rarely allow ourselves to feel our fears. We run from them, pretend they aren't there, distract ourselves, lash out at others, trying to find control. But we don't even admit we have these fears, most of the time, let alone actually allow ourselves to feel them. So the practice is to just sit there when you notice yourself feeling any fear, and see if you can stay with it for awhile. Don't stay with the story about the fear in your head, but rather how it feels in your body. See that it is stressful or painful or uncomfortable. Notice the particular physical feeling of this fear, this time. See if it changes. See what you can learn about it. See if you can be compassionate with it. 

Seeing your underlying goodness. As we sit in meditation, we can see that this moment is actually pretty wonderful. And this moment includes ourselves. We are part of the unconditional goodness of every single moment, and if we sit still we can start to feel that. There is goodness in our hearts, all the time, if we allow ourselves to feel it. There is the ability to appreciate and wonder, to feel and to love, to be present and to be grateful. Start to appreciate this, and you'll start to develop confidence that you'll be OK, even in uncertainty, even if you're being judged, even if you put yourself out there with vulnerability.

Here's how it works:

Embracing the joy of groundlessness. Uncertainty is scary because we don't like the feeling of not having stable ground under our feet. We want certainty, control, stability, permanence ... but life is filled with uncertainty, impermanence, shakiness, chaos. This causes the fear. Instead, we can start to embrace this uncertainty, see the beauty in impermanence, see the positivity of groundlessness. This uncertainty means we don't know what will happen, which means we can be surprised by every moment! We can be filled with curiosity about what will emerge. We can reinvent ourselves each moment, because nothing is set, nothing is determined. There is joy in this groundlessness, if we embrace it. 

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.

No, these are not easy practices. But you can practice with them right now, and set aside a few minutes each morning to practice. You'll see your confidence emerge, your fears dissipate a bit, your ability to appreciate each moment and yourself grow.

The Path of Fearlessness is one of mindfulness, of daily practice, and of finding the courage to face and push past the fears into joy. 

Leo Babauta [online source](#)

WHO WE ARE

The Communities of Mindful Living are inspired by the Buddhist teachings of Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh.



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

Sydney, Inner West - John Barclay
barclayjohn0@gmail.com

Sutherland Area - Lorraine Curtain
loricurtain@optusnet.com.au

Northern Beaches - Dharma Boat Sangha
Andrew Condell
raandrops@gmail.com

Southern Highlands - Jenny Mills
fivemountains@hotmail.com

Blue Mountains - Ann Morris
annmorris52@gmail.com

Newcastle - Hannah Perkins
han.perkins@gmail.com

Caboolture Qld - Joyce and Rhys Davies_
rhystdavies@yahoo.com.au

Lismore Area
5mountainscommunity@gmail.com

www.lotusbudsangha.org

All images used with permission from www.flickr.com creative commons unless otherwise stated.

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

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.
85 Queen St
Canley Heights.

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

Online sources for articles in this Issue

<http://www.oprah.com/spirit/Thich-Nhat-Hanh-Fearlessness>

<https://zenhabits.net/fearlessness/>